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INDIA'S RONAK WINS BRONZE IN 110KG 11 SPORTS



Modi to discuss with Zelenskyy ways to end war

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said he was looking forward to sharing perspectives with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on a peaceful resolution of the Ukraine conflict. The Prime Minister's comments came on Wednesday shortly before he embarked on a two-nation trip to Poland and Ukraine. Modi on Wednesday said his maiden visit to Poland will add momentum to the bilateral friendship and benefit the people of the two countries as he arrived here on the first leg of his two-nation visit during which he will also travel to the Ukrainian capital Kyiv. Modi, who will meet Poland's President Andrzej Sebastian Duda and hold bilateral talks with Prime Minister Donald Tusk, said he was looking forward to the various programmes in the Polish capital here. "Landed in Poland. Looking forward to the various programmes here. This visit will add momentum to the India-Poland friendship and benefit the people of our nations," Modi said in a post on X soon after his arrival at the Warsaw military airport here. On the first leg of the visit, Modi is visiting Polish capital city of Warsaw on August 21



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

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

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

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

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



UPENDRA KUSHWAHA, MANAN KUMAR MISHRA, KIRAN CHOUDHARY, MAMATA MOHANTA, GEORGE KURIAN, DHAIRYASHEEL PATIL, NITIN PATIL, RAVNEET SINGH BITTU

NDA's push for majority mark in Rajya Sabha

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

BJP leader Kiran Choudhary, former Union Minister Upendra Kushwaha, Supreme Court lawyer Manan Kumar Mishra, renowned Kudumi community leader Mamata Mohanta, Union Minister George Kurian, nominees of BJP and NCP, Dhairyasheel Patil and Nitin Patil, Mission Ranjan Das and Rameshwar Teli and Union Minister of State Ravneet Singh Bittu were among those who filed their nomination papers for election to the 12 vacant seats in the Upper House on Wednesday. For the BJP, the by-poll is crucial for pushing the NDA's Rajya Sabha tally past the majority mark, a key factor in passing of Bills. The current effective strength of Rajya Sabha is 229. Of this, the BJP has 87 MPs, with the NDA allies taking the number to 105. The support of six nominated MPs takes the NDA's strength further up to

111, four short of half-way mark. The Opposition has 84 members — Congress 26 and allies 58. Several of the 12 seats fell vacant as the sitting members, including Union Ministers Piyush Goyal, Sarbananda Sonowal and Jyotiraditya Scindia, were elected to the Lok Sabha. From Haryana, BJP leader Kiran Choudhary filed her nomination for the Rajya Sabha by-poll on Wednesday, with some JJP rebel MLAs also extending support to her candidature. Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, State BJP President Mohan Lal Badoli, several party MLAs, the party's co-in-charge for the State Biplab Kumar Deb and some JJP rebels were among those present when Choudhary submitted her nomination papers. Wednesday was the last day for filing of nominations for the Rajya Sabha by-poll. The BJP named Choudhary as its nominee shortly after she resigned from the

Assembly on Tuesday, nearly two months after she left Congress. She represented the Tosham seat in the Haryana Assembly. The by-poll for the lone Rajya Sabha seat in Haryana was necessitated after Congress leader Deepender Singh Hooda was elected to the Lok Sabha from Rohtak. His Rajya Sabha term was to end in April 2026. In Jaipur, Union Minister Ravneet Singh Bittu filed his nomination as a BJP candidate for the Rajya Sabha by-poll from Rajasthan. He was accompanied by Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma, Deputy Chief Ministers Premchand Bairwa and Diya Kumari, and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Jogaram Patel. Before submitting his nomination paper, Bittu, during a meeting of the BJP Legislature Party, expressed gratitude for his selection as the Rajya Sabha candidate from Rajasthan. Rajasthan has a total of 10 Rajya seats, one of which is vacant. Continued on Page 8



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

13 killed in Andhra pharma unit fire

PTI ■ ATCHUTAPURAM (ANDHRA PRADESH)

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

WB icons join march for justice in Kolkata horror case

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

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

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



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

A former Ranji Trophy player said, "It is the voice that has risen from within the society and that has to be addressed or else it will turn into a volcano... society is scared... I am a father of a girl who too is in a profession that I won't name and I want her safe... "I can just imagine what the old parents of the ill-fated doctor who was killed so brutally must be going through... gradually this fire will subside but the pain of losing an 'aulad' (offspring) that is burning the old parents by the hour will never subside... so it is the duty of the society to see the end of it." Continued on Page 8

Google, Meta in trouble over ads linked to fake lotteries

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

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



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

platforms like WhatsApp, Telegram and Instagram for some time stating that lotteries run by the state government can be bought online. People also get messages on their phones stating that the Kerala government has started an online lottery, and on spending ₹40 rupees there is a chance to win up to ₹12 crore, it said. When a person sends ₹40 on the number mentioned in the message, they get a fake lottery ticket image on WhatsApp. Later, when the draw time is over, the fraudsters send artificially fabricated results that show that the ticket held has won a prize of ₹5 lakh, the release said. Continued on Page 8

Bharat Bandh against SC's quota ruling evokes mixed response

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

eyeballs after a policeman accidentally hit a Sub Divisional Magistrate (SDM) with a baton while managing law and order in Patna. The bizarre incident occurred at the busy Dak Bangla square in Bihar's capital city. Having broken barricades at the JP Golambar intersection, the protesters reached Dak Bangla, where, to control the situation, security forces resorted to a lathi-charge. In a viral video, the policeman is seen hitting Khandekar, who was in civil dress, with a stick. While the SDM is taken aback, the erring policeman is taken away by his colleagues, who tell him about the mistake. The SDM identified as Shrikant Kundlik Khandekar. Continued on Page 8



SC resumes hearing on LMV driving licence

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday decided to resume its hearing on the legal question of whether a person holding a driving licence for a light motor vehicle is also entitled to drive a transport vehicle with an unladen weight not exceeding 7,500 kg. A five-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud took the decision after Attorney General R Venkataramani, appearing for the Centre, said though the consultations to amend the Motor Vehicles (MV) Act 1988 were "almost complete", but the proposed amendments are yet to be tabled before Parliament. The top most law officer said the amended Bill can be presented before Parliament in the Winter session and suggested the bench either defer the hearing till it is cleared by the House or proceed with the matters. Continued on Page 8

Dosa, butter chicken, Indian street food popular in Poland

PTI ■ WARSAW

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



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

Wednesday. This will be the first official visit of an Indian Prime Minister to this country in 45 years. In Warsaw, Chetan Nandani, a Gujarati businessman, recently opened a restaurant called 'Chaiwala', possibly alluding to the moniker that has stuck with Modi since 2014. Nandani, who already ran a restaurant called 'Curry House', opened the 'Chaiwala' owing to the popular demand for Indian food. He claimed to have introduced Indian street food to Warsaw. Continued on Page 8

Greed for big catch poses risk to fish eaters

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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



freshwater prawn (Macrobrachium spp.), which commands high prices in the market. Apart from this, a variety of Small Indigenous

Fish species are caught rampantly as the bye catch, including Puntius spp., Gudusia chupra, Salmostoma," said Ajoy Saha,

Archisman Ray, Kausik Mondal, Basanta Kumar Das from ICAR-Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute (CIFRI), Barrackpore, and Vikas Kumar from ICAR-CIFRI, Prayagraj. Presently, majority of the fish are harvested using gill nets, cast nets, passive fish traps, or occasionally plant-based fish poisons, the banned pesticides are being rampantly used despite being banned. "Indiscriminate use of synthetic pyrethroids, such as cypermethrin and deltamethrin, disrupts aquatic ecosystems by causing imbalances in fish populations and damaging aquatic flora. Continued on Page 8

Four killed as car rams into stationary truck

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Four persons died and two others were injured when their uncontrolled car ramed into a stationary truck on Agra-Kanpur national highway near Pilkhari village under Ikdil police station area of Etawah district on Wednesday early morning. Ikdil police rushed to spot and sent all the injured to the district hospital. It was apprehended that the accident took place when the car driver dozed off.

The deceased included the car driver while the injured, a woman and a minor girl. Around 6.30 am, the car was going to Hamirpur from Delhi. After its driver dozed off, the car ramed into the stationary truck. Police with the help of fire brigade took out four bodies and injured badly trapped in the car. The bodies of the deceased including Shobarani Prajapati, her husband Shiv Narain of Echan Kotwali, Mahoba, Ramapur of Paraldar Dimar, Hamirpur and driver Anshu of Sadapuri, Meerut,



The badly damaged car after it ramed into a stationary truck in Ikdil, Etawah, early on Wednesday morning.

were sent for autopsy. Injured Poonam, wife of Rambabu of Raipura Khurd Kotwali, Hamirpur and her daughter Baby were admitted to the district hospital. Meanwhile two farmers were fatally knocked down by a speeding bike on Ramaipur-Sachendi road under Sen Pashchimpara police station area on Tuesday night. The

incident took place when they were returning from the field on foot. One of them died on the spot while the other succumbed to his injury during treatment. The condition of bike-rider is also stated to be critical at the hospital. Police sent the bodies for an autopsy. Kamlesh (52) of Magrasa village along with neighbour Raja (35) was returning from the

field after sowing paddy on Tuesday night. Suddenly, near Namak Factory in Sen Pashchimpara police station area, the speeding bike-borne youth coming from Sachendi knocked them down due to which they died. Bike-rider Sanjay (36) of Itra village is undergoing treatment at the district hospital where his condition is stated to be critical. His kin had been apprised of the incident. SHO Gautam Singh said the injured had been admitted to the hospital. On receipt of complaint, further action will be initiated in the matter, he said.

DROWNED: A middle-aged man drowned in a pond in Unnao late on Tuesday evening. The incident took place when he had gone there to ease himself and suddenly slipped into the pond and died. He was identified as a street vendor Malik Ram (55), a resident of Hadaha, Achalganj, Unnao. After some time, kin traced him and recovered his body from the pond. Police sent the body for autopsy.

WOMAN ENDS LIFE: A woman committed suicide by hanging herself after a quarrel with her husband in Machhariya under Naubasta police station area on Monday night. After some time, when her husband entered the room, he found her hanging. The woman died during treatment at the hospital on Wednesday. Police sent the body for autopsy. According to a report received here, Roop Narain of Machhariya is a tempo driver. His kin said on Monday evening Roop Narain returned drunk and had a quarrel with wife Sarla (40) till late night. Thereafter, Sarla went to sleep in another room. After some time, when Roop Narain went to her room, he found her hanging from the ceiling fan. He immediately brought her down and took her to the Kashiram Hospital, Ramadevi, where she died on Wednesday. Roop Narain had a love marriage with Sarla 16 years ago. Kin said Roop Narain often fought with wife due to addiction to liquor.

Doctors continue protest



Doctors protesting at the OPD gate of LLR (Hallet) Hospital on Wednesday.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Hundreds of doctors at the LLR (Hallet) Hospital here struck work consecutively for the seventh day on Wednesday here in protest against the Kolkata rape and murder case. No new patients are being examined in the OPD as doctors have stopped issuing slips to them. Doctors said though the emergency medical services will continue but no resident doctor will serve the patients in the OPD. During demonstration at the OPD gate, they raised slogans of {Hatyaon Ko Phansi Do (Hang the killers), We Want Justice. They said the fight will continue till justice was not done to the victim's family. Apart from conducting trial of the case in the fast track court, strict penal action be also initiated against other culprits involved in the crime. At the JK Cancer

Hospital also, patients were not examined in the OPD. Apart from this, emergency services are also lying paralysed there. However, OPD in the Cardiology hospital will continue in view of seriousness of the disease, said resident doctors.

GROUND BREAKING SURGERY: Regency Health is proud to announce the successful completion of a complex robot-assisted radical nephrectomy on a 50-year-old woman of Kidwai Nagar here. This ground-breaking surgery highlights Regency Health's commitment to leveraging advanced medical technologies for improved patient outcomes. The woman to Regency Health with complaints of haematuria (blood in urine) and right upper abdominal pain. Comprehensive diagnostic evaluations, including CT-IVU and PET scans, revealed a very large tumour in the right

kidney, which was intricately attached to the liver and had invaded the kidney. Given the complexity of the case, a multidisciplinary team of doctors planned a robot-assisted radical nephrectomy. The surgery was successfully conducted in the Regency Robotic OT by Dr Piyush Tripathi, Consultant Robotic and Laser Urologist, Regency Hospital alongside the expert anaesthetist team and robotic surgeons. The operation lasted for 2.5 hours.

"Performing such a complex procedure using robotic assistance allowed us to manage various anatomical challenges, such as multiple arteries and renal veins, with exceptional precision," Dr Tripathi said and added the 3D vision and control provided by the robotic arms significantly reduced intraoperative blood loss to just 20 ml, which is about 10 times less than in traditional surgeries. This not only minimises the risk of complications during surgery but also facilitates a quicker and smoother recovery for the patient. The ability to perform such delicate operations with enhanced accuracy and reduced trauma marks a significant advancement in surgical care and we are thrilled to offer these benefits to patients at Regency Health. Postoperative recovery was swift and the woman was discharged in good condition just two days after the surgery.

Provide benefits of govt schemes to farmers on priority basis: CDO

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Kisan Diwas (Farmers' Day) was organised in the Vikas Bhawan auditorium here on Wednesday under the chairmanship of Chief Development Officer (CDO) Himanshu Nagpal. In the programme, along with the officers of Agriculture, Irrigation, Minor Irrigation, Cooperatives, Fisheries, Horticulture, Tubewell, Animal Husbandry, Milk Development departments, farmers of the district participated. The CDO directed the departmental officers to provide the benefits of government schemes to the farmers on priority. In the Kisan Diwas programme, the officers of the departments concerned tried to connect as many farmers as possible to the schemes by giving information about their departmental schemes. When the officer of Nalkoop (Tube Well) department was asked how many tube wells are currently in bad condition and how many are in working condition, the officer concerned did not clarify the status quo. The CDO directed the concerned to conduct a field inspection of all the government tube wells and inform about the status quo within three days. Along with this, all the departments were directed to immediately resolve the problems raised by the farmers present through this Kisan

Diwas and the same will be reviewed in the next Kisan Diwas. The Milk Development Officer said that at present under the Mukhya Mantri Swadeshi Gausamvardhan and Chief Minister's Progressive Animal Husbandry Promotion Scheme, progressive cattle farmers are being encouraged on indigenous cows of advanced breed. Also, primary milk cooperative society will be formed under Nand Baba Dudh Mission. For progressive cattle farmers, ₹10,000 has been fixed for high breed indigenous cows like Gir, Tharparkar, Haryana, Gangatiri cows giving 8 to 12 kg milk per day and ₹15,000 for cows giving more than 12 kg milk. Also, if a cow is taken from the cowshed, then it is given an allowance of ₹50 per day for its maintenance. A person can get a maximum of five cows from the cowshed. A Cooperative department officer said that at present DAP and urea are available in sufficient quantities at all the godowns. Its distribution is being done through a POS machine. The Horticulture department officer informed that under the Integrated Horticulture Development Mission Scheme, tissue culture banana, new papaya, new mango, dragon fruit, karonda, jamun, bael, jackfruit, palsa, hybrid vegetables, onion culti-

vation in Kharif and Rabi are being promoted and under the Prime Minister Agricultural Irrigation Scheme, the prescribed subsidy is payable for the establishment of drip irrigation, micro/mini sprinkler irrigation, portable sprinkler/raingun system. In addition, he said under the Prime Minister Micro Food Industry Upgradation Scheme, there is a provision of 10 per cent farmer share and 55 per cent bank loan and 35 per cent subsidy on expansion of agriculture-based micro industries such as dairy, flour mill, rice mill, sugarcane mill, oil press, cookery bakes, food processing, chilli based industry etc and establishment of new unit. The benefit of the above schemes is payable on the principle of 'first come first serve', he added. Besides, it was also informed that two hi-tech nurseries have been established in the district at the Indian Institute of Vegetable Research (IIVR) here in which if the farmer provides seeds to the nursery, then the plants are prepared there and given to the farmer concerned at the rate of one rupee and the nursery prepares plants and gives them to the farmers at the rate of ₹2. A Fisheries department officer informed that under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana, a scheme is being run in the district with the aim of increasing fish pro-

duction/ productivity and farmers' income and increasing self-employment opportunities. He informed that 60 per cent subsidy is permissible to women and Scheduled Caste/Tribe and 40 per cent to other categories. Under the Group Accident Insurance Scheme, female/male fishermen between 18 and 70 years of age are entitled to an annual insurance facility of ₹5 lakh in case of accidental death or total permanent disability, ₹2.5 lakh in case of permanent partial disability. It is mandatory to report the accident within 90 days. Under the Mukhya Mantri Matsya Sampada Scheme, it was said that two projects are being run by the state government for investment in gram sabha and other leased ponds and establishment of fish seed banks with the objective of promoting rural economy, increasing the income of farmers and providing self-employment opportunities. Besides 40 per cent subsidy is also allowed to this category under the scheme. Also, for fishery activities, collateral-free credit loan facility up to ₹1.60 lakh is available at four per cent interest rate through Kisan Credit Card Bank, in which maximum credit loan of ₹3 lakh is allowed. The Animal Husbandry department informed that at present a free vaccination campaign is going on for the prevention of foot and mouth disease.

BHU convocation to be held on December 14

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Banaras Hindu University (BHU) is all set to organise its 104th convocation on December 14 at Swatantrata Bhawan. The ceremony will commence at 9.30 am with Jay Chaudhry, an accomplished global entrepreneur and a pioneering figure in the world of cloud security, being the chief guest. Jay Chaudhry, CEO, Chairman, and Founder of Zscaler, is an esteemed alumnus of Banaras Hindu University and had obtained his Bachelor of Technology in Electronics Engineering for the Institute of Technology (now IIT-BHU) of the varsity in the year 1980. Jay Chaudhry is credited for making significant contributions to the field of cloud security with his innovative ventures. He is the founder, CEO, and Chairman of Zscaler, a global leader in cloud security that safeguards enterprises and government agencies across more than 185 countries from cyber threats and data breaches. The 104th convocation ceremony will see the presentation of the BHU Gold Medals for the academic session 2023-24 from the main dais. Besides, degrees to the graduands of the session will also be awarded during various ceremonies at respective institutes and faculties soon after the main convocation programme.

Steps to prevent mosquito-borne diseases

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Effective action is being taken continuously by the Health department to prevent mosquito-borne diseases in the district. The Health department has got 30 domestic breeding checkers with the help of DUDA, who are checking mosquito larvae by going door to door in the pre-identified hot spot areas of the city. Notices are being given to the houses where larvae are being found repeatedly. Also, an appeal is being made to be alert and careful. Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Sandeep Chaudhary said that preventive action is being continuously taken by the health workers in the pre-identified high-risk or hot spot areas of the district. For this, screening and awareness camps are being organised. Domestic breeding checkers are going door to door to find mosquito larvae and destroy the source. Apart from this, the Health department team is also spraying anti-larvae insecticides and doing fogging in rural and urban areas with the cooperation of Nagar Nigam and Panchayati Raj, the CMO said. According to Dr Chaudhary, beds with mosquito nets have



been reserved in primary and community health centres (PHCs/CHCs) and all government hospitals for the treatment of dengue patients. He said that 20-20 beds with mosquito nets have been reserved in the four government hospitals, namely SSPG Kabir Chaura, DDU Pandeypur, LBS Ramnagar and SVM Bhelupur. He added that 10-10 beds have been reserved in all urban and rural CHCs and five beds with mosquito nets have been reserved in PHCs. He further said that each hospital has been directed to compulsorily display the discharge and platelet protocol of the dengue patient in the ward. The CMO has appealed to the people of the district

that to prevent mosquito-borne diseases, everyone should keep their houses clean, not let bushes grow, not allow water logging, put burnt mobile oil or anti-larva chemicals in stagnant water, change the water of coolers etc once a week, use mosquito nets while sleeping, wear full-sleeved clothes, if any symptom of fever is seen, go to the nearest health centre and get tested and treated. He gave the message of 'Attack on mosquitoes every Sunday, we will eliminate dengue and malaria fever'. District Malaria Officer Sharad Chand Pandey said since August 1, 30 domestic breeding checkers are going door to door to find mosquito larvae. So far, about 22,260 houses have been visited, in which larva sources were found at 56,040 places and containers. All the sources were destroyed. Besides, 91 such houses were found where larva sources were found repeatedly and notices were given to those houses. Since August 1, around 1,097 fever patients have been found. No malaria positive case has been found in the investigation while one suspected dengue case was found. Dengue is confirmed only if the ELISA test is positive.

SP leader booked for chasing municipality team with rifle

PTI ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A Samajwadi Party (SP) leader was booked after he was caught in a video chasing a municipality team with a rifle, police on Wednesday said. The incident took place Tuesday when a municipal corporation team visited Vivekananda Park to clean it, police said. An FIR was filed against Amarnath Maurya on the complaint of Sub-Inspector

Kuldeep Upadhyay at Dhoomanganj Police Station. The incident came to light after a video turned up on social media allegedly showing Maurya chasing the team with a rifle. According to police, Maurya alleged that the civic authority team was digging up bricks from his land and taking them away, so he went to the park to stop them. "When I asked the Nagar Nigam people on what author-

ity they were taking bricks from my land, they had no answer. I have kept a rifle for my safety because my security has been withdrawn by the government," said the politician who had fought the 2024 Lok Sabha election on an SP ticket from Phulpur seat. Maurya has been booked under Section 132 (assault with intent to obstruct government work) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

PuVVNL MD takes action against engineers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A review meeting was held with the officers upto the level of junior engineers (JEs) in Basti Zone of Purvanchal Vidyut Vitran Nigam Limited (PuVVNL) under the chairmanship of its Managing Director (MD) Shambhu Kumar on Wednesday. In the meeting, a detailed discussion was held regarding revenue realisation, assisted billing, billing of LMV-2,4&6, IDE, Jhatpat and Nivesh Mitra. The PuVVNL MD expressed displeasure over the Chief Engineer (CE) and

Superintending Engineers (SEs) of Basti Zone for not conducting regular sub-centre wise review meetings. He directed the CE to issue show-cause notices to Executive Engineer (EE) Haraiya, Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) Vabhanan and SDO Amhat and to take action for suspension against JE Vabhanan Ram Nayan Prasad and JE Digwan Umesh Yadav. Besides, JEs Siddharth Shankar and Sushil Maurya and SDO Basti Anant Kumar were warned of strict action if their work is not improved in the next three days. In Basti Zone, only ₹25.32 crore

(44.66%) has been achieved against the monthly revenue target of ₹54.64 crore, while there are 2.70 lakh such consumers who have not made any payment till date after getting the power connection. Out of 11.62 lakh consumers in Basti Zone, 6.14 lakh consumers are those who have not made any payment this year. Along with providing uninterrupted power supply to the consumers on a regular basis, all JEs were directed to take action against the consumers who indulge in theft and are defaulters in their respective areas.

Radio broadcaster brings honour to Sangam city once again

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Sangam city's noted radio broadcaster K Rashi Badalia Kumar has been included in the elite panel of jury members of the prestigious international award conferred in the field of radio and television broadcasting.



K Rashi Badalia Kumar

The London-based prestigious Association for International Broadcasting (AIB) has included the well-known voice of radio, educator and writer Rashi among the selectors for its awards for 2024 for the fifth time in a row. Earlier, she was a judge for the award in 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023. This time three individuals from India have been selected among the panel of 62 judges from around the world for the international award. The other two being Rajen Garabada, an internationally award-winning producer and Ratan Bhardwaj, a senior journalist. Sangam city's noted radio broadcaster K Rashi Badalia Kumar is the only female representative from India for the fourth consecutive year. The UK-based organisation AIB gives international awards in the fields of journalism, TV, radio, audio and digital production. For this, media persons and organisations from all over the world apply. The selection process for these awards will be completed in September-October. The awards ceremony is scheduled for November 22 in London. Rashi, a resident of Civil Lines area of Prayagraj, said, "Of course it is a pleasure when your work is recognised. Being active in the field of media, it is an honour for me to be

included in the panel of distinguished AIB jury members this year too. It is a matter of great pride to represent my country on an international platform. It is a proud moment to be the only woman as a media professional from India among the international selectors." Rashi, who started her career as an English presenter from Akashvani-Lucknow in 1997, has a record of hosting more than 1,800 live radio shows. Rashi is the first voice of Uttar Pradesh's first FM radio 'AIR FM Rainbow-Lucknow', which started on August 20, 2000. In 2016, the then Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav honoured her with the Rani Laxmibai Award with a prize money of Rs 1 lakh. She has penned five books including 'A Gift - Your self-help companion to life at crossroads', an anthology of poems, 'From My Attic - a journey through 108 shades, short story collection 'Pandora - a collection of XXI thought-provoking stories', 'Two Zero One - Inspirational Quotes' and second edition of 'A Gift' that hit the bookstores in November 2023. Rashi's collection of 51 poems named 'Myriad Blooms' is going to be published in November 2024.

22-year-old woman jumps from building to flee 'boyfriend', dies

PTI/PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A 22-year-old woman died of wounds after she jumped from a coaching centre building near the Aeroplane crossing here allegedly after a row with her purported boyfriend, police on Wednesday said. The woman, Deepali Tripathi, was preparing for competitive exams and lived in Allahpur locality. Her father Bhopendra Nath Tripathi alleged that one Saurabh Singh, with three men, molested her at the coaching centre and forced her to jump from the corridor of the building, police said. He said that on Tuesday, Deepali had gone to the University Road to buy a book but was accosted by Saurabh Singh, who snatched her mobile phone and threw it on the ground. He also alleged that Saurabh and his three friends beat her too, police said. The entire incident was

caught in a CCTV recording, they said. Colonelganj Additional Commissioner of Police Rajiv Kumar Yadav, however claimed that Saurabh and Deepali were having an affair and there was a row between the two just before the incident over her purportedly dating another person. "Some person had told Saurabh that that victim was his girlfriend. To confirm this, Saurabh met the girl on Tuesday morning at the Aeroplane Square and both of them had an argument over this matter," Yadav said. Deepali was taken to a private hospital where doctors declared her dead, he said. Police have taken the damaged mobile in their possession and arrested Saurabh Singh, he said.

SUICIDE: A newly married couple committed suicide by hanging from a noose in Mungraon village under Handia police station area late at night. They hanged themselves from

a ceiling fan with a help of a saree. The family cremated the bodies without informing the police. Handia Station House Officer (SHO) BK Gautam said that the police is investigating the matter on getting information about the case. The reason for the suicide has not been revealed yet.

AGM ORGANISED: The Allahabad Management Association (AMA) organised its 36th AGM and annual day celebrations in Civil Lines. O.P. Goel was nominated as the president of the Allahabad Management Association. The chief guest was Prof Badri Narayan, Director, Govind Ballabh Pant Social Science Institute, Jhansi. The function started by a presentation by Ravi Prakash, the outgoing president, highlighting the events of the year 2023-2024. Treasurer Pramod Bansal presented the financial report. The vote of thanks was proposed by vice-president Dr Shanti Chaudhri.

NYC-NPSALS begins today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The 8th National Youth Convention on 'New Perspectives for Sustainable Agriculture and Livelihood Security (NYC-NPSALS-2024)' is scheduled to be held from August 22 to 23 at the Institute of Agricultural Sciences, BHU. This mega event being jointly organised by All India Agricultural Students Association (AIASA), New Delhi, Indian Council of

Agricultural Research (ICAR), New Delhi and Institute of Agricultural Sciences, BHU, Varanasi, will see congregation of a diverse group of scientific community and vibrant youth masses being directly associated with agriculture and livelihood security. "The convention will address key issues concerning challenges being faced by Indian agriculture which needs to be mitigated through key scientific resolutions and deliberated during the con-

vention in different thematic areas of agriculture and food security" said Prof SVS Raju, Director, Institute of Agricultural Sciences, BHU. The event will witness officials, dignitaries and scientists from all over the country who will strive to arrive at key recommendations likely to be emanated post-convention which will be useful for future policy and research directions for a sustainable agriculture scenario in the country.

NCR starts QR code payment facility

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

To promote Digital India, North Central Railway (NCR) has started the facility of payment through QR code at the ticket counters of railway stations. With this facility, passengers will get a permanent solution to the problems faced during transactions. Problems like overcharging due to lack of change while purchasing the

ticket and mistakes during cash payment will be eliminated. Payment through QR code will promote the Digital India campaign of the Government of India. In order to make the experience of railway travel pleasant, continuous efforts are being made by NCR for easy ticket distribution. For passenger convenience, NCR has provided the facility of payment through QR code at two UTS

and two PRS in Prayagraj division, 40 UTS and four PRS in Jhansi division and 44 UTS counters in Agra division. Senior Public Relations Officer (PRO), NCR, Dr Amit Malviya said with this facility, passengers are able to buy railway tickets by paying through UPI app. Payment through UPI app is playing an important role in the development of passenger facilities in easy ticket distribution.

CM: Hinduism guarantee of India's security, unity and cohesion

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Wednesday, said that Hinduism was not a caste, sect or religion, but rather the guarantee of India's security, unity and cohesion. Participating in the second edition of 'Hindu Gaurav Divas' programme, organised on the third death anniversary of late Kalyan Singh, Yogi said: "Remember, as long as the Sanatan Hindu society of India remains strong, no force can undermine the unity and integrity of our nation. However, if this unity is fractured, foreign conspiracies aimed at dividing India will gain ground. We must ensure that these conspiracies do not succeed."

"They who seek to divide you present themselves with different faces, behaviors, and characters. They will say one thing, show another, and act entirely differently. Whenever given the chance, they have incited riots in Uttar Pradesh and have disrespected Hindu heroes", he added. Paying tribute to former Chief Minister late Kalyan Singh, fondly called 'Babuji', Yogi stated: "Emulating Kalyan Singhji is no easy feat. It demands great struggle, the ability to face challenges, self-renunciation, and sacrifice. This is why Kalyan Singhji earned the profound trust of the public. He battled the forces of his time, persevered through difficult conditions, and remained steadfast in the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi movement."

Pointing out that the result of his struggle resonates across the world today giving every Sanatan believer a pleasant feeling, Yogi described the journey of late Kalyan Singh as one from "zero to zenith". Chief Minister Yogi said the zero-tolerance policy introduced by the revered Babuji in 1991 remains in effect today. "Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi this double-engine government will continue to uphold a zero-tolerance stance against crime, criminals, corruption and corrupt individuals, regardless of the cost. Not a single citizen will be harmed," he affirmed. Yogi described the entire journey of late Kalyan Singh from that of a farmer, to a teacher to Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh volunteer, Bharatiya Janata Party worker, MLA and MP, a health minister in post-Emergency Janata Party government and chief minister when the BJP first secured a significant majority, fueled by



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath paying tribute to former UP CM Kalyan Singh on his death anniversary in Lucknow on Wednesday

Yogi targets AKY over 'PDA' slogan

Lucknow (PNS): Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday criticised Akhilesh Yadav over his 'PDA' (Pichhde, Dalit, Alpsankhyak) slogan, accusing the Samajwadi Party president of showing disrespect towards Other Backward Classes leader and former chief minister Kalyan Singh. Speaking at the 'Hindu Gaurav Divas', Yogi Adityanath targeted Akhilesh Yadav for not paying tributes to late Kalyan Singh, a major figure in the Ram Temple movement,

"instead mourning the death of gangster Mukhtar Ansari". "Leave alone paying tribute to revered Babuji, the Samajwadi Party chief did not utter a single word of condolence. Meanwhile, when a notorious local mafia passed away, he visited his village to offer Fateha. Is this what PDA stands for? Those who were responsible for the bloodshed of countless Hindus were mourning the mafia's death as if they had lost a loved one. This reveals the true nature of the PDA," he said.

Continuing his scathing criticism, Chief Minister Yogi added that the incidents of Ayodhya, Kannauj and Lucknow had exposed the opposition parties completely. He remarked further: "Unless we unite in our fight against them, they will continue to deceive the people of the state. Today they are worried because their shops of hooliganism and anarchy have been shut down by the double-engine government. Each and every conspiracy of theirs has been thwarted at every turn."

the momentum from the Ram Janmabhoomi movement and then the governor of two states. He remarked: "The outcome of his contributions to the Ram Janmabhoomi movement is evident today. There are few workers and marginalised communities worldwide who have not witnessed the Pran Pratishtha ceremony of Ram Lalla in Ayodhya firsthand. In a time when humanity was suppressed, the construction of the Ram temple at Shri Ram Janmabhoomi stands as a beacon of hope. This hope began when 'Babuji' declared that even if the government fell, we would not target Ram devotees. Babuji remained steadfast in his commitment to values and ideals." Chief Minister Yogi said that his life was dedicated to the nationalism of India. He did

not support casteism and kept a distance from the forces that divided the society. Recalling Kalyan Singh's pivotal role in the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi movement, Chief Minister Yogi noted that on October 30 and November 2, 1990, the dark chapter in India's history, when bullets were fired at Ram devotees in Ayodhya and the then government was attempting to divide the Hindu community, Kalyan Singh stood firm like an immovable rock, opposing those spreading the poison of casteism. "On December 6, 1992, under intense pressure from the Central government to fire on kar sevaks in Ayodhya, Babuji declared that if the Central government wished, it could dismiss his government, but he would not allow bullets to be

fired at Ram devotees. He chose to resign from his post as chief minister rather than compromise on his principles," Chief Minister Yogi stated. On this occasion, BJP state president Bhopendra Chaudhary, Deputy Chief Ministers Keshav Prasad Maurya and Brajesh Pathak, Union Minister BL Verma, former Union minister and former BJP state president Dr. Mahendra Nath Pandey, former deputy chief Minister and Rajya Sabha MP Dr Dinesh Sharma, Unnao MP Swami Sakshi Maharaj, state government minister and former BJP state president Surya Pratap Shahi, Swatantra Dev Singh, programme organiser former MP Rajveer Singh (Raju Bhaiya), state government minister Sandeep Singh and other dignitaries were present.

Bharat Bandh called by Dalit outfits has little impact in UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The nationwide Bharat Bandh called by various organisations on Wednesday in response to a recent Supreme Court ruling on reservations had a little impact on normal life in Uttar Pradesh in Uttar Pradesh even as Dalit groups and political parties held demonstrations and marches in parts of the state. Several Dalit organisations took out processions, held rallies and staged protests in different parts of the state in support of reservations. However, despite the bandh call, most shops remained open, and business continued as usual. In anticipation of potential disruptions due to the one-day bandh, security measures were heightened.

Political parties such as the Bahujan Samaj Party and the Samajwadi Party supported the Bharat Bandh call. In Lucknow, political activists gathered on key roads in Hazratganj and nearby areas, causing some traffic disruptions. However, shops and markets in the city remained open, and daily activities proceeded normally. In central Lucknow, a significant number of BSP workers and supporters assembled at Ambedkar Square as part of the nationwide strike. In Prayagraj, Rapid Action Force personnel were deployed, while protests and marches were reported in Agra and Kanpur Nagar, where bus services continued without interruption. Various districts, including Unnao, Aligarh, Muzaffarnagar, Sambhal,

Jalaun, Etawah, Mathura, Hathras, and Gorakhpur, also witnessed processions and demonstrations in support of reservations. In Prayagraj, a BSP worker stated, "BSP workers are opposed to the abolition of reservations. We will submit a memorandum to the district magistrate on this issue." In western Uttar Pradesh, activists from the Azad Samaj Party and Bhim Army held protest marches in Bijnor, Saharanpur and surrounding districts. Azad Samaj Party (Kanshiram) president and MP Chandrashekhar Azad posted on X, asserting that the day's mass movement sends a clear message to both Central and state governments that the Bahujan society will not allow the "divide and rule" strategy to succeed. In Bareilly, the Bharat Bandh call had little effect, but thousands of people took to the streets under the banner of the Reservation Save Struggle Committee. Various organisations, including Bhim Army and Azad Samaj Party, staged vigorous protests. At around 12:30 pm, hundreds of protesters gathered at Chowki Chauraha, raised slogans, and later marched to the Collectorate. After about 30 minutes of protest, they dispersed. Similar demonstrations were reported in Shahjahanpur and Budaun, with rallies held in Lakhimpur Kheri as well. In Shahjahanpur, protests began at 10 am at the GIC ground in Khirni Bagh. Activists from various organisations marched through Anta Chauraha, Anjan

Chowki, Ghantaghar, Bahadurganj, and Sadar Bazaar before returning to the starting point. Despite the demonstrations, the city's markets remained open and unaffected by the bandh. Protesters demanded that the Supreme Court's ruling on sub-classification within SC and ST reservations be annulled by Parliament and that reservations be included in the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution. The rally saw significant participation from SP and BSP leaders who supported the demands. In Lakhimpur Kheri, the Bharat Bandh had no significant impact as the market remained open throughout the day. BSP and other organisations held rallies and protests, which culminated at the Collectorate. The police administration was on high alert during the bandh, with increased security measures in place. In Etah, there were protests against the creamy layer reservation. Large groups of Dalit youth took to the streets with blue flags, chanting slogans and attempting to forcibly close shops. In Jalesar, similar protests led to clashes with shopkeepers as demonstrators tried to shut down businesses. The protesters claimed they were peacefully expressing their opposition, but tensions escalated, resulting in broken shop counters. In Agra, supporters of the Bharat Bandh attempted to break through barriers, leading to the deployment of heavy police forces at Maharana Pratap Chauraha. The routes to

and from Agra Chauraha were blocked, with supporters of BSP, Bhim Army, and other groups chanting slogans against the Supreme Court's decision. Protests continued with marches organised by Bhim Army, BSP, and other groups, which eventually reached the Tehsil office. There, they submitted a memorandum to Nayab Tehsildar Vanishika Singh and called for a market shutdown. The situation led to clashes with authorities, breaking of shop windows, and attempts to enforce a market closure from tehsil to Agra Chauraha. Ahead of the bandh, the state police stepped up vigilance with Director General of Police Prashant Kumar monitoring the situation from the headquarters. DGP Prashant Kumar inspected the control room set up at the police headquarters in view of the Bharat Bandh and gave necessary guidelines for maintaining law and order in the state during the strike. Uttar Pradesh Police said in a post on X in Hindi. On August 1, the Supreme Court issued a historic ruling stating that states have the constitutional authority to sub-classify Scheduled Castes (SCs) to provide reservations for the most socially and educationally backward groups within them. The court clarified that sub-classification should be based on "quantitative and performance-based data" rather than political gain. In response to this decision, 21 organisations across the country gave the call for Bharat Bandh, arguing that the ruling undermines the fundamental principles of reservations.

Investments in UP entirely secure, profitable for businesses: Yogi Inaugurates JK Cement unit in Prayagraj

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Wednesday, said that investments in Uttar Pradesh were entirely secure and profitable for businesses, with the state government guaranteeing the safety of investors' capital. He added that the risks undertaken and reforms introduced by the government coupled with robust policies and effective implementation have resulted in Uttar Pradesh emerging as a leading state in terms of ease of doing business.

Chief Minister Yogi made this statement during the inauguration of a new cement plant in Prayagraj by prominent Kanpur headquartered industrial house JK Group. This plant's production capacity of 20 lakh tonnes is a testament to the improved investment climate in UP. The chief minister also highlighted the return of JK Cement, a once prominent industrial group in Uttar Pradesh which had lost confidence in the state and shifted its investments elsewhere, as an important development in UP's history. JK Cement's new plant in Prayagraj is the third of the company in Uttar Pradesh after Aligarh and Hamirpur. The chief minister stated



UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath virtually inaugurates a new cement plant in Prayagraj with a production capacity of 20 lakh tonnes, from Lucknow on Wednesday

that after the formation of the double-engine government in UP in 2017, the JK Group initially spent three years assessing the government's credibility. Once the results of the government's actions became evident, the JK Group committed to establishing three plants in Uttar Pradesh, with total investments of Rs 1,200 crore in Aligarh in 2020, Hamirpur in 2022, and Prayagraj in 2024. Chief Minister Yogi highlighted that Uttar Pradesh now boasts an extensive network of railways, expressways and highways, enabling easy distribution of locally produced goods to other states. He further emphasised that Uttar Pradesh has become a top investment destination in the country. JK Cement's investment is

significant, as it reinforces the industrial growth of the state without any industrial group feeling compelled to relocate. In the past seven years, Uttar Pradesh has cultivated an investment-friendly environment, propelling the state from 14th place in ease of doing business in 2016 to second place in the country today. Chief Minister Yogi remarked that Uttar Pradesh demonstrated how to successfully host an investor summit through Global Investors Summit-2023, attracting investment proposals exceeding Rs 40 lakh crore. In February this year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the groundbreaking ceremony for projects worth over Rs 10 lakh crore. Many units have already commenced produc-

tion, generating employment opportunities for thousands of youth. The JK Cement Limited's third Rs 400-crore cement manufacturing unit in Prayagraj will create at least 350 jobs. UP's Industrial Development Minister Nand Kumar Gupta 'Nandi', Minister of State for Industrial Development Jaswant Singh Saini, Chief Secretary Manoj Kumar Singh, Principal Secretary (Industrial Development) Anil Sagar, JK Cement Vice President Nidhipati Singhania, Managing Director Raghavpati Singhania, Deputy Managing Director and CEO Madhav Krishna Singhania, Assistant Vice-President Arun Sharma, MLA from Prayagraj Vachaspati, Vinod Prajapati and Anuj Khandewal along with other dignitaries were present in the programme.

Australian Envoy Philip Green meets CM Yogi to discuss investment prospects

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Australia has expressed a keen interest in supporting Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's initiatives to advance the agriculture sector in Uttar Pradesh. On Wednesday, Australian High Commissioner Philip Green visited Lucknow with a delegation and met with the chief minister to discuss potential investments in agriculture and allied sectors. High Commissioner Philip Green expressed his delight at visiting Uttar Pradesh for the second time and told Chief Minister Yogi that India and Australia enjoy a long-standing history of strong bilateral relations. He added, "Uttar Pradesh has the potential to play a pivotal role in further enhancing these ties." He highlighted the vast opportunities available in Uttar Pradesh and noted that Australian companies are eager to explore and expand these possibilities. Australia is keen to be a strong partner in enhancing the agriculture and food processing sectors in the state, he added.

High Commissioner Philip Green also introduced the chief minister to the representatives in the delegation, sharing their areas of expertise. While welcoming the Australian delegation to Lucknow, the chief minister highlighted that Uttar Pradesh, with the largest population in the country, is known as the food basket of India. He mentioned that despite having only 12 per cent of the country's total agricultural land, the state produces 20 per cent of the nation's food grain needs. The chief minister also stated that 85 per cent of the agricultural land in Uttar Pradesh is irrigated and emphasised ongoing efforts to expand this further. Furthermore, he provided details about the agricultural universities, agricultural science centres, and farmer production organisations established in the state. Praising the state's farmers, the chief minister stated, "Farmers in Uttar Pradesh are diligent and embrace innovation. If they gain access to Australia's agricultural technology, it will undoubtedly bring substantial benefits to the agriculture, horticulture, dairy, and food processing sectors in the state."

The chief minister remarked that Australia could play a significant role in enhancing Uttar Pradesh's dairy sector. He remarked, "Uttar Pradesh is making significant strides with its one district-one dairy initiative, and technical assistance from Australia would be immensely valuable."



In a discussion with representatives from various Australian educational institutions, the chief minister emphasised that a significant number of youths from Uttar Pradesh pursue higher education in Australia. He suggested that Australian universities should consider establishing MoUs with educational institutions in UP for research, collaboration and the exchange of technical knowledge. Additionally, he encouraged Australian universities to explore the possibility of setting up campuses in the state. Furthermore, the chief minister highlighted Uttar Pradesh's significant infrastructure development, noting that the state now boasts excellent connectivity across water, land and air. He emphasised that the state's 27 industrial sectoral policies are designed to cater to the needs of investors from various sectors. The chief minister also described Uttar Pradesh's policy for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Fortune 500 companies as highly beneficial for Australian investors.

During the talks with the Australian delegation, many state government officials were present, including Agriculture Minister Surya Pratap Shahi, Chief Secretary Manoj Kumar Singh, and Agriculture Production Commissioner Monika Garg. The delegation that met with the chief minister along with High Commissioner Philip Green included Senior Trade and Investment Commissioner John Southwell, Agriculture

Advisor Kiran Karamil, Second Secretary Tom Overton, Trade and Investment Director Asha Sundaramurthy, India Director of Ocean Lab Sandeep Jaiswal, Investment Manager of GrainCorp Jordan Jeffrey, International Strategy Head at Western Sydney University Nisha Rakesh, Michelle Rose from the University of Tasmania, and representatives from various Australian companies and educational institutions.

UPSIDA च.प्र. राज्य औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण, ए-1/4, लखनपुर, कानपुर

अल्पकालीन ई-निविदा सूचना

एनएच द्वारा स्थिति विना जाता है कि प्राधिकरण के विभिन्न जगहों में निम्न औद्योगिक क्षेत्रों में विद्युत विकास, अनुसंधान एवं रख-रखाव कार्यों हेतु सरकारी विद्युत / सार्वजनिक उपकरणों / निम्न / प्राधिकरणों / परिवहन / नगर निकायों में पंजीकृत एवं अनुमोदी कार्यों / ठेकेदारों से अल्पकालीन ई-निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है, जो दिनांक 22.08.2024 को अपरान्ह 4:00 बजे से दिनांक 29.08.2024 को अपरान्ह 5:00 बजे तक अपरान्ह की जा सकती है। निविदा को दिनांक 30.08.2024 को अपरान्ह 4:00 बजे खोल जायेगा। निविदादाताओं द्वारा भुगतान पत्रों की प्रतु प्रतिमा दिनांक 02.09.2024 को सायं 5:00 बजे तक कार्यालय में जमा की जा सकती है। ई-निविदा के माध्यम से आमंत्रित की जाने वाली निविदा सम्बन्धी विवरण निम्नवत् है-

क्रमांक	कार्य का नाम	कार्य की लागत रु. (साय में)
1.	Supply & Installation of CCTV & Annual Service Charges with AMC for 5 Year at I.A. G.C. Shahjahanpur and Chhouchh Lakhimpur Kheri.	16.44

नोट- 1. निविदादाता अपनी निविदाओं में सम्मिलित कर शर्तों दर्श अंकित करें। (जी.एस.टी. अलग से देय होगी)। निविदा सम्बन्धी विस्तृत जानकारी प्राधिकरण की website : www.onlineupsida.com पर स्थित ई-निविदा एवं यूपीएलकी website : <http://etender.up.nic.in> पर देखी जा सकती है।

वरिष्ठ प्रबंधक विद्युत खण्ड-प्रथम
उ.प्र.रा.औ.वि.प्रा., कानपुर

बैंक ऑफ़ बड़ोदा Bank of Baroda Regional Office Kanpur Dehat Region : 118/330, 2nd Floor, Kaushalpur, Gumti No. 5, Kanpur -208012

Possession Notice (Branch : Jhokan Bagh, Civil Lines, Jhansi)

Whereas the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of Bank of Baroda under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice calling upon the borrower & guarantor to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being with in 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrower/guarantor having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrowers/guarantors and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13 (4) of the said Act read with rule 8 & 9 of the said rules.

The borrower/guarantor in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the first charge of Bank of Baroda for amount & interest thereon.

The borrower's attention is invited to provision of sub-section (8) of 13 of the act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets.

Name and Address of Borrower/Guarantor & Description of Mortgage Property and Out Standing Amount as per Demand Notice/Demand & Possession Notice Date

Borrower : Shri Atul Verma S/o Shri Govind Sharan Verma and Smt. Sangeeta Verma W/o Shri Atul Verma, Both R/o : 2, Daru Bhaundela, Jhansi.

Demand Notice Date : 08-05-2024 • **Date of Constructive Possession:** 16.08.2024

Property : One Shop on ground floor of commercial complex, Part of House No. 4, Gandhigar ka Tapra, Sarafa Bazar, Jhansi in the name of Shri Atul Verma S/o Shri Govind Sharan Verma, Area : 17.04 Sq. Mtr., **Bounded as per Reg. sale deed dated 07-06-2019 - North :** 1.52 Mtr. Common Passag, **South :** House of Ram Swaroop, **East :** House of Raj Kumar Agarwal, **West :** Shop of Neeraj Verma & House of Ram Swaroop. O/s Amount as per Demand Notice : **Rs. 13,97,766.10 + Intt. + Others Charges**

Total Dues Amount as on Dated 10-08-2024 : Rs. 14,23,306.84 + Intt. + Others Charges

Date : 22-08-2024 **Place :** Jhansi **Authorised Officer**



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PAPER WITH PASSION

The Govt steps back

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

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



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

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

J&K gears up for historic elections

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



KALYANI SHANKAR

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

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



tions. The BJP claimed that the scrapping of Article 370 and their subsequent policies in Kashmir had developed the region for the better. The recently concluded Lok Sabha elections in Jammu and Kashmir were a significant victory for Indian democracy. In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the NC and PDP saw a resurgence. The election allowed them to revitalise their membership and bring long-standing issues to the forefront. Although the Congress did not secure any seats, the NC won two out of three, presenting a strong challenge for the third seat. Despite the region's history of terrorism and allegations of rigged elections, the polls were widely celebrated for the conduct of free and fair polls. The upcoming election will test the central government's efforts to integrate Jammu and Kashmir more fully into the Indian Union after revoking the region's special status under Article 370. It is also a test for the Election Commission to conduct polls without any violent incidents. The political parties have started preparing for the upcoming assembly elections, including campaign strategy, alliances, and candidate selection. The People's Conference, Congress,



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

Peoples Democratic Party, and National Conference met to plan for the elections. The political parties have started preparing for the upcoming assembly elections, including campaign strategy, alliances, and candidate selection. The People's Conference, Congress, Peoples Democratic Party, and National Conference have all met at their party level to plan for the elections. If the assembly elections are held as scheduled, the Valley will see a contest between the NC and the PDP. Moreover, the polarisation and separatist narrative that gained traction during the Lok Sabha elections will only intensify and peak during the assembly elections. The PDP leader and daughter of Mehboobha Mufti echoed the others. Other political parties, including the Congress, the BJP, the CPI(M) and the Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP), welcomed the EC's announcement. In the 2014 Jammu and Kashmir elections, no party won a majority. Governor's Rule was imposed for 49 days until PDP's Mehbooba Mufti was appointed chief minister with BJP's support. 2018, the BJP withdrew from the ruling alliance, leading to the Governor's Rule again. The

assembly was dissolved in November 2018, and President's Rule was imposed in December 2018. Since then, the governor's Rule has been in the state. The government needs to decide whether to intervene in the Kashmir Valley to address soft separatism or consider a reorganisation plan before the elections. During the parliamentary elections, Congress and the NC allied. The NC contested three seats in Kashmir, while Congress contested in Jammu and Udhampur. PDP, part of the INDIA Alliance, was not accommodated and fielded candidates on three seats in Kashmir against the National Conference. For the upcoming Assembly polls, the scene is not explicit. Congress and NC might go together. Omar mentioned that allying with the PDP would be difficult because they ran against each other in the parliament elections. If the regional parties want to improve, they must unite, and the INDIA Bloc must collaborate. The Kashmir elections are crucial, and the entire country will observe a popular government's rise after a decade. (The writer is a popular columnist; views are personal)

PICTALK



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

PTI

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



VIVEK SHUKLA

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

As fans gear up to celebrate the birth centenary of Bollywood's legendary showman Raj Kapoor on December 14th, it is essential to remember his deep-rooted connection with Delhi—a city that was almost like a second home to him. Kapoor's association with Delhi was profound, and this bond will be celebrated in a grand event in the capital on his birth anniversary. Raj Kapoor's final days were also tied to Delhi, where he passed away on June 2, 1988. Just a month before his death, on May 2nd, 1988, he was honored with the prestigious Dadasaheb Phalke Award by then President R. Venkataraman at the Siri Fort auditorium. Unfortunately, his health deteriorated shortly after the ceremony, leading to severe breathing difficulties. He was admitted to AIIMS, where doctors, led by Dr. J.N. Pandey, tried their best to save him, but his condition did not improve, and he passed away due to complications from asthma. Delhi, the city that played such a significant role in his life, also became the place of his final farewell.



Kapoor had a special affinity for Delhi's iconic cinema halls, particularly Regal and Moti, where he preferred his films to be premiered. Regal, one of New Delhi's first cinema halls, held a special place in his heart. It was here that some of his most celebrated films, including "Sangam," "Mera Naam Joker," "Satyam Shivam Sundaram," "Boot Polish," and "Jis Desh Mein Ganga Behti Hai," were released. The RK Banner films consistently performed well in the capital, further cementing Kapoor's connection with the city. As Pandit J.P. Sharma "Trika," a close family friend, recalls, even Kapoor's father, Prithviraj Kapoor, had acted in plays at Regal, which showcased both English and Hindi productions in its early days. Sadly, Regal closed its doors

in 2017, with Moti following suit shortly after. Shashi Kapoor, Raj Kapoor's younger brother, fondly remembered his visits to Regal with his elder brother. For Shashi, Regal was more than just a cinema hall; it was a place filled with memories of Raj Kapoor. Raj Kapoor's connection with Delhi was not limited to cinema alone. His trust with the city began in 1957 when he produced the film "Ab Dilli Door Nahin." The film also marked one of the early appearances of a young Amjad Khan, who would later become famous as Gabbar Singh. "Ab Dilli Door Nahin" captured various iconic locations in Delhi, including the old iron bridge over the Yamuna, Daryaganj, and Connaught Place. Kapoor's relationship with Delhi deepened further in 1970 when his eldest daughter, Ritu, married Rajan Nanda, son of H.P. Nanda, the founder chairman of the Escorts Group. Raj Kapoor would often visit his daughter's home in Jor Bagh whenever he was in town, strengthening his bond with Delhi. The Kapoor family's connec-

tion with Delhi extended beyond Raj Kapoor. His younger brother, Shammi Kapoor, had a different association with the city's cinema culture. In the mid-1960s, Shammi Kapoor became a partner in Plaza Cinema in Connaught Place, along with film producer F.C. Mehra. While he later sold his stake, Shammi Kapoor remains the only member of the Kapoor clan to have held a stake in a cinema hall. Raj Kapoor's fondness for his younger brother Shashi was evident, with the former often treating the latter as a son. Shashi Kapoor's early film "Householder," directed by James Ivory and produced by Ismail Merchant, was primarily shot in a large house near Times House in Daryaganj. "Householder," written by Ruth Praver Jhabvala, featured two of Delhi's iconic landmarks, Jantar Mantar and Jama Masjid. The Kapoor family's connection with Delhi is deeply rooted, with their memories continuing to be cherished in the city. (The writer is a journalist and a columnist; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT FOR RAPE

Madam — All eyes may be on Supreme Court hearings with respect to the Kolkata case but time shouldn't die down and the government can't be numb further on this issue. The pains undergone by the parents of the victim as well as the fear in the minds of the medicos when they enter into a hospital for their work need to be realised by the law making authorities. It's time to burn the culprits and not the candles. The time has come for the government to pass a bill for capital punishment for rapists. When currency can be changed overnight, when special session can be called to increase the salary of politicians, when parliament can remain open all night for trust votes, wondering what is delaying to pass a stringent law against rape. The State of West Bengal must be taught a lesson by enforcing the President's role till the case gets cracked and culprits taken to task. Only drastic change like this will also become a lesson for other states to adhere caution and to protect the women from this society. The female MPs in the parliament must take this up as a cause of their own and today it may be somebody's and tomorrow this can happen at their own house can't be ruled out. A.P. Thiruvadi | Chennai

REAL HERO

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

Saga of champai Soren!



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

insulted him. He should remember very well what was the fate of Geeta Koda, Congress MP from Singhbhum parliamentary constituency, when she jumped to BJP at the last moment in the last Lok Sabha elections? She was neither here nor there. The mystery of Champai Soren's future is going on for a long time because he played the game of rebellion thinking that all the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha MLAs of Kolhan will come with him. But nothing like that happened. Nor is it going to happen in the future. It is quite possible that he may lose the election from his constituency Saraikela as well. Because in the last assembly elections in the entire Kolhan, BJP was wiped out. Therefore, even though the people here call Champai the 'Tiger of Jharkhand', they will never tolerate rebellion against JMM. Therefore, for the time being, it seems that Champai Soren's political life has come to an end. Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

SAFETY AT SCHOOLS

Madam — Schools are noble and honorable places where students learn humility, humanity, compassion, benevolence, respect for others, and how to abandon violence and corruption. They foster unity, peace, and a spirit of togetherness. Unfortunately, today, schools have become places of fear and distress. Instances of student suicides due to teachers' cruelty, conflicts among students, vandalism on campus, and incidents like the recent Udaipur stabbing have left parents frightened and apprehensive about sending their children to school. Why is this happening? Why aren't government schools especially peaceful anymore? We heard a lot about shooting in the US schools and wondered why that happens but now it is happening in our own country. A close look is needed. Jakir Hussain | Kanpur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Sujit De | Kolkata



FIRST COLUMN

THE DIVINE JUSTICE SYSTEM

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



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Streamlining Punjab's administrative web



A S MITTAL

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

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

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



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

seven affiliated organisations oversaw the industrial sector.

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

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

proposed but has yet to materialise. Punjab, with 99.7 per cent of MSMEs, is a promising hub for growth. However, the most significant roadblock for these enterprises is dealing with multiple departments and keeping track of their compliance. Despite the implementation of ten policies since the first industrial policy was formulated in 1978, the need for actionable governance reforms is still pressing. It is necessary to explore various measures to significantly improve services and make Punjab an attractive destination. Policymakers must urgently re-imagine the state. Agriculture: In Punjab, agriculture is overseen by five distinct departments: the Department of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Dairy Development and Fisheries, Department of Horticulture, and Department of Soil & Water Conservation. Eighteen additional organisations support these departments. Despite the involvement of multiple organisations, the state's agricultural growth has consistently declined, resting at around three per cent from 1990 to 2000 and further declining to less than two per cent from 2010 onwards. Education: The government greatly emphasises education and considers it a top priority. There is a critical need to revamp the administrative structure, as there are currently two separate departments, with six organisations and a school education board. The Department of Higher Education and Languages manages organisations in education and languages, while the Department of School Education oversees the six organisations. Despite these efforts,

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

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

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

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

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

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



REETU SRIVASTAVA

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

Sangathan and Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti have also received their highest-ever allocations. The Flagship Schemes like Samagra Shiksha, POSHAN and PM-SHRI have got Rs 3,250 crores. The budget includes strengthening the skilling and apprenticeship ecosystem, skill development and internship opportunities for one crore youth by India's top companies, and providing employment-linked incentives to first-time employees across the sector. The government has introduced a revamped 'Model Skill Loans Scheme' from 1.5 lakhs to 7.5 lakhs to 25000 students annually and education loans up to 10 lakhs for pursuing education in higher domestic educational institutions to one lakh students every year with an annual interest subvention of 3%. The step will certainly promote enrolment in domestic institutions as well as reduce the financial burden on the students. In addition to this, the finance minister also outlined several initiatives for the Skill Development sector. These include the upgrading of 1,000 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) in line with the skill requirements of the industry. The internship opportunities for one crore youth in 5 years by the government is a welcoming step, this will provide youths with an engagement and enhance employability and practical skills. In the scheme 'National Apprenticeship Training Scheme (NATS)', an allocation of Rs 600 crore has been made. There has been an over-



all increase of Rs. 3525.15 crore (7.99%) in the budget allocation of the Department of Higher Education in this budget. Deemed Universities, IITs NITs, IISERs, and IISc have got hefty allocations, considerably high in comparison to the previous budget. In higher education, areas like Digital e-learning, Research and Innovation, teacher training, the Centre of

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

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

imparted at the school level it requires a revamped pedagogical structure, so, the Teacher Training segment has got its due share. The scheme 'Establishment of 3 Centres of Excellence (CoEs) in Artificial Intelligence (AI) has got an allocation of ₹255 crore in the budget. The Major Schemes For Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (PM-USHA) erstwhile known as Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA)], the budget has been kept at Rs1814.94 crore An allocation of Rs 1800 crore has been allocated for Institutions of Eminence. In the scheme 'Multi disciplinary Education and Research Improvement in Technical Education EAP (MERITE)', an allocation of Rs 200 crore has been made and this is a 100% increase over the

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

Ram Madhav appointed BJP poll in-charge in J&K

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Ending the four-year-long hiatus from active politics, Ram Madhav, a senior RSS functionary and former BJP General Secretary is all set to play an active role in bringing the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) closer to the corridors of power in Jammu Kashmir.



Late Tuesday evening, Party President JP Nadda sprung a surprise when he appointed Ram Madhav in charge of the Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir along with Union Minister G Kishan Reddy. Expressing his gratitude Ram Madhav posted on the micro-blogging site X, "I am extremely grateful to the Prime Minister for the assignment given to me as the BJP's Election Incharge for J&K. From conversations, I realized that PM's singular and statesmanly mission is to continue to provide good governance to the people of J&K after the historic abrogation of Art 370 by fulfilling his commitment of handing over reins of power to them through free and fair elections, just like the ones he conducted for the parliament a few months ago".

Madhav also thanked Home Minister Amit Shah, party President JK Nadda, and his parent organization RSS for extending their support in the new assignment. According to insiders in the party, Ram Madhav was brought back to the party fold at the behest of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) to iron out differences within the Jammu Kashmir party unit and explore the possibilities of stable government formation after the culmination of the poll process. His entry into the political landscape of Jammu Kashmir at this juncture is set to change the poll matrix after the culmination of the poll process. His contacts in the regional parties may come in handy during the government formation. Ram Madhav was earlier removed as general secretary in September 2020. After the vot-

ers handed over a fractured mandate during the 2014 Assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir, Ram Madhav along with Haseeb Drabu of the Peoples Democratic Party came together to stitch an alliance after which Mufti Mohd Sayeed took the oath of office as Chief Minister. After Mufti's demise on January 7, 2016, Ram Madhav again negotiated on behalf of the party with the PDP leadership to form the government headed by PDP Chief Mehbooba Mufti. Meanwhile, Leader of the opposition Rahul Gandhi also arrived in Srinagar late Wednesday evening ahead of finalising a pre-poll alliance with the top brass of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference. He is accompanied by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, KC Venugopal, and others. Rahul is scheduled to address party workers and senior leaders on Thursday at a private hotel while the party leaders may take time off to formalize the contours of the pre-poll alliance on the sidelines of the day-long meeting. Rahul Gandhi is also scheduled to visit Jammu later in the day to address a workers convention before heading back to New Delhi.

Petition filed in HC for ED probe into irregularities in Kolkata RGK Hospital

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

Even as the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) subjected former principal of the RG Kar Medical College Sandip Ghosh to marathon grilling for sixth consecutive day on Wednesday trouble continued to pile up for him with a former Superintendent of the Hospital moving the Calcutta High Court seeking and order for the Enforcement Department to investigate the financial irregularities that had been taking place in the medical college for the past several years. The petition was filed by Dr Akhtar Ali a former superintendent of the hospital who has claimed that he had brought the alleged financial issues before the vigilance commission and the State Health Department but nothing happened. "Sandip Ghosh has so much of clout that he was transferred twice and was reinstated in his post within a matter of days" adding "as I raised my voice I was transferred out of the college and at present I fear for my life after moving the High

Court as I am receiving threats." Incidentally after about an year of such issues being raised the State Government formed a Special Investigation Team comprising several senior IPS officers on Monday to look into the alleged complaints of financial irregularities. The SIT has issued summons to Sandip Ghosh to appear before it. "This is a ploy to take him into custody and destroy evidence before CBI or any other agency can get hold of him ... so this petition has been filed before the High Court so that this medical scam that has plagued the entire Health Department and all the State-owned hospitals gets brushed under the carpet like the previous scams ... this has to be unearthed because the doctors murder is not a one-off case ... it should be found out whether some people were trying to silence her," said one of the lawyers of Ali adding the scam could run into hundreds of crores and that Ghosh was only one of many fixers that was working for a Statewide "medical mafia."

Health scam of crores exposed, Delhi Govt Minister should resign: Vijender

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Vijender Gupta reacted sternly over the corruption in the construction of hospitals exposed in a note sent by three senior officers of Delhi Government to the Health Minister of Delhi regarding the lack of health services and has demanded resignation of the Health Minister. He said that the note sent by the officers of Delhi Government to the Minister has exposed the claims of the Delhi Government which is boasting about the health services of Delhi all over the world. Corruption worth crores of rupees has taken place. According to Gupta, the construction of 24 hospitals, including major facilities like LNJP Hospital and Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Hospital, has seen cost escalate by up to 100 per cent. Many of these projects are severely behind schedule. For instance, the new block at LNJP Hospital is only 60 per cent complete after nearly 4 years, despite an initial 30-month timeline. The misuse of funds extends to the polyclinic project as well. Out of 94 planned polyclinics, only 52 have been constructed, despite expenditures



exceeding the sanctioned budget. He mentioned that the Delhi government had planned the construction/renovation of 94 polyclinics, for which a sum of Rs 168.58 crore was sanctioned and given to PWD. However, PWD spent Rs 220 crore on constructing only 52 polyclinics. Similarly, there has been massive corruption in the construction works carried out in 24 hospitals of the Delhi government, including LNJP Hospital, Satyawadi Harishchandra Hospital, Bhagwan Mahavir Hospital, Guru Gobind Singh Hospital, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Hospital, Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Hospital, Acharya Shri Bhikshu Hospital, Rao

Tula Ram Hospital, Dada Dev Hospital, Chacha Nehru Bal Chikitsalaya, Aruna Asaf Ali Hospital, Deepchand Bandhu Hospital, etc. Gupta mentioned that the cost of these 24 under-construction hospitals has increased by 100 per cent, and the construction work has come to a standstill. Gupta highlighted a specific case study of the LNJP Hospital new block project, which was initially contracted at Rs 465.52 crore but has now seen costs spiral to Rs 1125 crore. "This scandal exposes the hollow claims of the Delhi government about world-class healthcare," Gupta stated. "The note from senior officials to the Health Minister reveals corruption worth hundreds of crores of rupees." In response to these findings, the Delhi BJP leadership plans to meet with the anti-corruption branch (ACB) chief to file an official complaint. They are demanding a thorough investigation into all aspects of this multi-crore scam and calling for the immediate resignation of Delhi's Health Minister. Gupta added, "The people of Delhi deserve answers and accountability. We will pursue this matter to ensure that those responsible for this gross mismanagement and potential corruption are brought to justice."

ICGS Sujay makes port call at Jakarta



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Coast Guard's Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) ICGS Sujay with integral helicopter made a port call at Jakarta, Indonesia on Wednesday as part of its ongoing overseas deployment to East Asia. This marks a pivotal milestone in diplomatic maritime engagements. During the two-day visit, the crew of ICGS Sujay will engage in professional interactions focusing on Marine Pollution Response (MPR), Maritime Search and Rescue (M-SAR) and Maritime Law Enforcement. Activities include professional interactions with BAKAMALA (Indonesia Coast Guard), Cross deck training, joint yoga sessions, friendly sports events and Passage Sea Exercise (PASSEX) with the BAKAMALA. The visit aims not only to strengthen ties between the Indian Coast Guard and their Indonesian counterparts but also to showcase India's ship-building capabilities, supporting the concept of "Atmanirbhar Bharat". Additionally, the 10 National Cadet Corps (NCC) cadets aboard ICGS Sujay will partici-

partate in an Environment Protection Walkathon towards marine plastic pollution in collaboration with local youth organisations, contributing to the GoI initiative "Puneet Sagar Abhiyan" and enhancing international outreach. In a maiden initiative, two women ICG officers embarked onboard for the Overseas Deployment will also be representing "Women in Maritime Security and Safety" while interacting and participating in bilateral cooperative engagements. ICG signed a Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) approved Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with BAKAMALA on 06 Jul 2020 towards enhanced maritime cooperation and institutionalised its cooperative engagements. The overseas deployment is in line with the Indian Coast Guard's commitment to fostering bilateral relationships under the ambit of MoU and holds significance in reinforcing bilateral relationships with key maritime agencies, crucial for ensuring safety, security, and environmental sustainability of the seas in the region, while addressing contemporary maritime challenges.

Bharat Bandh against SC's quota ruling...

From page 3

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Rajeev Mishra described the incident as a human error, and said the police officer did not recognise the official. The Patna District Administration later confirmed that the incident was an honest mistake and said no disciplinary action will be taken against the police officer. Meanwhile, the response to the Bharat Bandh or pan-India shutdown has been largely mixed; its maximum impact was seen in Bihar, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh. As many as 21 organisations including the National Confederation of Dalit and Adivasi Organisations (NACDAOR) have called for Bharat Bandh against the Supreme Court's decision to permit the sub-classification of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs). Left parties, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), Congress, Rashtriya Janata Dal, Bahujan Samajwadi Party have extended support to the nationwide bandh. In Jehanabad district, clashes occurred between protesters and security personnel on National Highway-83 near Unta Chowk, leading to the detention of five persons. In other districts, including Madhepura, Muzaffarpur, Saran, Begusarai, Hajipur, and Purnea, protesters attempted to block traffic and burned tyres, but were quickly dispersed by security forces. At Darbhanga and Buxar railway stations, a large number of protesters halted the Bihar Sampark Kranti and Farakka

Express trains, following which the Railway Protection Force (RPF) and district police were deployed to cleared the stations. East Central Railway Chief Public Relations Officer Sharswati Chandra confirmed that train services were disrupted in Ara, Chausa (Buxar), Darbhanga, Begusarai, and Rajgir, but the situation was promptly controlled. The bandh had little impact on normal life in Uttar Pradesh, even as Dalit groups and political parties held demonstrations and marches in parts of the state. A group of protesters held a march and raised slogans in Agra. BSP workers disrupted traffic on MG road, climbed atop the gate of the collectorate and raised slogans. They also tried to shut shops in the city. The protesters presented a memorandum to the district magistrate. In Lucknow, traffic was affected on key routes in and near Hazratganj as BSP workers held a demonstration. In Kanpur, some shops near the BSP's office were closed while public buses plied as usual. Similar scenes were witnessed in Unnao, Aligarh, Muzaffarnagar, Sambhal, Jalaun, Etawah, Mathura, Hathras and Gorakhpur, among other districts. The bandh has voked a mixed response in Chhattisgarh, barring tribal-dominated regions. Several shops and commercial establishments remained closed in parts of Bastar and Surguja divisions, largely inhabited by tribals, and Mohla-Manpur-Ambargarh Chowki and Dhamtari districts.

SC resumes hearing on LMV...

From page 3

The bench, also comprising justices Hrishikesh Roy, P S Narasimha, Pankaj Mithal and Manoj Misra, said as it has already heard the matter for some time and hence, it will proceed with the hearing without waiting for Parliament to clear amendments in the MV Act. The legal question has given rise to various disputes over payment of claims by insurance companies in accident cases involving transport vehicles being driven by those having licences to drive LMVs. Earlier on April 16, the bench had deferred the hearing on the issue after the attorney general submitted a note indicating that the consultations carried out by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways have culminated in proposals for amending the MV Act that will be put before the newly-constituted Lok Sabha following general elections. "By its communication dated April 15, 2024, the Ministry has placed on record the details of the proposed amendment to the statute. "In view of the impending General Elections, the Attorney General for India requests that these proceedings may be deferred until the last week of July 2024 so as to enable the Union government to bring forth a proposal for the amendment of the Motor Vehicles Act 1988 before the newly constituted Parliament following the General Elections," the bench had said. The impact, if any, of the amendments which are

proposed on the reference will be decided in the course of the hearing, it had said while deferring the hearing. Prior to this, the apex court had asked the Centre if a change in law is warranted on the legal question of whether a person holding a driving licence for a light motor vehicle is entitled to legally drive a transport vehicle of a particular weight. It had also sought the assistance of the attorney general in dealing with the legal question. Observing that these are policy issues impacting "the livelihood of lakhs of people", the court had said the government needs to take a "fresh look" at the matter, which needs to be taken up at the policy level. "Whether a person holding a driving licence in respect of a light motor vehicle (LMV) could, on the strength of that licence, be entitled to drive a transport vehicle of light motor vehicle class having unladen weight not exceeding 7,500 kg," reads the legal question being dealt with by the court. The bench had said ascertaining the position of the union ministry will be necessary after it was told that the apex court's 2017 verdict in the case of Mukund Dewangan versus Oriental Insurance Company Limited was accepted by the Centre and rules were amended to align those with the judgment. In the Mukund Dewangan case, a three-judge bench of the top court had held that transport vehicles, the gross weight of which does not exceed 7,500 kg, are not excluded from the definition of an LMV.

IN BRIEF

QR CODE MACHINES FOR TICKETS AT NFR

Maligaon: In order to promote the vision of 'Digital India' and facilitate cashless transactions at booking counters across the railway stations over Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR), a total of 191 QR code machines have been provided at 422 locations over five divisions at Katihar, Rangiya, Alipurduar, Lumding and Tinsukia. 587 counters at these locations have been covered till date. Further, 189 additional QR code machines are in advance stage of procurement, and will soon be installed at selected stations.



ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND GREEN HYDROGEN WORKSHOP

Amritsar: An open-door workshop titled "Energy efficiency and green hydrogen for rural India of 2047 and beyond" was organised by the Department of Chemistry, Guru Nanak Dev University, in collaboration with Brunel University London, UK. Expert lectures were delivered by leading global experts.

GNDU RELEASES EXAM FORM, FEE SCHEDULE

Amaravati: The online examination form submission and fee payments for December 2024 exams of under graduate Semester 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 and post graduate Semester 1, 3 (except BEd Sem-1st and Law TYC/FYIC Sem-1st) for regular and private students through online portal collegeadmissions.gndu.ac.in/loginNew.aspx has been scheduled as per below mentioned dates. Examination forms for annual system examinations (special chance/additional subject, re-appear, improvement) will be submitted manually at university cash counter, said Prof Shalini Bahl, Professor Incharge Examination

RPF OF NFR NABS 225 ILLEGAL MIGRANTS

Maligaon: Continuing the fight to detect illegal migrants (Bangladeshis and Rohingyas) the Railway Protection Force (RPF) of Northeast Frontier Railway has nabbed 225 illegal migrants and 16 Indian agents during checks across various stations of N.F. Railway from January 1 to August 15, 2024. In the present month itself till 15th of August, RPF of N. F. Railway has detained 22 illegal migrants. In an incident on 01 st of August 2024, RPF team of Agartala jointly with GRP/Agartala conducted a routine drive at Agartala Railway Station.



PRITHVI AWARDS 2024 ON SEP 14

New Delhi: Prithvi Awards 2024 and ESG Global Conference is a groundbreaking initiative by ESG Research Foundation, (Section 8 Not for Profit organisation registered with Govt. of India) to recognise sustainability icons and leaders in ESG and bring together ESG experts to have evocative discussions related to

RAJ-IV-A POWER HANDED OVER TO APRAAVA

Gurugram: REC Power Development and Consultancy Limited (REC/PDCL), a wholly owned subsidiary of REC Limited, the Maharashtra CPSU under the aegis of Ministry of Power, handed over a project specific SPV (Special Purpose Vehicle), viz, Rajasthan IV-A Power Transmission Limited to M/s Apraava Energy Private Limited (AEP/L). The project will facilitate evacuation of power from Rajasthan Renewable Energy Zone Ph-IV (Jaisalmer/Barmer Complex).

NMDC STEEL FIRST MAJOR PRODUCTION MILESTONE

Hyderabad: NMDC Steel Limited (NSL) proudly announces a landmark achievement of its production capabilities. Today, this ultra-modern, state-of-the-art plant has successfully produced 1 Million Ton (MnT) of Hot Rolled Coil (HRC), reaching this milestone four days ahead of the first anniversary of commencement of HR Coil production. These achievements highlight NSL's commitment to operational excellence and innovation. The company continues to push the boundaries by aspiring to be a leader in the steel manufacturing sector with a sole focus on efficiency, sustainability, and technological advancement.



WB icons...

From Page 3

Elsewhere at the College Street a swarm of retired and working engineers joined a procession demanding "justice." One of them who worked with the State Government for 35 years said, "I retired in 2005 ... went through the hoodlum years of the 1970s when Bengal lost hundreds of young people to naxalite movement and police atrocities ... but not like this ... I was not scared then as I am scared now." Samar Mahapatra another mechanical engineer who worked on a top post with the Indian Railways said he had severe arthritis and could not walk properly "but see the dead doctor has brought me here and I am walking with a stick to demand justice for her ... my daughter is in the US ... I hope she remains safe there... my solidarity with the family ... and when this hue and cry subsides I will visit the family of the victim and continue to be by their side till I die." Meanwhile, even a day after the Supreme Court ordering deployment of Central

Industrial Security Force for the security of RGKMCH there was no sign of the ongoing medical strike ending with the several thousand junior doctors on Wednesday marching to the Swasthya Bhawan (Health Headquarters). "We came to seek solution to a number of issues like foolproof security, inquiry into complains of corruption in all the State-run medical colleges and hospitals and appointment of full-time principals in medical colleges but there was no assurance coming from the authorities ... it seems that the Health Department is under serious pressure from higher authorities," said an agitating doctor from the RG Kar Hospital. The doctors' march came in tandem with a DIG of the CISF on Wednesday visiting the Hospital with a posse of security personnel. "The CISF officials had come to make a survey and inspect the hospital premises before they take charge ... they visited the principal's chamber and some other areas and then left" a source in the hospital said.

NDA's push for majority mark...

From Page 3

Of the nine seats, BJP has four and Congress has five. Bittu, grandson of former Punjab chief minister Beant Singh, joined BJP in March this year and contested the Lok Sabha polls. He lost, but was appointed as the Union Minister of State for Food Processing Industries and Railways. Former Union minister Upendra Kushwaha and Supreme Court lawyer Manan Kumar Mishra, filed their nomination papers for the by-polls to two Rajya Sabha seats in Bihar. Top leaders of the NDA in the State, including Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and his deputies, Samrat Choudhary and Vijay Kumar Sinha, were present at the Vidhan Sabha secretariat during the filing of nomination papers by the two candidates. The by-polls have been necessitated by the election to the Lok Sabha of sitting Rajya Sabha MPs Vivek Thakur (BJP) and Misa Bharti (RJD). Mishra, who began his political career with the 2009 Lok Sabha election he contested unsuccessfully from Valmiki Nagar on a BSP ticket, switched over to the BJP five years later and canvassed in favour of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Kushwaha, who heads Rashtriya Lok Morcha, is seeking election to the Upper House after having lost the recently held Lok Sabha polls. He asserted that as a member of the Upper House, he will press for judicial reforms and doing away with the Collegiums System. Notably, in the last 10 years, despite enjoying a comfortable majority in the Lok Sabha, the NDA numbers have remained short in the Rajya Sabha compelling the Government to rely on 'neutral' parties such as BJD and YSRCP to get Bills passed. With the two parties having changed tack - the BJP defeated BJD in Odisha this time, and allied with YSRCP's rival TDP in Andhra Pradesh - a boost in the Upper House will provide the NDA much-needed relief.

Greed for big...

From Page 3

"These chemicals trigger a knock-down effect in crustaceans, leading to their immediate death and impacting other aquatic life forms, the authors said adding that there is an urgent need for stringent regulatory actions and continuous outreach programs to curb the illegal use of pesticides. "They might also cause mutations in amphibians and insects. Moreover, juvenile fishes are more susceptible to these chemicals, and such detrimental effects on juvenile fishes and reproductive adults may threaten river fish population dynamics. The threat of bioaccumulation looms as birds and otters consume poisoned fish while wild animals drink water from poisoned rivers," said the study. "Raising awareness about the harmful effects and enforcing laws against toxic fishing practices is crucial to preserving the Ganga's ecological integrity.

Also, the scientists suggested that "further research is needed to quantify the extent of pesticide use, its environmental and health impacts, and to develop effective strategies for monitoring and controlling this destructive practice." Based on the information gathered from the fishermen, the researchers revealed that there is continuous poaching in the lower and some areas of the upper Hooghly estuary, using pesticides belonging to the synthetic pyrethroid group. Our study also demonstrated that long-term exposure to cypermethrin, even at an environmentally relevant dose, may affect the reproductive potential of fish. Therefore, fishermen have been warned to be vigilant and avoid eating contaminated fish, noted the authors. Measures like strict fishing regulations and continuous outreach programmes are necessary to maintain the natural river system, they added.

Google, Meta in trouble over ads linked to fake lotteries

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Subsequently, someone claiming to be a government representative calls on the phone and asks the 'ticket holder' to transfer a certain amount to a bank account towards 'GST' and 'stamp duty' to receive the prize money, it said. After the demanded amount is transferred, they ask for more money claiming that the RBI

is holding on to the prize. "Victims are provided with artificially produced documents and videos to make every step seem believable," the SPMC release said. The police have urged the public to be careful not to fall prey to such online lottery scams and to immediately call on the number 1930 if they suspect that a financial fraud is taking place.

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

The organisation identified 16 MPs and 135 MLAs facing cases related to crimes against women. West Bengal tops the list with 25 sitting MPs and MLAs facing charges related to crimes against women, followed by Andhra Pradesh with 21 and Odisha with 17,



according to the report that comes amid the nationwide protests over the alleged rape and murder of a trainee doctor in a State-run hospital in Kolkata and sexual assault of two children in Thane. According to the report, there are 16 sitting MPs and MLAs who have declared cases related to rape under Indian

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

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

The ADR has issued strong recommendations in response to these findings. It stressed on the need for political parties to refrain from giving tickets to candidates with criminal backgrounds, especially those with charges of rape and other crimes against women. The report called for the fast-tracking of Court cases against MPs and MLAs, ensuring professional and thorough investigations by police. The ADR urged voters to avoid electing candidates with such charges.

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



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and the US will review the entire gamut of their defence ties during Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's four-day visit there commencing Friday, Defence Ministry announced here on Wednesday. The forthcoming visit will further boost the comprehensive global strategic partnership between the two countries. In Washington, Rajnath will hold talks with Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan among others.

He is also likely to review the situation in the Indo-Pacific during talks with Austin, sources said. China is flexing its muscle in this strategically crucial region and has all along opposed Quad combine claiming it will lead to militarization of the zone. Quad comprises, India, US, Australia and Japan. Sources also said Rajnath may also discuss the issue of non-state players using drones to target merchant shipping after the Israel military action in Gaza. India's plan to procure 31 MQ-9B Predator drones, the proposed joint manufacturing of Stryker

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

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

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



Desi 700 MW reactor now fully operational

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

"The full power operation of KAPS-4 after the smooth operation of its twin unit KAPS-3 at full power demonstrates the strength of the first of a kind indigenous 700 MW Pressurised Heavy Water Reactor (PHWR) design," the NPCIL said. The KAPS-4 unit achieved first criticality on December 17 last year and commenced commercial operations on March 31.

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

India is building 14 more 700 MW nuclear power reactors of the same design which are expected to commence operations progressively by 2031-32. The NPCIL presently operates a fleet of 24 reactors with a total capacity of 8180 MW and has eight units with a capacity of 6800 MW under construction.

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



Shah to review Naxal coordination, security at meeting in Chhattisgarh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

At a separate meeting on the same day, Shah will also review security and development initiatives in Maoists-hit areas of Chhattisgarh, sources said here on Wednesday. The Chief Secretaries and Directors General of police of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, besides top security officials of the central Government are expected to attend the inter-State coordination meeting.

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

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

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

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

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

In the last five years, more than 5,000 post offices were set up in 90 districts that has Maoists presence or where the ultras had presence in the past. As many as 1,298 bank branches were opened and 1,348 ATMs made operational in the 30 most-affected districts, officials said. A total of 4,885 mobile towers were constructed at a cost of Rs 2,690 crore in the Naxal-hit areas and 9,356 km of roads were laid at a cost of Rs 10,718 crore.

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

EC halts recruitment results in Haryana until Assembly polls

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

As part of his official engagements, the Commander of Brazilian Navy is also scheduled to meet Defence Secretary, National Maritime Security Coordinator, and Vice Chief of Army Staff in Delhi. During this visit, Admiral Marcos Sampaio Olsen would also visit Information Fusion Centre - Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) at Gurugram and will hold interaction with various Defence Industry representatives.

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

Govind to succeed Ajay as Union Home Secretary



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



IAF aircraft malfunctions, drops air store at Pokhran

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

Congress blames hydel projects for Sikkim landslides, environmental damage

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

A massive landslide struck east Sikkim on Tuesday, damaging parts of a 510-mw hydroelectric project on the Teesta river. The landslide happened at Dipu Dara near Singtam in Gangtok district around 7.30 am, causing significant



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

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

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

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

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

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

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

The study is crucial given India's pressing health challenge as highlighted by the 2023 National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4) which reports that over 40 per cent of tribal children are underweight and stunted, and about 30 per cent are wasted. Published in PLOS ONE, the study analysed the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) to measure empowerment among 1,900 farm households. It found that women's empowerment in agricultural decision-making, income, and access to resources led to better household dietary diversity and higher weight-for-age and weight-for-height scores in children.

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



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

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

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

INDIAN PARA-ATHLETES EYE 12 MEDALS AT PARALYMPICS



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

No Jhinghan among India probables for Intercontinental Cup



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

U17 WORLD WRESTLING C'SHIP



India's Ronak wins bronze in 110kg

PTI ■ AMMAN (JORDAN)

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

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

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

AP ■ RIYADH

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

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



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

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

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

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

PTI ■ ST LOUIS (USA)

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

Gukesh draws with Nepomniachtchi

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



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

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

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

AP ■ WASHINGTON

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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BORDER GAVASKAR TROPHY ON PAR WITH ASHES FOR AUSTRALIA: STARC

PTI ■ SYDNEY

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

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

“Being five matches now it’s probably right on par with an Ashes series,” Starc told World of Sports.

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

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

“We always want to win every



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

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

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

“Hopefully when we’re sitting here on the 8th of January we have that trophy back on our shores.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



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

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

However, South Delhi Superstarz chased down the target with five balls to spare, courtesy a solid 101-run partnership between Arya and Ayush Badoni (42).

After the early loss of Sarthak Ray (0 off 1) in the first over, Badoni and Arya approached the run chase with composed batting.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Brief Scores:
Central Delhi Kings: 176/7 in 20 overs (Dhruv Kaushik 56 off 34, Yash Dhull 52 off 44, Kuldeep Yadav 2/37)
South Delhi Superstarz: 177/4 in 19.1 overs (Priyansh Arya 82 off 51, Ayush Badoni 42 off 36, Money Grewal 2/22).

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

AP ■ MADRID



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

his contract in 2019 to sign him from Benfica.

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

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

Felix was on loan at Barcelona last season.

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

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

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



PTI ■ CHENNAI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In the UTT, one of Manika’s most anticipated contests will be against world No. 13, Bernadette Szocs of Romania, who will play for Ahmedabad SG Pipers.

The two players also clashed during the pre-quarterfinals of the team event in Paris Olympics, with India winning the tie 3-2.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- UTT 2024 SQUADS:**
- Ahmedabad SG Pipers:** Manush Shah, Bernadette Szocs (Romania), Lilian Bardet (France), Reeth Tennisson, Pritha Vartikar, Jash Modi.
 - Chennai Lions:** Achanta Sharath Kamal, Sakura Mori (Japan), Jules Roland (France), Poymantee Baisya, Mouma Das, Abhinandh PB.
 - Dabang Delhi TTC:** Sathiyana G, Orawan Paranang (Thailand), Diya Chitale, Andreas Levenko (Austria), Yashansh Malik, Lakshita Narang.
 - Athlead Goa Challengers:** Harmmeet Desai, Yangzi Liu (Australia), Yashaswini Ghorpade, Sudhanshu Grover, Sayali Wani, Mihai Bobocica (Italy).
 - Jaipur Patriots:** Cho Seungmin (South Korea), Suthasini Sawettabut (Thailand), Snehit SFR, Ronit Bhanja, Moumita Dutta, Nithyashree Mani.
 - PBG Bengaluru Smashers:** Manika Batra, Alvaro Robles (Spain), Lily Zhang (USA), Jeet Chandra, Taneesha Kotecha, Amalraj Anthony.
 - Punerli Paltan Table Tennis:** Ayhika Mukherjee, Natalia Bajor (Poland), Joao Monteiro (Portugal), Ankur Bhattacharjee, Anirban Ghosh, Yashini Shivashankar.
 - U Mumba TT:** Manav Thakkar, Sutirtha Mukherjee, Aruna Quadri (Nigeria), Akash Pal, Kavyasree Baskar, Maria Xiao (Spain).

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

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

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

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

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

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

government.

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

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

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

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

Harmanpreet also thanked the state government for sponsoring hockey.

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

PTI ■ LAUSANNE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



restricted by the injury. “I came to Switzerland for

training ahead of the Diamond League. Luckily, I did not

aggravate my injury as I took extra care of that.

“I thought of continuing my season like most other athletes.

There is one month to go until the season ends. I will go to the doctors in my free time,” he had said last week.

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

Nadeem had finished fourth in the Paris Diamond League on July 7 with a throw of 84.21m. That was the only DL meeting — as well as the lone event apart from the Olympics — he had taken part this season.

He is currently at sixth spot in the standings with five points. Having pushed to the fourth spot with a throw of 88.50m in Paris after winning a silver in Tokyo, Vadlejch would be

looking to maintain his form in his bid to defend the DL title.

Two-time world champion Anderson Peters of Grenada, who took the bronze in the Paris Olympics with 88.54m, has been on the ascendancy after a poor last season, and he is capable of pulling off big throws, having already gone past the 90m mark in his career. Chopra has been the most consistent javelin thrower in the last couple of seasons, before Nadeem pulled off the heist in Paris, and the Indian will start as favourite in Lausanne on Thursday.

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

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

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