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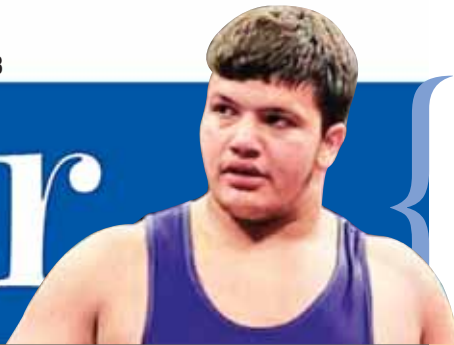
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**RONAK WINS BRONZE IN 110KG 11 SPORTS**



## NDA's push for majority mark in Rajya Sabha

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

BJP leader Kiran Choudhary, former Union Minister Upendra Kushwaha, Supreme Court lawyer Manan Kumar Mishra, renowned Kudumi community leader Mamata Mohanta, Union Minister George Kurian, nominees of BJP and NCP, Dhairiyasheel Patil and Nitin Patil, Mission Ranjan Das and Rameshwar Teli and Union Minister of State Ravneet Singh Bittu were among those who filed their nomination papers for election to the 12 vacant seats in the Upper House on Wednesday.

For the BJP, the by-poll is crucial for pushing the NDA's Rajya Sabha tally past the majority mark, a key factor in passing of Bills. The current effective strength of Rajya Sabha is 229. Of this, the BJP has 87 MPs, with the NDA allies taking the number to 105. The support of six nominated MPs takes the NDA's strength further up to

111, four short of half-way mark. The Opposition has 84 members — Congress 26 and allies 58. Several of the 12 seats fell vacant as the sitting members, including Union Ministers Piyush Goyal, Sarbananda Sonowal and Jyotiraditya Scindia, were elected to the Lok Sabha.

From Haryana, BJP leader Kiran Choudhary filed her nomination for the Rajya Sabha by-poll on Wednesday, with some JJP rebel MLAs also extending support to her candidature. Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, State BJP President Mohan Lal Badoli, several party MLAs, the party's co-in-charge for the State Biplab Kumar Deb and some JJP rebels were among those present when Choudhary submitted her nomination papers.

Wednesday was the last day for filing of nominations for the Rajya Sabha by-poll. The BJP named Choudhary as its nominee shortly after she resigned from the

Assembly on Tuesday, nearly two months after she left Congress. She represented the Tosham seat in the Haryana Assembly. The by-poll for the lone Rajya Sabha seat in Haryana was necessitated after Congress leader Deepender Singh Hooda was elected to the Lok Sabha from Rohtak. His Rajya Sabha term was to end in April 2026.

In Jaipur, Union Minister Ravneet Singh Bittu filed his nomination as a BJP candidate for the Rajya Sabha by-poll from Rajasthan. He was accompanied by Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma, Deputy Chief Ministers Premchand Bairwa and Diya Kumari, and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Jogaram Patel. Before submitting his nomination paper, Bittu, during a meeting of the BJP Legislature Party, expressed gratitude for his selection as the Rajya Sabha candidate from Rajasthan. Rajasthan has a total of 10 Rajya seats, one of which is vacant.

## Modi to discuss with Zelenskyy ways to end war

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said he was looking forward to sharing perspectives with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on a peaceful resolution of the Ukraine conflict. The Prime Minister's comments came on Wednesday shortly before he embarked on a two-nation trip to Poland and Ukraine. Modi on Wednesday said his maiden visit to Poland will add momentum to the bilateral friendship and benefit the people of the two countries as he arrived here on the first leg of his two-nation visit during which he will also travel to the Ukrainian capital Kyiv. Modi, who will meet Poland's President Andrzej Sebastian Duda and hold bilateral talks with Prime Minister Donald Tusk, said he was looking forward to the various programmes in the Polish capital here.

"Landed in Poland. Looking forward to the various programmes here. This visit will add momentum to the India-Poland friendship and benefit the people of our nations," Modi said in a post on X soon after his arrival at the Warsaw military airport here.

On the first leg of the visit, Modi is visiting Polish capital city of Warsaw on August 21



Prime Minister Narendra Modi gives his autograph on a portrait presented to him by the Indian community members upon his arrival at a hotel, in Warsaw, Poland, on Wednesday

and 22. Modi will be in Kyiv for around seven hours on August 23 in the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Ukraine since the country became independent in 1991. In a departure statement, Modi, referring to the Ukraine conflict, said as a "friend and partner," India hopes for an early return of peace and stability in the region. "From Poland, I will be visiting Ukraine at the invitation of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. This is the first-ever visit by an

Indian Prime Minister to Ukraine," he said. "I look forward to the opportunity to build upon earlier conversations with President Zelenskyy on strengthening bilateral cooperation and share perspectives on peaceful resolution of the ongoing Ukraine conflict," he said. "As a friend and partner, we hope for an early return of peace and stability in the region," he added. Modi said he was confident that his visit to Warsaw and Kyiv "will serve as a natural continuation of extensive

contacts with the two countries and help create the foundation for stronger and more vibrant relations in the years ahead." The Prime Minister will travel to Kyiv from Poland in a 'Rail Force One' train that will take around 10 hours. The return trip will also be of the same duration. A number of world leaders including US President Joe Biden, French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz visited Kyiv by train after the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Modi's visit to Kyiv comes nearly six weeks after his high-profile trip to Moscow which drew criticism from the US and some of its Western allies. India has been calling for resolution of the conflict through dialogue and diplomacy. In his summit talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow last month, Modi said "a solution to the Ukraine conflict is not possible on the battlefield and peace talks do not succeed amidst bombs and bullets." Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Monday said Modi's visit to Ukraine would be a "landmark and historic" one. "Lasting peace can only be achieved through options that are acceptable to both parties. And it can only be a negotiated settlement," said Tanmaya Lal, Secretary (West) in the MEA. "On our part, India continues to engage with all stakeholders," he said. "My visit to Poland comes as we mark 70 years of our diplomatic relations. Poland is a key economic partner in Central Europe," he said. "Our mutual commitment to democracy and pluralism further reinforces our relationship. I look forward to meeting my friend Prime Minister Donald Tusk and President Andrzej Duda to further advance our partnership," he said.



Firefighters douse a fire which broke out following an explosion in a reactor unit of pharmaceutical company Escientia, in Anakapalle, Andhra Pradesh, on Wednesday

## 13 killed in Andhra pharma unit fire

PTI ■ ATCHUTAPURAM (ANDHRA PRADESH)

The death toll in the fire accident at a pharmaceutical unit here on Wednesday rose to 13, officials said. Anakapalli District Collector Vijaya Krishnan said the fire broke out at 2:15 pm at Escientia Advanced Sciences Pvt Ltd at Atchutapuram in Anakapalli district. "The factory operates with 381 employees in two shifts. The blast occurred during lunch time. Therefore, staff presence was less, Krishnan told PTI, adding that the explosion is suspected to be electricity-related. As many as 33 injured people were shifted to different hospitals in Anakapalli and Atchutapuram while the Fire Department is engaged in rescue operations, deploying six fire tenders. Further, the collector said 13 people trapped in the unit were rescued. Meanwhile, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu expressed grief over the loss of lives. The CM assured that the Government will stand by the families of the workers who died, said an official press release.

## WB icons join march for justice in Kolkata horror case

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Kolkata continued to remain loyal to its age old insignia — Michhil Nagari or City of Processions — with players and engineers, IT personnel on Wednesday joining the doctors in their ongoing protest movement against the RG Kar Medical College rape and murder case. Veteran players from myriad fields like football swimming, athletics etc joined the march for "Justice" for the 31-year-old lady doctor who was allegedly raped and murdered in the wee hours of August 8.

Among who joined the march were Chess Grand Master Dibyendu Barua, swimmer Bula Chowdhury, sprinter Jyotirmoye Sikdar and national soccer player Gautam Sarkar. "We have joined not to get justice for the young lady doctor but also for the whole society... enough is enough we cannot breathe anymore in this vitiated system where everything is rotting... tomorrow it can be my family members or anyone else's... you need a foolproof system in place," said Chowdhury. Sarkar too lent his voice saying, "It is not the culprits that have to



be hanged but the system in which they flourish that has to go to the gallows... this rule of the corrupt, by the corrupt and for the corrupt must end because in the mire of this corruption these devils are born... who else than the State can do it... we demand justice for the State... if a doctor is not safe inside her own hospital ... if a journalist is not safe inside her own office... if a policewoman is not safe inside the police station... if a player is not safe inside the camp... or for that matter if a politician is not safe inside the legislature then who is safe in which place?"

A former Ranji Trophy player said, "It is the voice that has risen from within the society and that has to be addressed or else it will turn into a volcano... society is scared... I am a father of a girl who too is in a profession that I won't name and I want her safe..." "I can just imagine what the old parents of the ill-fated doctor who was killed so brutally must be going through... gradually this fire will subside but the pain of losing an 'aulad' (offspring) that is burning the old parents by the hour will never subside... so it is the duty of the society to see the end of it."

## Google, Meta in trouble over ads linked to fake lotteries

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala police have issued a notice to Google to remove apps from its Play Store that are selling fake lotteries online in the name of the lottery run by the state. A similar notice was issued to Meta to remove advertisements of such fake lotteries from social media platforms Facebook, Whatsapp and Instagram managed by it, the State Police Media Centre (SPMC) said in a release on Wednesday. Police took the action after cyber patrolling revealed that 60 fake lottery apps, 25 fake Facebook profiles and 20 websites are connected to the scam, the



SPMC release said. It said that stringent legal action will be taken against those who are behind the fraud. Giving details of the scam, the police said that fake advertisements in the name of 'Kerala Megamillion Lottery' and 'Kerala Summer Season Dhamaka' have been circulating on social media

platforms like WhatsApp, Telegram and Instagram for some time stating that lotteries run by the state government can be bought online. People also get messages on their phones stating that the Kerala government has started an online lottery, and on spending ₹40 rupees there is a chance to win up to ₹12 crore, it said. When a person sends ₹40 on the number mentioned in the message, they get a fake lottery ticket image on WhatsApp. Later, when the draw time is over, the fraudsters send artificially fabricated results that show that the ticket held has won a prize of ₹5 lakh, the release said.

## Bharat Bandh against SC's quota ruling evokes mixed response

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Amid protest against the Supreme Court's decision to permit the sub-classification of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), a daylong nationwide strike called by Dalits and Adivasi communities led to partial disruption in rail and road services in the States of Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and Rajasthan on Wednesday, evoked a mixed reaction. The response was tepid in other parts of the country. The bandh was by and large peaceful with some sporadic incidents of violence. Several videos of cops lathicharging protesters were doing the rounds on the Internet. One such video from Bihar's Patna has grabbed

eyeballs after a policeman accidentally hit a Sub Divisional Magistrate (SDM) with a baton while managing law and order in Patna. The bizarre incident occurred at the busy Dak Bangla square in Bihar's capital city. Having broken barricades at the JP Golambar intersection, the protesters reached Dak Bangla, where, to control the situation, security forces resorted to a lathi-charge. In a viral video, the policeman is seen hitting Khandekar, who was in civil dress, with a stick. While the SDM is taken away by his colleagues, who tell him about the mistake. The SDM identified as Shrikant Kundlik Khandekar.



## SC resumes hearing on LMV driving licence

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday decided to resume its hearing on the legal question of whether a person holding a driving licence for a light motor vehicle is also entitled to drive a transport vehicle with an unladen weight not exceeding 7,500 kg. A five-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud took the decision after Attorney General R Venkataramani, appearing for the Centre, said though the consultations to amend the Motor Vehicles (MV) Act 1988 were "almost complete", but the proposed amendments are yet to be tabled before Parliament. The top most law officer said the amended Bill can be presented before Parliament in the Winter session and suggested the bench either defer the hearing till it is cleared by the House or proceed with the matters.

## Dosa, butter chicken, Indian street food popular in Poland

PTI ■ WARSAW

Dosa, butter chicken and mango lassi, an unlikely combo for some perhaps but topping the list of favourites for Polish diners who say the dishes remind them of their travels to the country. More than 45 Indian restaurants are offering a variety of traditional Indian food across Poland, with the capital Warsaw City having at least a dozen of them, as per the listing of the Embassy of India in Poland here. And not just dining out, Indian food is popular as a takeaway option too across Poland.



India and Indian food are the talk of the town yet again as Warsaw is excited to receive Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who will arrive here for his two-day visit on

Wednesday. This will be the first official visit of an Indian Prime Minister to this country in 45 years. In Warsaw, Chetan Nandani, a Gujarati businessman, recently opened a restaurant called 'Chaiwala', possibly alluding to the moniker that has stuck with Modi since 2014. Nandani, who already ran a restaurant called 'Curry House', opened the 'Chaiwala' owing to the popular demand for Indian food. He claimed to have introduced Indian street food to Warsaw.

## Greed for big catch poses risk to fish eaters

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Several fishermen are illegally using commonly available pesticides, particularly synthetic pyrethroids to harvest high-value crustaceans or prawns in the lower stretches of the River Ganga in West Bengal. The practice may cause significant harm to the river's ecosystem in the long run, scientists from ICAR-Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute (CIFRI) have sounded alarms. "Research has shown that pesticide residues are present in fish tissues from the River Ganga, although concentrations are currently below levels deemed hazardous to human health.

"However, long-term exposure to these chemicals can impact reproductive health in fish and pose risks to wildlife and human populations dependent on the river for drinking water and livelihood," the researchers warned, calling for urgent stringent regulatory actions and community awareness. The illegal fishing practice is particularly prevalent in areas extending from Nabadwip to Balagarh in the State, said the study. Also, as per the representation of the local communities in the studied area, the scientists found that illegal intruders appear from neighbouring areas, specifically the villages adjacent to the river. "They target the lucrative



freshwater prawn Fish species are caught rampantly as the bye catch, including Puntius spp., Gudusia chapra, Salmostoma," said Ajay Saha,

Archisman Ray, Kausik Mondal, Basanta Kumar Das from ICAR-Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute (CIFRI), Barrackpore, and Vikas Kumar from ICAR-CIFRI, Prayagraj. Presently, majority of the fish are harvested using gill nets, cast nets, passive fish traps, or occasionally plant-based fish poisons, the banned pesticides are being rampantly used despite being banned. "Indiscriminate use of synthetic pyrethroids, such as cypermethrin and deltamethrin, disrupts aquatic ecosystems by causing imbalances in fish populations and damaging aquatic flora.



# Heavy rains wreak disaster in Tehri villages

PNS ■ NEW TEHRI

At least 17 cattle died, five homes were damaged and agricultural land was also damaged following heavy rain in more than half a dozen villages of Ghansali Tehsil in Tehri district following heavy rain on the intervening night of August 20 and 21. According to officials, the damage was caused



many villages of Ghuttu area due to the disaster. The administration has shifted the affected families to a safe place and started relief and rescue work.

Heavy rains in Ghuttu area late on Tuesday night caused considerable damage in the villages of the area. A number of homes were damaged in about half a dozen villages

there. More than a dozen cattle died after being buried in debris. Vishalmani, a resident of Malethi Tok in Chandla village, his wife Durga Devi and son Jagdamba saved their lives by running away at 1:30 AM. A number of homes in Chandla and nearby villages have also been damaged. As soon as the information about the incident was received, the administration

started relief and rescue operations. District disaster management officer Brijesh Bhatt informed that 10 members of two families have been affected due to heavy rains in Ghuttu area of Ghansali Tehsil. They have been shifted to Navjeevan Ashram for safety. Along with this, more than a dozen cattle died and five cowsheds were damaged, he added.

# Be updated- heavy rain likely in Dehradun & seven other districts today

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Parts of Dehradun witnessed moderate to heavy rain on Wednesday night though no major damage was reported till the time of this report being filed. Meanwhile, the State meteorological centre has issued a yellow warning (Be Updated)

regarding the possibility of heavy rain likely to occur at isolated places in Dehradun, Pauri, Tehri, Nainital, Champawat, Udham Singh Nagar, Bageshwar and Pithoragarh districts on Thursday. Thunderstorms accompanied with lightning/intense to very intense spells of rain are likely to occur at isolated places in all the districts of the State. Apart from this, light to moderate rain/thundershowers are likely to occur at many places in Uttarakhand, Rudrapur, Chamoli and Almora districts and at most places in the remaining districts of the State today. The provi-

sional State capital Dehradun is likely to witness a generally cloudy sky. Few spells of light to moderate rain/thundershowers are likely to occur, of which one or two spells may be intense/heavy in some areas.

The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in various places on Wednesday were 31 degrees Celsius and 22.7 degrees Celsius respectively in Dehradun, 31 degrees Celsius and 24.5 degrees Celsius in Pantnagar, 23.6 degrees Celsius and 15.1 degrees Celsius in Mukteshwar and 24 degrees Celsius and 17.6 degrees Celsius in New Tehri. The rain recorded in various places on Wednesday was 18.5 millimetres in Jhulaghat, 18 millimetres in Pokhri, 15.5 millimetres in Thalising, eight millimetres in Kichha, 7.5 millimetres in Tanakpur, six millimetres in Devidhura and four millimetres in Gadarpur.

# Doctors suggest precautions against conjunctivitis amidst monsoon

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

With the ongoing monsoon season, the heightened risk of eye infections including conjunctivitis has increased among people, the doctors here said. They said that the increased humidity during this season leads to a higher prevalence of infections, consequently resulting in eye-related issues. To prevent instances of conjunctivitis, it is advised that individuals prioritise hygiene by regularly washing their hands before touching their eyes, the doctors said. Talking to The Pioneer, senior eye specialist at the Government Doon Medical College (GDMC) hospital, Dr Sushil Ojha said that he has observed a rise in conjunctivitis cases with the onset of the monsoon season. He said that conjunctivitis infections are more common during this time due to the persistence of the infection in the atmosphere. Symptoms of conjunctivitis include itching sensation in the eyes, redness and pain. Ojha further advised individuals to maintain hygiene in their surroundings to prevent the disease, emphasising the importance of washing hands with soap before touching the eyes. He also stated that conjunctivitis is a contagious disease transmitted through contact. Considering this, individuals should avoid crowded places during the monsoon season. Further, eye specialist Dr Amit Singh added that he encounters four to five cases of conjunctivitis on a

daily basis. He informed that the likelihood of acquiring infections increases during the monsoon season. This in turn leads to the ailment of conjunctivitis. This condition manifests through symptoms such as redness, itching and in severe cases, pain in the eyes. Singh stressed the importance of wearing sunglasses when outdoors to prevent such cases. Additionally, he advised frequent handwashing with soap before touching the eyes. Singh cautioned against using medication without consulting a pharmacist, as it may exacerbate the eye infection in certain instances. He recommended seeking medical advice from a doctor at the first sign of any eye problems to mitigate any negative outcomes. Further, he underscored the importance of children to maintain hygiene practices as they are more susceptible to eye infections like conjunctivitis.

## THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS PUBLIC NOTICE

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In my Driving License No UK-0719930283956 my name is incorrectly written as Bhpender Kumar Pangti whereas correct name is BHUPENDRA KUMAR PANGETY as mentioned in Aadhar Card. Both names belong to me. Bhupendra Kumar Pangti / S/o Late Shri H.S. Pangti R/o 18/1, Teg Bahadur Road, Lane No-2, Dehradun, Uttarakhand

The general public is informed that I have changed my name from SONU SACHDEV to SHELLY DHINGRA and in future I should be known as Shelly Dhingra W/o Tarun Kumar Dhingra address: H No.-368, Vivek Vihar Colony, Jwalapur, Haridwar, UK

The general public is informed that I have changed my name from SONIA BAKSHI to SONIA KAUR BEDI and in future I should be known as Sonia Kaur Bedi w/o Inderjeet Singh Bedi address: Hotel Parth, Bye Pass Road, NH-58, PO-Kankhal, Haridwar, UK

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In army record my wife name written as **BINITA THAPA**. But my wife correct name is **BINITA GURUNG THAPA**. Also mentioned in my wife Adhar Card, Pan Card and Nepali Citizenship. In future my wife will be known as **BINITA GURUNG THAPA**. Kindly record my wife correct name in my Documents record. Army no.5854653L /Lnk Chudamani Thapa s/o Bhim Bahadur Thapa presently resident of **Birendranagar-9, Surkhet, Bheri, Nepal**. Current resident of **2/9 Gorkha Rifles, Pin-910252 c/o 9APO**

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# Traffic woes escalate on various roads of Dehradun

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Dehradun has been grappling with severe traffic congestion in recent days with major roads like Haridwar Road, East Canal Road and areas near Ghanatgar, Parade Ground and Dharampur facing significant traffic jams. Traffic remained disrupted due to multiple rallies on Wednesday too. Many

in the number of vehicles on the road.

He said that he personally visited some roads in the city and inspected the traffic conditions there. He said that he observed during inspection that vehicles using the cuts between Rispana and Mohkampur Flyover were causing the

ruptions on this busy road. He claimed that the decision to close these cuts was necessary due to the growing volume of traffic and the need to prevent congestion caused by vehicles making U-turns or crossing lanes through these cuts. However, Singh added, two-wheelers will still be allowed to pass



Traffic stuck near Parade Ground during one of the protest rallies held in Dehradun on Wednesday

Pioneer photo

commuters expressed their frustration with the city's traffic situation deteriorating in recent days. Responding to this, the Dehradun senior superintendent of police Ajai Singh also agreed that the traffic situation has gotten worse, especially after the Rakshabandhan festival on Monday, which saw a surge

traffic to halt, leading to unnecessary delays and increased traffic pressure. Considering this issue, the SSP ordered the traffic police to close two key road cuts- Kailash Hospital Cut and Govind Hospital Cut on Haridwar Road. This move is aimed at ensuring a smoother flow of vehicles and minimising traffic dis-

through the Kailash Hospital Cut while all other vehicles entering the city must now take a U-turn from under the Mohkampur Flyover to proceed towards the city area. These measures are expected to ease the traffic situation and provide some relief to the city's commuters, he added.

# Sleep lab yet to start in GDMC hospital

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Despite the installation of machines to treat sleep disorders, the operation of the sleep lab at the Government Doon Medical College (GDMC) hospital has not yet commenced. Notably, sleep labs within the hospital are typically set up to provide treatment for patients with the sleep disorder commonly known as sleep apnea. Informing about the functioning of the sleep lab, the medical superintendent at the GDMC, Dr Anurag Aggarwal informed that the machines required for treating the patients are already in place. He added that the hospital administration has been planning to establish the sleep lab for a considerable period of time, but various factors have caused delays. Nonetheless, the hospital

tional two to three months for the sleep lab to function properly. The existing delay in the lab's operation is attributed to the Model Code of Conduct (MCC), he said.

Aggarwal further highlighted that various factors including changes in lifestyle, obesity and others, have significantly increased the prevalence of sleep disorders like sleep apnea among individuals. To prevent sleep apnea, he recommended individuals take early precautions, avoid consuming alcohol, caffeine, chocolates and meals just before sleeping. Additionally, he emphasised the importance of sleeping on a proper bed and

had also stated that assessments for sleep disorders in patients would be carried out during nighttime in the sleep lab.



administration has now equipped the lab with the necessary machines and other equipment, he said.

He further informed that although the machines have been installed at the sleep lab, their operations have not commenced yet due to the delayed appointment of a technician or specialised doctor. The proposal to hire a specialised doctor for the sleep lab has been submitted to the concerned authorities. It is anticipated that it will take an addi-

maintaining conducive sleep hygiene.

It can be recalled that the appointment of a dedicated doctor for the sleep lab would be finalised within 15 days of its establishment and the lab would commence its operations promptly. However, the current situation contradicts these expectations. Additionally, earlier the hospital administration officials

# Gadkari to attend Shri Venkateshwara University's 10th convocation

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The founder chairman of Meerut-based Shri Venkateshwara University Sudhir Giri met the Union Minister of Road Transport and National Highways Nitin Gadkari at his official residence in New Delhi on Wednesday and invited him to attend the 10th convocation of the university slated on

September 6. The pro-chancellor of the university Rajeev Tyagi said that the Union Minister had appreciated the efforts being made by it in the field of education and free health service for the poor, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic, over the past two and half decades and consented to attend the ensuing convocation. Giri thanked the Union Minister for the newly constructed 'Venkateshwara Overhead Bridge' on the National Highway in front of the university and apprised him of the advanced courses on road safety management being run by the university.



## RASHTRIYA MILITARY SCHOOLS APPLICATIONS FOR ADMISSION TO CLASS VI AND CLASS IX (ACADEMIC SESSION 2025-26)

Applications are invited from boys and girls for admission into Class VI and Class IX in Rashtriya Military Schools (RMSs) located at Chail (HP), Ajmer (Rajasthan), Belgaum (Karnataka), Bengaluru (Karnataka) and Dholpur (Rajasthan). Online Application forms and payment of application fee will be available from 21st August 2024 (10:00h) to 19th September 2024 (20:00h) at <https://apply-delhi.nielit.gov.in/>. eProspectus, detailed notification and exam date for OMR based Common Entrance Test (CET) are available on website <https://apply-delhi.nielit.gov.in/>

## NAGAR NIGAM HARIDWAR

Letter No. 201/S.Cell/2024-25 Dated 21.08.2024  
**TENDER NOTICE**  
Offline bids are invited from Reputed firm for the "SELECTION OF CONSULTANT/ EXPERT TO WORK AS AN INDEPENDENT PROJECT ENGINEER FOR INTEGRATED SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT PROJECT UNDER SWACIICH BHARAT MISSION at Haridwar, Uttarakhand under SBM and fulfill the obligations as per MSW rule 2016. The Tender Documents can be purchased against payment of Rs. 5900/- in form of DD favor of MUNICIPAL COMMISSIONER NAGAR NIGAM HARIDWAR, Payable at Haridwar or in cash at Nagar Nigam Haridwar. The Tender Document can be procured at NNH office by the payment of tender fee. The officer of the tenders, who do not submit the cost of the tender shall be rejected. The last date for submission of offline bid is 10/09/2024 Upto 14:00 and the technical bids will be opened same day at Nagar Nigam Haridwar office at 15:00. Other Terms & Conditions may be seen from RFP document. The duration of consultancy services for 1 years and may be renewed as per need of project.

S.No.	DESCRIPTIONS	EMD	TENDER DOCUMENT
1	SELECTION OF CONSULTANT/ EXPERT TO WORK AS AN INDEPENDENT PROJECT ENGINEER FOR INTEGRATED SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT PROJECT UNDER SWACIICH BHARAT MISSION AT NAGAR NIGAM HARIDWAR	Rs. 30,000/-	Rs 5900/-

Senior Health Officer  
Nagar Nigam Haridwar, Uttarakhand



## Three ordinances tabled in Vidhan Sabha

PNS ■ BHARADISAIN

The government tabled three ordinances promulgated by it recently in the Uttarakhand Vidhan Sabha on the opening day of the Monsoon session on Wednesday. Cabinet minister Subodh Uniyal tabled the Uttarakhand (Uttar Pradesh) Municipality Act 1916 (Amendment) ordinance 2024 in the house. The placing of the ordinance in the

be recovered from those who cause the damage. The rioters will have to pay for the expenses incurred on Police and administration in the course of controlling the riots.

Uniyal also tabled the Uttarakhand (Uttar Pradesh) Municipal Corporation Act 1959 (Amendment) ordinance - 2024 and



house will pave the way for a law under which the damage caused to public property during riots and unrest will

Uttarakhand recovery of damages to public and private property ordinance, 2024 in the house.

## Monsoon session of Vidhan Sabha to be historic: CM

PNS ■ BHARADISAIN

Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhama has expressed confidence that the Monsoon session of Uttarakhand Vidhan Sabha will be historic. Interacting with the media persons outside the Assembly building on Wednesday, the CM said that the session is being held at Bharadisaan, Gairsain for the first time during the Monsoon season. He said that holding sessions during the rainy season is challenging. The CM also expressed confidence that the opposition will extend its constructive support during the session and healthy discussion will be held on the issues of public interest. He said that many important bills will be tabled and passed during the session.



Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhama meets Assembly speaker Ritu Bhushan Khanduri on the first day of the Vidhan Sabha monsoon session in Gairsain on Wednesday

Pioneer photo

The CM said that the government will place the supplementary budget during the session which is the

part of the advance planning of the government for various schemes of development. He said that the

government has no paucity of funds for the development activities and schemes.

## Cong demands extension of monsoon session of Vidhan Sabha

PNS ■ BHARADISAIN

The Congress MLAs strongly opposed the plan to hold the monsoon session of Vidhan Sabha for only three days. The leader of opposition (LoP) in the State Assembly Yashpal Arya told The Pioneer in Bharadisaan on the opening day of the Monsoon session on Wednesday that the government should extend the duration of the monsoon session. He said that, according to the Uttarakhand Vidhan Sabha work procedure rules, the Vidhan Sabha should have at least 60 sittings in a year. He alleged that for the past many years, the Vidhan Sabha sessions have been having less than 15 sittings in a year.



LoP Yashpal Arya meets CM Pushkar Singh Dhama on the first day of Assembly session in Gairsain

Pioneer photo

The LoP said that every time the issue of less sittings of Vidhan Sabha is raised the government gives a ridiculous argument of having less business for the functioning of the house. He said that it is the responsibility of the government to ensure business in the house. Arya suggested that the government should redesign all the existing laws which were borrowed from Uttar Pradesh as per the needs of Uttarakhand.

Arya however added that the Congress will make best use of every second available in the House and will corner the government in the house on the burning issues of the state and try to make it accountable.

The Manglaur MLA Qazi Nizamuddin said that the members have placed more

than 500 questions in the Assembly but it will not be possible for the speaker to take up all the questions due to the short period of the Assembly Session.

The Jaspur MLA Adesh Chauhan also expressed concern at the tendency of the State government to shy away from facing the house

## Tributes paid to Shaila Rani Rawat & Gahtodi on first day of Vidhan Sabha monsoon session

PNS ■ BHARADISAIN

The members of the treasury and opposition benches paid tributes to the late Kedarnath MLA Shaila Rani Rawat and former MLA of Champawat, Kailash Chandra Gahtodi on the opening day of monsoon session of Uttarakhand Assembly on Wednesday. The house paid tributes to Rawat and Gahtodi on a motion of condolence in the house.

ment of Kedarnath constituency. He said that the State has lost a great leader and the void created by her death will be difficult to fill.

He said that Rawat was first elected from Kedarnath Assembly seat in the year 2012 and was later re-elected from this seat in the year 2022.

The CM also expressed grief over the death of former MLA Kailash Chandra

The leader of the house, chief minister Pushkar Singh

the first person who announced vacating his seat for me when I lost the Vidhan Sabha election in 2022. I can never forget his sacrifice," said an emotional CM.

The leader of opposition (LoP) in Vidhan Sabha, Yashpal Arya said that Shaila Rani Rawat has left a deep impact in the society with her dedication and hard work. He said that Rawat was a picture of simplicity and gracefulness. Arya said that Rawat worked for strengthening the Panchayati Raj bodies and was elected to Vidhan Sabha for the first time in the year 2012 on Congress ticket.



Dhama said the death of Rawat is a major loss for the State and the Uttarakhand Vidhan Sabha. He said that she used to stand firmly with the people of her constituency. The CM recalled that Rawat used to remain very concerned for the develop-

Gahtodi. He said that Gahtodi was the chairman of Forest Development Corporation at the time of his death. Dhama termed the death of Gahtodi as a personal loss and said that he was completely dedicated to the development of Champawat. "Gahtodi was

Arya also expressed grief at the death of former MLA Gahtodi. He said that Gahtodi was always concerned about the development of his constituency.

Tributes were also paid to Rawat and Gahtodi by many members of Vidhan Sabha including ministers Prem Chand Agarwal, Satpal Maharaj, Dhan Singh Rawat, Subodh Uniyal, Rekha Arya and Saurabh Bahuguna and deputy leader of Congress legislature party Bhuwan Kapdi.

## Summer capital not visible anywhere in Gairsain: Harish Rawat

PNS ■ BHARADISAIN

Former chief minister and senior Congress leader Harish Rawat observed a symbolic fast in Gairsain on the opening day of the monsoon session of Uttarakhand Vidhan Sabha on Wednesday. He held the protest at Ramlila ground of Gairsain and observed a fast of about an hour there along with other leaders on the government's neglect of Gairsain. Rawat also led a procession of the party workers from the Congress party office. Rawat also held a torch and told the gathering that he is unable to find the summer capital in

Gairsain but he failed to find it.

He said that the people of the State have been cheated by the State government from the last seven-eight years. "The biggest example of this deception with the people here are the singboards mentioning summer capital Gairsain but the capital is nowhere to be seen," he said.

Rawat added that many problems plague Gairsain but the government takes no cognisance.

## Dhama meets parents of youth missing from Kedarnath

PNS ■ BHARADISAIN

Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhama met the family of Himanshu Negi in their village located near Bharadisaan on Wednesday. Negi has been missing from Kedarnath since July 31. The CM assured the family members that every possible effort will be made to find Himanshu. He also directed the District Magistrate (DM) Chamoli Himanshu Khurana to speed up the search



operation in Kedarnath.

The CM met Narendra Singh Negi the father of Himanshu and his grandparents, mother and wife.

## Rawat's protest nothing more than political drama, says BJP

Remaining silent is the only option for Congress as it lacks issues to raise: Bhatt

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Responding to the silent protest staged by former chief minister and senior Congress leader Harish Rawat, the Bharatiya Janata Party said that the Congress is sans issues due to which its leaders have no other option but to remain silent. The BJP State president Mahendra Bhatt said that the Vidhan Sabha is the highest forum for raising issues of public interest in the State. However, considering Rawat's protest, it appears as if he does not have faith in the party's MLAs.

ignored Gairsain when he was the chief minister but is now talking about the lack of development in the area. Rawat lacks issues and the Congress lacks ideas so there is no other option for them but to stage a silent fast in protest," the BJP State president said.

He asked if Rawat lacks confidence in the capability of the Congress MLAs. Bhatt said that the Assembly is the place where public representatives raise issues of public interest. If Rawat wants to raise any important issues like those related to Gairsain, he should have discussed it with the MLAs of his party, who would have raised it in the Assembly. "What is the point in staging a protest on the road outside the Vidhan Sabha when the Assembly is in session? Rawat either lacks confidence in the capability of Congress MLAs to raise

the subject in the Assembly or doubts their intentions. Maybe, he is staging a political drama just to sustain his political existence," Bhatt said.

On the subject of land laws, Bhatt said that all the issues being raised by the Congress now are a result of the BJP's efforts based on its ideology and principles. The public has faith that the BJP will achieve a decisive solution to issues including the development of the State and land laws, the BJP State president added.



## Five arrested for public brawl and raising ruckus in Dehradun

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The police arrested five young men involved in a public brawl and creating a disturbance at a local cafe in Clement Town area of Dehradun late on Tuesday. Out of these five accused, four are college students, the offi-

engaged in a heated altercation, using abusive language and causing chaos reportedly under the influence of alcohol. A team from the Clement Town police station reached the spot to take cognisance of the issue. The officials said that

ing with the involved parties.

However, the five men became increasingly aggressive, escalating the disorder. Given the potential threat to public order, the police arrested all five individuals under Section 170 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) Act, the officials said. The police have identified the arrested accused as Harshit Sharma (21), a resident of Shamli, Uttar Pradesh, Hansraj (22), a resident of Clement Town, Pankaj Singh (23) a resident of Lohaghat, Champawat, Harsh Kumar (23), a resident of Begumpur, Bihar and Vineet (24), a resident of Jhula Ghat, Pithoragarh. Except Vineet, the remaining four accused are students, the officials said.



cials said. They informed that the police received information that five young men were

upon arrival, the police attempted to bring the situation under control by reason-

## Man arrested for killing mother for property

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Police arrested a man on charges of brutally murdering his mother in Haridwar on Wednesday. The Haridwar senior superintendent of police Prameendra Dobhal said that the accused Sawan hit his mother to death using a shovel and a stick in Dhanpura area under the Pathri police station area of the district on Tuesday. He informed that the accused is allegedly a drug addict with a history of criminal activities. He had been allegedly pressuring his mother to transfer the ownership of their house to his name for the past several days. He asked her to transfer the house on his name on Tuesday again. When his mother refused and scolded him for his past criminal behaviour, he lost control and allegedly attacked her with a shovel and a stick, killing her on the spot. After committing

the heinous act, he hid her body in the bathroom and fled the scene, the SSP claimed. He stated that the police managed



to track down and arrest the accused within hours of the crime after getting information of the murder. The police also recovered the murder weapons, including the shovel and stick used in the attack. He will be soon presented in court, he added.

## Four people including pregnant woman killed in Rudrapur

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Four people died in a road accident in Rudrapur, Udham Singh Nagar district early on Wednesday when a speeding car collided with the e-rickshaw they were travelling in. The deceased also included a pregnant woman. Besides this, two other women and the car's driver sustained serious injuries, the officials said. They informed that the incident happened at about 3 AM on Nainital Road.



The pregnant woman along with some family members was returning from a hospital in the wee hours. She had reportedly started experiencing labour pains, due to which she was taken to the hospital late on Tuesday. However, the doctor reportedly told them after examination that the woman is due in one or two days and sent them home. While returning home in an e-rickshaw around 3 AM, a car ramed into it, as per the officials. They informed that the police reached the location after getting information about the accident and took the injured to the district hospital. Doctors declared two women and

they get stable to gather more details about the accident.

The police are yet to determine the exact cause of the accident, the officials added. Besides this, the Udham Singh Nagar senior superintendent of police Manjunath TC also reached at the accident site and obtained detailed information about the incident. He also visited the mortuary to meet the relatives of the deceased and expressed his condolences for the loss. He also visited the hospital to check on the injured.

They include pregnant woman Jyoti, Urmila, Vibha and the e-rickshaw driver Manoj Sahni. The officials informed that the bodies have been sent for post-mortem. The police will also question the injured after

# 16 MPs, 135 MLAs face charges of crimes against women, WB tops: ADR

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 151 sitting MPs and MLAs have declared cases related to crimes against women in their election affidavits, with West Bengal having the highest number of lawmakers facing such cases, according to a recent report by a poll rights body.

For the report, the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) examined 4,693 out of 4,809 affidavits of sitting MPs and MLAs submitted to the Election Commission of India during elections between 2019 and 2024.

The organisation identified 16 MPs and 135 MLAs facing cases related to crimes against women.

West Bengal tops the list with 21 sitting MPs and MLAs facing charges related to crimes against women, followed by Andhra Pradesh with 21 and Odisha with 17,



according to the report that comes amid the nationwide protests over the alleged rape and murder of a trainee doctor in a State-run hospital in Kolkata and sexual assault of two children in Thane.

According to the report, there are 16 sitting MPs and MLAs who have declared cases related to rape under Indian

Penal Code (IPC) section 376, which carries a minimum sentence of 10 years and can be extended to life imprisonment. Of these, two are MPs and 14 MLAs. The charges include repeated offences against the same victim, further underscoring the gravity of these cases. Among political parties, the

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has the highest number of representatives (54 MPs and MLAs) with declared cases related to crimes against women, followed by the Congress with 23 and the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) with 17, according to the report. Both BJP and Congress have five sitting lawmakers each facing rape charges.

The ADR has issued strong recommendations in response to these findings. It stressed on the need for political parties to refrain from giving tickets to candidates with criminal backgrounds, especially those with charges of rape and other crimes against women.

The report called for the fast-tracking of Court cases against MPs and MLAs, ensuring professional and thorough investigations by police. The ADR urged voters to avoid electing candidates with such charges.

# India-US to review defence ties, during Rajnath's four-day visit



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and the US will review the entire gamut of their defence ties during Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's four-day visit there commencing Friday, Defence Ministry announced here on Wednesday. The forthcoming visit will further boost the comprehensive global strategic partnership between the two countries.

In Washington, Rajnath will hold talks with Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan among others.

He is also likely to review the situation in the Indo-Pacific during talks with Austin, sources said. China is flexing its muscle in this strategically crucial region and has all along opposed Quad combine claiming it will lead to militarization of the zone. Quad comprises, India, US, Australia and Japan.

Sources also said Rajnath may also discuss the issue of non-state players using drones to target merchant shipping after the Israel military action in Gaza. India's plan to procure 31 MQ-9B Predator drones, the proposed joint manufacturing of Stryker

infantry combat vehicles and co-production of GE F414 engines in India are likely to figure prominently in Rajnath's parleys with US defence establishment, officials said.

"The visit is expected to further deepen and broaden the India-US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership," the Defence Ministry said announcing Singh's trip to the US from August 23 to 26. "The visit comes in the backdrop of the growing momentum in India-US relations and defence engagements at multiple levels," it said.

Rajnath will also chair a high-level roundtable meeting with the US defence industry on the ongoing and future defence collaborations. He will also interact with the Indian community during the visit. US has emerged as one of the biggest defence exporter to India in the last two decades with figures touching 15 billion dollar mark.



# Desi 700 MW reactor now fully operational

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India's second home-built 700 MW nuclear power reactor at Kakrapar Atomic Power Station (KAPS) in Gujarat on Wednesday started operating at its full capacity, the plant operator said.

The Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) said Unit 4 at KAPS had been operating at 90 per cent capacity before raising it to full power of 700 MWe.

"The full power operation of KAPS-4 after the smooth operation of its twin unit KAPS-3 at full power demonstrates the strength of the first of a kind indigenous 700 MW Pressurised Heavy Water Reactor (PHWR) design," the NPCIL said.

The KAPS-4 unit achieved first criticality on December 17 last year and commenced commercial operations on March 31.

The power level of the unit, which commenced commercial operation on March 31, 2024 was raised in line with the permissions of the regulatory authority, the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB).

India is building 14 more 700 MW nuclear power reactors of the same design which are expected to commence operations progressively by 2031-32.

The NPCIL presently operates a fleet of 24 reactors with a total capacity of 8180 MW and has eight units with a capacity of 6800 MW under construction.

In addition, 10 more reactors with a total capacity of 7000 MW are in pre-project activities. These are expected to be completed progressively, taking the installed nuclear power capacity in the country to 22480 MW by 2031-32, the NPCIL said.



# Shah to review Naxal coordination, security at meeting in Chhattisgarh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will review the inter-state coordination among the Naxal-affected States at a high-level meeting to be held in Chhattisgarh's Raipur on Saturday.

At a separate meeting on the same day, Shah will also review security and development initiatives in Maoists-hit areas of Chhattisgarh, sources said here on Wednesday.

The Chief Secretaries and Directors General of police of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, besides top security officials of the central Government are expected to attend the inter-State coordination meeting.

During his three-day tour of Chhattisgarh, Shah will also visit the Mahaprabhu Vallabhacharya Ashram in Raipur, review the functioning of the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) in the State Capital and attend a meeting related to the Ministry of Cooperation. Earlier, Shah had said after a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Government assumed charge in the Central Indian State late last year, about 125 Naxals were killed, more than 352 arrested and about 175 had surrendered in just five months.

On April 16, security personnel gunned down 29 Naxals, including some senior cadres, in Chhattisgarh's Kanker district. This was the highest number of fatalities suffered by the red ultras in a

single encounter in the history of the State's fight against left-wing extremism.

According to the Union Home Ministry's data, the number of incidents of left-wing extremism has reduced from 14,862 in the decade from 2004 to 2014 to 7,128 from 2014 to 2023.

The number of deaths of security forces personnel due to left-wing extremism has declined by 72 per cent, from 1,750 in the 2004-to-2014 period to 485 between 2014 and 2023, and the number of civilian deaths has declined by 68 per cent, from 4,285 to 1,383, in the said period. The number of districts with violence was 96 in 2010. It declined by 53 per cent to 45 in 2022.

Along with this, the number of police stations reporting violence decreased from 465 in 2010 to 176 in 2022.

In the last five years, more than 5,000 post offices were set up in 90 districts that has Maoists presence or where the ultras had presence in the past. As many as 1,298 bank branches were opened and 1,348 ATMs made operational in the 30 most-affected districts, officials said.

A total of 4,885 mobile towers were constructed at a cost of Rs 2,690 crore in the Naxal-hit areas and 9,356 km of roads were laid at a cost of Rs 10,718 crore.

Local youngsters are being engaged by setting up 121 Eklavya residential schools, 43 ITIs and 38 skill-development centres in the Naxal-affected areas, the officials said.

# EC halts recruitment results in Haryana until Assembly polls

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In order to maintain the level playing field and to ensure that no undue advantage is accrued to anyone, the Election Commission (EC) has directed the Haryana Government not to declare the results of these recruitments till completion of Assembly polls in the State. The Assembly elections in Haryana will be held in a single phase on October 1 and results will be declared on October 4.

The EC's model code instructions do not bar the continuing regular recruitment process or promotion through the UPSC, the State public service commission or the staff selection commission

or any other statutory authority. But States that take "recruitments through non-statutory bodies will require prior clearance of the commission".

The commission took cognisance of a complaint from Congress Leader Jairam Ramesh regarding violation of the MCC in the process of recruitment against 5,600 vacancies for the post of constable in the Haryana Police, 76 posts of two categories of teachers by the HSSC and recruitment for various posts by the HPSC. After ascertaining the facts from the State Government and in view of the existing Model Code of Conduct (MCC) instructions, the commission found no violation of the code in the ongoing

recruitment processes by the Haryana Staff Selection Commission (HSSC) and the Haryana Public Service Commission (HPSC). The commission has found that the recruitment processes were initiated before the announcement of the election on August 16 and is within the existing MCC instructions as stated above, where statutory authorities can continue their work. However, in order to maintain level playing field and to ensure that no undue advantage is accrued to anyone, the EC has directed that announcement of results of these recruitments by the authorities concerned (HSSC and HPSC) will not be released till completion of the Assembly poll in the State.

# Govind to succeed Ajay as Union Home Secretary



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Senior IAS officer Govind Mohan on Thursday will take charge as the new Union Home Secretary from Ajay Kumar Bhalla, who completes his five year tenure at the sensitive post, official sources said. Mohan, a B.Tech from Banaras Hindu University and PG Diploma from IIM, Ahmedabad, was serving as Union Culture Secretary before his appointment to the top bureaucratic post, next only to the Cabinet Secretary.

A 1989 batch IAS officer of Sikkim cadre, Mohan has already joined the Union Home Ministry as an Officer on Special Duty. He has a wide experience of serving both the Sikkim and the Central Governments in various capacities. Mohan is considered to be one of the brilliant officers presently serving in the Government and known for his diligence. He had earlier served the Home Ministry as additional Secretary handling several key divisions, including Union territories.

A seasoned bureaucrat, Mohan was also the Government's key officer during the COVID-19 pandemic and tasked with overseeing implementation of decisions taken for various protocols and ensuring smooth coordination with States.



# IAF aircraft malfunctions, drops air store at Pokhran

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

An IAF fighter aircraft on Wednesday reportedly faced a technical malfunction resulting in the inadvertent release of an "air store" near the Pokhran firing range in Rajasthan, officials said. The incident occurred earlier in the day, prompting air force authorities to initiate an investigation to determine the cause of the technical issue that led to the inadvertent release.

No casualties or damage to property has been reported in the incident.

"An inadvertent release of an air store from an Indian Air Force (IAF) fighter aircraft took place near Pokhran firing range area, due to technical malfunction, today. An enquiry by the IAF has been ordered to investigate into the incident. No damage to life or property has been reported," IAF said in a social media post.

During a routine operation, an unexpected malfunction led to the accidental deployment of an air store, which generally includes munitions, bombs, or other military equipment carried by aircraft. IAF, however, has not disclosed the specific type of air store involved in the incident.

# Brazilian Navy chief visits India for talks on maritime, cooperation, training

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Admiral Marcos Sampaio Olsen, Commander of Brazilian Navy is on an official visit to India from August 19-24. The visit aims to enhance maritime cooperation between the two countries as well as showcases the commitment of like-minded navies to collaborate and cooperate on shared challenges in the maritime security.

He called on Navy chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi here on Wednesday and held discussions on various aspects encompassing operational engagements, technical cooperation, and training.

Indian Navy cooperates with the Brazilian Navy through various initiatives, which include operational interactions, training cooperation and other maritime avenues. The two navies have also been interacting in multilateral forums like MILAN and India-Brazil-South Africa Maritime (IBSAMAR).

Bilateral Defence Cooperation between the two countries is conducted through the Joint Defence Committee, steered by respective Ministries of Defence.

As part of his official engagements, the Commander of Brazilian Navy is also scheduled to meet Defence Secretary, National Maritime Security Coordinator, and Vice Chief of Army Staff in Delhi.

During this visit, Admiral Marcos Sampaio Olsen would also visit Information Fusion Centre - Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) at Gurugram and will hold interaction with various Defence Industry representatives.

In addition to New Delhi, the Commander of Brazilian Navy, would also visit Mumbai, where he would be interacting with Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Western Naval Command, as well as visit indigenous warships and submarines, Naval Dockyard and Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders limited.

# Empowering women in tribal Odisha linked to improved child nutrition: Study

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

The adage 'Educate a woman, and you educate an entire family' holds good in the realm of child nutrition too, as has been confirmed by a team of researchers who in their recent study found that empowering females women in tribal areas of Odisha, India, significantly improved child nutrition and reduced underweight and wasted children.

The study is crucial given India's pressing health challenge as highlighted by the 2023 National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4) which reports that over 40 per cent of tribal children are underweight and stunted, and about 30 per cent are wasted.

Published in PLOS ONE, the study analysed the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) to measure empowerment among 1,900 farm households.

It found that women's empowerment in agricultural decision-making, income, and access to resources led to better household dietary diversity and higher weight-for-age and weight-for-height scores in children.

However, the study also suggested that complementary interventions are necessary to enhance dietary diversity further. Sylvester Ogutu, a researcher for the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT and the paper's lead author, explained that by using this score and then comparing it to outcomes like the number of different foods found in the household and the weight



of children for their age, a clear picture emerged.

"As primary care-givers, the empowerment of women contributes to improved child nutrition, health, and education," he said and added, "Women's empowerment in agricultural input use, sales, income, and other (access to credit, group membership and employment) decision-making domains was associated with fewer underweight and wasted children."

Jonathan Mockshell, an agricultural economist at the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, study lead, and a coauthor of the paper chipped in saying that in terms of the effects of women's empowerment on the household dietary diversity score (HDDS) — a snapshot of the economic ability of a household to access a variety of foods dietary diversity — the study found women's empowerment contributes to

improved food production and dietary diversity.

"The magnitude of the effect of women's empowerment on dietary diversity was relatively small, which suggests that complementary interventions may be required to achieve higher household dietary diversity," he said in the study, "Women's empowerment, household dietary diversity, and child anthropometry among vulnerable populations in Odisha, India". The researchers also measured the height and weight of children and discovered that women's empowerment significantly increased children's weight-for-age z-scores (WAZ), and weight-for-height z-scores (WHZ), but not their height-for-age scores (HAZ).

"The improvements in the z-scores contributed to reduced prevalence of underweight and wasting in children with mother's with a higher empowerment score," Mockshell said.

# Congress blames hydel projects for Sikkim landslides, environmental damage

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In the wake of landslides in Sikkim, the Congress on Wednesday hit out at the Government and said hydel projects in ecologically fragile regions have been coming up over the past few years without giving adequate thought to their cumulative environmental impact. The Opposition party also asserted that dams on the Teesta river are the prime example of how ecology is being fundamentally altered with grave consequences for this and future generations.

A massive landslide struck east Sikkim on Tuesday, damaging parts of a 510-mw hydroelectric project on the Teesta river.

The landslide happened at Dipu Dara near Singtam in Gangtok district around 7.30 am, causing significant



damage to the powerhouse of the Teesta Stage V hydroelectric project of the NHPC.

In a statement, Congress General Secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said a series of landslide disasters in Sikkim has substantially damaged the Teesta V, a 510 MW hydel power station on the Teesta. This disaster comes on the

heels of the Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOF) and riverine floods in the Teesta River basin in October 2023, which caused massive devastation in Sikkim and Kalimpong, West Bengal, he noted. The Union Budget, unveiled in July 2024, had a section dedicated to 'Irrigation and Flood Mitigation,' where Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman

made the vague promise of "assistance" without any details of funds for Sikkim, he said. "In a classic case of the Government's confrontational federalism, the Budget was indifferent to the areas in West Bengal which were equally affected," Ramesh said. "The obvious vendetta politics aside, the Budget announcements were insufficient - what the entire region needs is for a development framework that centres ecological dimensions, the case for which has become apparent from the cascading series of disasters in the last year," the former Environment Minister argued.

National Highway 10, the lifeline of Sikkim and Kalimpong, runs along the Teesta and has been in a precarious State with frequent landslides and closures, he pointed out.

# Will resign willingly if need arises: Union Minister Kumaraswamy

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Union Minister H D Kumaraswamy on Wednesday said he will willingly resign if the need arises unlike Chief Minister Siddaramaiah who found fault with Governor Thawarchand Gehlot's permission to investigate and prosecute him in the Mysuru Urban Development Authority land allotment 'scam'.

Reacting to the Chief Minister's allegation that the Governor was not giving consent to prosecute him, Kumaraswamy asked what stops Siddaramaiah from approaching the Supreme Court against him in connection with the alleged scam related to Sri Sai Venkateshwara Minerals. Lokayukta's Special Investigation Team has once again submitted a proposal to the Governor on Monday seeking permission to file a charge-sheet against Kumaraswamy in the alleged illegal mining lease case. The SIT had first requested Gehlot's nod in November last year to prosecute the Union Minister for Heavy Industries and Steel, who had allegedly granted mining



lease to the private firm when he was the Chief Minister in 2007 in violation of law. The Chief Minister on Wednesday reiterated that the Governor sanctioned in haste case against him. Accusing the Governor of discriminating against him, Siddaramaiah said Lokayukta's recommendation to prosecute Kumaraswamy has been pending with Gehlot since November 2023. Kumaraswamy, the Union Minister for Heavy Industries and Steel, said he has seen the statements of Virajpet MLA and legal advisor to the Chief Minister A S Ponnanna and some other ministers

# Install CCTV cameras in one month, schools told after Badlapur incident

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Following the incident of sexual abuse at a school in Badlapur, the Maharashtra government on Wednesday issued a directive to all the schools in the state to install CCTV cameras on their premises within a month. The failure to comply with the order may result in severe consequences such as revocation of the permission to operate, said the order issued by School Education Minister Deepak Kesarkar. Protests have broken out in many parts of the state following the alleged sexual abuse of two kindergarten girls at a school in Badlapur near Mumbai. A school attendant was arrested in the case. "All private schools in the state are required to comply with new guidelines from the department, mandating the installation of CCTV cameras at appropriate locations within school premises. Failure to comply may result in actions such as withholding financial grants or revocation of the school's

operating permit," the order said. Installation of a comprehensive CCTV camera network is a proactive measure to enhance the safety and security of students, teachers and staff, it said. The school education department has also permitted the use of five per cent of the funds allocated for schools in the District Planning and Development Council to establish CCTV camera networks in state-run and aided schools. Further, the CCTV footage should be examined at least three times a week, and it would be the principal's responsibility to contact police if any concerning incident is captured by the cameras, the order said. The department also instructed school managements to conduct thorough background checks of all employees with the assistance of the local police station. Schools should provide the local police station the details and photographs of their employees, it added.

# Hema panel report: UDF demands apology from CM

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Opposition Congress-led UDF on Wednesday rejected Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's claim that Justice Hema had herself requested that the expert panel's report on the film industry not be made public, calling it a 'blatant lie' and 'hypocrisy'.

Addressing a press conference here, opposition leader V D Satheesan said Justice Hema, who helmed the three-member panel, had never asked the government not to release it.

The CM tried to mislead everyone by telling lies, and his reply that the government had always been with the victims was nothing but "hypocrisy", he alleged.

The Leader of the Opposition also released the purported letter Justice Hema reportedly sent to the government. Accusing the government of protecting the "hunters" for the last four and a half years after the panel submitted its report, he further charged that Vijayan's expectation was that the letter would never come out.

"In the letter, the Hema committee had not asked the government not to release the report but to follow the



directions of the Supreme Court while releasing it," he said. The direction of the apex court is not to disclose the names of victims, but it is not an obstacle to taking action on the report. "This is nothing new. This is not a bar to taking action on the report. There are references to incidents in the report that require prosecution even under POCSSO Act," Satheesan said. It is also a criminal offence if a person, who knows that a crime has been committed, conceals it or fail to report it, he pointed out and accused the Chief Minister and other ministers of committing the offence by sitting on it silently without taking any action.

The LoP further alleged that a series of crimes had taken place, and there is evidence to prove the same. So, a team of women IPS officers should investigate the case, he demanded. But the CM is "lying" without being prepared for an investigation, he charged. The LoP called on Chief Minister Vijayan to apologise for his allegedly misleading claims about the letter penned by Justice Hema. He warned the government of street protests if it doesn't act upon the report findings. Satheesan also urged the CM and the Law Minister to explain what the legal hurdles were in registering cases when there are statements of victims.

# PMLA case: Hearing on Senthil's appeal adjourned to Aug 28

PTI ■ CHENNAI

The Madras High Court on Wednesday adjourned the hearing on former Tamil Nadu Minister V Senthil Balaji's appeal against a sessions court order refusing to discharge him from a money laundering case. A division bench comprising Justices S M Subramaniam and V Sivagnanam adjourned to August 28, the hearing on the appeal at the request of advocate Gouthaman, appearing for Senthil Balaji. When the case came up for hearing, Additional Solicitor General A R L Sundaresan submitted charges had been framed against Senthil Balaji in the money laundering case by Principal Sessions Judge S Alli and the trial also commenced by examining a prosecution witness. The trial was posted to August 22 for cross examination, he added. Advocate Gouthaman, appearing for Balaji, sought time to argue the case.



Posting the case to August 28, the bench said the trial which has already commenced may go on. Balaji was arrested on June 14, 2023 by the Enforcement Directorate in connection with a money laundering case linked to a cash-for-jobs scam when he was the Transport Minister during an earlier AIADMK regime.

# Bihar decides to launch 'social register' to create database of beneficiaries

PTI ■ PATNA

The Bihar government on Wednesday decided to launch a family-based 'social register' to create a database of beneficiaries of welfare schemes of the state. The decision was taken during a cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar. The council of ministers approved a proposal by the Information Technology Department to launch the 'social register' which will act as a Unified Service Delivery Platform, Cabinet Secretariat's Additional Chief Secretary S Siddharth told reporters after the meeting. The department will prepare a unified platform, which will be called 'Bihar-One', for the purpose, he said. "The aim of launching this register is to develop a database of all beneficiaries who are availing of government welfare schemes in the state," Siddharth said. In future, those who want to avail benefits of such welfare schemes will have to first register themselves with the portal and each individual



will be allotted a specific registry number, he said. "With the help of that number, the government can find out details about benefits of the schemes that are being availed by an individual in the state," the official said. The social registry system will also reduce fraud and duplication of beneficiaries and provide a monitoring mechanism for the living standards, he said. The department will spend Rs 85.23 crore in developing the 'social register', he said, adding that the process will start very soon. The cabinet also decided to reduce registration charges on new vehicles to prevent loss of revenue, said the ACS, adding that the decision has been taken in view of the lower motor vehicle registration charges in the neighbouring states. It was also decided in the cabinet meeting that the government will soon launch vaccination for girls in the age group of 9 to 14 years for the prevention of cervical cancer. "The government will provide such vaccines at all government health facilities in the state. The state government will invest Rs 150 crore in the procurement of such vaccines for the purpose, he said.

# 28 children died of Chandipura virus since July in Gujarat: Minister

PTI ■ GANDHINAGAR

Chandipura virus has claimed the lives of 28 children under the age of 14 in Gujarat since the first case was reported in July, the state legislative assembly was informed on Wednesday. Responding to a 'short notice question' by AAP MLA Umesh Makwana, health minister Rushikesh Patel told the House that Gujarat has so far reported 164 cases of viral encephalitis, caused by certain pathogens including the Chandipura virus, with 101 children succumbing to the infection. Of these 164 cases detected so far, 61 were caused by the Chandipura virus, he said. Chandipura virus causes fever, with symptoms similar to flu, and acute encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). It is transmitted by vectors like mosquitoes, ticks and sandflies. He said the sandfly, which carries the Chandipura virus, lives in the cracks of mud houses that are very common in the hinterland. "So far, 101 children under



the age of 14 have died due to acute encephalitis. Of these, 28 have died due to Chandipura virus infection, while 73 succumbed to encephalitis caused by other viral infections," said Patel. The minister said 63 children were discharged after treatment, while four were still under medical care. The situation is under control, he said and stressed that no new case has been reported in the past week and no death has been reported for the last 12 days. According to the minister, the government has launched a drive across the state for vector control and

# Lay proper motorable roads in Kalvarayan Hills: HC to TN Govt

PTI ■ CHENNAI

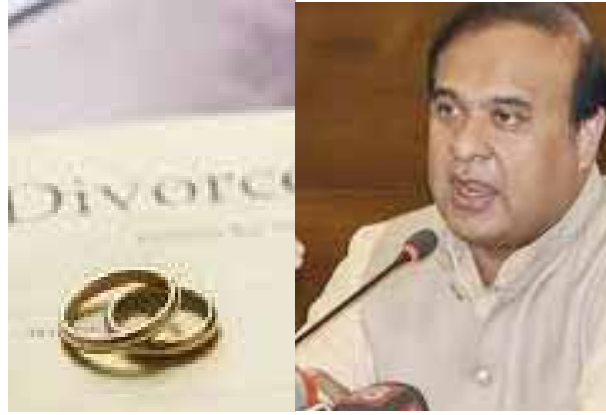
The Madras High Court on Wednesday directed the Tamil Nadu government to ensure proper motorable roads were laid in Kalvarayan Hills in Kallakurichi district. A division bench comprising Justices S M Subramaniam and V Sivagnanam gave the directive while passing further interim orders on proceedings initiated by it, pursuant to the Kallakurichi hooch tragedy that left over 60 persons dead. The bench said the State government should also ensure adequate doctors and nurses were available in Primary Health Centres in

Kalvarayan Hills, besides teachers in schools. When the case came up for hearing, Additional Advocate General J Ravindran submitted a status report and said the state government was taking steps to provide all infrastructure facilities to the people living in Kalvarayan hills. After it was pointed out that people living there were not provided with ration cards, the bench directed the state government to conduct a special camp within four weeks and provide ration cards, Aadhar Card and Voter ID cards to them. The bench posted for September 19, further hearing of the case.

# Assam to table Bill for compulsory registration of marriage, divorce of Muslims: Himanta

PTI ■ BHOPAL

The Assam government will introduce a bill in the upcoming Autumn Session of Assembly for compulsory government registration of marriage and divorce of Muslim people, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said. Addressing a press conference after a cabinet meeting, Sarma said the government will table the Assam Compulsory Registration of Muslim Marriage and Divorce Bill, 2024 during the upcoming session, which will begin on Thursday. "Earlier, Muslim marriages were registered by the Kazis. However, this new bill will ensure that all marriages of the community will be registered with the government," he added. Sarma also claimed that mar-



riages of minors were also registered by the Kazis earlier, but the proposed bill will prohibit any such move. "Now, minor marriage registration will not happen at all. We want to end the menace of child marriage. So, the marriages will be registered at the Sub-Registrar's Office," he added, citing cabinet decisions. Sarma said that there will not be any restriction on the rituals followed by Muslims during the marriage ceremonies, but only the registration by the Kazis has been restricted.

# MP Govt transfers nine IAS officers

PTI ■ BHOPAL

In yet another bureaucratic reshuffle this month, the Madhya Pradesh government has transferred nine Indian Administrative Services (IAS) officers with Sukhveer Singh being appointed as the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of the state. The government issued the transfer order on Tuesday night. Sukhveer Singh, a 1997-batch IAS officer posted as the Principal Secretary of Horticulture and Food Processing till now, will replace Anupam Rajan. Rajan, a 1993 batch officer, has been transferred as the Principal Secretary of Higher Education Department. Amit Rathore, a 1996 batch officer, has been appointed as the Principal Secretary of the Finance Department.



He was holding the charge of the Commercial Tax Department. Shriman Shukla, a 2007 batch officer, has been transferred as the Divisional Commissioner of Shahdol division. On August 10, the state government had carried out a major bureaucratic reshuffle, transferring 26 IAS officers, including eight district collectors and 21 Indian Police Services (IPS) officers.

# Monsoon to remain active in east Rajasthan for another week

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Monsoon will remain active in eastern parts of Rajasthan for one more week, the meteorological department here said on Wednesday. Heavy rains pounded many districts, including the capital Jaipur, in the last 24 hours, it said. Radheshyam Sharma, in-charge of Jaipur Meteorological Centre, said a low pressure area was formed on Wednesday, raising a strong possibility of monsoon being active in many parts of eastern Rajasthan over the next one week. During this period, moderate to heavy rains are likely in some parts of Bharatpur, Jaipur, Ajmer, Kota, and Udaipur divisions. There is also a possibility of heavy rains at some places in Kota and Udaipur districts and Jaipur division for the next 5-6 days. Sharma said light to moderate rains are likely in some parts of Jodhpur and Bikaner divisions of western Rajasthan for the next two-three days. According to weather data in the past 24 hours till 8:30 am on Wednesday, Jaipur tehsil was the wettest in the state recording a maximum rainfall of 85 mm, followed by 78 mm rains in Rajakheda of Dholpur, 65 mm in Gandhar of Jhalawar, 42 mm in Kushalgarh of Banswara.

# Mizoram yet to collect biometric data of refugees taking shelter in State: Minister

PTI ■ AIZWAL

The Mizoram government is yet to collect biometric data of refugees from neighbouring countries taking shelter in the state, Home Minister K Sapdanga told the assembly on Wednesday. In a written reply to a query of opposition Mizo National Front (MNF) MLA Robert Romawia Royte, the Home minister said that the matter is being discussed with

the Centre. "The state government is currently in talks with the Ministry of Home Affairs over the collection of biometric data of the refugees," the Home minister said. Sapdanga said that 33,724 Myanmarese nationals and 2,014 Zo ethnic people from Bangladesh took shelter in the state as per the record of state home department, as of August 13.



Besides, 7,999 internally displaced people from Manipur also took refuge in the state, he said. The Myanmarese people mostly from the Chin state,

who share ethnic ties with the Mizo, have been taking shelter in Mizoram since the military takeover in February 2021, while the Bawm people, one of the Mizo tribes, from Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) migrated to the northeastern state in November 2022, officials said. The Kuki-Zo people from Manipur, who also share ethnic ties with Mizos, have been taking shelter in Mizoram since May 2023 due

to ethnic violence in neighbouring Manipur, they said. Earlier, Chief Minister Lalduhoma had said that biometric enrollment portal has been in place for collection of the data and it will be utilised in near future. He had said that the biometric enrollment portal was prepared in accordance with the advice of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home minister Amit Shah.

In April last year, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs had directed the governments of both Mizoram and Manipur, which share borders with Myanmar, to capture the biometric and biographic details of "illegal immigrants" in their states. In June, it directed the states that the campaign be completed by the end of September and directed both to prepare a plan and initiate the process.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## The Govt steps back

The Government withdraws lateral entry into bureaucracy amid opposition from its allies

The government has decided to withdraw its initiative on lateral entry into the civil services. This decision comes in the wake of mounting opposition from its political allies, who raised concerns over the potential implications of such a policy shift. However, this withdrawal would put the clock back on the Government's desire to infuse the bureaucracy with fresh talent from the private sector and other domains, aiming to bring specialised skills and perspectives into the administration. Lateral entry, as a concept, was introduced to bridge the gap between the skills required for contemporary governance and the traditional expertise within the civil services. By allowing professionals from various fields—such as finance, technology, and social sciences—to enter the bureaucracy at senior levels, the government aimed to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of public administration. This initiative was seen as a way to inject new ideas and innovation into a system often criticised for being slow, rigid, and out of touch with modern realities. But it was not well taken by the Opposition and the BJP allies alike.



Critics argued that lateral entry could undermine the foundational principles of the Indian civil services, which have historically emphasised neutrality, continuity, and a deep understanding of the country's socio-political landscape. This policy, they claimed, might lead to a dilution of these values, creating a disconnect between the administration and the people it serves. This is indeed a valid point as the professionals in the private sector do not have the training and mindset to serve the people, they are more focused on achieving targets and making profits. This does not go well

with the public office which has to be more sympathetic to people's aspirations even if the cost is high. Another major concern, and that is more pronounced in the Indian context, was that lateral entry could become a tool for political patronage. It was feared that the process could be manipulated to favour individuals with political connections, thus compromising the meritocratic nature of the civil services. Surely, it could lead to the politicisation of the bureaucracy, further eroding public trust in the system. Besides, bypassing the traditional recruitment process could create resentment among career bureaucrats. The decision to withdraw the lateral entry initiative reflects a pragmatic recognition of the political realities at play. While the government may have been convinced of the merits of the policy, the need to maintain a cohesive and supportive alliance outweighed the potential benefits of pushing forward with a contested reform. For now, the Government's retreat on lateral entry is a reminder of the delicate interplay between policy and politics. While the idea of bringing in fresh talent from outside the civil services is laudable, the concerns raised by political allies cannot be ignored. Moving forward, any attempt to reform the bureaucracy will need to address these concerns head-on, ensuring that innovation does not come at the cost of values.

## PICTALK



People perform Shrawani Purnima rituals while taking bath in the Ganga river, in Varanasi

PTI

## Raj Kapoor's deep bond with Delhi: A legacy of cinema

Raj Kapoor's relationship with the capital remains an enduring part of his legacy, etched in the memories of cinema halls and the city's cultural fabric

As fans gear up to celebrate the birth centenary of Bollywood's legendary showman Raj Kapoor on December 14th, it is essential to remember his deep-rooted connection with Delhi—a city that was almost like a second home to him. Kapoor's association with Delhi was profound, and this bond will be celebrated in a grand event in the capital on his birth anniversary.



Kapoor had a special affinity for Delhi's iconic cinema halls, particularly Regal and Moti, where he preferred his films to be premiered. Regal, one of New Delhi's first cinema halls, held a special place in his heart. It was here that some of his most celebrated films, including "Sangam," "Mera Naam Joker," "Satyam Shivam Sundaram," "Boot Polish," and "Jis Desh Mein Ganga Behti Hai," were released.

The RK Banner films consistently performed well in the capital, further cementing Kapoor's connection with the city. As Pandit J.P. Sharma "Tripathi," a close family friend, recalls, even Kapoor's father, Prithviraj Kapoor, had acted in plays at Regal, which showcased both English and Hindi productions in its early days. Sadly, Regal closed its doors

in 2017, with Moti following suit shortly after. Shashi Kapoor, Raj Kapoor's younger brother, fondly remembered his visits to Regal with his elder brother. For Shashi, Regal was more than just a cinema hall; it was a place filled with memories of Raj Kapoor.

Raj Kapoor's connection with Delhi was not limited to cinema alone. His tryst with the city began in 1957 when he produced the film "Ab Dilli Door Nahin." The film also marked one of the early appearances of a young Amjad Khan, who would later become famous as Gabbar Singh. "Ab Dilli Door Nahin" captured various iconic locations in Delhi, including the old iron bridge over the Yamuna, Daryaganj, and Connaught Place.

Kapoor's relationship with Delhi deepened further in 1970 when his eldest daughter, Ritu, married Rajan Nanda, son of H.P. Nanda, the founder chairman of the Escorts Group. Raj Kapoor would often visit his daughter's home in Jor Bagh whenever he was in town, strengthening his bond with Delhi. The Kapoor family's connection

with Delhi extended beyond Raj Kapoor. His younger brother, Shammi Kapoor, had a different association with the city's cinema culture. In the mid-1960s, Shammi Kapoor became a partner in Plaza Cinema in Connaught Place, along with film producer F.C. Mehra. While he later sold his stake, Shammi Kapoor remains the only member of the Kapoor clan to have held a stake in a cinema hall.

Raj Kapoor's fondness for his younger brother Shashi was evident, with the former often treating the latter as a son. Shashi Kapoor's early film "Householder," directed by James Ivory and produced by Ismail Merchant, was primarily shot in a large house near Times House in Daryaganj. "Householder," written by Ruth Praver Jhabvala, featured two of Delhi's iconic landmarks, Jantar Mantar and Jama Masjid. The Kapoor family's connection with Delhi is deeply rooted, with their memories continuing to be cherished in the city.

(The writer is a journalist and a columnist; views are personal)



VIVEK SHUKLA

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# J&K gears up for historic elections

For the first time since the revocation of Article 370 and the bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir in 2019, the region is set to hold its Assembly elections



KALYANI SHANKAR

Jammu and Kashmir will have Assembly elections from September 18 to October 1 to elect 90 legislators, the first after the revocation of Article 370 and the state's bifurcation in August 2019. The delay in holding new elections has been a contention for years. However, a recent Supreme Court directive was crucial in setting the timeline. Now that the elections are announced, political parties of all shades welcomed it. Kashmir has been a significant source of conflict for long between India and Pakistan. Both countries claim Kashmir, although they only govern a part of it. Pakistan has even internationalised the issue, which has been brought to the United Nations. In 2019, mixed reactions followed Modi's decision to divide the state.

This decision led to Kashmir losing its flag, criminal code, and constitutional protections. Government job opportunities for Kashmiris decreased and are now open to non-residents. Despite challenges, the state has seen both positive and negative changes. The Prime Minister's initiatives have spurred development, and the growing interest of Gulf countries in investing in Jammu and Kashmir signals a promising future, bringing hope to the residents. The Ministry of Home Affairs reports decreased security force casualties from 80 in 2019 to 33 in 2023 and a drop in civilian deaths from 44 in 2019 to 12 in 2023. The last state elections were in 2014. The high voter turnout in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls has led to Assembly polls. In Kashmir, there was a historic 58.46% voter turnout in the recent parliamentary elections, a 30-point increase from the 2019 general election. The government completed a delimitation exercise after the 2019 revocation of Article 370 and the bifurcation. The assembly seats in Jammu and Kashmir increased from 87 to 114 after the 2022 delimitation, including 24 seats for Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). This increase in seats could potentially shift the balance of power and influence the strategies of political parties in the upcoming elec-



tions. The BJP claimed that the scrapping of Article 370 and their subsequent policies in Kashmir had developed the region for the better. The recently concluded Lok Sabha elections in Jammu and Kashmir were a significant victory for Indian democracy. In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the NC and PDP saw a resurgence.

The election allowed them to revitalise their membership and bring long-standing issues to the forefront. Although the Congress did not secure any seats, the NC won two out of three, presenting a strong challenge for the third seat. Despite the region's history of terrorism and allegations of rigged elections, the polls were widely celebrated for the conduct of free and fair polls. The upcoming election will test the central government's efforts to integrate Jammu and Kashmir more fully into the Indian Union after revoking the region's special status under Article 370.

It is also a test for the Election Commission to conduct polls without any violent incidents. The political parties have started preparing for the upcoming assembly elections, including campaign strategy, alliances, and candidate selection. The People's Conference, Congress,



THE UPCOMING ELECTION WILL TEST THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO INTEGRATE JAMMU AND KASHMIR MORE FULLY INTO THE INDIAN UNION AFTER REVOKING THE REGION'S SPECIAL STATUS UNDER ARTICLE 370

Peoples Democratic Party, and National Conference met to plan for the elections. The political parties have started preparing for the upcoming assembly elections, including campaign strategy, alliances, and candidate selection.

The People's Conference, Congress, Peoples Democratic Party, and National Conference have all met at their party level to plan for the elections. If the assembly elections are held as scheduled, the Valley will see a contest between the NC and the PDP. Moreover, the polarisation and separatist narrative that gained traction during the Lok Sabha elections will only intensify and peak during the assembly elections.

The PDP leader and daughter of Mehbooba Mufti echoed the others. Other political parties, including the Congress, the BJP, the CPI(M) and the Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP), welcomed the EC's announcement.

In the 2014 Jammu and Kashmir elections, no party won a majority. Governor's Rule was imposed for 49 days until PDP's Mehbooba Mufti was appointed chief minister with BJP's support. 2018, the BJP withdrew from the ruling alliance, leading to the Governor's Rule again. The

assembly was dissolved in November 2018, and President's Rule was imposed in December 2018. Since then, the governor's Rule has been in the state.

The government needs to decide whether to intervene in the Kashmir Valley to address soft separatism or consider a reorganisation plan before the elections. During the parliamentary elections, Congress and the NC allied. The NC contested three seats in Kashmir, while Congress contested in Jammu and Udhampur. PDP, part of the INDIA Alliance, was not accommodated and fielded candidates on three seats in Kashmir against the National Conference. For the upcoming Assembly polls, the scene is not explicit. Congress and NC might go together. Omar mentioned that allying with the PDP would be difficult because they ran against each other in the parliament elections. If the regional parties want to improve, they must unite, and the INDIA Bloc must collaborate. The Kashmir elections are crucial, and the entire country will observe a popular government's rise after a decade.

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

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### CAPITAL PUNISHMENT FOR RAPE

Madam — All eyes may be on Supreme Court hearings with respect to the Kolkata case but time shouldn't die down and the government can't be numb further on this issue. The pains undergoing by the parents of the victim as well as the fear in the minds of the medicos when they enter into a hospital for their work need to be realised by the law making authorities. It's time to burn the culprits and not the candles. The time has come for the government to pass a bill for capital punishment for rapists. When currency can be changed overnight, when special session can be called to increase the salary of politicians, when parliament can remain open all night for trust votes, wondering what is delaying to pass a stringent law against rape.

The State of West Bengal must be taught a lesson by enforcing the President's role till the case gets cracked and culprits taken to task. Only drastic change like this will also become a lesson for other states to adhere caution and to protect the women from this society. The female MPs in the parliament must take this up as a cause of their own and today it may be somebody's and tomorrow this can happen at their own house can't be ruled out.

A.P. Thiruvadi | Chennai

### REAL HERO

Madam — Amid the dance of death and destruction in Wayanad, humanity dawned. Darkness gets a relief when the sun softly touches it at dawn. Our pessimism and doubt in goodness in human beings similarly got a relief. It was when we read the report that some people on their own rushed to the danger zone in Wayanad and saved others at the cost of their lives. Sharath saw that the roof of his home had been blown away after landslides hit Chooramala on July 30. Immediately, he took his parents to a safer place. But he did not stop there. He rescued 18

## Saga of champai Soren!



Sixty eight year-old Champai Soren, who was the Chief Minister of Jharkhand for a few weeks, is in the headlines of newspapers these days. Some are saying that he will join BJP, some are predicting that he will form a new party, some are assessing that he will join JDU. But three days have passed since this news break but it has not come to fruition yet. He is still silent, yes, his intention has definitely become clear that after four decades, the people of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, with whose help he became famous,

before he went missing. Prajeesh ventured up the hill with his jeep the moment the first landslides hit Mundakkai at the small hours. It was pitch dark as landslides thrashed electricity connections. He made the second trip after rescuing many lives in his first mission. After his successful second trip, rescuing several lives, he was last seen in his jeep, setting off for his third attempt.

They have reiterated the scientific discovery that says all living human beings are relatives and have originated from one woman. Research has shown that fragments of the mitochondrial genome carried by all humans alive today can be traced to a single woman ancestor living an estimated 150,000 to 200,000 years ago. This woman, known as "Mitochondrial Eve", lived in Africa. You and I, irrespective of our religion, race, class, caste, country, colour, or gender carry the same genome of that mother. The whole humanity is one!

Sujit De | Kolkata

insulted him. He should remember very well what was the fate of Geeta Koda, Congress MP from Singhbhum parliamentary constituency, when she jumped to BJP at the last moment in the last Lok Sabha elections? She was neither here nor there. The mystery of Champai Soren's future is going on for a long time because he played the game of rebellion thinking that all the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha MLAs of Kolhan will come with him. But nothing like that happened. Nor is it going to happen in the future.

It is quite possible that he may lose the election from his constituency Saraikela as well. Because in the last assembly elections in the entire Kolhan, BJP was wiped out. Therefore, even though the people here call Champai the "Tiger of Jharkhand", they will never tolerate rebellion against JMM. Therefore, for the time being, it seems that Champai Soren's political life has come to an end.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

### SAFETY AT SCHOOLS

Madam — Schools are noble and honorable places where students learn humility, humanity, compassion, benevolence, respect for others, and how to abandon violence and corruption. They foster unity, peace, and a spirit of togetherness.

Unfortunately, today, schools have become places of fear and distress. Instances of student suicides due to teachers' cruelty, conflicts among students, vandalism on campus, and incidents like the recent Udaipur stabbing have left parents frightened and apprehensive about sending their children to school. Why is this happening? Why aren't government schools especially peaceful anymore? We heard a lot about shooting in the US schools and wondered why that happens but now it is happening in our own country. A close look is needed.

Jakir Hussain | Kanpur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



## FIRST COLUMN

### THE DIVINE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Aligning with this divine justice system is essential for realising true justice and harmony in life



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

Along with the Creation, God has set in place a perfect justice system. This is overseen by the Divine Authority under the superintendence of God. (The Bhagavad-Geeta 9.10) The Divine Authority is required to record all our acts by the mind, words and the body 24x7. Obviously, they have access to them. They are required by God to decide awards and punishments according to the guidelines given by Him. God does not interfere in this, and we keep on getting rewards and punishments as deserved life after life according to the 'Karmaphala Principle', which is: "what we sow we reap." Going into details, there are three parts of this.

There is 'prarabdha' (acts done earlier), 'kriyamana' (acts currently being done) and 'svabhava' (nature). What was done earlier including past lives, which has not been acted upon is carried forward till rewarded or punished. This process goes on eternally. The timing of rewards and punishments are decided by the Divine Authority. God knows what is being done, but does not interfere in it.

God gets into the act only if someone, mostly a devotee having God's consciousness, approaches Him for relief/pardon. If the request is found appropriate, God helps those approaching Him in order to deal with their punishments, i.e. makes them tolerable. (18.58) In this connection, it is necessary to point out that nature of all souls are also results of past karmas (deeds), as determined by the Divine Authority. It is very difficult to change one's nature by self-help. For example, if someone is lusty,



he or she will continue to be so during his entire life, unless God intervenes and helps in improving it. Again, we have to pray for it. These are the basics. Now let us see how it turns out practically. Take up a soul as an example. He has past karmas, which are due for rewards and punishments in this life. They manifest at their appointed times.

A man gets into an argument with his brother for his share in the paternal property. He decides to seek legal help. This is stage one of the justice system. Now it is 'Panchayat' at the village level or a court of justice. Such courts deliver justice based on man-made laws. These authorities deliver justice expeditiously, i.e. not taking too much time. But they must do justice, in which 'dharma' (highest religious principles) is the basis, wherever they have some latitude. Failing which, they create their faulty destiny; they just act as mediums. Whatever happens to a person has been decided long ago. That is how astrologers can predict what will happen to us.

At every stage of the legal process, rewards and punishments, as destined only, keep coming. If the person concerned is fated to get relief, it will happen in a higher court. Vice versa is also true. God has no pre-conceived or prejudiced notion towards anyone, except if someone takes His shelter, as mentioned earlier. Like all of us, nations have also destiny. This is a cumulative total of fate of all its residents. Let me take up India for example.

The 21st century is likely to be dominated by India. If it is true and India will become a developed nation by 2047, then, its judicial system has to be functioning smoothly. It must have been streamlined. There will be no delay in the delivery of judgements, i.e. there will be time-bound at every stage. Justice delayed is justice denied will be a thing of the past. There will be adequate judicial infrastructure with sufficient resources. But for this miracle to happen, some people in authority have to become mediums. For this, they will be rewarded personally according to the karmaphala principle. The divine justice system is foolproof. Are people in authority listening? It will be a shame if an opportunity like this is squandered; whatever is destined will surely happen. The question is: who would become mediums and get credit? This has been left to individuals.

(The writer is a spiritual teacher; views are personal)

# Streamlining Punjab's administrative web



A S MITTAL

To unlock the State's true potential, there is an urgent need for structural reforms that prioritise smooth operations, accountability and stakeholder engagement

It's time for the complex web of multiple organisations of the Punjab government to take cues from the Indian Army's well-structured organisational hierarchy, which prioritises efficient command, control, and operational efficiency to maintain readiness. From a Havaldar leading a section, the smallest unit comprising ten soldiers, to the Chief of the Army Staff, the Army meticulously ensures cohesive functioning, distinct roles, and responsibilities, enabling the 14.55 lakh personnel to effectively fulfil defence and security roles. In contrast, the Punjab government's organisational structure (4.15 lakh personnel, including contractual and outsourced) requires an overhaul. In total, 50 parent departments and 163 affiliated organisations, each with its administrative head, aim for seamless result-oriented operations, which are below expectations. In the current government, the Chief Minister, who also oversees the industry sector, plays a pivotal role. However, the current structure, with around 20 administrative secretaries heading 17 departments, corporations, boards, and regulatory authorities, is not conducive to growth. By fostering a culture of collaboration, we can overcome these hurdles and drive efficiency and accountability towards a single goal of industrial growth, which has the potential to exceed the current stagnation of around 3% over the past 20 years in Punjab. Unfortunately, the complexity of multiple departments cannot achieve the single target of developing a fresh entrepreneurial class in the state. Rather, numerous channels breed corruption at various levels, and coercion can easily be gauged as the Punjab government scrapped 1498 mandatory compliances for industries three years ago. Therefore, it is high time to further ease the parent department as a single unique point, focusing on the singular target of developing a fresh entrepreneurial class in the state. It's impractical for any chief secretary to closely monitor 50 parent departments and their 163 affiliated organisations, which around 75 administrative secretaries head.

Assigning an Apex officer, preferably at an additional chief secretary (ACS) level, is crucial to overseeing and synchronising each key sector. This officer will provide guidance, ensure alignment of goals and strategies, and streamline human resources operations effectively. Industries and other key sectors, such as Education, Health, urban development, Rural Development, and Agriculture, also need help navigating the complex web of 15 parent departments and their 69 affiliated organisations, which hampers good governance in Punjab. However, these challenges also present an opportunity for policymakers to reassess and reform, driving efficient and accountable human resources and paving the way for a vibrant Punjab. Industries: In Punjab industries are overseen by over 20 administrative secretaries who manage 17 departments and affiliated organizations. This large organizational structure, instead of collectively achieving the goal of growth, is currently engaged in assessing around 2000 compliances, posing a significant challenge for entrepreneurs. The need for an efficient and accountable administrative setup is urgent to create a conducive and thriving business environment. Initially, the Department of Punjab Industries and Commerce and its



IT'S IMPRACTICAL FOR ANY CHIEF SECRETARY TO CLOSELY MONITOR 50 PARENT DEPARTMENTS AND THEIR 163 AFFILIATED ORGANISATIONS, WHICH AROUND 75 ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARIES HEAD

seven affiliated organisations oversaw the industrial sector.

However, three additional departments were later established - the Department of Investment Promotion, the Department of Employment Generation and Training, and the Department of Technical Education and Industrial Training - along with their ten organisations to fulfil the same objective. To fetch new investment, "Invest Punjab" was established under the Punjab Bureau of Investment Promotion (PBIP) as a single access point to streamline processes. It is claimed that this entity has been empowered to provide over 34 regulatory approvals, clearances, and compliances related to more than 30 organisations. This streamlined approach is crucial for existing industries, as they face challenges in directly dealing with 17 departments- the Punjab Industries & Commerce Department, Pollution Control Board, Chief Electrical Inspector, Labour Commissioner, Department of Factories, Department of Industries, Employment Generation and Training, Skill Development Mission, Punjab Bureau of Investment Promotion and Punjab State Industrial Development Corporation etc.

This complex web of multiple departments is directionless and unfocused; enormous human resources can be utilised in a single merged service provider entity. In 2012, the idea of merging The Punjab State Industrial Development Corporation (PSIDC) and Punjab Financial Corporation (PFC) into the Punjab Small Industries and Export Corporation (PSIEC) was also

proposed but has yet to materialise. Punjab, with 99.7 per cent of MSMEs, is a promising hub for growth. However, the most significant roadblock for these enterprises is dealing with multiple departments and keeping track of their compliance. Despite the implementation of ten policies since the first industrial policy was formulated in 1978, the need for actionable governance reforms is still pressing. It is necessary to explore various measures to significantly improve services and make Punjab an attractive destination. Policymakers must urgently re-imagine the state. Agriculture: In Punjab, agriculture is overseen by five distinct departments: the Department of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Dairy Development and Fisheries, Department of Horticulture, and Department of Soil & Water Conservation.

Eighteen additional organisations support these departments. Despite the involvement of multiple organisations, the state's agricultural growth has consistently declined, resting at around three per cent from 1990 to 2000 and further declining to less than two per cent from 2010 onwards. Education: The government greatly emphasises education and considers it a top priority.

There is a critical need to revamp the administrative structure, as there are currently two separate departments, with six organisations and a school education board. The Department of Higher Education and Languages manages organisations in education and languages, while the Department of School Education oversees the six organisations. Despite these efforts,

it is essential to address that Punjab's secondary school dropout rate was 17.2% in 2022, exceeding the national average of 12.6%. The Way Forward: The reforms have the potential to significantly improve the functioning of key sectors in Punjab, creating a more accessible, transparent, efficient, responsive and accountable system to achieve a single goal collectively. Therefore two steps may be taken: First, Empowering Apex Officials: To achieve seamless collaboration among departments, empower at least five to six apex officers who will oversee the overall administration of their respective departments and have to report to the chief secretary. Each apex officer should have the support of five to six officers as direct reports.

This approach aims to improve responsiveness, ensure transparency in decision-making processes, and hold apex officials accountable for their actions. Second, Stakeholder Engagement: The active participation of stakeholders is not just important, it's integral to the success of the proposed reforms. Encouraging stakeholder participation through feedback mechanisms and regular interactions to understand their needs and concerns is a key part of inclusive growth.

(The Author is Vice-Chairman of Sonalika ITL Group, Vice-Chairman (Cabinet minister rank) of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board, Chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council and President of Tractor and Mechanization Association (TMA). Views expressed are personal)

# A bold leap towards 'Viksit Bharat' with historic push for education and skilling

This budget allocation of Rs 1.48 lakh crore for education and skilling along with digital learning will help build a robust, future-ready workforce

Union Minister for Education Dharmendra Pradhan hailed the 2024-25 budget as a pivotal milestone on India's path to becoming a developed nation by 2047. Prioritising education, skilling, employment generation, research and innovation like never before, #Budget for Viksit Bharat paves the way for strengthening Bharat's credentials. "Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan posted on X. He noted that these are comprehensive and concrete measures taken up by Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman that will be a win-win for all stakeholders—students, academia, and industry. The budget allocation for Education, employment, and skilling has been increased by



REETU SRIVASTAVA

30% to Rs 1.48 lakh crore. India has the largest educational system with 265 million students in schools, 43 million in higher education and more than 10 million learners enrolled in skilling institutions. The Budget Allocation for 2024-25 of Rs 73,498 crores is the highest ever for the Department of School Education & Literacy. Autonomous bodies such as the Kendriya Vidyalaya

Sangathan and Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti have also received their highest-ever allocations. The Flagship Schemes like Samagra Shiksha, POSHAN and PM-SHRI have got Rs 3,250 crores. The budget includes strengthening the skilling and apprenticeship ecosystem, skill development and internship opportunities for one crore youth by India's top companies, and providing employment-linked incentives to first-time employees across the sector. The government has introduced a revamped 'Model Skill Loans Scheme' from 1.5 lakhs to 7.5 lakhs to 25000 students annually and education loans up to 10 lakhs for pursuing education in higher domestic educational institutions to one lakh students every year with an annu-

al interest subvention of 3%. The step will certainly promote enrolment in domestic institutions as well as reduce the financial burden on the students. In addition to this, the finance minister also outlined several initiatives for the Skill Development sector. These include the upgrading of 1,000 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) in line with the skill requirements of the industry. The internship opportunities for one crore youth in 5 years by the government is a welcoming step, this will provide youths with an engagement and enhance employability and practical skills.

In the scheme 'National Apprenticeship Training Scheme (NATS)', an allocation of Rs 600 crore has been made. There has been an over-



all increase of Rs. 3525.15 crore (7.99%) in the budget allocation of the Department of Higher Education in this budget.

Deemed Universities, IITs, NITs, IISERs, and IISc have got hefty allocations, considerably high in comparison to the previous budget. In higher education, areas like Digital e-learning, Research and Innovation, teacher training, the Centre of

Excellence in Artificial Intelligence and some specific institutions have received higher allocations. Under Digital e-learning, the government is looking forward to tapping the potential of virtual learning and aligning it with the Academic Bank of Credits with the view of increasing portability and flexible study options.

In the scheme 'National Mission in Education through ICT', an allocation of ₹480 crore has been made in 2024-25 and this is ₹80 crore more than the allocation in 2023-24. The increased budget for Research and Innovation is to focus on academic and research collaborations in science, engineering and technical education. To improve the quality of education being

imparted at the school level it requires a revamped pedagogical structure, so, the Teacher Training segment has got its due share. The scheme 'Establishment of 3 Centres of Excellence (CoEs) in Artificial Intelligence (AI) has got an allocation of ₹255 crore in the budget. The Major Schemes For Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (PM-USHA) erstwhile known as Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), the budget has been kept at ₹1814.94 crore. An allocation of ₹1800 crore has been allocated for Institutions of Eminence. In the scheme 'Multi disciplinary Education and Research Improvement in Technical Education EAP (MERITE)', an allocation of ₹200 crore has been made and this is a 100% increase over the

last year's budget. The NEP 2020 says that the aim of the policy must be for India to have an education system by 2040 with equitable access to the highest-quality education for all learners regardless of social or economic background. Recognising the crucial role of education the government has designed an ambitious package for education for it to be growth-oriented, inclusive and progressive. However, the most important aspect is its implementation. The features of the budget meant for education will play a crucial role in guiding India towards becoming a 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047 as stated by the Education Minister. (The writer is an educationist and a freelance writer; views expressed are personal)

# 'Commercial ship drifts, ablaze after attacks in Red Sea'

AP ■ DUBAI

A commercial ship traveling through the Red Sea came under repeated attack Wednesday, leaving the vessel "not under command" and drifting ablaze after an assault suspected to have been carried out by Yemen's Houthi rebels, the British military said. Few details were immediately available about the attack, though it comes during the Houthis' months-long campaign targeting ships on the ongoing Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip. The attack saw men on small boats first open fire with small arms some 140 kilometers (90 miles) west of the rebel-held Yemeni port city of Hodeida, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) center said.

Four projectiles also hit the ship, it added. It wasn't immediately clear if that meant drones or missiles. "The vessel reports being not under command," the UKMTO said, likely meaning it lost all power. "No casualties reported." Later, the UKMTO warned the ship was drifting while on fire in the Red Sea. The Houthis did not immediately claim the attack, though it can take them hours or even days before their acknowledgment one of their assaults. The Houthis have targeted more than 80 vessels with missiles and drones since the war in Gaza started in October. They seized one vessel and sunk two in the campaign that also killed four sailors. Other missiles and drones have been either intercepted by a US-led coalition in the Red

Sea or failed to reach their targets. The rebels maintain that they have targeted ships linked to Israel, the United States or the UK to force an end to Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza. However, many of the ships attacked have little or no connection to the conflict, including some bound for Iran. The Houthis have also launched drones and missiles toward Israel, including an attack on July 19 that killed one person and wounded 10 others in Tel Aviv. Israel responded the next day with airstrikes on the Houthi-held port city of Hodeida that hit fuel depots and electrical stations, killing and wounding a number of people, the rebels say. After the strikes, the Houthis paused their attacks until August 3, when they hit a Liberian-flagged container ship traveling through the Gulf

of Aden. A Liberian-flagged oil tanker came under a particularly intense series of attacks, beginning August 8, likely carried out by the rebels. A similar attack happened Aug. 13 as well. As Iran threatens to retaliate against Israel over the assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran, the US military told the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier strike group to sail more quickly to the area. America also has ordered the USS Georgia guided missile submarine into the Mideast, while the USS Theodore Roosevelt aircraft carrier strike group was in the Gulf of Oman. Additional F-22 fighter jets have flown into the region and the USS Wasp, a large amphibious assault ship carrying F-35 fighter jets, is in the Mediterranean Sea.

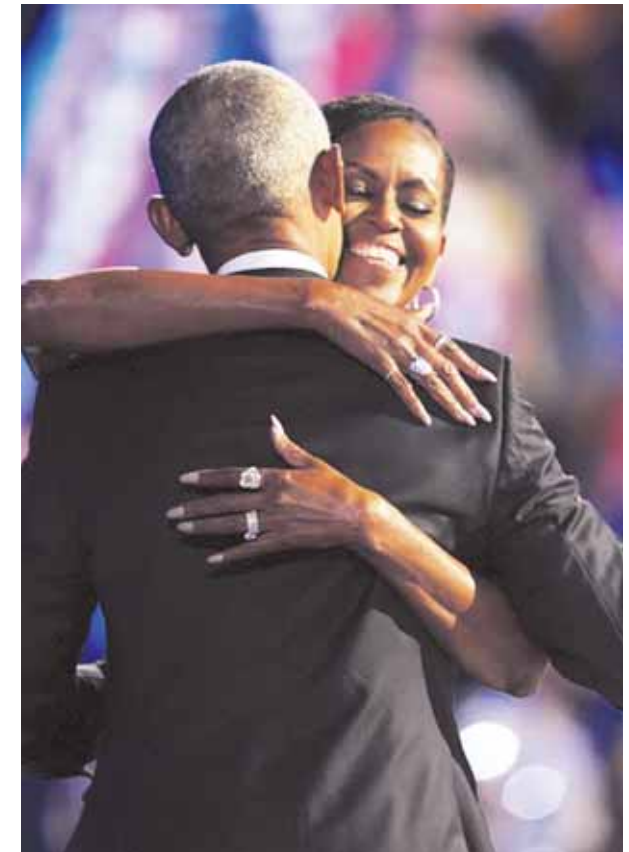


Israeli police officers scuffle with ultra-Orthodox Jewish men during a protest against a potential new draft law which could end their exemptions from military service in Jerusalem, Wednesday. AP/PTI

# Iran's parliament approves all members of president's Cabinet

Tehran (AP) — Iran's hard-line parliament on Wednesday approved all members of reformist President Masoud Pezeshkian's Cabinet, the first time in over two decades a leader has been able to get all of his officials through the body. The approval marks an early win for Pezeshkian, a longtime lawmaker who found himself catapulted into the presidency after a helicopter crash in May killed his hard-line predecessor. Getting his officials approved shows Pezeshkian picked a Cabinet of consensus with names palatable to all of the power centres within Iran's theocracy, as opposed to going for controversial choices as well.

Former Foreign Minister Mohamad Javad Zarif, who campaigned for Pezeshkian in his election, later resigned as a vice president for the new leader over the Cabinet selections. Underlining that point, Pezeshkian immediately posted an image online with him standing next to Iran's judiciary chief, a Shiite cleric, and the country's parliament speaker, a hard-liner he once faced in the election. "Consensus for Iran," he wrote in the caption. Among those in Pezeshkian's new Cabinet is Abbas Araghchi, 61, a career diplomat who will be Iran's new foreign minister. Araghchi was a member of the Iranian negotiating team that reached a nuclear deal with world powers in 2015 that capped Tehran's nuclear programme in return for the lifting of sanctions. In 2018, then-President Donald Trump pulled the US out of the deal and imposed more sanctions on Iran. Pezeshkian said during his presidential campaign that he would try to revive the nuclear deal. The candidate who received the most support from lawmakers was the country's new defence minister, Aziz Nasirzadeh, who received 281 votes out of 288 present lawmakers.



Former President Barack Obama hugs former first lady Michelle Obama as he is introduced during the Democratic National Convention Tuesday, in Chicago. AP/PTI

# Michelle Obama attacks Trump on 'Black jobs'

PTI ■ CHICAGO

In perhaps her boldest words ever against Donald Trump, Michelle Obama, the former first lady took a swipe at the former president for attacking her family because of their race, saying that the top job he is seeking once again "might just be one of those Black jobs." Delivering a forceful endorsement of Kamala Harris during the second night of the Democratic National Convention, Michelle said former president Trump, the Republican candidate in the race for the White House, will try and attack the US Vice President, the Democratic Party's nominee — something she said she and her husband have personal experience with. "For years Donald Trump did everything in his power to try to make people fear us. His limited narrow view of the world made him feel threatened by the existence of two hard-working, highly educated, successful people who happen to be Black," she said in her

nearly 20-minute address on Tuesday in Chicago, her hometown. Voicing her hope that Harris will win the November 5 election - and Trump's repeated use of the term - "Black jobs" - she chided him for promoting birtherism and other racist comments. "Who is going to tell him that the job he currently is seeking might just be one of those Black jobs?" the 60-year-old former first lady said, referring to Barack Obama, America's first Black president. The Obamas were targets of unfounded claims by Trump and other Republicans that Barack Obama's birth certificate was a forgery. Her powerful statement was a jab at Trump's comments at the June presidential debate and while speaking last month to the National Association of Black Journalists, where he said that immigrants are taking "Black jobs." If Harris is elected, she will become America's first woman — and first woman of colour

and first Indian-origin politician — to win the presidency. Michelle, the wife of the country's first Black president, predicted that Trump would launch attacks on Harris' race and gender. She warned that the race to the White House was still close, and asked the Democratic Party to continue working in the days ahead to ensure the victory of Harris. Michelle, in her address, described Vice President Harris, 59, as one of the most qualified presidential candidates who worked her way up from a middle-class background, drawing on lessons from the two women's late mothers. "Even though our mothers grew up an ocean apart, they shared the same belief in the promise of this country. That's why her mother moved here from India at 19," she said of Shyamala Gopalan, the mother of Harris. "She'd often tell her daughter: 'Don't sit around and complain, do something,'" Michelle said. She also recounted how

Harris was a student at Howard University — a historically black university — and then attended law school. "And then she went on to work for the people," Michelle said, "from a middle-class household. Kamala worked her way up to become vice president of the United States of America. My girl Kamala Harris is more than ready for this moment. She is one of the most qualified people ever to seek the office of the presidency." Michelle was earlier greeted by a long standing ovation from the crowd as he arrived to address them during which she delivered a series of not-so-subtle digs at Trump — evoking his name to critique what she described as his "ugly, misogynistic, racist lies." "No one has a monopoly on what it means to be an American," she said in an apparent reference to Trump's recent remarks on Harris' background as a child of immigrants. "If we see a mountain in front of us, we don't expect there to be an escalator waiting

to take us to the top," she said. Lest anyone think she was being ambitious, Michelle called Trump out by name. Michelle Obama's speech, "delivered with a clear voice as she looked straight into the camera to address Americans watching at home, was not saccharine. She began her time onstage by framing her remarks in the context of reaching for hope through despair," the New York Times commented. Kamala Harris rallied thousands of voters in one packed arena as former President Barack Obama and Michelle Obama energized millions more on Harris' behalf inside another on a Tuesday night designed to demonstrate the energy and breadth of the Democratic nominee's evolving coalition. "I am feeling hope," Obama told the Democratic National Convention in Chicago just minutes after his wife, the former first lady Michelle Obama, told the same crowd that, "Something wonderfully magical is in the air, isn't it?"

# Congo reports more than 1k new Mpox cases in a week

Cape Town (AP) — Congo reported more than 1,000 new mpox cases in the last week up to Tuesday as African health authorities asked for desperately needed vaccines to help fight its "growing" threat on the continent. The World Health Organisation has declared the outbreaks in Africa a global emergency. Mpox belongs to the same family of viruses as smallpox but causes milder symptoms like fever, chills and body aches, and mostly spreads through close skin-to-skin contact, including sexual intercourse. People with more serious cases can develop lesions on the face, hands, chest and genitals. While mpox has been reported in 12 of Africa's 54 countries during these outbreaks, the vast central African nation of Congo has recorded by far the most cases this year. Out of a total of 18,910 cases in 2024, 94% — or 17,794 — were in Congo, and the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said, with 535 of the 541 deaths reported. The figures are likely an underestimate, as only about one in five suspected cases in Congo are being tested for mpox. Africa CDC director-general Dr. Jean Kaseya said many affected African countries had limited testing and surveillance capabilities. Over the last seven days, Congo recorded 1,030 of the 1,405 new cases in Africa according to statistics provided late Tuesday by the Africa CDC. Only 16% of the cases have been confirmed by virus tests, but the infections meet the agency's definition of the disease. The rising mpox case count in Africa and a new form of the virus identified in Congo that might be more easily transmitted led the WHO to declare it a global health emergency last week. Some hope this will encourage donors to share vaccines and other help to curtail the outbreaks in Africa before cases spread internationally as Sweden recorded a case of the new mpox variant first seen in eastern Congo.

# UK steps up action against Mpox in Democratic Republic of Congo

PTI ■ LONDON

The UK on Wednesday announced new GBP 3.1 million funding to work with the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to bolster the regional African response to outbreaks of Mpox and cholera in the country. The funding announcement follows a declaration from the World Health Organisation (WHO) that the upsurge of Mpox in the DRC and a growing number of countries in Africa constitutes a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC). During a visit to the Institute National de Recherche Biomedicale (National Institute of Biomedical Research) in the DRC, minister Lord Ray Collins announced the funding for a new partnership with UNICEF aimed at benefiting over 4.4 million people in affected communities and preventing the further spread of Mpox to neighbouring countries. "Working together, with our partners and

using the expertise and dedication of Congolese scientists, including those at the world-leading research centre I have visited in DRC, our support will play an important role in ensuring global health security for all," said Collins, UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) minister in charge of Africa. "By protecting the health and wellbeing of communities across DRC, and by helping contain these outbreaks, we reduce the risk of diseases spreading further afield. This will ultimately benefit us all," he said. There have been more than 17,000 Mpox cases and 571 deaths in Africa this year, following the emergence of a new clade 1b variant of the disease first spotted in the DRC. Mpox, previously referred to as monkey pox, causes blisters on the face and elsewhere, and mainly spreads when fluids from these lesions are passed on during sexual contact. But it can also be spread through other types of skin-to-skin contact, as well as an

infected person coughing or sneezing nearby, and can even be spread by touching clothing, bedding, or towels used by someone with Mpox. The small-pox vaccine is used to protect against its spread. The UK said it remains in regular contact with the WHO and the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention on developments of the outbreak and the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) is closely monitoring the situation. India is also on high alert over the disease, which has reportedly been detected outside Africa in Sweden and Pakistan. "The UK's support to the DRC, in partnership with UNICEF, on the Mpox response, will contribute to saving the lives of affected populations by aligning with the DRC's national Mpox preparedness and response plan," said Professor Christian Ngandu, Public Health Emergency Operations Centre Coordinator at DRC's National Public Health Institute.

# Bus carrying Shiite pilgrims from Pak to Iraq crashes in Iran, killing 28

AP ■ TEHRAN

A bus carrying Shiite pilgrims from Pakistan to Iraq crashed in central Iran, killing at least 28 people, an official said Wednesday. The crash happened Tuesday night in the central Iranian province of Yazd, said Mohammad Ali Malekzadeh, a local emergency official, according to the state-run IRNA news agency. Another 23 people suffered injuries in the crash, 14 of them serious, he added. He said all the bus passengers hailed from Pakistan. There were 51 people on board at the time of the crash outside of the city of Taft, some 500 kilometers southeast of the Iranian capital, Tehran. Iranian state television later broadcast images of the bus, turned upside down on the highway with its roof smashed in and all its doors open. Rescuers stepped gingerly through the broken glass and debris littering the road. In the state TV report, Malekzadeh



This image taken from a video released by Iranian state television shows the aftermath of a bus crash near Taft, Iran, early Wednesday. A bus carrying Shiite pilgrims from Pakistan to Iraq crashed in central Iran, killing multiple people, an official said Wednesday. AP/PTI

blamed the crash on the bus brakes failing and a lack of attention by its driver. In Pakistan, authorities described those on the bus as coming from the city of Larkana in Pakistan's southern Sindh province. Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said he was "deeply saddened" by the crash and that diplomats were providing assistance to those affected. "My thoughts are with the bereaved families," Sharif said

undermine our border security putting lives at risk. And by increasing enforcement capabilities and returns we will establish a system that is better controlled and managed, in place of the chaos that has blighted the system for far too long," she said. As part of the measures unveiled this week, the Home Office expects a "large surge" in enforcement and returns flights, with the aim of putting removals at their highest level since 2018. There will also be increased detention capacity, including 290 added beds at Campsfield and Haslar Immigration Removal Centres, and redeployment of staff to drive the process of returning migrants entering the UK illegally from a country deemed as safe.

# From blind date to 'Momala': Kamala Harris' husband shares their love story

PTI ■ CHICAGO

Kamala Harris' husband Douglas Emhoff shared his love story and recalled how he met his wife on a blind date in 2013 and left an awkward voice message for her which she plays for him every year on their wedding anniversary. Second Gentleman Doug Emhoff took to the stage at the Democratic National Convention here on Tuesday night with this deeply personal story to drum up support for Harris, who is of Indian and African heritage. He said he loved working as a lawyer, became a dad to son Cole and daughter Ella, got a divorce and then "something unexpected happened" — he was set up on a blind date with Harris.

plays for him every year on their anniversary. "For generations, people have debated when to call the person you're being set up with, and never in history has anyone suggested 8:30 am. And yet, that's when I dialled," he said. "I got Kamala's voicemail, and I just started rambling." "I remember trying to grab the words out of the air and put them back in my mouth. After what seemed like far too many minutes, I hung up. By the way, Kamala saved that voicemail, and she makes me listen to it every anniversary. That message wasn't the only unusual thing about that day," he said, drawing laughs and cheers from the Democratic Party supporters. "Kamala, who normally would have been working hard at the

office, just happened to be waiting at her apartment for a contractor to do some work on her kitchen. I was eating at my desk, which was not a regular occurrence for a busy lawyer like me who appreciates a good business lunch," Emhoff said. "That's when she called me back. We talked for an hour. We laughed. You know that laugh. I love that laugh. Maybe that counted as our first date. Or, maybe it was that Saturday, when I picked her up and told her "Buckle up-I'm a really bad driver," he said. He called his wife a "joyful warrior" and a loving co-parent to his kids. Emhoff, a Los Angeles attorney who took leave from his firm when Harris became vice president, has two now-grown children from his first marriage.

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# Another case filed against Hasina, her aides in B'desh

PTI ■ DHAKA

A case was filed on Wednesday against Bangladesh's deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina and 86 others on charge of attacking a procession in Sylhet city which left several people shot and injured during the recent mass protests on August 4, taking the number of cases against her after her ouster to 33.

Juber Ahmed, acting president of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal's Sylhet city unit, filed the case with the court of Sylhet Metropolitan Magistrate Suman Bhuiya.

Hasina's sister Sheikh Rehana is also an accused in the case. According to the case statement, the accused attacked a peaceful rally, brought out by Bangladesh Nationalist Party and its associate organisations in Sylhet City's Bandarbarza area on August 4, which left several shot and injured, The Daily Star newspaper said.

Awami League's general secretary and former road transport minister Obaidul Quader, former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan, former foreign minister Hasan



Mahmud, former law minister Anisur Rahman, and former advisor to the prime minister Salman F Rahman were among people named in the case. With this case, Hasina is now facing 33 cases against her, including 27 for murder, four for crimes against humanity and genocide, and one for abduction, the paper said. Hasina fled to India on August 5 after resigning from her post amidst unprecedented anti-government student-led protests.

The Hasina-led government was replaced by an interim government, and 84-year-old Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus was named its Chief Adviser. Bangladesh's interim govern-

ment has said it will try those involved in the killings during the recent mass movement of the students against the Hasina-led government in the International Crimes Tribunal. Over 230 people were killed in Bangladesh in the incidents of violence that erupted across the country following the fall of the Hasina government, taking the death toll to more than 600 since the massive protest by students against a controversial quota system in government jobs first started in mid-July.

On Tuesday, she along with five other was implicated in a case lodged over the murder of private company employee Firoj Talukder in indiscriminate shooting from a helicopter by Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) during recent anti-discrimination students' movement.

Earlier Hasina, her son Sajeeb, daughter Saima and sister Rehana and 17 others were sued in a case filed over the killing of a fruit seller in the capital's Jatrabari on August 5. The victim's father, Sultan Miah, filed the case with the court of Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Md Shakil Ahmed.

Another case was filed against Hasina and 49 others over the death of Md Omar Faruque, a student of Kabi Nazrul Government College, at Laxmibazar of Sutrapur on July 19.

Hasina and 24 others were sued for the death of 18-year-old garment worker Sohail Rana in the city's Adabor area on August 5.

In Savar, Hasina and 75 Awami League men were sued over the murder of a barber shop worker on August 5.

In Narayanganj, a case was filed against Hasina, seven former ministers and lawmakers and 179 others for killing a bus helper in the Kanchpur area of Sonargaon upazila.

In Rangpur, Hasina, her sister and 49 were sued over the killing of a vegetable trader during the quota reform movement on July 19.

In Joypurhat, a murder case has been filed against Hasina along with 216 others in connection with the death of an auto driver in front of a police station on August 5. In Bogura, Hasina and Obaidul Quader have been sued for the murder of a rickshaw puller on August 4.

# Moscow faces massive Ukrainian drone attack but destroys all

AP ■ MOSCOW

Moscow came under one of the largest attacks yet by Ukrainian drones since the start of fighting in 2022, Russian authorities reported Wednesday, saying they destroyed all of those headed toward the capital.

Russia downed 45 Ukrainian drones overnight, the Ministry of Defense said. It said 11 were destroyed over the Moscow region, 23 over the Bryansk region, six over Belgorod, three over Kaluga and two over Kursk.

"This was one of the biggest attempts of all time to attack Moscow using drones," Moscow Mayor Sergey Sobyanin said on his Telegram channel. He said strong defenses around the capital made it possible to shoot down all the drones before they could hit their intended targets.

Some Russian social media channels shared videos of drones apparently being destroyed by air defense systems, which then set off car alarms.

Alexander Bogomaz, the governor of the Bryansk region, which borders Ukraine, reported



a "mass" attack on his region but that 23 drones were destroyed.

While Ukraine has been bogged down in a land conflict in eastern Europe in which the Russians have been driving forward slowly at a heavy cost to both sides, Kyiv has also been attacking Russia with drones. Ukraine has targeted oil refineries and airfields in an attempt to weaken Russia's fighting potential, and also has targeted the capital several times.

The drone attacks come as

Ukrainian forces are continuing to push into Russia's western Kursk region.

The daring incursion into Russia has raised morale in Ukraine with its surprising success and changed the dynamic of the fighting. But it's uncertain how long Ukraine will be able to hold the territory it has seized in Kursk.

It has also opened up another front in a fight where Ukrainian forces were already badly stretched. The gains in Kursk come as Ukraine continues to lose ground in its eastern industrial region of Donbas.

The Institute for the Study of War, a think tank based in Washington, said in its daily report late Tuesday that the Ukrainians had made additional advances in their incursion, now in its third week.

The Russian state news agency Tass reported that 31 people had died since Ukraine's attack on Russia began Aug. 6, citing an unnamed source in the medical service — figures which are impossible to verify. It said 143 people had suffered injuries, of whom 79 were hospitalized, including four children.

Ukraine's attacks on three bridges over the Semyr River in Kursk, in areas it does not control, could potentially trap Russian forces between the river, the Ukrainian advance and the Ukrainian border. Already they appear to be slowing down Russia's response to the Kursk incursion.

Ukrainian forces appear to be striking Russian pontoon bridges and pontoon engineering equipment over the Semyr in an area west of the Ukrainian advance point, the Washington think tank said.

# Unrest impact: Hospitality sector hit in Dhaka, rooms empty at hotels

PTI ■ DHAKA

The recent anti-government protests that rocked Bangladesh for over a month have hit the hospitality sector hard in the capital Dhaka with the majority of rooms at several luxury and economy hotels here going empty in the aftermath of the unrest.

Dhaka is both the political and financial capital of Bangladesh and home to several landmark commercial properties managed by international hotel chains which cater largely to business travellers.

Senior managers at many of these hotels say, the "heaviest impact" was felt in July when huge booking cancellations took place resulting in a "big financial loss".

PTI spoke to front office employees, managers and restaurant staff at some of the luxury chains as well as economy hotels located in plush areas, and they all painted a sombre picture of the current condition of the hospitality sector in Dhaka.

"The situation is now a bit better, but still far from normal in our sector as the majority of the rooms are still empty. While a certain section of business travellers are still coming, after the

unrest in the country, the number of guests occupying rooms have dramatically shrunk," a senior manager in the sales department of a luxury hotel told PTI on the condition of anonymity.

This five-star hotel operating under the current brand name for a year-and-a-half is located in a towering building near Gulshan enclave — an affluent area which also houses several diplomatic missions of foreign countries in Bangladesh.

"We have 150 rooms of different categories — standard, premium, junior suite and executive suite. Currently, about 35 rooms are occupied. The numbers are slowly increasing," the senior manager said.

He recalled the situation in the area on August 4-5 when the unrest had reached its peak leading to the ouster of embattled Bangladeshi leader Sheikh Hasina as the prime minister, plunging the country into a state of crisis.

Several hundreds of people have been killed in the protests in Bangladesh, triggered by the reinstatement of a quota system for the allocation of jobs in civil services, and injuries suffered in its aftermath.

The protests began in July and local residents and staff at

multiple hotels still talk in a hushed tone about the police action that took place in the third week of July and later days to halt the protests. However, the police crackdown only infuriated the masses which eventually led to the fall of the Hasina-led government.

"For July, the mass cancellations of booking for rooms, food and beverage services and banquet and catering services led to the loss of Taka 1.2-1.3 crore, and the financial loss suffered in the first week of August was about Taka 35 lakh," the senior manager at the five-star hotel added.

As the situation had escalated, the hotel administration had asked its women staff to stay at home on August 4-5 while arrangements were made for the stay of male staff within the premises of the hotel building which is a huge landmark in the area with Gulshan Avenue and Kemal Ataturk Avenue being major thoroughfares.

Recalling the challenges faced on August 5, the day the Hasina government fell, he said, on that day there were Germans, Russians, Swiss, Indian and Bangladeshi people among the guests and some members of the diplomatic community, at the hotel.

# Imran demands open court trial of ex-ISI chief

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Jailed former prime minister Imran Khan on Wednesday demanded an open court trial of former Pakistan spymaster Lt Gen (retd.) Faiz Hameed if his links with the May 9 violence were established as then "it would not be an internal military affair."

These remarks came just two days after Khan on Monday expressed his fear that authorities were coercing the arrested former spymaster to become a state witness against him (Khan) in the May 9, 2023 riots.

After Khan was arrested in an accountability case last year, hundreds and thousands of his followers and workers of his party Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) vandalised a dozen military installations, including the Jinnah House (Lahore Corps Commander House), Mianwali Airbase and the ISI building in Faisalabad on May 9.

The Army headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi too was attacked by the mob for the first time. The arrest of Hameed, the former chief of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), was disclosed by the military last week.

During an informal conversation with journalists at the Adiala Jail at Rawalpindi, where he has been lodged since last



year, Khan said that if Hameed is "indeed the mastermind behind the May 9 conspiracy, then the trial should be held openly," adding that the incident was a local issue rather than a matter of national security. Earlier in one of the similar informal talks with the media soon after Hameed was arrested, Khan had said it was an internal matter of the army.

"They'll make Faiz Hameed turn state witness against me," he told reporters and added, "The army chief should facilitate a transparent trial for Faiz Hameed."

Hameed, who served as director general of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) from 2019 to

2021 when Khan was the prime minister, was arrested following action in the complaint of a private property developer over alleged misuse of official authority. He denied that he had any association with the ex-spy chief since the latter retired in November 2022.

"General Faiz became insignificant after retirement. How could he benefit me in any way?" Khan questioned, dismissing the notion that he was in contact with the former ISI chief. The former premier also said he knew who ordered "my arrest" and this person was the "number one and the Badshah and the super King" but didn't name anyone.

# Pak police charge man with cyber terrorism

Lahore (AP): Pakistani police have arrested a man and charged him with cyber terrorism for his alleged role in spreading misinformation that led to widespread rioting in the UK earlier this month, a senior police investigator said Wednesday.

The suspect was identified as Farhan Asif, 32, a freelance web developer, said Imran Kishwar, deputy inspector general of investigations in Lahore, the capital of eastern Punjab province.

The man is accused of spreading misinformation from YouTube and Facebook about the British teenage suspect in a stabbing attack that killed three girls and injured 10 other people July 29 at a dance class in Northwest England. The false information claimed that the suspect was a recently arrived asylum-seeker and had a name that suggested the teen was Muslim. After the misinformation led to a violent mob attacking a mosque near the site of the stabbing the next day, police took the unusual step of clarifying that the suspect was born in the UK. It's been widely reported in British media

that his parents are from Rwanda and said to have Christian beliefs. Channel3 Now, an account on the X social media platform that purports to be a news channel, was one of the first outlets to report the false name, Ali Al-Shakati. A Facebook account for the channel said it is managed by people in Pakistan and the US.

The site's editor-in-chief posted an apology July 31 for "the misleading information published in a recent article on our website, Channel3 NOW. We deeply regret any confusion or inconvenience this may have caused." But the false reports were widely disseminated and are blamed for fueling more than a week of rioting that broke out across the United Kingdom and has led to more than 1,000 arrests.

Authorities have blamed far-right agitators for stoking the violent unrest by continuing to spread misinformation and promoting the violent demonstrations online. At a news conference in the eastern city of Lahore, police said Asif was arrested at his house in the city for questioning.

# Indonesia searches for ways to balance domestic industries with surging Chinese imports

AP ■ JAKARTA

A flood of Chinese products into Indonesia has hit local manufacturers hard, prompting the government to look for ways to placate domestic producers while avoiding angering the country's biggest trading partner. Garment makers — both home-based piece work producers and factories — have appealed for help as they lose market share to low-cost apparel and textiles from China. A surge of products bought online has added to the problem.

A protest by workers in Jakarta prompted Indonesian Minister of Trade Zulkifli Hasan to announce in July that the government will impose import tariffs of up to 200% on some products from China, particularly textiles, clothing, footwear, electronics, ceramics and cosmetics, to try to protect local businesses and prevent layoffs.

"The United States can impose a 200% tariff on imported ceramics or clothes, so we can do it as well," Zulkifli said,

to ensure micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises and industry. But China is Indonesia's largest trading partner, with two-way trade exceeding \$127 billion in 2023. Imposing higher tariffs could prompt Chinese manufacturers to invest in more factories in Indonesia, but could also backfire, leading Beijing to retaliate. As a result, the government announced in July that it was setting up a task force to monitor and handle problems related to certain imports.

It's an urgent matter, Hasan said, given the flood of imported products that has caused closures of textile factories and mass layoffs.

From January to July 2024, at least 12 textile factories shut down operations, causing more than 12,000 workers to lose their jobs, according to the Nusantara Trade Union Confederation.

In Bandung district in Indonesia's West Java province — an area famous for textiles such as batiks, handwoven fab-

rics and silks — imports of Chinese products have left thousands of workers idle and without regular incomes, said Neng Wati, a manager at manufacturing company Asnur Konveksi.

"Now they take turns. The number of workers stays the same, but the work is divided up and not all get some. Some of them have been off for two weeks, some of them haven't gotten work for a month," Wati said. That's a hard blow coming after the slow days of the COVID-19 pandemic, when many workers were shifted to e-commerce to make ends meet, said Nandi Herdianan, head of a local organization of small- and medium-sized entrepreneurs. Only 60% of the 8,000 members of the association kept working after the pandemic.

Now, the biggest challenge is cheap imports from China. In the past two months, output from home-based industries has fallen by 70%, the industry organization says.

The uptick in imports of Chinese products is partly seen as the result of trade friction between the U.S. and China, which has led to increased American tariffs on Chinese goods. But it also reflects rising trade within Asia as the region implements various free trade pacts, as well as weakening demand in Western markets for Chinese exports. Industry groups in Thailand have also expressed increasing concern about an influx of cheap products from China, which they say have greatly hurt sales by domestic producers who are unable to compete. In what it called an urgent measure, the Thai government imposed a 7% value-added tax on all imported products, a change from the previous rule that only collected taxes on imported products that cost more than 1,500 baht (\$44). The policy is only in effect from July until December this year to give the government time to study the issue before a longer-term solution can be applied.

# School employee kills at least 3 in Bosnian town

Sarajevo (AP): A school employee shot and killed three people Wednesday in a town in northwestern Bosnia, police said. The shooter was severely injured after trying to kill himself. The shooting took place around 10 a.m. local time in a secondary school building in Sanski Most, about 300 kilometers northwest of Bosnia's capital, Sarajevo, said regional police spokesman Adnan Beganovic. Beganovic told The Associated Press that the man used a "military weapon, an automatic rifle." He then attempted to kill himself and is in serious condition in a hospital in nearby Banja Luka. The victims include the school principal, a secretary and a teacher, said Beganovic. Regional TV1 television reported that the man had a dispute with the school management.

No other details were immediately available. Bosnian schools are closed for the summer holiday, but Beganovic said there were people in the school as repeat examinations were underway.

# China opens investigation into EU exports as trade tensions flare

AP ■ BEIJING

European milk and cheese producers have become the latest target in a simmering trade war with China. The Chinese Commerce Ministry said Wednesday that it would launch an investigation into subsidies given by the European Union and EU

member countries for dairy products that could lead to tariffs on their export to China.

The announcement came one day after the EU released a draft decision to finalize tariffs on electric vehicles made in China, in a follow-up to provisional tariffs announced last month. The tariffs have said.

been denounced by the Chinese government and automakers and threaten to set back the industry's efforts to go global.

The dairy investigation will cover a range of products including fresh and processed cheese, blue cheese and milk and cream with a fat content of more than 10%, a Commence Ministry notice last month.

# Sirisena settles compensation for Easter Sunday bombings victims

Colombo (PTI): Sri Lanka's former president Maithripala Sirisena has settled in full the SLR 100 million compensation for the victims of the 2019 Easter Sunday bombings that killed 270 people, including 11 Indians, during his tenure.

Sirisena, 72, was ordered by the Supreme Court to pay SLRs 100 million as compensation to victims for his negligence in preventing the

country's one of the worst terror strikes despite having credible information of an imminent attack.

His lawyers said the full payment of rupees 100 million was completed on August 16. Nine suicide bombers belonging to local Islamist extremist group National Thawheed Jamaat (NTJ) linked to ISIS carried out a series of devastating blasts that tore through



three Catholic churches and as many luxury hotels on April 21, 2019, killing nearly 270 people, including 11 Indians, and injuring over 500.

Sirisena was also the minister of defence at that time. The attack stirred a political storm as the then President Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe were blamed for their inability to prevent the attacks despite

prior intelligence being made available.

In mid-July, Sirisena reported to the court that he had already paid SLR 58 million and pleaded for six more months to pay the balance of 42 million.

A presidential panel of inquiry appointed by Sirisena after the attacks ironically found the then-president guilty of his failure to prevent the attacks.

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No. EM/MSD-IT/TECH-03/2024/1199 Date: 16.08.2024  
e-TCN No. EM/MS-23/2024  
Name of the Work: "Hiring of another 01 (one) no. of Truck Mounted Conveyors Mechanical Road Sweeping Machine for a period of (03+02) years inside port prohibited area". Estimated cost: Rs.6,40,20,000/- excluding GST and cost of Diesel. Last date & time of Submission of bid: **05.09.2024 up to 18:00 Hrs.** Refer our website for details <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app>.  
Sd/- Executive Engineer (M) Workshop Division-II, Paradip Port Authority PPA/PR/29/2024-2025 dtd.20.08.2024

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MPMKVVCL, Bhopal invites following bids through e-tendering.

Tender Specification Number	Particulars	Approx. Value (Rs. Cr.)	Tender Fee including GST @18% (in Rs.)	Date of Pre-Bid Conference	Date of opening of tender
MD/MK/04/1079	Survey, Supply and Installation of ACDB, DCDB and Marshalling Box along with Replacement of Deflecting OTI, WLI, MOG and Switches, Indication Lamp, Ammeter, Voltmeter and Other Panels Equipments etc. at various 33/11KV Substation Under Substation Renovation Work on Semi Turkey Contract Basis in MPMKVVCL, Bhopal.	6.54	11800.00	29.08.2024 3:30 pm	10.09.2024 at 3:30 pm

Other details are available on Company website <https://portal.mpcz.in> & <https://mptenders.gov.in>  
M.P. Madhyam/116024/2024  
**CHIEF GENERAL MANAGER (PROC.)**

# Markets extend gains

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty closed higher on Wednesday, helped by gains in FMCG, consumer durables and healthcare stocks amid strong buying support from domestic institutional investors. However, foreign capital outflows amid a cautious trend in global equities ahead of the release of US Fed minutes restricted the gains in domestic markets, traders said. In a range-bound trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex gained for the second day in a row, rising 102.44 points or 0.13 per cent to close at 80,905.30. During the day, it rose 149.97 points or 0.18 per cent to hit an intra-day high of 80,952.83. Rising for the fifth straight session, the NSE Nifty went up by 71.35 points or 0.29 per cent to end at 24,770.20. "The Indian market traded on a tight range with a positive bias supported by strong DII flows. While defensive sector outperformed due to a continued shift in portfolio towards FMCG, consumer, commodities, and pharma. "Global markets exhibited a mildly cautious tone ahead of the release of the FOMC minutes later today. Currently, the expectation of a rate cut



remains high, given the fall in US inflation and moderation in overall growth," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said. Among the Sensex firms, Titan, Asian Paints, ITC, Hindustan Unilever, Nestle India, Bajaj Finserv and Bharti Airtel were among the gainers. In contrast, UltraTech Cement, Tech Mahindra, Tata Steel, Power Grid, HDFC Bank, HCL Technology, State Bank of India and ICICI Bank were the laggards. Shares of FSN E-Commerce Ventures, beauty and personal care brand Nykaa, bounced 9.42 per cent on Wednesday. During the day, it rallied 18.6 per cent to hit its 52-week high

of Rs 228.50. GE T&D India stocks fell 5 per cent — its lower circuit limit — after the company said its promoters are considering selling a minority stake to simplify its holding structure. Meanwhile, the scrip of NHPC fell 0.88 per cent after a major landslide in East Sikkim caused significant damage to the 510-MW hydroelectric project on the Teesta River. In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge jumped 0.87 per cent, and the midcap index climbed 0.43 per cent. Among the indices, Consumer Durables surged by 1.56 per cent, FMCG by 1.33 per cent, healthcare by 0.94 per cent, metal by 0.73 per cent,

Telecommunication by 0.66 per cent, Commodities by 0.58 per cent and Consumer discretionary by 0.55 per cent. Realty, Power, Bankex and Utilities were the laggards. "The Indian markets showed mixed signals as key indices traded in a narrow range on Wednesday. "Investors are now focusing on the minutes from the Federal Reserve's most recent monetary policy meeting and Fed Chair Jerome Powell's speech at the Jackson Hole Economic Symposium for clues on the US interest-rate cuts this year," Avdhut Bagkar, Technical and Derivatives Analyst at StoxBox, said. The European markets were trading higher on Wednesday. In Asian markets, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong were closed in the negative territory, while Seoul ended higher on Wednesday. The US stock markets settled lower in overnight trade on Tuesday. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) again turned sellers on Tuesday as they offloaded equities worth Rs 1,457.96 crore, according to exchange data. Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought equities worth Rs 2,252.10 crore on Tuesday.

# Sebi slaps ₹11 lakh fine on IIFL Securities for flouting stock brokers rules

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Capital market regulator Sebi on Wednesday slapped a fine of Rs 11 lakh on brokerage firm IIFL Securities for flouting stock broker rules and other regulatory norms. The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) inspected IIFL Securities Ltd (IIFL) to look into various compliance requirements adhered by the brokerage firm. The inspection was conducted for the period beginning April to July 2022. Thereafter, a show cause notice (SCN) was issued to IIFL Securities on April 15, 2024 by the regulator. In its 35-page order, Sebi observed that the noticee (IIFL Securities) has admitted to the allegations stated in the SCN in respect of the monthly/ quarterly settlement of client funds and securities stating that there was some technical error. "I find that the circulars specifically mandate brokers to settle accounts and issue retention statements on a timely basis. However, the noticee failed to do so," Sebi's Adjudicating Officer Barnali Mukherjee said in the order.



While the noticee has now taken corrective action, it noted that it failed to settle the funds and securities on a monthly/ quarterly basis. The regulator also alleged that the noticee did not do periodic reconciliation of client securities lying in DP accounts, with back office holding and also reported incorrect quantity in weekly holding statement in one instance for 1,835 shares valued at Rs 11.69 lakh. As per Sebi norms, stock reconciliation is a critical process for all brokers to ensure that their physical inventory count matches the recorded data in their systems to make correct

reporting to the exchange. IIFL Securities admitted that it was a one-off case and a very small portion of the entire holding of shares valued at Rs 120.73 crore. Therefore, the noticee failed to reconcile 1,835 shares, and hence the allegation of violation of norms by the noticee stands established, the order said. "I find that the noticee has given an ambiguous reply and not addressed the issue raised in the SCN regarding the passing of penalty on short reporting of upfront margin. "The noticee has not given any reason why it had passed on a penalty to clients on account of short reporting of upfront margins amounting to Rs 24.22 lakh in the CM segment for 26 clients, Rs 56 lakh in Futures & Options segment for 13 clients and Rs 5.19 lakh in CD segment for 15 clients," Mukherjee said. Accordingly, IIFL Securities contravened the provisions of brokers' rules. IIFL Securities was under a statutory obligation to abide by and comply with the provisions of the circulars/directions issued by Sebi and stock exchanges, which it failed to do during the inspection period, Sebi said.

# Studying in Australia made easy for Indians

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

For Indian students eager to pursue higher education in Australia, a new fintech platform has been launched by Australian fintech Ziksu in partnership with India's Elanistech. This innovative platform, introduced at a launch event at the Australian High Commission here is designed to simplify and enhance the financial journey for students studying abroad. The collaboration aims to address the financial needs of Indian students by providing a unified platform that covers the entire financing process, from pre-admission to post-admission stages. With student loans averaging AUD 3.2 billion annually (INR 17,700 Crores), this platform will support students and their families by offering comprehensive financial solutions. Dr Monica Kennedy, Senior Trade and Investment Commissioner — South Asia at Austrade said, "Australia's Ziksu's collaboration with India's Elanistech and IDFC First Bank Limited showcases how Australian technology is bridging education and financial services.

# AI-led demand for data centres in India to drive 500 MW capacity addition in 4 yrs: Avendus

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Artificial Intelligence (AI)-led demand for data centres in India is projected to drive about 500 MW of capacity addition over next four years, according to a report released by Avendus Capital on Wednesday. India is among the fastest-growing data centre markets globally, it has seen overall capacities doubling to about 1,011 megawatt (MW) in 2023 from about 540 MW in 2019. Poised to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of about 26 per cent over the next three years, the sector now has the attention of investors, from growth stage PEs to long-term pension and sovereign wealth funds, as per the report. According to it, India's data centre (DC) market is undergoing massive disruption led by increased demand and use cases by AI customers. The report said that AI-led data centre capacity in India has the potential to add another 500 MW over the next four years. "With AI workloads set to surge and eventually outpace traditional cloud computing, the demand for DCs is also



expected to rise sharply," the report said. Hyperscalers in India are opting to build and own data centre tailored to their specifications, marking a major deviation from trends seen globally. This preference is bolstered by India's long-term growth potential and regulatory guidance for data sovereignty. Prateek Jhwar, Managing Director and Head, Infrastructure and Real Assets Investment Banking, at Avendus Capital believes that India's data centre market will pave the way for the next wave of investments in real estate and AI unlocking tremendous stakeholder value. "Developers can expect to generate 25 per cent plus IRR (Internal Rate of Return) with a build-and-sell model,

highlighting the sector's potential for superior returns compared to other yielding real asset classes," Jhwar said. This will drive overall demand for DC capacity in India, which is expected to double to 2 gigawatt (GW) by 2026, Jhwar pointed out. Close to 94 per cent of the current installed data centre capacity is concentrated in India's top seven cities. Over the next five years, around 40 per cent of the total additional capacity is projected to be added in Mumbai. Chennai is expected to contribute about 25 per cent of the new capacity, while Delhi will account for around 15 per cent. "We anticipate heightened transaction activity from both public and private markets. Scaled investments with a vintage of over 4 years are expected to seek listing opportunities, while developers will look to raise larger amounts of capital to fund this growth. The industry is maturing with the entry of long-term investors with commitments of over USD 250 million per investment, offering de-risked returns," Jhwar added.

# Scheme to bolster medical device industry to roll out soon: Pharma Secy



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A new scheme to strengthen the domestic medical device industry will be rolled out in the next one month, Department of Pharmaceuticals Secretary Arunish Chawla said on Wednesday. The scheme is being formulated after detailed consultations with the medical device industry, he stated while participating in an event here. "This (the scheme) will be launched in the next one month. It was part of the stakeholder consultation so that different parts of the scheme are firmed up and are aligned with the needs of the industry," Chawla said. He further said: "We have already received in-principle approval from the Finance Ministry for launching the new scheme." Participating in the second Meditech Stackathon, the

secretary said the scheme envisages a reduction in import dependence on medical devices going forward. "The scheme is being brought in order to make the domestic industry self-reliant in the long run," Chawla said. He noted that the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for medical devices has worked well so far with 20 big greenfield projects having already commenced operations. Various high-tech medical devices like computed tomography (CT) scan, MRI, ultrasound and dialysis machines, among others, are now being manufactured in the country. Last year in April, the Union Cabinet approved the National Medical Devices Policy to increase domestic production and reduce imports of such equipment.

# Rupee plunges 14 paise to 83.91 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Indian rupee nosedived 14 paise to 83.91 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday amid unabated outflow of foreign capital and volatile domestic equity markets. Forex traders said a weak American currency and lower level of crude prices, however, cushioned the local unit at lower level. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened weak at 83.79 and touched the intra-day low of 83.94 against the greenback. The unit finally settled at 83.91 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a loss of 14 paise from its previous days' closing level of 83.77. The rupee settled 10 paise higher at 83.77 against the American currency on Tuesday, a day after gaining 8 paise. Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said the rupee declined on recovery in US dollar index and US treasury



yields. "FII outflows also weighed on the rupee. However, weak crude oil prices cushioned the downside." He said the rupee is expected to trade with a slight negative bias due to recovery in the US dollar and geopolitical tension in the Middle East. "USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 83.70 to Rs 84.20," Choudhary added. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading higher by 0.09 per cent at 101.38. Analysts said the dollar index is at its seven-month low level

amid concerns over upcoming PMI data from the US and Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell's speech at Jackson Hole Symposium later this week. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.40 per cent to USD 77.51 per barrel. On the domestic equity market front, Sensex rose 102.44 points, or 0.13 per cent, to close at 80,905.30 points. The Nifty went up 71.35 points, or 0.29 per cent to 24,770.20 points. Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Tuesday, offloading shares worth Rs 1,457.96 crore, according to exchange data.

# Online vendors generated 15.8 million jobs in India, says e-commerce report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Online vendors have generated 15.8 million jobs in India, including 3.5 million for women, with about 1.76 million retail enterprises participating in e-commerce activity, says a report released on Wednesday. The report 'Assessing the Net Impact of e-Commerce on Employment and Consumer Welfare in India' was launched by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal. "Plugging in data from our survey, we estimate that online vendors generate 15.8 million jobs, including 3.5 million jobs for women," the report prepared by Pahlle India Foundation (PIF), a Delhi-based policy research institute, said. E-commerce, according to the report, has been a key driver of employment generation in India. On an average, online vendors employ 54 per cent more people and almost twice the number of female employees, compared to offline vendors. The report noted that two of the most widely-recognised contributors of e-commerce penetration in the retail sector are — growth in employment and improvements in consumer welfare. It said rather than displacing physical markets, e-commerce is expanding into new territories like tier 3



cities. "Our data shows that a higher percentage of Tier 3 city consumers spend more than Rs 5,000 per month on online shopping as compared to consumers from bigger cities," it said, adding this is the India consumption story, which enables the co-existence of physical and digital retail. The study analysed the impact e-commerce has had on employment and consumer welfare through a pan-India survey of 2,062 online vendors, 2,031 offline vendors, and 8,209 consumers of products from e-commerce websites across 35 cities in 20 states and UTs. According to the report, each e-commerce vendor on an average employs about 9 people, of which 2 are female, while each offline vendor employs about 6 people, of which only 1 is female. It pointed out that there was increase in employment across skill levels, including high-skilled (management,

marketing), medium-skilled (customer service, operations), and low-skilled (warehousing, logistics, delivery) functions. The report said that the growth of e-commerce and accompanying digitalisation have fundamentally changed the skill sets and roles required in the industry. "Vendors have experienced improved business performance parameters since listing online, including higher sales and profits," it said. According to the report, 60 per cent and 52 per cent of vendors, respectively, state that their sales and profits have increased since the time they have started selling online. "Overall, more than two thirds of the online vendors interviewed experienced an increase in online sales value and profits in the past year," the report said, adding that 58 per cent saw an increase in both.

# Brookfield proposes massive investment in renewable energy sector in Andhra

PTI ■ AMARAVATI (ANDHRA PRADESH)

Brookfield, a global owner and operator of real assets, has proposed to invest massively in Andhra Pradesh in the next three to five years in renewable energy, focusing on wind and solar formats. A delegation from the Canadian company met Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday in Amaravati and proposed to build the renewable energy projects, a state government official said. "Brookfield officials did call on

the Chief Minister and expressed desire to examine investment opportunities in Andhra Pradesh," the official confirmed to PTI. However, he said he could not comment on the quantum of investment. Meanwhile, K Ravi Kumar Reddy, chairman, Evren, a joint venture between Brookfield and Axis Energy Group, said the platform envisages to invest over Rs 50,000 crore in the next three to five years in the southern state. Evren aims to install 1,380 MW of solar power capacity and 1,640 MW of wind power capacity by 2026, Reddy said. It already operates 210 MW of



wind power assets in Andhra Pradesh. Further, he said that the joint venture envisages to add 828 MW of solar power capacity and 204 MW of wind power capacity in 2027. It also plans to install 1,311 MW of solar power capacity and 3,300 MW of wind power capacity beyond 2027 with the

ambition to achieve 8,873 MW of joint solar and wind capacities in total. "These projects will mostly come up in the Rayalaseema region. We have to procure land for wind energy projects... We are very committed," Reddy said, adding that Kurnool and

Anantapur could feature in the larger scheme of things. The Evren chairman said the company is keen to speed up these investments and observed that every MW can create one job, hinting at the employment potential. Further, Reddy pointed out that the company has already harvested four years worth of wind data to assess the viability and intensity of wind energy in the southern state. Evren is a brand of ABC Clean Tech Company, which is 51 per cent owned by Brookfield and 49 per cent by Axis Energy Group.

# Tata Motors ties up with two firms to expand charging infra for electric CVs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Tata Motors on Wednesday said it has tied up with Delta Electronics India and Thunderplus Solutions to set up charging infrastructure for its range of electric commercial vehicles (CVs). As part of the MoU inked between the parties, 250 new fast-charging stations for electric commercial vehicles would be set up across the country. Strategically located in and around over 50 cities, including Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Bengaluru, Pune, and Kochi, among others, these new charging stations

will significantly increase the existing network of 540 commercial vehicle charging points, Tata Motors said in a statement. Basis its understanding of the commercial EV movement, the commercial vehicle major will recommend optimal locations and nearest dealerships for setting up the fast-charging stations, the company said. While Delta Electronics will supply the necessary hardware, Thunderplus Solutions will install and operate them, it added. E-commerce companies, parcel and courier service providers, among other industries, are increasing the

adoption of commercial EVs for last-mile deliveries. "Expanding the available charging infrastructure on high-use routes will encourage more customers to opt for electric commercial vehicles and improve vehicle uptime, resulting in higher revenues and better profitability, while contributing towards a cleaner, greener environment," Tata Motors Commercial Vehicles Vice President and Business Head — SCV & PU — Vinay Pathak said. Currently, Tata Motors sells Ace EVs to cater to various last-mile delivery requirements.

# India allows export of 2 lakh tonne of non-basmati white rice to Malaysia

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government has permitted exports of two lakh tonne of non-basmati white rice to Malaysia, through National Cooperative Exports Limited (NCEL). Though exports of non-basmati white rice have been banned since July 20, 2023, to boost domestic supply, exports are allowed on the basis of permission granted by the government to certain countries to meet their food security needs on request. "Exports of 2,00,000 MT of non-basmati white rice... To Malaysia is permitted through NCEL," the Directorate General of Foreign Trade

(DGFT) has said in a notification. India has earlier also allowed these exports to countries like Nepal, Cameroon, Cote D'Ivoire, Guinea, Malaysia, Philippines, and Seychelles. NCEL is a multi-state cooperative society. It is jointly promoted by some of the leading cooperative societies in the country, namely, Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF) popularly known as AMUL, Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Ltd (IFFCO), Krishak Bharati Cooperative Ltd (KRIBHCO) and National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd (NAFED).

# INDIAN PARA-ATHLETES EYE 12 MEDALS AT PARALYMPICS



**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
 Eyeing an unprecedented five gold and a dozen medals in total, the first batch of the Indian contingent, including star javelin thrower Sumit Antil, left for the Paris Paralympics in advance to get acclimatised to the conditions. The 16 para athletes will stay at hotels in Paris for a few days before entering the Games Village on August 25, three

days before the Opening Ceremony. The likes of Antil, who is bidding to become the first Indian to defend his Paralympics gold, will train at facilities near the French capital to acclimatise with the weather conditions there. Para athletics events will be held from August 30 to September 8, the closing day of the Paralympics, at Stade de France, the same venue where the able-bodied athletes

competed during the Paris Olympics. "Sumit Antil and some other para athletes will train at Nelson Mandela Sports Complex for a few days before entering the Games Village," para-athletics head coach Satyanarayana told PTI. Nelson Mandela Sports Complex is around 5km from Stade de France. It has state-of-the-art training facilities for athletics, rugby, tennis, wheelchair tennis and

swimming. "Some will stay at hotels near the Games Village and they can use the training facilities there during day time," he added. Asked about Indian para-athletics team's medal prospects at the Paris Games, he said, "We are aiming for at least five gold and 12 medals in total. This will be our best performance in the Paralympics." Satyanarayana's hopes stem

from the unprecedented success at the 2024 World Para Athletics Championships in Kobe, Japan, in May where India had finished sixth in the medal tally with six gold, five silver and six bronze. Antil (men's javelin F64), Deepthi Jeevanji (women's 400m T20), Sachin Khilari (men's shot put F46), Ekta Bhyan (women's club throw F51), Simran Sharma (women's 200m T12) and Mariyappan Thangavelu (men's high jump T42) won gold. In the Tokyo Paralympics in 2021, India had won a record 19 medals (5 gold, 8 silver and 6 bronze). India is sending its biggest ever team of 84 athletes across 12 sports to the Paralympics, with 38 from the para-athletics team. Paralympic Committee of India President Devendra Jhajharia has predicted at least 25 medals from the Paris Games. Antil and Bhagyashree Jadhav, who won a silver in Hangzhou Asian Para Games in women's shot put F34, will be the joint flag bearers for India during the Opening Ceremony, which will be held outside a stadium for the first time. The ceremony will be held from Champs-Elysees to Place de la Concorde in the heart of Paris. The Opening Ceremony of the Paris Olympics was also held outside a stadium, on the banks of the Seine river, a first in the games' history.

# No Jhinghan among India probables for Intercontinental Cup



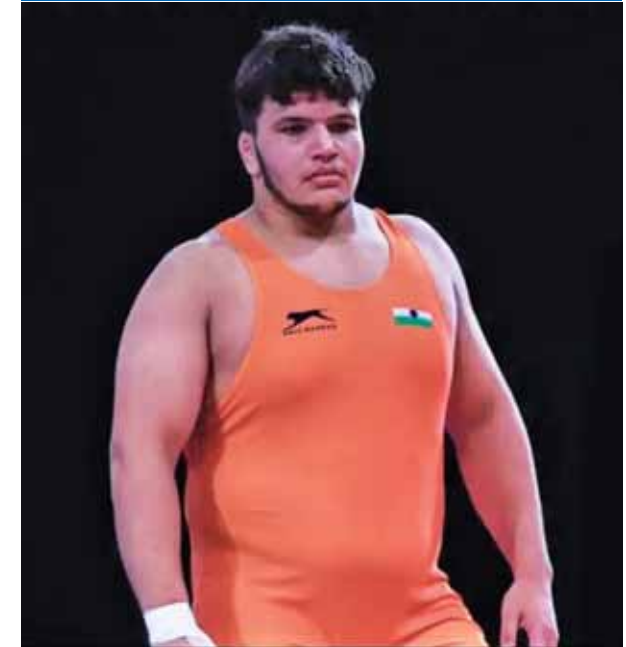
**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Influential centre-back Sandesh Jhinghan's name was missing as Chennaiyin FC forward Kiyann Nassiri, son of East Bengal's Iranian legend Jamshid, on Wednesday inched closer to his maiden India selection after being named among new head coach Manolo Marquez's 26 probables for the Intercontinental Cup preparatory camp. Mohun Bagan SG right-back Ashish Rai and East Bengal goalkeeper Prabhshukhan Singh Gill, who are yet to play for the senior India team, also received call-ups for the camp in preparation for the three-team annual tournament that will be held from September 3-9 in Hyderabad. It is understood that key defender Jhinghan, who sustained a right knee injury during India's Asian Cup group match against Syria in January, is yet to recover from the injury. Jhinghan, the 31-year-old central defender, also missed out on selection for the team's camp ahead of the FIFA World

Cup 2026 preliminary joint qualification round 2 matches against Kuwait and Qatar, in May. Syria, placed 93rd in the latest FIFA rankings and Mauritius, who stand at 179, are the other two teams in the competition. India are currently ranked 124th. The preparatory camp will start in Hyderabad from August 31. The fourth edition of the Intercontinental Cup will be the first full tournament after the retirement of the legendary Sunil Chhetri and the first assignment for Marquez who was named India head coach last month. India have won the tournament twice in the past. The 23-year-old Kiyann, who grew up in Kolkata and whose mother was born and brought up in Shillong, has been excelling upfront while playing for Indian Super League side Chennaiyin FC. His father has been an East Bengal legend and currently lives in Kolkata, having represented the Iranian U-20 team in the 1977 FIFA World Youth Championship. Announcing the probables,

Marquez said: "We are very excited about our first preparatory camp and I know it will be the same for the players. "We face two different teams and the rankings are not very important. We need to work all together in the same direction to find the correct group of players and their predisposition will be very good, something I am completely sure about. "I know all of us are in pre-season with nice challenges in front of us. Is a big honour to wear the jersey of the national team and we need to show it for all our fans." **THE LIST OF PROBABLES:** **Goalkeepers:** Gurpreet Singh, Amrinder Singh, Prabhshukhan Singh Gill. **Defenders:** Nikhil Pojary, Rahul Bheke, Chinglensana Singh Konsham, Roshan Singh Naorem, Anwar Ali, Jay Gupta, Ashish Rai, Subhasish Bose, Mehtab Singh. **Midfielders:** Suresh Singh Wangjam, Jeakson Singh, Nandhakumar Sekar, Naorem Mahesh Singh, Yasir Mohammad, Lalengmawia Ralte, Anirudh Thapa, Sahal Abdul Samad, Lallianzuala Chhangte, Lalthathanga Khawhlhring. **Forwards:** Kiyann Nassiri Giri, Edmund Lalrindika, Manvir Singh, Liston Colaco. **Intercontinental Cup fixtures (all matches will kick-off at 7.30 pm):** **September 3:** India vs Mauritius **September 6:** Syria vs Mauritius

## U17 WORLD WRESTLING C'SHIP



# India's Ronak wins bronze in 110kg

**PTI ■ AMMAN (JORDAN)**  
 India's Ronak Dahiya bagged the bronze medal in the 110kg Greco-Roman category at the U17 World Wrestling Championship here. In the bronze medal play-off, Ronak, currently ranked two in the world in his age-group weight category, comfortably disposed the challenge of Turkey's Emrullah Capkan 6-1 to claim India's first medal from the championship on Tuesday. Earlier, Ronak had lost to eventual silver medallist

Zoltan Czako of Hungary in the semi-final. The gold in this category was won by Ukraine's Ivan Yankovskiy, who beat Czako 13-4 by virtue of technical superiority. India have a chance of a second medal in the 51 kg repechage if Sainath Pardihi wins two bouts. He is first pitted against Dominic Michael Munaretto of the United States and if he wins the bout then he will fight the bronze medal play off with either Kazakhstan's Mussan Yerassyl or Iran's Abolfazl Mehrdad Karamiegaei.

# Ronaldo aiming to help Al-Nassr end Al-Hilal's dominance in Saudi soccer league

**AP ■ RIYADH**

Cristiano Ronaldo is lining up for another Saudi Pro League season with the main aim of helping Al-Nassr end the dominance of Riyadh rival Al-Hilal. Ronaldo signed for Al-Nassr in December 2022 and has yet to win a domestic trophy with the club. In a social media post this week, he wrote: New season, same goal. Al-Hilal won the title last season with 31 wins and three draws, finishing 14 points clear of second-place Al-Nassr. Hilal beat Ronaldo's team 4-1 in the final of the Saudi Super Cup last weekend. The 18-team league kicks off its season on Thursday. "I'm feeling a lot of apprehension because this season is going to be very

difficult," Al-Hilal defender Kalidou Koulibaly, who signed from Chelsea last year, told The Associated Press. "Last year, it was a tough championship, but we managed to come out on top. This year, all the teams will be gunning to beat Al Hilal." Last summer, a string of big-name stars arrived from Europe's top leagues to join Ronaldo in Saudi Arabia. According to Deloitte's Sports Business Group, a total of \$957 million was spent. This summer has been comparatively quiet, although the transfer window remains open until Sept. 2. For Al-Hilal, the return of Neymar will be like a new signing. The Brazilian superstar made only five appearances for the Riyadh club before sustaining a serious left knee injury while



playing in a World Cup qualifier in October. "Neymar's return is highly anticipated by our players," Koulibaly said. "We know that there is still a little bit of waiting due to his injury but people will see a great Neymar. He still has this motivation when we see him in training."

Neymar returned to training last month and, according to local media, could start playing again in September. In Neymar's absence, Serbian striker Aleksandar Mitrovic scored 28 league goals last season, second only to Ronaldo's record 35. Al-Hilal also has Portuguese

international Ruben Neves and Morocco's Yassine Bounou in goal. Al-Nassr's major new signing so far has been Brazilian goalkeeper Bento, who replaces Colombian international David Ospina. As well as Ronaldo, the Yellows have Senegalese star Sadio Mane, Croatian midfielder Marcelo Brozovic and defender Aymeric Laporte, who helped Spain to the European championship in July. Other challenges are expected to come from Jeddah clubs Al-Ahli, led by Riyad Mahrez, and Karim Benzema's Al-Ittihad, which has made the biggest signing this summer so far, paying over \$60 million to Aston Villa for French winger Moussa Diaby. All four clubs, which were taken over in 2023 by Saudi

Arabia's Public Investment Fund, are by far the country's best-supported teams. League officials will likely be hoping a more competitive title race will help improve the average attendance, which was just over 8,000 per game last season. Al-Hilal has international as well as domestic ambitions. The club will represent Asia in the expanded FIFA Club World Cup which kicks off June 15 in the United States. Al-Hilal reached the final of the 2022 tournament before losing to Real Madrid. "What will be expected going into that competition is that it's going to be Neymar's team," the 33-year-old Koulibaly said. "So we're going to do everything in training so that he's out there and in his best conditions to help us win trophies."

**PTI ■ ST LOUIS (USA)**

World championship challenger Indian Grandmaster D Gukesh played out a thrilling draw with Russia's Ian Nepomniachtchi to be tied second after the second round of the Sinquefeld Cup, the final event on the Grand Chess Tour this year. After a relatively easy draw with reigning world champion Ding Liren of China, Gukesh had an exciting match against Nepomniachtchi out of a Catalan opening game on Tuesday. The Indian stood marginally better for the major part as white pieces but Nepomniachtchi, who has won the

# Gukesh draws with Nepomniachtchi

Candidates' tournament twice, stayed put with some fine defense and counter-attacks to steer the game to a draw in the knight and pawns endgame. The game lasted 60 moves. Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa also stayed in the hunt after a draw with Maxime Vachier-Lagrave of France. It was another Italian opening game as black for the Indian who did not get any chance against a solid Vachier-Lagrave. The pieces got traded at regular intervals and the players arrived at a rook and pawns endgame that



offered no chances. After a lone decisive game in the opening round wherein Alireza Firouzja of France defeated Fabiano Caruana of United States, the second round witnessed an all-draws day. Firouzja drew with Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan and Dutchman Anish Giri signed peace with Ding Liren. In the other game of the USD 3,50,000 prize money tournament, the all American duel between Wesley So and Caruana was also drawn.

Firouzja remained in front with 1.5 points in his bag leaving eight players behind him on one point each. With a half point in his kitty, Caruana is currently at the bottom with seven rounds still remaining in the 10-player round-robin tournament. **RESULTS ROUND 2:** Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra, 1) drew with R Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 1); Anish Giri (Ned, 1) drew with Ding Liren (Chn, 1); Wesley So (Usa, 1) drew with Fabiano Caruana (Usa, 0.5); D Gukesh (Ind, 1) drew with Ian Nepomniachtchi (FID, 1); Alireza Firouzja (Fra, 1.5) drew with Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzb, 1).

# It's final week to qualify for Presidents Cup and Solheim Cup

**AP ■ WASHINGTON**

The BMW Championship is the last stop before the leading six players get automatic spots in the Presidents Cup next month at Royal Montreal. Turns out the first FedEx Cup playoff event had a strong effect, too. Jordan Spieth might have been a long shot to make the U.S. Team, but last week sealed it. He finished 26 shots out of the lead, failed to advance and said he would be having surgery on his left wrist. His season is over. It also was a big blow to Mackenzie Hughes of Canada, who dropped out of the top 50. International captain Mike Weir wants a strong Canadian presence, but none is in the top six and four other Canadians are ahead of Hughes. Weir gets six captain's picks after the Tour Championship. Hughes won't be at East Lake,

either. This comes two years after Hughes, renowned for his putting, was curiously left off the International side for the matches at Quail Hollow, where he is a member. For the Americans, there figures to be significant turnover from their last team competition at the Ryder Cup. Three players already are effectively eliminated - Spieth, Rickie Fowler (didn't qualify for the postseason) and Brooks Koepka (ineligible because he plays for LIV Golf). The leading five - Scottie Scheffler, Xander Schauffele, Collin Morikawa, Wyndham Clark and Patrick Cantlay - were at Marco Simone. Sahithi Theegala is holding down the sixth spot over Tony Finau. Max Homa, who went 4-0 in his Presidents Cup debut at Quail Hollow, finished last in the 70-man field last week. He has not contended since his Sunday chance at the Masters (his lone top 10 was at Wells

Fargo, where he finished 13 shots behind). Homa is at No. 9 in the standings. Right behind is Brian Harman, who has one top 10 in his last 13 starts. The wild card, again, is Justin Thomas. He is at No. 16 in the standings and he could use a mile-high effort this week. Thomas faced plenty of scrutiny from being picked for the Ryder Cup team without having qualified for the postseason. U.S. Captain Jim Furyk could have some interesting choices, such as 20-year-old Nick Dunlap or 22-year-old Akshay Bhatia, depending on what kind of performances he sees at Castle Pines and then East Lake. The International team, which has lost nine in a row, is the side that would appear to have some stability. The leading five players were at Quail Hollow and Byeong Hun An played in the 2019 matches. Four others



from the '22 team have done well enough to merit consideration. **SOLHEIM CUP PUSH:** The Women's British Open at St. Andrews is the final qualifying event for the Solheim Cup, with seven players vying for the final two automatic spots for the U.S. Team. Lauren Coughlin, who won the Women's Scottish Open, and Allisen Corpuz, who tied for 15th in Scotland, clinched their spots. Meghan Khang and Andrea Lee are holding

down the final two spots among seven automatic qualifiers. Rose Zhang is at No. 8, though she also is leading in the two spots awarded to players from the women's world ranking not already eligible. Stacy Lewis gets three captain's picks, one of them likely going to Lexi Thompson, who has shown renewed form since announcing her retirement from a full schedule. Europe takes two players from its European Solheim Cup

standings, the leading six players from the women's world ranking and Suzann Pettersen will get four captain's picks. The matches are Sept. 13-15 at Robert Trent Jones Golf Club in Gainesville, Virginia. Keegan hangs on. Keegan Bradley figured to be safe when he started the postseason at No. 39, but that was a little misleading. There were 93 points between Bradley and No. 38, and only 105 points down to Jake Knapp at No. 50. Bradley left the TPC Southwind projected outside the top 50 and he narrowly hung on, moving inside when Tom Kim finished bogey-double bogey-double bogey. He has said his goal was to get to the Tour Championship. But the Ryder Cup captain did well to make it to the BMW Championship. The top 50 get into all eight signature events next year, allowing Bradley to

be around players likely to make his team for Bethpage Black. Plus, he doesn't have to put tournament directors in a spot by asking for exemptions. **WINNERS OUT:** Winning a PGA Tour event that offers full FedEx Cup points is worth a trip to the Masters and PGA Championship, a start at Kapalua for The Sentry and a two-year exemption. But it doesn't guarantee the top 50 in the FedEx Cup and the guarantee of playing the eight \$20 million signature events the following year. Nick Taylor (Phoenix Open), Jake Knapp (Mexico Open), Peter Malnati (Valspar Championship), Davis Riley (Colonial) and Jonathan Vegas (3M Open) did not reach the BMW Championship. Don't expect Vegas to lose sleep over it. He was No. 139 in the FedEx Cup and in danger of losing his card when he won

in Minnesota. Saunders retires. Trying to play golf at the highest level is difficult enough. Sam Saunders did this while being known his entire career as the grandson of Arnold Palmer. Saunders strived for his own identity while embracing his heritage with remarkable poise. But the 37-year-old is ready to move on. Saunders missed the cut on the Korn Ferry Tour last week and posted to Instagram that it was his last professional round. He did not qualify for the Korn Ferry Tour postseason after making only four cuts this year. "I started this career over 15 years ago, and today was my last professional round," Saunders wrote. "I didn't want to post anything or make a big to-do of it, but I have too many people I want to thank, and acknowledge what a treat it has been."

# BORDER GAVASKAR TROPHY ON PAR WITH ASHES FOR AUSTRALIA: STARC

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Australia pace ace Mitchell Starc believes that with the upcoming Border-Gavaskar Trophy against India becoming a five-Test affair for the first time in over three decades, it would be "right on par" with the esteemed Ashes series for his team.

The marquee series between India and Australia, set to begin in November, was extended by a match this year for the first time since the 1991-92 season.

"Being five matches now it's probably right on par with an Ashes series," Starc told Wide World of Sports.

Since 2014-15, Australia have failed to lay their hands on the Border Gavaskar Trophy, with India winning four consecutive series including the historic triumphs Down Under in 2018-19 and 2020-21.

Starc is not only intent on reversing this trend but also harbours aspirations of a clean sweep, particularly as the series forms a crucial part of the World Test Championship.

"We always want to win every



game at home and we know India are a very strong team," he said.

Currently, India leads the World Test Championships table with Australia in second place.

"As we're placed at the minute we're the top two teams on the Test ladder... So a very exciting series coming up for the fans and certainly the players.

"Hopefully when we're sitting there on the 8th of January we have that trophy back on our shores."

The 34-year-old is just 11 matches shy of reaching a milestone 100 Tests and has no plans to quit red-ball cricket.

The left-armed said he is scaling back his white-ball commitments to prolong his

Test career for as long as possible.

"...Every time I get to wear the baggy green cap it feels very special. Hopefully it's five times through the summer with five wins and we can sing that song five times, then we move on from there.

"If it does come to a point where I'm lucky enough to get

past that 100 number then it's obviously going to be pretty special as well," he said.

Starc is scheduled to fly to England next month for a white-ball series following which the left-armed intends to play domestic cricket for New South Wales ahead of the Border Gavaskar Trophy.

"The Tests will always be taking precedence for me," he said.

"We've got seven Tests on the bounce with five against India and then two in Sri Lanka, so they sit top of the tree with what's coming up."

Alongside, Test and ODI skipper Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood, Starc will shoulder the pace duties across three formats.

"Pat is resting for this UK tour... We love playing all three formats but that could look different at different times over 12 months."

"There is certainly no end date on (our bowling careers). That will be an ongoing one. We'll see where (our) bodies are and the want to keep going, but at this stage it's all guns blazing for five Tests against India."

# Arya leads South Delhi Superstarz to six-wicket win over Central Delhi Kings

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Priyansh Arya's scintillating 82 off 51 balls powered South Delhi Superstarz to a six-wicket win over Central Delhi Kings in the Delhi Premier League here.

Fifties from Dhruv Kaushik (56) and Yash Dhull (52) guided Central Delhi Kings to 176/7 after they were asked to bat on Tuesday.

However, South Delhi Superstarz chased down the target with five balls to spare, courtesy a solid 101-run partnership between Arya and Ayush Badoni (42). After the early loss of Sarthak Ray (0 off 1) in the first over, Badoni and Arya approached the run chase with composed batting.

By the end of the powerplay, they took the score to 45/1 and went on to consistently score more than 10 runs per over.

Arya brought up his fifty in 32 balls, while Badoni contributed a vital 42 off 36 balls before being caught at mid-wicket, thus missing out on his half-century.

By the strategic timeout, SDS were firmly in control, thanks to the free-flowing stroke play of Arya and Tejaswi Dahiya.



Arya, who smashed seven sixes and three fours, was dismissed in the 17th over. Tejaswi followed in the next over, contributing 22 off 14.

Despite these quick wickets, the South Delhi Superstarz were still in a commanding position, needing just 17 runs from 16 balls.

Vision Panchal and Dhruv Singh then sealed the victory with two sixes and a four in the 19th over, securing the South Delhi Superstarz' second consecutive win of the tournament.

Earlier in the contest, Hiten Dalal (10 off 9) fell cheaply to

Divij Mehra in the third over. However, skipper Yash Dhull led from the front, keeping the scoreboard ticking alongside Dhruv Kaushik as they stitched together a solid 91-run partnership off 65 balls.

Kaushik was then dismissed in the following over after scoring 56 off 33 balls.

**Brief Scores:**  
**Central Delhi Kings:** 176/7 in 20 overs (Dhruv Kaushik 56 off 34, Yash Dhull 52 off 44, Kuldeep Yadav 2/37)

**South Delhi Superstarz:** 177/4 in 19.1 overs (Priyansh Arya 82 off 51, Ayush Badoni 42 off 36, Money Grewal 2/22).

# Conor joins Atletico Madrid from Chelsea as Joao moves in opposite direction

AP ■ MADRID

England midfielder Conor Gallagher finally completed his move to Atletico Madrid on Wednesday, ending a weeks-long saga that required a move by Joao Felix in the opposite direction to facilitate the deal.

Gallagher joined Atletico for a reported 36 million pounds (\$47 million) on a five-year deal. Hours later, Chelsea announced the signing of Felix, the Portugal forward, for a reported 45 million pounds (\$59 million).

Chelsea wanted to sell Gallagher, an academy product and the team's vice-captain last season, to help the club meet the Premier League's financial requirements that are being more strictly applied in recent seasons.

Chelsea and Atletico reached an agreement on his transfer but it was in jeopardy last week, reportedly because of



the collapse of a deal that would have seen Atletico striker Samu Omorodion move in the opposite direction.

That meant Gallagher had to return to Chelsea and train alone but a solution was reached, with Felix instead making the switch from Atletico to Chelsea.

Felix spent the second half of the 2022-23 season on loan at Chelsea, having previously become the third most expensive player of all time when Atletico triggered the 126 million euro (around \$140 million) buyout clause in

his contract in 2019 to sign him from Benfica.

"I'm really happy to be back at Chelsea and I can't wait to get started," he said. "I can see some familiar faces from the last time I was here, which is always nice."

"I loved my time here before and I told my friends and family that I'd love to return to the Premier League one day. To do that with Chelsea is a great feeling and I'm excited to be back."

Felix was on loan at Barcelona last season.

Gallagher played for England at the recent European Championship and was one of Chelsea's best players last season. He has played 95 times for a club he joined as a 6-year-old, scoring 10 goals in total.

It continues a frenzied summer of transfer activity for Chelsea, which continues to overhaul its squad under its American owners.

# Unlucky to lose to Germany; back-to-back bronze a huge achievement: Harmanpreet

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

India hockey captain Harmanpreet Singh on Wednesday said that his side was unlucky to lose to Germany in the Paris Olympics semifinal despite creating several chances before calling the back-to-back bronze winning performance a "huge achievement".

India repeated their 2021 Tokyo Games performance in Paris, defeating Spain to win consecutive bronze medals

for the first time in 52 years. The keenly-contested semifinal earlier saw India going down to reigning world champions Germany 2-3 to set up a bronze-medal match with Spain.

"It (semifinal vs Germany) was a very close match. I think we created a lot of chances but you can say we were not lucky that day and some chances were off target," Harmanpreet told PTI Videos during a felicitation ceremony organised by the Odisha

government.

"But I think the bronze medal was very important. It was the last match of the tournament and feeling very happy after winning the match. Our effort was that we should fulfil our dream (of winning gold) but somehow we were unlucky."

"But, still, we had the bronze medal to play for. So, went into the match with that mindset that we will win. We've won back-to-back medals in hockey; it's a very big thing for us," he added.

Harmanpreet was left speechless with the reception given to the players, saying the team gets the same affection every time it comes to Odisha.

"And, this time, we are getting all the more affection. Whenever the team comes here, be it to play in a tournament or after winning a medal, it always feels nice... We get a lot of respect," added Harmanpreet.

Harmanpreet also thanked the state government for sponsoring hockey.

# Can see growth, especially in women's table tennis in India: Manika on UTT



PTI ■ CHENNAI

Indian table tennis is headed in the right direction thanks to the advent of the UTT tournament which attracts top players from across the world, feels Manika Batra, who is the most prominent face of the women's game in the country.

Manika and Sreeja Akula recently made history by becoming the first Indian table tennis players to reach the Olympics singles pre-quarterfinals in Paris.

Next, the 29-year-old Manika will represent Bengaluru Smashers in the eight-team Ultimate Table Tennis (UTT) competition, which gets underway here on Thursday.

"Personally, it has helped me because the players come for UTT from different countries, and we play against them, we play with them," Manika told reporters here on Wednesday.

"It's really fun, and we enjoy this. I can see the growth that's happening, especially in women's table tennis in India, how we all are performing internationally. We have improved a lot from UTT."

Manika lost to Miu Hirano of Japan 0-3 in the women's singles pre-quarterfinals

in Paris. In the team event, India, who were represented by Manika, Sreeja and Archana Kamath, lost to Germany 1-3 in the quarterfinals.

In the UTT, one of Manika's most anticipated contests will be against world No. 13, Bernadette Szocs of Romania, who will play for Ahmedabad SG Pipers. The two players also clashed during the pre-quarterfinals of the team event in Paris Olympics, with India winning the tie 3-2.

Bernadette said, "I love to play here; I love all the fans who are very big supporters of table tennis. And, of course, always when I come here, everything is perfect with good organisation."

Veteran Sharath Kamal, who will lead Chennai Lions in UTT, feels the performance graph of Indian players is going up gradually.

"This is the first time both Indian teams, men and women, qualified for the Olympic Games in the team event. The girls went further; they went on to play in the quarterfinals in the team event, and especially Manika and Sreeja got into the last 16 in the individual event," Sharath pointed out.

"So, performances like this have been constantly coming up, and India has

been constantly growing in the international arena, and we look forward to more growth."

Nigerian legend Quadri Aruna returns to the tournament, and his clash against Sharath is expected to be one of the highlights of the tournament.

"With huge spending on the sport of table tennis in India, we have seen huge growth. Indian players are already title contenders in most of the tournaments in the world. So, I think table tennis has improved a lot in India," expressed Aruna, who will be representing U Mumbai TT.

**UTT 2024 SQUADS:**

**Ahmedabad SG Pipers:** Manush Shah, Bernadette Szocs (Romania), Lilian Bardet (France), Reeth Tensionn, Pritha Vartikar, Jash Modi.

**Chennai Lions:** Achanta Sharath Kamal, Sakura Mori (Japan), Jules Rolland (France), Poymantee Baisya, Mouma Das, Abhinandh PB.

**Dabang Delhi TTC:** Sathiyam G, Orawan Paranang (Thailand), Diya Chitale, Andreas Levenko (Austria), Yashansh Malik, Lakshita Narang.

**Athead Goa Challengers:** Harmeet Desai, Yangzi Liu (Australia), Yashaswini Ghokpade, Sudhanshu Grover, Sayali Wani, Mihai Bobocica (Italy).

**Jaipur Patriots:** Cho Seungmin (South Korea), Suthasini Sawettabut (Thailand), Snehit SFR, Ronit Bhanja, Moumita Dutta, Nithyashree Mani.

**PBG Bengaluru Smashers:** Manika Batra, Alvaro Robles (Spain), Lily Zhang (USA), Jeet Chandra, Taneesha Kotecha, Amalraj Anthony.

**Puneri Paltan Table Tennis:** Ayhika Mukherjee, Natalia Bajor (Poland), Joao Monteiro (Portugal), Ankur Bhattacharjee, Anirban Ghosh, Yashini Sivashankar.

**U Mumbai TT:** Manav Thakkar, Sutirtha Mukherjee, Aruna Quadri (Nigeria), Akash Pal, Kavyasree Baskar, Maria Xiao (Spain).

# After silver at Olympics, Chopra takes field in Lausanne in bid for Diamond League title

PTI ■ LAUSANNE

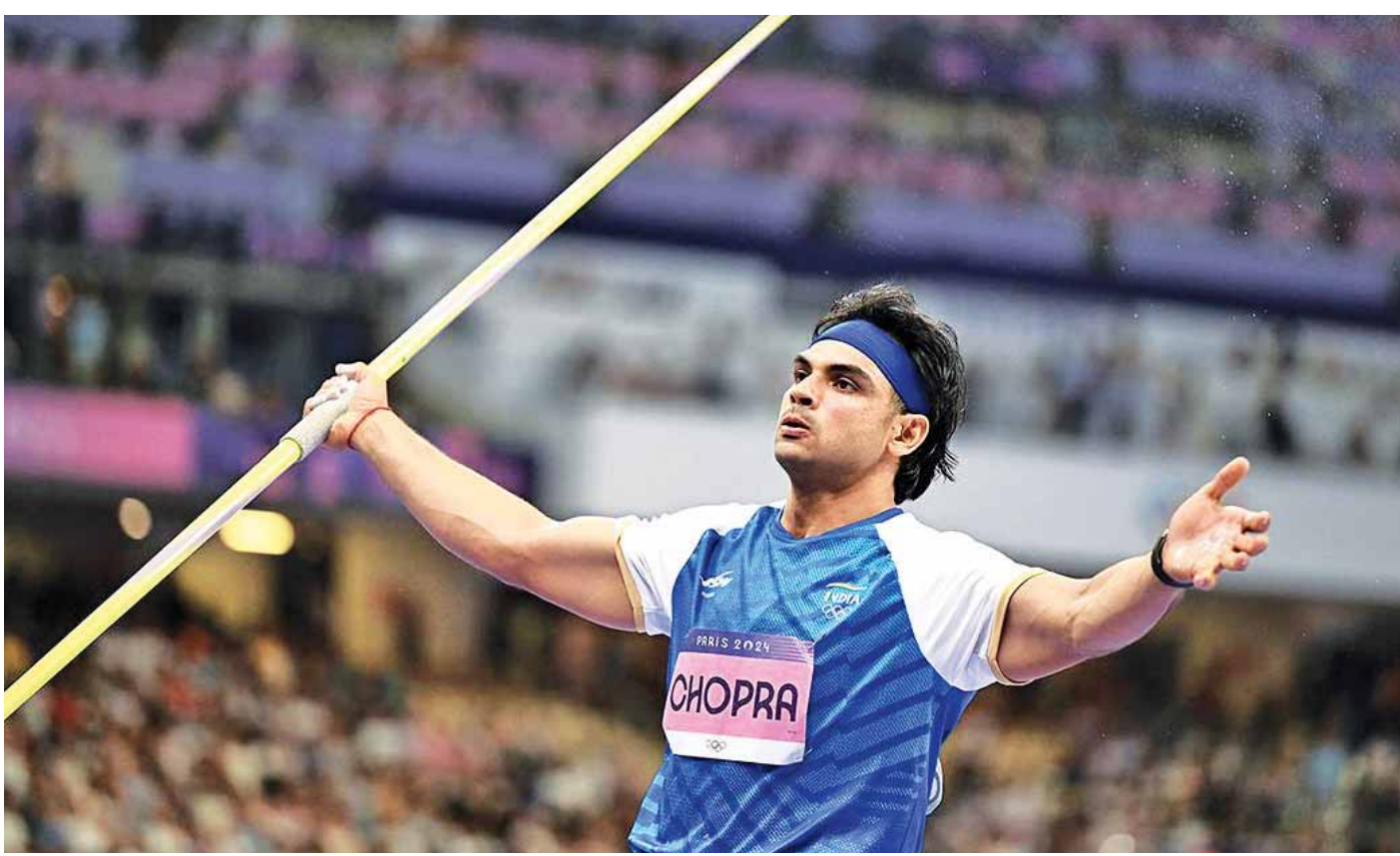
Two weeks after winning his historic silver medal at the Paris Olympics, star Indian javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra will resume action at the Lausanne Diamond League meeting on Thursday, seeking to reclaim the DL trophy at the season-ending finale next month.

Nursing a long-standing groin injury, Chopra claimed a silver in the Paris Olympics on August 8 with a 89.45m throw, having won a historic gold in the Tokyo edition of the Games three years ago.

The 26-year-old double Olympic medallist Indian on Saturday confirmed his participation at the Diamond League meeting in Lausanne, leaving a decision on a possible surgery after the end of the season.

Chopra was the Diamond League champion in 2022 and finished second behind Jakub Vadlech of Czech Republic in the winner-takes-all DL final in Eugene, USA, last year.

This season's DL finals will be held in Brussels on September 14. He needs to finish in the top-six of the Diamond League meetings series standings to qualify for the season



finale. There is another DL meeting — in Zurich on September 5 — which has men's javelin throw event in its roster.

He is currently at fourth spot with seven points he has garnered after finishing second behind Vadlech in the Doha Diamond League on May 10.

After a busy couple of days post the Olympic final on August 8, Chopra started training in Switzerland and is determined to finish the season on a high despite being restricted by the injury.

"I came to Switzerland for training ahead of the Diamond League. Luckily, I did not aggravate my injury as I took extra care of that."

"I thought of continuing my season like most other athletes. There is one month to go until the season ends. I will go to the doctors in my free time," he had said last week.

Chopra will be up against a top-class field in Lausanne with five of the top-six finishers in Paris Olympics final competing. Only Pakistan's Arshad Nadeem, who stunned the athletics world by winning the gold with an Olympic record throw of 92.97m, is missing. Nadeem had finished fourth in the Paris Diamond League on July 7

with a throw of 84.21m. That was the only DL meeting — as well as the lone event apart from the Olympics — he had taken part this season.

He is currently at sixth spot in the standings with five points.

Having pushed to the fourth spot with a throw of 88.50m in Paris after winning a silver in Tokyo, Vadlech would be looking to maintain his form in his bid to defend the DL title.

Two-time world champion Anderson Peters of Grenada, who took the bronze in the Paris Olympics with 88.54m, has been on the ascendancy after a poor last season, and he is capable of pulling off big throws, having already gone past the 90m mark in his career.

Chopra has been the most consistent javelin thrower in the last couple of seasons, before Nadeem pulled off the heist in Paris, and the Indian will start as favourite in Lausanne on Thursday.

He has been managing his groin injury since winning the gold in the Budapest World Championships last year.

"The final treatment will be after the season ends. I will try to take care of it as much as possible and consult the doctors later," he said.