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WORLD 8 BRAZIL TO LIMIT ENTRY FOR SOME ASIANS

MONEY 10 GOLD LOAN MARKET PROJECTED TO DOUBLE IN 5 YEARS

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

Late City Vol. 18 Issue 232 *Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

DEHRADUN, FRIDAY AUGUST 23, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹3

Established 1864

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KARTIK TO LEAD INDIAN CHALLENGE 12 SPORTS

Supreme Court extremely disturbed over delay in Kolkata FIR

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Terming the delay by the Kolkata Police in registering the unnatural death of the woman doctor raped and killed at the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital as 'extremely disturbing', the Supreme Court on Thursday came down heavily on the West Bengal Government about the "14-hour delay" in filing the First Information Report (FIR). The SC flagged discrepancies in police status report questioning the sequence and timing of legal formalities conducted by the police.

During the hearing, Justice JB Pardiwala, who is part of the three-judge bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Manoj Misra, said he has not come across the kind of procedure followed by the State Government of West Bengal in his 30 years of legal career life. Expressing surprise that the post-mortem of the victim was conducted on August 9 between 6.10 pm and 7.10 pm before the registration of case as unnatural death, the top court pulled up the Kolkata police over "unexplained" delay of 14 hours in lodging of the FIR in the case.

THE NATION WAITS FOR JUSTICE ON RAPE AND MURDER HORROR



Doctor sitting on protest against the death of a doctor of RG Kar Hospital, at RML hospital on Thursday

11.30 pm on August 9 after post-mortem and the FIR is recorded at 11.45 pm. This is extremely disturbing," the bench, also comprising Justice JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, said. Questioning the sequence and timing of the legal formalities conducted by police, Justice Pardiwala said, "The entire procedure followed by your State (West Bengal) is something which I have not come across in the 30 years of my professional life.

"The first thing is, is it true that the UD (unnatural death) was recorded at 10.30 hours (10.30 am)? Second, who is this assistant superintendent non-medical (person), her conduct is also very doubtful. Why did she act in this manner?" It directed the Kolkata Police officer, who registered the first entry about the incident that shocked the country, to appear in the next hearing and disclose the time of the entry. The court also observed that there seemed to be an attempt to pass off the murder as a suicide. Meanwhile, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) while sharing a status report on the matter claimed that the crime scene was altered and tampered with which has hindered the further probe in the case. The CBI also informed the court that the FIR was lodged after the cremation of the trainee doctor.



Security personnel outside the residence of a man allegedly linked to Al Qaeda, in Lohardaga, on Thursday. Seven people allegedly linked to Al Qaeda were detained by Jharkhand Anti-Terrorist Squad in raids in different parts of the State on Thursday PTI

Delhi Police deals death blow to Al Qaeda terrorists

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police's Special Cell on Thursday claimed to have busted an Al Qaeda-inspired terror module after arresting 11 people and detaining three others from Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. Six of the suspects were arrested from Bhiwadi in Rajasthan while they were undergoing training to handle weapons, according to a police officer. They have been identified as Hasan Ansari, Enamul Ansari, Altaf Ansari, Arshad Khan, Umar Farooq and Shabbaz Ansari, all natives of Jharkhand. They were staying in Rajasthan for the past few days, the officer said. Five more people were arrested from Ranchi in

Jharkhand. They have been identified as Dr Ishtiyaq Ahmed, Motiur, Rizwan, Mufti Rahmatullah and Faizan, he added. A senior police official said the operation by the Special Cell of the Delhi Police was conducted, along with the police forces of the States after receiving intelligence inputs. "In a coordinated, intelligence based operation, conducted by the Special Cell of Delhi Police in association with State Police forces of Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, an Al Qaeda (AQ) inspired module has been busted," a Delhi Police statement said. The terror module was aiming to declare 'khilafat' in the country and was planning for carrying out terrorist activities across India.

Delhi Doctors resume work

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Resident doctors at AIIMS, Delhi RML Hospital and Federation of All India Medical Association announced that they were withdrawing their 11-day long strike following assurance from the Supreme Court on Thursday. "We are resuming duty following the SC's appeal and assurances and intervention in the RG Kar incident and the safety of doctors. We commend the court's action and call for adherence to its directives. Patient care remains our top priority," the Resident Doctors

Association, AIIMS, New Delhi, said in a post on X. The resident doctors' association of RML Hospital said in a similar statement that they would resume duty from 8 am on Friday. The SC on Thursday directed doctors protesting over the Kolkata rape and murder incident, to resume work and assured them that no adverse action would be taken after they rejoin. The court said judges and doctors cannot go on a strike since they deal with matters involving life and liberty. "Justice and medicine cannot afford to

be stopped. Can we (judges) go and sit outside the Supreme Court now?" the bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud asked. The bench comprising Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud, Justice JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, was hearing the matter of the progress of the investigations by the two separate agencies — Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Kolkata police in the alleged rape and murder of a woman doctor at R G Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata.

Congress, National Conference shake hands for Jammu and Kashmir

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Former alliance partners Congress and National Conference on Thursday decided to 'unitedly' contest the upcoming Assembly polls by forging a pre-poll alliance in Jammu and Kashmir. By finally stitching the deal, the National Conference has also put to rest all the speculations about the possibility of the post-poll alliance by the Kashmir-based mainstream regional parties with the ruling dispensation in New Delhi. The alliance partners have decided to contest all 90 seats as per the terms and conditions of the pre-poll alliance. The deal was struck between the two parties at the residence of Dr Farooq Abdullah in Srinagar. Omar Abdullah also attended the crucial meeting. Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge after addressing the workers meeting at a private hotel in Srinagar visited the Gupkar Road residence of Dr Abdullah where they held a closed-door meeting with the top brass of the National Conference discussing the contours of the pre-poll alliance. Soon after the meeting, the National Conference president Dr Farooq formally announced that the pre-poll alliance with Congress is final, and will be approved by this evening.



Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge with party leader Rahul Gandhi meets J&K National Conference president Farooq Abdullah and vice president Omar Abdullah, in Srinagar, on Thursday PTI

"The alliance is on track and it will go on well with God's grace. It is final and will be approved by this evening." The NC president said Congress, NC and CPI(M) are on the same page and will fight Assembly elections together. He hoped that with the collective efforts of the alliance, the Statehood of Jammu and Kashmir would be restored. However, he maintained that doors are still open for everyone to join the alliance and give a befitting reply to those who damaged the country's institutions and its secular fabric. To a query, he replied that the meeting with Kharge and Rahul took place in a very cordial atmosphere. The leaders from both parties have been entrusted with the responsibility of

deciding how many seats NC was willing to leave for Congress in the Valley and how many seats Congress was ready to concede for the National Conference after the Jammu region. Meanwhile, addressing a workers' meeting in Srinagar, Rahul said it is our priority in the Congress party and also in the INDIA Block to restore Statehood to Jammu and Kashmir as soon as possible. He said Congress is expecting the region gets Statehood before Assembly polls but "polls were announced which is a step forward." "We hope to see democracy restored," he said and reiterated that it was for the first time since Independence that a State was reduced to a Union Territory.

PM MODI WALKS THE TALK IN WARSAW

Prime Minister Narendra Modi with his Polish counterpart Donald Tusk during his ceremonial welcome at the Chancellery, in Warsaw, Poland, on Thursday



PTI

Assam Bill to register Muslim Marriages

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ GUWAHATI

The Assam Government on Thursday introduced a Bill to repeal a law to register marriages and divorces of Muslims, stating that it had scope to allow marriages of minors from the community. Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Jogen Mohan tabled The Assam Repealing Bill, 2024 in the Assembly to abolish The Assam Moslem Marriages and Divorces Registration Act, 1935 and the Assam Repealing Ordinance 2024. "There remains a scope of registering marriages of intended persons below 21 years (in case of male) and 18 years (in case of female)," he said in the Statement of Object and Reasons of the Repealing Bill. It hardly had any provisions for



monitoring the implementation of the Act throughout the State and it attracted huge amounts of litigation courts, he added. "There is a scope of misuse by both authorised licensee (Muslim marriage Registrars) as well as by citizens for underage/minor

marriages and forcibly arranged marriages without the consent of the parties," Mohan said. Besides, the registration of marriages and divorces were not mandatory, and the registration mechanism was informal that left a lot of scope for non-compliance with the norms, he added. "It is a pre-Independence Act adopted by the British India Government for the then Province of Assam for Muslim religious and social arrangements," the Minister said. On Wednesday, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had said the Assam Government would introduce a Bill in the ongoing Assembly Session for compulsory Government registration of marriage and divorce of Muslim people.

India refutes Bangladesh's accusation of Tripura Dam breach

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India on Thursday described as factually incorrect reports floating in Bangladesh that the current flood situation in certain parts of the country has been caused by the opening of the floodgates of the dam on the Gumti river in Tripura. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said floods in the rivers flowing through both the countries are a "shared" problem inflicting sufferings on the people on both sides, and require close mutual cooperation for resolution. "We have seen concerns being expressed in Bangladesh that the current situation of flood in districts on the eastern borders of Bangladesh has been caused by opening of the Dumbur Dam upstream of the Gumti river in Tripura. This is



Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha inspects a flood-affected area after heavy rains, on the outskirts of Agartala, on Thursday PTI

actually not correct," the Ministry clarified. "We would like to point out that the catchment areas of the

Gumti river that flows through India and Bangladesh have witnessed heaviest rains of this year over the last

few days," it added. The MEA said the flood in Bangladesh has been caused

primarily by the heavy flow of waters from these large catchments downstream of the dam. The Dumbur dam is located quite far from the border — more than 120 km upstream of Bangladesh — the Ministry said in a statement. "It is a low-height (about 30 metres) dam that generates power to feed into a grid, and Bangladesh also draws 40MW power from Tripura," the MEA noted. "Along the about 120-km river course, we have three water-level observation sites at Amarpur, Sonamura and Sonamura 2," it said. Heavy rainfall has been continuing since August 21 in the whole of Tripura and the adjoining districts of Bangladesh. In the event of heavy inflow, automatic release of water has been observed, said the MEA, adding that the Amarpur station is part of a bilateral protocol under which

India transmits real-time flood data to Bangladesh. "Data showing rising trend has been supplied to Bangladesh up to 1500 hours on August 21. At 1800 hours, due to flooding, there was power outage, leading to problems of communication," it said. "Still, we have tried to maintain communication through other means created for urgent transmission of data," it noted. The MEA said the two countries share 54 common cross-border rivers and river-water cooperation is an important part of the bilateral engagement. "We remain committed to resolving issues and addressing mutual concerns in water resources and river water management through bilateral consultations and technical discussions," the Ministry statement said.



Photo: Ranjan Dimri

National Capital brought to a halt

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Delhiites face major transportation problem as taxi and autorickshaw drivers began their two-day strike on Thursday demanding better compensation from cab aggregator services with commuters in the national Capital and its adjoining areas are to have a tough time. Meanwhile, drivers who didn't participate in the ongoing strike were threatened and asked to deboard passengers. Taxi and auto unions said inadequate compensation coupled with aggregators launching bike taxi services has hit their livelihood. Delhi Auto Taxi Transport Congress Union (DATTCU) president Kishan Verma claimed that 80 per cent of autorickshaws and taxis are off the road in the city as around 14 unions are participating in the protest. Anil Pradhan, a cab driver, demanded a ban on bike taxis that offer services using non-commercial number plates. "The Government should step in and ban the commercial plying of vehicles with non-commercial numberplates. It is becoming difficult to make ends meet," he said. Amid the autos and taxis not operating, commuters expressed their frustrations as they took to social media to complain about delay in getting cabs and cancellations.



Doon receives intense spells, orange alert issued for Bageshwar

Heavy rain likely in four districts, intense spells likely across State today

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

As witnessed on Wednesday, the weather took a turn after sunset in Dehradun which once again witnessed intense spells of rain with thunder and lightning on Thursday night. For Friday, the State meteorological centre has issued an orange alert (Be Prepared) regarding the possibility of heavy to very heavy rain likely to occur at isolated places in Bageshwar district. A yellow warning (Be Updated) has also been issued regarding the possibility of heavy rain likely to occur at isolated places in Dehradun, Chamoli, Nainital and Pithoragarh districts. Thunderstorms accompanied with lightning/intense to very intense spells of rain are likely to occur at isolated places in all districts of the State today.



The provisional State capital Dehradun is forecast 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 parts of the State on Thursday were 31.2 degrees Celsius and 23.3 degrees Celsius respectively in Dehradun, 30.5 degrees Celsius and 23 degrees Celsius in Pantnagar, 25.2 degrees Celsius and 14.9 degrees Celsius in Mukteshwar and 24.5 degrees Celsius and 17.8 degrees Celsius in New Tehri.

CM visits disaster-affected villages in Tehri, directs necessary action

PNS ■ NEW TEHRI

Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami reached Ghuthu-Panja-Devling in Tehri district on Thursday and inspected the relief and rescue operations going on in the disaster-affected areas. During his visit, the CM also met the affected locals and assured all possible help to them. Nearly a dozen villages in this area of Tehri were hit by landslides following heavy rains past Tuesday midnight causing deaths of more than a dozen cattle along with damage to homes and agricultural land.

Dhami said that there has been a lot of damage due to heavy rainfall in Ghuthu. A number of homes have been damaged and cattle have died due to the disaster. He directed the district administration to provide immediate assistance to the disaster-affected areas, find out the causes of the disaster and start the reconstruction work in the affected areas. He said that there will not be any lack of funds in facilitating such works, adding that efforts will be made to compensate for the loss caused by the disaster as soon as possible. Regarding



the complaint of the villagers about the damage to the houses due to Ghuthu hydro power plan, the chief minister directed the district magistrate to get it checked. District magistrate Mayur Dixit informed that 29 buildings have been damaged in Ghuthu area under Ghansali Tehsil due to heavy rainfall on the intervening night of August 20 and 21. Out of these, six buildings are completely damaged and 23 buildings are partially damaged. So far, more than Rs 10 lakh has been given as compensation for about nine damaged homes. People of about 20 families living in homes partially damaged are being kept in disaster relief camps for their safety. All necessary arrangements are being made for these people. The

DM further said that after the situation becomes normal, if there is a need for relocation of some villages, then necessary action will be taken as per rules or those who want to go to rented houses will be provided funds for rent as per rules. He said that 17 cattle also died in the disaster. About 24 drinking water supply lines have been damaged. Along with this, other assets like electricity supply lines, roads and culverts have also suffered damage. Earlier, Dixit inspected the disaster-affected areas and also met the affected people of Ranidhang staying in the disaster relief camp. While listening to the problems of the affected people, he said that a survey will be conducted in the area by the geological team.

Dehradun DM visits rain-affected areas in Raipur

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Dehradun district magistrate Sonika visited the affected areas of Maldevta, Serki Village and other areas of Raipur block on Thursday morning after the heavy rainfall that occurred on Wednesday night causing severe damage. She assessed the damage caused by the rain and interacted with the local residents. During her visit, Sonika inspected the upper areas of the villages where the heavy flow of rainwater had carried debris, damaging roads and a huge pipe line. She instructed the respective sub-divisional magistrate and the Tehsildar to assess the damage and take necessary action.

She also directed the Irrigation department and other officials concerned to ensure the removal of debris from the roads and proper drainage of water. Emphasising the importance of preventing further damage in residential areas, she asked officials to take preventive measures. Considering that the area might experience heavy rainfall again, the DM directed the tehsildar to maintain constant monitoring of the area and deploy necessary personnel there. Sonika also observed that rainwater had entered inside the houses of people in Serki village causing serious damage.

The local women requested the DM to make arrangements for proper drainage during heavy rainfall. In response, she instructed the Irrigation department to work on water drainage in the affected areas and ordered the immediate removal of debris to protect residential areas. She also observed soil erosion and debris in a village that had affected roads and agricultural fields too. She directed the officials present to restore easy access to the area and use machines to quickly restore natural water channels.

All officials concerned must stay alert to tackle any kind of emergency situation during monsoon besides taking possible preventive measures, she added.

SPIC MACAY State convention starts in Doon

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Society for the Promotion of Indian Classical Music Amongst Youth (SPIC MACAY) commenced its three-day State Convention 2024 at the Unison World School here on Thursday. The programme will continue till August 24. The aim of the convention is to showcase India's rich cultural heritage to students of Uttarakhand, with the guidance of celebrated artists and master artisans. Over 450 students have registered for workshops to be held as part of the convention. In addition to this, several schools from the Dehradun, Kumaon and Garhwal regions will also be part of the three-day programme.



during the programme. Additional secretary of Higher Education, Ashish Kumar Srivastava was the chief guest on the inaugural day.

Speaking on the occasion, the national chairperson of SPIC MACAY, RM Tiwari, expressed happiness about the programme and stated that with this programme, students will learn from some of the most renowned Gurus in the country.

Further, the principal of the Unison World School Mona Khanna stated that with this programme, the SPIC MACAY organisation promotes and preserves the tangible and intangible aspects of Indian and world heritage by organising programmes and workshops related to Indian classical and folk music and dance, yoga, meditation, crafts and other aspects of Indian culture.

City market decked up for Janmashtami

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

With Janmashtami approaching on August 26, the city is abuzz with preparations for the festivities. Major markets such as Raja Road, Paltan Bazaar and Dhamawala are decked up with colourful idols of Lord Krishna and Radha.

people want during Janmashtami, including puja items and dresses for children, among other things. Additionally, he also has dresses for Laddu Gopal, which are in high demand at this time. The range for Laddu Gopal dresses

and designs. He highlighted that people have commenced buying Krishna dresses for their children to adorn them for school during Janmashtami celebrations.

The enthusiasm for celebrating Janmashtami has been witnessed among the people at the market. A local resident, Sonal Pandey said that she and her entire family have been celebrating Janmashtami together for many years. She added that they also make tableaux at home during Janmashtami. In preparation for the upcoming Janmashtami celebration, she has started shopping early and added that her shopping for the festival will continue until the day of the celebration.



In addition to the idols, there is a wide variety of Lord Krishna dresses for children, attracting many visitors. Regarding this, shopkeepers have noted that this year there are new designs available for adorning the small idols of Lord Krishna.

starts from Rs 100 and goes up to Rs 3,000, he said.

Another shopkeeper selling Janmashtami items, Pranay Dixit informed that the demand for lights, dresses and many other items has increased leading up to Janmashtami. He added that this year, dresses for adorning children as Lord Krishna at the market have become available in large varieties

UIC to raise public awareness on RTI Act

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Uttarakhand Information Commission will organise workshops for departments and undertake other measures to raise awareness on the Right To Information Act. Stating this while addressing the media on Thursday, the chief information commissioner in-charge Vivek Sharma said that the commission will hold two workshops every month for public information officers and other officials concerned of all departments in order to make the implementation of the RTI Act more effective. The RTI Day is celebrated annually on October 12 and in the runup to this occasion, the commission will organise workshops for officials concerned of all the departments

to make the implementation of the Act more effective. Further, to raise public awareness, the commission will also organise State-level debates and facilitate awareness through higher education institutions across the State, he said. Sharma further said that out of the total applications being received under the RTI Act, the applicants were submitting the second appeal/complaint in only four per cent cases. This means that most of the applicants are satisfied with the functioning of the public information officers and first appellate officers, he said. State In-

formation Commissioners Yogesh Bhatt, Vipin Chandra and the commission secretary Arvind Pande were also present on the occasion.

NDUSSL felicitates Bhakuni on his milk marketing feat

PNS ■ LALKUAN

Nainital Dughd Ut-padak Sahakari Sangh Limited (NDUSSL) felicitated the organisation's marketing in-charge Sanjay Singh Bhakuni for his success in

NDUSSL chairman Mukesh Bora and general manager Anurag Sharma presented him with a memento and expressed the hope that he would succeed in further expanding the market for milk and milk products in coming days. Bora said that thanks to sincere efforts of persons like Bhakuni, Aanchal brand has emerged as the largest procurer of milk and milk products in the State, adding that their target is to procure 1.5 lakh litres of milk per day in the future.



strengthening and expanding the milk marketing network while satisfying the consumers' expectation on quality here on Thursday.

Controlling of trains for Power & Traffic block at Howrah station limit

For shifting of Point No. 203 towards Howrah end due to inadequate cross-over length over Platform no.-8 loop, Power & Traffic block will be necessary on 25.08.2024 (Sunday) at Howrah station limit. Consequently, following trains will be controlled on 25.08.2024 as under: (1) 12370 Dn Dehradun-Howrah Kumbha Express will be controlled enroute for 1 hour. (2) 13022 Dn Raxaul-Howrah Mithila Express will be controlled enroute for 15 minutes. (3) 13024 Dn Gaya-Howrah Express will be controlled enroute for 25 minutes. (4) 13034 Dn Katihar-Howrah Express will be controlled enroute for 20 minutes. Special Note: Special or Late running trains & any further newly introduced train/Parcel Train/TOD during block period, if any, will be controlled/diverted suitably enroute. Passengers are requested to follow the public address system of stations. Inconvenience is regretted.

Divisional Railway Manager, Howrah
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NORTHERN RAILWAY

CORRIDGENDUM NOTICE
Tender was invited under tender notice no. 139-DRM-MB-24-25, dated 20.08.2024, the following values has been changed due to some changes in schedule of the tender:-
1 Advised Value from Rs. 2,64,59,089.07 to Rs. 2,65,33,539.64
2 Earnest Money from Rs. 2,82,300.00 to Rs. 2,82,700.00
Other terms and conditions will remain same. 2623/2024
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EXTENSION QF DATE FOR SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS

With reference to Vacancy Circular no. A-20014/Consultants/2023-24- Estb. Dated 01.08.2024 and AERA/10015/IT-11/2020-21/IT Professional dated 01.08.2024 published on 01.08.2024, last date for receipt of applications through proper channel is hereby extended upto 11.09.2024 till 5:30 pm.
CBC-03112/12/0008/2425 Deputy Chief, AFRA

NORTHERN RAILWAY E-TENDER NOTICE

Sr. DENI/MB acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders against following Tenders Notice, closing date & time are mentioned against each column. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids up to closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Contractors are allowed to make payments against this tender towards tender document cost and earnest money only through payment modes available on IREPS portal like net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft, Banker's cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed.

Tender No.	141-DRM-MB-24-25 Dt. 20.08.2024		
Name of Work	Provision of infrastructural facilities, monitoring mechanisms, FOIS/TMS and facilities for merchants at Bulandshahar goods shed under the jurisdiction of ADEN/HPU.		
Tender Closing Date	12.09.2024	Tender Closing Time	16:00
Advised Value (Rs.)	2,90,52,085.86	Earnest Money (Rs.)	2,95,300.00
Period of Completion	10 months	Bidding Start Date	03.09.2024
Tender No. Sr. DENI/MB	24-25 Dt. 22.08.2024 2621/2024		

BRIDCUL (ब्रिडकुल) E-Tender

ब्रिज, रोपवे, टनल एण्ड अदर इन्फ्रास्ट्रक्चर डेवलपमेंट कॉर्पोरेशन ऑफ उत्तराखण्ड लिमिटेड (उत्तराखण्ड सरकार का उपक्रम) पूर्व में उत्तराखण्ड राज्य अवस्थापना विकास निगम लिमिटेड इकाई कार्यालय : अवस्थापना भवन, राजकीय आईटीआई निरंजनपुर के सामने, माजरा, सहरानपुर रोड, देहरादून-248001

Ref No: 3022/BRIDCUL-233/24 Dated: 22/08/2024

On behalf of Hon'ble Governor of Uttarakhand, MD, BRIDCUL invites E-Tender for the following works from Contractors Empanelled with BRIDCUL in Electrical work Category-III (Upto 2 Crore):-

S. No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost with GST (In Lac)	Bid Security /EMD (In Lac.)	Cost of Tender Document	Document Download Start Date	Bid submission End Date	Date of Technical Bid Opening
1	Electrification & Fire Fighting works at Fire Station Gairsain, Dist Chamoli	66.30	1.33	Rs. 5000/- + 18% GST	29.08.2024	18.09.2024	18.09.2024

The details of e-tender of above work can be obtained directly from website. <https://www.uktenders.gov.in> Changes if any will be intimated only through our website <https://www.uktenders.gov.in>. Project Manager, BRIDCUL

COURT NOTICE (U/o 5 Rule 20 CPC) (SUCCESSION CASE)

IN THE COURT OF Sh. Rajeev Additional Civil Judge (Senior Division), Fatehabad Dinesh Kumar VS. General Public CNR No.:HRFT02-000721-2020 Next Date:- 19-09-2024 Petition under Section 372/373 of Indian Succession Act for issuance of Succession Certificate of Rajender Singh son of Shri Avtar Singh alias Ram Avtar resident of village Badopal Tehsil and District Fatehabad in respect of amount of F.D. No. 0130986 Account No. 34/261 (31986) dated 12-08-2020 amounting to Rs. 63,014/- maturity value of Rs. 72,396/- as on 12-08-2012 lying deposited in the office of respondent No. 2 in the name of deceased Rajender Singh son of Shri Avtar Singh alias Ram Avtar resident of village Badopal Tehsil and District Fatehabad along with further interest till its actual payment, in favour of the petitioner and perform respondents in equal share. On the basis of oral and documentary evidence of each and every description. PUBLICATION ISSUED TO: Resp. No. 3 Ganeshi Devi Spouse:-Rajender Singh Village Niranjapur Luxur Haridwar (Uttarakhand) In above titled case, the defendant(s)/respondent(s) could not be served. It is ordered that defendant(s)/respondent(s) should appear in person or through counsel on 19-09-2024 at 10 a.m. For details logon to https://highcourtcad.gov.in/?trs=district_notice&district=Fatehabad Additional Civil Judge (Senior Division), Fatehabad Dated, this day of 21-08-2024

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS PUBLIC NOTICE

In my Husband's Army record my name is mistakenly recorded as NANDI GARIA whereas my correct name is NANDI DEVI GARIA as mentioned in other all documents. My No-JC173946K SUB/MAJ & HONY LT LATE RANJEET SINGH GARIA R/O JAINTANWALA GHANGORA (GARHI CANTT) DEHRADUN UTTARAKHAND vide IN-UK39670845699996W Affidavit 21.08.2024 before Dehradun. मेरे पुत्र के सैन्य अभिलेखोंनुसार, मेरा गलत नाम शांति दर्ज है, सही नाम शांति देवी आचार संख्या 717826484581 M/o आर्मी नं. 16011637M हवलदार चंद्रवीर सिंह R/o 05, दाऊजी धाम कॉलोनी, दामोदरपुरा, औरंगाबाद खादर, मथुरा, यू.पी.- 281006 है।

मेरे पुत्र के सैन्य अभिलेखोंनुसार, मेरा गलत नाम गिर राज सिंह दर्ज है, सही नाम गिराज आचार संख्या 611024056278 F/o आर्मी नं. 16011637M हवलदार चंद्रवीर सिंह R/o 05, दाऊजी धाम कॉलोनी, दामोदरपुरा, औरंगाबाद खादर, मथुरा, यू.पी.- 281006 है।

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Rs 5013.05 crore supplementary budget tabled in Vidhan Sabha

PNS ■ BHARADISAIN

Finance minister Prem Chand Agarwal tabled a supplementary budget of Rs 5013.05 crore for the ongoing financial year in the Uttarakhand Vidhan Sabha here on Thursday. This includes Rs 3,756.89 crore under revenue head and Rs 1,256.16 crore under the capital head. Agarwal said that the State government is dedicated to public welfare. He said that important provisions have been made for many social welfare schemes in the supplementary budget.



A Rs 718.40 crore provision has been made in the budget for State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) under the Disaster Management department. Similarly a provision of Rs 218.60 crore has been made for SDMF and Rs 20 crore as additional allocation to district magistrates for repair and reconstruction works of assets damaged by disaster. A provision of Rs 748.81 crore is made in the supplementary budget for major construction activities to meet supplementary demands. Similarly, a provision of Rs 406.61 crore has been made for Housing and Urban Development department. The minister said that a provision of Rs 25 crore has been made for virtual registration scheme under the Stamps and Registrations department. Similarly, a sum of Rs 15 crore is provided for the

revolving fund of dairy development project.

In other business of the day the Parliamentary Affairs minister Agarwal tabled the Uttarakhand (Uttar Pradesh Municipality Act, 1916) Amendment Bill 2024, Uttarakhand (Uttar Pradesh Municipal Corporation) Amendment Bill 2024, Uttarakhand Prisons and

Correctional Services Bill, Uttarakhand Recovery of Damages to Public and Private Property Bill 2024, Uttarakhand State Sports University Bill 2024, Uttarakhand State Vidhan Sabha Miscellaneous (Amendment) Bill 2024, Uttarakhand (Uttar Pradesh) Zamindari Abolition and Land Management Bill 2024.

At the start of second day of the session, the leader of opposition (LoP) Yashpal Arya demanded discussion on law and order situation in the State under rule 310. However, the speaker Ritu Bhushan Khanduri ordered that the discussion on the issue will be held under rule 58. The Congress members held a protest outside the Vidhan Sabha building on misuse of government agencies for harassing leaders of opposition. The LoP Arya said that the Hindenburg report reveals that the SEBI chief has business interests in the Adani group.

CAG pulls up State government for financial mismanagement

PNS ■ BHARADISAIN

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India has raised a question mark over the financial management of Uttarakhand government in its State finances audit report for the year which ended in March 2023. The report was tabled in the Assembly on Thursday. In a serious indictment of the State government, the CAG report has revealed that expenditure exceeding 50 per cent of the total expenditure for the year 2022-23 was incurred in March. This shows how the government departments try to dispose of the budget in the last month of the financial year. The report mentions that a staggering 77.55 per cent of yearly allocation was done in March under the Power head and 73.55 per cent expenditure was done in March under capital outlay for medium irrigation. The report mentions that 76.28 per cent expenditure under eight major heads was incurred in the last quarter of the FY 2022-23. The CAG report also points out that varying levels of expenditure



have occurred in different state programmes and schemes. It mentions that not even a single rupee was spent out of the budget provision of Rs 14.90 crore in the Eja- Boi Shagun scheme for pregnant women. The CAG report has advised that the State government should be more realistic in the budgetary estimates and ensure efficient control mechanisms to curtail savings. It also suggests that the State government may assess the savings and surrender the amount well before the close of the FY so that they can be effectively utilized in other areas/ schemes.

Cong blames BJP Govt for fewer sittings of Vidhan Sabha

PNS ■ BHARADISAIN

The opposition Congress tried to corner the State government on less number of sittings of Vidhan Sabha on the second day of the monsoon session here in the State's summer capital on Thursday.

Raising the issue as a question of order after the end of question hour on Thursday the Manglaur MLA Qazi Nizamuddin said that rules and business procedures manual of Uttarakhand Vidhan Sabha clearly mentions that at least 60 sittings of the Vidhan Sabha should be held in a year

PRI mentioned that Uttarakhand Vidhan Sabha has a dubious distinction of presenting and passing the annual budget in only one day. The leader of opposition (LoP) Yashpal Arya said that the Vidhan Sabha has not been convened on Mondays for the past many years due to which the questions related to the departments headed by chief minister are never taken up for discussion. He accused the State government of running away from its responsibility. In his response the Parliamentary Affairs minister Prem Chand



Congress members protest outside the Vidhan Sabha at Bharadisaian on Thursday
Pioneer photo

in its three sessions (budget, monsoon and winter). He informed that in the year 2022, the Vidhan Sabha functioned for only eight days. Similarly in the year 2023, only 10 sittings were held and in the year 2024, the Vidhan Sabha has functioned for only four days so far. He said a report released by

Agarwal said that the house functions on business and added that the government wants that the Vidhan Sabha should function for more days. The speaker Ritu Bhushan Khanduri said that the business is determined by the government and the business advisory committee.

Gupta brothers trying to destabilise U'khand Govt: Umesh Kumar

PNS ■ BHARADISAIN

In a sensational claim made in the Vidhan Sabha, independent MLA from Khanpur, Umesh Kumar said on Thursday that the controversial Gupta brothers are conspiring to dislodge the Uttarakhand government. He claimed that the Gupta brothers are ready to spend a sum of Rs 500 crore in this endeavour. He said that the State government remained benevolent to the Gupta brothers between 2016 and 2020 and Y and Z category security was given to them. Kumar said that corruption started paralysing Uttarakhand ever since it was created. He said that the nexus between mafia,

politicians and bureaucrats has plagued the State. He also claimed that real estate businessmen Satyendra Sahani committed suicide due to the threats from the Gupta brothers. The MLA said that the subsidiary companies of Sara Computers Limited (a black listed company of Gupta brothers), Heritage Aviation and Doon Lodge and Hospitality Limited were given major contracts in Uttarakhand. He demanded that a probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation should be ordered into the criminal activities of Gupta brothers and their association with politicians.

621 posts of specialist doctors vacant in Uttarakhand

PNS ■ BHARADISAIN

The State government accepted in the Vidhan Sabha on Thursday that a large number of posts of specialist doctors are vacant in the State. A total of 621 posts of specialist doctors are vacant in the State. In response to a question by BJP MLA Khushal Singh Adhikari, the Health minister Dhan Singh Rawat said that there are 641 specialist doctors in the State deployed on 1,262 posts. The minister said that the state government has started a 'you quote we pay'

scheme under the National Health Mission (NHM) for recruitment of the specialist doctors. He said that the State government has increased the age of retirement of specialist doctors to 65 years from the earlier age limit of 60 years. Rawat further said that many bonded medical officers are undergoing post graduation in different medical colleges and on completion of studies they will be deployed in different hospitals as specialist doctors.

Dehradun ISBT gangrape victim reveals prior rape

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The 16-year-old girl, who was allegedly gangraped by five men inside an Uttarakhand Roadways bus parked at Dehradun ISBT, reportedly revealed that she

on Wednesday at Balika Niketan, before a magistrate in the presence of a counsellor. The official also informed that the Dehradun police has filed a zero FIR



was also raped earlier before the crime in Dehradun. This detail was disclosed by the victim during a session with officials, which took place in the presence of the Child Welfare Committee and counsellors, as per a senior police official. The victim's statement was also recorded

and will forward it to the police department concerned for further investigation into the charges made by the victim. Besides this, the court also granted a two-day police custody remand of the five accused in the Dehradun ISBT gangrape case.

MCD receives 101 objections regarding delimitation process

Today is last date for raising objections

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Municipal Corporation of Dehradun (MCD) has received 101 objections regarding the delimitation of wards in the city so far. The last date for raising objections regarding the delimitation is August 23, the municipal commissioner Gaurav Kumar said. The objections are part of the ongoing delimitation process which are crucial for upcoming municipal elections. The majority of objections were filed from the Rajpur and Dharampur Assembly constituencies, with 31 and 39 objections respectively. People from Mussoorie and Cantonment Assembly constituencies registered seven objections each, while from Raipur, the MCD received 15 objections. The MCD has received no objection regarding delimitation from Sahapur Assembly constituency so far, the commissioner informed.



He further stated, "The last date to submit any objections regarding the delimitation is August 23. After this deadline, the corporation will not entertain any further objections. Following the closure of the objection window, a meeting will be held with the DM to proceed with the next steps in the delimitation process." The delimitation of the 54 wards in

Dehradun was recently under scrutiny due to significant discrepancies. In 2018, just before the elections, villages surrounding Dehradun were included in the municipal corporation, increasing the number of wards from 60 to 100. The latest delimitation, ordered in July 2022, was completed in October last year and submitted to the State administration through

the DM. However, several councillors raised concerns about the process. As per the officials, some wards were found to have lower voter counts while others had numbers exceeding the standard voters per ward. The 2011 census data remains the basis for the current delimitation, as the 2021 census was not conducted. According to the last census, Dehradun's population is 803,983. Based on these figures, the population for each of the 100 wards should be approximately 8,040, with an acceptable variance of 10 per cent. The population should not exceed 8,844 or fall below 7,236 per ward. Considering this, the State administration had returned the delimitation report submitted by the corporation earlier this month, prompting the DM to direct MCD to prepare another delimitation report, the officials said.

Dengue patient from Tehri treated in GDMC hospital

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

A dengue patient was recently admitted in the Government Doon Medical College (GDMC) hospital here. The Health department clarified on Thursday that the patient recently admitted in the hospital does not belong to Dehradun. Notably, it was claimed in some reports that the first positive case of dengue has been confirmed in Dehradun through an enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) test. The patient has been admitted in the GDMC hospital for treatment. Officials at GDMC hospital have informed that the patient's health is stable and no significant loss of platelets has been observed so far. Additionally, they have also reported the case to the Health department.

of the first dengue-positive case in Dehradun, the Health department has examined the details of the case. After investigations, the Dehradun chief medical officer Dr Sanjay Jain revealed that the 42-year-old patient identified as Rishabh is actually a resident of Tehri district. On August 13, he had visited the sub district hospital in Rishikesh from Tehri due to symptoms including fever and headache. As his symptoms were not alleviated, he sought medical advice again at Premsukh Hospital on August 14. Following an observation of the same condition, on August 19, he was admitted to GDMC for treatment, where his ELISA test yielded a positive result. He was discharged from the hospital on Wednesday after recovering and he had provided the



address of his relative in Dehradun in the hospital records, Jain added.

Considering this, he further added as of now, no positive cases of dengue have been reported in Dehradun district. Jain further stated that intensive monitoring of dengue is underway in the district, with all hospitals being instructed to

prioritise medical treatment for patients exhibiting possible symptoms of dengue. Additionally, he noted the availability of dengue testing facilities in all district hospitals.

Further, the medical superintendent of the GDMC hospital Dr Anurag Aggarwal stressed the importance of people observing precautions to prevent the spread of dengue, urging them to promptly address water stagnation or logging in their surroundings. Further, he emphasised the significance of wearing full sleeves and light-coloured clothes, particularly during the monsoon season.

Bank of India		Zonal Office, Dehradun: Mahavir Tower, St. Jude's Crossing, Shimla Bypass Road, Seva Khand, Dist. Dehradun - 248171 Tel No. - 0135-2640046, 2641002, Email: Dehradun.ARD@bankofindia.co.in		E-AUCTION NOTICE	
"APPENDIX-IV-A" (See proviso to rule 8(6)) Sale notice for sale of Immovable/Movable property					
E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable/Movable Assets Under Securitisation And Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 Read with Proviso to Rule 8(6) of The Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.					
Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described movable/immovable properties Hypothecated / charged to the secured creditor, the constructive/Physical/Symbolic possession of which has been taken by the Authorised officer of Bank of India, will be sold on "As is Where is", "As is What is" and "Whatever there is, Without Recourse" Basis. For detailed terms and condition of sale, please refer to the link provided in (a) https://www.bankofindia.co.in/ (b) https://www.ebkay.in .					
DATE OF INSPECTION OF THE ASSETS		LAST DATE AND TIME OF SUBMISSION OF EMD AND DOCUMENTS ON OR BEFORE		DATE AND TIME OF E AUCTION	
21.09.2024		Date : 24.09.2024 upto 05.00 PM by ONLINE		Date : 25.09.2024 from 11.00 AM onwards till 05.00 PM with unlimited extensions of 10 Minutes duration	
From 11.00 AM to 04.00 PM with concerned Branch					
Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/Guarantor/ Mortgagee	Description of Immovable/Movable Assets	Demand Notice Date	Name of Auth. Officer/ Phone No./ Email I.D	Reserve Price EMD Bid Increment Value
1.	Branch: Seva Kalaan Borrower: Mr. Bahadur Singh	1. Flat no. D-406, Pacific Estate Khasra No. 540, 541, 546, 548, 549, 550 Mauza Karwil Dehradun Uttarakhand admea -suring 481 sqft owned by Mr. Bahadur Singh. Boundary: East Side: Flat-D-408, West Side: Flat No. D-404, North Side: Balcony and open to sky, South Side: Corridor	04.01.2024	Mr. Kailash Chand Bhatt Mobile No. 9634629180 E Mail I.D- Dehradun.ARD@bankofindia.co.in	Rs. 29,52,000/- Rs. 2,95,200/- Rs. 10,000/-
However The measurement of above properties however to be verified by bidders at site and also from the revenue records prior to participating in auction.					
Terms & conditions of E-Auction are as under:- 1. E-Auction is being held on "as is where basis" "as what is basis" and will be conducted "On Line" before submitting bid EMD shall be deposited through NEFT/Fund Transfer in working hours on or before 24.09.2024. 2. For downloading further details Process Compliance and Terms & Conditions, Please visit https://www.bankofindia.co.in . 3. Website address of our e-Auction Service Provider M/s PSB Alliance e-auctionportal-psba@psballiance.com Bidder may visit: https://www.ebkay.in where "Guidelines" or bidders are available with educational videos Bidders have to complete following formalities well in Advance. Step 1: Bidders/Purchaser Registration Bidder to register on e-Auction Platform (link given above) using his mobile number and email-id. Step 2: KYC Verification Bidder to upload requisite KYC documents shall be verified by e-Auction service provider (may take 2 working days) Step 3: Transfer of EMD amount to Bidder Global EMD Wallet Online/offline of fund using NEFT/Transfer using challan generated on e-Auction Platform. Step 4: Bidding Process and Auction Result: interested Registered bidders can bid online on e-Auction Platform after completing. Step 1, 2 and 3/Please note Step 1 to Step 2 should be completed by bidder well in advance before e-Auction date. 3. To the best of knowledge and information of the Authorised Officer, there is no encumbrance on the properties. However, the intending bidders should make their own independent regarding the encumbrances, title of properties put on auction and claims/rights/dues/affecting the property, prior to submitting their bid. The e-Auction advertisement does not constitute and will not be deemed to constitute any commitment of any representation of the bank. The property is being sold with all the existing and future encumbrances whether known or unknown to the bank. The Authorised officer/Secured Creditor shall not be responsible in any way for any third party claims/rights/dues. No claim of whatsoever nature will be entertained after submission of the online bid regarding properties put for sale. 4. Date of inspection 21.09.2024 from 11.00 am to 4.00 pm with prior appointment with mentioned respective branches on the contact numbers given against respective branches. 5. Bids shall be submitted through online procedure only. 6. Bidders shall be deemed to have read & understood the terms & conditions of sale & be bound by them. 7. The Bid price to be submitted shall be above the Reserve price & bidders shall improve their further offers in multiples Rs. 10,000/- (Rupees Ten Thousand Only). 8. It shall be the responsibility of the interested bidders to inspect and satisfy themselves about the property before submission of the bid. 9. The Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) of the successful bidder shall be retained towards part sale consideration and the EMD of unsuccessful bidders shall be refund. 10. The Earnest Money Deposit shall not bear any interest. The successful bidder shall have to deposit 25% of the sale price including EMD already paid, immediately on acceptance of bid price by the Authorised Officer and the balance of the sale price on or before 15th day of sale. The auction sale is subject confirm by the Bank Default in execution of sale certificate such as stamp duty, registration fee, etc. shall be borne by the successful bidder. 11. The sale is subject to rules/conditions prescribed under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002. Further details/enquiries if any on the terms and conditions of sale can be obtained from the respective branches on the contact number given. 17. This is also a mandatory notice of 15 days as per provision of the SARFAESI Act to the Borrower/Guarantors/Mortgagees of the above accounts informing them about holding of sale/Auction aforesaid etc					
Date: 22.08.2024		Place: Dehradun		Authorised Officer, Bank of India	

Following the confirmation

Amit Shah assures all relief for flooded Tripura

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday called up Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha to take stock of the flood situation in the State and assured him of all assistance from the Centre. Shah also said the Central Government is rushing teams of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) as well as boats and helicopters to the State to assist the local Government in relief and rescue operations. "Spoke with CM Tripura, @DrManikSaha2, and took stock of the flood situation in the State. The Centre is rushing teams of NDRF, apart from boats and helicopters to the State to assist the local Government in relief and rescue operations," he said in social media post. Assuring the Chief Minister of all possible assistance as and when required, the Union Home Minister said the Narendra Modi Government firmly stands with "our sisters and brothers in Tripura during this hour of crisis". At least 10 people were killed and one was missing in landslides and flood-related incidents in Tripura since



Sunday. Over 32,000 people have taken shelter in 330 relief camps due to heavy rainfall. Following a request from the Chief Minister to the Home Minister, four additional NDRF teams arrived in the State to assist in the rescue operations, Tripura Government officials said. Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Thursday said NDRF teams along with relief materials and disaster management equipment have arrived to assist the State Government in flood relief operations, reported PTI from Agartala. At least 10 people were killed and one was missing in landslides and flood-related

incidents in Tripura since Sunday. Over 32,000 people have taken shelter in 330 relief camps due to heavy rainfall. The entire State Government machinery has been working round the clock to tackle the unprecedented natural calamity, he said. "NDRF team along with relief materials arrives in Tripura. Relief materials & disaster management equipment have landed at Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya Bahadur Airport, Agartala & are being swiftly dispatched to flood-affected areas. Bringing hope & aid to those in need," Saha posted on Facebook. "Spoke to Hon'ble Home Minister Shri Amit Shah Ji on

the current grim flood situation in the State. He informed that a total of eleven NDRF teams would be sent to Tripura... Arrangement would also be made for choppers for airlifting of the stranded people in the flood affected areas. More number of boats would also be sent along with the NDRF teams. I thank Hon'ble HM for providing instant assistance to the people of Tripura," Saha said. "Due to excessive rainfall since Sunday, the water level in all major rivers has already crossed the danger mark flooding several areas. Ten people killed in landslides and flood-related incidents since Sunday. Altogether 32,750 people have taken shelter in 330 relief camps," a State Government release said on Wednesday. The statement said the northeastern State witnessed as many as 1,900 landslides causing disruption in road connectivity. A red alert has been sounded in West Tripura and Sepahijala districts for heavy rainfall on Thursday, it said. State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), NDRF, central paramilitary forces including Assam Rifles are engaged in rescue and relief operations in affected areas.

JPC meets on Waqf Amendment Bill

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Joint Committee of Parliament on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill held its marathon first meeting on Thursday amid objections by Opposition MPs over a host of provisions in the proposed law as the Union Minority Affairs Ministry made a presentation. Heated words were exchanged at times during the meeting but members from various parties sat through several hours, recording their views on the provisions of the Bill, offering suggestions and seeking clarifications. The Trinamool Congress' Kalyan Banerjee, Sanjay Singh of AAP, Asaduddin Owaisi of the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) and A Raja of the DMK were joined by some other Opposition members in raising questions over the need for several clauses, including the move to give more powers to the collector and have non-Muslim members on Waqf boards. There was a view among the members, some of them said, that the ministry was not "adequately prepared" to address the queries raised in the meeting. The next meeting of the committee will be held on August 30, a member said. Committee Chairperson Jagdambika Pal assured the members that the panel would speak to all stakeholders, including various Muslim bodies. The 31-member committee has been tasked by the Lok Sabha to scrutinise the contentious Bill, which has drawn protests from the Opposition parties and



Muslim organisations. The representatives from the Minority Affairs Ministry were expected to brief the committee on the "amendments proposed on the Bill", the Lok Sabha Secretariat said. The committee will discuss the Bill threadbare and also the concerns over it, Pal said ahead of the meeting, adding that voices of different stakeholders would be heard. "We will discuss all the 44 amendments and bring a good and comprehensive Bill by the next session," he said. Pal said the committee would call various Muslim bodies representing the different sects to hear their views. The Bill is the first major initiative from the BJP-led NDA Government aimed at reforming the registration process for Waqf properties through a centralised

portal. It proposes several reforms, including establishing a Central Waqf Council alongside State Waqf boards with representation for Muslim women and non-Muslim representatives. A contentious provision of the Bill is the proposal to designate the district collector as the primary authority in determining whether a property is classified as Waqf or Government land. The Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha on August 8 and referred to a Joint Committee of Parliament after a heated debate, with the Government asserting that the proposed law did not intend to interfere with the functioning of mosques and the Opposition calling it a targeting of Muslims and an attack on the Constitution.



EC trains its guns on fair elections in Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission (EC) on Thursday advised its over 400 observers being deployed for Assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir and Haryana to stay vigilant to false narratives trying to derail the election process and to ensure a quick counter. Reminding the observers of their crucial role, Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar emphasised that they, as representatives of the Commission, are expected to conduct themselves professionally and be accessible to all stakeholders including candidates and public at large. He also advised them to overcome language barriers and ensure that there are no gaps in communication. He reminded the observers that they would be under the watchful gaze of parties, candidates, voters and EC alike. Around 200 general observers, 100 police observers and as many expenditure observers, are being deployed in Jammu and Kashmir and Haryana. CEC Kumar advised the officials to be vigilant towards false narratives trying to derail the

election process. Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar emphasised that the officials should observe the complete election ecosystem for free and fair polls. Noting that the Assembly elections are keenly contested, he said the role of observers becomes all the more critical in these polls. Election Commissioner Sukhbir Singh Sandhu noted that accessibility, visibility and responsiveness are essential to develop a virtuous spiral enhancing the conduct of the elections. According to the poll authority, observers were strictly directed to remain accessible to all parties, candidates and voters for timely redressal of their grievances. Any complaints in this regard will be viewed seriously by the Commission. As the eyes and ears of the Commission on the ground, the observers were asked to exercise constant vigilance with utmost sincerity. The EC deploys observers under Section 20B of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 and plenary powers of the Constitution. IAS, IPS, IRS and those from other central services are deployed as observers.

Talented youth of Haryana exploited in name of Kaushal Rozgar Nigam: Cong

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A day after the Election Commission (EC) barred Haryana authorities from announcing the results of an ongoing recruitment process, the Congress on Thursday lashed out at the BJP and alleged that the "anti-youth" Government in the State was remembering the youth after "harassing" them for 10 years. To ensure a level-playing field in the Assembly polls in Haryana, the Election Commission on Wednesday barred authorities in the State from announcing the results of ongoing recruitment processes for police constables and teachers till the election was over. The commission took cognisance of a complaint from Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh

regarding violation of the model code of conduct 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 Haryana Staff Selection Commission (HSSC) and recruitment for various posts by the Haryana Public Service Commission (HPSC). Ramesh said in a social media post in Hindi, "The double-break BJP Government of Haryana harassed the youth during the last 10 years, kept recruitment on hold and whatever little recruitment was made was given to their own people. The talented youth of Haryana were exploited in the name of Kaushal Rozgar Nigam ie Government contracts." "There was a lot of rigging in Government recruitment, papers were leaked... Keeping



the elections in mind, on the day of announcement of the elections, to lure youths, recruitment was announced

that would never fructify," he said. "Today, when the Election Commission has reminded

about the code of conduct, the anti-youth Government has remembered the youth," he said. The Assembly elections

in Haryana will be held in a single phase on October 1 and the results declared on October 4. The Election Commission on Wednesday said the model code instructions did not bar the continuing regular recruitment process or promotion through the Union Public Service Commission, the State public service commission or the staff selection commission or any other statutory authority but "recruitment through non-statutory bodies will require prior clearance of the commission". After ascertaining the facts from the State Government and in view of the existing model code of conduct instructions, the poll panel found no violation of the code in the ongoing recruitment processes by the HSSC and the HPSC.

Sanjeev Raina of the ITBP to be ADG at LAC, the second non-IPS officer on the China frontier

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Sanjeev Raina, a 1987-batch Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) officer, has been appointed Additional Director General (ADG) in the India-China Line of Actual Control (LAC) guarding force, only the second time when a non-IPS officer has been elevated to this post in the force. An order issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Wednesday said Raina, serving as an Inspector General (IG) at the force's central sector headquarters in Bhopal, is being elevated to the ADG rank apart from another officer, IG Jaspal Singh, for the panel year 2024. However, Raina, 59, will serve in the new post for just

over a month as he is scheduled to retire next month. A rank piping ceremony was held at the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) headquarters on Lodhi Road here on Thursday in the presence of Director General Rahul Rasgotra and other senior officers. Raina has now been posted as the ADG (western command) of the ITBP headquartered in Chandigarh, the order said. The formation looks after the deployment of the force along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh, Uttarakhand and Himachal



Pradesh apart from supervising units located in Punjab, Delhi and Jammu and Kashmir. As per officials, this is only the second time in the 1962 and raised ITBP when a cadre officer has been elevated to the ADG post, the second highest rank in the force after the DG. The ADG post in the ITBP and other central armed police forces (CAPFs) is essentially headed by officers who come on deputation to these organisations from the Indian Police Service (IPS). "This appointment also came late as the departmental promotion committee

meeting was delayed. Jaspal Singh will be appointed ADG after Raina's retirement and he too will retire in a few months in December," a senior officer said. Raina, who hails from Kashmir, joined the ITBP in November, 1987 and has served tenures in Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir, and northeast, and is credited with setting up the famed counter insurgency and jungle warfare (CIJW) school of the mountain-warfare trained force in Mahidanda, Uttarakhand. Apart from the LAC, the ITBP having strength of about 98,000 personnel is deployed for rendering a number of internal security duties in the country including conduct of anti-Naxal operations.

Smart lab launched to revive small rivers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With an aim to revitalise small rivers through cutting-edge technology and innovative practices, a Smart Laboratory on Clean Rivers (SLCR) has been launched under the Green Strategic Partnership between India and Denmark. With an initial investment of Rs 16.80 crore from the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti and an additional Rs 5 crore from Denmark, the SLCR project focuses on rejuvenating the Varuna River. It aims to create a dynamic platform for collaboration among Government agencies, academic institutions, and local communities to develop and implement effective

solutions for clean and sustainable river water. This initiative, part of the Green Strategic Partnership between India and Denmark, aims to rejuvenate small rivers through innovative and sustainable approaches, the Ministry said in an official statement. A hybrid lab model will be established at IIT-BHU, coupled with an on-field living lab at the Varuna River. This model will allow for real-world testing and scaling of solutions aimed at improving river health, the statement said. The SLCR's institutional framework includes a robust appraisal mechanism to ensure excellence and



diligence in project execution. The Indo-Danish Joint Steering Committee (JSC), the highest authority within the SLCR, will provide strategic guidance and review the project's progress. Additionally, a Project Review Committee (PRC), comprising members from the National Mission on Clean Ganga (NMCG), Central Water Commission (CWC), Central Ground Water Board (CGWB), IIT-BHU and Denmark's Urban Sector Counsellor, will oversee quality control at the project level. Coordination efforts will be managed by the Multi-Stakeholder Working Group (MSWG), chaired by the

district magistrate of Varanasi and co-chaired by representatives from NMCG and IIT-BHU. The Joint Steering Committee has already cleared four key projects under the SLCR initiative. Among them is the development of a Decision Support System (DSS) for water management aimed at analysing basin water dynamics through advanced hydrological models and data analytics. This project, expected to last two to three years, will facilitate real-time monitoring and scenario simulations to support holistic planning and effective water management. Another vital project focuses

on the characterisation of emerging pollutants in the Varuna River. Over the next 18 months, advanced analytical techniques will be employed to identify and quantify contaminants, creating a comprehensive fingerprint library for water quality monitoring and proposing effective remediation strategies, the statement said. Utilising advanced geophysical techniques, the project will identify optimal recharge sites and develop a comprehensive river-aquifer flow dynamics model over the next 24 months, supporting informed decision-making and water resource optimization.

Would soon form panel to end farmers' woes for all times: SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday said it would soon form a multi-member panel to amicably resolve the grievances of farmers "for all times" and asked both the Punjab and Haryana governments to persuade the agitators at the Shambhu border between the states to remove their tractors and trolleys from the site.



SHAMBHU BORDER BLOCKADE

Sinhal for Haryana, who said no political person should be included in the panel. The bench said "we will not allow any politician to be in the committee".

The bench allowed the representatives of both Punjab and Haryana to continue engaging with the farmers and directed them to apprise the court about the outcome of such meetings on the next date of hearing.

The bench said both the states must take it as a joint initiative and continue persuading the agitating farmers to remove their tractors and trolleys and clear the highway.

"If need be, you (the states) can informally discuss the issues with them also. The committee may be small or big, but we may give some kind of power or authority to make recommendations to the state governments and, if need be, to the Union of India to consider their grievances sympathetically, so that the issues are resolved for all times," it said.

It further said, "We have clarified that the reference to the committee will have a wider mandate, so that the issues which are time and again causing law-and-order problems can be amicably resolved in a fair and just manner. That is why the needful shall be done in this regard within three days."

One of the counsel, appearing in the matter, said Leader of Opposition in the Punjab Assembly Partap Singh Bajwa

is included in the committee as he was one of the original petitioners before the high court.

The submission was opposed by Senior Additional Advocate General Lokesh

"We have suggested to the advocate general and the AAG of Punjab and Haryana respectively to submit the proposed issues, which will be the subject matter of reference for the committee to be constituted by this court," the bench noted in its order.

Assam move to waive job application fee for SC, ST candidates



PTI ■ GUWAHATI

The Assam government on Thursday introduced a bill to make all applications for its jobs free for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe candidates.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pijush Hazarika tabled The Assam Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Reservation of Vacancies in Services and Posts) (Amendment) Bill, 2024 in the Assembly on behalf of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who also looks after the Personnel department. Presently, application fees for

SC and ST candidates are half in government jobs compared to those from the general category.

In the Statement of Objects and Reasons, Sarma said that the Bill "proposed to provide exemption of fees for examinations for selection to any service or posts under Government of Assam to be collected from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe candidates".

He also said that it will have financial implications with the total fees collected against applications will be reduced as there will be complete waiver of fees from the SC and ST candidates.

Actor-politician Vijay unveils party flag, gears up for 2026 TN polls

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Popular Tamil film actor-turned-politician Vijay unveiled the flag of his political party - Tamizhaga Vetri Kazhagam - on Thursday and hoisted it at his party headquarters in Panaiyur near here.

The two-coloured flag with maroon on top and bottom, has yellow in the middle with a motif of two fighting tuskers on either side of the Vaagai flower.

The unveiling of the flag and also the official launch of the party anthem heralds a new chapter in Tamil Nadu politics marked by the entry of the Tamizhaga Vetri Kazhagam (TVK), which is gearing up to face the 2026 Assembly elections in the state.

Though Vijay announced the launch of his political outfit in February, he chose not to contest the 2024 Lok Sabha elections nor did it support any party during the



polls. While unveiling the TVK flag, the top actor took a pledge along with his party workers.

"We will always appreciate the fighters who fought and sacrificed their lives for the liberation of our country, and countless soldiers who fought tirelessly for the rights of our people from Tamil soil," the pledge read. The party took a vow to remove the differences in the name of caste, religion, gender, place of birth and also to create awareness among the people and strive for equal opportunities and equal rights for all.

"There's an interesting story of historical significance behind the (party) flag. I will explain it along with party principles and plan of action at the upcoming state-level conference," Vijay said, addressing the party workers.

"This is not a mere party flag. I see it as a flag of the victory of Tamil Nadu's future generations," he said at the event which was also attended by his parents, film director S A Chandrasekhar and Shobha Chandrasekhar. He called upon the party workers to strive hard in the coming years and uplift the people.

Solvent leak could have triggered fire in AP pharma unit: Official

PTI ■ ATCHUTAPURAM

A suspected solvent leakage could have triggered a blaze in a pharma unit here that has killed 17 persons, a senior official said on Thursday.



Vijaya Krishnan observed that a suspected solvent leakage could have triggered the blaze in the plant of Escientia Advanced Sciences Pvt Ltd here, leading to the death of 17 persons and injuries to 33.

The Anakapalli district Collector told PTI that there was no rise in the death toll which stood at 17 following the accident on Wednesday.

"The actual cause is yet to be ascertained," she said, adding preliminary assessment pointed to solvent leakage from a pipe which fell on an electric panel, leading to the fire accident.

The Chief Minister, who met the injured persons undergoing treatment at a hospital, said Rs 50 lakh would be given to severely injured workers and Rs 25 lakh to the injured persons.

"I met the injured persons of the Atchutapuram pharma company accident in a Visakhapatnam hospital and instilled confidence in them and their families. I gave the assurance to come to the rescue of victims' families," Naidu said in a post on X.

Promising to take necessary precautions to avoid these kinds of accidents in future, the CM wished for the speedy recovery of the workers undergoing treatment.

Though it is being reported the accident occurred due to a reactor blast, officials said when solvent oil was being pumped from one floor to another it led to leakage and resulted in a blaze followed by a large explosion, according to a post on X by the Office of the Deputy CM of Andhra Pradesh, K Pawan Kalyan.

BRS stages State-wide stir to demand farm loan waiver

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

The opposition BRS in Telangana on Thursday held protests across the state demanding the Congress government for an "unconditional" implementation of a farm loan waiver scheme.

As part of the protests, the BRS leaders and party workers took out rallies, held dharnas and raised slogans at different places and demanded the government to fulfill its promise on the Rs two lakh loan waiver to all farmers without any conditions.

BRS Working President KT Rama Rao and party leaders including former minister T Harish Rao took part in the protests at different places in the state.

The BRS has accused Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy and his ministerial colleagues of "betraying" on loan waiver up



to Rs two lakh to all the farmers. The government earlier promised to waive the crop loans on two occasion, but "failed" to do so, they had alleged.

Meanwhile, CM Reddy, who took part in a dharna here, along with his ministerial colleagues and Congress party leaders and workers, demanding SEBI chief Madhabi Buch's resignation and a Joint Parliamentary

Committee probe into the Adani issue, accused the BRS leaders of spreading "false" propaganda on farmer loan waiver.

"Farmers should not get carried away by the canards spread by the BRS. My government is ready to address all peoples' problems. Don't trust the BRS, who robbed Telangana for ten years," he said.

Reddy said he is ready for a debate on the BRS contribution to people (during its) in ten years (regime) and the Congress government's assistance in just 10 months.

The Telangana CM also hit out at Harish Rao, accusing him of playing dramas without resigning from his MLA post.

Reddy had recently challenged Rao to quit his MLA post as the Congress government fulfilled its promise of Rs two lakh crop loan waiver.

Assam proposes to make Manipuri Associate Official Language in four districts

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

The Assam government on Thursday proposed to make Manipuri as the Associate Official Language in three districts of Barak valley along with Hojai in central part of the state.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pijush Hazarika tabled The Assam Official Language (Amendment) Bill, 2024 on behalf of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who also looks after the Home and Political Department.

In the Statement of Objects and Reasons, Sarma said that a number of people living in the Barak valley and other parts of the state speak Manipuri language and there have been persistent demands to officially recognise their language.

"The proposed amendment will allow Manipuri language



to be used as an Associate Official Language for all or any of the official purposes as are specified in the Schedule-II, in four districts of the state, namely, Cachar, Karimganj, Hailakandi and Hojai," he added.

The bill proposed to insert a new section 5B in the Assam Official Language Act, 1960 to recognise Manipuri language in the four districts, Sarma said.

City court extends Senthil Balaji's remand

PTI ■ CHENNAI

A sessions court here on Thursday extended former Tamil Nadu Minister V Senthil Balaji's remand till August 28. He was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate on June 14, 2023 in a money laundering case.

Principal Sessions Judge S Alli, before whom Senthil Balaji was produced by the prosecution through video-conferencing from the Central Puzhal Prison here, also extended his judicial custody till August 28.

When the case came up for hearing, defense counsel Gouthaman, appearing for Senthil Balaji, cross-examined Harish Kumar (Listed Witness-1) an official of City

Union Bank, who was formerly the Karur branch manager.

The examination pertained to the transactions of Senthil Balaji, his wife Meghala and his brother Ashok Kumar.

As the cross examination was not completed, the judge posted to August 28, further hearing of the case.

Earlier, Special Public Prosecutor N Ramesh, appearing for the ED had on August 16 examined Harish Kumar.

PSJ Alli had on August 8 issued summons to three witnesses for examination in the case. Accordingly, all the three witnesses were present on August 16.

In total, the prosecution has cited 22 witnesses in the case.

Heavy rain lashes parts of Rajasthan

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Monsoon activity continued in Rajasthan on Thursday with heavy rain pounding four districts, including Kota and Ajmer, in the last 24 hours, the meteorological department here said.

According to the weather data in the last 24 hours till 8.30 am on Thursday, light to moderate rain accompanied with thundershowers was recorded at some places in western and eastern Rajasthan.

During the same period, heavy rain lashed parts of Rajasamand, Baran, Kota and Ajmer districts, the Meteorological Centre Jaipur said.

Nasirbad (Ajmer) was the wettest in the state recording



the maximum rainfall of 89 mm, the data showed.

Khamnor (Rajasamand) logged 77 mm of rainfall, followed by 68 mm in Nathdwara, 67 mm in Deygarh (Kota) and 65 mm in Baran, according to the data.

Rain activities will continue in parts of eastern Rajasthan till August 29, the weather office said.

Parts of Bharatpur, Jaipur, Ajmer, Kota and Udaipur divisions are likely to witness

moderate to heavy rain accompanied with thunderstorms during this period, it added.

Additionally, there is a possibility of an increase in rain activities in a few parts of Kota and Udaipur divisions between August 25 and 26, the Met centre said.

Light to moderate rain may occur at some places in Jodhpur and Bikaner divisions between August 23 and 24, it added.

Prithviraj meets Jarange, says Maha Govt must take call on quota now

PTI ■ CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR

Senior Congress leader Prithviraj Chavan on Thursday met Maratha activist Manoj Jarange in Jalna and said the Eknath Shinde government must take a decision on quota demands of the community soon.

It was a courtesy meeting to inquire about Jarange's health as he had come to Satara some days ago and had fallen ill, former chief minister Chavan said. "I wanted to meet him in Satara but could not as he left early. So I have come here to Antarwali Sarati. He has been agitating for the Maratha community. I asked about his health. He is leading a selfless



agitation," Chavan said. "While the Mandal Commission and Kaka Kalelkar Commission did not consider the Marathas as backward, the community is part of the Other Backward Classes segment in Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh. So we (Congress-NCP government) decided to give them 16 per cent reservation," Chavan

said. "We asked the state OBC commission to find out the ground reality about the community's backwardness but it refused claiming the community does not need quota. Landless labourers and those with small plots are in distress and finding it tough to spend on education. If they get reservations, they will have some hope of getting government jobs," the Congress leader added. Chavan said the reservation given to the Maratha and Muslim communities by the Congress-NCP government in July 2014 was not taken forward by the next government (of the BJP-Shiv Sena under Devendra Fadnavis).

Tourist taxi operators protest in Goa against Mopa airport management

PTI ■ PANAJI

Hundreds of tourist taxi operators and those owning shacks and water sports facilities held a protest in Pernem in Goa on Thursday alleging their rights had been ignored despite giving land for the Manohar International Airport in Mopa.

They walked to Pernem police station demanding that Chief Minister Pramod Sawant arrive there and speak to them. "People of Pernem sacrificed their lands for

Manohar International Airport but they have not got their due share after the facility was commissioned. The airport management is taking unilateral decisions without taking the CM into confidence, which is inconveniencing citizens," former Mandrem panchayat sarpanch Amit Sawant said.

"The Manohar International Airport must have a special tourist taxi counter for operators from Pernem. Parking fee must be capped as well," another protester told reporters.

Kerala HC asks State Govt to submit Hema panel report in sealed cover

PTI ■ KOCHI

The Kerala High Court on Thursday asked the state government to submit to it in a sealed cover the Hema Committee report on atrocities against women in the Malayalam film industry.

A division bench comprising Acting Chief Justice A Muhamed Mustaque and Justice S Manu, while considering a PIL filed by a resident said the report contains serious allegations.

The high court admitted the writ petition and directed the government to file its counter affidavit. The court asked the government its next course of action based on the report

submitted by the Hema Committee. The government lawyer submitted that it is not possible to register a case unless someone files a complaint.

The state government said it has all the names mentioned in the uncensored original report which was a confidential document. It said the committee was entrusted to study and report the situation of women in the movie industry but the government has limitations in registering cases as the statements were recorded by the committee upon ensuring confidentiality.

It is not possible to register a case against that confidentiality statement, the

government said, adding that cases will be registered if someone comes forward and files a complaint. The high court on Thursday on its own implied the State Women's Commission in the matter.

The PIL sought to publish the original report and asked the high court to direct the state government to initiate criminal proceedings in connection with the alleged sexual offences mentioned in the report.

The Justice K Hema Committee was formed after the 2017 actress assault case involving actor Dileep, to study issues of sexual harassment and gender inequality in Malayalam cinema.

K'taka Govt to give advice to Guv to act on requests for prosecution of Kumaraswamy

PTI ■ BENGALURU

The Karnataka Cabinet on Thursday decided to give "aid and advice" to Governor Thawarchand Gehlot to act on requests seeking sanction for prosecution against JD(S) leader and Union Minister H D Kumaraswamy and three former BJP Ministers including mining baron G Janardhan Reddy.

The Congress government's move comes within a week of the Governor granting sanction for prosecution of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) site allotment 'scam' on August 16.

"To take decisions in the pending cases at the earliest and to smoothen the judicial process, under article 163 of the Constitution the Cabinet can give aid and advice to the Governor. Using it, the Cabinet has given its approval to give the Governor aid and advice," Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H K Patil said.

Briefing reporters after the Cabinet meeting, he said: "the advice will be sent to the Governor."

"Out of the four cases that are pending regarding which we have given aid and advice, in two of these cases (Janardhan Reddy and Kumaraswamy) the charge sheet has been

filed..." he added. Asked whether the Governor can reject the Cabinet's aid and advice, Patil said: "According to us, he is bound by our advice; his discretion is limited. I am sure he shall use his discretion very judiciously."

The Governor on August 16 accorded sanction against Siddaramaiah, under Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and Section 218 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 for the commission of the alleged offences as mentioned in the petitions of Pradeep Kumar S P, T J Abraham and Snehamayi Krishna.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Witaj Poland!

PM Narendra Modi arrives in Poland for the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister in 45 Years

In a significant diplomatic milestone, Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in Poland on August 21, marking the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to the country in 45 years. This historic visit underscores the growing importance of India-Poland relations, which have evolved considerably since their establishment over 70 years ago. India and Poland share a rich history of diplomatic engagement that dates back to the early 1950s, soon after India gained independence and Poland emerged from the devastations of World War II. The two nations established formal diplomatic relations in 1954, laying the foundation for a partnership based on mutual respect, shared values, and common interests. During the Cold War era, India and Poland maintained cordial relations, bolstered by their shared membership in the Non-Aligned Movement. This period saw steady growth in bilateral trade, cultural exchanges, and political dialogue. However, the relationship experienced a slowdown in the post-Cold War era as both countries



focused on domestic reforms and economic transitions. Despite this, the underlying warmth between the two nations remained intact. In recent years, the India-Poland relationship has witnessed a resurgence, driven by mutual economic interests, shared concerns about global security, and a commitment to multilateralism. Poland, as a member of the European Union and a key player in Central Europe, has become an important partner for India in its engagement with the region. Meanwhile, India's rapid economic growth and its strategic position in Asia have made it an attractive partner for Poland.

Prime Minister Modi's visit to Poland is a significant step in revitalising and deepening bilateral ties. It is particularly noteworthy as it marks the first time an Indian Prime Minister has visited Poland since 1979. The visit is expected to enhance cooperation in several key areas, including trade and investment, defence, technology, and cultural exchanges. Trade between India and Poland has been steadily increasing, with bilateral trade reaching approximately \$3 billion in recent years. Polish companies have shown keen interest in the Indian market, particularly in sectors such as defence, energy, and infrastructure. Likewise, Indian businesses are exploring opportunities in Poland, particularly in the fields of information technology, pharmaceuticals, and manufacturing. Defence cooperation is another area of mutual interest. India, with its growing defence industry, can be a valuable partner for Poland in this endeavour. Cultural ties between the two nations are also set to receive a boost during PM Modi's visit. Poland has a vibrant Indian diaspora, and cultural exchanges between the two countries have been on the rise. Indian films, cuisine, and festivals are increasingly popular in Poland, reflecting the deepening people-to-people connections. As India and Poland work together to address common challenges, from global security to climate change, this visit could mark the beginning of a more dynamic and mutually beneficial partnership.

PICTALK



Visitors at the Taj Mahal in Agra

The shadow games of Pakistan's ISI



BHOPINDER SINGH

Often accused of overstepping its professional bounds, ISI has become a player in domestic politics, international intrigue, and personal vendettas

Spies as complicated and lonely beings, living double lives. Such seclusion makes deception, intrigue and unrequited ambition, their default mode. The fact that they know the deep and dark secrets but are still expected to comply by restrains occasionally leads them to flex their 'privilege' (read, confidential information) towards reckless ends. Because they are dangerously privy to so much dirt, they fear their ambition.

Like the proverbial Ceasar's wife, must always be above suspicion – but often aren't. Pakistan's notorious spy agency Inter-Services-Intelligence (ISI) is infamous for going beyond its professional remit and dabbling in domestic politics, commercial interests or even partaking in cross-border dalliances, beyond their approved mandate. If the Pakistani Army Chief is the real power (pretence of civil politicians, notwithstanding), arguably the second most powerful person is the DG-ISI. Supposed loyalty to the Army Chief or to the PM (in times when the Army takes a backseat and politicians have an upper hand) is implicit, though, in the Pakistani narrative, backstabbing is common.

Ironically for such a powerful 'number two' post, there have been 29 DG-ISIs so far, and only one has ascended to the post of Army Chief i.e., the current Army Chief, General Asim Munir. It is reflective of the slippery slope that the post entails which invariably ends up making some power centres in Pakistan unhappy about their conduct e.g., Clergy, Politicians, Americans/Chinese or even their alma mater, the Pakistani 'establishment'. Even the current Army Chief, General Asim Munir was abruptly moved out as the DG-ISI as the then PM Imran Khan felt uncomfortable with his conduct (karma later evened out the equation as Imran finds himself languishing in the jail today). Seemingly the profile is for a loyal, unquestioning and low-key DG-ISI who does the job is satisfied with obscurity (shouldn't be overambitious) and effectively rides into



the sunset after retirement, without much fuss. Given the opportunity, lure and access, many do try to take their chances.

There is a curious case of one DG-ISI who did get appointed as the Army Chief, but his tenure was only for a few hours and the same does not go in official records as having become the Pakistani Army Chief. Lt Gen Ziauddin Butt was a typical DG-ISI who went across the Afghan border to meet the dreaded leader of the Taliban, Mullah Omar, to negotiate – he was in the thick of the dark corridors and machinations of the Pakistani State. Ziauddin had direct access to the other competing power centre i.e., PM Nawaz Sharif, and was a willing accomplice in Sharif's attempt to remove Pervez Musharraf as the Army Chief. Before the coup (or counter-coup as Musharraf calls it), 'General' Ziauddin was hastily appointed the Army Chief and then immediately dumped by the Pakistani Army which refused to back their DG-ISI's ambition. Spymaster's gambit failed. Ziauddin was not the first or the last of DG-ISIs to harbour personal ambition beyond what was warranted constitutionally. The shadowy likes of Lt Gen Akhtar Rahman,



WHEREAS THE UNHINGED POLITICIANS LIKE IMRAN KHAN WHO ARE DESPERATELY TRYING TO SAVE THEIR SKINS AND INGRATIATE THEMSELVES TO THE PAKISTANI 'ESTABLISHMENT' HAVE DISOWNED AND THROWN LT GEN FAIZ HAMEED UNDER THE PROVERBIAL BUS!

Hamid Gul, Shamsur Kallu, Zaheerul Islam etc., operated with questionable interests. Yet another one who is in the news for harbouring extraconstitutional ambitions and paying the price for the same is the former DG-ISI, Lt Gen Faiz Hameed. Forced into premature retirement over his dubious role amid the recent turf war between the Pakistani 'establishment' (led by previous and current Army Chiefs i.e. Qamar Bajwa and Asim Munir, respectively) against the Imran Khan dispensation – he has been brought back to public news for having misused his then powerful position and arm-twisting people in some really deal.

While he was earlier afforded a relatively face-saving 'early retirement' (though everyone knew better), he could be embarrassingly court-martialed to score fresh brownie points against the deposed Imran Khan dispensation (which Lt Gen Faiz Hameed is popularly believed to be identified with). Many acts of Lt Gen Faiz Hameed did suggest a rather megalomaniac, cavalier and overreaching conduct that did not behave the role of spymasters, but perhaps the personal ambition had got the better of him. As the roll of the dice played out, the narrative changed and with it, he too

was ousted. Only he is back for a possible second round of infamy and disrepute if the current dispensation has its ways. Whereas the unhinged politicians like Imran Khan who are desperately trying to save their skins and ingratiate themselves to the Pakistani 'establishment' (after realising that they are not going anywhere) have disowned and thrown Lt Gen Faiz Hameed under the proverbial bus! Instead of backing their henchman who did their bidding, Imran said, "if Faiz Hameed was involved, it should be investigated" and he welcomed the enquiry!

The whole saga says a lot about the unprofessionalism and complete absence of loyalty in overall governance, as exemplified by Lt Gen Faiz Hameed or by Imran Khan – the former was disloyal to his institution, and the latter to his word. As Israeli Michael Bar-Zohar notes in Mossad: The Greatest Missions of the Israeli Secret Service, "Dirtiest actions should be carried out by the most honest men", perhaps former DG-ISI Faiz Hameed wasn't one and will pay the price, again.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Ensuring safety of health workers



It's good to learn that the apex court has taken up the issue of Kolkata doctor's rape and murder case Suo Motu and formed a National Task force to examine the broader issue of doctors' safety at work places. The

failure of the hospital authorities and state as well even after the gory incident is glaringly evident, forcing the court to go to the underlying deep malaise. The hospitals and other public healthcare services are working under unsafe circumstances. The security angle of health care providers is not addressed effectively.

The junior doctors are being forced to undertake backbreaking schedules with inadequate facilities, thanks to the poor doctor patient ratio. India is not spending even two percent of its GDP. Where six percent is needed on health causing more pressure on limited resources. Apart from a stringent law against attacks on health personnel, the working conditions should be improved. Though the health and law and order are state subjects, there seems to be a need for a strong central act.

DVG Sankara Rao | Vizianagaram

away with the bells. They had always been a part and parcel of the temple. He struck upon an idea. He installed a call bell (sans the electrical connection) with a huge and prominent sign "Ring this bell only. Only this bell is connected to God."

People pressed it again and again to their heart's content, ignoring all the other bells of the temple. This smart gadget brought the much desired peace and calm, delighting in its wake, the priest as well as the deities. I hope that someday all our temples – noisy and crowded as they usually are – will realise the home truth that noise, even if it emanates from a temple bell or a loudspeaker, ought to be eliminated. If our gods and goddesses reside in temple idols, don't they deserve an environment that is free from noise pollution?

Avinash Godbole | Devwas

SC TURNS DOWN HC VERDICT

Madam – Calcutta HC's act in advising an adolescent girl to restrain from sexual urge and not to give in, as right-

ly observed by the SC is not only an act unbecoming of an HC judge but also a trespass into the modesty of an adolescent. On top of preaching to the victim the acquittal of the delinquent is an act of a Kangaroo court and not a High Court of the country.

Judges should understand and realise that they are guardians of constitutional morality and the way deal in the matters in their court and their verdicts should reflect this. The SC's reprimand of the Calcutta HC highlights the need for judges to uphold constitutional morality.

The HC's inappropriate advice and the acquittal of the delinquent were unjust, reflecting a failure to protect the victim's dignity. The SC's intervention rightly restored justice and reaffirmed judicial integrity.

Kudos to SC in rapping the Calcutta HC and preserving justice in the matter!!

Gopalswamy | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

The catalyst for corporate success

Ambition is an incredibly powerful force. When properly harnessed, it has the potential to unlock remarkable outcomes

In the realm of corporate success, there is a fundamental truth: the sky is not your limit, but merely the starting point. With a powerful drive and unwavering determination, ambition propels you to surpass all perceived boundaries. Just like a high-performance engine, achieving your dreams requires proper focus and direction.

Today, we all have unique goals and dreams, both in our personal lives and careers. Nevertheless, the journey from having a vision to making it a reality can be challenging and draining. It calls for unwavering dedication, relentless effort, and occasionally, the need to ignore those who doubt you. In our business environment, having a strong drive and unwavering determination is not just a cliché, but a crucial factor in setting ambitious goals and relentlessly striving for excellence. We must connect these grand aspirations to careful planning, unwavering commitment, and consistent hard work. Only then will the aspiration reveal its magic. Many times, the biggest obstacles we face



are a result of the actions of others. There will always be those who view our dreams as unattainable or doubt our abilities. It's crucial to remember that our potentials are not defined by external voices. Throughout history, countless individuals have faced ridicule and scepticism, only to ultimately prove their doubters wrong.

The proper environment can truly make a difference in our pursuit of success. It is an environment that fosters growth by providing opportunities to use our skills and allowing for energetic and unwelcome ambition, which drives change and advancement. Surround yourself with

mentors and peers who share your vision and are there to support you on your journey. Embrace growth opportunities and always value the feedback of others to refine your approach. Equally crucial is the art of expressing our goals.

Make sure to communicate your goals and progress with both supervisors and colleagues. It's important to keep everyone in the loop and stay motivated. When you openly express your aspirations and the steps you're taking to achieve them, not only do you attract valuable encouragement, but you also establish a sense of personal responsibility. However, the

true basis of ambition stems from the constant trust within oneself.

It is important to have a strong belief in your abilities and to acknowledge the unique qualities that you bring to the table. Recognising and celebrating the small victories along your journey to greater success is crucial. Embrace challenges as chances to grow and learn. Stay resilient in the face of setbacks.

Ambition is an incredibly powerful force. When properly harnessed, it has the potential to unlock remarkable outcomes. Despite facing obstacles and encountering negativity, you will always choose to embrace a positive mindset. And getting encouragement from prominent individuals will help you hugely achieve your goals. After all, everyone deserves a chance to shine. So set the bar high, work, and let the ambition catapult you to new heights. The sky is not the limit in the corporate world; it is just the beginning of your journey toward success.

(The author is a freelance writer, views are personal)



RACHNA LAKHPATRI

DARKNESS BEHIND THE SILVER SCREEN

Madam – The long-awaited Justice Hema Committee report, commissioned by the Kerala government to investigate the challenges faced by women in the Malayalam film industry, has sent shockwaves through the community. The report, which was released to the media under the RTI Act five years after its submission, uncovers disturbing accounts of sexual exploitation, harassment, and mistreatment endured by women in the industry. Revealing the dark underbelly of the film world, the report underscores the truth behind what were once dismissed as mere rumors—casting couch practices, "adjustments," and compromises that are now exposed as grim realities. It's especially jarring to learn that even some of the most "popular" and "reputed" actors are implicated in these unethical practices, likely leading to the downfall of stars once idolized on the silver screen, now unmasked as villains behind the scenes. Additionally, the report highlights the dire working conditions faced by junior artists and other industry workers.

This report serves as both a wake-up call and a rallying cry, urging those within the film industry, along with the concerned ministry and stakeholders across the country, to take immediate and serious action to ensure the safety and well-being of female professionals in the industry.

M Pradyu | Kannur

A BELLWEATHER ACT

Madam – This happened in a temple in a remote village, somewhere in a remote district of MP. A temple priest wanted his temple to be a serene place, free from the constant jangle of temple bells that were hung from several places in and around the temple. He wished to be left in silence while offering his prayers and doing his daily "pooja" before the temple deity.

At the same time, he did not wish to do



FIRST COLUMN

THAW IN INDO-MALDIVES TIES

The Maldives after a break is now trying to mend fences with India



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

India's recent outreach to Maldives, with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar visiting the island nation, a couple of weeks back signifies a reset in the currently stressed bilateral relationship between the neighbours. After new President Mohammed Muizzu took charge, there has been a spate of anti-India voices, which has derailed decades of carefully curated strategic defence partnerships. Mr Muizzu's PNC-PPM coalition came to power last year, largely driven by India's campaign. Soon after Indian defence forces manning some critical equipment for the Maldives, were given marching orders and it seemed relations with India's nearest maritime neighbour were on a downward spiral without any checks. However, things began to change somewhere towards the beginning of this year and President Muizzu was invited to PM Modi's third swearing-in ceremony in June.

In his speech at the inauguration of the India-assisted projects to hand over water and sewerage projects across 28 islands of the Maldives President was all praise for the Indian PM. He said "The Government and people of Maldives extend our deep gratitude to Prime Minister of India, His Excellency Narendra Modi, the Government, and the friendly people of India for their generous and continued assistance to the Maldives and discuss strengthening our bilateral relations."

The speech highlighted a rethink regarding India relations and perhaps a silent acknowledgement that the Maldives needs India, to come out of financial stress. Maldives needs nearly millions of dollars in budgetary support for which the President has already reached out to China, Türkiye



and some Middle Eastern nations. However, any bailout by the lending countries has stiff collaterals attached, which could have risky consequences in future. Meanwhile India despite getting a bloodied nose, has been committed to rolling over nearly \$100 million in payments due from the Maldives, to ease off its financial burden. Maldives has also realised that beyond the India Out rhetoric, a recalibration of the bilateral in terms of economic and security ties would be a great midway for a stronger partnership with India. It was no coincidence that several critical India-assisted infrastructure projects inaugurated pre-President Muizzu's tenure were an important peg during S Jaishankar's visit to Male.

The press release issued by the ministry highlighted "EAM visited the India-assisted Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCP) site and jointly reviewed the progress of this flagship development project that will connect Male with the adjoining islands of Villingili, Gulhifalhu and Thilafushi...EAM also visited Addu city on 11 August 2024, during which he, along with Foreign Minister and Minister of Construction and Infrastructure, jointly inaugurated the Addu Reclamation and Shore Protection Project and Addu Detour Link Bridge Project. The visit highlights the importance of Maldives, India's maritime neighbour, as a key partner in the 'Neighbourhood First' policy and India's Vision 'SAGAR' i.e. Security and Growth for All in the Region.

Maldives remains an important partner of India in maintaining peace, stability and prosperity in the Indian Ocean region. "India and Maldives are dependent on each other for their respective economic, security and climate change-related issues. However, the resentment in the Maldives relationship is also a greater message to the new government in Bangladesh, which in the past has not been a great sympathiser with India's concerns. While the interim government in Bangladesh has so far maintained a moderate line of continuity on India bilateral, the political parties in power may not be too kind in future. Like many of India's neighbours, Bangladesh too is under severe economic crisis, and sooner or later the realisation would dawn that the best bet for the country is to have a good neighbour.

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

Monsoon mayhem: Tackling urban flooding



B K SINGH

There is urgent need for comprehensive disaster management and infrastructure reforms to protect lives and property from future monsoon fury



In the warming world Sea surface temperature is rising followed by excessive evaporation and deposition of moisture laden vapours in the form of clouds. When conditions are favourable, incessant rainfall occurs. Many times, half the annual rainfall occurs in 24 to 48 hours. Urban infrastructures are unable to take the challenge; flooding on roads, public places, ground floors and the basement of buildings is quite common leading to disruption of rail, road and air traffic as well as businesses. Rural areas face the brunt of the mayhem; loss of crops, landslides, and landslids in hilly terrain can claim lives and livelihoods and can throw the economy out of gear.

It can put additional stress on the budget as the public fund (taxpayers' money) has to be diverted for the reconstruction of damaged infrastructures and also for compensating the losses for the private properties. The disaster that hit Wayanad on 30th July claimed more than 400 human lives and injured an equal number has been one of the worst of its kind in living memory.

Big boulders and stones from an 8.26 ha (82600 sq meter) area on the top of the hill located at 1550 meters above the mean Sea level have rolled for 7 km on a downward slope and smashed buildings, damaged roads and bridges etc in three-four villages at 650 meters above the mean Sea level. One ton boulder has attained the energy of 9 mega Joule, which is enough to destabilize and knock down an RCC building in a rural area. Monsoon mayhem has caused damage in many other places in Western Ghats as well as in the Himalayas. Landslides and damage to roads and bridges have posed a challenge to people and tourists in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

In this column let me confine to the issues faced by metropolitan cities and make some suggestions to deal with it. The death of three civil service aspirants in the basement flooding of Rau's coaching centre in Rajendranagar Delhi last month and also another aspirant dying

of electrocution are chilling reminders of the apathy of the civic body. We must know the precautions that must be undertaken by the agencies and the building occupants to make sure that such incidents are not repeated. Civic Body of Mumbai had earlier designed stormwater drains and related infrastructure to take care of 25 mm of rain in an hour. Severe flooding repeatedly occurring during the past several years has forced them to remodel their drainage system to take care of more intense rains up to 50 mm per hour. However, in places like Mumbai, Ratnagiri, Satara, Mahabaleshwar and many other locations 80 to 100 mm of rain per hour has been recorded. Similarly, places in some other regions of the country are also experiencing frequent cloud bursts resulting in 80 to 100 mm of rainfall per hour for three to four hours. Wayanad tragedy was the result of 570 mm of rain in 48 hours. All Civic authorities in cities like Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Delhi, Gurugram etc should remodel the drainage system to take care of at least 100 mm of rain per hour. The encroachments on storm water drains as well as on lake beds should be removed. Further, the drains should be regularly de-silted and cleaned up so that plastics, polythene bags silts etc are removed and disposed of at far-off places. The lakes in the cities are balancing reservoirs where the water level should be regulated by opening the sluice gates. De-weeding and de-siltation of lakes are also required to be done periodically to ensure that the water reservoirs are kept clean up to maximum flood level. All the inlets of the lakes are

monitored to ensure that none carry untreated sewage into them. There is the possibility that lake water may enter people's houses at the time of flash floods; it must be ensured that sewage water does not enter houses. Stormwater drains in metropolitan cities are often found partly encroached and occupied for living by erecting small huts. Such occupants must be rehabilitated elsewhere and drains must be fully opened for flow of water. Let us not forget that the existing stormwater drain is insufficient to take the load of more than 25 mm of rainfall per hour. Beds of many urban lakes have also been encroached. Lake beds up to high flood levels are meant for storage of water. The reduction in volume for storage indicates that the water flows in the basement and ground floor of the buildings, causing undue hardship for the people. Incessant rains in November 2015 (approximately 483 mm in 24 hours) led to one of the biggest catastrophes in Chennai. 500 people were killed and nearly 10 lakh houses were submerged resulting in the displacement of 1.8 million people. Two reasons were attributed to the disaster. One was the encroachments on lake beds in Chennai and the other was the delay in regulating the water level in the Chembaram Bakkam reservoir. The situation came under control only when 1.5 lakh cusecs water from this reservoir was released into the Adiyar river. Many wetlands in Chennai have been occupied by communities. Pallikarnai wetland used to have an extent of over 5000 ha has shrunk to 10% and only 500 ha is remaining as wetland at present. Unless the encroachments are cleared, we are likely to face

a similar tragedy in future. Civic bodies while working on drainage systems for stormwater as well as sewer lines must take enough precautions and keep the drains and man-hole covered, so that no person accidentally falls into them and perishes. When the road is flooded and becomes a flowing river, uncovered drains and sewer lines cannot be identified by people wading through. People in Mumbai, Delhi, Gurugram and many other metropolitan cities find flood water trapped in the basements of their houses. Often they resort to pumping it out, which requires time and energy. It is advisable to construct a sump underneath so that the rainwater can be effectively harvested and later used for various purposes. If the basement is kept clean, then flood water collected would be of drinkable quality. Several Civic Bodies mandate water harvesting structures along with new constructions while approving Plans. At the implementation stage, however, such structures generally take care of harvesting water from the rooftop and ignore basements, prone to flooding during cloud bursts. Water harvesting for basements should be made compulsory and must be seriously implemented. Building by-laws if necessary be amended by respective civic agencies to make sure that the basement of the buildings is used for parking vehicles, storing unserviceable items and water harvesting/ storage only. In no circumstances should people be permitted to use it for housing, hotels and businesses.

(The writer is retired principal chief conservator of forests, Head of forest force, Karnataka; views are personal)



MANY TIMES, HALF THE ANNUAL RAINFALL OCCURS IN 24 TO 48 HOURS. URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE S ARE UNABLE TO TAKE THE CHALLENGE; FLOODING ON ROADS, PUBLIC PLACES, GROUND FLOORS AND THE BASEMENT OF BUILDINGS IS QUITE COMMON LEADING TO DISRUPTION OF RAIL, ROAD AND AIR TRAFFIC AS WELL AS BUSINESSES

Prime Minister Modi's Ukraine visit: A strategic balancing act

PM's visit underscores India's evolving role on the world stage, where it seeks to navigate complex alliances and assert its national interests

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Kyiv marks a significant moment in international diplomacy, reflecting India's strategic balancing act between Russia and the West amid the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. As the first leader from a nation that maintains strong relations with both Russia and Western countries, Modi's visit sends a nuanced message to global powers, particularly Russia.



AKHILESH SUMAN

comes at a critical time, coinciding with Ukraine's recent military successes against Russian forces, adding weight to the message Modi intends to deliver.

India's historical relationship with Ukraine has been far from warm, yet the scale of suffering in Ukraine has stirred sympathy within India. This sentiment is reflected in Modi's earlier statements, emphasizing that this is not an era of war

and advocating for peaceful resolutions. Despite this, India has refrained from condemning Russia's actions, continuing to purchase oil from Moscow, which has been crucial for Russia during the conflict. However, Russia's increasingly close ties with China have become a point of concern for India, particularly regarding China's aggressive behavior along the Indian border. The 2020 Galwan Valley clash and subsequent military tensions have strained India-China relations, making Russia's perceived indifference to India's security concerns troubling. The frequent meetings between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping have heightened these concerns,

prompting India to reassess its foreign policy strategy. Modi's visit to Ukraine can be seen as a diplomatic effort to subtly pressure Russia into reconsidering its relationship with China. By engaging with Ukraine, India signals to Moscow that its close ties with Beijing cannot be taken for granted without potential consequences. Historically, India has enjoyed a strong relationship with Russia, especially in defense, but the evolving geopolitical landscape requires India to prioritize its national interests. Modi's visit also underscores India's independent foreign policy, a principle that has guided the country since the Cold War era. India has long prided itself on its non-aligned stance, making decisions based



on strategic interests rather than aligning with any particular bloc. This approach remains relevant in the 21st century, as India navigates the complexities of global politics. India's refusal to outright condemn Russia at the United Nations has caused friction with Western capitals. However, Modi's visit to Ukraine demonstrates that India's neutrality does not imply inaction or tacit approval of Russian aggression.

Instead, it reflects a nuanced approach, balancing relationships and interests while encouraging Russia to reconsider its military strategy. As India seeks to strengthen its ties with Western nations, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region where China's assertiveness is a growing concern, Modi's visit to Ukraine reaffirms India's commitment to a multipolar world. India values its strategic autonomy, making decisions based on its national interests—a stance that has occasionally drawn criticism from its allies. Another important aspect of Modi's visit is India's interest in contributing to Ukraine's reconstruction efforts. The war has left Ukraine in ruins, and India sees an opportunity to play a role in its rebuilding process. This involvement would not only be a humanitarian gesture but also a strategic investment that could benefit the Indian economy. India has already provided humanitarian aid to Ukraine, and Modi's visit could pave the way for more substantial support, including infrastructure projects and logistical assistance, which would also benefit related Indian industries.

Furthermore, India's involvement in Ukraine's reconstruction could serve as a counterbalance to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). By offering an alternative model of development cooperation that respects the sovereignty of partner countries, India positions itself as a more favorable partner for nations in need. This approach aligns with

India's broader goal of positioning itself as a global leader and a moral force in international diplomacy. As the world closely watches Modi's visit to Ukraine, the potential outcomes could have far-reaching implications for global power dynamics. Should Modi's diplomacy contribute to a ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine, India could emerge as a significant peacemaker and problem solver on the world stage. This would enhance India's reputation as a nation capable of navigating complex geopolitical landscapes while maintaining its principles and strategic autonomy. *(The writer is a senior journalist who has been covering foreign affairs for many years; views are personal)*

Clinton: Harris is clear choice over 'other guy'

PTI ■ CHICAGO

Americans in 2024 have a clear choice between "for the people" versus "me, myself, and I", former president Bill Clinton has said, as he rooted for Kamala Harris in the race for the White House and said she will be the "president of joy". Clinton on Wednesday took the crowd at the National Democratic Convention through Harris' life story and said he believes that her candidacy represents for the country. Her story is that of an America they all know is possible, he said, referring to the 59-year-old Harris, who is of Indian and African heritage. America faces a "clear choice" between Harris and Donald Trump in November, Clinton said. "In 2024, we gotta pretty clear choice, it seems to me," Clinton said. "Kamala Harris, for the people, and the other guy, who has proved even more than the first go-around that he's about me, myself and I." "Kamala Harris will work to solve our problems, seize our opportunities, ease our fears, and make sure every single American, however they vote, has a chance to chase their dreams," Clinton, 78, said. Clinton's wife, Hillary Clinton, lost the 2016 election to former President Trump, the current Republican presidential nominee. Clinton said he wants America that more joyful, inclusive, and future-focused. "Where we weather the storms and earn the benefits together. That's the America Kamala Harris will lead. She's already made her first presidential decision, picking a running mate," Clinton, who served two terms in the White House until January 2001, said. Clinton riffed on the famous "place called Hope" line he gave at the 1992 Democratic convention to encourage Americans to vote the "president of joy," Harris, into the White House. Clinton, who is from Hope, Arkansas, famously said in the 1992 convention, "I still believe in a place called Hope." On Wednesday, the-

'Trump will divide America'

Chicago (PTI): Top Democratic leaders have hammered Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump for being an agent of chaos and that his failed policies would take America backwards. Democrats used their national convention in Chicago on Wednesday to cast the former president as an existential danger and project Vice President Kamala Harris as the best person to lead the nation. Harris, 59, will take on former president Trump, 78, in the November 5 election. Former president Bill Clinton in his address to the Democratic National Convention said Trump - a paragon of consistency - is dividing, blaming, and belittling. "He creates and curates chaos. It's showmanship, but it's not leadership," he said. On the other hand, he said Harris is the only candidate in this race with the vision, the experience, the temperament and the will. "Now, how does Donald Trump use his voice? Mostly to talk about himself, his vengeance, vendettas, complaints, and conspiracies. The next time you hear him, don't count the lies-count the

mer president said: "From a man who once had the honour to be called in this Convention, a man from Hope, we need Kamala Harris - the president of joy - to lead us." "Kamala Harris is the only candidate in this race who has the vision, the experience, the temperament, the will, and yes, the sheer joy, to get something done. I mean, look, what does her opponent do with his voice? He mostly talks about himself. So, the next time you hear him, don't count the lies, count the 'I's. Clinton went on to criticise Trump's "vendettas, his vengeance, his complaints, his conspiracies." "He is like the tenors opening up before he goes on stage, like I did, by saying, 'me, me, me, me, me.' When Kamala Harris is president, every day will begin with you, you, you, you," Clinton said. Clinton took a jab at Trump's age. "Two days ago, I turned 78, the oldest man in my family for four generations. And the only personal vanity I want to assert is I'm still younger than Donald Trump," he said. Clinton is just a few months younger than Trump, who turned 78 in June this year. If Trump wins in November, he would be the oldest president at his swearing-in at 78 years and 219 days, surpassing President Joe Biden's previous record of 78 years and 61 days.

Brazil to limit entry for some Asians

AP ■ SAO PAULO

Brazil will begin imposing restrictions on the entry of some foreigners from Asia who use the country as a launching point to migrate to the United States and Canada, the justice ministry's press office said Wednesday. More than 70% of requests for refuge at the airport come from people with either Indian, Nepalese or Vietnamese nationalities, an official document says. The African nations of Somalia, Cameroon, Ghana and Ethiopia are among the remaining 30% of refugee seekers. The move, which starts on Monday, will affect migrants from Asian countries who require visas to remain in Brazil. It does not apply to people from Asian countries currently exempt from visas to Brazil. US citizens and many European nationals also do not require visas for Brazil. A Federal Police investigation has shown these migrants often

buy flights with layovers in Sao Paulo's international airport, en route to other destinations, but stay in Brazil as a place from where they then begin their journey north, according to official documents provided to The Associated Press. Starting next week, travellers without visas will either have to continue their journey by plane or return to their country of origin, the ministry said. A report signed by federal police investigator Marinho da Silva Rezende Junior informs the justice ministry that since the beginning of last year there has been "great turmoil" due to the influx of migrants at the airport in Guarulhos, a city located in the Sao Paulo metropolitan area. "Evidence suggests that those migrants, for the most part, are making use of the known - and extremely dangerous - route that goes from Sao Paulo to the western state of Acre, so they can access Peru and go toward Central America and then,

finally, reach the U.S. from its southern border," one of the documents says. An AP investigation in July found migrants passing through the Amazon, including some from Vietnam and India. Many returned to Acre state, on the border with Peru, as U.S. border policies triggered a wait-and-see attitude among them. Brazil's justice ministry said that the new guidelines will not apply to the almost 500 migrants currently staying camping out at a Sao Paulo's international airport. Remullo Diniz, the coordinator of border with Peru, as U.S. border policies triggered a wait-and-see attitude among them. Brazil's justice ministry said that the new guidelines will not apply to the almost 500 migrants currently staying camping out at a Sao Paulo's international airport. Remullo Diniz, the coordinator of border operations, told the AP the government's move comes after local authorities spoke to U.S. diplomats about the situation with many Asian and undocumented migrants in the region. "We have seen growth both in the number of migrants coming here and in the number of nations they come from," Diniz told the AP over the phone.

"Bangladesh, Indonesia also send a lot of people here. They come either with no documents or with fake documents from other nations." "That is a concern for us, they could be running from police," he added. "And there are also the coyote networks, taking unaccompanied children, trafficking drugs." Earlier on Wednesday, Brazil's federal prosecutors' office said in a statement that Sao Paulo's international airport "is once again counting a high number of foreigners who arrive on flights of the airline LATAM and do not exit quickly due to the overload on the Brazilian migration system." The prosecutors' office added that it will put pressure on airlines to give migrants some basic supplies as they wait for their concession of refuge. The term refers to an application for refugee status, regardless of the reason. LATAM did not immediately respond an AP request for comment.

"It is important that we quickly decide on these refugee requests so that the growing arrival of foreigners does not impact the operation of the airport itself," federal prosecutor Guilherme Rocha Göpfert said after a meeting at Sao Paulo's international airport Wednesday. One of the documents says Brazil's federal police received 9,082 requests for refuge this year through July 15. That is more than the double the amount for the entire 2023, and the most in over a decade, according to the figures. However, federal police said that just a few hundred of those sought to get documents to remain in Brazil. The same document says federal police are convinced there is "a consolidated route of irregular migration in Brazil, with a strong presence of people who are involved in migrant smuggling and human trafficking, with an evident fraudulent use of the application for refugee status."

French destroyer rescues 29 mariners from stricken Red sea oil tanker

AP ■ DUBAI

A French destroyer rescued 29 mariners from an oil tanker that came under repeated attack in the Red Sea, officials said Thursday, while also destroying a bomb-carrying drone boat in the area. Yemen's Houthi rebels are suspected to have carried out the assault on the Sounion. The attack, the most serious in the Red Sea in weeks, comes during a monthslong campaign by Houthi targeting ships over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip that has disrupted a trade route through which \$1 trillion in cargo typically passes each year. The Sounion is now at anchor in the Red Sea and no longer drifting, the European Union's Operation Aspidites said. However, it wasn't clear if the vessel was still ablaze. The vessel had been staffed by a crew of Filipinos and Russians. Military officials did not name the French



destroyer involved in the rescue. In the attack Wednesday, men on small boats first opened fire with small arms about 140 km (90 miles) west of the rebel-held Yemeni port city of Hodeida, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations centre said. Four projectiles also hit the ship, it added. It wasn't immediately clear if that meant drones or missiles. The Houthis did not immediately claim responsibility for the attacks, though it can take them hours or even days before

they acknowledge their assaults. However, they did acknowledge US airstrikes in Hodeida that the American military's Central Command said destroyed a Houthi surface-to-air missile and radar system. The Houthis have targeted more than 80 vessels with missiles and drones since the war in Gaza started in October. They seized one vessel and sank two in the campaign that also killed four sailors. Other missiles and drones have either been intercepted by a US-led coalition in

'British tech magnate Mike Lynch's body found in yacht wreckage'

Porticello (AP): The Italian coast guard said Thursday the body of British tech magnate Mike Lynch is among those recovered off the coast of Sicily from the wreckage of a superyacht whose builders had called it unsinkable. One woman remains missing. The bodies of Lynch, who had been celebrating his recent acquittal on fraud charges with his family and the people who had defended him at trial in the United States, and five others were recovered by rescue crews following Monday's tragedy. The Bayesian, a 56-metre (184-foot) British-flagged yacht, went down in a storm early Monday as it was moored about a kilometre (half-a-mile) offshore. Civil protection officials said they believe the ship was struck by a tornado over the water, known as a waterspout, and sank quickly. The chief executive of The Italian Sea Group, which owns the Bayesian's manufacturer, said superyachts like these are "the safest in the most absolute sense." "First of all, because they have very little surface compared to a yacht facing into the wind," CEO Giovanni Costantino told Sky News on Wednesday. "Second, with the structure, the drift keel, they become unsinkable bodies." Investigators are now looking at why the Bayesian sank, killing at least six people. A seventh remains missing. Fifteen of the 22 people aboard survived, including a mother who reported holding her 1-year-old baby over the waves to save her. Divers have struggled to find the bodies in the yacht's hull on the seabed 50 metres (164 feet) underwater. "We would need a crystal ball to know when we'll be able to find the next body," said Luca Cari, spokesperson for the fire rescue service. "It's very difficult to move inside the wreckage. Moving just one meter can take up to 24 hours," Cari said.

America faces many elevated threats all at once: FBI Director

AP ■ BROOKLYN CENTRE

The country is facing heightened threats from many corners at a time when law enforcement agencies are struggling, FBI Director Christopher Wray said in an exclusive interview, adding that he is "hard pressed to think of a time in my career where so many different kinds of threats are all elevated at once." Wray spoke Wednesday with The Associated Press while visiting the Minneapolis field office to talk about partnerships between law enforcement agencies and also with other entities. His remarks come as the FBI confronts heightened concerns over terrorism, both domestic and international, as well as Chinese espionage and intellectual property theft and foreign election interference. "I worry about the combination of that many threats being elevated at once, with the chal-



lenges facing the men and women in law enforcement more generally," Wray said at the office in the suburb of Brooklyn Center. "And the one thing that I think helps bridge those two challenges is partnerships. That's how we get through. It is by all working together." Wray's assessment of an elevated threat landscape is consistent with alarm bells he has

sounded for months. Soon after the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas in Israel, Wray began warning that the rampage could serve as an inspiration to militants, "the likes of which we haven't seen since ISIS launched its so-called caliphate years ago." The FBI has also scrambled to deal with security concerns related to the United States' southern border, with officials revealing in June that eight people from Tajikistan with suspected ties to the Islamic State group were arrested and were being held on immigration violations. Officials are also dealing with the specter of foreign election interference. The FBI and other federal agencies announced Monday that Iran was responsible for a hack targeting the Trump campaign and for an attempted breach of the Biden-Harris campaign, part of what officials portrayed as a brazen and

aggressive effort to interfere in American politics. Wray declined to talk about any specific investigation or threat but said investigations into cyberattacks, including against election infrastructure, candidates or campaigns, require help from the private sector. "One of the things that we have been doubling down on with every passing day is, is on partnerships, because ultimately you're talking about the ability to connect the dots, whether it's against some kind of election influence threat or some other kind of threat," Wray said. "You need to have partners sharing information with each other to put the two pieces together to see the bigger picture." Law enforcement officers are being killed in the line of duty at a rate of about one every five days, Wray said, noting that four first responders have died in Minnesota alone in 2024.

Visa data shows Indian students hesitant to apply to UK universities

London (PTI): Indians may continue to top the tally of student visa grants but they are beginning to show signs of being put off applying to UK universities amid greater migration curbs, the latest Home Office statistics revealed on Thursday. The Home Office data for the past year until June 2024 shows a 23 per cent fall in Indian students coming to the UK for higher studies, even as they continue to represent the largest group granted leave to remain on the Graduate Route visa which allows foreign students to work in Britain for two years after their degree. This fall in Indian student numbers is the first indication of the impact of tighter curbs on the right of most student visa holders to bring along dependent family members, which came into effect earlier this year. "There were 110,000 sponsored study visa grants to main

applicants who were Indian nationals in the year ending June 2024 (25 per cent of the total), 32,687 fewer than the previous year," the Home Office statistics reveal. "Most of the increase in foreign students between 2019 and 2023 were from Indian and Nigerian nationals, but numbers for these nationalities have fallen in the latest year (by 23 per cent and 46 per cent respectively)," it notes. The India-UK Young Professionals Scheme, which involves a two-way flow of young graduates to live and work in either country for up to two years, brought in 2,234 Indian nationals since the first ballot was held in February last year - well below the annual 3,000 visa cap. "In the year ending June 2024, Indian nationals represented the largest group of students granted leave to remain on the Graduate Route (67,529), representing almost half (46 per

cent) of grants of Graduate Route extensions to main applicants," the data reveals. However, a gradual decline in student numbers will cause concern among UK universities as they struggle through financial pressures and rely on the much higher fees paid by overseas students. The National Indian Students and Alumni Union (NISAU) UK fears a review launched into the Graduate Route visa last year, which concluded only in May to confirm it would not be abandoned, put many Indians off applying. "It is critical that we ensure that the chaos and uncertainty that the review of the Graduate Route had led to is now fully put to rest. NISAU has engaged with millions of students in India to spread the message that the UK remains a warm and welcoming destination for Indian students," said NISAU UK chair Sanam Arora.

Man opens plane door, walks on wing at Australian airport

Melbourne (AP): A passenger was arrested at an Australian airport after he left a stationary airliner through an emergency exit, walked along a wing, and then climbed down a jet engine to the tarmac on Thursday, officials said. Jetstar Flight JQ507 had arrived at Melbourne Airport from Sydney and had parked at a terminal gate when the man left the plane by the right-side exit, officials said. Opening the exit automatically deployed a slide from the back of the wing at the fuselage to the ground, a Jetstar statement said. But the man instead walked along the wing and climbed down one of the Airbus A320's two engines, an official said. Passenger Audrey Varghese said passengers screamed and shrieked as the man began "erratic" behaviour shortly before he opened the

hatch. "The man was exhibiting some quite strange behaviour," Varghese told Melbourne Radio 3AW. "As soon as the plane had started coming to a stop, he immediately got up and basically charged to where the emergency exit row is, and in the process shoving people, causing a bit of commotion, (and) ripped open the emergency door," Varghese said. Another passenger, identified as Maddison, told Nine News television the man had been vaping, which is not allowed, during the 90-minute mid-morning flight and had unsuccessfully demanded the air crew provide him with alcohol. Australian Federal Police officers had been alerted by Jetstar staff and arrested the man for "alleged aggressive behaviour and breaching aircraft safety protocols", a police statement said.

Pressure mounts on Mexico's judicial overhaul amid market concerns

Mexico City (AP) President Andrés Manuel López Obrador is facing mounting pressure against his controversial proposal to overhaul the Mexican judicial system, which would have judges be elected. Judges and magistrates on Wednesday joined a strike begun early this week by federal court employees to oppose the proposal, while Morgan Stanley and other financial institutions warned that the overhaul could pose serious market consequences and risks for potential investors in Mexico. In a response to rising criticism, President-elect Claudia Sheinbaum joined her political ally López Obrador in defending the proposal Wednesday. "Investors shouldn't be worried. On the contrary, we will have a better justice system in Mexico," Sheinbaum said. López Obrador, a populist leader who is nearing the end of his six-year term, has long been

at odds with Mexican courts. He contends judges are part of a "mafia" against him, and says the proposal is meant to clean up corruption. He has gone on winding rants against the judicial system, ignored court orders and publicly sparred with judges whose rulings he has disagreed with. Among the changes sought by the López Obrador it to have judges be elected and allow virtually anyone with a law degree with a few years experience as a lawyer to become a judge through popular vote. Given major electoral wins by López Obrador's party Morena in June elections, many academics have voiced concerns that selecting judges by popular vote would put politically biased judges on the bench and deal a blow to checks and balances. The striking court employees also fear that the measure could put their careers in danger. Since Monday, thousands of employees have camped outside

federal court buildings, and the rallies grew Wednesday with judges and magistrates joining in. The demonstrators gathered under tents chanting and holding protest signs, with Mexicans with court appointments turned away. "It could do damage to society," said Fernando Rangel Ramirez, a federal judge on strike. He said the judicial branch "is an institution that historically, and in its nature, should not be politicized. There should be people in it that have enough experience." The National Association of Circuit Magistrates and District Judges said the strike will go on indefinitely, until the president's proposal with "its many imperfections" is blocked. The group said it hopes to redirect "public discussion toward a well-considered comprehensive reform to address the structural causes that have been steadily weakening the quality of justice" in Mexico.

90-foot-tall Hanuman statue in Texas becomes new landmark

Houston (PTI): A 90-foot-tall bronze murti of Lord Hanuman, unveiled near here, symbolising "a new milestone in the cultural and spiritual landscape of America," has become the latest landmark in Texas visible from miles away, and the third tallest sculpture in the US. The Statue of Union, as it has been named, is one of the tallest statues in the world and holds several other distinctions: it is the tallest Hanuman murti outside India, the tallest in Texas, and the third tallest statue in the United States, surpassed only by the Statue of Liberty in New York (151 feet) and the Pegasus and Dragon in Hallandale Beach, Florida (110 feet), the organisers said. "The 'Statue of Union' Hanuman murti, which was unveiled at the Sri Ashtalakshmi Temple in Sugar Land, about 35-odd km from here, during a grand Prana Prathishtha Mahotsavam ceremony from August 15 to 18, symbolises "selflessness, devo-



tion, and unity," the organisers said, adding, the murti is named so to "honour Hanuman's pivotal role in reuniting Lord Ram and Sita." "This awe-inspiring structure is the result of the visionary efforts of His Holiness Sri Chinna Jeeyar Swamiji, a Padma Bhushan awardee, and a renowned Vedic scholar, who envisioned the project as a spiritual epicentre for North America," the organiser said in a statement.

The festivities commenced on August 15, coinciding with India's Independence Day and the core of the celebrations unfolded on August 18, with the grand Prana Prathishtha ceremony. "The rituals, led by Sri Chinna Jeeyar Swamiji and overseen by a multitude of Vedic priests and scholars, were a powerful display of devotion and spirituality," the statement said. The ceremony featured a helicopter showering flowers upon the murti, sprinkling of sacred water, and placing of a 72-foot-long garland around Hanuman's neck amid thousands of devotees chanting the names of Shri Ram and Hanuman in unison. The statue stands tall not only as a symbol of Hanuman's indomitable spirit but also as a new milestone in the cultural and spiritual landscape of America, embodying the principles of devotion, strength, and unity for all who come to witness its grandeur, the organisers added.

Ukraine's Zelenskyy visits border area

AP ■ KYIV

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy toured the northeastern Ukrainian region of Sumy on Thursday in his first visit to the border area since his forces entered Russian territory more than two weeks ago.

After a meeting with Ukraine's military commander, Zelenskyy said Ukrainian forces have claimed control of another settlement in the Russian region of Kursk and taken more Russian prisoners of war whom he hopes to exchange for captured Ukrainians. He referred to that as Ukraine's "exchange fund."

"Another settlement in the Kursk region is now under Ukrainian control, and we have replenished the exchange fund," Zelenskyy wrote on the social media platform X after hearing a report from the military commander, Col Gen Oleksandr Syrskiy. But the gains there come as Ukraine continues to lose ground in its eastern Donetsk region. The Russian Defence Ministry announced Thursday that its military has claimed control of the village of Mezhevo.

Ukraine's push into Russia marks the first capture of Russian territory since World War II. It comes as both sides in the war use drones to attack far within enemy lines.

A Ukrainian drone attack Thursday sparked a fire at a military facility in southern Russia as Kyiv pushes its offensive in the Kursk region and struck key infrastructure including bridges.

Andrei Bocharov, governor of the Volgograd region, said Thursday that a "defence ministry facility" was on fire after being attacked by drones in the area of Marinovka, in a sign that Ukraine is not letting up on its attacks. He did not specify what was damaged.

Ukraine attacked Russia overnight with 28 drones, Russia's Ministry of Defence said. Thirteen were shot down over the Volgograd region, seven over the Rostov region, four over the Belgorod region, two over the Voronezh region, and one each over the Bryansk and Kursk regions, the ministry said. Russian Telegram channels said drones attempt-

'Poorly trained recruits contribute to loss of Ukrainian territory on eastern front'

AP ■ KYIV

Some new Ukrainian soldiers refuse to fire at the enemy. Others, according to commanders and fellow fighters, struggle to assemble weapons or to coordinate basic combat movements. A few have even walked away from their posts, abandoning the battlefield altogether.

While Ukraine presses on with its incursion into Russia's Kursk region, its troops are still losing precious ground along the country's eastern front — a grim erosion that military commanders blame in part on poorly trained recruits drawn from a recent mobilization drive, as well as Russia's clear superiority in ammunition and air power.

"Some people don't want to shoot. They see the enemy in the firing position in trenches but don't open fire. ... That is why our men are dying," said a frustrated battalion commander in Ukraine's 47th Brigade. "When they don't use the weapon, they are ineffective."

The accounts come from commanders and soldiers who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity in order to speak freely about sensitive military matters. Others spoke on the condition that they be identified only by their call signs in keeping with Ukrainian military protocol.

Commanders say the recruits have contributed to a string of territorial losses that enabled Russia's army to advance, including near the city of Pokrovsk, a critical logistics hub. If it falls, the defeat would imperil Ukraine's defenses and bring Russia closer to its stated aim of capturing the Donetsk region. Russian soldiers are now just 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) away.

ed to attack a military air base near Marinovka in the village of Oktyabrsky. Videos shared on Russian social media showed an explosion in the night sky, reportedly near the base. Marinovka is about 300

Adding to Ukraine's woes are Russia's huge advantage in manpower and its willingness to accept staggering losses in return for capturing small objectives.

The recently conscripted Ukrainians are a far cry from the battle-hardened fighters who flocked to join the war in the first year of the full-scale invasion. The new troops lack even a minimal level of training, commanders and soldiers from four brigades defending the Pokrovsk area said.

Frustrated with the quality of the new conscripts sent to the front line by territorial recruitment centers, commanders are now seeking to conduct their own mobilization drives to better screen and train new fighters, multiple commanders and soldiers said.

"The main problem is the survival instinct of newcomers. Before, people could stand until the last moment to hold the position. Now, even when there is light shelling of firing positions, they are retreating," said a soldier with the 110th Brigade.

Not everyone is turning around and running away from battle, he added. "No, there are motivated people, but they are just very, very few," he said. "The position is held as far as there are these people who are motivated and committed."

Following the implementation of a controversial mobilization law in May that established clearer regulations for territorial recruitment centers, Ukraine is reportedly

drafting tens of thousands of fighters per month. Demand is highest in the infantry. But there are logistical hurdles to train, equip and pay so many incoming people, and commanders constantly demand new soldiers. To ease that pressure, military leaders have had to take units from brigades in one region and transfer them to different areas to stabilize weak spots.

Some point the finger back at commanders who single out recent recruits for losses. Viktor Kevliuk, a military expert with the Ukraine-based Center for Defense Strategies think tank, said the training offered to recruits is adequate. He said brigade commanders "are looking for an explanation for tactical failures."

"Likewise, the brigade commander has the appropriate tools to influence morale. If all these processes are established in the brigade, there will be no significant problems. If these mechanisms fail, we read about the negativity in social networks," he added.

And in intense fights such as the one in Pokrovsk, "it is the timely tactical decisions of commanders that make the difference, Kevliuk said. In some instances, terrified new recruits have fled from the fight. "This fear creates panic and chaos," said the battalion commander in the 47th Brigade. "This is also the reason we have lost."

The loss of the village of Prohres last month in the Pokrovsk region is the most recent example of territorial loss blamed on new recruits, commanders said. Units from the 31st Brigade left in a poorly coordinated frenzy, prompting the 47th Brigade to enter the battle and attempt to stabilize the line. A similar scenario unfolded in the village of Ocheretyne in May.

km (185 miles) east of the Ukrainian border and about the same distance west from the border with Kazakhstan. Ukraine claimed responsibility for the attack. Ukraine's Security Service and

the Special Operation Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine conducted the drone attack Wednesday night striking the Marinovka airfield in Russia, a law enforcement official told The Associated Press. The offi-

cial spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to speak publicly. The attack came as the ground offensive in Russia's Kursk region rattles the Kremlin. The daring operation could involve as many as 10,000 Ukrainian troops backed by armour and artillery, military analysts say.

Drone attacks on military facility in southern Russia spark fire

Kyiv (AP): A drone attack sparked a fire at a military facility in the Volgograd region of southern Russia on Thursday, regional officials and the country's Ministry of Defence said.

Regional Volgograd Governor Andrei Bocharov said on Telegram that a "defence ministry facility" was on fire after being attacked with drones in the area of Marinovka. There were no casualties, he said.

Bocharov did not specify what was damaged but Russian Telegram channels said that drones attempted to attack a military air base near Marinovka in the village of Oktyabrsky. Ukraine did not acknowledge the attack but it comes as Ukraine has intensified its attacks on Russia, with a ground offensive into the Russian region of Kursk and drone attacks that targeted Moscow on Wednesday in what the capital's mayor called one of the largest done attacks to date since Russia's all-out invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Videos shared on Russian social media channels showed thick black smoke rising from the air base and an explosion in the night sky reportedly near the base.

Marinovka is about 300 kilometers (185 miles) east of the Ukrainian border and about the same distance west from the border with Kazakhstan.

Ukraine attacked Russia overnight with 28 drones, Russia's Ministry of Defence said. Thirteen were shot down over the Volgograd region, seven over the Rostov region, four over the Belgorod region, two over the Voronezh region, and one each over the Bryansk and Kursk regions, the ministry said. Russian Telegram channels said drones attempt-

Putin meets Li as Moscow, Beijing deepen their ties

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin met with Chinese premier Li Qiang Wednesday, hailing growing trade relations as Moscow becomes increasingly dependent on Beijing for political and economic support.

"Our trade relations are developing, developing successfully ... The attention that the governments of the two countries on both sides are paying to trade and economic ties is yielding results," Putin said at the meeting in the Kremlin. He also said that Russia and China have developed "large-scale plans" for economic and other projects.

"Chinese-Russian relations are at an unprecedentedly high level," said Li, who earlier had met with his Russian counterpart, Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin.

The meeting took place as Russia struggled to push back a Ukrainian incursion into the Kursk region now in its third week. And overnight, Moscow experienced one of the largest



waves of drone attacks on the Russian capital since the start of the Ukraine conflict. Russian news reports did not indicate whether Putin and Li discussed Ukraine. China has tried to position itself as neutral in the Ukraine conflict, but it shares with Russia high animosity toward the West.

After Western countries imposed heavy sanctions on Russia in response to Russia sending troops into Ukraine in February 2022, China strongly stepped up its

purchase of Russian oil, increasing its influence in Russia. Putin underlined the importance of China by meeting in Beijing with Chinese leader Xi Jinping soon after being inaugurated for a fifth term in the Kremlin.

A U.S. intelligence assessment released this year indicates that China has significantly increased sales to Russia of machine tools, microelectronics and other technology Moscow uses to produce missiles, tanks, aircraft and other weaponry.

Another case filed against Hasina, aides in B'desh

PTI ■ DHAKA

A case was filed on Thursday against Bangladesh's deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina and 46 others over the killing of a hawk in the national capital during the recent mass protests, taking the number of cases against her after her ouster to 45.

The case was filed in Ashulia Police Station following a court order, the state-run BSS news agency reported.

Md Mojibul Hossain, a relative of the victim, Shaon, filed the complaint with the court of Dhaka Senior Judicial Magistrate Rabeya Sultana. The court, after recording the statement of the complainant, asked the officer in charge of Ashulia Police Station to accept the matter as a first information report (FIR), the report said. According to the case docu-



ment, Shaon joined the anti-discrimination street protest on July 4 during which he got shot at and succumbed to his injuries the same day.

With this case, Hasina is now facing 45 cases against her, including 28 for murder, four

for crimes against humanity and genocide, and one for abduction. Besides, she is also facing seven other cases filed against her with the International Crimes Tribunal. 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. 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.

Former ISI chief's close aide flees Pakistan amid probe

Lahore (PTI): A close aide of Pakistan's former ISI chief Lt General (Retd) Faiz Hameed, who has been in the Pakistan Army's custody on corruption and other charges, has fled the country to evade arrest, according to a media report.

Mohsin Habib Warriach, who is said to have managed major business deals for Gen Hameed in Pakistan and abroad, has reportedly fled to the UK, Samaa TV reported.

Several military officers and some civilians have been taken into custody in connection with the alleged links with Hameed. Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi didn't confirm nor deny reports about Warriach's leaving the country. Gen Hameed is facing court-martial proceedings for misusing his position to extort money from a private housing society and his role in May 9 attacks on military installations and his close ties with jailed former prime minister Imran Khan are also being probed. Khan feared that Gen Hameed might be used against him as an approver

so that he could be tried at a military court. Warriach, son of former federal minister retired Maj Habibullah Warriach, reportedly fled the country for the UK before the arrest of Hameed. According to the report, Warriach, a central figure in the multi-billion rupees scam at the National Insurance Company Limited, has been managing major business deals for Hameed since 2014. He was the frontman of Hameed in securing business deals for the former spymaster.

Gen Hameed led the ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) during Khan's administration from 2019 to 2021 before taking early retirement in December 2022. Hameed was arrested following action in the complaint of a private property developer over alleged misuse of official authority. According to the report, Warriach travelled the world on behalf of Hameed, acting as his de facto representative, negotiating and executing deals, often introducing himself as an arms dealer working for the Pakistan Army.

Imran's party defers power show in Islamabad till next month

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party on Thursday postponed its planned rally in the capital here until next month on the direction of its founder and jailed former premier Imran Khan after the government refused to permit the demonstration.

Party leader Azam Swati said while talking to the media outside the Adiala Jail Rawalpindi where he along with party leader Gohar Khan met Khan. "The rally has been rescheduled and now will be held on September 8 as directed by Imran Khan," Swati made the announcement, adding that the government also agreed to the new date.

He also quoted Khan as saying that the party workers, who were already out on the road to reach the venue, should go back. The announcement comes as the capital city was tense due to the threat by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party (PTI) leaders to go ahead with its plan



to hold the rally in Islamabad despite the government's refusal to give permission. The government closed all schools in Islamabad and also blocked all main entries to the city by placing shipping containers on roads to stop the movement of the PTI workers. There were reports of traffic jams and long queues of vehicles on the inter-city roads which were still open. PTI had sought to hold a power show after months of political wrangling over the cases against its party chief and former premier Khan and other leaders. However, the government can-

celled its no-objection certificate (NOC) at the last minute.

Islamabad Chief Commissioner Muhammad Ali Randhawa on Wednesday issued an order, stating that he was immediately suspending the NOC issued on July 31 by the deputy commissioner to hold a rally, elaborating that it was unsafe to allow the PTI rally given the current situation. Separately, the Punjab Home Department imposed Section 144 across the province in light of "the prevailing law and order situation and security threats" and it prohibited gatherings, sits-in, rallies, demonstrations, protests and similar activities across Punjab with effect from Thursday to Saturday.

Officials feared violence and possible sit-ins if the PTI was allowed to bring thousands of supporters to the capital because it has a history of such protests. It staged a 126-day-long sit-in in Islamabad in 2014, while on May 9, 2023, the party held a violent protest when Khan was arrested.

Pakistani man to remain in officers' custody over misinformation that sparked riots in UK

AP ■ LAHORE

A court in Pakistan on Thursday allowed investigators to question a man in their custody for four more days about his role in spreading misinformation that sparked widespread rioting in the UK earlier this month, officials said.

The court's decision came a day after authorities charged the suspect Farhan Asif, 32, with cyber terrorism following his arrest from his home in Lahore, the capital of eastern Punjab province.

Asif, who is a freelance web developer, was produced before the court amid tight security. He was not allowed to talk to the media. Kiran Muqem, a prosecutor for the Federal Investigation Agency, told the court that Asif did not cooperate with officers after the same court the previous day allowed them to question him for a day. They demanded his custody for two weeks but the court said it would only allow it for four more days.

Muqem later told reporters that Asif disseminated fake news and caused riots in England. Asif was handcuffed and wearing blue shalwar kameez garments when brought to the court.

His lawyer Rana Rizwan told reporters that the court remanded his client into the custody of the federal agency in a hurry and without hearing him. "We were informed by the court that the case of Asif would be taken up after lunch break. But the court took up the matter before the lunch break, and allowed FIA to keep him in their custody," Rizwan said. Asif 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 on July 29 at a dance class in Northwest England.

Lanka SC orders govt to hold postponed local election soon

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Slamming the Sri Lankan government for violating the fundamental rights of citizens, the Supreme Court on Thursday ordered it to hold the long-postponed local council elections as soon as possible.

The ruling by a five-member bench of the apex court came in response to four fundamental rights petitions filed by the Opposition and civil society groups. Elections for over 340 local councils were postponed since early last year.

The court found that the members of the independent election commission and President Ranil Wickremesinghe, in his capacity as finance minister, had violated the fundamental rights of citizens by failing to hold the elections.

The local elections, initially scheduled for March 9 last year, were not held due to the

Treasury's claim that it couldn't fund the election expenditure amidst the ongoing economic crisis. However, the court rejected the argument, stating that the Treasury had not provided sufficient evidence to support its claim of a total inability to hold the election. "Other than referring to the economic crisis and difficulties faced, the affidavit of the secretary to the Treasury and Ministry of Finance has not averred sufficient material to indicate a total inability to hold the election," the court said. In an interim order, the court directed the Treasury to allocate the necessary funds for the local council election, which had already been budgeted for. The court emphasised that the local council election must be conducted by the elections commission without disrupting the preparations for other elections, including the presidential election scheduled for September 21.

Thousands of Indonesians attempt to storm parl

AP ■ JAKARTA

Thousands of protesters attempted to storm Indonesia's parliament Thursday, tearing down a section of fence and throwing stones at police, and forcing the legislature to delay a vote on controversial changes to election laws that could further enhance the political influence of outgoing President Joko Widodo.

Parliament was to meet in an emergency session in order to overturn one decision made by the country's Constitutional Court on election procedures, while amending another. Protesters held banners and signs, while others started a fire and burned tires. The Constitutional Court court on Tuesday dismissed a challenge to an age limit that prevents people younger than 30



for running for regional governorships, which would prevent the Widodo's 29-year-old youngest son, Kaesang Pangarep, from running in a regional contest in Central Java. The court also made it easier for political parties to nominate

Wednesday, and planned to ratify the vote in a plenary session on Thursday.

The moves triggered widespread condemnation on local social media and raised concerns about a potential constitutional crisis. The legislature was forced to delay the vote after failing to achieve a quorum. Widodo's eldest son, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, is the incoming vice-president after the same court created an exception to the age limit for the post for former regional leaders, while Widodo's brother-in-law was serving as chief justice. He was criticised for participating in a case involving a close relative and later dismissed. Activists, students, workers, and a number of Indonesian celebrities and musicians also joined the protest, voicing concerns about democracy in Indonesia.

Protests were also reported in other big cities, including Bandung, Yogyakarta, Surabaya and Makassar. In Yogyakarta, at least 1,000 protesters including students and workers rallied in front of Yogyakarta's Parliament building, the state palace and the city's ceremonial centre. Their demands included voting down the regional election bill, respecting the Constitutional Court's ruling and rejecting political dynasties. The simultaneous protests in the major cities showed anger at Parliament's efforts to overrule the Constitutional Court decision to allow more candidates to compete in the regional elections, said Yoes Kenawas, a political analyst at Atma Jaya Catholic University. "They also opposed the dynastic politics carried out by President Jokowi," Kenawas said.

Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot

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E-Tender Enq. No. 555/P-3/EMPWP-12687 dated 21-08-24
Dy. Chief Engineer/ Headquarter (Procurement Cell-3) GGSSTP, Roopnagar invites **E-Tender ID No. 2024_POWER_125891_1** for annual overhauling of Coal Pipe for 1 no. units of 210 MW at GGSSTP, Ropar. For detailed NIT & Tender Specification please refer to <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from **21.08.24/ 05.00 PM** onwards.
Note:- Corrigendum & addendum, if any will be published online at <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>

RTP-95/24

76155/12/3332/2023/36938 Dated CHD :- 8/22/2024

India sustains growth momentum

Set to achieve 6.5-7% growth: FinMin Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's economic momentum remains intact despite a somewhat erratic monsoon, and real GDP growth of 6.5-7 per cent projected in the Economic Survey seems appropriate, a finance ministry report said on Thursday.

According to the Monthly Economic Review for July, the Indian economy has sustained its momentum in the first four months of FY25.

Goods and Services Tax collections in the first four months of FY25 underwent a level shift pushed up by the widening of the tax base and heightened economic activity, the report released by the finance ministry said.

"The resilience of domestic activity is also reflected in the strong performance of the manufacturing and services sector purchasing managers' indices. The manufacturing growth has been driven by expansion in demand conditions, a rise in new export orders and growth in output prices," it said.

On the fiscal front, it said, the Union



Budget FY25 has laid out a glide path of fiscal consolidation. Supported by strong revenue collection, discipline in revenue expenditure, and robust economic performance, the fiscal deficit is projected to decline. At the same time, it said, capital

expenditure is maintained at high levels, supporting the fledgling private investment cycle. Retail inflation decreased to 3.5 per cent in July 2024, the lowest since September 2019, driven by moderation in food inflation, it said, adding that steady progress in the

southwest monsoon has supported kharif sowing.

Replenishing water levels in the reservoir bodies well for the current kharif and upcoming rabi crop production and this will further aid in reducing food inflation in the coming months, it said.

"On balance, India's economic momentum remains intact. Despite a somewhat erratic monsoon, reservoirs have been replenished. Manufacturing and services sectors are expanding, according to the Purchasing Managers' indices," it said. Tax collections, especially indirect taxes, which reflect transactions, are growing healthily, and so is bank credit, it said.

"Inflation is moderating, and exports of both goods and services are doing better than they did last year. Stock markets are holding on to their levels. Foreign direct investment is looking up as gross inflows are rising," it said.

As of now, it said, the projection of real GDP growth of 6.5-7.0 per cent for FY25, made in the Economic Survey for 2023-24, seems appropriate.

India's steel sector tech investment likely to hit USD 2.7 bn by 2030: Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The investments in process and digital technologies across the steel value chain in the country are expected to grow up to USD 2.7 billion by 2030, according to a report.

These investments will advance technological capabilities and drive progress toward a more efficient and sustainable mining and steel industry, the FICCI-Deloitte Report said on Thursday. "The investment in process and digital technologies across the steel value chain in India is projected to increase from USD 1-1.2 billion in 2024 to USD 2.3-2.7 billion by 2030, excluding ERP upgrades," said the report on 'Automation, Digitalisation and Technology Integration for the Indian Mining and Steel sector'.

The year 2030 is significant for the domestic steel industry as the government's National Steel Policy 2017 aims to scale up India's installed steel-making capacity to 300 million tonne by 2030.



As per the report, the per capita steel consumption is anticipated to reach 160 kg by 2030 and around 220 kg by 2047.

Digital tools can help to enhance compliance with environmental regulations through better energy efficiency and emission monitoring, it said.

Furthermore, digital technologies offer the flexibility and scalability necessary to adapt to market changes, drive innovation, and improve worker safety, the report noted.

Integrating digital technologies across the value chain can thus unlock transformative capabilities, it

said. Rajib Maitra, Partner, Deloitte India, said, "The Indian mining and steel sector is on a transformative path, spurred by innovations in AI and digital technologies. The operators, on the ground, face practical challenges like integrating new systems with legacy infrastructures and managing the costs associated with technological upgrades."

Gajraj Singh Rathore, Co-Chair, FICCI Steel Committee said "By fostering a culture of innovation, tech adoption, digitalisation and partnerships, we can collectively shape a resilient, prosperous and sustainable future for all."

Rupee falls 4 paise to close at 83.94 against US dollar

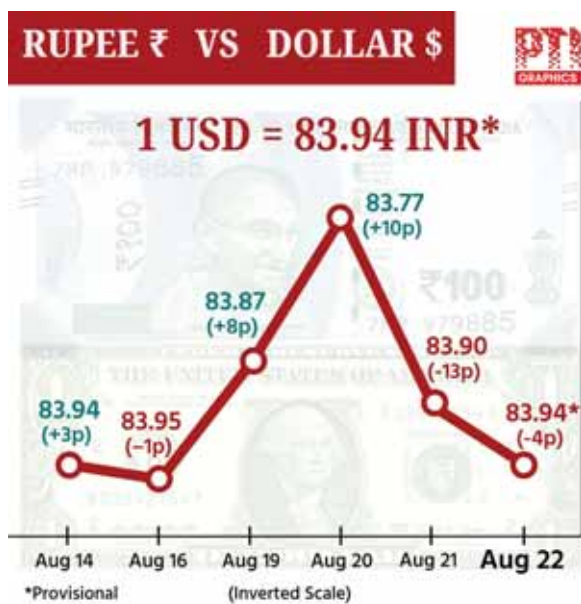
PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee traded in a narrow range and settled lower by 4 paise at 83.94 (provisional) against the American currency on Thursday, as relentless dollar demand from importers and relentless foreign fund outflows dampened investor sentiments.

However, a positive trend in domestic equities and lower global crude oil prices supported the domestic currency and restricted its fall, forex traders said.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened weak at 83.93 and touched an intraday low of 83.97 against the US dollar. The domestic currency finally settled at 83.94 (provisional), 4 paise lower from its previous close.

On Wednesday, the rupee fell 13 paise to 83.90 against the US dollar. "We expect the rupee to trade with a slight negative bias on outflows by foreign investors and demand for the greenback by importers. However, a positive tone in the domestic markets and



declining global crude oil prices may support the rupee," said Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas. Traders will now take cues from the weekly unemployment claims, existing home sales and PMI data from the US. "Investors may remain cautious ahead of Fed Chair

Jerome Powell's speech at Jackson Hole Symposium for any cues on rate cuts by the central bank. USD/INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 83.75 to Rs 84.20," Choudhary added. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.19 per cent higher at 101.23.

Expect scooter segment to account for over 40% of two-wheeler sales, says TVS Motor

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

TVS Motor Company expects the scooter segment to grow further and account for around 40 per cent of the overall two-wheeler sales, its CEO KN Radhakrishnan said on Thursday.

The company, which on Thursday introduced the new Jupiter 110, said it has outpaced the industry in scooter sales with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 12 per cent compared with the industry's 8 per cent.

"Scooter category share is currently around 32 per cent. I am a firm believer that the scooter segment will substantially expand, it may even go to 40 per cent and above, that's my expectation," Radhakrishnan told reporters.

He noted that the share of the scooter segment is witnessing growth in both urban and rural regions.

"We are confident that the Jupiter 110 with its many first-in-segment features will further build our position in the two-wheeler market," Radhakrishnan stated.

Sensex rises 147 points, Nifty ends above 24,800 on firm global trend

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark BSE Sensex rose by 147 points to settle above 81,000 level while Nifty closed above 24,800 following buying in commodity, telecom and consumer stocks amid a firm trend in global markets.

Rising for the third straight day, the 30-share BSE Sensex rose by 147.89 points or 0.18 per cent to close at 81,053.19, registering gains for the third day in a row. During the day, it climbed 331.15 points to hit an intra-day high of 81,236.45.

Extending gains to a sixth session in a row, the NSE Nifty went up by 41.30 points or 0.17 per cent to end at a two-week high of 24,811.50.

Bharti Airtel was the biggest gainer in the Sensex pack, rising 1.63 per cent, followed by Tata Steel, ICICI Bank, Titan, Asian Paints and Ultratech Cements.

On the other hand, M&M, NTPC, Tata Motors, TCS and PowerGrid were the major losers.

"The domestic market witnessed modest gains owing to the positive global



sentiments. Particularly, the recent signs of weakness in the US non-farm payroll data have strengthened the case for potential interest rate cuts in September," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services said.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge jumped 0.47 per cent, and the midcap index climbed 0.67 per cent.

"Markets are closely monitoring global indices for direction, and the recent pause in US markets ahead of the Jackson Hole Symposium is leading to some caution locally also," Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare

Utilities, Power, Oil & Gas, Energy and IT were the laggards

In the broader market, Awfis Space Solutions jumped 9.54 per cent to close at Rs 863.25 apiece. In the intraday trade, it advanced 19.99 per cent to hit its 52-week high of Rs 945.70 after the company expanded its footprint in Bengaluru.

Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Ltd shares rallied more than 7 per cent after the company said its board will consider a proposal to raise up to Rs 4,500 crore through issuance of shares.

On the other hand, scrip of Adani Power fell a little over 3 per cent amid media reports that the promoters of the company may sell stakes in Adani Power and Ambuja Cements to trim debt.

In Asian markets, Tokyo, Seoul and Hong Kong closed with gains, while Shanghai ended in the negative territory on Thursday. European markets were trading with significant gains in the mid-session deals.

The US stock markets gained in overnight trade on Wednesday.

Gold loan market projected to double in 5 years to ₹14.19 lakh crore: PwC India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's organised gold loan market is projected to double in next five years to Rs 14.19 lakh crore despite expected moderation in growth due to stricter regulations, said a PwC India report.

In fiscal 2023-24, the organised gold loan market demonstrated substantial growth, reaching a valuation of Rs 7.1 lakh crore, according to the report titled 'Striking gold: The rise of India's gold loan market'.

"It is expected to reach around Rs 14.19 lakh crore by FY 2029 at a five-year CAGR of 14.85 per cent," it said. Indian families own massive



quantities of gold, estimated at 25,000 tonne. Existing gold holdings with Indian households are valued at roughly Rs 126 lakh crore, the report said.

It further said the gold loan market is poised to see moderate growth over the next two years, as gold lenders are facing increased scrutiny from regulatory authorities

regarding loan-to-value (LTV) maintenance and auction-related procedures.

"The second-largest player in the gold loan market being inactive would have an impact on market growth in FY25," the report said.

Also, the RBI's advisory to NBFCs on cash disbursement, which limits the amount of cash disbursal to Rs 20,000, could push customers to rely on the unorganised sector.

The regulator has also raised concerns about the evaluation process for lending activities through fintech startups.

The increased regulatory scrutiny and revised guidelines have led to a dip in the share prices of leading NBFCs, PwC said.

GoM on GST rate rationalisation discusses tax cut for some items

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The ministerial panel on GST rate rationalisation on Thursday broadly converged towards retaining a 4-tier slab structure and asked the committee of tax officers to analyse the implication of tinkering rates on some items and present it before the GST council.

The issue of GST on health and life insurance was also raised by some states in the meeting of the Group of Ministers (GoM) on rate rationalisation and referred to the fitment committee, comprising central and state tax officers, for further data analysis.

The suggestions of the GoM will be taken up on the September 9 meeting of the GST Council headed by Union Finance Minister

Nirmala Sitharaman and comprising state counterparts.

Talking to reporters after the first meeting of the GoM under his conensorship, Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Chaudhary said, "Some GoM members are demanding that there should be no change in tax slabs under GST".

"More discussions will happen, and then only a final decision will be taken," Chaudhary said, adding the GoM has received representations from restaurants, beverages and online gaming sectors, which will be reviewed and some of them will be sent to the Fitment committee.

West Bengal Finance Minister Chandrima Bhattacharya stated, "I have said there should be no changes in the



GST slab. A presentation will be made before the Council".

The next GoM meeting will be held after the September 9 Council meeting, she added.

Asked if the GoM deliberated on reducing 4 slabs to 3, Bhattacharya said, "That will not happen for now. Slabs will be retained at 5, 12, 18, and 28 per cent. This will be

that we will discuss it (reducing slabs)," she added. On health and life insurance taxation, Byre Gowda said, "We have asked for further report (from fitment committee). We are not sure if it's part of the agenda".

The Opposition has been demanding the removal of GST on health and life insurance premiums, which attract an 18 per cent rate. Sitharaman had earlier this month said that tax was levied on insurance premiums even before the imposition of GST, and GST revenues are shared between the Centre and states.

Gowda said the GoM had asked for a break up of changes in tax rates on some items. "What will be the implication of tax rates going up or down on those items," he said.

We said in the next meeting reviewed by the Council now". Asked if there was discussion on tinkering with slabs, Karnataka Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda said that Goods and Services Tax (GST) has broadly stabilised. "So why disturb it.. What do you achieve by disturbing it? We said in the next meeting

POWERGRID acquires STL

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID) - a Maharashtra CPSU under Ministry of Power has acquired two Project Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) viz Sirohi Transmission Limited and Beawar - Mahandisar Transmission Limited on August 22, 2024. The purpose is for the Transmission System Projects for evacuation of power from Rajasthan REZ Phase IV (Part 2: 5.5 GW) (Jaisalmer/ Barmer Complex); Part B and Part D respectively from the Bid Process Coordinator PFC Consulting Limited (PFCCL) after competing with various private



sector players and emerging as successful bidder in Tariff Based Competitive Bidding (TBCB) process.

Sirohi Transmission Limited shall implement a Transmission System comprising establishment of new 765/400 kV sub-station near Sirohi in Rajasthan, 765kV & 400kV D/C Transmission Lines and associated bays extension works at existing substation in the state of Rajasthan.

Adopt more supportive, empathetic approach towards MSMEs, lenders told

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Reserve Bank Deputy Governor Swaminathan has asked financial institutions to adopt a more sensitive and empathetic approach towards MSMEs, and deploy supportive measures like restructuring options for loans, to support the sector which plays a key role in the economy.

In a speech at the Annual Day of the Foreign Exchange Dealers Association of India (FEDA) here, the deputy governor said MSMEs face challenges like access to affordable finance, delayed payments, infrastructure bottlenecks, and

requirements of compliance, among others.

The journey of India's economic transformation cannot be complete without the robust development of the MSME sector.

"MSMEs are not just the backbone of our economy, they are the engines of growth, innovation, and employment," he said at the event held on Wednesday.

However, for these enterprises to truly thrive and scale up, the financial sector must step up with innovative solutions, sensitivity, and a forward-looking approach, Swaminathan said. "This is not just about



providing credit; it's about enabling these enterprises compete globally, drive exports, and contribute to

the nation's goal of becoming a developed economy by 2047. While financial instruments and support

mechanisms are crucial, the way we engage with the MSME sector, our sensitivity to their challenges and our commitment to their success, will ultimately determine the strength and sustainability of this partnership," he said.

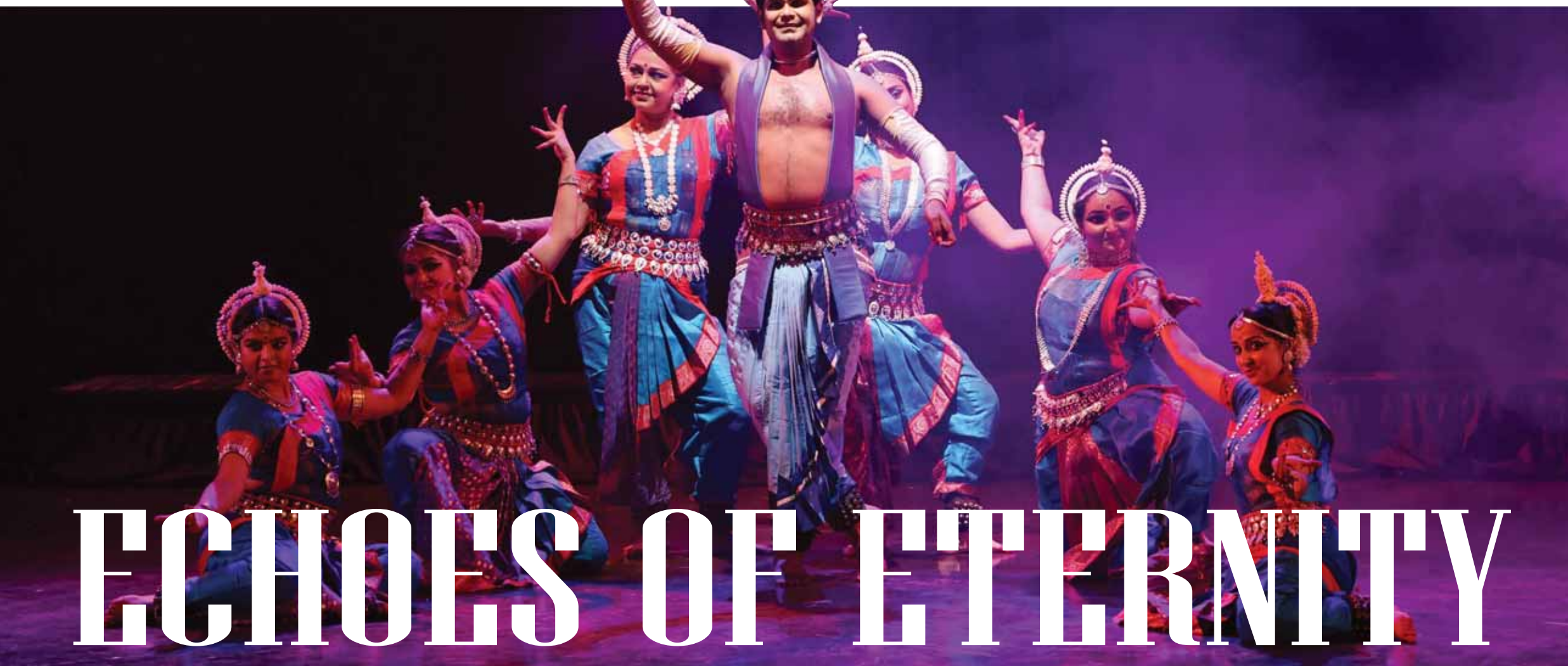
The deputy governor also emphasised that considering the key role that MSMEs play in the economy, the financial sector should adopt a more sensitive and empathetic approach towards them.

"While financial discipline is crucial, the unique challenges faced by MSMEs, such as low capital base, lack of scale, cash flow constraints from delayed payments, fluctuating market

conditions, and external economic pressures, necessitate a more nuanced approach to assessment as well as follow-up," he said.

While timely repayment of dues is crucial to maintain the health of the financial system, financial institutions should focus on deploying supportive measures such as restructuring options, grace periods, and tailored repayment plans that give MSMEs the breathing space they need to recover and get back on track while

encountering difficult situations, the senior official said at the event attended by representatives of financial sector, among others.



ECHOES OF ETERNITY

Utsav's dance festival weaves timeless tales of India's soul

PIONEER CULTURE DESK

In a grand celebration of India's rich cultural heritage, the Utsav Educational and Cultural Society, led by the illustrious Ranjana Gauhar, marked its 37th anniversary with the 19th edition of the 'Saare Jahan Se Accha' Classical Dance Festival. The festival brought to life the timeless beauty of classical dance, enchanting audiences with performances that were both a tribute to tradition and a call to preserve the cultural legacy for future generations. The Utsav Educational and Cultural Society, renowned for its unwavering dedication to preserving and promoting India's classical dance and music traditions, particularly Odissi, celebrated its 37th anniversary with the 19th edition of the 'Saare Jahan Se Accha' Classical Dance Festival. The festival offered a rich tapestry of performances that paid homage to the nation's cultural heritage. Over the years, Utsav Educational and Cultural Society has become synonymous with excellence in the promotion of Indian classical arts. Beyond the 'Saare Jahan Se Accha' festival, Utsav organises several major annual dance festivals, including Unbound Beats of India, Su-Tarang, and World Dance Day, each offering a platform for artists to showcase their talent and celebrate the beauty of dance.



Through these festivals, Utsav continues to foster a deeper appreciation for India's cultural heritage, ensuring that the traditions of classical dance are passed on to future generations. As Utsav marks its 37th year, the legacy of Smt. Ranjana Gauhar and her unwavering commitment to the arts remains as vibrant as ever, inspiring artists and audiences alike. Ranjana Gauhar, the visionary founder of Utsav Educational and Cultural Society, is a distinguished figure in the Indian classical dance community. A recipient of the prestigious Padma Shri and the Sangeet Natak Akademi (SNA) Award, Gauhar has dedicated her life to the art of Odissi. Her contributions to Indian classical dance are profound, extending

THE UTSAV EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL SOCIETY, RENOWNED FOR ITS UNWAVERING DEDICATION TO PRESERVING AND PROMOTING INDIA'S CLASSICAL DANCE AND MUSIC TRADITIONS, PARTICULARLY ODISSI, CELEBRATED ITS 37TH ANNIVERSARY WITH THE 19TH EDITION OF THE 'SAARE JAHAN SE ACCHA' CLASSICAL DANCE FESTIVAL.



Photos: Pankaj Kumar

beyond performances to include teaching, choreographing, and organising cultural festivals that showcase the richness of India's dance traditions. Under her leadership, Utsav has become a beacon of cultural preservation, offering a platform for both seasoned and emerging artists. The 'Saare Jahan Se Accha' Classical Dance Festival, one of Utsav's flagship events, is a testament to her commitment to keeping the flame of Indian classical dance burning bright.

A TWO-DAY CELEBRATION OF DANCE AND CULTURE

The highlight of the first evening was an enchanting Odissi dance drama titled "Ksheer Sagar," choreographed and performed by Utsav's Repertory

under the artistic direction of Guru Ranjana Gauhar. The dance drama, which depicted the mythological narratives of Chandrabhaga and Matsya Avatar, captivated the audience. Through intricate choreography and evocative storytelling, the performance underscored the timeless relevance of ancient tales, particularly emphasizing the importance of water conservation and environmental preservation. The second day of the festival continued to enthrall audiences with solo performances by senior disciples of renowned dance gurus. The event was inaugurated in the presence of distinguished guests, including Ambassador Bhaswati Mukherjee and Shri Sunit Tandon. Esteemed artists such as Dr. Ananda Shankar Jayant, Smt. Geeta Chandran, and Smt. Shobhana Pillai were among those honored for their outstanding contributions to Indian classical dance. The one of a kind cultural event featured a diverse range of classical dance forms, including Odissi, Bharatnatyam, Kathak, and Manipuri, performed by the disciples of illustrious gurus. Each performance was a testament to the depth and diversity of India's classical dance heritage, leaving the audience spellbound.

EMBRACING SHADOWS THE ENDURING LEGACY OF LEATHER PUPPETS

Shadow Puppetry, an ancient art that uses leather figures and light to tell stories, continues to captivate with its unique charm. The exhibition "Chhaya, The Shadow of Leather Puppets and Storytelling," presented by MATI, invites visitors to explore this fascinating tradition from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, says SAKSHI PRIYA



Photos: Pankaj Kumar

Shadow puppetry, a captivating and ancient form of storytelling, has charmed audiences across the world for centuries. This remarkable art form uses intricately crafted leather puppets cast against a translucent screen, illuminated from behind to create dramatic shadows that bring age-old tales to life. Originating in India and spreading to various parts of Asia, shadow puppetry is more than just a visual spectacle, it is a profound method of passing down cultural values and traditions through generations. The exhibition *Chhaya, The Shadow of Leather Puppets and Storytelling*, presented by the

Management of Art Treasures of India (MATI), offers a rare opportunity to explore the rich heritage of this timeless art form. The exhibition showcases a stunning collection of shadow puppets from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Each puppet is a tribute to the skill and artistry of the creators, adhering to traditional iconography and narrative styles rooted in classical texts. As visitors stroll through the exhibition, they encounter a diverse array of puppets, including revered figures like Lord Ram, Lakshman, Maa Sita, Hanuman and the formidable demon Ravana. The display also features depictions of Lord Shiva and Mata

Parvati, complete with their vahanas, Nandi and Tiger. These puppets, adorned with vibrant colours and intricate details, provide a vivid glimpse into the epic stories of the Ramayana and Mahabharata. The exhibition thoughtfully highlights the differences between the shadow puppets of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. The Andhra puppets, known as Tholu Bommalata, are celebrated for their grandeur and elaborate design, while the Karnataka puppets or Togalu Gombeyata, are distinguished by their bold outlines and dramatic expressions. This side-by-side presentation allows visitors to appreciate the



unique characteristics of each regional style and understand the cultural significance behind them. One of the most striking aspects of Chhaya is its emphasis on the ongoing evolution of shadow puppetry. While deeply rooted in tradition, the art form is not static.

Contemporary artists and performers are reimagining shadow puppetry, infusing it with modern themes and innovative techniques to reach new audiences. This dynamic approach ensures that shadow puppetry remains relevant in the modern

era, bridging the gap between ancient traditions and contemporary artistic expression. The success of this exhibition is an attestation to the vision and dedication of Siddhartha Tagore, the Founder-Trustee of MATI. Tagore, who established MATI in 2012, has long been a champion of Indian art. His earlier venture, 'Art Konsult,' aimed to promote Indian contemporary art globally. Through MATI, he has continued to broaden perspectives and highlight the importance of preserving India's fading traditional and folk arts. His commitment is evident in the meticulous curation and presentation of Chhaya, reflecting

a deep respect for both historical preservation and modern relevance. In reflecting on the exhibition, it is clear that *Chhaya, The Shadow of Leather Puppets and Storytelling* is not just a showcase but a celebration of shadow puppetry's enduring allure. It offers a profound opportunity to wonder at the beauty and complexity of this ancient art form while underscoring the critical need to safeguard and cherish our cultural legacy. The exhibition leaves a lasting impression, illustrating how tradition and innovation can harmoniously coexist and continue to enchant new generations.

LORDS TO HOST ITS FIRST-EVER WOMEN'S TEST BETWEEN INDIA AND ENGLAND



PTI ■ LONDON
The 'home of cricket' Lord's will host its first-ever women's Test to be played between India and England in 2026, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) announced on Thursday. The ECB said on its website that after a three-match ODI

series between India and England in July 2025, the former will return in 2026 for a one-off Test. "I'm also delighted we can confirm that India Women will return in 2026 to take on England Women in the first-ever women's Test match at Lord's. It will be a truly special occasion, and one of real significance," ECB CEO

Richard Gould said. India and England will play three ODIs on September 2, 4 and 7 at Headingley, Lord's and Southampton respectively. "It has also been confirmed that India Women will return in 2026 for a one-off Test match at Lord's - the first-ever Women's Test to be staged at the Home of Cricket," the ECB added.

"England Women have played white-ball matches at Lord's for the past three years, with another scheduled next year, but it will be the first time the ground has hosted a Women's Test match." India have played nine Tests so far against England in their backyard from June 1986 with their last clash at Bristol in June 2021 ending in a draw.

'Future economist' Archana bids farewell to TT

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Archana Kamath will dearly miss donning the Indian jersey, but the table tennis player is determined to serve the country in a "different way" in future, helping to shape its public policies as an economist. Days after recording India's only success in the quarterfinal loss to Germany in the recent Paris Olympics, the 24-year-old from Bengaluru has re-entered student life in the USA where she is studying for a Masters in Public Policy at the University of Michigan. Having started her professional career as a teenager, Archana's decision to move away from table tennis has been quite emotional. But she has equally enjoyed studying since her school days where she was a topper, securing 98.7 and 97 percent in her 10th and 12th exams. Now, she is pursuing her second masters degree in Michigan, having already completed her post graduation in International Relations. Archana obtained her bachelor's degree in economics and she wants to return to India after two years and serve

FROM PARIS TO MICHIGAN IN A FORTNIGHT



the nation, probably as an economist. Her role models range from well-known economist Sanjeev Sanyal to the likes of tennis stars Carlos Alcaraz and Rafael Nadal whom she met at the Games Village in Paris earlier this month. Speaking to PTI from Ann Arbor in Michigan, Archana explained her decision to leave elite sport right after the Olympics. She categorically stated that "she is not in it" for a better financial future as she has been taken care of by her employers Indian Oil, OGQ and the government. "I have always liked studying,

as much as table tennis. I had inquired about this course in Michigan last year as well but then we qualified for the Paris Olympics as a team for the first time and I wanted to focus on that. "Now that the Olympics are done, I want to study more and come back to India after two years and serve the people in a different capacity. My decision has nothing to do with financial returns. "I have got all the support I have needed while playing for India, which has been the biggest honour," said the soft-spoken athlete, who has gone to Michigan after applying for a study leave with her employer. She comes from a financially secure family of doctors with both her parents being ophthalmologists. Her brother is currently pursuing a PHD in aerospace engineering in the USA. But her memories cannot be ripped away from table tennis as it was the first time that both Indian men and women had qualified for the team event of the Olympics. Archana hopes to continue playing table tennis in the USA and will miss the team environment the most. "The best thing about the Olympics was being with seniors like Sharath Kamal and Manika Batra. The environment was so good. I also got to meet Novak Djokovic, Rafael Nadal and Carlos Alcaraz. I made memories for life there. "I have also loved fighting for my country and that is something I will miss the most. I hope to keep playing here (in the US)," she said. Archana is certain about being a public servant in India after her course in Michigan but she is yet to work out the finer details.

Berge joins Fulham and Liverpool sells teenager Clark

AP ■ LONDON
Fulham completed the signing of Sander Berge from relegated Burnley for a reported 25 million pounds (\$32.8 million) on a five-year contract on Thursday, with the Norway international set to

replace the departed Joao Palhinha as the club's holding midfielder. Palhinha left for Bayern Munich in the transfer window. "It's been a little bit back and forth the last few weeks," Berge said, "but I'm finally sitting

here in the shirt in this beautiful stadium, knowing that my future is here, which feels great." Berge, who has also played for Sheffield United in the Premier League, could be in contention to make his debut for Fulham against Leicester

on Saturday. Liverpool sold 19-year-old midfielder Bobby Clark to Salzburg for a reported 10 million pounds (\$13 million). Clark was one of the youngsters who helped Liverpool win the English League Cup last season.



Mohun Bagan, East Bengal to clash in Lucknow on September 2

PTI ■ LUCKNOW
Lucknow, the city of Nawabs, is gearing up to host traditional rivals Mohun Bagan and East Bengal for the first time on September 2 as part of plans to promote football in Uttar Pradesh. The derby will be played at state capital's K.D. Singh Babu Stadium. State Sports Director R.P. Singh told PTI that preparations are on full swing for the high-voltage match that will be played under floodlights. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is also expected to watch the proceedings and about 10,000 spectators are expected to throng the stadium. As part of the preparations, the testing of the recently-installed flood lights in the stadium has started and dressing rooms and other facilities are being arranged for the players. Singh said that All India Football Federation (AIFF) President Kalyan Chaubey had met Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in Lucknow recently and expressed the need to promote football in Uttar Pradesh. It was during that time, that he had proposed to organise the derby and the state government accepted the proposal. Both the teams will reach Lucknow on September 1.

Teen prodigy Kartik to lead Indian challenge at Asia Pacific Amateur golf

PTI ■ GOTEMBA (JAPAN)
A year after becoming the youngest golfer to make the cut at the Asia-Pacific Amateur Championship, 14-year-old Kartik Singh will spearhead the Indian challenge at the 15th AAC to be held here from October 3-6. Kartik is the highest ranked Indian at 199 while the other three players to have received the invitation for this prestigious event are Krishnav Nikhil Chopra, Vedant Sirohi and Rakshit Dahiya. Krishnav and Vedant have earlier participated in the tournament. A regular winner in junior and amateur events, Kartik has also been named in the 2024 Junior Presidents Cup team. Apart from Kartik, seven

others have been named in the 2024 Junior Presidents Cup International Team. They are Joshua Bai, Warut Boonrod, Xihuan Chang, Rayhan Latief, Khanh Hung Le, Thangwin Lee, Anh Minh Ngyuyen. As many as 113 players have been confirmed for the Championship, which will be held at Taiheiyu Club in Gotemba, Japan. The field will have 120 players with a few more names to be added by the organisers. India's best ever performance has been the second-place finish by Rayhan Thomas in Sentosa, Singapore in 2018. The Dubai-based Indian has since turned professional, and last week won his first pro title on India's Professional Tour of India Tour. Krishnav, who plays college



golf in the US, is the son of former India cricketer turned commentator Nikhil Chopra, who often takes the role of a caddie for his son. Created in 2009, the Asia-Pacific Amateur Championship was established by the Asia-Pacific Golf Confederation (APGC), The R&A and the Masters Tournament to further develop

amateur golf in the Asia-Pacific region. The champion will receive an invitation to compete in the 2025 Masters Tournament and The 153rd Open, while the runner(s)-up will gain a place in Final Qualifying for The Open. The confirmed list which has players from 38 APGC member organizations is

highlighted by defending champion Jasper Stubbs of Australia and four players representing China inside the top 100 of the World Amateur Golf Ranking: Wenyi Ding (No. 4), Xihuan Chang (No. 36), Xiangyun Bai (No. 61) and Paul Chang (No. 97). Ding finished runner-up to Stubbs in the 2023 Asia-Pacific Amateur while Xihuan Chang reached the semi-finals of the U.S. Junior Amateur in July. Other top-100 participants include Vietnam's Anh Minh Nguyen (No. 68) and Japan's Rintaro Nakano (No. 78). Notable past competitors include 2021 Masters champion Hideki Matsuyama, a two-time winner of the Asia-Pacific Amateur, and 2022 Open champion Cameron Smith.



Guys like Pant have muscle memory and thirst for victory: Hayden

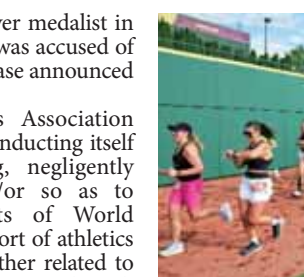
PTI ■ MUMBAI
Batting great Matthew Hayden feels Rishabh Pant will be a key player for India when they travel to Australia for a five-Test series later this year owing to his "muscle memory and thirst for victory" that made him such a sensation during the team's previous tour Down Under. The eagerly-anticipated five-Test series starts on November 22 at Perth. "Guys like Rishabh Pant have got a muscle memory and the thirst for victory. He was such a key player last time he played here and the Australian public loved him as well, because of the nature of the way he played his game," Hayden told media on the sidelines of 'CEAT Cricket Rating Awards' here on Wednesday. "It was exciting. It was innovative. It was just fresh and good. Then you have got your old stewards, like Virat Kohli, (he) will want to make an impression again. From a batting point of view, I'm excited to see how India have that strategy to take on the Australian conditions," the Australian added. Pant, who has made a successful return to cricket after a life-threatening accident in 2022, was an outstanding performer for India in the 2020-21 tour, notching up brilliant knocks of 97 and 89 not out in the landmark trip. India outgunned a full-strength Australia despite missing several frontline players in one of the most dramatic turnarounds in the history Test cricket. The visitors bounced back from the ignominy of 36 all out in the opening Adelaide Test to win the Border-Gavaskar Trophy 2-1 for a second consecutive time. Kohli had to return home after the Adelaide game due to personal reasons and five other players, including key pacers Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami, were forced out due to injuries and fitness issues. "The great thing from an Indian

perspective is that when you look at the last victory, there was no Virat Kohli. There was a very much a second team bowling line-up that won at the Gabba," Hayden said. "That's the kind of confidence that you can expect this Indian unit to go to our shores (with) and go, guys, we've done this before, and we've done it in a way that's second to none, even without our key players," he said. **PINK TESTS TAKE AWAY AUSTRALIA'S HOME ADVANTAGE:** Hayden said scheduling a day-night Test tends to take away the advantage enjoyed by Australian teams in the past. Even in the upcoming tour, the two teams will play a Pink Test in Adelaide. "Once you get those overhead conditions under that twilight zone, they can be really difficult," he said. "I would go as far as to say that the home advantage in Australia has been taken away quite a lot, simply on the basis that if you get (on) the wrong side of a certain session, be that you are four for 130 at twilight, you can (soon) be eight for 150. "There's no chance to actually really naturally dominate a game," he added. Hayden said Pat Cummins, who led Australia to the World Test Championship and ODI World Cup wins last year, has rallied his troops like no other Australian captain in the past. "He has a very special leadership style and ability. It's a very different style to the former captains of the Australian cricket team that were (about) very much a carrot and stick type approach," he said. "He's operating on a model that's bringing out the individuals and individual preparation in particular - something which our game struggles with being a team sport," he added. Hayden said Australia under Cummins has been an extremely close-knit team which has earned respect from former players like him who were upset with the manner in which previous coach Justin Langer was removed.

Bahrain's track team sanctioned over doping and blocked from naturalising more athletes

AP ■ MONACO
Bahrain's track team will have to pause its successful strategy of naturalizing athletes from Africa after accepting a package of sanctions related to doping. World Athletics said Thursday that Bahrain had been restricted to a maximum of 10 athletes in the track and field events at the Paris Olympics - which wasn't announced at the time - and at next year's world championships in Tokyo. Bahrain's team in Paris included Kenya-born Winfred Yavi, who won gold in Paris in the women's 3,000-meter steeplechase, and Nigeria-born sprinter

Salwa Eid Naser, the silver medalist in the 400. Neither athlete was accused of any wrongdoing in the case announced Thursday. The Bahrain Athletics Association admitted a charge of "conducting itself in relation to doping, negligently and/or recklessly and/or so as to prejudice the interests of World Athletics or bring the sport of athletics into disrepute," and another related to its employment of staff to work with athletes, governing body World Athletics said. That followed an investigation into allegations two athletes used blood transfusions at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021 and into the BAA having



"engaged" a coach who was under a doping-related ban, World Athletics added. Bahrain has agreed not to recruit any more foreign athletes until 2027, World Athletics said. The next Summer

Olympics are in Los Angeles in 2028. Bahrain has also committed to fund a "talent academy" to develop local athletes and has set up a new national anti-doping body. It's not the first time Bahrain has faced scrutiny over doping, particularly among its roster of athletes who were naturalized. Naser missed the Tokyo Olympics while serving a ban for not being available for drug testing. Kemi Adekoya, a former world indoor champion in the 400, got a four-year ban in 2019 in a steroid case. Marathon runner Marius Kimutai was banned for three years in April after failing a drug test.

Cash-strapped Barcelona sheds players one year after their arrival

AP ■ BARCELONA (SPAIN)
If trying to compete with Real Madrid and newly arrived Kylian Mbappé wasn't daunting enough, now Hansi Flick's Barcelona squad is being thinned out by departures. Barcelona looks set to lose both Ilkay Gundogan and Vitor Roque in the coming days - or even hours - with both players reportedly close to exits. Gundogan appears set on returning to Manchester City a year after the midfielder left the serial winners to start a new chapter in Spain. That could be cut short because of Barcelona's need to trim its salary burden, leaving the team without one of its top playmakers from last season. Roque is also reportedly close to leaving on loan for Real Betis, although Portugal's

Sporting has made inquiries. The young Brazilian forward cost Barcelona a 30-million-euro (USD 33-million) transfer last summer. He arrived in the winter transfer market but never earned consistent playing minutes despite the significant investment made to sign him. When their exits are made official, it will confirm that the club's efforts last summer to strengthen the squad turned out to be makeshift moves. Last summer, Barcelona maintained the quality of a squad that lost veteran leaders Sergio Busquets and Jordi Alba without spending much money. Gundogan and former Athletic Bilbao defender Inigo Martinez arrived as free agents, Oriol Romeu's move from Girona cost a reported 4 million euros, and João Félix and João Cancelo both arrived on loan deals from Atletico



Madrid and Manchester City, respectively. But a year later, only Martinez appears set to continue with the team that finished last season without a title and the departure of coach Xavi Hernandez, who was pushed out after he publicly complained that the club's lack of money would make it hard to compete with Madrid or the other top European clubs.

Barcelona has locked up the arrival of Spain midfielder Dani Olmo from Leipzig. But, it has yet to meet the financial requirements of the Spanish league necessary to register him to play. Flick is also without key players Gavi Páez and Ronaldo Araújo, who are recovering from leg injuries. With players hurt or leaving, Flick has not hesitated in relying heavily on the products

of Barcelona's famed La Masia youth academy. He gave debuts to midfielders Gerard Martin and Marc Bernal at the always demanding outing at Valencia in their Spanish league opener when Robert Lewandowski scored a brace for a 2-1 victory. In total Flick aligned three 17-year-olds in his starting 11 between Lamine Yamal, Bernal and Pau Cubarsi. As Lewandowski said after the victory, "We can win games with these youngsters." **NEXT TEST:** Barcelona will face a good test on Saturday in the second round of league fixtures when it hosts Athletic Bilbao, including Nico Williams. Williams and Barcelona teen Lamine Yamal helped lead Spain to the European Championship title this summer. Barcelona had been rumoured to be interested in securing Williams' transfer

from Athletic, but right now that looks like wishful thinking given the Catalan club's ongoing financial struggles. Coached by former Barcelona manager Ernesto Valverde, Athletic will look for its first victory at Barcelona since the 2001-2002 season. Since then, it has gone 22 visits without a victory, with Barcelona winning 19 times. Athletic, which won the Copa del Rey last campaign, will likely have to use its youth-team goalkeeper, Alex Padilla, after minor injuries to Spain's keeper Unai Simón and backup Julen Agirretzabala. Madrid hosts Valladolid on Sunday after the defending champions were held 1-1 at Mallorca in their league opener. Atletico Madrid hosts Girona on the same day in a matchup of the respective fourth- and third-place finishers from last campaign.