



OPINION 6
WHEN HEROES DEFY
THEIR LEGACIES

WORLD 9
ZELENSKY 'CONFIRMS' DARING
INCURSION ONTO RUSSIAN SOIL

MONEY 10
ADOPT GUIDANCE OVER
INTIMIDATION: CBDT CHIEF

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12 SPORTS

Manhunt for foreign terrorists

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

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

The soldiers who made the supreme sacrifice have been identified as Hav Dipak Kumar Yadav and L/Nk Praveen Sharma. In a post on X, the Indian Army spokesman said, the Indian Army offers deepest condolences and stands firm with the bereaved families in this hour of grief. "General Upendra Dwivedi COAS and All Ranks of the Indian Army salute the supreme sacrifice of bravehearts Hav Dipak Kumar



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

Yadav & L/Nk Praveen Sharma, who laid down their lives in the line of duty, in Anantnag, J&K". Meanwhile, Inspector General (IG) of Kashmir VK Birdi who visited the encounter site told reporters on Sunday that the operation that began a day ago is underway in the upper reaches of Gagar-Mandu area of Kokernag in Jammu and Kashmir's Anantnag district.

"Security forces had information regarding the movement of terrorists in the upper reaches. A search operation was being conducted in the Gagar-Mandu area. Security forces spotted the movement of terrorists and there was an exchange of fire between the security forces and terrorists... Operation is underway..." IG Birdi told

reporters. He said the civilian killed in the encounter has been identified as Abdul Rashid Dar. Giving details of the current operation, a Srinagar-based defence spokesperson said that on August 5, it was confirmed through human and electronic means that terrorists responsible for atrocities in the Doda region in July have

sneaked across the Kishtwar range into the Kapran-Garol area in south Kashmir. "The Rashtriya Rifles and the Jammu and Kashmir Police have relentlessly tracked these terrorists and precise operations were launched on the night of August 9 and 10 in the mountains in the east of Kapran where these terrorists were reportedly holed up.

Kolkata doctor rape-murder: Shocking details surface

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The murdered lady doctor from a North Kolkata medical college was subjected to horrific brutalities, according to preliminary postmortem and inquest reports. Referred to as "Abhaya" by her colleagues, the victim suffered ten grievous injuries, evoking memories of the decade-old Nirbhaya case in Delhi, say fellow doctors at RG Kar Medical College, where she was pursuing her postgraduate studies in chest medicine. "The autopsy report is chilling," said a fellow doctor, who is participating in the State-wide indefinite cease-work by medical staff. "She had a finger, collarbone, and pelvic bone broken. She was bleeding from her eyes, lips, abdomen, and private parts. Tufts of her hair had been torn out, and a clip was attached to her private parts," said the doctor. Police sources revealed that the brutal attack took place within 30 to 35 minutes. The panel of doctors who conducted the postmortem suggested that she might have been raped after being killed, as it would have been nearly impossible for one person to inflict such extensive injuries in such a short time, said the police. Family sources shared that the victim was scheduled to get married next year. A colleague from the same college,



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

requesting anonymity, said the young doctor likely endured extreme pain before her death, as a healthy person of her age would not have succumbed quickly. "The post-mortem reports are not fully out so that we can understand whether it was a gangrape or an act of an individual beast," she said. Sanjay Das - a civic volunteer from the unarmed wing of Bengal Police, which operates on a daily wage basis - was arrested on Saturday in connection with the heinous crime. Reports indicated that Das confessed to the act, even pleading with his interrogators to hang him swiftly, a desperate request that has sparked suspicion among civil society members. Many are now questioning whether Das is being used as a scapegoat to shield others involved in the crime.

Another lady doc threatened
PNS ■ KOLKATA

The Bengal Police on Sunday arrested another civic volunteer for threatening a woman doctor at Bharat State General Hospital in East Burdwan district with "RG Kar-like consequences". According to the lady doctor, the man, identified as Susanta Roy, threatened her after a heated altercation, warning, "You'll face an RG Kar-like consequence for your conduct... Do you even know what happened to the doctor there?"



Former External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh passes away

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former External Affairs Minister K Natwar Singh passed away on Saturday night after a prolonged illness, family sources said. He was 93. He breathed his last at Medanta Hospital in Gurugram near Delhi, where he had been admitted for the past couple of weeks, they said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday condoled the passing away of Natwar Singh, and said he made rich contributions to the world of diplomacy and foreign policy. In a social media post, Modi said, "Pained by the passing away of Shri Natwar Singh Ji. He made rich contributions to the world of diplomacy and foreign policy." "He was also known for his intellect as well as prolific writing. My thoughts are with his family and admirers in this hour of grief. Om Shanti," the prime minister said. Singh was born in 1931 in Bharatpur district of Rajasthan. He was a career diplomat, who brought a wealth of experience in diplomacy to his political career and a prolific author on subjects ranging from the life of a maharaja to nuances of foreign affairs. During his distinguished career, he wore many hats, and for his service to the nation, the former external affairs minister was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 1984.

Delhi rain fury claims lives of two teens

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

The rain in the national Capital on Sunday, while offering relief from the oppressive heat, also brought chaos, with traffic snarls, water-logging and tragedy. Amid the downpour, two children lost their lives - a seven-year-old drowned and a 13-year-old electrocuted - raising the toll of rain-related deaths to four in the last two days. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued an orange alert for the city. In Delhi's Rohini Sector 20, a seven-year-old boy named Tarun drowned in a waterlogged park on Saturday evening around 6:30 pm while playing there. In another incident in the Ranhola area of outer Delhi, a 13-year-old boy lost his life after being electrocuted when he came into contact with an iron pole supplying electricity to a gaushala (cowshed) while playing cricket in Kotla Vihar Phase-2.

Meanwhile, the teen's mother Anita Devi has demanded strict action against the 'gaushala' (cowshed) and the Power Department. Disruptions to flight operations were also witnessed at Delhi airport on Sunday due to the bad weather. Delhiites who stepped out to enjoy their weekend were met with massive disappointment as their journey to hangout destinations turned into nightmares, with roads inundated and many people struggling to push their vehicles through knee-deep water. Many candidates who went out to write their NEET-PG 2024 examinations also faced difficulties reaching their centres due to waterlogged roads.



Photo: Ranjan Dimri

Bangladesh interim Govt warns media over fake news

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Bangladesh's interim Government on Sunday issued a stern warning to media organisations, stating that they will be shut down if they publish or broadcast false or misleading news, in a move aimed at curbing the spread of misinformation. "A nation falters when the media does not uphold the truth," the interim government's Home Affairs Adviser, Brigadier General (ret'd) M Sakhawat Hossain, said during his visit to injured policemen at Rajarbagh

Central Police Hospital. He warned that the media outlets would face closure if they provided misleading news, the Dhaka Tribune newspaper reported. Meanwhile Syed Refaat Ahmed was sworn in as Bangladesh's new chief justice on Sunday, a day after Obaidul Hassan stepped down as the top judge following an ultimatum by the protesters demanding a revamp of the judiciary. Hassan and five other judges of the apex Appellate Division on Saturday tendered their resignation,



Bangladeshi Army and navy officials stand guard in front of the Supreme Court area in Dhaka, Bangladesh

five days after the fall of Sheikh Hasina's regime amid massive street protests. Criticising the media for not presenting the truth, Hossain said, "A country deteriorates when the media fails to report honestly," and argued that had the media accurately reported events, the current situation involving the police might have been avoided. "The media often ignores the truth... There is a lack of substantive discussion on talk shows, and the media fails to provide accurate information," he said.

Hindenburg: Sebi chief, husband refute charges

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Capital markets regulator Sebi Chairman Madhabi Puri Buch and her husband on Saturday denied allegations levelled against them by short seller Hindenburg as baseless and asserted that their finances are an open book. In a statement, Madhabi Puri Buch and Dhaval Buch also said it is unfortunate that Hindenburg Research against whom Sebi has taken an Enforcement action and issued a show cause notice has chosen

to attempt character assassination in response to the same. US short-seller Hindenburg Research alleged that Sebi chairperson Madhabi Puro Buch and her husband had stakes in obscure offshore funds used in the Adani money siphoning scandal. In a blogpost, Hindenburg said 18 months since its damning report on Adani, "SEBI has shown a surprising lack of interest in Adani's alleged undisclosed web of Mauritius and offshore shell entities."

Har Ghar Tiranga



People wave the Indian national flags at Mubarak Mandi palace ahead of the Independence Day, in Jammu, on Sunday

Mullaperiyar Dam: A deluge waiting to engulf Kerala

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Close on the heels of the landslides and deluge in Wayanad that claimed more than 400 lives and devoured 300 houses, a disaster of higher magnitude is all set to befall on the State of Kerala. The Mullaperiyar dam built across River Periyar and dating back to 130 years is on the verge of collapse and this will wipe out the entire population in five districts of the State. Though the dam is situated in Kerala, the entire water in the catchment area is drawn from Tamil Nadu which shows from all rooftops that Mullaperiyar dam is safe. But experts in dam construction and safety disagree. Though Tungabhadra dam is in Karnataka, the news that one of its gates getting washed

away because of the snapping of the chain link by the floodwaters has jolted people in five districts of Kerala. Tungabhadra dam built in 1953 and Mullaperiyar in Kerala, built 130 years ago have a lot of similarities. Both are built with a combination of surki, mortar, mud and limestone making them the last surviving non-cement dams in India. The Mullaperiyar dam, constructed across River Periyar in Kerala with the sole purpose of providing drinking and irrigation water to the four districts in Tamil Nadu has become a modern day water bomb. People living in the districts of Idukki, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha, Kottayam and Ernakulam would be drowned in the deluge that would occur



Search and rescue operation underway at a landslide-hit area in Wayanad district, Sunday

once the dam collapses. It can happen any time now because the dam has outlived its utility," said P C George, a seven-time MLA of the State who is waging a battle with the authorities to construct a new

dam. George, in his 35-year-long service as a law maker and chairman of the petition committee of the legislative Assembly had submitted three comprehensive reports to the authorities. "But the

governments of the day did not take any action on these reports," George told The Pioneer in the aftermath of Wayanad tragedy. He said the impact of the collapse of Mullaperiyar Dam would be similar to the repercussions of 1,000 Wayanad landslides. "The old and children do not sleep well even for a single day as they fear that the dam would down any time. It is atop the Western Ghats and you cannot imagine the intensity of the water bursting out of the dam. There will not be any time for evacuation and rescue missions," he said. Mullaperiyar Dam is 53.67 metre tall and 365.85 metre long. "The active capacity of the dam is \$10.56 thousand million cubic feet (TMC ft). Geologists have cautioned us that the dam is

vulnerable to high intensity earthquakes as the fault line passes through the reservoir," said PNS Nambodiri, former revenue official in Kottayam district. While the Tamil Nadu government scoffed at reports about a possible collapse of the dam, it went many steps ahead in opposing the Indian Nutrino Observatory at Madurai under the pretext that the fault line passes through the area earmarked for the proposed project. But the fault line is dangerously close to the Mullaperiyar dam. Seismic experts and geologists have warned that the dam made of surki and mortar has outlived its utility and should be decommissioned at the earliest. Dr A K Gosain of IIT Delhi who had led a team of experts to study the safety aspects of

the dam has called for the construction of a new dam in 2011 itself. "I don't say that Mullaperiyar will collapse tomorrow. But the dam is not safe from the point of view of a hydrologist," he had told this newspaper. More than 40 lakh people in the five districts mentioned above would perish once Mullaperiyar collapses. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin's act of donating Rs five crore towards the Chief Minister's disaster relief fund is being seen in Kerala as a ploy to buy silence from the State Government. "The 8100 acre land on which the dam has been built belongs to Kerala and the dam was constructed with money given by the State of Travancore. Tamil Nadu is like having the cake and eating it too," said George.



GUEST COLUMN

A hidden biosphere beneath the lifeless desert



Vir Singh

Planet Earth, so far, the only known living planet in the whole cosmos, has deepest affinity for life. The Earth loves life. The Earth tends to preserve, conserve and enhance life in its every nook and corner, even in the laps of the most inhospitable ecosystems. Planet Earth's profound affinity and nurturing embrace of life is illuminated by a recent ground-breaking discovery of a hidden

The Atacama desert, Earth's driest desert, stretches over 1,00,000 square kilometres along the western coast of South America, encompassing parts of Peru, Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina. Its arid climate, characterised by virtually no rainfall and extreme temperature fluctuations, has led scientists to compare it to the conditions found on Mars. Yet, despite its inhospitable surface, researchers have long suspected that life might persist in the subsurface, shielded from the extreme harshness above.

Recent expeditions led by an international team of scientists have confirmed these suspicions, as they delved into the depths of the desert's soil and rocks. Using cutting-edge techniques, including DNA sequencing and isotopic analysis, researchers have identified a diverse community of microorganisms thriving in this unlikely habitat.

tions are more stable, we have encountered a thriving ecosystem of microbial life."

The newfound biosphere is teeming with microbial organisms adapted to the extreme conditions of their subterranean environment. These microorganisms, including bacteria, archaea, and fungi, have developed ingenious strategies to survive in this harsh landscape. Some feed on minerals, while others rely on chemical reactions for energy, carving out a niche in this hidden realm.

This wonderful discovery seeds sanctity for life in our mind. Exuberance of life everywhere on Earth gives a feel of increased sphere of our own existence and enhances our own cheerfulness. There is enormous diversity of life but all organisms are tied into oneness. We must cultivate an attitude of reverence for Mother Earth and the life flowering in her

"The Atacama desert, Earth's driest desert, stretches over 1,00,000 square kilometres along the western coast of South America, encompassing parts of Peru, Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina. Its arid climate, characterised by virtually no rainfall and extreme temperature fluctuations, has led scientists to compare it to the conditions found on Mars. Yet, despite its inhospitable surface, researchers have long suspected that life might persist in the subsurface, shielded from the extreme harshness above."



biosphere nestled beneath the Atacama desert, one of Earth's extreme environments and most inhospitable places on Earth. Long believed to be devoid of life, this parched landscape has now revealed a stunning array of microbial life thriving in the depth below.

Elena Rodriguez, lead researcher of the project, describes the discovery as a "remarkable revelation." "The Atacama Desert has long been regarded as a lifeless expanse of sand and rock," she says, "but our findings challenge that perception entirely. Below the surface, where condi-

tions are more stable, we have encountered a thriving ecosystem of microbial life."

Experts warn of Chinese Manja risk for humans and birds

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Experts have highlighted the need for stringent actions by the State government against the sellers of Chinese Manja- used by some for flying kites- emphasising its potential risks to both humans and animals. Despite the ban on this product, the demand for glass-coated kite strings remains prevalent in the

during Independence Day and Rakshabandhan in Dehradun and other parts of the State. In preparation for these occasions, the city market becomes inundated with various types of kites and strings.

A kite seller near Raja Road area of Dehradun, Mayank Saini added that

is predominant among teenagers, who often engage in kite duels on occasions like Independence Day and Rakshabandhan. To emerge victorious in these matches, teenagers prefer Chinese Manja for its ability to cut the kite strings of their opponents, he said. Saini further said that Chinese Manja is also more cost-effective than Indian Manja, which further encourages its purchase.

Other kite sellers in the city's major market have also reported a significant customer demand for Chinese Manja over the Indian variant.

A customer Sarthak Lohri expressed a preference for using Chinese Manja exclusively when flying kites each year. He highlighted the superior durability of Chinese Manja compared to other varieties available in the market, although he has added the instances where his hands were accidentally cut while using Chinese

Manja. Regarding this, public health consultant Dr Mahesh Bhatt raised concerns regarding individuals who continue to use Chinese Manja despite the ban on its sale. Bhatt emphasised that numerous cases of neck, hand and other injuries have been linked to the use of this banned item. He condemned the ongoing use of Chinese Manja as a regrettable activity that poses risks to individuals, animals, birds and the environment. He added that the government should enforce stricter measures and take action against sellers of Chinese Manja in the market. Animal rights activist Rubina Nitin Iyer added that despite the ban, there are reports of people still using Chinese Manja. This string has resulted in injuries to individuals and birds, with some even losing their lives. It is imperative for the State government to actively enforce the ban and impose strict measures against sellers who continue to provide this



city, with many sellers still including Chinese Manja with kite purchases. Regarding this, experts pointed out the detrimental effects associated with the use of Chinese Manja.

he is currently offering both Indian and Chinese Manja at his store. He noted that despite the ban, customers continue to request Chinese Manja due to its superior durability compared to the Indian variant. He pointed out that the trend of kite-flying

Notably, the tradition of kite flying is primarily seen

UVSP to create question paper bank to help students prepare for board exam

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Uttarakhand Vidyalyai Shiksha Parishad (UVSP) will create a question paper bank to assist students in preparing properly for their board examinations. The additional secretary of UVSP, Vinod Simlati stated that a workshop was organised under the guidance of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), in which the authorities were advised to conduct board examinations in the form of competitive exams in line with the National Education Policy (NEP)- 2020. Following the direction, the UVSP commenced preparing for the board examination based on competitive exams.



State to designate experts from their respective districts to create sample question papers in a competitive exam format. These experts will develop the papers, which will then be distributed to all UVSP-affiliated schools or published on the UVSP website for easy access for students in preparation for the examinations. He further added the question papers will be crafted according to the NEP. Specifically, there will be sample question papers for eight subjects in class X and for 29 subjects in class XII. Class X exam subjects will include Hindi, English, Mathematics, Social

Science, Home Science, Sanskrit and Entertainment Arts. In contrast, the class XII question papers will cover subjects such as Hindi, English, Sanskrit, Urdu, Punjabi, History, Geography, Economics, Home Science, Music, Drawing, Political Science, Sociology, Education Science, Psychology, Military Science, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Psychology, Accountancy, Business Studies, Agriculture and Computer Science. It is expected that the creation of question papers from the question paper bank will begin in August, Simlati added.

He further informed that the key objective behind this shift towards competitive exams is to enhance students' capabilities and focus on practical knowledge rather than rote learning. In light of this transformation, UVSP aims to develop a question paper bank containing sample papers for students to prepare effectively for their exams. UVSP has instructed the chief education officers of all districts in the

panding the boundaries of habitats beyond what was previously imagined. Moreover, the microbial communities uncovered in the Atacama may hold clues to life's potential on other planets, such as Mars. With its similarities to the Martian surface, the Atacama desert serves as a natural laboratory for studying the limits of life in extreme environments and refining our search for extraterrestrial life.

As researchers continue to explore the depths of the Atacama desert and other extreme environments on Earth, they are sure to uncover even more surprises. Each new discovery brings us closure to unfolding the mysteries of life's origins and its potential across the cosmos. The hidden biosphere beneath the Atacama desert serves as a moving reminder of the resilience of life and boundless wonders that await discovery, both on our own planet and beyond. This discovery not only expands our understanding of the boundaries of life on our own planet but also fuels optimism in the search for life beyond Earth, suggesting that life could persist in similarly extreme environments elsewhere in the universe. Earth's capacity to foster life in such diverse and extreme conditions reaffirms its role as a cradle of life, constantly surprising us with the tenacity and versatility of living organisms.

On this life-enhancing discovery, a blend of ecological, philosophical, and spiritual feel is generated in our mind conveying us a biophilic message- life loves life.

(The author is professor emeritus, environmental science, GB Pant University of Agriculture and Technology. Views expressed are personal)

Sports Dept finalises tender process for PMU & GMS for 38th National Games

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Sports department has finalised the tender process for selecting companies under the Project Management Unit (PMU) and Games Management System (GMS) for the upcoming 38th National Games scheduled to take place in Uttarakhand this year. The director of the Sports department Jitendra Sonkar informed that for the successful organisation of both international and national events, it is essential to engage companies specialised in PMU and GMS to ensure effectiveness and efficiency. He informed that based on this principle, the department has recently concluded the selection of the company tasked with handling the PMU and GMS aspects of the National Games preparations. Further, he said that the department will promptly convene meetings with the chosen companies to discuss future plans and preparations in order to ensure the successful execution of the National Games in Uttarakhand.



Commenting further about the preparation for the National Games, Sonkar added that 90 per cent of the infrastructural preparations for the upcoming National Games have already been completed by the department. The remaining 10 per cent will be executed during the event in the State. He added that 34 games will be included in the National Games in the State, and the department is considering adding three more

games to the list. The final decision on these additional games will be made in consultation with the Indian Olympic Association (IOA). These three games will be chosen based on the talent of Uttarakhand and their potential to enhance adventure tourism, he added.

He further added that the IOA is expected to announce the date for the national games soon. He stated that the delay in finalising the date for the National Games in Uttarakhand was primarily due to the Paris Olympics. Sonkar further informed that the State government has recently approved a budget of Rs 250 crore for the National Games. However, it is projected that an amount ranging between Rs 400 to 450 crore will be necessary for the successful organisation of the National Games in Uttarakhand. In consideration of this projected budgetary requirement,

the department will resubmit the budget proposal to the state administration. Notably, Sonkar earlier informed that the duration of the National Games will be 14 days, with an additional two days dedicated to the opening and closing ceremonies. Apart from this, out of 34 games, 16 games are scheduled to be played in Dehradun, he informed.

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS PUBLIC NOTICE

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It is notified to the general public that I have changed my name from KIRAN BALA CHHABRA (old name) to KIRAN KUKREJA (new name). In future I should be known and identified as KIRAN KUKREJA W/o HARISH KUKREJA, Address- 49/2 Lane No.-4 Guru Teg Bahadur Road, Dalanwala, Dehradun, Uttarakhand.

The general public is informed that I have changed my name from GULBAHAR PARVEEN (old name) to GULBAHAR (new name) and in future I should be known and recognised as Gulbahar resident of 14, Chhota Bharuwalla, PO Clement Town, Distt Dehradun, Uttarakhand.

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Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami greets veterans at an event organised by ex-servicemen in Dehradun on Sunday



Bangladeshi national caught in Roorkee amid upheaval in neighbouring country

Intelligence agencies on alert, search on for any more infiltrators

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The police in Roorkee have apprehended a Bangladeshi national who had been allegedly living secretly in the city under a false identity. The arrest has raised alarms within the police and intelligence agencies, as the suspect has been providing conflicting information regarding his arrival in the country.

Amid the ongoing unrest in Bangladesh, a significant incident has come to light in Roorkee, Haridwar district. According to the Haridwar senior superintendent of police Pramendra Dobhal, some residents noticed a suspicious person near a local shop in the Dhandera area under the Civil Lines Police Station's jurisdiction in Roorkee late on Saturday. They suspected foul play due to his unusual manner of speaking and informed the police. The police arrived at the scene and brought the suspect to the police station for questioning. However, as there was no one on-site who understood Bengali, the police sought the assistance of a



Bengali-speaking person from IIT Roorkee.

The suspect, identified as Rahimul (43), belongs to Hakimpur village, Nurdeep Tehsil, Pabna district of Bangladesh. The accused revealed that he had entered India illegally three months ago. He crossed the Benapur border from Bangladesh and travelled through Murshidabad and Sealdah to reach Kolkata by

train. Since then, he had been wandering around various places in India. Recently, he heard about the upcoming Urs Mela in Piran Kaliyar in Haridwar district and arrived in Roorkee by train, intending to stay there until the event began. When the police asked Rahimul for his visa, passport, or any form of identification, he was unable to produce any documents. Consequently, a

case was registered against him under Section 14 of the Foreigners Act, Section 3 of the Passport (Entry into India) Act, and Section 12 of the Passport Act.

The Haridwar police, with significant support from Military Intelligence, are conducting further investigations into the case. The Bangladeshi national is currently under police custody, where various inves-

tigative agencies are conducting detailed inquiries, the SSP said. It was also informed that the area where the accused was arrested is in close proximity to a military zone, further intensifying the investigation. Both the police and Intelligence agencies are meticulously interrogating him to determine whether he has any connections with individuals or organisations that might pose a security threat. The police said that efforts are also underway to identify any local contacts or accomplices who may have assisted him during his stay in Roorkee.

In the wake of this arrest, Intelligence agencies are closely monitoring social media reactions and keeping a watchful eye on minority-dominated areas to prevent any potential unrest. Additionally, the police are gathering information on other Bangladeshis who might be residing illegally in the Haridwar district.

Landslide reported at Bhimbali on Kedarnath route, two drown in separate incidents

154 roads remain blocked due to debris and other factors across State

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

A massive landslide at Bhimbali affected the flow of the Mandakini river along the bridge path to Kedarnath on Sunday afternoon. The landslide did not cause any loss of life and though the flow of the river gradually normalised to some extent, the authorities issued an alert till Rudraprayag as a precaution. In the Nainital district, one child reportedly drowned in a river while a man reportedly drowned in the Ganga at Rishikesh on Sunday. Meanwhile, 154 roads were reported to be blocked in various parts of the State on Sunday evening, according to the State Emergency Operations Centre (SEOC). In the Rudraprayag district, the national highway to Kedarnath is open till Kund. The Ukhimath sub divisional magistrate informed that some movement has been allowed on the Sonprayag-Gaurikund-Kedarnath bridge path even as the work on repairing the route is underway on a war footing. A total of 24 rural motor roads and two pedestrian bridges are blocked in the district. The national highways to Gangotri and Yamunotri are open in the Uttarkashi district though one main district road and 10 rural



motor roads are blocked in the Bageshwar district. In Dehradun district, the authorities received information about a local resident being carried away in the Ganga river at Lakadghat Shyampur in Rishikesh on Sunday morning. He was part of a five-member group which had gone to bathe in the river. The authorities were searching for him till the time of this report being filed. Four State highways and 16 rural motor roads are blocked in the district. Eighteen rural motor roads are blocked in the Pithoragarh district while two rural motor roads are blocked in the Almora district. Two rural motor roads are blocked in the Champawat district while all the roads are reported to be clear in the Haridwar district. Similarly, one State highway and one rural motor road are blocked in Udhampur district while one State highway, one main district road and 14 rural motor roads are blocked in the Pauni district. Fourteen rural motor roads are blocked in the Tehri district. The authorities are working to clear the debris and reopen the roads.

Warning- heavy rain likely in six districts including Dehradun today

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Even as light to moderate rain was reported in various parts of the State on Sunday, the State meteorological centre has issued a yellow warning (Watch) regarding the possibility of heavy rainfall likely to occur at isolated places in Dehradun, Tehri, Nainital,

accompanied with lightning/intense to very intense spells of rain are likely to occur at isolated places in the districts of the State. Apart from this, light to moderate rain/thundershowers are likely to occur at most places in Dehradun, Tehri, Pauri,

districts of the State today. The provisional State capital Dehradun is forecast to witness a partly to generally cloudy sky. Few spells of light to moderate rain/thundershowers are likely to occur, of which one or two spells may be intense in some areas. The maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to be about 30 degrees Celsius and 24 degrees Celsius respectively in Dehradun today. Meanwhile, 56.5 millimetres of rain was reported in Rishikesh, 51 millimetres in Roorkee, 50.5 millimetres in Laksar, 38 millimetres in Yamkeshwar, 33 millimetres in Haridwar, 28.5 millimetres in Lansdowne and 10.5 millimetres in Dhanaulti on Sunday. The maximum and minimum temperatures were 31 degrees Celsius and 24.5 degrees Celsius respectively in Dehradun, 32.6 degrees Celsius and 25.8 degrees Celsius in Pantnagar, 20.7 degrees Celsius and 15.4 degrees Celsius in Mukteshwar and 24 degrees Celsius and 17.6 degrees Celsius in New Tehri.



Champawat, Chamoli and Bageshwar districts on Monday. Thunderstorms Nainital, Chamoli and Bageshwar districts and at many places in the remaining

Police conduct verification drive amid rain, Rs 23 lakh penalty charged

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The police conducted a large-scale verification drive across Dehradun district on Sunday amid rain and conducted door to door verification of 2,375 people. The Dehradun senior superintendent of police Ajai Singh

conducted the verification drive along with the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) to ensure that tenants and individuals working in Dehradun from other districts were properly verified. During the

operation, it was found that many landlords had failed to comply with the mandatory tenant verification process despite repeated warnings by the police. Considering this, the police issued chal-



lans to 232 landlords for not verifying their tenants and imposed a hefty fine of Rs 23.2 lakh. Besides this, the police also imposed fines on 75 people, amounting to Rs 26,250 for various violations under the Police Act.

Singh said that the police also questioned 154 suspicious individuals who were unable to produce valid identification documents at the time. These individuals were taken to the respective police stations or outposts for further interrogation. Singh said that this verification campaign is part of an ongoing effort to maintain law and order in the district and it will continue in the future as well. He also urged all landlords and employers to comply with verification requirements to avoid legal consequences and contribute to a safer community.

IAF's Mi-17 leaves after completing operations in Kedarnath

More than 15K persons rescued from disaster affected areas, Chinook to transport heavy machinery to Kedarnath

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The first phase of the rescue operation in the Kedarnath valley has concluded. The authorities informed that 78 persons staying voluntarily in Kedarnath were taken by the Indian Air Force Mi-17 helicopter to Guptkashi on Sunday. These persons included shopkeepers, ascetics and horse-mule operators. With this, the Mi-17 has been sent back to its home base with no pilgrims left to come down from Kedarnath. The ration and other essential items for Kedarnath Dham were transported earlier by the Mi-17 and the State helicopter. Meanwhile, the IAF's Chinook helicopter is still in the area to transport some heavy machines to Kedarnath. The heavy machines will be transported by the chopper as soon as the weather clears, after which this helicopter too will be sent back to its home base. Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home minister Amit Shah for the prompt and effective assistance provided to



Uttarakhand by the Centre for the rescue and relief operations in the disaster affected areas of the State. He said that the PM was so concerned about the safety of the pilgrims after the disaster that he took regular updates on the rescue and relief operations. Dhami also thanked the various agencies involved in the rescue and relief operations. He said that more than 15,000 persons were safely rescued from disaster

affected areas as part of this operation. The CM too regularly monitored the rescue and relief operations. According to officials, most of the bridge paths damaged due to heavy rain and landslide on July 31 have been restored to a level where they are good to walk on. Out of the 29 routes damaged at various places, 25 have been restored for pedestrians while work is underway to restore the remaining routes.

Couple suffocates to death while cleaning gobar gas tank in Haldwani

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

A couple died due to suffocation while cleaning a gobar gas tank in the Mukhani area of Haldwani on Sunday. The incident occurred when Matru Lal (40) was cleaning a gobar gas tank at a cowshed owned by Jagdish Joshi, a resident of Adarsh Nagar in Mukhani. According to the officials, Joshi told the police that after the tank was cleaned with a machine, some residual cow urine remained at the bottom. Lal entered the tank to manually clean it but became unconscious due to the toxic gases inside the enclosed space. Seeing her husband in distress, Rani (35) immediately descended into the tank to rescue him but she too fell unconscious due to the lack of oxygen. The officials said that despite efforts to rescue the

rushed to a nearby private hospital, where doctors declared them dead on arrival. According to the officials, no formal case was registered till Sunday evening but the matter is under investigation. The bodies of the deceased have been sent for post mortem examination. They also informed that the victims originally hailed from Rajau town in Badaun district in Uttar Pradesh. The incident has left their family in deep grief, particularly their three children who have now been orphaned. Many locals expressed concern over the owner who allowed the manual cleaning of the gobar gas tank despite the associated risks. However, the police said that they are conducting a thorough investigation and will take appropriate



couple, they were both pulled out of the tank in an unresponsive state. They were

action if they find proof of any negligence or wrongdoing.

Auto rickshaw operators warn of protest over illegal e-rickshaw and Rapido operations

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Stating their concerns over the impact of illegal electric rickshaw operations and Rapido services on their livelihoods in Dehradun, the auto rickshaw drivers have warned of protest against the Transport department. Member of the Doon Auto Rickshaw Union, Pankaj Arora said that the government urged them to switch to CNG-fuelled vehicles, which they complied with, but despite that, their business is suffering due to irregularities in public transport. "Out of over 2,000 auto rickshaws in Dehradun, about 1,700 are now CNG-fuelled. However, despite our efforts to align with government policies, our business has been severely affected by the illegal operations of Rapido two-wheelers and e-rickshaws on the city's main roads for several months," Arora said. He criticised the

Transport department for its failure to take concrete action against these illegal operations. He said that Rapido vehicles continue to operate illegally without paying any tax to the depart-

ment, while e-rickshaws, which are prohibited from operating on main roads between 8 AM and 8 PM, continue to do so, often overloading passengers. "E-rickshaws are operating on almost every road in the city, from colonies to main roads and near bus stands or railway stations, where they are explicitly prohibited. This



action," Arora stated. He further informed that the e-rickshaw operators do not pay taxes to the department, unlike the auto rickshaw drivers, who are now suffering financial losses due to the irregular operation of public transport in the city. Arora also expressed concerns about the increasing number of e-rickshaws in Dehradun, estimating there are between 5,000 and 6,000 in the city. He also urged the department to halt the registration of new electric auto rickshaws, stating that the existing number is sufficient and any further increase would exacerbate the challenges faced by auto rickshaw drivers. Another auto rickshaw operator, Dayal Thapa, echoed these concerns, adding that the

significant rise in e-rickshaws and electric auto rickshaws numbers has also led to parking issues. "Most of the roads are now occupied by these vehicles, causing a nuisance for the public and this problem will only worsen if the department does not regulate the registration of such vehicles," Thapa said. Arora said that the union will approach Dehradun district magistrate Sonika on Monday to present their grievances. He warned that if their concerns are not addressed, they will stage a protest, as the ongoing situation is severely affecting their livelihoods. "We are hopeful that the authorities will take prompt and effective measures to regulate illegal e-rickshaw operations and address our concerns to prevent further disruption to our livelihood, he added.

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday released 109 high-yielding, climate-resilient and biofortified seed varieties of agricultural and horticultural crops, aiming to enhance farm productivity and farmers' income. Developed by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), these varieties span 61 crops, including 34 field crops and 27 horticultural crops. Modi unveiled the seeds at three experimental agriculture plots at Delhi's Pusa Campus, where he also interacted with farmers and scientists. The field crop varieties include cereals, millets, forage crops, oilseeds, pulses, sugarcane, cotton, and fibre crops. For horticulture, the PM released new varieties of fruits, vegetables, plantation crops, tubers, spices, flowers, and medicinal plants. According to an official statement, Modi stressed on the significance of value addition in agriculture while discussing the importance of these new varieties with farmers. Farmers



present on the occasion said that these new varieties would be highly beneficial to them because of lower input cost. The Prime Minister discussed the importance of millets and underlined how people are moving towards nutritious food. He also talked about the benefits of natural farming and the increasing faith of common people towards organic farming. Modi noted that people have started consuming and demanding organic foods. Farmers appreciated the efforts of the government in promotion of natural farming. They also lauded the role played by Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVK) in creating awareness, the release said. Modi suggested that the KVKs should proactively inform farmers about the benefits of the new varieties being developed every month to create awareness about their benefits, the statement said. The Prime Minister also lauded the scientists for the development of these new crop varieties.

eties. The scientists informed that they have been working in line with the suggestion given by the Prime Minister to bring unutilised crops into the mainstream, the statement said. Since 2014, Modi has advocated for sustainable farming practices and climate-resilient methodologies to bolster farmers' income. He has consistently emphasised on the promotion of biofortified crop varieties, linking them to government initiatives like the Mid-Day Meal scheme and Anganwadi services to combat malnutrition in India. Later addressing reporters, Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Shivraj Singh Chouhan said that today is a historic day for farmers as 109 varieties of 61 crops which have been released will help increase farmers' income, enhance production and reduce costs. Chouhan said that the seeds of these crops are climate-friendly and can yield good crops even in adverse weather. He also informed that these varieties are rich in nutrition.

Hindenburg: BJP slams Opposition for creating financial instability in India

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



short by one working day and got over on Friday. BJP leader and former Union minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar said the short-selling firm has clearly attacked market regulator SEBI in an "obvious partnership" with the Congress and has a sinister motive and goal. It is to destabilise and discredit one of the world's strongest financial systems and create chaos in the world's fastest growing economy, he said on X. He said he has read the report which, he claimed, is a classic "Congress style innuendo and lies glued together", aimed at discrediting the regulator and causing chaos and losses in markets for investors to slow down bullish sentiments. He alleged, "I have said often and say again -- many global forces with help of Congress dynasty want to slow down or trip up India's rise. We won't let them." Union Communications Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia accused the Congress of spreading anarchy and controversies over the Hindenburg Research's allegations against SEBI Chairperson Madhabi Buch. "Congress's work is only to spread anarchy and entangle the country in controversial matters," said Scindia while responding to reporters' query on the Hindenburg Research report. The Guna MP said PM Narendra Modi and BJP workers are carrying the torch of development and progress, whereas the Congress has been trying to mislead the country and keep it in the dark for years. The Hindenburg Research on Saturday launched a broadside against market regulator SEBI chairperson Madhabi Buch, alleging she and her husband had stakes in obscure offshore funds used in the Adani money siphoning scandal. In a blogpost, Hindenburg said 18 months since its damning report on Adani, "SEBI has shown a surprising lack of interest in Adani's alleged undisclosed web of Mauritius and offshore shell entities." The SEBI chairperson and her husband have rejected the allegations levelled against them as baseless and asserted that their finances are an open book.

NDA eyes clear majority in RS after bypolls on 12 seats

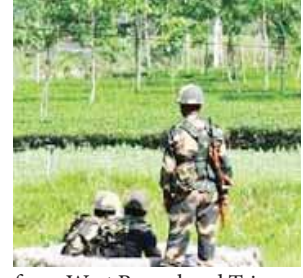
PNS ■ NEW DELHI
The BJP-led NDA is expected to achieve a clear majority in Rajya Sabha after bye-elections for 12 seats scheduled next month, which would help the party get the nod for key legislations such as the Waqf (Amendment) Bill. In the Upper House with the current effective strength of 229, the BJP has 87 MPs and with its allies the number is 105. Six nominated members, who usually cast their vote with the government, take the strength of the NDA to 111, four short of the half-way mark of 115. The Congress has 26 members in the Upper House and its allies add another 58, taking the Opposition alliance numbers to 84. Among the key fence-sitters are the YSR Congress Party with 11 members and BJD with eight members. Elections to the 12 vacant Rajya Sabha seats in nine states will be held on September 3. The Election Commission has announced 12 separate elections for each of the seats, handing over a clear advantage to the ruling party in the state. The BJP and its allies are expected to win 11 of the 12 seats in the elections, which will take the NDA past the half-way



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

11 Bangladeshi nationals caught trying to infiltrate into India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
Eleven Bangladeshi nationals have been apprehended while trying to infiltrate into India through international border in West Bengal, Tripura and Meghalaya, the Border Security Force (BSF) said on Sunday. They are being questioned and will be handed over to State police for further legal action, a spokesperson said. He said the BSF was in regular touch with its counterpart BGB to sort out mutual issues, especially the prevention of atrocities on Indian nationals and people from minority communities in Bangladesh. The South Bengal Frontier of the force headquartered in Kolkata said in a statement that its eastern command head, Additional Director General (ADG) Ravi Gandhi, chaired an operational conference on Saturday to review security along the 4,096-km-long India-Bangladesh border "amid the current unrest in Bangladesh" and the upcoming Independence Day on August 15. It said, "11 Bangladeshi nationals have been apprehended on border while infiltrating into India. Two each were nabbed



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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Monday a plea of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal challenging a Delhi High Court order upholding the summons issued to him in a criminal defamation case for retweeting an allegedly defamatory video circulated by YouTube Dhruv Rathee in May 2018. A three-judge bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna, Sanjay Kumar and R Mahadevan is likely to hear the matter in which Kejriwal has admitted that he "committed a mistake" by retweeting the alleged defamatory video. On March 11, the top court asked Kejriwal whether he wanted to give an apology to the complainant in the matter. Kejriwal had on February 26 told the apex court that he made a mistake by retweeting the allegedly defamatory video related to the BJP IT Cell. The counsel appearing for complainant Vikas Sankritiyan had told the top court that Kejriwal may issue an apology on social media platforms like microblogging platform 'X' or Instagram. On February 26, the apex court, without issuing notice on



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

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

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI
As India grapples with the challenge of eliminating sickle cell disease (SCD), a recent research offers a glimmer of hope. A new study published in 'Blood' highlights the potential of bone marrow transplants to reverse heart damage associated with SCD. The study, titled "Impact of Hematopoietic Cell Transplantation on Myocardial Fibrosis in Young Patients with Sickle Cell Disease," indicates that hematopoietic stem cell transplants (HCT) can significantly reduce myocardial fibrosis, a serious complication of the disease. Sickle cell disease, a genetic disorder causing abnormally shaped red blood cells, leads to chronic anemia and various complications, including heart damage. Traditional treatments, such as hydroxyurea, have been ineffective in reversing these complications, as per the study. However, HCT, which replaces a patient's faulty blood stem cells with healthy ones, appears to offer a new avenue for improving heart health in affected individuals. The study, conducted by St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, involved analysing cardiac MRI scans from patients undergoing HCT. Results showed a decrease in myocardial extracellular volume (ECV), a marker of heart muscle scarring, by 3.4% in the first year after transplantation, with further reductions observed in patients with two-year follow-up data. While these

findings are promising, they highlight the need for larger studies to confirm the long-term benefits of HCT and its potential role in addressing the broader challenge of sickle cell disease in India. The country continues to face significant hurdles in eliminating SCD, but advancements like these provide hope for improved treatment and management of the disease. The study holds significance in the context of India which has a large number of people with the blood disorder. In fact, India has launched a Sickle Cell Mission which aims to provide affordable, accessible and quality care to all patients with sickle cell disease (SCD), reducing the prevalence of the disease through awareness campaigns and targeting screening of 7 crore people aged 0-40 years in affected districts of tribal areas by 2025-26. While welcoming the outcome of the study and stressing that it was time that bone marrow transplant facilities are expanded in the country, Dr Lt CBS Dangi who has been working in the sector for the past several years also stressed on creating awareness and mobilising community efforts to combat sickle cell disorder and thalassemia. The Act provides for the establishment of gram nyaya-ayats at the grassroots level to provide access to justice to the citizens at their doorsteps. After years, The Gram Nyaya-ayats Act, 2008 came into effect from Gandhi Jayanti the next year.

Village courts face challenges due to manpower, fund shortages

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

Chirag to convene meet of SC MPs of different parties

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
Union Minister and LJP (Ram Vilas) leader Chirag Paswan is planning to convene a meeting of Scheduled Caste MPs of different parties as he works to mobilise support ahead of his party filing a review plea in the Supreme Court against its judgment allowing sub-categorisation of reservation within the community. The Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) leader has already expressed his disagreement with the verdict and said his party will file a review petition in the apex court. Paswan, sources said, has reached out to Scheduled Caste MPs to gauge their view over the verdict, a judgment of far-reaching political impact over which major national parties have maintained silence while engaging in internal stock-taking deliberations, and may convene a formal meeting soon. It remains to be seen, though, what the response of the Scheduled Caste MPs of different parties will be, many of whom have spoken in different voices depending on the mood of their constituencies. The parties like Paswan's or Mayawati-led Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), which draw support from numerically strong SC communities which fare better than other Dalit castes on social and economic metrics, have come out openly against the judgment. However, another Dalit ally of the BJP and Union Minister



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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal has accused the opposition of creating confusion among people over the Supreme Court "observation" on creamy layer among SCs and STs, and asserted that the Constitution given by B R Ambedkar has no provision of a creamy layer. In an interview to PTI Videos, he said the BJP-led NDA government will follow Ambedkar's Constitution and will continue the reservation system for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes as provided in it. Meghwal noted that though the opposition is aware that the top court had only made an "observation" on creamy layer, it is trying to create confusion among people. On Saturday, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge had said that the idea of denying reservation to SCs and STs on account of the creamy layer concept is "condemnable". He also said the government should have brought a legislation in Parliament to nullify the part of the recent Supreme Court judgement that talks about the issue. Meghwal underlined that the top court has said that if the states want, they can do sub-classification. But SC has not made any decision on creamy layer. It is an observation, he asserted. "There is a difference between direction and observation," he



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



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Catastrophe revisited

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

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



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

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

A Heartfelt reflection on the changing face of Nainital

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

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



After what felt like an impatiently long time, as we turned a bend, I gasped looking with awe at the majestic lake spread out before me. We had arrived at Nainital. I had fallen in love with the hills. I would return several times in the following years, till I realised that there were many other equally beautiful hills to explore. Things started changing fast. My first visit in the summer of 1970 faded into a fond memory, which I would often draw upon to mourn a lost

time. I still remember very vividly the green shades covering the hills, even in the summers, much before the onset of monsoons. There was not even a speck of brown visible beneath the thick curtain of foliage. I also do not remember the presence of fans, coolers, refrigerators, much less air conditioners. The only cooling devices were the soft ice-cream machines along the Mall road. The subsequent visits were a stark contrast. We could see the rapid pace of deforestation and the mushrooming of construction activities along the roads. There was a hazy curtain of dust as dumpers carried their load from the innumerable quarries in the hills. Fans started making their entry in homes and hotels, initially only for a few days in peak summers, and

When heroes defy their legacies



SANTHOSH MATHEW

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

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



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

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



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

Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2019. Abiy was recognized for his efforts in resolving the long-standing conflict with neighbouring Eritrea, earning international acclaim as a peacemaker. However, within two years of receiving the prize, Abiy found himself leading his nation into a brutal civil war. The conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray region has been marked by atrocities, displacement, and a humanitarian crisis of staggering proportions. The United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights are celebrated as monumental achievements in the history of human rights, enshrining the principles of freedom, equality, and justice. Thomas Jefferson, one of the Founding Fathers and the principal author of the Declaration of Independence, played a crucial role in shaping these foundational documents. Yet, Jefferson was also a slave owner who, during his lifetime, owned over 600 enslaved people. This glaring contradiction between his public advocacy for liberty and his private practice of slavery has sparked intense debate among historians and scholars. Jefferson's writings espoused ideals of

freedom and human dignity, yet he continued to benefit from an institution that deprived others of these very rights. Similarly, Muhammad Ali Jinnah is revered as the founding father of Pakistan, the world's first Islamic republic. He is celebrated for his role in establishing a nation for Muslims in the Indian sub-continent, based on the idea of Muslim nationalism. However, Jinnah's personal life was far removed from the strict religious values that would later come to define the country he founded. Jinnah was a highly Westernised individual who enjoyed the finer things in life. He was known to smoke cigars, drink alcohol, and reportedly favoured pork—a practice contrary to Islamic teachings. His second wife, Maryam, was a Parsi, and his only daughter, Dina, married a Parsi as well, sparking considerable controversy given his public role as a Muslim leader. These episodes remind us that even the greatest leaders are not without their contradictions. In the end, history reminds us that even the greatest of icons are not immune to contradiction—it is in their complexity that their true humanity shines through. (The writer is an associate professor, views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BAIL NOT JAIL SHOULD BE THE NORM

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



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

A world in turmoil

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

HATS OFF TO INDIAN OLYMPIC SQUAD

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

NEERAJ WINS SILVER

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

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

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

HAVE A INTREPID AND ROBUST MINDSET

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



RAVI VALLURI

Always be associated with people who are good at heart. This is what Swami Vivekananda said. My mother shares her birthday with Swami Vivekananda who was born on 12th January 1863. Association, Sangha, and Satsang were her strong points. She nurtured strong bonds with all religious faiths and spiritually inclined people. She wanted to pursue medicine but life did not take that trajectory instead she became a qualified medical social worker. She used to tell patients and their children, 'Fear is only as deep as the mind allows.' Thus, patients afflicted with TB, but not bedridden, participated in the projects. This was what she called 'Diversionary Therapy'.

The TB Hospital became a unique template for the methods adopted by doctors, para-medical staff, social workers, government bodies and NGOs, all to contribute to the rehabilitation of the patients. Climate changes, civilizations collapse, governments change political affiliations alter and even the best possible model collapses. This is inevitable. As Buddha says, 'The only permanent thing in life is impermanence.' The lofty objectives were not approved by a new set of hospital administrators and the beacon of hope collapsed but she tried hard with a robust mindset. This was extremely traumatic for my mother and she became a patient of Paroxysmal Atrial Tachycardia (PAT). This is a type of arrhythmia (irregular heartbeat).

Paroxysmal means that the episode of arrhythmia originates and terminates abruptly. Atrial implies the arrhythmia starts with the atria or in the upper chambers of the heart. The tachycardia results in a signifi-



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

Normally, a patient suffers from such a condition owing to emotional upheavals, physical exhaustion, deep anxiety, and consumption of caffeine or alcohol. I saw my mother suffering from this condition on several occasions and being admitted to the ICU. It was a distressing and disturbing sight. While it is not a life-threatening affliction, it certainly disorients the psychology and attitude of the patient. During her suffering, we saw her clutching onto her rosary as a lifesaver, while we prayed fervently for her recovery. She was administered medication but it worked only to an extent. The real help came in the form of a pentagon-shaped talisman. That is through Siddha Healing, Pranik Healing, the ten-day Vipassana Course and the Part 1 and Part 2 Art of Living courses. This is the unique, amazing and scientific power of the breath.

Breathing techniques, meditation, medication, and proper diet changed the trajectory of the life of the patient and brought back the mojo in her life. 'When you take a breath in, let it become your meditation that all the suffering of all the beings in the world is riding on that incoming breath and reaching your heart, and see a miracle happen,' says Osho. Till her final days, she continued with these practices. Senior citizens, those in pain and agony and even the able-bodied should undertake the courses mentioned. Swami Vivekananda took Yoga to America and spread the Ramakrishna Mission. He was the Arjuna of Shri Rama Krishna Paramhansa. My mother imbibed the trait of service to mankind by reading extensively about Shri Ramakrishna Paramhansa and Swami Vivekananda and the Almighty God blessed her with an intrepid mind.

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

Populism will not let food subsidy reforms take off



UTTAM GUPTA

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



In the full Budget presented by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on July 23, 2024, the government has pegged the budget estimate (BE) food subsidy for FY 2024-25 at Rs 205,250 crore which is no different from the estimate given in the interim Budget. Though slightly lower than the revised estimate (RE) of Rs 211,394 crores for FY 2023-24, this is no consolation as invariably, the RE for any financial year turns out to be higher than the BE. For instance, while presenting the budget for FY 2023-24, Sitharaman kept the BE for food subsidy at Rs 197,000 crore. Against this, RE has turned out to be Rs 14,394 crore more. The moot point is that the expenditure incurred by the Central government during the last five years under this head has been consistently over Rs 200,000 crore mark every year 2020-21: Rs 529,000 crore; 2021-22: Rs 372,000 crore; 2022-23: Rs 287,000 crore; 2023-24: Rs 211,394 crores and 2024-25: Rs 205,250 crore (BE).

During 2024-25, food subsidy will account for 4.2 per cent of its budget (Rs 4820,000 crore), 5.5 per cent of its revenue expenditure (Rs 3709,000 crore) and consume nearly 8 per cent of its estimated net tax receipts (Rs 2583,000 crore). Reining in food subsidy is no less important than the goal it seeks to achieve namely providing 'food security'. The uncontrolled rise in the former leads to an unsustainable increase in fiscal deficit (excess of total receipts over total expenditure) which can injure the economy in multiple ways through high inflation, high interest rates, a slowdown in growth, fewer jobs, low incomes and so on. This, in turn, can lead to a demand for higher financial assistance including food subsidies from the government thereby exacerbating the vicious cycle.

There exists a huge scope for reducing food subsidies. To assess this, at the outset, let us see how it is administered. Under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), the Centre asks the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and other state agencies to procure food from the farmers at MSP (minimum support price) and organize its distribution to around 820 million people for free.



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

The entire cost i.e. MSP paid to farmers plus handling and distribution cost (HDC) is reimbursed to the FCI/other state agencies as a subsidy. The money comes from the Union Budget's allocation for 'food subsidy'. While, the PMGKAY has been in force since January 1, 2023, before that, the Centre was giving food to 820 million persons (7 kg of cereals per person per month to 120 million poorest of the poor persons covered under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana or AAY families and five kg of cereals per person per month to the remaining 700 million) at a heavily subsidized price of Rs 2/3/1 per kg for wheat/rice/coarse cereals under the National Food Security Act (NFSA). In addition, since April 2020, it has given 5 kg of food per person per month for "free" to all 820 million beneficiaries under PMGKAY to mitigate the consequences of Covid-19 pandemic. From January 1, 2023, it merged the free part of PMGKAY with the regular food security schemes under NFSA.

Now, food is available to all 820 million beneficiaries for free under the new incarnation of NFSA namely the PMGKAY. This arrangement will continue for five years till the end of CY 2028 as per the announcement by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in November 2023. Avenues for saving in subsidy First, fundamentally, subsidized food is meant for the poor. The number of poor isn't more than 15-20 per cent of India's population. Yet, the number of beneficiaries under the PMGKAY at 820 million works out to nearly 59 per cent of the population. Even as per the Shanta Kumar Committee (2015), the number of people eligible for subsidized food under NFSA shouldn't be more than 40 per cent. The excess of 19 per cent comes to around 270 million.

Further, during the last nine-and-a-half years of the incumbent government, 250 million persons have come out of poverty (as per a recent report by Niti Aayog). These persons can be excluded from the list of beneficiaries.

Doing a back-of-the-envelope calculation, giving free food to a million persons entails a subsidy of Rs 200 crore per annum. Excluding 250 million will help save Rs 50,000 crore. The existing beneficiaries list of 820 million is based on 2011 Census estimates while the Supreme Court (SC) has directed that the Centre should take into account the population during 2021. On this basis, it needs to give free food to an additional 100 million.

That will cost Rs 20,000 crore. Even after providing for this, it will save Rs 30,000 crore annually. Second, why every beneficiary should get free food? The Shanta Kumar Committee had recommended that non-AAY persons should pay 50 per cent of the MSP. Other than AAY are 700 million persons. Minus 250 million (who shouldn't get a subsidy at all) and adding 100 million (as per SC order), we get 550 million. Making them pay 50 per cent of MSP or Rs 11.4 per kg (wheat), will save Rs 37,600 crore annually. Third, the NFSA legislation enacted in 2013 required beneficiaries to pay Rs 2/3/1 per kg for wheat/rice/coarse cereals.

Since 2016, there has been no legal bar on increasing the price. Yet, far from increasing, the Modi - government has reduced the price to zero. Are they all (read: 820 million persons) so poor that they can't pay even a fraction of the cost (in the case of wheat at Rs 2 per kg, it is 1/15th)? Even if you make them pay a notional Rs 1 per kg, this will yield savings of Rs 5000 crore per annum. Fourth, the initial idea under the

Scheme was that FCI et al would buy only the quantity needed for meeting beneficiaries' requirements under NFSA plus maintain some 'strategic' buffer to meet emergencies.

It was never meant to be an 'open-ended' procurement which it has become today. This has also contributed to the avoidable increase in subsidy besides stocking problems. Shunning 'open-ended' purchases can yield significant savings. Fifth, currently, FCI/state agencies are paid HDC on an 'actual' basis. This leads to payment for inefficiencies in the system and even cost padding.

The stories of loaders being paid hefty salaries by the FCI are still fresh in memory. A shift from 'actual' to reimbursement of cost to agencies on a 'normative' basis can save a lot of subsidy. Finally, the availability of a mammoth of around 60 million tons (the quantity distributed under the PMGKAY) in the supply chain with zero price tag is an open invitation to dubious operators to siphon off and sell in the open market raking in a moolah.

The PDS scam in West Bengal involving the diversion of subsidized food grains worth tens of thousands of crore currently under investigation by the central agencies provides a classic example. This can be curbed if the subsidy is given directly to the beneficiaries using DBT (direct benefit transfer) mode. The potential for reducing food subsidies is immense. The government can go for any of the above measures or all of them depending on how much savings it targets. But, ALAS under the current political scenario, Modi won't dare to take even a baby step like charging a notional price of Rs 1 per kg.

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

Implications of upheaval in Bangladesh on its trade relations with India

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

Since Sheikh Hasina assumed office as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh in 2009, the country has been a key ally of India. Her leadership has seen significant progress in bilateral relations, with a focus on infrastructure, connectivity, and trade. However, the recent political crisis in Bangladesh has raised concerns about the future of this partnership.

On January 8, 2024, Sheikh Hasina declared that boosting the country's economy would be her top priority for the next five years. Yet, by August 2024, the nation was engulfed in violent demonstrations over a quota system for government positions, leading to a deepening domestic political crisis. As tensions escalated, Sheikh Hasina resigned and sought



ADITYA PRATAP SINGH

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

credit to Bangladesh for the development of road, rail, shipping, and port infrastructure. The two nations have also engaged in various areas of commerce, including medical tourism, business expansion, and the international garment trade. Bangladesh, a major player in the global garment industry, relies heavily on cotton imports from India.

The textile and garment sectors account for 56% of Bangladesh's total exports to India, making it a vital trading partner in South Asia. In the financial year 2023-24, bilateral trade between the two countries reached \$13 billion, according to the Union Ministry of Commerce. The Impact on Trade Sheikh Hasina's leadership saw a flourishing of com-

merce between India and Bangladesh, leading to a significant trade surplus for India. However, the ongoing political turmoil in Bangladesh threatens to disrupt this economic partnership. The civil unrest and worsening economic situation have created security concerns that could impact Indian exports, commerce, and infrastructure projects in the neighboring nation.

One of the major challenges will be on the bilateral trade front. After reaching \$12.21 billion in 2022-23, India's exports to Bangladesh dropped to \$11 billion in 2023-24. Similarly, Bangladesh's imports decreased from \$2 billion in the previous year to \$1.84 billion in the most recent fiscal year. Indian exporters have



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

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

future of the FTA proposals. Sheikh Hasina's exit might slow or pause this development, affecting the expansion of commerce and trade in new areas between the two nations.

Challenges for the Textile and Garment Industry The ongoing crisis in Bangladesh could also have a negative impact on other sectors, particularly the textile and garment industry. In the fiscal year 2021-2022, Bangladesh exported garments worth \$42.613 billion, solidifying its position as the second-largest apparel exporter globally. However, the recent incidents of factories being set on fire have raised concerns about the future of this industry. Many of these textile units are owned by traders associated with the

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

(The author is a PhD scholar at HBTU, Kanpur; views are personal)

Zelenskyy 'confirms' daring military incursion onto Russian soil

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

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



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

use of Ukrainian military units on Russian soil, it caught Moscow unaware and was an

embarrassment to Russian military leaders who have scrambled to contain the breach.

The exact aims of the operation remain unclear and Ukrainian military officials have adopted

a policy of secrecy, presumably to ensure its success. Military experts have said that it is

likely intended to draw Russian reserves away from the intense fighting in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region, while a presidential advisor suggested it may strengthen Kyiv's hand in any future negotiations with Russia. Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said Sunday that Ukraine "understands perfectly well" that the recent attacks "make no sense from a military point of view." "The Kyiv regime is continuing its terrorist activity with the sole purpose of intimidating the peaceful population of Russia," she added. Kursk acting governor Aleksei Smirnov said on Sunday that a "Ukrainian sabotage and reconnaissance group" entered the Belovsky district the previous day, but that the situation had been "stabilized." In Russia, the Defense Ministry said 35 drones were shot down overnight over the Kursk, Voronezh, Belgorod, Bryansk and Oryol regions. Ukraine has not commented on the Sunday drone attacks

inside Russia. But it comes as Ukraine has increased the pace of similar drone attacks largely targeting military infrastructure and oil depots in recent weeks. Meanwhile, Belarus said it was sending more troops to its border with Ukraine on Saturday, saying Ukrainian drones had violated its airspace as part of Kyiv's military incursion into Russia's Kursk region. Authoritarian leader Alexander Lukashenko said Belarusian air defense forces destroyed dozens of targets flying from Ukraine over the Mogilev region, which borders Russia, on Friday evening. "The Ukrainian armed forces violated all rules of conduct and violated the airspace of the Republic of Belarus. In the eastern direction, very close to us in the Kostyukovich district," Lukashenko said at a meeting in Minsk on Saturday. Belarusian Defence Minister Viktor Khrenin said Belarus regards the violation of its airspace as a provocation and is "ready for retaliatory action."

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

PTI ■ KATHMANDU
Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri on Sunday met with Nepal's top leadership and discussed ways to provide an impetus to various sectors of bilateral cooperation. Earlier in the day, Misri and Secretary of Nepal's Urban Development Ministry Maniram Gela jointly inaugurated a new building of Nepal Bhasha Parishad in Kathmandu built under India's post-earthquake reconstruction grant. "Foreign Secretary @VikramMisri & Mr Maniram Gela, Secretary, Ministry of Urban Development, Govt of Nepal jointly inaugurated the new building of Nepal Bhasha Parishad in Kathmandu, built under India's post-earthquake reconstruction grant," the Embassy of India said in a post on X. The building in the Naradevi area of the capital was damaged in the 2015 earthquake. Nepal Bhasha is the language belonging to the ethnic Newar community of

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

& underlines India's commitment to its #NeighbourhoodFirst policy," it said. According to the Foreign Ministry, foreign secretaries of both countries would discuss a gamut of matters related to Nepal-India relations, mutual interests, and cooperation. This is the first visit of the Indian foreign secretary to Nepal after the formation of the Oli-led coalition government last month. This is a regular visit of the Indian Foreign Secretary to Nepal, the Foreign Ministry sources added. Misri will also meet Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Urban Development Prakash Man Singh, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance Bishnu Paudel and Home Minister Ramesh Lekhak. He will also hold a bilateral meeting with Foreign Secretary Lamsal and will attend a dinner reception hosted by Lamsal.

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

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

steep slope in an impoverished part of the city. Women and children who scavenge plastic waste for income frequently gather there, and some homes have been built close to the landfill.

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

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

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

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

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

Hussainabad area, a Muslim Gujarati-speaking family that migrated from Junagadh in India has been selling different varieties of masala dosas in Bahadurabad for over five decades. "Come sunset and business begins," says Zafar, whose father started the masala dosa stall on a scrap Suzuki van proudly claiming that their food joint is among the first original places to sell pure vegetarian Indian dishes. Zafar and his team of cooks and helpers sell varieties of masala dosas but the aloo masala dosa remains their best-selling item despite being priced at 500 rupees. "I think Karachi has a lot of migrants from India who are more moderate or liberal in their choice of food and that is why there is an acquired taste for Indian vegetarian dishes," Zafar explained. On the other end of the spectrum are the upscale Rajdhani Delight and Nawab Dynasty restaurants in the posh Clifton area whose daily "pure vegetarian" and "chicken Thalis" are sought after by foodies. As soon as you walk into the Rajdhani Delight restaurant owned by a Gujarati family, the aroma of authentic Rajasthani and Gujarati food just gets into you, restaurant manager Jerome Earnest said. "The 'navratna vegetarian thali' with its mixture of vegetable, paneer, daal dishes, chutneys, achar, spicy yoghurt, dhokla, rice, salty lassi and gulab jamuns is a steal for 1500 rupees with waiters attired in traditional Rajasthani costumes waiting to serve you fresh chapatis in the metal tray with small bowls.



A REFRESHING TWIST ON PROBIOTIC HEALTH

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

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



mango flavour adds a refreshing twist, making it an enjoyable choice for those who love the fruit and want to incorporate probiotics into their daily routine.

Dr. Neeraja Hajela, Head of Science and Regulatory Affairs at Yakult Danone India Pvt Ltd, emphasises the importance of probiotics in daily life: "Lactobacillus casei Shirota is backed by more than 100 human studies conducted across the globe, including India. Probiotics increase the good bacteria in the gut, reducing the harmful ones. This balance ensures better digestion, proper absorption of nutrients, and stronger immunity, reducing the risk of infections." In today's environment, where factors like pollution, stress and poor diet can easily disrupt gut health, incorporating probiotics into your diet is a proactive step toward better health. A decrease in probiotic bacteria, coupled with unhealthy lifestyle choices, can lead to poor gut health and weak immunity, manifesting as fatigue, poor growth, malnutrition, and repeated infections.

Therefore, introducing scientifically validated probiotic products like Yakult into your daily routine is essential for maintaining a healthy gut and a strong immune system. Yakult Light Mango Flavour is more than just a tasty drink; it's a step toward better health. By incorporating this probiotic-rich beverage into your daily routine, you can support your gut health and boost your immunity. As Yakult Danone India continues to innovate and expand its offerings, the new mango flavour is an attestation to its commitment to improving the health and well-being of its consumers. Whether you're a longtime fan of Yakult or new to probiotics, Yakult Light Mango Flavour is a refreshing way to support your health goals.

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

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

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

Revolutionising Fitness and Wellness

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

At the recent FDCI Manifest Wedding Weekend, renowned fitness and wellness expert Sumaya Dalmia delivered a masterclass focused on practical health and fitness advice. The session, designed for brides, grooms and wellness enthusiasts, aimed to promote sustainable fitness habits rather than quick fixes or superficial transformations. Sumaya's approach emphasised the importance of a balanced lifestyle, combining nutrition, exercise and daily physical activity for long-term health benefits.

Sumaya began the masterclass by addressing common fitness myths that often mislead people. She debunked the idea that weightlifting leads to unwanted bulk, especially for women. Instead, she encouraged attendees to embrace strength training, highlighting its role in building muscle, improving metabolism and boosting confidence. Sumaya stressed that fitness is not an instant achievement but a lifelong journey requiring consistency and dedication. She pointed out that while exercise is crucial, nutrition is equally vital in achieving fitness goals, stating, "99.9% of anything to do with gut health, losing weight or aesthetics is about nutrition." The masterclass delved into the importance of understanding individual dietary needs, focusing on protein intake. Sumaya explained how to calculate daily protein requirements and stressed the significance of distributing protein consumption throughout the day for optimal absorption. Rather than categorising foods as "good" or "bad," Sumaya advocated for balanced eating, integrating proteins, healthy fats and carbohydrates based on personal needs. This approach, which promotes moderation and mindful eating, resonated well with the audience.



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

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

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

No one is immune to antimicrobial resistance

SHOBHA SHUKLA

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

Why do infections become difficult to treat or untreatable?

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) occurs when bacteria, viruses, fungi, or parasites change over time and become resistant to (or no longer respond to) medicines, making infections harder (or impossible) to treat and increasing the risk of disease spread, severe illness and death. Misuse and overuse of medicines fuels AMR. It is important to remember that it is the disease-causing microbe (and not the human being, animal or plant which is being treated) that becomes resistant to medicines. Therefore, even if a person uses antimicrobial medicines responsibly, they are still at risk of acquiring a drug-resistant infection. Resistant microbes can pass between animals, plants and food, and in the environment. A "One Health" approach which recognises that the health of animals, humans, plants and the environment are interlinked is therefore essential to respond to AMR.

No one is immune to AMR

AMR threatens to unravel a century of medical progress, turning once treatable infections into untreatable life-threatening conditions, said Dr Pandav. "AMR is identified by the WHO as one of the top 10 global health threats facing humanity. AMR is making infections harder to treat, leading to prolonged hospital stays, higher medical costs, and increased disability, morbidity, and mortality. AMR has a real and devastating impact on individuals,

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

Almost 5 million people died of AMR in a year

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



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

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

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

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

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

challenging with limited technical capacity and budgetary resources. Limited access to diagnostic microbiology facilities (at subnational level) and access to antimicrobials is another challenge," said Dr Upadhyaya.

Right and timely diagnosis and right treatment is key

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Star javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra hoped to compete with other prominent international names in India sooner than later following his silver medal-winning effort in the Paris Olympics. Chopra bagged the silver at the Paris showpiece with a throw of 89.45m behind Pakistan's Arshad Nadeem, who hurled the javelin to 92.97m, an Olympic record. Anderson Peters of Grenada came third with a throw of 88.54m among the field that included some high-profile javelin throwers like Julian Webber, Jakub Vadlejch and Julius Yego. "It's a dream of mine to compete with other international stars in India. Hopefully, there will be an international competition soon in India and I can do that," Chopra said during an interactive session with fans organised by the Olympics.Com But before that, Chopra, whose silver was his second successive Olympics medal after the gold in Tokyo, said he wanted to work on certain areas of his game. "I am entering a new season now. So, I don't have that much time to change training



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

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

after her marriage. She is not familiar with social media and things like that. She often speaks from her heart. But she understands what families of athletes, even from different countries, feel towards them." **Praise for Sreejesh, Manu** Chopra lauded shooter Manu Bhaker for showing perseverance to grab two bronze medals in the Paris Games after experiencing the utter disappointment in the

Tokyo edition. "The way Manu Bhaker prepared her mind and came from her Tokyo setback is impressive. Her mindset appeared to be very strong this time while taking part in back-to-back competitions. I think it's just a start for her because I saw even people over 50 (age) were participating in shooting. "I hope Manu will play in a lot more competitions, bring a lot more medals for the country and change the colour of the medal too," he said. The 26-year-old also hailed Indian hockey team's goalkeeper PR Sreejesh, who retired from top-level competition with a bronze at Paris. "Sreejesh is a very relaxed and funny person. He motivates younger players a lot. Sreejesh bhai had said that he would retire after the Olympics. The players, I think, also felt that they should win it for Sreejesh bhai after doing so many great things for the team," Chopra said Sreejesh offers a fine example in tackling pressure situations. "He has so many years of experience and he knows how to tackle the pressure situations. He seemed to be in his zone when I met him before the bronze medal match," he added.

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

PTI ■ PARIS

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



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

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



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

PTI ■ PARIS

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

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

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

PTI ■ PARIS

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

has raised us. He educated us. He has transmitted the sports spirit to us. He has been with me in my heart, and tomorrow we will be going to visit him in the hospital." Kilichev fell ill backstage after flyweight Hasanboy Dusmatov won Uzbekistan's first gold medal Thursday. According to GB Boxing, team doctor Harj Singh and physical therapist Robbie Lillis found Kilichev in life-threatening distress. They performed CPR on the coach, and Lillis also used a defibrillator, the team said. Jalolov said Kilichev remained in contact with the team over the past two days while recovering, and his



fighters responded with a historic performance. Jalolov was the last of Uzbekistan's five Paris champions to climb the podium Saturday night in the

best Olympic performance since Cuba also won five golds at the 2004 Athens Games. Uzbekistan won the final five men's gold medal bouts contested at Roland

Garros, starting with Dusmatov on Thursday - a victory followed by that frightening moment for Kilichev. "This is history for Uzbekistan, and I'm emotional because becoming a two-time Olympic champion was my dream," Jalolov said. "Now I feel very happy, and I will continue my career as a professional boxer." Lazizbek Mulojonov won the heavyweight title Friday night, joining a remarkable Olympic lineage at that weight including Joe Frazier, George Foreman, Teofilo Stevenson, Felix Savon and Oleksandr Usyk.

"We are building a new generation of boxers," Mulojonov said. "This is the result of all the federation's work." Indeed, Uzbekistan has responded sharply to its twisting fortunes in the past two Games under Kilichev's leadership. The team claimed three gold medals in Rio de Janeiro in 2016 to signal its arrival as an international power, but won just one gold medal - Jalolov's first - five years later in Tokyo. With Jalolov and Dusmatov returning alongside a new crew of gifted young boxers, Uzbekistan has returned to dominance.

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

PTI ■ PARIS

Lin Yu-ting fought to remain poised and calm throughout the Paris Olympics boxing tournament, even when it seemed like most of the chattering world was maligning her, misrepresenting her and questioning the very nature of her being. The flyweight shut off her social media, kept up her training and focused on earning one proficient victory after another. But when she heard Taiwan's anthem while standing on the top podium at Roland Garros with a gold medal around her neck, Lin suddenly broke down in cathartic sobs. She cried not only for the tumult of the past two weeks, but for a lifetime in boxing that

culminated in this gold-medal victory over previously unfathomable challenges. "I saw images flashing, and I thought about the beginning of my career when I started boxing," Lin said. "All the difficult practices, the times that I got injured, the competitors I fought against. All these images flashed in my head. There are times of great pain. There are times of great joy. I cried because I was so touched." Lin completed her domination of her division Saturday night, following Imane Khelif's lead a day earlier by giving a glittering response to the intense scrutiny faced by both fighters inside the ring and around the world over misconceptions about their womanhood. Lin routed Julia Szeremeta of

Poland 5:0 in the final, capping her four-fight unbeaten run through Paris by winning Taiwan's first Olympic boxing gold medal. On Friday, Khelif won Algeria's first women's boxing medal with a decisive victory in the welterweight division final, beating Yang Liu of China. Both fighters persevered through an avalanche of criticism and uninformed speculation about their sex during the Paris tournament to deliver the best performances of their boxing careers. "Every fight is not easy," Lin said. "Winning 5-0 might seem easy, but behind that is a lot of practice and hard work." World leaders, celebrities and online critics attempted to make it about something other than the boxers' years of work. The detractors either



questioned their eligibility to be in women's competitions or falsely claimed they were men, forcing both women to take unwanted starring roles in a debate over changing attitudes

toward gender identity and safety regulation in sports. Lin said she minimized this potentially enormous distraction by managing to avoid learning about it almost

entirely. She also said she'll speak with her team about whether to take legal action against some of the claims. "As an elite athlete, during the competition it's important to shut myself off from social media," she said. "That's extremely important. Some of the noises or some of the news articles, of course I heard some of the information through my coach, but I didn't pay too much mind to it. And I was invited by the IOC to participate in the Games. This is what I focused on." Both fighters were disqualified last year from the world championships organized by the International Boxing Association, a Russian-dominated governing body that has been banished from the Olympics since 2019. The IBA said they failed an

eligibility test for women's competition, but it has struggled to defend its claims since they resurfaced at the Olympics, occasionally giving contradictory information or saying they were asked not to give details by the boxers' national federations. The two boxers' detractors included former U.S. President Donald Trump, "Harry Potter" author J.K. Rowling and Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni. Their presence in Paris became a weapon in a largely Western culture clash over eligibility for women's sports. Khelif said a gold medal would be the "best response" to the uproar. Both fighters got the last word in Paris, although the chatter and scrutiny could persevere for the rest of their careers. Lin hadn't been as dominant or

as dynamic as Khelif in Paris, but she steadily rolled toward the final as the top seed in the women's 57-kilogram division. The 5-foot-9 (1.75 meter) Lin is usually taller and more slender than her opponents, and she uses those advantages to pick them apart with skill and angles, rather than strength or power. That's exactly what Lin did to Szeremeta after taking the ring Saturday to loud cheers and dozens of Olympic-style Chinese Taipei flags waving in the stands, with millions more cheering back home. After having her hand raised and holding open the ropes for Szeremeta's departure in a typical boxing gesture of sportsmanship, Lin went to the center of the ring, knelt on the Paris 2024 logo and touched her head to the canvas.

World Boxing to announce major increase in membership after Paris Olympics

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The nascent governing body fighting to keep boxing in the Olympics is about to get a major membership boost. World Boxing expects to expand its membership base to 50 national federations or more in the weeks after the conclusion of the tumultuous Paris Olympics, President Boris Van Der Vorst told The Associated Press. The organization already has 37 members, including most of the top Western national federations. Van Der Vorst said he is leaving Paris even more confident his sport can pull off "the greatest comeback story ever in the Olympic

movement." Van Der Vorst has spent the Games speaking to boxing leaders and federation officials as World Boxing attempts to unify the sport under the only practical alternative to the Russian-dominated International Boxing Association, which has been banished from the Olympic movement. World Boxing must court each federation individually to accomplish this seismic change to the sport - and the clock is ticking. Boxing is not currently on the program for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, and the International Olympic Committee has repeatedly said the sport must find a suitable new governing body - likely by early 2025 - to be restored to the lineup for the Games. An IOC unit ran the past two Olympic boxing tournaments. "There's only one reason to join (World Boxing), and that's to save our sport," Van Der Vorst told the AP on Saturday.

