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NITESH SEALS
SEMIS SPOT; MANASI,
MANOJ OUT
12 SPORTS

PM Modi apologises to his deity, Shivaji Maharaj



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Maharashtra Governor CP Radhakrishnan and Chief Minister Eknath Shinde during laying of the foundation stone of Vadhvan Port and launching of development works, in Palghar district, on Friday

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In an apparent bid to blunt the Opposition's full-fledged campaign against the BJP-led MahaYuti Government and the Centre over the collapse of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's imposing statue at Rajkot fort in Sindhudurg district ahead of the Maharashtra Assembly polls, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday apologised to Chhatrapati Shivaji whom he described as not just "a revered king or great personality but a deity".

Maharashtra's Palghar district and kick-starting other developments, Modi recalled that the first thing he did after he was nominated by the BJP as the Prime Ministerial candidate in 2013, was to visit Raigad Fort to offer his prayers to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj at the latter's Samadhi. He said he was blessed with the same 'bhakti bhav' with which he revered his master and embarked on the new journey to serve the nation. Alluding to the collapse of a 35-tall statue at Malvan in Sindhudurg district, the Prime Minister tendered his humble apology to the legendary Marathi king by saying: "Shivaji Maharaj is not merely a name, a revered king

or a great personality but a deity". Indirectly hitting out at the leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi of the Congress for showing disrespect towards freedom fighter Veer Savarkar, Modi said that his upbringing and his culture made him different from those "who intend to disrespect the great son of the land Veer Savarkar and trample the feeling of nationalism". In an unmistakable criticism of Rahul Gandhi ahead of the State Assembly polls, Modi said: "People of Maharashtra should remain wary of those who disrespect Veer Savarkar and feel no remorse for it". The Prime Minister said that his

reverence towards Chhatrapati Shivaji should be seen in the context of the fact that the first thing he did after visiting Maharashtra was to apologise to his deity Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. He also sought forgiveness from all those who worship Shivaji Maharaj. Averring that his government had taken major steps for the growth of Maharashtra in the last 10 years as "a Viksit Maharashtra is the most crucial element of the resolution of a Viksit Bharat", Modi said that the state had the potential and resources to grow due to its coastal proximity, holding immense possibilities for the future. "The Vadhvan Port will be the

country's largest container port and will be counted among the world's deep water ports. It will become an epicenter of trade and industrial development for Maharashtra and India," the Prime Minister said. Being built at a cost of ₹76,000 crore, Vadhvan Port — located near Dahanu town in Palghar district — is expected to be one of India's largest deep-water ports and will provide direct connectivity to international shipping routes, reducing transit times and costs. Vadhvan Port aims to establish a world-class maritime gateway that will boost the country's trade and economic growth by catering to large container vessels, offering deeper drafts, and accommodating ultra-large cargo ships. Modi, who also inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of 218 fisheries projects worth around Rs 1,560 crore and launched Rs 360 crore National Roll Out of Vessel Communication and Support system, said there was a time when Bharat used to be counted among the most strong and prosperous nations due to its maritime capabilities. "People of Maharashtra are well-versed in this potential. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj took India's maritime capabilities to new heights with his policies and strong decisions for the development of the country," Modi said, adding that even the entire East India Company could not stand in front of Darya Sarang Kanhoji Yaganti.

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Dialogue a bygone theme, EAM warns Pakistan of action

RAHUL DATTA ■ NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday sent out a stern message to Pakistan declaring that the era of "uninterrupted dialogue" is over. He also warned that "actions have consequences" in an apparent reference to Pakistan-sponsored terrorism. Making these assertions at a book launch event here, he reaffirmed New Delhi's position that terror and talks cannot go together. The Minister's comments on dialogue with Pakistan came in the backdrop of elections in Jammu and Kashmir in less than 20 days. "The era of uninterrupted dialogue with Pakistan is over. Actions have consequences," Jaishankar said. "So far as Jammu and Kashmir is concerned, Article 370 is done with. So, the issue is what kind of relationship we can contemplate with Pakistan," Jaishankar said, making it clear that there would be no compromise on this matter. He also stressed that India would not remain passive in its dealings with Pakistan. "What I do want to say is that we are not passive, and whether events take a positive or a negative direction, either way, we will react," the Minister added. On a suggestion that India is content with the relationship to continue as it is, he said, "Maybe yes, maybe no... but what I do want to say is that we are not passive, and that whether events take a positive or negative direction... either way we will react." In his address, Jaishankar also said for any country in the world, neighbours are "always a



conundrum", and so are "major powers". Major powers will be a conundrum because they are major, because of the breadth of their interests. They will always have an agenda, which will overlap with us, but to differing degrees, also diverge, he said. In the case of China, you have a "double conundrum", because it's a neighbour and a major power. So, the challenges with China fit this double definition, he added. The book "Strategic Conundrum: Reshaping India's Foreign Policy" by former diplomat Rajiv Sikri talks about India's relationship with its neighbouring countries and the accompanying challenges. The Minister also said there is a debate in the neighbourhood about SAARC and BIMSTEC, and "all of you know the difference". That is a contrast which illustrates some of the challenges and opportunities of "regionalisation", he said.

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Jagdish Tytler to be framed for 1984 riots and murders

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Holding that there was sufficient evidence to put him on trial, a Delhi Rouse Avenue Court on Friday ordered framing of charges for murder and other offences against Congress leader Jagdish Tytler in a case related to alleged murder of three people in the North Delhi's Pul Bangash area, almost 40 years after the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. Special CBI judge Rakesh Sial said there was sufficient evidence against him to put him on trial. "Sufficient ground is there to proceed against the accused person," the Special CBI judge said, posting the matter for September 13 for formally framing the charges when Tytler would be asked if he would like to plead guilty or face trial. Tytler was discharged under the Indian Penal Code (IPC)'s Section 148 (rioting armed with deadly weapons) as the special judge Rakesh Sial listed the matter for the next hearing on September 13. Welcoming the development, BJP national spokesperson RP Singh wrote on X, "Albeit delayed, it appears justice is being done." The case relates to the burning to death of Badal Singh, Sardar Thakur Singh, and Gurbachan Singh and setting ablaze Pul Bangash Gurudwara a day after the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's assassination on November 1, 1984.

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Helpless Mamata Banerjee writes to PM a second time

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Within a week of writing a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking enactment of stringent laws in rape cases — all in the backdrop of the nationwide protests against the rape and murder of a postgraduate lady doctor at RG Kar Medical College Hospital in Kolkata — Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday shot him off a second letter reiterating the earlier demand and expressed her dismay at the alleged lukewarm response her first missive found in South Block. "You may kindly recall my letter number 44-CM dated August 22, 2024," Mamata wrote, adding with a tinge of discontent that though such issues warranted immediate attention she is yet to receive any reply from him. "No reply was received from your end on such a sensitive issue," the Chief Minister wrote in her second letter mentioning, however, that she had indeed received a general letter from the Minister of Woman and Child Development which, she said, was a "generic reply" concerning a serious issue. "I am of the thought that the seriousness of the subject



and its relevance to society has not been adequately appreciated as this generic reply reflects," Mamata wrote providing details of the measures her Government has taken to prevent such offences. Mamata's back-to-back express communications come in the wake of tremendous pressure her Government is facing from the community of doctors, the civil society and general public as a whole with streets of the State getting flooded with huge rallies demanding justice for the 31-year-old lady doctor who was brutally raped and murdered in the wee hours of August 9 even as she was taking rest inside a seminar hall of the hospital after completion of 36 hours of non-stop duty.

Mamata's letter also comes in the wake of her Government announcing amendments in the Central laws through a special Assembly Session summoned for that purpose on September 2. The State Government has convened a Special Assembly Session on September 2 for placing an amendment Bill and passing a stringent law against rape, senior Bengal Minister Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay earlier said. The State Cabinet has already given clearance to the tabling of the Amendment Bill, he said. Mamata had a couple of days ago told a students' rally that she had requested Modi to pass stringent laws in these cases. "But if the Centre cannot pass stringent laws... then we will pass it in the State by convening a Special Session of the Assembly... we want a strong law so that the accused can be tried in a fast-track court and given death sentence in 15 days' time," she said. Meanwhile, Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose on Friday met Home Minister Amit Shah at his residence where they apparently discussed the situation arising out of the rape and murder of the lady doctor at RH Kar Hospital, sources said.

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Assam cancels Jumma break for Muslim MLAs

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

The Assam Assembly will do away with a two-hour break provided on Fridays to facilitate Muslim legislators to offer namaz, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said. The rule will be implemented from the next Session, an Assembly official said. In a social media post, Sarma said, "By doing away with the 2 hour Jumma break, @AssamAssembly has prioritised productivity and shed another vestige of colonial baggage. This practice was introduced by Muslim League's Syed Saadulla in 1937."

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Champai Soren joins BJP, Jharkhand feels the tremors

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

On a day when Ghatshila OMLA Ramdas Soren replaced him in the Jharkhand Cabinet taking oath as a Minister, former Chief Minister Champai Soren, popularly known as the "Kolhan Tiger", joined the BJP on Friday, marking a significant change in the State's political landscape just ahead of the Assembly elections. Champai along with a large number of his supporters crossed over to the saffron camp in the presence of Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa



Former Jharkhand chief minister Champai Soren with Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan waves to supporters after joining BJP during a ceremony, in Ranchi, Friday

Sarma at a ceremony in Ranchi while Jharkhand Governor Santosh Gangwar administered the oath to Ramdas in the presence of Chief Minister Hemant Soren, senior leaders of the JMM-led coalition Government, and top bureaucrats. Though Ramdas's portfolio is yet to be announced, he would likely be given similar portfolios as Champai held. Champai's induction into BJP is seen as a shot in the arm of the saffron party, looking to establish a foothold in the tribal belt of Jharkhand, where Scheduled Tribes make up about 26 per cent of the electorate.

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Construction threatens Sultanpur Park's fragile biodiversity

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Taking exception to the flagrant disregard for environmental regulations at the Ramsar site and Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) of Sultanpur National Park in Gurugram, Haryana, a high-level central panel chaired by Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav, has sought action against the offenders.



It has also called for a comprehensive action taken report from the State Government in the matter. At a meeting held recently, the members of the Standing Committee of the National Board of Wildlife (NBWL) led by the Union Minister deliberated in detail on the observations made in the report prepared under the supervision of Inspector General

(Wildlife). The report was particularly alarming to the extent that it "leaves much to be desired." The report said despite the national park being enclosed by a boundary and its habitats largely preserved due to the proactive measures of the Forest and Wildlife Department, the governance and management practices within the ESZ are found to be seriously deficient.

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Nation salutes historic gold and bronze medalists at Paris Paralympics

PTI ■ CHATEAUX

The incredible Avani Lekhara became the first Indian to claim successive Paralympic gold medals with a record-shattering top finish in the women's 10m air rifle (SH1) shooting competition and had a bronze-winning Mona Agarwal for company on the podium in a historic double for the country here on Friday. Winner of the Tokyo Paralympics gold three years back, Avani, 22, shot a superb 249.7 to erase her own Paralympic record of 249.6 set in the Japanese capital three years back. The 37-year-old Mona, who dabbled in several sports

including shot-put, powerlifting and wheelchair volleyball before settling on shooting, notched up 228.7 for the third-place finish. This is the first time in India's Paralympic history that two shooters have pulled off medals in a single event. Avani, who hails from Jaipur, endured a tough buildup to the Paralympics. She grappled with a host of health issues, including a gallbladder surgery, which forced her to take a recovery break of one and half months. But the committed shooter, who is an assistant conservator of forest with the Rajasthan Government, did not let health concerns distract her from her aim of



Avani Lekhara X/@CricCrazyJohns

Paralympic glory. She lost quite a bit of weight following the surgery but the determination to overcome all odds was all too evident

during the national camp at the Karni Singh ranges, where she worked hard on regaining her strength and mentally steeling herself for Paris.

"I am happy to win a medal for my country. I am thankful to my team, my coaches and my parents," said Avani after the match. The SH1 category is for athletes who have movement affected in their arms, lower trunk, legs or have no limbs. The youngster, who is wheelchair bound after a car mishap left her paralysed below the waist as an 11-year-old, had become the first woman shooter from the country to win medals in shooting at the Tokyo Paralympics in 2021. In a nerve-wracking final, Avani was trailing her rival Lee Yunri by a few decimal points but the South Korean wilted under pressure and

had an awful last shot of 6.8, while Avani kept her cool to shoot a superb 10.5 to clinch the gold with a Paralympics record. The success will come as a huge boost for Avani ahead of the 50m rifle 3-positions event, where she is also a firm favourite for a medal after winning bronze in the previous edition of the Games in Tokyo. Earlier, Avani came up with another sterling performance by qualifying for the final in second place, while Mona, who too has been in sublime form in the last one year, also made it to the eight-shooter summit clash in fifth place. While Avani shot a 625.8 to be placed second behind

Ukraine Iryna Shchetnik, who broke the Paralympic Qualification Record with a score of 627.5, Mona, the two-time World Cup gold medalist, shot 623.1. Avani had credited the "positive environment" in the national camp for helping her overcome her fitness worries. "I think we have been in a very positive environment throughout. We are just focussing on the process rather than the outcome. "There, obviously, will be expectations but those expectations only motivate me and inspire me more to give my best. I am also more mature in my technique," she had said before leaving for Paris.

Malayalam film industry a saga of sexual abuses, suicides

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The accusations by Malayalam actresses against senior artists in the movie industry that they were sexually harassed and abused which have become daily headlines of newspapers and topics of evening debates in TV channel shows are nothing new. A glance over the history of Malayalam and Tamil film industry will show that many female artists have died mysteriously over the last five decades which the cops just wrote them off as unnatural deaths or suicides.

to share bed with their predators. The first such death to hog the limelight was that of Vijayasree, the Thiruvananthapuram born actress who was a heart throb of movie goers in late 1960s and early 1970s. The prima donna of South Indian film industry, she was known more as the Marilyn Monroe of Malayalam and Tamil films. Her beauty added to her physique and the then super stars were vying with one another to be case with her heroes. But she was found dead at the peak of her career in 1974 at the age of 21. Those were the days when it was impossible to imagine a Malayalam movie which has no Vijayasree.

Though it was claimed that she committed suicide, nobody could give any reason for her decision. Though names of producers Kunchako, Azim Bhai and actor Prem Nazir were linked with her death, investigators stood their ground that it was a suicide. The death of Shoba, who became the youngest star in the history of Indian cinema at 18 to win the national award for best actress (1979) for her realistic depiction of a wayside worker which demolished the age-old concept of female artists as decorative pieces in films is another tragedy of movies. The Urvashi Award turned out to be Shoba's swan song. Within days of the honour being bestowed on her, the



artist was found dead in the bedroom of her rented house. Balanathan Benjamin Mahendra (known by the screen name Balu Mahendra), a Sri Lankan movie maker who was 25 years senior to her was cited as the cause for Sobha's "suicide". Mahendra had married Sobha



and by the time she won the national award, had dumped her and went after another artist. Later he married a child artist whom he met during the making of his movie Yatra. "Shoba's life should have been an eye opener for other youngsters and aspiring stars and their parents. Even today we can see



many mothers accompanying their daughters to sets and directors' bungalows in the hope of making their children the future Hema Malinis and Nayan Tharas," said P K Sreenivasan, chronicler of South Indian films who has authored many books about the unseen and unheard wannabe stars

who burnt out before they venture out to the studio floors. Srinivasan said that Sobha's death was enmeshed in mystery and he would not describe it as suicide. Silk Smitha (1960-1996) who took Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu and Kannada films like a storm was another martyr of the world of glamour. Hailing from a poor family in rural Andhra Pradesh, Smitha was the "most and she was known for wanted" artist at the time of her demise as directors, male super stars and technicians waited for her dates. "Smitha was not the kind of conventional artist who would resort to the extreme measure even in the toughest situation. I strongly believe there was

foul play in these deaths," said Sreenivasan. He pointed out that there were super mega stars in South India who would go to any extent to get rid of their eyesores. "There is an actor who ditched her South Indian wife to marry a Punjabi star and then tried to murder her by pushing her doer from the balcony of their house. The third wife ran away for fear of death even as he was wooing the fourth and fifth preys," said Mankombu Gopalakrishnan, lyricist and story writer. There are many other stars who have fallen by the wayside. The names Mukesh, Ranjith, Siddique, Raju, Babu Raj, Idavela Babu and Jayasooraya are just tip of the iceberg.

Kolkata horror: Mystery of man in red T-shirt on crime scene

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The parents of the lady doctor who was raped and murdered inside the seminar hall of the RG Kar Medical College Hospital in the early morning of August 9 have once again referred to a mysterious man in a red T-shirt and another person wearing a violet shirt on the crime scene when they visited the place. "He was acting quite suspiciously and searching something around the dead body."

then told this to a junior doctor who told me that he was not a doctor but could be someone from the class IV staff... Then I told him of his mysterious ways and asked the doctor to catch him... he immediately went and took his photographs. Incidentally a broken blue-tooth had been found from the place of occurrence that formed a major evidence to nab the prime accused Sanjoy Das. She wondered whether such information had been shared with the CBI. "We are not getting any inputs on the progress of the investigation... we don't even know whether the CBI has such details... now after more than three weeks of the crime many things are appearing to us that should have been investigated," the father of the victim said. The mother of the victim had also said on Thursday that she

had seen her daughter covered with a green sheet "whereas the insiders were talking about a red sheet and the photographs of the crime scene show that she was covered with a blue sheet... all these should be investigated." Speaking on the issue the senior police officer had earlier said that the police had cordoned off the 40-feet area from where the dead body of the victim was lying and that the crowd was standing in the 10-feet area outside that cordoned off place. However, photographs and videos shown by the junior doctors who were present at the scene show that a swarm of people including doctors, paramedics, outsiders and even those not connected to medical profession had gathered at the area inspecting the body of the victim perhaps doing everything that could destroy evidence, sources said.

Jammu and Kashmir legislative complex remains incomplete, 13 years on

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

A multi-floor under-construction building of the Legislative Assembly complex in Jammu is a picture-perfect image that depicts the story of 'Good Governance' in Jammu and Kashmir. In the last 13 years, three Chief Ministers, two Governors, and two Lieutenant Governors, who have taken over the reins of power to govern the erstwhile princely state spent lavishly on releasing full-page advertisements hard selling the theme of Naya Jammu and Kashmir. Ironically, they too failed to expedite the completion of the project. The pace of work and scale of planning exposes the 'work culture' in the region. The unavailability of the funds for such a long period delayed the project's completion and added to the cost escalation. The original cost of the project initially pegged at around 110 crores has already exceeded 200

crores. After the Abrogation of Articles 370 and 35-A in August 2019, developmental projects worth several hundred crores were launched in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. Ironically, this ambitious project once again missed the bus. Currently, the project executing agency is awaiting a nod to receive Rs 134 crores as per the revised estimates. So far the project executing agency has failed to receive adequate funds to ensure its timely completion. The foundation stone of the ambitious project was laid on July 1, 2011, by the then Chief Minister Omar Abdullah. On ground zero, the construction work was started in August 2011. Initially, the project was estimated to be built at a cost of around 113 crores in a stipulated period. According to the project engineers, who remained in charge from time to time the work on the project was going on smoothly till 2015 but the same hit the roadblock during



the BJP-PDP alliance government in office. The alliance government raised certain specific queries related to the administrative and financial approval before giving their formal nod to the revised estimates. After the fall of the BJP-PDP alliance government, the pro-

ject remained a non-starter for one long year. In August 2019 after the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir was reorganized following the Abrogation of Articles 370 and 35-A the project executing agency once again failed to receive the funds to complete the pending works. The work was delayed further during the Covid-19 pandemic. In the last decade, ever since the work on attempts have been made to minimise the delay and check the 'unproductive' cost escalation. In October 2021, former Chief Secretary Arun Kumar Mehta issued necessary directions to submit the revised proposals and restart the work on the project at the earliest".

However, little headway was made. At present, the Public Works Department has taken over the project from the Jammu and Kashmir Projects Construction Corporation (JKPCC). According to official sources, a revised estimate has been submitted to the Union Territory Administration for approval. The DPR will now be submitted before the Administrative council or the new cabinet for approval after it is thoroughly examined by the Finance Department, Law, Justice, and Parliamentary Affairs Department. The multi-story complex will be equipped with a modern fire fighting / alarm system, lifts, digital lighting control system, FACADE lighting, the most advanced electro-mechanical and sound system LAN, CCTV, PAVA, AV system and solar lights besides rainwater harvesting and treatment systems. In the Assembly Hall, space for 500 people for the Press gallery and visitors gallery has been created.

CM Saini to contest Haryana polls from Ladwa

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/CHANDIGARH

Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini will contest the Haryana Assembly elections from Ladwa in Kurukshetra district. The ruling BJP is expected to release its first list of candidates for the October 1 polls by Sunday. Badoli — when asked from where the chief minister would contest the elections — said, "CM Ladwa se chunav ladenge (the CM will contest from Ladwa)." Saini, who represents the Karnal seat in the Haryana Assembly, was the MP from Kurukshetra between 2019 and 2024. Speaking to reporters in Delhi, Badoli did not divulge if Saini would also contest from Karnal. The Ladwa Assembly seat is currently held by the Congress' Mewa Singh. Badoli, the MLA from Rai in Sonapat, also said that he would not contest the elections. After another round of meetings, the first list of candidates is expected to be out soon, he said. He also said there had been no discussions regarding an alliance and asserted that the BJP would form the government with a clear majority. The BJP has finalised the names of more than 50 candidates for the upcoming Haryana Assembly polls at its Central Election Committee (CEC)

meeting held here on Thursday. The BJP CEC meeting, chaired by party president JP Nadda, was attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, party's Haryana election in charge and Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, National General Secretary (Organisation) BL Santhosh and other senior party leaders. During the CEC meeting, discussions were held on the names of candidates for all seats, Badoli -- who took over as BJP chief in Haryana in July -- said and added another meeting would take place after two days. Some candidates will be declared in the first list, he said. In March, the BJP replaced Manohar Lal Khattar as Haryana chief minister with Saini, an OBC leader. Khattar, who won the parliamentary elections from Karnal, is now a Union minister. At the time he replaced Khattar, Saini was the BJP's Haryana chief and the party's Kurukshetra MP. He won the bypoll from the Karnal assembly seat vacated by Khattar. Saini had won the assembly polls from the Naraingarh seat in Ambala district when BJP stormed to power in 2014. The 90-member Haryana Assembly is set to go to polls on October 1. The counting of votes will take place on October 4.

Skill up-gradation and certification programme launched

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Power Sector Skill Council (PSSC) has launched the Lineman Certification Programme under the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) initiative in association with BSES Yamuna Power Limited (BYPL) aligned with the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) Safety Regulations. This strategic program aims to enhance the skill sets of BYPL's workforce, particularly those engaged in electrical operations, ensuring adherence to the highest safety standards. Created with a mandate to facilitate skill development across the Power Industry (covering Power Generation, Transmission, Distribution, Renewable Energy and Power Equipment Manufacturing), PSSC has been actively engaged in the task to deliver on the objectives with active support of industry stakeholders. This recently launched program of PSSC is significant for all distribution, transmission and generation companies of the power sector as it aligns with the government's commitment to safety and quality in electrical operations. This will also benefits the employees in getting National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) aligned certifications along with Skill India.

Dialogue a bygone...

From Page 1 "The real issue is that of overlapping identities versus forging new ones. So, everywhere there is history at play, but there is politics that often contests history and this in a way is a perennial challenge for India's relationships with all its neighbours," Jaishankar said. On India's ties with Afghanistan, Jaishankar said there is actually a "strong people-to-people relations", at the societal level, adding there is a certain goodwill for India. The minister previously stated that the Centre cannot "overlook" terrorism in an effort to improve relations with Pakistan. He noted that terrorism has become almost an "industry level" issue in Pakistan, and India's current mood is not to tolerate such threats. He also addressed the situation in Bangladesh, which has faced political instability following Sheikh Hasina's ouster, as well as law and order challenges, including attacks on the minority Hindu community. "It is natural we will deal with the government of the day," Jaishankar said, while recognising that regime changes can be disruptive. He underlined the need for mutual interest and cooperation, saying, "Neighbours are always a conundrum... Tell me which country is there that doesn't have challenges with neighbours?"

Helpless Mamata...

From Page 1 According to sources, the Governor provided detailed information on the current situation in Bengal. State BJP president and Union Minister Sukanto Majumdar had earlier met the Governor with a demand of stringent action against the State Government for massive lathi charge on the students who had marched to the State Secretariat at Nabanna seeking the Chief Minister's resignation. In a related development the National Human Rights Commission has written a letter to Kolkata Police Commissioner Vineet Goyal to explain the lathi-charge on the student rallyists on Wednesday.

Assam cancels Jumma break for Muslim...

From Page 1 "My gratitude to Hon'ble Speaker Shri @BiswajitDaimar5 dangoriya and our legislators for this historical decision," Sarma added. For the last time, this two-hour break was provided on Friday, the final day of the Autumn session of the assembly, the official said. An official statement circulated in the House, a copy of which was made available to reporters, said the Rules Committee of the assembly had unanimously agreed to drop this practice. "Accordingly, today, the House adopted a motion to amend this rule so as to provide for sitting of the House for conduct of its proceedings on Fridays like any other day," the statement added.

Jagdish Tytler to...

From Page 1 The Delhi Police registered a case the same day. Tytler would have to be physically present in the court for the framing of charges under the IPC Sections 143 (unlawful assembly), 147 (rioting) 153A (promoting enmity between different

groups), 188 (disobedience of the order duly promulgated by a public servant), 295 (injuring or defiling a place of worship), 436 (mischief by fire or explosive substance with intent to destroy house), 451 (house trespass), 380 (theft in dwelling house), 149 (common object), 302 (murder) and 109 (abatement). A witness had earlier submitted in the charge-sheet that Tytler came out of a white Ambassador car in front of the

Gurdwara Pul Bangash on November 1, 1984 and instigated a mob with the words, "kill the Sikhs, they have killed our mother," following which three people were killed. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) registered the case afresh in November 2005 on the recommendations of the Nanavati Commission, which was formed in 2000 and submitted its report five years later.

Construction threatens...

From Page 1 The violations of the ESZ zonal plan and notification are expected to exacerbate development pressures in the area, thereby jeopardizing the park's ecosystem. Evidence indicates significant stress on the national park, as demonstrated by the reduction in the size of Sultanpur Jheel and the increased reliance on the Gurgaon canal to maintain water levels, the report stated. "The violations of ESZ zonal plan and the ESZ notification are likely to intensify develop-

ment in the region, thus putting the park ecosystem at risk," warned the report about the Sultanpur wetland. Furthermore, the report highlighted the park's previous exposure to species invasion and the considerable loss of wetland areas surrounding the park, which is of serious concern. It underscores the importance of the ESZ notification and the zonal plan as essential regulatory tools to align regional development with the ecological needs of the protected site. The report emphasises that the ESZ notification and the zonal plan are essential tools for aligning regional development with the park's ecological

needs. It called for strict enforcement of existing regulations, enhanced monitoring of compliance, and improved coordination among agencies to safeguard the park's biodiversity and ecological services. The Committee concluded that the park represents a critical biodiversity hotspot. Preserving the park's biodiversity and ecosystem services is vital for both regional ecological and economic stability, as well as for the global biodiversity, given its designation as a Wetland of International Importance. The Committee has recommended stringent enforcement of existing regulations, vigilant monitoring of ESZ compliance, the development of inter-

agency coordination mechanisms, the preservation of no-construction zones, and addressing shortcomings in the Sultanpur ESZ Zonal Plan notification. It has also called for the removal of unauthorized farmhouses that have proliferated in the region and prevention of alterations to hydrological pathways. Mitigation measures proposed include compensating for increased built-up areas with additional green cover, enhancing human resources for the management of the Ramsar site and the ESZ, preparing an integrated management plan, and fostering community awareness.

PM Modi apologises to his deity, Shivaji...

From Page 1 Slamming the previous governments at the Centre for failing to pay heed to Bharat's rich past, Modi said: "This is New India. It learns from history and recognizes its potential and pride. New India is creating new milestones in maritime infrastructure by leaving behind every trace of the shackles of slavery". Stating that lakhs of crores of rupees had been invested in modernising ports in the country, the Prime Minister said: "Entire world is looking towards Vadhvan Port today. Very few ports in the world can match Vadhvan Port's depth of 20 meters. This port would transform the economic landscape of the

entire region due to railway and highway connectivity. It will create opportunities for new businesses and warehousing owing to its connectivity to the dedicated Western Freight Corridor and proximity to the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway". Dwelling upon the launch of the Vessel Communication System, the Prime Minister said: "This system will become a blessing for the fishermen community. Our government plans to install 1 lakh transponders on vessels used by fishermen to establish uninterrupted connectivity with their families, boat owners, fisheries department and coast guards. That will help fishermen communicate

in times of emergency, cyclones or any untoward incidents through the help of satellites. "It is the government's priority to save lives during any emergency". Modi said that more than 110 fishing ports and landing centers are being built for the safe return of fishermen's vessels. Maharashtra Governor C P Radhakrishnan, chief minister Eknath Shinde, deputy chief ministers Devendra Fadnis and Ajit Pawar, Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal and Union Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying Ranjan Singh were present on the occasion.

Champai Soren joins BJP...

From Page 1 This community which has been the main electoral base of the JMM. He was a close aide of JMM supremo Shibhu Soren. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has alleged that Champai was kept under surveillance by his own government for six months and a befitting reply awaits the "corrupt" JMM-led alliance in two months. "Champai Soren was kept under surveillance by Jharkhand police for six months. I have never heard of such an instance. I warn you (Chief Minister Hemant Soren), we will give a befitting

reply after two months," Sarma said at a function in Ranchi where Champai joined the BJP. After joining the BJP, Champai said, "After I was put under surveillance by the Jharkhand Government in Delhi and Kolkata, my resolve to join the BJP got strengthened." He also said the BJP can save the tribals' identity and check infiltration in Jharkhand's Santhal Pargana. Alleging that the tribal identity was put "at stake" by the Congress, Champai said, "I am committed to delivering justice to the people." "I nurtured JMM" with my sweat and blood but only got humiliation and insult in return. I am compelled to join the BJP. I am now proud to be a member of the world's largest political party. I was not ready to tolerate humiliation

and snooping," Champai said. Champai had previously met Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi to announce his decision to join the BJP. "Tiger Zinda Hai", said Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Friday while welcoming Champai into the party fold. "When Champai was the Chief Minister of Jharkhand, he took tough decisions against middlemen. This irked JMM top leadership which started humiliating him. He had been trying to free Jharkhand from the malaise of corruption," Chouhan said. Champai quit the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) on Wednesday, claiming that the State Government's present style of functioning and its policies compelled him to leave the party he served for

many years. Champai has earned the moniker of 'Jharkhand's Tiger' for his contribution to the fight for a separate state of Jharkhand to be carved out of Bihar in the 1990s. Jharkhand was carved out of the southern part of Bihar in 2000. The elections to the 81-member Assembly are due later this year. Despite being chosen over Hemant Soren's wife Kalpana to lead the government, Champai's tenure as CM was short-lived. Five months into his term, Champai Soren was compelled to resign amid what he described as "bitter humiliation" from the party he once held dear. Following Hemant Soren's release from jail on June 28 and his subsequent swearing-in as Chief Minister on July 4, Champai resigned on July 3. A matriculate from a

government school, he started his political career after getting elected as an Independent MLA through a by-election from the Seraikela seat in undivided Bihar in 1991. Four years later, he contested the assembly polls from the seat on the JMM ticket and defeated the BJP's Panchu Tudu. In the maiden 2000 assembly elections, he was defeated from the same constituency by the BJP's Anant Ram Tudu. He regained the seat in 2005 by defeating the BJP candidate by a margin of only 880 votes and won subsequent elections in 2009, 2014 and 2019. He served as a cabinet minister in the BJP government headed by Arjun Munda between September, 2010 and January, 2013 when BJP formed government in the state with the support of JMM.

Battle for MCD ward committee elections begins

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Candidates from the AAP, BJP, and Congress on Friday filed their nominations for the zonal level ward committee elections with the Municipal Secretary for the post of chairman, deputy chairman, and standing committee member.

The ruling AAP has fielded 33 candidates in 11 of the 12 zones, barring Keshav Puram zone while the opposition BJP has fielded 30 candidates in 10 of the 12 zones, barring City SP Zone and Karol Bagh. The Congress, which has only nine councillors in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), has fielded candidates from Shahdara South Zone.

Meanwhile, two AAP Councillors, including Prem Chauhan and Tilotma Chaudhary, withdrew their pleas from the Delhi High Court seeking deferment of the MCD ward committee elections, slated to be held on September 4, even as AAP and the BJP have claimed that councillors from the other side are ready to defect.

The AAP councillors had sought the rescheduling of the elections, alleging that sufficient time was not given to file nominations for the polls to elect the chairman and deputy chairman of 12 zonal ward committees and a member from each of these panels for the MCD Standing Committee. The last date to file nomination is August 30.

Chauhan has filed his nomination for standing committee member from South Delhi zone, while Chaudhary has been fielded from Najafgarh Zone for the post of deputy chairman of the ward committee.

Former DCW member and AAP councillor Promila Gupta is also in the fray for standing committee member from the Civil Lines zone. Punardeep Singh Sabby, son of AAP MLA Parlad Singh Sawhney, has been nominated for standing committee member from the City SP zone.

Leader of Opposition Raja Iqbal Singh is contesting for the post of standing committee member from the Civil Lines Zone. He was a former



Mayor of North Delhi before the municipality's unification in 2022.

The BJP has also fielded Pawan Shehrawat and Sugandha, the councillors who recently switched sides from the AAP, for the post of chairman for the ward committee from Narela and Central Zone. Former East Delhi Mayor Neema Bhagat is contesting the polls for the post of standing committee member from Shahdara South Zone.

Congress has nominated Haji Zarif for the post of zonal chairman, Nazia Khatoon for zonal deputy chairman, and Sabeela Khatoon for standing committee member in Shahdara South zone. Meanwhile, a senior functionary from AAP said that six

councillors are expected to join the party in the next couple of days. The party had received a setback when five of its councillors had joined the BJP on Sunday.

However, one of the councillors Ramchandra returned to AAP on Thursday. "There are some councillors from the BJP who will join our party in the next few days. Two of our councillors are returning to the party fold while at least four BJP councillors are likely to come to us," he added.

The anti-defection law, passed in 1985, is not in force in the MCD and punishes individual MPs and MLAs for defecting. A senior Delhi BJP functionary said the councillors who wanted development of their respective wards were

looking towards the BJP since "corruption" of AAP has hindered working of the civic body.

"There are many councillors of AAP who are frustrated with the working of the party and looking to leave it at the first chance. Our doors are open for those who wish to work for Delhi's people," he added.

The civic body on Wednesday announced the date for the long-pending ward committee elections, essential for the formation of the standing committee, MCD's highest decision-making body which is important for approving proposals involving expenditures of Rs 5 crore and above. The ward committee elections will be held across its 12 zones through secret ballot.

19 cyber criminals from seven States arrested in special drive

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police arrested 19 cyber criminals from seven States across the country, including the cybercrime hotspots Jamatara and Giridih in Jharkhand in a special drive against cyber fraudsters.



According to the police on Friday, in effort to crack-down on the increasing cyber crimes, arrests were made in six different types of modus operandi, including online stock market investment, online work from home through Telegram, fraud through fake customer care numbers, frauds through 99 acre app and Quiker app and driver track plus (Newmo) and phishing and cyber bullying or harassment through Instagram impersonation.

"Complaints and cases of the Cyber-crime have been increasing significantly across the nation and national capital and in the south west district also the volume of the complaints is increasing. In order to take strict and impactful action against the cyber fraudsters especially in the area of cyber crime

hotspots and other growing cyber crime areas, teams from cyber Police Station South West District were formed and targeted main fraudsters," DCP Southwest Rohit Meena said.

Further, he added that after intensive work on the identified cases and leads all the team undertook the operation in cyber crime hotspots and other cities of seven states within a week Bihar's Samastipur, Madhya Pradesh's Rajgarh, Sehore and Bhaora, Uttar Pradesh's Paratop Garh, Maharashtra's Mumbai Rajasthan's Ajmer and West Bengal.

About 148 complaints on the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (NCRP)

were found linked to this and seven cases were worked in the operation.

"There are a total of 42 mobile phones and 42 mobile phones, 21 SIM cards, six ATM cards and two Fake Aadhar Cards were recovered in this operation. Apart from this, over 35 lakh rupees were seized in the alleged accounts of the fraudsters," Meena added.

The police arrested nine people in the driver track plus and phishing case, two for 99 acre and Quiker app, one in fake customer care, one in online job fraud, five in online share market investment and one in Impersonating through Instagram and harassing and bullying.

Repeated rape incidents call for strong ecosystem to punish culprits: Dhankhar

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Describing the alleged rape and murder of a doctor at Kolkata's R G Kar Hospital as a "painful" incident, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Friday here called for a deterrent ecosystem to punish the perpetrators for such crimes. Referring to President Droupadi Murmu's statement on the incident, he reiterated her expression, "Enough is enough."

Making these assertions while addressing students at Delhi University's Bharti College during an event, Vice President Dhankhar said, "It is unfortunate to see the kind of fear girls and women have in their minds because of such incidents. President Murmu is a tribal woman herself. She has seen the ground reality. She rightly expressed in a media note that enough is enough for crime against women," Dhankhar said.

Referring to the 2012 Delhi gang rape incident, he added that the repeated incidents call for a strong ecosystem to punish the culprits and instil fear in their minds. He slammed those justifying the rape incident by calling it



a regular occurrence, saying he is appalled by their thought process.

Stressing on the need of financial independence for girls and women, the Vice President emphasised, "I call upon each of you to be financially independent. This is quintessentially important for you to unleash your energy and potential."

"Girls are the most important stakeholders in the development of the Nation. They constitute the backbone and spinal strength of the rural economy, agro-economy, and informal economy," he further added. Advocating for decimation of gender-based inequities, Vice President

Dhankhar highlighted the existing gender disparity in terms of pay and opportunities for women in the society. "But can we say that there is no gender disparity today? Same qualification but different pay, better qualification but not equal opportunities. That mindset has to change. The ecosystem has to be equitable, inequities have to be decimated," he added.

The Vice President also criticized "anti-national" narratives against India and called it the biggest challenge in the development of the country. He urged students to keep the national interest above political and ideological differences.

Appointment letters to 629 newly recruited Govt employees distributed

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI



Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Friday distributed appointment letters to 629 newly recruited employees of Delhi Government and Delhi Development Authority (DDA), including 27 doctors, in a function held at Vigyan Bhawan.

Saxena took to X and shared, "Privileged to have distributed letters of appointment to 629 Government employees, including 27 doctors, in various Delhi Government departments and DDA." He said the recruitment process was expedited by the Delhi State Subordinate Services Recruitment Board (DSSSB) and another 20,000 Government posts are expected to be filled up by March

2025, reducing the "huge vacancies" in various departments of the Delhi Government. "With over 17,000 permanent recruitments by DSSSB in the last two years, the count exceeds the total appointments made in the previous 10 years. Having expedited the recruitment process, DSSSB is expected to fill another 20,000 Government vacancies by March next year, significantly reducing the huge vacancies in Delhi Govt departments," the Delhi LG said.

Further, Saxena said, "We are committed to Prime Minister's emphasis on ending ad hocism in government jobs and creating opportunities for eligible candidates in a free, fair and transparent manner," he said in a post on X, congratulating the new employees.

Minor girl abducted for ransom by relatives rescued from Indo-Nepal border

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has rescued a six-year-old girl from the Indo-Nepal border, who was kidnapped for ransom by her relatives in Central Delhi's IP Estate.

According to the police on Friday, they arrested five accused in connection with the kidnapping of a minor girl on August 27. "On August 27, an incident of kidnapping was reported at IP Estate Police Station in which the complainant stated that his daughter, aged about six and a half years, left home at about 8:30 pm to go to general store, but she neither reached the general store nor returned home," DCP Central M Harsha Vardhan stated.

Vardhan added that the father further stated that someone must have lured and taken his daughter away.

A case under section 137(2) BNS was registered and investigation was taken up. "Later on they received voice messages for ransom on Whatsapp from a Malaysian number," he said.

Upon investigation and checking more than 300 CCTV cameras, it was found that there is a Sitamarhi Bihar connection to the case by analysing the number.

"Local intelligence and detailed interviews of family members also revealed monetary issues. It was found that one of the relatives of the girl child is also from Sitamarhi district of Bihar," the police officer said.

Dismiss city Govt, take immediate action to restore constitutional order in Delhi: BJP to Prez Murmu

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Members of the Delhi Legislative Assembly, led by Opposition Leader Vijender Gupta, have formally appealed to President Droupadi Murmu for urgent intervention in the ongoing constitutional crisis plaguing Delhi. The delegation met the President and submitted a memorandum highlighting a series of grave concerns about the functioning of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Government under Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

"The AAP Government has lost all moral right to govern and has blatantly deceived the mandate given by the people of Delhi," said Gupta. "We are calling on the President to dismiss this Government and take immediate action to restore



constitutional order in Delhi." At the forefront is the issue of governance paralysis, with CM Kejriwal in jail for over four months on serious corruption charges related to the Delhi excise policy scam. Despite his imprisonment, Kejriwal has refused to resign, creating an unprecedented situation that

has led to a complete breakdown of governance in Delhi. Critical administrative decisions are being delayed, and essential services are severely affected, directly impacting the lives of Delhi's citizens.

The memorandum also brought attention to significant constitutional violations by the AAP Government. Most notably, the failure to constitute the Sixth Delhi Finance Commission, which has been due since April 2021.

Meanwhile, AAP accused the BJP of having no regard for the Constitution and said, "The BJP approaching the President to dismiss the Arvind Kejriwal Government shows they have already accepted defeat in the upcoming Delhi Assembly elections."

DU appoints CEO for conducting students' union elections

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi University has appointed Satyapal Singh, a Professor with its Department of Sanskrit, as the Chief Election Officer for the conduct of the students' union polls for the year 2024-25, according to an official notification.

Other office bearers and members of the Central Council of Delhi University Students' Union (DUSU) include Professor Raj Kishore Sharma as the chief returning officer and Rajesh Singh as the returning officer, it said.

Sharma is from the Department of Chemistry, while Singh is a librarian. According to the notification dated August 29, the vice-chancellor has also appointed



the principals of the colleges and the heads of the institutions affiliated with the DUSU as election officers for the conduct of the election of the Central Council in their respective institutions for the year 2024-25. In last year's DUSU polls, which took place after a gap of three years due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the RSS-affiliated ABVP won three cen-

tral panel posts, including that of the president, and the Congress's student wing NSUI bagged the remaining one.

Tushar Dedha of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) won the post of DUSU president, defeating the NSUI's Hitesh Gulia. The Congress student wing's Abhi Dahiya bagged the post of vice-president.

World Bank discusses financing of RRTS corridors

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A high-level delegation from the World Bank visited the National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC) corporate office to discuss ongoing and future collaborations in urban transit. The primary focus of the discussion was on financing the upcoming Rapid Rail Transit System (RRTS) corridors. The delegation, led by Pankaj Gupta, Regional Director for Infrastructure at the World Bank, met with the NCRTC team, headed by Managing Director Shalabh Goel.

The World Bank is a multi-lateral development bank approved by the Government of India to fund the RRTS corridor between Delhi-Gurgaon-SNB. The Bank has previously partnered with NCRTC on various initiatives, including studies on providing logistics services through RRTS corridors and exploring Transit-Oriented



Development (TOD) potential along the upcoming RRTS routes. This partnership has been highly productive, characterized by a collaborative approach to advancing sustainable and efficient transport infrastructure in the National Capital Region.

During their visit, the delegation appreciated the advanced technologies deployed by NCRTC in implementing India's first RRTS project and was particularly impressed by NCRTC's ability to meet the targeted timelines for the Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut corridor—an impressive achievement for such a large-scale & complex infrastructure pro-

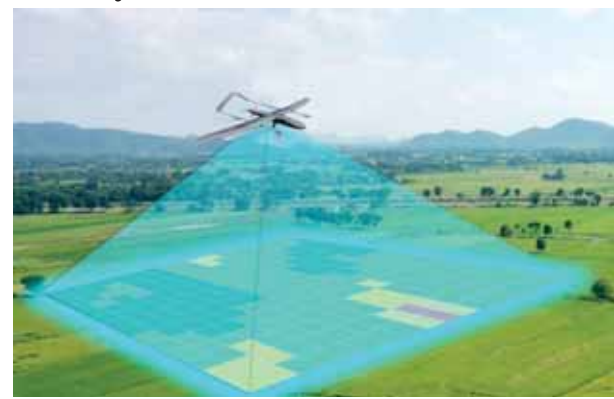
ject. The emphasis on providing seamless multimodal integration at various RRTS stations was also well-received.

The delegation noted NCRTC's development of a substantial capacity of experts and a robust knowledge base, which could greatly benefit other organizations in urban transit. The delegation also expressed a strong interest in exploring further collaboration with NCRTC, marking a significant step toward strengthening the partnership and paving the way for future urban transit developments.

Drone survey soon to curb land encroachment

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In an effort to combat land encroachments in the national capital, Delhi Development Authority (DDA), steered by Lt Governor/Chairman, DDA V K Saxena, on Thursday signed a tripartite memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), and Survey of India (SoI) to carry out drone survey to determine current status of land in the city, DDA officials said on Friday.



Giving details, they said the MoU aims to generate geospatial data by survey and mapping activities which will act as base for integration of data of DDA, MCD and various other departments in NCT of Delhi including Revenue Department, Housing Department, Urban Development, PWD, Irrigation Department, Environment Department, Agriculture Department, Forest Department, Disaster Management, to maximize resource utilization and ensure comprehensive coverage of all areas under their respective

jurisdictions.

The scope of the work in the MoU includes Data Acquisition, Geo-referencing of existing Cadastral Maps with ORI and Vectorisation, Vectorisation and Linking of Layout Plan (LoP) with geo-referenced vector data of existing cadastral maps, Creation of Topographic Template, Resurvey for Plot Boundary/Property for updation and collection of ownership data, Digitalisation of data/records of various departments for integration with administrative boundary/topographical feature, Storage and

management of data acquired/generated, Creation of LIS/GIS ready data, Development of Geo-Portal, Training of officials.

With the signing of this MoU, it is expected that both DDA and MCD will be able to better identify encroachments, unauthorized constructions, and change detection in their respective jurisdictions which will enable timely decision making and result in prompt and swift action, thereby helping in planned development of Delhi as per MPD. Officials said the Lt. Governor, who had been faced with lack

of concrete knowledge with regards to status of various government lands in several review meetings chaired by him had been consistently flagging the lack of real ground status and personally monitored the entire development, bringing the three agencies together.

In the month of August 2024 itself, two meetings were conducted under his chairmanship on the issue. "This absolute lack of clarity and actual ground status had been flagged by different Courts that had

also instructed the land owning agencies to adopt advanced technological solutions to map the actual status of land in the National Capital and encroachment on government lands.

In the penultimate meeting this month, Saxena was shown the results of a trial run that had been conducted over an area of 50 sq. kms. The results had been very encouraging, with high resolution images of even 1x1" area being mapped clearly by the drones.

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For details of Qualification, Experience, Emoluments, please refer TCIL website (www.tcil.net.in)

The last date for receipt of applications is 13.09.2024

Mamata a liar, says BJP

Has done nothing to protect women in West Bengal: Malviya

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Friday slammed West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee calling her a "liar" and asked her to explain why she has not done anything to ensure implementation of existing "stringent" rules and regulations to protect women in her state.

This came after Mamata wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, reiterating her request for stringent central legislation and exemplary punishment on heinous crimes like rape and murder.

She also sought mandatory provision for time-bound disposal of cases of rape/rape and murder. "It is incumbent on Mamata to explain why the West Bengal Government hasn't done anything for implementing the stringent rules and regulations, which exist for protecting women and girls," BJP co-incharge for West Bengal Amit Malviya said in a social media post. "Stop writing letters. Answer the questions. You are accountable," he said.



In her letter, Mamata said she was yet to receive a reply from the Prime Minister on the issue that she had flagged in her previous letter to him. The Chief Minister, however, said she received a communication from the Union Women and Child Development (WCD) Minister Annapurna Devi. Maintaining that the letter by the WCD Minister "barely attends the gravity of the issue" raised by her, Banerjee wrote, "The seriousness of the subject and its relevance to the society have not been adequately appreciated while



sending out this generic reply." Banerjee, in her letter to the Prime Minister, mentioned that 88 fast-track special courts and 62 POCSO-designated courts are already functioning in West Bengal on State funding. Reacting sharply, Malviya said, "Mamata is a liar." "Annapurna Devi, Union Minister of Women and Child Development, responded to West Bengal Chief Minister on August 25, 2024. In her letter, in point 4, she (the WCD Minister) specifically mentions West Bengal Government not

setting up even a single fast track Court for addressing rape and POCSO related cases," the BJP Leader said. He also posted on social media a copy of the WCD Minister's letter to the West Bengal Chief Minister. Malviya said as many as seven cases of rape, mostly of minors, and in some cases murders too have been reported in West Bengal in the last 48 hours. "But in the last 48 hours, Mamata has been engaged in every deplorable act — that a civilised Chief Minister would be ashamed of — from issuing open letters to clarifications, from threatening and abusing doctors to inciting nationwide arson," he said in another social media post. He called Mamata a "failed Home and Health Minister" of the State and alleged that she is preoccupied with suppressing evidences of her corruption and incompetence in the RG Kar Hospital rape-and-murder case. "But, enough is enough. The awakened conscience of Bengal now calls for her accountability," the BJP leader added.



PM Modi to visit Brunei, Singapore in September: MEA

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to visit Brunei and Singapore in the first week of September, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Friday. The Prime Minister will travel to Brunei on September 3-4, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal announced at his media briefing. This will be the first bilateral visit of an Indian Prime Minister to Brunei, he said. This visit will also mark 40 years of the establishment of the diplomatic ties between India and Brunei, Jaiswal said. From there, Prime Minister Modi is slated to visit Singapore on September 4-5 at the invitation of his Singaporean counterpart, the MEA said.

JPC hears views of Muslim organisations on Waqf Bill

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Joint Parliamentary Committee met here for the second time on Friday to hear the views of Muslim bodies on the contentious Waqf (Amendment) Bill which seeks to reform the registration process for Waqf properties through a centralised portal. During the day-long meeting, the panel headed by BJP's Jagdambika Pal will hear the views of stakeholders, including the All India Sunni Jamiyatul Ulama, Mumbai, and Delhi-based Indian Muslims for Civil Rights (IMCR). The Bill is the first major initiative of the BJP-led NDA Government aimed at reforming the registration process for Waqf properties. Besides this, establishing a Central Waqf Council alongside State Waqf Boards with representation to Muslim women and non-Muslim representatives are also among the proposed reforms. 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 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. In its marathon first meeting earlier this month, opposition MPs flagged objections over a host of provisions as the Union Minority Affairs Ministry made a presentation in the proposed law. Sources said BJP members in the meeting lauded the proposed amendments, including the provisions which seek to empower women. Meanwhile, the Joint Committee on Friday sought suggestions from stakeholders, experts and other institutions on the proposed law. The Bill seeks to reforming the registration process for Waqf properties through a centralised portal. According to a statement issued by the Lok Sabha Secretariat, the committee led by BJP's Jagdambika Pal has

asked for "views/suggestions from the public in general and NGOs, experts, stakeholders and institutions in particular" considering the "wider implications" of the Bill. People have been asked to share their suggestions in writing in the next 15 days. The memoranda and suggestions submitted to the committee would form part of the records of the Committee and would be treated as "confidential", it said. Those who wish to appear before the committee, besides submitting views in writing, have been asked to specifically indicate so in their correspondence. 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 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.



Five billion people globally consume less iodine, vitamin E, calcium: Study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A recent study published in The Lancet Global Health journal has revealed people across all age groups in India and globally, both men and women, are consuming inadequate amounts of micronutrients critical for health, including iron, calcium and folate. The study is the first to provide estimates of insufficient consumption of 15 micronutrients across 185 countries, taken through diets without the use of supplements, according to an international team, including researchers from Harvard University, US. The findings suggested that around the world, almost 70 per cent, or over five billion, people do not consume enough iodine, vitamin E, and calcium. The researchers also found that within a country and an age group, more women were consuming inadequate amounts of iodine, vitamin B12 and iron, compared to men, whereas more men were consuming inadequate amounts of magnesium, vitamin B6, zinc and vitamin C, compared to women. In India, while more women consumed insufficient

amounts of iodine, compared to men, more men consumed inadequate amounts of zinc and magnesium, compared to women, the team found. While analyses over the past 10 years have looked at micronutrient deficiencies, the researchers said large data gaps remain for many micronutrients and population groups. In the study, the authors used publicly available data from the Global Dietary Database to estimate the prevalence of insufficient nutrient intakes for 99.3 per cent of the global population. Men and women aged 10-30 years were most prone to low-levels of calcium intake, especially in South Asia, Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, the team pointed out. The authors said the findings could be used by public health professionals to target populations in need of dietary interventions. They added that since they did not account for intake of fortified foods or supplements, the results could possibly be an overestimate for some key nutrients in particular locations where people consume high amounts of fortified foods and supplements.

Sharad rejects proposal to step up security at his Delhi house

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Nationalist Congress Party-SP (NCP-SP) chief Sharad Pawar, accorded Z-plus protective cover recently, is learnt to have turned down certain measures suggested by security agencies. The Centre accorded him the Z-plus cover of the Central Reserve Police Force's (CRPF) VIP security wing after a threat assessment review by central agencies. However, Pawar is learnt to have conveyed to them that he has not been told why his security is being beefed up. The 83-year-old former Maharashtra Chief Minister is learnt to have rejected the proposals to deploy additional security personnel inside his house in the national Capital, change the vehicle he uses to travel within the city and that he be escorted by two security personnel inside his vehicle. Pawar was also amenable to increasing the height of the boundary walls of his house in Delhi as part of the enhanced security measures. The former Defence Minister is learnt to have conveyed this to the representatives of security agencies the CRPF and the Delhi Police at a meeting here on Friday. Besides them, representatives of the Delhi Fire Service, the Central Public Works Department, the New Delhi Municipal Council and the Union Home Ministry were also part of the meeting. Sources had said after the assessment recommended a strong security cover for Pawar, the Union Home Ministry asked the CRPF to give him Z-plus protection.

Graduation degree must for pharmacist position within CGHS

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

To elevate professional standards for pharmacists in the Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) and address the sector's longstanding demands, the Modi Government has implemented new recruitment rules mandating a graduation degree as the minimum educational qualification for pharmacist positions within CGHS. A notification in this regard was issued by the Union Health Ministry recently. Till now, the qualification required for the pharmacists post in CGHS was a 12th class pass with science subjects (Physics, Chemistry, and Biology) and a Diploma in

Pharmacy from a recognized institution. Additionally, the age limit for candidates applying for the post has been increased from 25 to 27 years, according to a recent notification from the Union Health Ministry. This adjustment is intended to provide a broader age range for potential candidates, making the recruitment process more inclusive. Baldev Kumar, a senior pharmacist and central council member of the Pharmacy Council of India, welcomed the new RR, noting that they represent a significant shift in qualification requirements and age limits. He highlighted that candidates holding a



Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm.D) degree from a recognized Central or State Government university or institute are now also eligible for pharmacist positions in CGHS. This inclusion acknowledges advanced qualifications and may attract highly skilled professionals. Vikas Jain, General Secretary of the All India CGHS Employees Association, echoed similar sentiments.

He stated that the direct impact of this change will be on the CGHS department. With the new rules, only graduate and experienced pharmacists will be eligible for positions. He called the decision a significant victory for the pharmacist community, which has long sought more respectable positions and salary scales commensurate with their qualifications and experience. While the qualification requirement has been increased, the salary scale remains unchanged. However, Jain pinned hopes that a future pay commission may revise the salary scale to align with the new qualifications, leading to

potential salary improvements. Overall, these new rules are a positive development for the pharmacist community, aligning job qualifications with industry standards and potentially enhancing the professional status of pharmacists in the CGHS, said the pharmacists. CGHS facilities providing a range of healthcare services, including outpatient and inpatient care, diagnostics, and medicines are utilized by central Government Employees, pensioners, Central Government Autonomous Bodies, Central Government Undertaking Employees and Certain State Government Employees.

Joint Commanders' meet to begin soon

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The first Joint Commanders' Conference (JCC) is set to take place at the Headquarters Central Command, Lucknow from September 4, 5. Themed 'Sashakt aur Surakshit Bharat: Transforming the Armed Forces', the conference will be attended by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, and will serve as the pivotal platform for undertaking internal process reforms' within the armed forces, Defence Ministry said here on Friday. Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan will inaugurate the convocation on September four, which brings together the apex level hierarchy from the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces. The two-day deliberations

will focus on analysing the impact of regional and global geo-political disruptions and the commensurate demands that are likely to be placed upon the reforms being undertaken by the armed forces. Preparing for Future Wars, Jointness and Integration among the constituent services and technology absorption, riding on the Government's 'Atmanirbharta' initiative to achieve self-reliance in Defence, will be areas receiving prime emphasis. The JCC is planned to be developed as a crucial forum for exchange of ideas, strategies and best practices among India's top military leadership, reinforcing the country's commitment to a strong and safer future and achieving strategic autonomy in defence.

SC terms recovery agent firm as 'group of goons'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Termining a recovery agent firm of a bank as a "group of goons" who did not return the vehicle seized from a man despite one time settlement of the loan amount, the Supreme Court has directed the West Bengal Police to file charge sheet against the company within two months. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan, which directed for payment of compensation to one Debasish Bosu Roy Chowdhury who took a loan of Rs 15.15 lakh for purchasing a bus for plying in Kolkata, directed Bank of India to recover the amount from the recovery agent. "Given the observations made by the High Court and the plea taken by the petitioners, we find that respondent No. 4, a recovery agent, in actuality appears to be a group of goons, who use their muscle power to harass loanees on behalf of the petitioner-bank," the bench said in its recent order. It noted an FIR was lodged against the recovery agent firm M/s City Investigation and Detective for failing to return the vehicle in proper condition and said, "The Commissioner of Police of the concerned area is directed to ensure that investigation of FIR dated July 5, 2023, registered at Police Station Sodepur in West Bengal, under Sections 406, 420 and 471 of the IPC, is taken to its logical conclusion without any delay, and charge sheet is filed within a period of two months." The recovery agent firm, however, later returned the vehicle but in a damaged condition, with chassis and engine numbers changed. "The petitioner-bank shall be entitled to recover the compensation amount paid to



respondent No. 1 (Chowdhury) from respondent No. 4 (recovery agent firm), or any other person found to be responsible for the damage caused to the vehicle," the bench said. It directed that thereafter, the trial Court would take cognisance of the charge sheet and proceed in accordance with law. The bench further directed, "If there is any license/authority letter granted by a competent authority to respondent No. 4 to act as recovery agent, the petitioner-bank is directed to make a separate complaint to that authority, regarding cancellation of such permission/authority letter." The top Court refused to interfere with the Calcutta High Court order of May 16 by which the bank was asked to pay Chowdhury Rs 5 lakh interim compensation for its conduct in not returning the vehicle to him. The High Court had granted liberty to the loanee to approach the civil Court for higher compensation. Chowdhury had approached the bank for a loan of Rs 15.15 and upon satisfaction of the bank's conditions, his loan was sanctioned and to be repaid along with interest in 84 equated monthly installments of Rs 26,502 commencing from December 2014. The vehicle (bus) in question was hypothecated to the bank. It was contended by the bank

that from January 2018, Chowdhury started defaulting in payment of monthly installment and his account was declared a Non-Performing Asset (NPA) on May 31, 2018. The outstanding amount of loan as on date of NPA stood at Rs 10.23 lakh. The top Court noted that the bank hired the services of M/s City Investigation and Detective, the so-called recovery agent, who was aided by the Government authorities in seizing Chowdhury's vehicle for and on behalf of the bank. The bank claimed in the High Court that the market value of the vehicle as on July 31, 2019 was only Rs 2.37 lakh and the distress sale value was only Rs 1.66 lakh. In March 2021, Chowdhury approached the bank for One-Time Settlement (OTS) of Rs 1.8 lakh towards the entire outstanding. The bank agreed to the proposal to accept the OTS offer though it was only 17.75 per cent of the outstanding dues. "For reasons best known to the officers of the bank, a one-time settlement (OTS) was executed between the bank and respondent No. 1 (loanee) for a paltry sum of Rs 1,80,000. The said amount was admittedly deposited by respondent No. 1 (loanee) with the Bank," the top court noted in its order. It said the vehicle, however, was not released to the loanee, even though the bank was bound to do so, having accepted the OTS. "After great efforts, the vehicle/bus was recovered, but by that time its chassis number and engine number were changed and some of the spare parts were also removed. Also, the vehicle was not in working condition," the bench noted.

Women doctors feel insecure on night shifts, some carry weapons: IMA

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A study by the Indian Medical Association (IMA) has highlighted alarming safety concerns among doctors, with a significant number, particularly women, reporting feelings of extreme insecurity during night shifts so much so that some have begun carrying weapons for self-defence. This comprehensive survey, involving 3,885 respondents across 22 States, was conducted in the wake of the alleged rape and murder of a trainee doctor at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata. It said about one-third of respondents felt "unsafe" (24.1 per cent) or "very unsafe" (11.4 per cent)

during night shifts. Around 45 per cent of doctors reported not having access to a duty room during night shifts. Those with duty rooms generally felt safer. However, many duty rooms were overcrowded, lacked privacy, and had inadequate facilities, such as missing locks and no attached bathrooms. There were infrastructure issues also. Duty rooms were often located far from patient care areas (53 per cent), and one-third lacked attached bathrooms, requiring doctors to venture outside late at night. The study has recommended enhanced Security, improved infrastructure and legislative measures. These suggestions come amid the Union Health



Ministry's directives to the States urging them to increase the number of trained security personnel, install CCTV cameras, improve lighting, and implement alarm systems. It has also asked to ensure duty rooms are secure and equipped with basic amenities, and address overcrowding and privacy issues. Some doctors reported carrying weapons for self-

defense due to unsafe conditions. Issues like verbal and physical threats from patients under the influence, and inappropriate contact in crowded emergency rooms were noted. The study highlights the urgent need for policy changes to enhance security and infrastructure in healthcare settings. Dr. Siddharth Tara, Convener of the Progressive Medicos and Scientists Forum, emphasised the urgent need for the survey, highlighting that the Indian healthcare system relies heavily on women, including ASHA workers, female nurses, and doctors. He asserted that these professionals deserve to work with dignity and called for the National Medical

Commission to derecognise medical colleges that fail to ensure the safety of their trainee doctors, citing a lack of administrative accountability. Dr. Shweta Sharma, a psychologist and head of Mansa Global Foundation, described the IMA survey as revealing and critical. She underscored the severe mental trauma experienced by female doctors following the tragic incident at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata. Noting that similar incidents have been reported in the media, she stressed the need for an urgent and comprehensive safety network to ensure doctors can perform their duties without fear or undue pressure. Ends



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PAPER WITH PASSION

The dark side

Sexual exploitation in the Kerala film industry revealed by the Hema Committee report sends shockwaves across the country

It is a "me too" moment of the Kerala film industry. The image of the Kerala film industry has touched the rock bottom after Hema committee has reported rampant sexual abuse, lack of basic amenities for women and more. It is all the more shocking as it is happening in the state which has given the most progressive films to the country. The Kerala film industry, known for producing some of India's most critically acclaimed and beloved films, is now under the shadow of a severe crisis. A landmark report from the Hema Committee has exposed the deep-rooted gender issues and sexual exploitation that plague this vibrant film hub, revealing a shocking underbelly that contradicts the industry's artistic achievements. The 290-page report, prepared by a three-member panel headed by retired Kerala High Court Justice K. Hema, offers a scathing indictment of the Malayalam-language film industry. It paints a grim picture of a workplace where sexual harassment is rampant and systemic, and where a "mafia of powerful men" wields control, leaving women vulnerable to exploitation. The Hema Committee was established by the Kerala government in 2017, in the aftermath of a high-profile case that sent shockwaves through the industry. The Hema Committee's findings have laid bare the systemic problems that have long been ignored or downplayed. The report uncovers a litany of abuses, from the lack of basic amenities like toilets and changing rooms for junior artists to the frequent demands for sexual favors by powerful men in the industry. It describes the harrowing experiences of

women who have been forced to endure long hours without access to toilets, leading to severe health issues. The panel also found that sexual harassment is not only widespread but often goes unchecked and unreported due to the fear of retaliation. As expected, the Kerala film fraternity has vehemently denied all the allegations. Despite the damning findings, the Association of Malayalam Movie Artists (AMMA), a prominent industry body, has denied the accusations. The organization's general secretary, Siddique, dismissed the claims, stating that conditions for women on film sets have improved in recent years and that the industry is not controlled by a small group of powerful men. However, the report's release has sparked widespread outrage, with activists and opposition leaders demanding immediate action against those implicated. Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has vowed to take action if any woman who testified before the committee comes forward to file a complaint. As the industry grapples with these revelations, there is hope that this moment of reckoning will lead to lasting change. The Kerala film industry has long been celebrated for its artistic achievements; now, it must also become a beacon of respect, safety, and dignity for all who work within it.

PICTALK



Aukhra Nimbarka Peeth Mahanta Asthal, a 250-year-old Mutt in East Bardhaman

Environment: A casualty of overtourism



KOTA SRIRAJ

The future of India's tourism sector depends on a delicate balance between ecological integrity and economic growth, but it needs to be addressed now

Recently the Mayor of the picturesque Santorini Island in Greece had to declare an emergency as 17000 tourists descended on the island in one day. The beleaguered residents of the island were advised to stay indoors as swarms of tourists took over the hapless location putting immense stress on infrastructure, accommodation and the local environment including the verdant beaches. This has triggered protests by the locals who took out rallies holding placards that read "no more mass tourism."

Overtourism is characterised by increased pollution and strain on resources like water and energy in a destination that is overwhelmed by an excessive number of tourists, to a point where it negatively affects the local environment, biodiversity, and infrastructure. The telling impact of overtourism is evident in India too. Every year the popular hill stations of north India such as Kullu, Manali and Mussoorie witness serpentine tourist traffic jams that extend over many kilometres to gain entry to these towns.

Thanks to this excess footfall the average ambient temperatures have gone up in many of the Himalayan tourist hot spots. The rising temperatures in these locations have in turn altered the weather patterns. Over the last two decades, the Indian Himalayan region has experienced a consistent decline in snowfall days, severely affecting destinations such as Gulmarg and Auli, which have seen a decrease in skiing tourists and shorter seasons, resulting in lower revenue and local economic strain. Even far-flung religious destinations such as Joshimath have not been immune to this heavy tourism torture with over 10 crore people visiting this revered Himalayan town every year resulting in ecological issues such as land subsidence and crumbling biodiversity. Down south popular tourist states such as Kerala are experiencing the painful consequences of rampant tourism. The above-normal rainfall combined with indiscriminate human activity in the form of



tourism resulted in a change in land use patterns in the plantation areas across Kerala. The God's Own Country became a victim of human greed as over-tourism led to increased demand for hotels, restaurants and related businesses. Consequently, indiscriminate building activity on hillsides, exploitation of land and deforestation took place leading to irreversible damage to the environment besides terrain instability issues. The recent tragedy in Wayanad is an unfortunate example that consumed 500 lives and left 400 people injured besides causing immense loss of property. The unfortunate impact of tourism is accurately captured by the findings of the French start-up Murmuration specialising in monitoring the environmental impact of tourism using satellite data. The firm has stated that 80% of tourists visit just 10% of the world's tourist spots leading to bigger crowds in fewer locations. If this trend continues, the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) estimates that by 2030, the number of worldwide tourists, which peaked at 1.5 billion in 2019, will reach 1.8 billion. Furthermore, by 2030 the transport-related carbon emissions from tourism are expected to grow by 25% from 2016 levels. Some countries like Australia have taken



THANKS TO THIS EXCESS FOOTFALL THE AVERAGE AMBIENT TEMPERATURES HAVE GONE UP IN MANY OF THE HIMALAYAN TOURIST HOT SPOTS. THE RISING TEMPERATURES IN THESE LOCATIONS HAVE IN TURN ALTERED THE WEATHER PATTERNS

broad steps to address the issue. The Australian eco-certification programme for instance promotes minimal environmental impact tourism, which helps tourists make responsible travel choices. South Africa on the other hand supports ethical tourism through its fair-trade tourism certification, which ensures fair wages and working conditions in tourism enterprises. Closer home, Bhutan has adopted a "high value, low volume" policy, which serves a dual purpose and involves a daily fee paid by tourists, which helps fund local community services and limits tourist numbers to prevent over-tourism. However, India has unique problems and needs more specific and aggressive measures to rein in the issue of over-tourism. The beginning point can be the tourism supply chain sector comprising travel companies, cruise companies, ticketing firms and package tour providers. These entities must bear a fair share of responsibility for ensuring a balanced tourist traffic flow across the destinations in India. This can be done by abstaining from overselling usual tourist destinations and redirecting travellers to other locations. This will prevent overcrowding of a few traditional tourist hot spots and bring

down environmental stress. The tourism ministry in collaboration with the Ministry of environment working in tandem can employ innovative initiatives to protect the ecology and biodiversity of popular tourist destinations. This partnership can start by first regulating the tour and ticketing companies. This can be ended by registering each tourist operator and weeding out illegal entities. The dual ministry partnership can usher in a new era of environmentally conscious tourism. As a part of this, both the ministries can provide unique and non-transferable registration IDs to tourism companies and then periodic workshops can be held for these bonafide members to sensitise them about ecology, biodiversity and climate change issues. As a part of this partnership, the ministries can also develop algorithm-based software for the tourism sector companies that helps in automatically limiting the tourist flow to popular destinations by limiting hotel and transport availability after a certain quota of tourists are accommodated. This can go a long way in reducing the tourist burden on the environment in these destinations. (The author is a policy analyst. The views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Let us have eco-friendly festivals



India is a country where festivals are celebrated with immense joy and enthusiasm. However, these celebrations also bring forth significant challenges. Every year, Ganesh Chaturthi is celebrated with great fervor, and this year will be no different, with festivities reaching new heights. But alongside the excitement, one of the most pressing challenges we face is environmental health.

Our past experiences have shown that festivals often lead to severe water pollution, particularly due to the disposal of idols and ritual remains. These materials, often containing silicon dioxide and sodium carbonate, are harmful to aquatic life, leading to their deaths and causing significant water contamination. This, in turn, affects the quality of life, disrupts food chains, and threatens the balance of our ecosystems. To address this issue, people across the country must adopt the practice of making idols from clay and soil. This eco-friendly approach could be a significant asset in preserving environmental health. With many species of flora and fauna already endangered or on the brink of extinction, it is crucial to embrace new, innovative methods to celebrate festivals. By doing so, we can protect life on Earth while maintaining the same energy and enthusiasm in our celebrations.

Sarthakj Sharma | Ujjain

treatment! Less said about the worst woes of patients, rushing from towns and villages several hundred kilometers away, suffering from cancer or requiring dialysis and operations the better! Yes, unlike the muscle-flexing stone-hurling violent goons, the "protests" by the "sacrosanct" Doctors are "peaceful" indeed
Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

BENGAL GOING DOWN THE HILL

Madam — To the one of the kind gesture, recently the Indian Air Force launched the comic book to inspire youngster for joining Air Force. So far, joining the air force is been a sort of privilege for the men and women. But after the case of Agniveer is trolled so much politically by the opposition parties and there were rumours of dismantling this particular scheme, one established in the governance, the craze of joining force got a little hurt. Although patriotism is always a biggest inspiration for all the young people to

serve their motherland with utmost honesty and integrity. But the novel idea of comic book to share the valour and patriotism of our exuberant commanders and officers. The nation is safe on the clutches of brave hands, we hope that more and more valour loving people come from the society to serve the nation's cause. In conclusion, while the Agniveer scheme has faced political scrutiny, the spirit of patriotism remains a driving force for many young people eager to serve their motherland. By showcasing the courage and dedication of our commanders and officers, this novel approach helps reignite the passion for joining the Air Force. The nation's safety lies in the hands of these brave individuals, and we hope to see more valiant citizens stepping forward to serve the nation with honor and integrity.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

CAN GENDER JUSTICE BE ENSURED

Madam — With the revelations of the Hema Committee, the masks of many prominent figures in the Malayalam film industry are falling apart. This is a good start. But are such degradations only in Malayalam cinema? Is this not the case in Kollywood and Bollywood? Aren't ordinary women more or less humiliated in many public places except in the government sector? Isn't this the reason for the age-old awareness of the society towards gender justice? How do organized religions treat their women? Do women have their own voice? After the Hema Committee's revelations, will the beleaguered creeps examine the condition of the women around them? It is not rituals and prayers that children should be taught from an early age. Rather, the ability to react like the heroine in Jaya Jaya Jaya jayaha should be developed. Only then will society, the society's copies and remakes of cinema and its workers, especially actresses, be saved. Which party will take the initiative? Which religion will come forward?
Unnikrishnan Mangalasseril | Malappuram

ARE DOCTORS' PORTESTS PEACEFUL?

Madam — This is in response to the news report titled "Doctors on strike refuse to listen to Mamata" (August 29). Junior Doctors of government medical colleges of West Bengal, who are on cease-work for around 3 weeks, have not only condemned the violence and mayhem unleashed by a political outfit in the guise of "students" on the 27th day of August in Kolkata; but also gone to the hilarious extent of terming their own "protests" as "peaceful"! While goons and lumpens are directly tormenting the innocents through muscle-flexing and physical assaults resulting in wounds of the victims; the Doctors are tormenting the innocent vulnerable patients, suffering from "wounds" in heart lungs kidney brain liver stomach eyes through the "non-violent" path of refusal of medical

Automation vs authenticity: Can AI replace the writer's soul?

Will the essence of storytelling — the reflection of genuine human experience — be lost in the rise of machine-generated content?



ASHA IYER KUMAR

Way back in the early 2000s, when I started writing my debut novel, it seemed like a daunting task that would take an entire lifetime to complete. Driven purely by my literary instincts and an eagerness to create something authentic, I took four years to finish the story and become an author. To be an author in those days meant a lot. Not many people ventured to do it given the time and effort that one had invested in the process. Cut to the new times, and becoming an author is as easy as blowing bubbles, thanks to the emergence of AI.



Someone I know recently said that they have a target of publishing 10 books this year, and I wasn't surprised. But can AI-assisted writing be a patch on creative writing that comes from the inner realms of a writer filled with genuine emotions and subjective thought? As a creative writing coach for children, I have often wondered if children will ever need to learn to write in future, and if even readers will stop caring if a piece of writing has come from AI's backyard or the annals of original human contemplation and creativity. I have floated this question to people and the responses have been divided. Some believe that in a world that is pressed for time, the source of thought is not as important as the thought itself. If served in an easily digestible manner, it doesn't matter where it comes from — man or machine. While this view has resulted in the spawning of authors around the world, what remains a cardinal truth is that a story or a piece of writing can be resonant with readers only when it is generated in human consciousness. The chief purpose of art and literature is to be able to strike a chord with readers and not to just disseminate information. The reader is

looking for a part of herself in the stories, a reflection of common human experiences and the books they read to be echo chambers of their own lives in parts or whole. Authentic storytelling brings with it a chunk of the writer's soul and it seeks to merge with the soul of the readers. Anything that is generated by a vast reservoir of ready-made ideas will be too perfect to evoke responses. Students may be able to produce perfect sentences and passages that will answer a question, but they will not reflect the personality and character of the writer. What makes a genuine piece of writing enduring and endearing is the voice of the writer and their ability to draw on personal experiences, intuition and a strong need to connect with the audience. No matter how the concepts are laid out in an artificial piece of story, they will be less distinctive and more formulaic and impersonal. Maybe, our hustling world needs only quick fixes, and as we discover newer methods to replicate human thought, our spirit will also capitulate and settle for

the synthetic form of writing. It's again about what the audience chooses that will determine the future of creativity. If AI can satiate the population, then why would original writers spend time and energy on creating something from the core of their hearts? It is a scary outlook to hold, as a writer and creative writing coach. While a part of me still refuses to believe the doomsday scenario, I am still betting on ethical and moral considerations to deter people from going all out and claiming themselves to be authors and writers without much intellectual investment. I am under no illusion that writing will remain sacrosanct as it used to be. It will soon become generic and predictable. Or maybe, going forward, AI will be able to generate stylised texts that mimic the voice of a particular writer and erase the distinction between the real and the unreal. It's a scary and depressive scenario, but one that we, as authentic writers, must brace ourselves for. (The author is a columnist and writing coach based in Dubai; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

RELATIONSHIPS AND SPIRITUALITY

We must learn to see others as souls like ourselves, worthy of respect and understanding



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

Yes, spirituality can help in maintaining good relationships. I will cite several examples, where solutions are available in spirituality. Beginning with the common fault of seeing fault in others, don't we have faults? Therefore, others must have too. How should we deal with this problem? Lord Krishna guides in the Bhagavad-Geeta, "We should not cause confusion in the minds of ignorant persons, rather should pacify." (3.26) Let us assume that our assessment of other person is right.

Then, accept it and somehow manage the situation. We should be able to do so if we indeed are wise. Another common flaw is to get angry with someone and maintain anger. What benefit is there in doing so? All we will do is to cause harm to ourselves. The Geeta illuminates, "From anger, foolishness results; from foolishness, bewilderment results; from bewilderment, loss of intelligence occurs; and by the loss of intelligence, a person is doomed." (2.63) This sequence is repeated in the lives of all those who harbour anger. How does spirituality help? Forgive and be done with it. What benefit will be derived by harbouring anger?

Rather one can be a happy person. (5.23) Thoughts of illicit acts are another common problem. Who can claim that he or she doesn't get them: The only exceptions are highly advanced devotees like Swami Vivekananda. What is the spiritual solution? Lord Krishna has drawn the line when He stated, "I am passion in beings, according to religious principles." (7.11) Otherwise, get ready to burn as warned in this verse, "By this insatiable fire in the form of lust, which is the eternal enemy of a knowledgeable person knowledge is covered." (3.39) Close relationships



like marriage require special attention. In spiritual terms, we are packages with both good and bad. Our natures are parts of these. When we are born we bring them into our present lives. These are parts of our fate and don't change much in our lifetime, mainly the major factors. This is the solution for marriage partners. We must accept them as they are. Disliking would not help; acceptance will, as long as there is no violation of dharma like maintaining illicit relationships. From the Geeta we learn that even a man of knowledge endeavours according to his nature; persons follow nature. What will repression do? (3.33) God can help if we are determined, but it is a very slow process. Another major deterrent to good relationships is a clash of egos. Everyone is trying to prove his or her superiority, whereas there is only one superior, i.e. God. We are all small, ignorant and quite helpless really.

This is what ego means. Sooner we give up the false sense of superiority and become humble better we will be served. Humility is a great quality to achieve relationships. One will begin appreciating instead, which endears us to one and all. One will have no dearth of friends, which all egoists lack. Just like everyone has faults, everyone has some good qualities also. Look for them and you will find plenty.

Make a habit of thanking whenever some favour is done to us; this habit entitles us to more favours. Lord Krishna has asked us to see all others as souls just like us. (5.18) There must be basic regard for all human beings. We are judgemental, and, unfortunately, suffer due to our very limited knowledge. How much do we know about anything in its totality – the Big Picture? Only God knows. Therefore, our expectations are very high from others and, inevitably, very little from ourselves. If we are not so judgemental our relations with others will be conducive to dealing. We will appreciate that the circumstances of others may not be so favourable to them. We will be better served in dealing with others if we embrace spirituality. We will not step in the three doors to hell, which are lust, anger and greed. And if we can control our hateful tendencies, we will endear ourselves to others greatly.

(The writer is a spiritual teacher, views expressed are personal)

The crisis of residential colonies in Punjab



SUKHDEV SINGH

Despite repeated efforts to curb unauthorised development, the reality remains stark: unauthorised colonies have proliferated, and buyers still face numerous hurdles



In its meeting held on August 14, 2024, the Punjab cabinet decided to remove the requirement of PUDA NOC for the sale of plots in the unapproved residential colonies. But the stated objective "to save the buyers from their struggle for basic civic amenities in these colonies" is the same as used by the successive governments amending the PAPR Act 1995 from time to time while its hollowness is so obvious in the reality on the ground. Every time the law has been amended to make some of its provisions more stringent against the colonisers, it has served them more. For example, the PAPR Act 1995 was amended in 2014 to deal with the promoters or estate agents registered under the act but failing to comply with its provisions.

The amendment changed the punishment of imprisonment from up to three years to a minimum of three years extendable to seven years with a fine from ten thousand to a minimum of Rupees two lac extending to Rupees five lac. But it made the law ineffectual on the offending colonizers in the past. The cycle of stricter punishment and waiver of the offences in the past has been on since 1995 in the name of saving buyers from cheating and deceit. The notifications, issued in the years 2010, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2021, and 2022, amending or adding to the law(s) of PAPRA instantiate the continuity in relief to the colonizers in the name of providing relief to the people. The successive governments have been approving the schemes of instituting the need for a 'no objection certificate' NOC by paying some fee as development charges that the individual plot holders are circumstantially compelled to pay but the real estate agents remain immune to it waiting for the next the cut-off date for the waiver. Given the increased demand for housing and the unregulated activities of "some private colonisers" working with the sole "motive of profits" disregarding "the interests and rights of buyers of plots and flats", the stated objective for repealing the Punjab Regulation of



THE PAPR ACT 1995 WAS AMENDED IN 2014 TO DEAL WITH THE PROMOTERS OR ESTATE AGENTS REGISTERED UNDER THE ACT BUT FAILING TO COMPLY WITH ITS PROVISIONS

colonies Act, 1975 and the legislating Punjab Apartment and Property Regulation Act (PAPRA) 1995 was "to check, control and regulate effectively the activities of such private colonisers and protect the interest of the consumers".

The situation originated from the unpreparedness of the government to meet the rising need for housing and post-1990 privatisation policy without any regulating mechanisms. In hindsight, the Punjab Apartment and Property Regulation Act 1995 was legislated and the Punjab Urban Planning and Development Authority (PUDA) was established to register private colonizers and issue licenses to develop the housing colonies on the agricultural or other land after seeking change in land use (CLU) and approved plans as per rules in PAPR Act 1995.

With a huge financial burden on salaries and infrastructure PUDA and its subsequent regional authorities were tasked to enforce 'obligations on promoters and estate agents' to create all civic amenities within a specified time-frame requiring them to hand over the colony to the respective urban local body after NOCs from all the concerned departments. The stated objective of the act (PAPAR) and the authority (PUDA) since then has been to check the growth of unauthorised colonies and enforce the development in the authorised colonies as per rules.

But unfortunately, it has miserably failed in its two-pronged objective: since 1995 the number of unauthorised colonies has risen to more than 15000 while the number of authorised colonies in comparison is much less.

Yet in the authorised colonies, the enforcement of time-bound assured development is too weak to act for anyone as a motivation to build houses there. The colonisers have sold all the plots in the name of legal colonies plotting a chunk of land on its sidelines without necessary approvals and without developing the approved section to the standards of seeking NOCs from the concerned departments to hand over the colonies to the local body; the irony is that the development authorities prefer not to take any suo moto notice of it. Neither the developer nor any government agency including PUDA undertakes the development responsibility although the rules prescribe stringent action against the coloniser and for PUDA to undertake development by confiscating the mortgaged properties and bank guarantees etc. But PUDA continues to grant extensions year after year while the plot buyer is not able to build the house on the 'legal' plot in a 'legal' colony because the PSPCL does not provide a power supply connection in the absence of NOC.

The officials appointed in PUDA and urban local body (ULB) to enforce and ensure time-bound development in the legal colonies by the licensed private developer finish off by saying that the public facilities in an authorised colony are the responsibility of the colonizer who doesn't give a damn to this responsibility because he understands that the enforcement agencies enforce the law not on those who approach the law not on those who violate the law.

The plot buyers feel legally duped. The unauthorised colonies without change in land use or any

approved plan continued to mushroom where the colonisers created very little infrastructure and sold the plots leaving the plot holders to act as the vote bank approaching the political class for relief. Hence the need for NOCs and their waiver becomes a game of politics rather than a policy. Now that the cycle is complete by the Punjab cabinet decision to waive off the need for NOCs in the unauthorised colonies while the cabinet itself had legislated for the NOCs.

It doesn't matter to the common man which cabinet it was or is; what matters to them is a legal and easy-to-build house policy for them.

Therefore while the government notifies the waiver of NOCs in the unauthorised colonies, it should direct PUDA to confiscate mortgaged properties and bank guarantees to develop all more-than-ten-years colonies and ensure time-bound development of electricity LD systems, sewerage, water supply and roads before selling any plot in the authorised colonies to encourage the planned and legal development and strictly control the unauthorised development in future rather than approve policies to legalise the illegal.

The onus for ensured development should be on the regulator rather than on the buyer of a plot. Let the 2024 notification waiving off the condition of NOCs by the buyers be the last one! Let the common man experience the fundamental right to live a respectable life!

(The writer is a retired professor from Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar and a Member, of the Governing Council, INTACH; views are personal)

Seizing the opportunity in global defence supply gaps

With its growing defence manufacturing capabilities and strategic partnerships, India has the unique opportunity to address the emerging gaps in global defence supplies

The global defence landscape is rapidly evolving, marked by escalating geopolitical conflicts and the increasingly strategic use of denial tactics to restrict access to critical military hardware and technology. Many nations, including India's key strategic partners, are facing unprecedented challenges as essential defence stockpiles deplete, and sophisticated war machines become obsolete or vulnerable to new forms of subversion. In response, major defence suppliers, particularly those in first-world countries, are prioritizing the preservation of their stockpiles over external sales. Amid these challenges, a critical opportunity emerges for India. By adopting a strategically designed approach to filling these gaps and enhanc-



PADMALOCHAN DASH

ing its strategic influence and partnerships, India can play a significant role in addressing the emerging deficits in the global defence supply chain.

Vulnerabilities in the Global Defense Supply Chain: The COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with ongoing conflicts in regions like Ukraine, the Middle East, and the Indo-Pacific, has exposed the fragility of global defence supply chains. As India seeks to position

itself as a reliable and diversified supplier of defence equipment, it is imperative to act promptly. Scaling these capabilities and implementing robust, resilient policies rooted in long-term strategic objectives is critical for India to emerge as a prominent player in the global defence marketplace.

Strengthening Strategic Alliances: India has bolstered its defence partnerships with major global powers, including the United States, Russia, France, and Israel. However, these alliances must evolve beyond transactional arrangements into enduring, reciprocal relationships. For India, every transaction or partnership should be leveraged to bolster the country's ability to produce surpluses

and emerge as a key provider for other nations' defence needs. These strategic alliances should not only enhance India's position as a global player but also provide it with a sustainable competitive edge in the global defence market.

Advancing Indigenous Production Capacity: India has made considerable strides in Indigenous defence production, exemplified by achievements such as the Arjun main battle tank, BrahMos missile, and Tejas fighter jet. However, these successes must evolve to meet the increasing demands of the global defence market. To strengthen its position as a world-class defence producer, India must expand its production capabilities into areas such as military-class UAVs, advanced missile defence sys-



tems, and cutting-edge cyber defence technologies. Additionally, integrating advanced maritime reconnaissance aircraft, anti-submarine warfare systems, and comprehensive surveillance infrastructure into its production portfolio is essential.

India's Indigenous defence production capacity must be enhanced to meet international benchmarks, positioning the country as a dominant

player in filling global defence requirements.

Enhancing Strategic-Critical Manufacturing Projects

India's ambitions to become a leading, self-sufficient defence producer are underscored by initiatives like "Make in India" and Atmanirbhar Bharat. However, the true measure of success will be how well these products align with international demands and address the expanding gaps in the global defence supply chain. India must swiftly adapt to global requirements, ensuring that its products are compatible with international platforms and standards.

To achieve this, the country's policies must prioritize attracting investments in advanced manufacturing infrastructure, supporting defence production

systems, and upgrading critical production expertise. Additionally, enforcing rigorous quality control and fostering an innovation-driven, high-quality production foundation is essential to meeting global defence demands.

Diversification and Global Competitiveness: Diversification within India's defence sector are vital for achieving global competitiveness. A diversified manufacturing base that strategically incorporates public sector units with private enterprises must be developed to create a more adaptable and responsive supply chain.

As India aims to become a major defence supplier, success will depend on developing a sustainable innovation ecosystem that produces tangible

outcomes.

Path Forward:

India as a Leading Defense Supplier India's ambition to emerge as a leading defence supplier demands decisive action and strategic focus. To realize this vision, India must enhance its export capabilities, target key markets, and align with international standards. Success in this arena depends on establishing a firm policy commitment to consistently deliver high-quality, adaptable, and precise defence products tailored to the needs of diverse conflicts, theatres, and warfare requirements.

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Aid group: Israeli missiles hit convoy to hospital in Gaza

AP ■ DUBAI

An Israeli missile hit a convoy carrying medical supplies and fuel to an Emirati hospital in the Gaza Strip, killing several people from a local transportation company, the American Near East Refugee Aid group said Friday. Israel claimed without immediate evidence that it opened fire after gunmen seized the convoy.

The strike killed several people employed by a transportation company that the aid group was using to bring supplies to the Emirates Red Crescent Hospital in Rafah, said Sandra Rasheed, Anera's director for the Palestinian territories.

The strike happened Thursday on the Salah al-Din Road in the Gaza Strip and hit the convoy's first vehicle.

"The convoy, which was coordinated by Anera and approved by Israeli authorities, included an Anera employee who was fortunately unharmed,"



Palestinian civil defense workers clear the rubble from a damaged house following an Israeli military operation in the West Bank refugee camp of Nur Shams, Tulkarem, Friday. AP/PTI

Rasheed said in a statement. "Despite this devastating incident, our understanding is that the remaining vehicles in the convoy were able to continue and successfully deliver the aid to the hospital. We are urgently seeking further details about what happened."

Anera planned to release more information later Friday. The Israeli military did not immediately respond to a request for comment Friday from The Associated Press. However, Israeli military spokesperson Lt. Col. Avichay Adraee posted to the social

platform X that "gunmen seized a car at the head of the convoy (a jeep) and began driving." "After the seizure operation and after confirming the possibility of attacking the militants' vehicle alone, the raid was carried out, as the rest of the convoy vehicles were not harmed and reached their target according to the plan," Adraee wrote. "The operation to target the militants removed the risk of seizing the humanitarian convoy." He added: "The presence of armed men inside a humanitarian convoy in an uncoordinated manner makes it difficult to secure the convoys and their staff and harms the humanitarian effort." The United Arab Emirates, which reached a diplomatic recognition deal with Israel in 2020 and has been providing aid to Gaza since the Israel-Hamas war began, did not immediately acknowledge the attack. Israeli forces have opened fire on other aid convoys in the Gaza Strip.

Houthi video shows Yemeni rebels planted bombs on tanker now threatening Red Sea oil spill

AP ■ DUBAI

Yemen's Houthi rebels released footage on Thursday showing their fighters boarded and placed explosives on a Greek-flagged tanker, setting off blasts that put the Red Sea at risk of a major oil spill. The vessel was abandoned earlier, after the Houthis repeatedly attacked it.

In the video, the Iran-backed Houthis chant their motto as the bombs detonated aboard the oil tanker Sounion: "God is the greatest; death to America; death to Israel; curse the Jews; victory to Islam." The blasts capped the most-serious attack in weeks by the Houthis in their campaign disrupting the \$1 trillion in goods that pass through the Red Sea each year over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip, as well as halting some aid shipments to conflict-ravaged Sudan and Yemen. The Sounion carried some 1 million barrels of oil when the Houthis initially attacked it on Aug 21 with small arms fire, projectiles and a drone boat. A French destroy-

er operating as part of the European Union's Operation Aspidess rescued the Sounion's crew of 25 Filipinos and Russians, as well as four private security personnel, after they abandoned the vessel and took them to nearby Djibouti.

The footage released Thursday shows masked Houthi fighters carrying Kalashnikov-style rifles boarding the Sounion after it was abandoned. The bridge appeared ransacked. Fighters then rigged explosives over hatches on its deck leading to the oil tankers below. At least six simultaneous blasts could be seen in the footage.

The footage, as well as comments by the Houthi's mysterious leader Abdul Malik al-Houthi, confirmed an earlier analysis by The Associated Press that the Houthis boarded and planted explosives on the Sounion. The Houthi-controlled SABA news agency described al-Houthi as saying the Sounion attack shows America "is lying in its claims regarding any deterrence of Yemeni operations supporting Palestine." "The effec-

tiveness of our operations and their control of the situation is acknowledged by the enemies," al-Houthi said.

Western countries and the United Nations have warned any oil spill from the Sounion could devastate the coral reefs and wildlife around the Red Sea. However, the EU's naval force in the region says it has yet to see any oil spill from the Sounion. Operation Aspidess "is preparing to facilitate any courses of action, in coordination with European authorities and neighbouring countries, to avert a catastrophic environmental crisis," the EU mission said. "Together, we can protect the environment and maintain stability in the region." UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric commended the efforts by the international community and the UN special envoy for Yemen, Hans Grundberg, "to secure the immediate access to the vessel and avert an environmental catastrophe". The Houthis have agreed to allow the operation to proceed safely, he said. Dujarric did not offer any indication when it might start

but added that the reports that "the salvage operations for the tanker can proceed with tugboats and rescue ships to access the incident area" are encouraging. On Wednesday, the Houthis suggested they may allow the Sounion to be salvaged, though the rebels already once blocked crews trying to reach the abandoned vessel, the US military said.

The US State Department declined to directly comment on the video Thursday. It referred to earlier remarks in which spokesperson Matthew Miller warned "the Houthis' continued attacks threaten to spill a million barrels of oil into the Red Sea, an amount four times the size of the Exxon Valdez disaster" in 1989 off Alaska. This isn't the first time the Houthis have used the threat of an oil spill to their advantage. It took years of negotiations before the rebels allowed the UN in 2023 to remove 1 million barrels from the oil tanker Safer off the coast of Yemen, which had been used as a floating storage and offloading facility.

Germany deports 28 Afghan nationals to their homeland

AP ■ BERLIN

Germany deported Afghan nationals to their homeland on Friday for the first time since August 2021, when the Taliban returned to power. Government spokesperson Steffen Hebestreit described the 28 Afghan nationals as convicted criminals but did not immediately respond to a request for comment to clarify their offenses.

Interior Minister Nancy Faeser called the move a security issue for Germany. Germany does not have diplomatic relations with the Taliban, requiring the government to work through other channels. It's unlikely that Friday's actions will lead to a wider thawing of relations between Germany and the Taliban, especially after last week's issuing of the first set of laws to prevent vice and promote virtue in Afghanistan. They include a requirement for a woman to

conceal her face, body and voice outside the home. German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock has slammed the morality laws in posts on X.

While Hebestreit said the deportations have been in the works for months, they occurred a week after a deadly knife attack in the town of Solingen in which the suspect is a Syrian citizen who had applied for asylum in Germany.

The suspect was supposed to be deported to Bulgaria last year but reportedly disappeared for a time and avoided deportation. He was ordered held Sunday on suspicion of murder and membership in a terrorist organization pending further investigation and a possible indictment.

The Islamic State militant group claimed responsibility for last Friday's attack, without providing evidence. The extremist group said on its news site that the attacker tar-

geted Christians and that he carried out the assaults "to avenge Muslims in Palestine and everywhere." The claim couldn't be independently verified.

There has also been debate over immigration ahead of regional elections Sunday in Germany's Saxony and Thuringia regions where anti-immigration parties such as the populist Alternative for Germany are expected to do well. In June, Chancellor Olaf Scholz vowed that the country would start deporting criminals from Afghanistan and Syria again after a knife attack by an Afghan immigrant left one police officer dead and four more people injured.

Faeser on Thursday announced a plan to tighten knife laws, according to German news agency dpa. Along with other officials in the governing coalition, she also pledged during a news conference to make deportations easier.

'America ready to turn page on Trump'

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The American people are ready to "turn the page" on Donald Trump, Kamala Harris has said, asserting that her Republican challenger is pushing an agenda which "divides" the country and "diminishes the character" of its people.

In her first major television interview of her presidential campaign, the 59-year-old US Vice President, who will face Trump in the November 5 elections, said the American people are ready for a "new way forward."

"I think sadly in the last decade, we have had in the former president someone who has really been pushing an agenda and an environment that is about diminishing the character and the strength of who we are as Americans — really dividing our nation," Harris, in a joint interview with her running mate Minnesota Governor Tim Walz, told CNN. "And I think people are ready to turn the page on that," Harris, the Democratic Party's candidate,

said. "The American people are ready for a new way forward. Our former president has pushed an agenda that diminishes the character and strength of who we are as Americans, and divides our nation. People are ready to turn the page," she said in a post on X, linking an interview snippet. Harris, who is of Indian and African heritage, also refused to engage in Trump's identity politics during the interview. She eluded questions about Trump's claims over her racial identity, calling those a part of the "same old tired playbook."

Last month, Trump questioned Harris' racial identity at the National Association of Black Journalists conference in Chicago, suggesting she had previously identified as South Asian but "happened to turn Black" for political purposes. Her refusal to comment aligned with her campaign's strategy to avoid leaning into identity politics following Trump's remarks, CNN reported. Responding to a question about a previous debate on the

decriminalisation of US borders, she said, "I believe there should be consequence. We have laws that have to be followed and enforced that address and deal with people who cross our border illegally. And there should be consequence." Harris added that she is the "only person" in the presidential race who has "prosecuted transnational criminal organisations who traffic in guns, drugs, and human beings." "I'm the only person in this race who actually served a border state as attorney general to enforce our laws. And I would enforce our laws as president going forward. I recognise the problem," she said.

Calling the border issue a "very significant" immigration issue to the American people and the security of the US, she said a border security bill was crafted under the administration of her boss — incumbent President Joe Biden. She said that Trump killed the bill that would have put 1,500 additional agents at the border as it "would not have helped him

politically". Speaking about Biden, she said that serving with him for almost four years was "one of the greatest honours of my career." He has the intelligence, the commitment and the judgment — disposition that I think the American people rightly deserve in their president," she said. Last month, Biden dropped out of the presidential race, saying it was in "the best interest" of the Democratic Party and the country to withdraw from the race. He endorsed Harris to be the nominee of the party.

Harris also said she would name a Republican to serve in her Cabinet if elected. Kamala Harris responded to a question in her first in-depth interview when asked about her Republican rival Donald Trump's remarks questioning her race. Fifty-nine-year-old Harris, who is of Indian and African descent, is the Democratic Party candidate in the November 5 presidential election in which she will contest against Trump, 78. During the interview with CNN, the US Vice President

was asked to comment on Trump's remarks on her race. Harris brushed off the question and said Trump's remarks as an "old, tired playbook."

"Trump has been making disparaging remarks about Harris during the campaign. His comments, especially at the National Association of Black Journalists convention where he appeared to question Harris' race. Trump had falsely claimed Harris had only emphasised her Asian-American heritage until recently when, he said, "she became a black person" for political gain.

"I didn't know she was Black until a number of years ago when she happened to turn Black and now, she wants to be known as Black. So, I don't know, is she Indian or is she Black?" Trump said at the time. Harris' mother, Shyamala Gopalan, was originally from India and her father, Donald Harris, is from Jamaica. Trump in the last few weeks has been personally attacking Harris despite calls from allies to refocus his campaign on policy issues.

Harris: Biden called to inform about decision to not seek re-election

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris has said President Joe Biden called her personally on a Sunday to inform her about his decision to not seek reelection, asserting that he was "very clear" about endorsing her instead. In the first major television interview of her presidential campaign on Thursday, the 59-year-old Vice President said she was with her family when she got the call from Biden, 81. Harris said that she was having bacon with her baby nieces when her phone rang. "And it was Joe Biden. And — and he told me what he had decided to do. And I asked him, 'Are you sure?' And he said, 'Yes.' And that's how I learned about it," she told CNN in a joint interview with her running mate Minnesota



Democratic presidential nominee Vice President Kamala Harris poses for photos at a campaign rally in Savannah on Thursday. AP/PTI

Governor Tim Walz. Last month, Biden, 81, dropped out of the presidential race, saying it was in "the best interest" of the Democratic Party and the country to withdraw from the

race. Biden had a disastrous presidential debate against former president Donald Trump, who is the Republican presidential candidate. Responding to a question

about Biden endorsing her as the Democratic Party's presidential candidate, Harris said, "He was very clear that he was gonna support me."

She added that her first thought at that moment was about Biden and not herself. Harris asserted that history will show several things about Biden's presidency. She said it would show how it was "transformative" about investing in America's infrastructure, new economics, new industries, and bringing its allies back together, among other things. "And I think history is going to show not only has Joe Biden led an administration that has achieved those extraordinary successes, but the character of the man is one that he has been in his life and career, including as a president, quite selfless and puts the American people first," she said.

Trump asks federal court to intervene in hush money case in bid to toss conviction

AP ■ NEW YORK

Donald Trump asked a federal court late Thursday to intervene in his New York hush money criminal case, seeking a pathway to overturn his felony conviction and indefinitely delay his sentencing scheduled for next month. Lawyers for the former president and current Republican nominee asked the federal court in Manhattan to seize the case from the state court where it was brought and tried, arguing that the historic prosecution violated Trump's constitutional rights and ran afoul of the US Supreme Court's recent ruling on presidential immunity.

Trump's lawyers said moving the case to federal court following his May 30 conviction will give him an "unbiased forum, free from

local hostilities" to address those issues. If the case is moved to federal court, Trump lawyers wrote, they will then seek to have the verdict overturned and the case dismissed. If it remains in state court, with sentencing proceeding as scheduled, it could amount to election interference, they said. "The ongoing proceedings will continue to cause direct and irreparable harm to President Trump — the leading candidate in the 2024 Presidential election — and voters located far beyond Manhattan," Trump lawyers Todd Blanche and Emil Bove wrote in a 64-page US District Court court filing. Trump was convicted in state court in Manhattan of 34 counts of falsifying business records related to a payment to buy affair allegations that threatened to cloud his 2016 presidential run. Even if the

case isn't moved to federal court, the potential delay caused by litigation surrounding Trump's effort could give him a critical reprieve as he navigates the aftermath of his criminal conviction and the homestretch of his presidential campaign.

Separately, the state court judge who presided over the trial, Juan M Merchan, is weighing Trump's requests to postpone sentencing until after Election Day, Nov 5, and to overturn the verdict and dismiss the case in the wake of the Supreme Court's immunity decision. The high court's July 1 ruling reopens prosecutions of ex-presidents for official acts and restricts prosecutors in pointing to official acts as evidence that a president's unofficial actions were illegal. Trump's lawyers argue that in light of the ruling, jurors in the

hush money case should not have heard such evidence as former White House staffers describing how the then-president reacted to news coverage of the deal to pay hush money to porn actor Stormy Daniels.

Trump's lawyers had previously invoked presidential immunity in a failed bid last year to get the hush money case moved from state court to federal court. A federal judge rejected that request, clearing the way for Trump's historic trial in state court.

US District Judge Alvin Hellerstein rejected Trump's claim that allegations in the hush money indictment involved official duties, writing in July 2023, "The evidence overwhelmingly suggests that the matter was a purely a personal item of the president — a cover-up of an embarrassing event."

Taipei zoo's veteran giant panda celebrates her 20th birthday

AP ■ TAIPEI

With politics set aside, well-wishers gathered to wish the Taipei zoo's senior panda a happy 20th birthday. Visitors crowded around Yuan Yuan's enclosure to take photos of her with a birthday cake in the shape of the number 20. Yuan Yuan was born in China and arrived in 2008 with her partner Tuantuan. He died in 2022 at age 18 but not before fathering two female cubs, Yuanzai and Yuanbao, now 11 and 4 respectively and still living at the zoo.

Danielle Shu, a 20-year-old Brazilian student in Taiwan, said she found online clips of the pandas an enjoyable distraction. "And I just find it really funny and cute," Shu said. Giant pandas are native only



to China, and Beijing bestows them as a sign of political amity. Yuan Yuan and Tuantuan arrived in Taiwan during a period of relative calm between the sides, which split amid civil war in 1949. China claims the island its own territory, to be annexed by military force if

necessary. Faced with declining habitat and a notoriously low birthrate, giant panda populations have declined to around 1,900 in the mountains of western China, while 600 pandas live in zoos and breeding centres in China and around the world.

MCA-Nepal signs contract for cross-border power transmission line to India

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Nepal on Friday signed a USD 12.36 million contract for a critical 18 km cross-border electricity transmission line, a crucial part of the broader Electricity Transmission Project that will deepen energy cooperation with India. Signed under the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Nepal Compact, the 18 km transmission line project, with three sub-stations, will help Nepal achieve its domestic power goals and reinforce Nepal's position in the regional energy market, officials said.

"As MCA-Nepal marks the first anniversary of the Compact's Entry-Into-Force, this new milestone reflects the unwavering commitment from



all stakeholders to enhancing regional energy trade between Nepal and India," read a statement by the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) Nepal. The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Nepal Compact is jointly funded by the government of Nepal and

the US government. The MCC was created by the US Congress in January 2004 with strong bipartisan support. The contract, amounting to USD 12.36 million, has been awarded to Transrail Lighting Ltd, entrusted to construct the transmission line from the 400 kV New Butwal Substation in

Nawalparasi Bardaghat Susta West to the Nepal-India border, the MCA-Nepal said. The contract was inked by Khadga Bahadur Bisht, executive director of MCA-Nepal, and Amol Wankhede, representative of Transrail Lighting Ltd at the signing ceremony witnessed by the officials from the Ministry of Finance, National Electricity Authority (NEA), MCC and MCA-Nepal. "Along with the signing of the three substation contracts worth USD 126 million, this 18 km transmission line project is set to play an important role in helping Nepal make strides in achieving its domestic power goals and reinforcing Nepal's position in the regional energy market," Dr Ram Prasad Chimire, Secretary, Ministry of Finance, said.

Indian-origin woman in UK admits to killing daughter

London (PTI): A 33-year-old Indian-origin woman on Friday admitted to the killing of her 10-year-old daughter, who was found dead at their home in a town in the West Midlands region of England earlier this year. Jaskirat Kaur, also known as Jasmine Kang, had been charged with the murder of Shay Kang on March 4 when West Midlands Police said the girl had been found with injuries at an address in the town of Rowley Regis and pronounced dead at the scene. Kaur has now told Court in a short hearing via video link from her prison that she pleads guilty to her daughter's manslaughter on the basis of diminished responsibility.

B'desh yearns for new political force amidst uncertainty

PTI ■ DHAKA
After Bangladesh's recent political upheaval following Sheikh Hasina's ouster, the deeply polarised country is yearning for a new political force to emerge beyond the traditional Awami League and Bangladesh Nationalist Party binary that aims to create a discrimination-free and more inclusive society. "We have seen the BNP, Awami League, and Jatiya Party come to power and fail us for decades. It is time for someone new to lead our country," says 60-year-old Ahmed, a rickshaw-puller in Dhaka, echoing a sentiment shared by many in present-day Bangladesh. Under unprecedented anti-government protests that peaked on August 5, Hasina, 76, resigned as prime minister and fled to India. The interim government led by 84-year-old Nobel laureate Mohammad Yunus aims to

reform Bangladesh's fractured institutions and restore public trust by ensuring a free and fair election, which, if successful, would mark a significant achievement in a nation with a history of electoral malpractice. Yet, people are divided and yearning for a new political force, having experienced all the traditional parties. While former prime minister Khalida Zia's BNP, long the main opposition party, is expected to participate, people have already tasted its governance in the early 1990s and 2000s, casting doubt on its ability to gain widespread public support. The Jamaat-e-Islami, the largest Islamic party in the country, is also a contender after the ban on it was lifted this week, but it too was in power in the early 2000s alongside the BNP. The Jatiya Party, which held power in the late 1980s, is

another player in the political arena and has gone through several splits in the last three decades. Meanwhile, the Awami League, now a political pariah, with its leadership in hiding or exile, is uncertain whether it will be in a position to join the fray. The possibility of new student parties emerging from the recent upheaval also looms large, potentially shifting the dynamics of the upcoming elections. "We, too, had hit the streets by responding to the call by the students. The students and youth of the nation have given us new hope, and now they must not step back. They have already come up as a force to reckon with, and now they should come up with a full-fledged political party. The people of this country are fed up with mainstream political parties," said Masud Alam, a teacher. Amid the growing speculation

about new political players, the role of the student movement remains a critical factor. While many have suggested that the student-led Monsoon Revolution could lead to the formation of a new political outfit, student leaders have so far refuted such reports. "We are not here to replicate the mistakes of the past; we want to hold those in power accountable, whoever they may be," Ayesha Siddiqui, a student activist, said. However, with the political landscape in flux, some observers believe it's only a matter of time before the students channel their momentum into a more organised political form, potentially becoming a new force in Bangladesh's politics. The recent student movement has left many veteran politicians wondering if a new era of political transformation in Bangladesh is on the horizon. Golam Sarwar Milon, the first

president of the Bangladesh Jatiotabadi Chatra Dal—the student wing of the BNP—suggested that the successful movement could pave the way for a new generation of political leaders, potentially challenging the dominance of traditional parties like the BNP, Awami League, and Jatiya Party. "This just may be the beginning of a new era of political transformation in Bangladesh, with students once again leading the way," Milon, who is presently co-chairman of the Jatiya Party (Raushan faction), told PTI. "The logical conclusion is that the students form a new political party. Although they have said they don't want to form any political party, you don't know what's in the future," he said. Other political leaders seem to echo this sentiment. Senior BNP leader Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury mentioned there is no issue if a new political outfit emerges, saying,

"That would only enhance the democratic system in the country. We are not like the Awami League, which doesn't believe in the democratic process. If the students want to join the political process, they are welcome to do it." Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami supreme Shafigur Rahman also stated that his party has no objections to the formation of new political entities, emphasising that everybody deserves free and fair elections. "There have been no elections in Bangladesh since 2014. All the elections were fraudulent and did not reflect the people's mandate. We want people to participate in the elections and choose their own representatives democratically," he said. Echoing these sentiments, G M Quader, the chairman of the Jatiya Party, emphasised that student movements, untainted by narrow political agendas, have played a transformative role in shaping

Bangladesh's political landscape. "Students have a unique advantage because they are trusted by the people," he remarked. "We have witnessed once again how ordinary citizens have rallied behind them, showing unwavering support and solidarity during the recent protests. Now if they want to form a political party and contest elections, they are free to do it," he said. Kajal Debnath, a leader of the Hindu minority community and a praesidium member of the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council, believes that there is significant potential for a new political force to emerge, and that "the students who spearheaded the anti-discrimination protests could indeed usher in a more inclusive and discrimination-free society in Bangladesh." The student movements in Bangladesh have

always played a critical role in shaping the country's history, from the 1952 Language Movement to the Liberation War of 1971 and beyond. However, the recent Monsoon Revolution is being hailed as something different—an unprecedented scale of mass mobilization that has the potential to change the course of Bangladesh's future. Political analysts, however, feel that supporting students during mass movements and electing them as their representatives are not the same. "It remains to be seen whether new coalitions, arising from the unorganised power of students and citizens, will lead to the formation of a new political party or a reformation of existing structures and bring about a change in the mindset of the mainstream political parties," Zillur Rehman, executive director of the Centre for Governance Studies, a think tank in Bangladesh, said.

Kremlin not worried about Putin visit to Mongolia

AP ■ MOSCOW
The Kremlin says it has "no worries" about President Vladimir Putin's upcoming visit to Mongolia, a country that is a member of the International Criminal Court, which last year issued a warrant for his arrest. The visit, scheduled for September 3, will be Putin's first trip to an ICC member state since the warrant was issued in March 2023 over suspected war crimes in Ukraine. Under the court's founding treaty, the Rome Statute, ICC members are bound to detain suspects for whom an arrest warrant has been issued by the court if they set foot on their soil. But the court doesn't have any enforcement mechanism. In a famous case, then-Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir wasn't arrested in 2015 when he visited South Africa, which is a member of the court, sparking angry condemnation by rights activists and the country's main opposition party. Putin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov, who previously stressed that Russia doesn't recognize the jurisdiction of the ICC, told reporters during his daily conference call Friday that the Kremlin has "no worries" about the upcoming trip: "We have a wonderful dialogue with our friends from Mongolia," he said. According to a statement released by the Kremlin on Thursday, Putin will travel to Mongolia at the invitation of President Ukhnaa Khurelsukh "to participate in the ceremonial events dedicated to the 85th anniversary of the joint victory of the Soviet and Mongolian armed forces over the Japanese militarists on the Khalkhin Gol River". Putin will also hold talks with Khurelsukh and other top



Mongolian officials, the statement said. The ICC has accused Putin of personal responsibility for the abductions of children from Ukraine, where Moscow has fought a devastating war for the last 2½ years. It was the first time the global court has issued a warrant against a leader of one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. The ICC said in a statement that Putin "is allegedly responsible for the war crime of unlawful deportation of (children) and that of unlawful transfer of (children) from occupied areas of Ukraine to the Russian Federation". The court also indicted Putin's children's rights envoy, Maria Lvova-Belova, on the same charges, and later issued arrest warrants for former Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu and chief of the general staff Gen. Valery Gerasimov on the charges of war crimes and the crime against humanity of inhumane acts. Russia isn't a member of the court, doesn't recognise its jurisdiction and refuses to hand

Japan def ministry seeks record budget

AP ■ TOKYO
Japan's Defence Ministry on Friday sought a record 8.5 trillion yen (USD 59 billion) budget for the next year to fortify its deterrence on southwestern islands against China's increasing threat, while focusing on unmanned weapons and AI to make up for the declining number of servicemembers as a result of the country's shrinking population. The ministry's request for 2025 marks the third year of Japan's rapid five-year military buildup plan under the government's ongoing security strategy. Japan aims to spend 43 trillion yen (USD 297 billion) through 2027 to double its annual military spending to around 10 trillion yen, making it the world's third-largest military spender after the United States and China. The budget request was approved at the Defence Ministry meeting Friday ahead of a submission to the Finance Ministry for negotiations through December. Japan has been rapidly building up the defense of the southwestern region in recent years amid China's growing military threats and tension in the regional seas.

China has escalated clashes with the Philippine coast guards in disputed waters in the South China Sea and sent a fleet of coast guard boats to routinely violate territorial waters around Japanese-controlled disputed islands in the East China Sea that Beijing also claims. A hefty 970 billion yen (USD 6.7 billion) of the budget request for 2025 covers the cost of bolstering strike-back capability with the development and purchases of long-range missiles and equipment for their launch, including from an Aegis-class destroyer. About one-third of it goes to a satellite constellation aimed at bolstering the capability to detect missile-related activity, as North Korea, China and Russia develop hypersonic missiles that are harder to detect and track. While pushing military buildup, Japan must deal with a shrinking troop size and is focusing on developing and buying more drones for surveillance and combat, requesting 103 billion yen (USD 710 million). It also seeks 314 billion yen (USD 2.17 billion) to build three new multi-purpose compact destroyers that require 90

crewmembers, less than half the crew size currently needed. Japanese defence officials say combat drones are "game changers" that can be on hours-long missions and lower human losses in combat and consider it a main pillar of Japan's ongoing military buildup. The unmanned weapons can also help a country struggling with its aging and shrinking population. Japan has been struggling to fulfill SDF troop levels at 247,000 people. The Self-Defence Force has faced difficulty attracting young applicants in recent years and fulfilled only half of its recruiting target of 19,598 last year, making it the lowest in the 70 years of SDF history. Last year, 6,258 mid-career personnel left, the highest number in 30 years. "Due to declining childbirths and working age population, it is inevitable that Japan will face a society of serious labour shortage," the ministry said in an interim report on human resources, also released Friday. "We need to build an organisation that can fight in new ways while strengthening defence

power." Shrinking younger population and private companies that offer better salaries and benefits make "the environment surrounding recruiting servicemembers the worst since the end of World War II," the ministry report said. It requested 18 billion yen (USD 124 million) to introduce an AI surveillance system at 40 SDF bases across Japan, aiming to free up 1,000 service personnel. It is also asking 4.3 billion (USD 29.7 million) for automated supply storage for launch in 2027 in Okinawa. In the interim report released Friday, the ministry called for reforms to improve salary, working environment, more training and learning opportunities, as well as support for working mothers to lure more women. The ministry has been hit by a series of revelations of sexual assaults, harassment and abuse of power in recent years. Its internal investigation last year criticized cover-up attempts and a lack of sense of responsibility among supervisors. It came under fire in July over the leak of classified information and corruption scandals.

Pak PM speaks to Yunus

Islamabad (PTI): Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday spoke to Bangladesh Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus during which the two leaders agreed to work closely for the progress and prosperity of the people of both countries. During the telephone conversation, they further agreed that "greater regional cooperation could play a vital role in uplifting the lives of the people of South Asia," according to an official statement here. Sharif's telephone call to Yunus marks the first high-level direct contact.

GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY, AMRITSAR
TENDER NOTICE
Online tenders are invited from reputed manufacturers/authorized dealers for the Rate Contract for supply of Chemicals, Glassware and Plasticware etc. (upto Rs. 2,00,000/-) for the Period 2024-25. Earnest Money (Rs. 20,000/-) may be deposited online latest by 13/09/2024 (till 5:00 pm). Online Tender Form can be filled through link available on www.gndu.ac.in
Director of Research
NA/12/25078/2023/37148
Dated CHD :- 8/30/2024

Ukraine says US experts helping figure out why F-16 crashed in Russia war

AP ■ KYIV
US experts have joined a Ukrainian investigation into why an F-16 warplane that Ukraine received from its Western partners crashed earlier this week during a Russian bombardment, the country's air force commander said on Friday. Commander Mykola Oleshchuk said on Telegram that "a detailed analysis is already being conducted" into why the fighter jet went down on Monday, when Russia launched a major missile and drone barrage at Ukraine. "We must carefully understand what happened, what the circumstances are, and whose responsibility it is," Oleshchuk wrote in the post. The crash was the first reported loss of an F-16 in Ukraine, where they arrived at the end of last month. At least six of the warplanes are believed to have been delivered by European countries. Military analysts say the planes won't be a game-changer in the war, given Russia's massive air force and sophisticated air defence systems. But Ukrainian officials welcomed the super-sonic jets, which can carry modern weapons used by



NATO countries, for bringing an opportunity to hit back at Russia's air superiority. Russia's army is making slow but gradual progress in its drive into eastern Ukraine, while Ukraine's forces are holding ground in the Kursk border region of western Russia after a recent incursion. Oleshchuk, the Ukrainian air force chief, directed scathing criticism at a lawmaker who is deputy head of the Ukraine parliament's defense committee for her claims that the F-16 was downed by a Patriot air defence system. Ukraine has received an unspecified number of the US-made systems. Mariana Bezuhla cited unnamed sources for her claim and demanded punishment

for those responsible for the error. Oleshchuk accused Bezuhla of defaming the air force and discrediting US arms manufacturers, adding that he hoped she would face legal consequences for her claims. The air force didn't directly deny that the F-16 was hit by a Patriot missile. The Institute for the Study of War said it was to be expected that Ukraine would lose some Western-provided military equipment in the fighting. But the Washington-based think tank added that "any loss among Ukraine's already limited allotment of Western-provided F-16s and trained pilots will have an outsized impact on Ukraine's ability to operate F-16s in the near term as part of its combined air defense umbrella or in an air-to-ground support role." Overnight, Russia fired 18 Shahed drones and one ballistic missile at Ukraine, the air force said. It said 12 drones were destroyed, with four more going down before reaching their target. The attack killed one woman and started a fire in Sumy, the capital of the region of the same name that borders Russia's Kursk region, the regional administration said.

Colombo Security Conclave signs Charter and MoU for Secretariat



National Security Advisor Ajit Doval (file pic) and the representatives of the Maldives, Mauritius and Sri Lanka signed the Charter and an MoU for the establishment of the Colombo Security Conclave Secretariat

PTI ■ COLOMBO
National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and the representatives of the Maldives, Mauritius and Sri Lanka on Friday signed the Charter and an MoU for the establishment of the Colombo Security Conclave Secretariat here to promote regional security by addressing transnational threats and challenges of common concern to the member states. The Colombo Colombo Security Conclave (CSC) brings together National Security Advisors (NSA) and Deputy NSAs from India, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Mauritius. It deals with maritime security, counter-terrorism and cyber security with India bringing to the fore its own strategic concerns in the Indian Ocean and promotes regional security by addressing transnational threats and challenges of common concern to the Member States. "NSA Ajit Doval KC joined reps from Maldives, Mauritius & Sri Lanka in signing the Charter & MoU for the establishment of Colombo Security Conclave (CSC) Secretariat today. A key platform to enhance regional security cooperation, the signing marks a milestone in the CSC roadmap," the Indian High Commission here said in a post on X along with photos from

the signing ceremony. A Colombo Security Conclave joint press release said the Member States of the Colombo Security Conclave (CSC) "signed the Charter and the MoU for the Establishment of the CSC Secretariat on 30 August 2024." The Signing Ceremony was hosted in Colombo by the Government of Sri Lanka, it said. Doval; Ibrahim Lt Col (Retd) Latheef, DC, NSA of Maldives; Haymandoyal Dillum, High Commissioner of the Republic of Mauritius to Sri Lanka, and Sagala Ratnayake, National Security Advisor to the President of Sri Lanka, signed the documents on behalf of the respective Member States. The event concluded with a discussion among heads of delegation on the next steps and the future activities of the Conclave. There are five pillars of cooperation under the CSC namely Maritime Safety and Security; Countering Terrorism and Radicalisation; Combating Trafficking and Transnational Organised Crime; Cyber Security and Protection of Critical Infrastructure and Technology; and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief, the joint press release said. Bangladesh and the Seychelles have observer status at the Conclave.

verka
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THE PUNJAB STATE COOPERATIVE MILK PRODUCERS FEDERATION LTD.
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Notice Inviting Tender www.verka.coop

e-Tenders are hereby invited for the purchase and supply of following items:-

Sr. No.	Name of Work/Item	Period/Tentative Qty
1.	For Verka Head office, Chandigarh Hiring of milk powder plant having conversion capacity in the range of 2.00 to 4.00 LPLD for conversion of liquid milk into extra grade SMP and WMP for Verka Dairies.	Annual
2.	For Verka Mohali Dairy Hiring of Agency for packaging of Dahi pouch/ Cups/Matkas, Lassi pouches, Kheer cups, Ghee, Paneer and Yoghurt, Packaging and recombination of White Butter and Reconstitution of SMP.	As per day to day requirement of Market
3.	For Verka Bathinda Dairy Hiring of insulated vehicles for supply of packed milk and fresh milk products in Bathinda Milkshed area.	One year with extension upto one year
4.	For Verka Sangrur Dairy a) Refrigeration Machinery Scrap. b) MS Scrap. c) Ammonia Compressor 7x7. d) Ammonia Compressor 9x9. e) Copper Wire Scrap f) Outsourcing activities i.e. packing of products, loading/unloading etc.	25 Ton 05 Ton 01 Ton 01 Ton 300 kg Annual
5.	For Verka Ludhiana Dairy Hiring of:- i. Toyota Innova Crysta without driver for minimum running of 2000 kms per month on lump sum basis. ii. Deep Freezer (cold store) for storing White Butter Approx 2000 MT including storage, loading/ unloading at cold store and transportation charges(to and fro) of White Butter per M.T per month. iii. Road Milk Tankers for transportation of milk all over Punjab, Chandigarh, U.P Delhi & Haryana. iv. Insulated Road Milk tankers for Transportation of milk from BMC/Mcc etc. v. Vehicles (Tempo) for Cattle feed/ Milk products / Technical services. vi. Vehicles (Tempo) for transportation of Milk through cans. vii. Passenger Car (Swift Dzire, Toyota Etios or Equivalent) and Jeep Camper Type.	01 complete job Annual 04 No's 45 No's 07 No's 40 No's Cars 18 No's & Camper 01 No's
6.	For Verka Gurdaspur Dairy a) Operation repair & maintenance of pouch packing machines (milk, lassi and Dahi), online coding machines photocell sensors and crate washers. b) Hiring of:- i. Insulated Vehicle for city supply. ii. Car (Dzire or Its equivalent). iii. Diesel Car (5 seater Bolero camper or its equivalent). iv. Milk powder plant having conversion LPD for conversion of liquid milk into standard grade SMP for Verka Gurdaspur Dairy c) Advertisement Material backlit glow Sign Board, double sided glow sign board, non lit flex board, flex change, flex banner, wall painting/shop painting, vehicle painting, umbrella, A-Type standing flex board and vinyl stickers. d) Allotment of Milk booth (Civil Hospital Pathankot, Civil Hospital Batala, Civil Hospital Gurdaspur, Kotli Surat Mahli and Sardar Beant Singh State University).	30000 ltr to 50000 ltr per day 02 years 01 No. 01 No. 50000 ltr to 100000 ltr per day 01 year 02 years
7.	For Verka Jalandhar Dairy a) Lifting/Sale of paneer whey from Verka Jalandhar Dairy. b) Hiring of vehicles for transportation of Panjiri to C.D.P.O.'s of Punjab and other milk products to Punjab and other states. c) Advertisement Material flex board, flex banner, star flex banner, vinyl board, glow sign board, gum sheets stickers, pamphlets, danglers, sun board, wall painting, vehicle painting, standies, canopies.	Annual Annual Annual
8.	For Verka Amritsar Dairy a) Hiring of:- i. Powder plant for conversion of skimmed milk into SMP. ii. Deep Freezer (cold store) for storage of white Butter at -18°C or below. iii. Godown for storage of Skimmed Milk Powder.	09 Months 01 No. 01 No.
9.	For Verka Hoshiarpur Dairy Allotment of Milk booth:- i. Municipal Corporation office, Hoshiarpur. ii. Udarn Singh Park, Hoshiarpur.	03 years 03 years
10.	For Verka CFP, Bhattian (Khanna) Hiring of Five-Seater AC car model less than 7 year old.	02 No's
11.	For Verka Mega Dairy, Bassi Pathana Hiring of 5-Seater Bolero camper (AC) - 01 no's & Passenger Vehicle Bolero/ swift Dzire/ Etios (Platinum) or equivalent (AC)-2 no's along with drivers.	03 No's

NOTE:
1. For complete details regarding above tender (NIT), please visit our website i.e. www.verka.coop & e Tendering portal i.e. eproc.punjab.gov.in.
2. Corrigendum, if any, will be uploaded on website only.

NA/12/25103/2023/37175 Dated CHD :- 8/30/2024
Dy. General Manager (Purchase)

Sensex, Nifty hit all-time high during early trade

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty hit their new all-time high levels during early trade on Friday, amid the ongoing bullish rally in domestic stocks, tracking firm trends in Asian markets and fresh foreign fund inflows.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 502.42 points to hit a fresh all-time high of 82,637.03 in early trade. The NSE Nifty surged 105.7 points to hit a new record peak of 25,257.65.

Among the 30 Sensex firms, Bajaj Finserv, HDFC Bank, Titan, Bajaj Finance, NTPC, Power Grid, Asian Paints and HCL Technologies were the biggest gainers. Tata Motors and Sun Pharma were the laggards. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong were trading with gains. The US markets ended on a mixed note on Thursday. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 3,259.56 crore on Thursday, according



to exchange data. Domestic Institutional Investors also bought equities worth Rs 2,690.85 crore. "Continuation of accumulation of quality largecaps by the DIIs (Domestic Institutional Investors) and HNIs and the FIIs reducing their selling significantly and buying on certain days have contributed to the resilience of the

market," said V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.23 per cent to USD 80.12 a barrel. Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said, key catalysts for markets rally include substantial FII buying, positive global cues, and

upbeat US GDP data. The BSE benchmark jumped 349.05 points or 0.43 per cent to settle at an all-time closing high of 82,134.61 on Thursday, extending its winning momentum to the eighth day in a row. Rallying for the 11th straight session, the Nifty surged 99.60 points or 0.40 per cent to settle at a new closing high of 25,151.95.

Mahindra Group, Sentrycs sign MoU to explore development of anti-drone solutions

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Mahindra Group and Israel's Sentrycs Ltd on Friday said they have signed a non-binding Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to explore opportunities for developing and providing 'differentiated anti-drone solutions' in India. The solutions will cover civilian and military applications, the two companies said in a joint statement. The MoU relates to the 'anti-drone systems' technology space and will focus on the Transfer of Technology (TOT) and manufacturing of radio frequency-based counter-drone solutions under the government of India's 'Make in India' initiative, it added. The 'differentiated anti-drone solution' is an autonomous and integrated system with a command and control (C2) module, and enables detection, tracking, identification and mitigation of incoming drones. "We believe that this MoU with Sentrycs would enable the group to explore opportunities in the anti-drone space and set the stage for cutting-edge technological offerings with global partners for a full suite of anti-drone



solutions across applications in the future," said Vinod Sahay, Mahindra President, Aerospace & Defence Sector and Member of Group Executive Board. Sentrycs CEO Yoav Zaltzman said the strategic partnership with Mahindra would provide a cutting-edge multi-layer CUAS (Counter Unmanned Aircraft System) solution, made in India, that can be used to protect military bases, military forces and borders

against the threat of drones. "India is a very important market for us and I am confident that together with industry leaders like Mahindra we will create the best CUAS solution for India," he added. The differentiated anti-drone solution can monitor drone flight paths, and identify their specific models, unique serial numbers, and their IDs. This capability allows for precise differentiation between

friendly and hostile drones, the statement said. In cases where a drone is classified as a threat, the system can autonomously take control and ensure it lands safely in a predefined zone resulting in no collateral damage. The system can be deployed for protection of critical infrastructure in urban areas or as an integral part of a broader multi-layered 'anti-drone solutions' for military applications, it added.

Rupee rises seven paise against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Rupee appreciated 7 paise to 83.82 against the US dollar in morning trade on Friday, supported by significant foreign fund inflows and a positive trend in domestic equities. Forex traders said a rise in global risk sentiments supported the rupee, while recovery in the US dollar and month-end dollar demand from importers and oil marketing companies (OMCs) weighed on investor sentiments. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.83, then gained ground to touch 83.82, registering a rise of 7 paise from its previous close. On Thursday, the rupee appreciated 8 paise to close at 83.89 against the American currency. According to forex traders, MSCI rebalancing flows could take the rupee higher. "Some appreciation in the rupee appears likely, with anticipated MSCI inflows of around USD 3 billion. The rupee is likely to trade within a range of 83.75 to 83.90,



while in the medium-term, a range of 83.60 to 84.05 is anticipated, with a bias towards the upside," CR Forex Advisors MD-Amit Pabari said. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was up 0.03 per cent to 101.37 points. Brent crude, the international

benchmark, gained 0.29 per cent to USD 80.17 per barrel in futures trade. In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex advanced 227.63 points, or 0.28 per cent, to 82,362.24 points, while the Nifty was up 65.70 points, or 0.26 per cent, to 25,217.65 points. Foreign Institutional Investors

(FIIs) were net buyers in the capital markets on Thursday, as they purchased shares worth Rs 3,259.56 crore, according to exchange data. Meanwhile, Moody's Ratings on Thursday raised India's GDP growth forecast for 2024 and 2025 calendar year to 7.2 per cent and 6.6 per cent, respectively, on strong broad-based growth.

CAG signs MoU with General Court of Audit, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has signed a pact with the General Court of Audit, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to strengthen cooperation and exchange of expertise between the two nations in the field of public sector auditing. The area of cooperation encompasses conducting joint training programmes on topics related to financial, performance and compliance audits and exchange of audit manuals and audit methodologies, the CAG said. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on Thursday in Riyadh. "Our commitment to a strong bilateral relationship is a witness to the shared values and objectives of our institutions and will serve to reinforce bonds between our SAIs and our nations," CAG Gish Chandra Murmu said. The CAG stated that the



support and cooperation between the two SAIs will energise their capacity development initiatives and encourage exchange of knowledge and information between the two Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs). Hussam Abdulmohsen Alangari, President, General Court of Audit, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, highlighted the importance of the agreement in enhancing the cooperation in areas of competence of two SAIs to enhance and improve their respective external audit practices.



SpiceJet shares slump as DGCA places carrier under enhanced surveillance

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of SpiceJet on Friday morning tumbled over 6 per cent after aviation watchdog DGCA decided to place the crisis-hit firm under enhanced surveillance. The stock tanked 6.38 per cent to Rs 62 on the BSE after a weak beginning. DGCA on Thursday decided to place SpiceJet under enhanced surveillance that will entail increased spot checks and night surveillance to ensure safety of the airline's operations. Based on reports of cancellation of flights and financial stress being experienced by SpiceJet, DGCA said it conducted a special audit of the airline's engineering facilities on

August 7 and 8 and certain deficiencies were found during the audit. "In light of the past record and the special audit carried out in August 2024, SpiceJet has once again been placed under enhanced surveillance with immediate effect." This would entail an increase in the number of spot checks/night surveillance with a view to ensure safety of operations," the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said in a release on Thursday. In 2023 also, the regulator had placed SpiceJet under enhanced surveillance. The no-frills carrier has been grappling with multiple headwinds, including financial and legal woes, and is also in the process of raising funds.

INBRIEF

NBCC SELLS COMMERCIAL SPACE WORTH ₹14,800 CRORE APPROX
NEW DELHI: NBCC (India) Limited, announces the remarkable achievement of selling 100% of the office space inventory at World Trade Center (WTC) Nauroji Nagar, New Delhi and 100% retail and commercial space at Downtown Sarojini Nagar, New Delhi.

RECPDCL HANDS OVER BHADLA-III
NEW DELHI: REC Power Development and Consultancy Limited (RECPDCL), handed over a project specific SPV (Special Purpose Vehicle), viz. Bhadla-III Power Transmission Limited to I/s Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (PGCIL) on 28th August 2024 at Gurugram.

7TH INTERNATIONAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS EXPO
NEW DELHI: Union Minister of AYUSH Pratap Rao Jadhav inaugurates the Three-Day 7th International Health and Wellness Expo at Pragati Maidan in Delhi

DR. PONGURU NARAYANA ON HIS APPOINTMENT AS MINISTER
ANDHRA PRADESH: Dr. G. Viswanathan - Hon'ble Chancellor along with Shri Sankar Viswanathan - Vice president VIT University have called Dr. Ponguru Narayana on his appointment as Minister of Municipal Administration and Urban Development - Government of Andhra Pradesh

GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY ORGANISED EXPERT TALK
AMRITSAR: Department of Education of Guru Nanak Dev University organized an expert talk to explore the universe and to develop the scientific temper and attitude among the teacher educators of the department under the guidance of Prof (Dr) Jaspal Singh Sandhu, Vice Chancellor of Guru Nanak Dev University.

1ST INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON ADVANCED MATERIALS
AMRAVATI: The inauguration of first edition of International Symposium on Current Trends in Advanced Materials (CTAM-24) was held at VIT-AP Campus. The 6-day symposium is being organized in association with American Chemical Society.



Vistara to operate its last flight under brand name on Nov 11

PTI ■ NEW DELHI/ MUMBAI

Vistara will operate the last flight under its brand on November 11 and the full-service carrier's operations will be unified with Air India from November 12. The government has given its nod for the foreign direct investment by Singapore Airlines as part of the Air India-Vistara merger. Vistara is a joint venture between Tata Group and Singapore Airlines. Air India is owned by Tata Group. "Starting 03 September 2024, customers will, progressively, no longer be able to make bookings with Vistara for travel on or after 12 November 2024," Vistara said in a release on Friday. Thereafter, Vistara aircraft will be operated by Air India and bookings for the routes operated by these planes will be redirected to Air India's website. "Vistara will continue to take bookings and operate flights as usual till 11 November 2024," the release said. The merger of Vistara with

Air India was announced in November 2022 and post-completion of the deal, Singapore Airlines will have a 25.1 per cent stake in Air India. Vistara CEO Vinod Kannan said the merger is about offering passengers more choice with a larger fleet and a wider network while elevating the overall travel experience. "Cross-functional teams from Air India and Vistara have been working together for many months to make the transition of aircraft, flying crew, ground-based colleagues and, most importantly, our valued customers, into the new Air India as seamless as possible," Air India CEO and MD Campbell Wilson said. In a separate release, Air India welcomed the Union Cabinet's approval for the foreign direct investment by Singapore Airlines in the airline. "This is an important milestone that facilitates the merger process between Vistara and Air India, and the broader transformation of the Air India Group," it said.

SEBI amends rules to regulate unregistered financial influencers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Markets watchdog Sebi has amended norms in a bid to regulate unregistered financial influencers or influencers amid growing concerns about potential risk associated with such unregistered persons. In three separate notifications, the regulator has restricted associations between its regulated entities and unregistered individuals. This came after the board of Sebi approved a proposal in this regard last month. As per the notifications, the persons regulated by Sebi and the agents of such persons will not have any association like any transaction involving money, referral of a client, interaction of information technology systems with any other person who, directly or indirectly, provides advice, recommendation or makes explicit claim of return. "No person regulated by the Board (Sebi) or the agent of such a person shall have any direct or indirect association, with another person who provides advice or any recommendation, directly or indirectly, in respect of or related to a security or securities, unless the person is registered with or otherwise permitted by the Board to provide such advice or recommendation; or makes any claim, of returns or performance expressly or impliedly, in respect of or related to a security or securities, unless the person has been permitted by the Board to make such a claim,"



the regulator said. By requiring influencers to register with Sebi and adhere to specific guidelines, the regulator is setting a standard for accountability and expertise in the sector, market experts said. The move would ensure that mutual fund houses, research analysts, registered investment advisors and stock brokers do not partner with influencers. On the other hand, a small window has been provided for investor education from such partnership. This is subject to a condition that these influencers do not provide any recommendation or claim any return or

performance. This came amid growing concern over the potential risks associated with unregulated influencers who might offer biased or misleading advice. They usually work on a commission-based model. Influencers have significantly impacted their followers' financial decisions in the last few years and thus Sebi's regulatory framework can make them accountable and responsible for the advice they provide. To give this effect, Sebi has amended norms governing depository participants, intermediaries and Securities Contracts.

Centre fixes kharif rice acquisition target at 485 lakh tonnes for 2024-25

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has fixed kharif rice procurement target at 485 lakh tonnes for the 2024-25 marketing year starting October and asked states to focus on increasing purchases of coarse cereals. In the current 2023-24 marketing year (October-September), the government procured 463 lakh tonnes of kharif rice. Paddy is grown in both kharif and rabi seasons. State-owned Food Corporation of India (FCI) is the government's nodal agency for procurement and distribution of foodgrains. Union Food Secretary on Friday chaired a meeting with State Food Secretaries and FCI to "discuss arrangements for procurement of crops in ensuing Kharif Marketing Season (KMS) 2024-25", an official statement said. Various factors impacting procurement such as weather forecast, production estimates, and readiness of states for procurement operations were reviewed during the meeting. "After deliberations, the estimates for paddy procurement (Kharif crop) during ensuing KMS 2024-25 have been fixed at 485 lakh tonnes in terms of rice compared to procurement of 463 lakh tonnes (Kharif crop) during KMS 2023-24," the statement said. The meeting was attended by Principal Secretary/Secretary (Food) of states/Union Territories as well as officers from FCI, IMD and Department of Agriculture.



MAGICAL SPELL OF AN UTTARAKHANDI RASOIYA

We metropolitan dwellers are forever starved of authentic regional cuisines across India's traditionally rich and diverse home kitchens. **SHOBORI GANGULI** had the fortune of feasting on one such regal platter wafting from the heart of Uttarakhand in Delhi



Tamra, at Shangri La Eros, New Delhi, had a monsoon delight on offer this month with a pop-up of some truly earthy, hearty and soulful Uttarakhandi cuisine handcrafted by the extremely gifted Dehradun based Chef Yojana Khanduri Chaudhary. Those familiar with the flora and fauna of this northern Himalayan region would clearly know of the robust aromas of a pahadi kitchen and some of its most mouth-watering dishes to be savoured on a rain-drenched August afternoon. Here, I will pause to underline that Chef Pin is God's gift to those who worship and crave for, authentic Indian regional cuisines, far away from the butter chicken and paneer tikka fare that parades under the "Indian cuisine" banner in restaurants across metropolises. A unique and innovative platform across Delhi NCR, Bengaluru, and Mumbai, Chef Pin is an app which offers diners local, authentic and home-cooked meals from hundreds of talented home chefs. Apart from opening up these secret kitchens to urban diners at their homes, the pop-ups organised by Chef Pin at leading hotels allow these chefs to showcase their unique culinary flair to a much larger audience. So this month it was Chef Yojana, a textile designer by training, her passion for food having taken her on a parallel route of creativity: Cooking. Her dedication to cooking, imprinted with her signature flourish on time-held traditional recipes of the Himalayan landscape, gave us a truly delectable meal. This infectious bubbly Chef has made a commendable effort to act as a bridge to bring the raw, earthy robust spices, herbs, vegetables and seeds sourced from the



heart of Uttarakhand to the uninitiated urban metro dweller. I was indeed fortunate to savour the innovative fusion of aromatic spices, fresh ingredients and traditional cooking techniques masterfully curated by Chef Yojana. Her passion for authenticity and originality, deeply inspired by her Himalayan roots, to cater to the urban palate is nothing short of a marvel.



This young Chef put out quite a royal feast, her signature creations infusing each preparation with the warmth of a pahadi rasoia. She was kind enough to detail all the ingredients she had sourced from her home town to give the Delhi diner some authentic flavours, like Jakhiya, Bhang beej, Bhang jeera, Phara, Jhangora (millet), Mandua (Ragi millet), Lal Bhaat, (red rice), Chemi (pahadi rajma) and gehet (horsegram). Chef Yojana is



passionate about roasting and hand grinding her masalas on a sil batta (stone mortar and pestle). Rare to see such enthusiasm for tradition in today's generation of professionals. With everything in place, I set out on a heart-warming culinary journey through Patudi, a mini Dal Cheela, the absolutely irresistible and aromatic Bhaang Sookha Chicken. With Lal Bhaat as a companion, Chef Yojana walked me through with chicken cooked in arbi leaves (colocassia). Her Shikar Mutton was the show stopper of the whole spread with its smoky flavours lifting the rich gravy to an unbeatable level. There was palak hari bhujji (Spinach) and Urad ki Kichdi. All accompanied by side dishes like Bhang ki Chutney, Kheere ka Raithu, Naal Badi ka Saag and Mooli Thechwa. Chef Yojana concluded the fare with her signature take on traditional Uttarakhandi sweets like Jhangore Ki Kheer and Mandve Ka Halwa, descending straight from the serene landscapes of the Himalayas into the heart of Delhi. Hope these roving chefs continue to visit us with their art and craft of cooking!

Sushi Samurais, Dim Sum Warriors

China Bistro in Delhi recently observed its first anniversary with the launch of Chopstick Chronicles. **SHOBORI GANGULI** participated in this celebration of Asia's ancient culinary heritage set against the backdrop of a contemporary Bistro

Tucked away in a quieter corner of the bustling Select City Walk mall in Delhi, China Bistro with its calming ivory hued décor and Pan Asian culinary spread is the perfect place for a relaxed and quiet lunch or dinner with friends and family. Since its inception in 2012 in Mumbai, it now has outlets across India and the UAE. In the NCR, Delhi is the Bistro's first chapter, August 21 marking its first anniversary. To commemorate the event, China Bistro launched Chopstick Chronicles, a festival of sushi and dumplings, crafted and curated by Chef Lee Khan as he unveiled Asia's centuries-old imperial culinary treasure trove for its patrons. Each bite proved to be a passport to divine dining, transporting one to a world of traditional Asian cuisine artistically painted on a rich canvas of culture and tradition. As pointed out by Rajib Mazumder, Corporate Chef at Foodlink F&B Holdings India Pvt Ltd, "Chopstick Chronicles goes beyond the plate, exploring the cultural significance of chopsticks and the dynamic duos of Asia's sushi and dim



sum." Indeed, the sushi rolls were a work of art and the dim sum folds displayed brilliant craftsmanship. Drawing inspiration from global gastronomic innovations, the spread brought Japan, Tibet and China to the table. The result: Simply awesome.

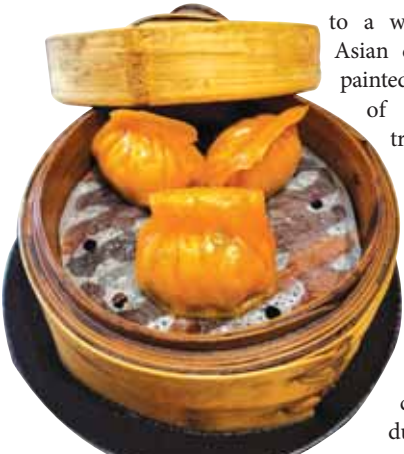
One started out with the Lasha Luxury Dumpling, a Tibetan masterpiece which had juicy, aromatic chicken dumplings wrapped in lotus flour dough. Legend has it that these dumplings had to be bathed in a rich, piping hot chicken broth served right at the table. The experience was as magical as the dish itself. This was followed by the Dynamite Prawn Maki, a creation of Chef Chiro



from Vancouver, crispy prawn tempura, crunchy nori, and sweet sushi rice. The freshness and texture of the prawns really stood out. Next on offer was the Wasabi Firecracker Prawns - crispy tempura coated prawns tossed in a spicy wasabi sauce, inspired by Chef Jack's offering at his seafood restaurant from his coastal hometown. Sitting in the heart of Delhi, savouring this delicacy was pure pleasure.

I was then thrown open to the Dim Sum Dare. This dish had four juicy chicken dim sums wrapped in carrot lotus flour and served with chicken broth. The dare was that these had to be consumed with four deadly chili dips, Sesame Sauce, Roasted Pepper Sauce, Sichuan Pepper Sauce, Bhut Jolokia Sauce. I guess my Bengali genes helped me simply cruise through this spice challenge. I also tried Chef Takashi's exquisite and signature Enoki Truffle Crunch, crispy tempura Enoki mushrooms wrapped in creamy truffle mayo in a delectable sushi roll. They say, one evening in a tranquil forest, Chef Takashi discovered a hidden truffle patch. He then used his discovery to create a creamy truffle mayo teaming it with crispy Enoki mushrooms to create a revolutionary sushi roll. This modern innovation of a traditional Japanese cuisine went on to become a legend. Of course, I washed all this down with a chilled glass of Kogarashi, a combination of ginger and lime and some cool crispy cucumber flavour. A splash of non-alcoholic ginger beer gave the beverage a fizzy, spicy finish. China Bistro is highly recommended if you crave for authentic Pan Asian cuisine.

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ABHINAV BINDRA SAYS TRAINING INDIAN ATHLETES ON MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES A 'WORK IN PROGRESS'

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Olympic gold medallist Abhinav Bindra on Friday acknowledged training Indian athletes across sports on the aspect of mental health remains a "work in progress", while adding that benefits of the same must reach grassroots level. Bindra said mental health directly influences overall well-being of an athlete and sports administrators also share equal responsibility in it. "It's an area where there is work in progress — we all acknowledge that. We are a sporting ecosystem which is developing. It is slowly maturing," he said during a virtual interaction organised by Mpower to launch AMP: A Sports Psychology Division to Elevate Athlete Performance. "This is an aspect that not just from a shooting athlete's point of view, but across the board, which needs to be prioritised. It is something which has a direct influence on the performance of the athlete. "It has a direct influence on the well-being of an athlete. Sports organisations and everybody involved in governance has to also ensure that our athletes perform well, but their well-being is of equal importance," he added.



Bindra highlighted the presence of a mental health expert with the Indian contingent in Paris Olympics as a step in the right direction. "We've seen progress made even during the Olympics in Paris. It was the first time there was a mental health expert who was with the team. There (also) was somebody for sleep," he said. "There are things that are happening. But we need to keep working with intensity to make sure that this perpetuates down to the grassroots level," he added. Bindra rejected the notion that athletes today are "softer" than those in the past. "I completely disagree. If that is the notion to be believed, then the softer ones are winning more than the tougher ones because that's what our results and our history tell us," he said. Bindra revealed how a meditation course, while planning to quit shooting, helped him find "love for the process" after winning the Olympic gold in 2008. "When I did win that gold medal at the Olympics, my energy was completely drained in the sense that I was physically, emotionally (and) mentally drained. It also required a period of time to just let go and then to recharge my batteries and that wasn't easy," he said. "I decided to go on a vipassana

meditation course and it was interesting because I was wanting to actually leave the sport and move on to the next calling. That was my primary drive, to find my new calling. "I had to meditate for eight nine hours a day in complete silence for 10 days and all I did in that course was to think back to how I loved the process of what I was doing," he said. Bindra said he was guilty of not realising his full potential since he judged himself on outcomes of tournaments. "For far too long, perhaps, I too was guilty in putting myself worth to wear my name, equating myself worth to where my name would appear on the ranking list of a sports competition and that was very silly," he said. "I became an Olympic champion, (a) world champion, I won many many championships but I failed in achieving my fullest and truest potential and now that I have a chance to look back I would attribute that failure to this lack of balance that I had in my life as an athlete. "I did not humanise my effort enough and I think that was while it helped me achieve goals it didn't help me get to my very best ability," he added.



Jurgen Klopp joins the crowd at the Paralympics

CHEERING ON LONG TIME FRIEND PLAYING BADMINTON

AP ■ PARIS

Former Liverpool coach Jurgen Klopp is used to being at the center of attention. On Thursday he was more than happy to be on the sidelines, cheering for his longtime friend Wojtek Czysz as he competed in badminton at the Paris Paralympics. "I stood next to Elena, his incredible wife, and we both had tears in our eyes," Klopp said after watching Czysz lose to Britain's Daniel Bethell in the men's singles. "I couldn't be prouder of him. I know sports are all about results, but just seeing him on the court was so touching, and I couldn't get my head around that." Their friendship began about 20 years ago when Czysz, a promising soccer player, suffered a devastating injury in a collision with a goalkeeper that led to the amputation of his lower left leg. During his rehabilitation Czysz met Klopp, who was managing FSV Mainz 05, a second-division German club at the time. They made an immediate connection that grew deeper over the years. Klopp, who stepped down as Liverpool coach this year after more than eight seasons, often uses Czysz's story as a source of inspiration for others. "Wojtek is constantly doing things I'm not brave enough to do," Klopp said at the La Chapelle Arena in the north of Paris. "Yesterday, he was telling me how easy it is to swim with sharks," he added, referring to Czysz's experience as a licensed diving instructor. Following his injury, Czysz started competing in para athletics, winning gold medals for Germany in the 100 meters, 200 meters and long jump at the 2004 Paralympics. After he quit the sport in 2013 he and his wife Elena Brambilla-Czys bought a catamaran and sailed around the world, helping amputees living on remote islands to get prosthetics. They arrived in New Zealand in 2019 where Czysz decided to take up badminton. After just a few years, he got so skilled at the sport that he earned a spot at the Paris Paralympics, competing for New Zealand. However, Bethell, the No. 2 seed, proved to be difficult for the 44-year-old Czysz in the SL3 category for players who practice standing and have a disability in one or both legs. Bethell won in straight sets 21-5, 21-2. Still, Czysz said Klopp's support meant a lot. "Jurgen is family to me," Czysz said. "It was great having him in my corner, despite the tough loss today. We need people like Jurgen putting the spotlight on us." It was a special moment also for Bethell who received a thumbs-up and a "Great job, Dan" from Klopp. "That was surreal, seeing him (Klopp) in the stands," Bethell said. Despite the loss, Czysz's journey in Paris is not over. He will face Ukraine's Oleksandr Chyrkov in a decisive second group stage match. "I'll have to think about it," Czysz joked.

Ronaldo included in Portugal's first squad after scoreless Euro 2024

AP ■ LISBON (PORTUGAL)

Portugal coach Roberto Martinez included Cristiano Ronaldo in his squad list for the first two Nations League matches following the veteran forward's disappointing European Championship. Martinez announced the squad on Friday for its home games against Croatia on Sept. 5 and Scotland on Sept. 8. The 39-year-old Ronaldo holds the record of 130 goals for international men's soccer. But he went scoreless in all five of Portugal's games at Euro 2024 before it was eliminated in a penalty shootout by France in the quarterfinals. Martinez said after Euro 2024 his team is starting "a new cycle for the 2026 World Cup." Ronaldo would be 41 by the time that tournament in North America kicks off. Martinez restored Ronaldo to his place in the starting lineup after predecessor Fernando Santos had stunned his team, and nation, by benching him midway through the 2022 World Cup, where he scored in an opening win over Ghana but then went scoreless over the next four games including a quarterfinal upset loss to Morocco. PORTUGAL: Goalkeepers: Diogo Costa (FC Porto), José Sá (Wolverhampton), Rui Silva (Real Betis).



Defenders: Rúben Dias (Manchester City), António Silva (Benfica), Renato Veiga (Chelsea), Gonçalo Inácio (Sporting), Tiago Santos (Lille), Diogo Dalot (Manchester United), Nuno Mendes (Paris Saint-Germain), Nelson Semedo (Wolverhampton). **Midfielders:** João Palhinha (Bayern Munich), João Neves (Paris Saint-Germain), Vítinha (Paris Saint-Germain), Bruno Fernandes (Manchester United), Bernardo Silva (Manchester City), Rúben Neves (Al-Hilal), João Félix (Chelsea), Francisco Trincão (Sporting), Pedro Gonçalves (Sporting). **Forwards:** Rafael Leão (AC Milan), Geovany Quenda (Sporting), Pedro Neto (Chelsea), Cristiano Ronaldo (Al Nassr), Diogo Jota (Liverpool).

Nitesh seals semifinal spot; Manasi, Manoj out

PTI ■ PARIS

India's Nitesh Kumar dished out a superlative performance, thrashing China's Yang Jianyuan in straight games in his second men's singles SL3 group A match to qualify for the semifinals in para badminton competition at Paris Paralympics on Friday. A 29-year-old IIT Mandi graduate, Nitesh, who had suffered a permanent damage to his leg due to an accident in 2009, outclassed Yang 21-5 21-11 in a dominating show. With his second consecutive win, Nitesh is assured of a top-2 finish in the four-man group. The top two ranked players from each of the two groups qualify for the semifinals. Nitesh, who hails from Karnal district in Haryana, will next face Thailand's Bunsun Mongkhon in his last group A match. Manasi Joshi and Manoj Sarkar, however, suffered their second successive defeats to end their hopes of making it to the semifinals from their respective groups. Manasi, a 2019 World Champion, faltered at the finishing line to go down narrowly 21-10 15-21 21-23 to Ukraine's Oksana Kozyna in her second women's singles SL3 Group A match. She had lost her opening match to Indonesia's Qonitah Ikhtiar Syakuroh on Thursday. Tokyo bronze medallist Manoj also suffered yet



another loss, this time going down 19-21 8-21 to Bunsun in his second Group A match. He had lost to compatriot Nitesh on Thursday and will meet Yang on Friday. SL3 class is for those players with more severe lower limb disabilities, requiring play on a half-width court. On Thursday night, Nitesh and Thulasimathi Murugesan had lost to Indonesian combination of Ramdani Hikmat and Oktia Ieani Ratri 15-21 8-21 in their second mixed doubles SL3-SU5 group stage match. Suhas Yathiraj and Palak Kohli also suffered a 15-21 9-21 loss to France's Lucas Mazur and Faustine Noel in their second group A mixed doubles match. SU5 class includes athletes with upper limb impairments.

Carlos Alcaraz's 15-match Grand Slam win streak ends in loss to Botic van de Zandschulp

AP ■ NEW YORK

After double-faulting to fall behind two sets to none - a deficit he's never overcome - in the second round of the U.S. Open, Carlos Alcaraz slung his equipment bag over a shoulder and trudged toward the locker room. Glancing in the direction of his coach, 2003 French Open champion Juan Carlos Ferrero, Alcaraz pointed his right index finger at his temple, then wagged that finger, as if to say, "I'm not thinking straight." He might have been excused for being confused by what was transpiring under the closed retractable roof at Arthur Ashe Stadium on a chilly evening, and one set later, Alcaraz's 15-match Grand Slam unbeaten streak was over with a sloppy 6-1, 7-5, 6-4 loss to 74th-ranked Botic van de Zandschulp. "It was a fight against myself, in my mind, during the match. In tennis, you are playing against someone that wants the same as you - to win the match - and you have to be as ... Calm as you can, just to think better in the match and try to do good things," Alcaraz said. "Today I was playing against the opponent, and I was playing against myself, in my mind. A lot of emotions that I couldn't control." The result eliminated the pre-



tournament men's favorite and certainly was hard to predict beforehand, given the No. 3-seeded Alcaraz's standing in the game, his excellence of late and his opponent's far-lesser resume. It followed another exit in Ashe for a past U.S. Open champion, Naomi Osaka, who was sent home Thursday by Karolina Muchova 6-3, 7-6 (5). That one, though, was not nearly as out-of-nowhere as what happened to Alcaraz. He won the French Open in June and Wimbledon in July to raise his career total to four major championships, including taking the title at Flushing Meadows in 2022. Then, in early August, Alcaraz won a silver medal at the Paris Olympics, losing to Novak Djokovic in the final. Maybe, Alcaraz acknowledged, a tennis schedule he called "so tight" drained him too much. "Probably, I came here with not as much energy as I thought that I was going to (have)," he said. "But, I mean, I don't want to put that as excuse." What's clear is he never found his footing against van de Zandschulp, a 28-year-old from the Netherlands. Alcaraz was way off, repeatedly missing the sorts of shots he usually makes routinely. The 21-year-old from Spain came in with a 16-2 record at the U.S. Open, where he never lost before the quarterfinals in three previous appearances. This also was Alcaraz's earliest defeat at any major tournament since bowing out in the second round of Wimbledon in 2021 as a teenager; he's never been beaten in the first round at a Slam event. In contrast, van de Zandschulp only once has been to a Grand Slam quarterfinal, getting that far at the U.S. Open in 2021. Otherwise, though, he is not someone most folks would have expected to pull off this sort of monumental upset. Consider: van de Zandschulp was just 11-18 for the season at

the start of this week and hadn't won consecutive matches at a tour-level event in 2024 until now. "Actually, I am a little bit at a loss for words," he said. "It's been an incredible evening for me." Sure was. The key stat probably was that van de Zandschulp won the point on 28 of his 35 trips to the net. The opening set was unbelievably lopsided. With van de Zandschulp's powerful forehands and serves at up to 132 mph finding their marks, Alcaraz never seemed to get comfortable. He did not produce a single winner in that set and was nearly doubled up in total points, 24-13. The second set was a bit better for him, but not enough so, and a double-fault gift-wrapped a service break that put van de Zandschulp up 6-5. When Alcaraz pushed a forehand wide to end the next game, van de Zandschulp finished off a hold at love that gave him the initial two sets after 1 1/2 hours of action. Didn't take long for Alcaraz to fall behind by a break in the third, too, at 3-2, but he made a stand immediately - well, with some help, because van de Zandschulp's double-fault ceded a break that made it 3-all. Alcaraz then held at love and smiled as he strutted to the changeover.

New track, new colors, new confidence for Ferrari heading into home race at Italian GP

AP ■ MONZA (ITALY)

New track, new colours and renewed confidence for Ferrari as the Formula One team heads into its home race at Monza. Ferrari did better than expected at last weekend's Dutch Grand Prix, with Charles Leclerc earning a second straight podium finish and teammate Carlos Sainz Jr. Surging from 10th on the grid to place fifth. That was a surprise in what was expected to be a weekend of damage limitation before planned car upgrades at the Italian Grand Prix. Although it was a well-timed morale boost for a team which started 2024 fighting for wins but had dropped out of contention, Leclerc was quick to temper expectations. "I don't let the last two races change our expectations," he said. "We are in a difficult moment for the team. We are struggling a little bit with pace at the moment. "I think we understood quite a few things since Zandvoort ... it was a good race. In Spa, it was good as well. "Here, it should be a bit more in the direction of Spa, so hopefully we'll be a bit more in the fight for the podium. However, for the win, I don't think we quite have that yet." Indeed, Ferrari has only won one of the past 13 editions of the Italian Grand Prix, with Leclerc delighting the passionate red-clad fans in 2019. Since then, the famed Italian Scuderia's only two podium finishes have been Leclerc's second place in 2022 before he was beaten to third place by Sainz last year. "I wouldn't say the feeling is that we must do better," Leclerc said. "However, there's definitely

a huge motivation because it's not only a normal weekend that starts from the Thursday to the Sunday, but it starts already from Monday in Maranello where we have so many tifosi (fans), and that obviously motivates everybody. "It seems and it looks like we've had a pretty strong car with a very low-downforce package even in the last few years where performance was not as good. That's positive because it's our home race and as much as it's giving exactly the same amount of points as other races, emotionally speaking and for the whole team it's definitely a special one." **NEW LOOKS:** Monza is one of the oldest and most historic circuits on the F1 calendar, but there have been considerable changes to the Temple of Speed this year. Modernisation works cost more than 20 million euros (USD 22 million), and the track has completely resurfaced for the first time since 1922 and will have a much darker appearance. Moreover, some of the iconic kerbs have been modified - much to the dismay of several drivers. "They've changed the kerbs," Red Bull's Daniel Ricciardo said on Thursday after inspecting the new look by bicycle. "I went around the track this morning. I can't say I'm that impressed because some elements have lost some of the character of the circuit. "Maybe, it's just as a driver, because we drive it and experience it, but kerbs and things like this make a circuit unique ... Part of Monza is that it was old school, and now that's gone. The resurfacing looks great, the asphalt looks really nice, but the kerbs, I'm a bit disappointed in."

