



OPINION 6 THE SHADOW GAMES OF PAKISTAN'S ISI

WORLD 9 VENEZUELA'S SC BACKS MADURO'S CLAIMS

MONEY 10 GOLD LOAN MARKET PROJECTED TO DOUBLE IN 5 YEARS

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KARTIK TO LEAD INDIAN CHALLENGE 12 SPORTS

Supreme Court extremely disturbed over delay in Kolkata FIR

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

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

During the hearing, Justice JB Pardiwala, who is part of the three-judge bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Manoj Misra, said he has not come across the kind of procedure followed by the State Government of West Bengal in his 30 years of legal career life.

KOLKATA DOCTOR RAPE-MURDER CASE



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

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

"The first thing is, is it true that the UD (unnatural death) was recorded at 10.30 hours (10.30 am)? Second, who is this assistant superintendent non-medical (person), her conduct is also very doubtful. Why did she act in this manner?"

Continued on Page 8

Mamata writes to Modi for stringent law against rape

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee wrote a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking stringent laws against rape. Her letter comes against the backdrop of ongoing agitation in demand of justice for a lady doctor who was found raped and murdered inside the seminar room of RG Kar Medical College Hospital in the early morning of August 9.

Continued on Page 8



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

Delhi Police deals death blow to Al Qaeda terrorists

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police's Special Cell on Thursday claimed to have busted an Al Qaeda-inspired terror module after arresting 11 people and detaining three others from Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

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

Continued on Page 8

Delhi Doctors resume work

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

Continued on Page 8

Armed student, locked at home, keeps Gudamba cops on toes

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A Class XI student on Thursday locked himself in a room at Sulabh Apartment in Gudamba and threatened to shoot himself, keeping the cops on tenterhooks.

DCP (North) Abhijeet R Shankar and his team were at the scene, working to rescue the student. The student was yet to be rescued till last reports came in.

The incident unfolded around 2 pm on Thursday after the student returned home from school. According to the DCP, the police were informed that the boy had locked himself in a room and fired two rounds from his father's licensed pistol. "His father is a transporter and the pistol was securely locked in an almirah. The boy knew where the pistol was and managed to find the key of the almirah," the DCP explained. The boy was threatening to shoot himself and the police were taking calculated measures to ensure his safety.

"We have cordoned off the area and are not allowing anyone near him. He is likely under significant mental distress, which could lead to unpredictable behaviour if anyone approaches," the DCP said. He also addressed media reports suggesting the boy wanted his mother to come to the scene. He clarified that the boy was not willing to speak to anyone. "We are making every effort to resolve the situation. We have called a psychiatrist for counselling," he said. Efforts to coax the boy to speak with his brother, with whom he has a good relationship, were so far unsuccessful.

Congress, National Conference shake hands for Jammu and Kashmir

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Former alliance partners Congress and National Conference on Thursday decided to 'unitedly' contest the upcoming Assembly polls by forging a pre-poll alliance in Jammu and Kashmir. By finally stitching the deal, the National Conference has also put to rest all the speculations about the possibility of the post-poll alliance by the Kashmir-based mainstream regional parties with the ruling dispensation in New Delhi.

The alliance partners have decided to contest all 90 seats as per the terms and conditions of the pre-poll alliance. The deal was struck between the two parties at the residence of Dr Farooq Abdullah in Srinagar. Omar Abdullah also attended the crucial meeting. Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge after addressing the workers meeting at a private hotel in Srinagar visited the Gupkar Road residence of Dr Abdullah where they held a closed-door meeting with the top brass of the National Conference discussing the contours of the pre-poll alliance. Soon after the meeting, the National Conference president Dr Farooq formally announced that the pre-poll alliance with Congress is final, and will be approved by this evening.



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

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

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

Continued on Page 8

PM MODI WALKS THE TALK IN WARSAW

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



Assam Bill to register Muslim Marriages

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ GUWAHATI

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



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

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

Continued on Page 8

India refutes Bangladesh's accusation of Tripura Dam breach

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

"We have seen concerns being expressed in Bangladesh that the current situation of flood in districts on the eastern borders of Bangladesh has been caused by opening of the Dumbur Dam upstream of the Gumti river in Tripura. This is



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

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

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

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

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

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

Medicos to resume duty with black ribbons

The Resident Doctors' Associations of Ram Manohar Lohia Institute of Medical Sciences (RMLIMS) and King George's Medical University (KGMU), Sanjay Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences (SGPGI) and Kalyan Singh Super Speciality Cancer Institute on Thursday decided to resume duties from Friday, albeit with black ribbons as a symbol of their ongoing protest against the brutal rape and murder of a resident doctor in Kolkata.

College asst accountant accused of manipulating CCTV tender process

The self-finance coordinator of Shri Jai Narayan Mishra PG College has lodged a complaint against an assistant accountant, accusing him of manipulating the tender process for installing CCTV cameras to favour a preferred firm.

Investigations revealed that the assistant accountant had conspired with the firm's owner and staff to benefit both himself and the favoured firm. The accused allegedly falsified the number of PVC pipes in a competitor's quotation, causing a significant increase in their bid and ensuring they ranked second in the comparative chart.

KGMU forms task force for safety of female staff

Lucknow (PNS): Following the rape and murder of a resident doctor in Kolkata, King George's Medical University has formed a task force to enhance the safety and convenience of female health workers.

A task force, led by the chief medical superintendent, has been established to address security concerns for female health workers. This task force will oversee the daily progress of the facility upgrades and ensure that the needs of female staff are met.

LDA to revive 25-year-old housing colony in Chinhat

The Lucknow Development Authority on Thursday decided to revive a 25-year-old housing scheme in Chinhat. Originally designed and planned by the UP Housing Society Cooperative in 2000, the project was intended to develop a residential colony but hanged fire.

The OPD medicine counter at KGMU reported a decrease in patient registrations, with only 500 registrations compared to the usual 700 by 11:30 am. KGMU spokesperson Dr Sudhir Singh noted that while emergency procedures are being handled, non-essential procedures are delayed.

Woman lawyer jumps to death from session court building

Lucknow (PNS): Maya Rawat, a lawyer, jumped to death from the third floor of the sessions court building in Wazirganj on Thursday afternoon. Police said that she was live-streaming on Facebook before she jumped off.



Members of Zila Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, Lucknow, taking out a peace march to protest atrocities against Hindus in Bangladesh, in the state capital on Thursday

Woman lawyer jumps to death from session court building

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UP to double maize production by 2027

The Yogi Adityanath government has set an ambitious target to double maize production by 2027. The goal is to elevate maize output to 27.30 lakh metric tonnes within the specified period.

Ken-Betwa link project a lifeline for drought-prone Bundelkhand

In line with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's vision to integrate the drought-prone Bundelkhand into the mainstream of development, the Uttar Pradesh government is expediting the Ken-Betwa link project in order to facilitate irrigation of more than 2.5 lakh hectares of land in the region.

CITYBRIEFS

EKAL BHARAT MANCH 2.0

The Ekal Bharat Manch 2.0, held at a city hotel on Wednesday, brought together leaders and activists to discuss holistic national development. The event featured a panel discussion supported by Bharat Lok Shiksha Parishad and Ekal Vidyalaya.

Conducive academic environment top priority: Goswami

Lucknow (PNS): On the second day of the three-day Navaramb 2024-25 programme at the Uttar Pradesh State Institute of Forensic Sciences (UPSIFS), various subject matter experts shared knowledge with the new students.

NOTICE

Original Allotment letter no. 1775 dated 21.06.1990 House No. H-442 Satyam Vihar A.W.-1 Kalyanpur Kanpur in the name of Jagdish Singh Yadav lost some where I issued by - Satya Roopa Devi.

NOTICE

I have changed my name from AYAJUDDEN to AYAZUDDIN S/o SHARAFUDDEN R/o 98/202, Beconganj, Kanpur NAGAR, for all future purpose.

NOTICE

I Sanjay Singh Bhadauria S/o Mr Shamsher Singh Bhadauria Resident - 2C - 313 Awes Vikas, Hansapuram, Naubasta, Kanpur. In my son's passport, the name of my son is wrongly recorded as ARCHIT SINGH BHADAURIA whereas in other official documents of my son, the correct name is ARCHIT SINGH BHADAURIA.

NOTICE

I Saddam S/o Islam Ali, R/o Gosai purwa, Lakshmanpur Jat Balpur, Gondia UP 271125, wants to inform publicly that my name in Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Education Pune, Secondary School Certificate 2022 is written as Saddam Islam Ali where as on Aadhar and PAN card it is Saddam. Both names are of one person only and in future he will be known by the name Saddam.

NOTICE

This is to inform that in my child's suryansh pal school documents my name has been mistakenly written as Kapil Pal whereas the correct name is Kapil Kumar Pal. Kapil Kumar Pal and Kapil Kumar Pal both are names of the same person Suryansh pal S/O Kapil Kumar Pal R/o - 549 / 279 Bada Barha Alambagh

NOTICE

My son's name is written in school documents as UMAR KHWAJA which is incorrect. The correct name is OMAR KHWAJA as mentioned in his Aadhaar & D.O.B. is 02.09.2010. Farha Khwaja, W/o Rohi Khwaja, R/o 301, Universal Crescent Apartment, Sector-A, Mahanagar, Lucknow, Opposite, Montfort Inter College, Mahanagar, Lucknow.

NOTICE

I have changed my name from Mohd Rayyan To Mohammad Rayyan for all future purpose. Mohammad Rayyan S/o Mohd Mustaqeem R/o 89/194, Sohan Lal Compound, Bansmandi Kanpur

NOTICE

I GULAB CHAND S/O SH MUNNU PLOT NO.148 SEC-1 JANKIPURAM EXTENSION HAVE CHANGED MY NAME GULAB CHAND TO GULAB CHAND BARNWAL IN ALL FUTURE PURPOSE

NOTICE

I Saddam S/o Islam Ali, R/o Gosai purwa, Lakshmanpur Jat Balpur, Gondia UP 271125, wants to inform publicly that my name in Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Education Pune, Secondary School Certificate 2022 is written as Saddam Islam Ali where as on Aadhar and PAN card it is Saddam. Both names are of one person only and in future he will be known by the name Saddam.

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दिनांक 30-08-2024 प्रातः 11:30 बजे लखनऊ अर्बन कोऑपरेटिव बैंक लि., लखनऊ (परिसमापनाधीन) की शाखा - ठाकुरगंज, 439/16-हर्दोई रोड, अपोजिट सी. एम. एस. चौक शाखा, लखनऊ व अपराह्न 3:00 बजे मुख्यालय - 190-तुलसीदास मार्ग, अपोजिट बाजार खाला पुलिस स्टेशन, लखनऊ में अनुपयोगी/निष्प्रयोज्य सामग्रियों, लाकर्स आदि की नीलामी, सिक्योरिटी रु० 10,000/- नागद, जी. एस.टी. पंजीकरण के साथ जमा होगी। आईपी सिंह एण्ड सन्स.

NOTICE

I MANSHREE H/O SH GULAB CHAND BARNWAL PLOT NO-148 SEC-1 JANKIPURAM EXTENSION HAVE CHANGED MY NAME MANSHREE TO MANSHREE BARANAWAL IN ALL FUTURE PURPOSE

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Corporate Identity Number U40109PB2010SGC033813 Website- www.pspcl.in
Mobile No. 96461-55525
E-Tender Enq. No. 555/P-3/EMPW-12687 dated 21-08-24
Dy. Chief Engineer/ Headquarter (Procurement Cell-3) GGSSTP, Roopnagar invites E-Tender ID No. 2024_POWER_125891.1 for annual overhauling of Coal Pipe for 1 no. units of 210 MW at GGSSTP, Repar. For detailed NIT & Tender Specification please refer to https://eproc.punjab.gov.in from 21.08.24/ 05.00 PM onwards.
Note:- Corrigendum & addendum, if any will be published online at https://eproc.punjab.gov.in

Foolproof security plan in place for police recruitment exam

Biometric verification of candidates a must before entry

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Yogi Adityanath government has put in place a comprehensive and foolproof plan to ensure the safe and secure conduct of the largest UP Police recruitment exam to date. As part of this initiative, stringent security measures have been implemented for the police constable direct recruitment examination, which is scheduled to be held in two shifts starting Friday, August 23. Static magistrates have been stationed at every examination centre, with the presence of officers ranging from deputy superintendents of police to sub-inspectors, depending on the number of candidates, to serve as centre supervisors. Additionally, intensive monitoring will be conducted through CCTV cameras, and all candidates will be allowed entry into the examination centres only after biometric verification. The state government is conducting these examinations as part of the recruitment drive for 60,244 police constable positions to further strengthen the police force. The exams are scheduled to take place on August 23, 24, 25, 30 and 31 across 1,174 centres in all 67 districts of the state. Uttar Pradesh Police Recruitment and Promotion Board (UPPRPB) Chairman Rajiv Krishna said that extensive arrangements had been made for the police recruitment exam, in line with the directives

of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. At the district level, district magistrates will act as district supervisors, overseeing administrative duties at each examination centre, including the deployment of sector magistrates and static magistrates. Each examination centre will have an assistant centre supervisor in addition to a static magistrate. The additional district magistrate will serve as the assistant nodal officer (administration), and sector magistrates will be assigned to three exam centres. To prevent cheating and ensure a smooth process, flying squads will be on standby. The centres will be supervised by officers ranging from deputy superintendents of police to sub-inspectors, with deputy superintendents overseeing centres with over 1,000 candidates, inspectors at centres with up to 1,000 candidates, and sub-inspectors at centres with up to 500 candidates. To maintain the integrity of the exams, 50 per cent of the personnel at each centre have been appointed by the district magistrate, while the remaining 50 per cent have been selected by the centre administrator (principal). Examination assistants have been appointed by both the district magistrate and the centre administrator, with one invigilator assigned per 12 candidates and additional assistant invigilators provided as needed. To ensure transparency in the examination process, advanced technology will be

employed to verify the identity of candidates. Comprehensive measures have been put in place for the thorough checking, frisking and supervision of candidates at each examination centre. Entry to the centre will be granted only after candidates undergo physical frisking, security checks using hand-held metal detectors and biometric verification, including fingerprint and facial recognition. In cases where facial recognition is not possible, arrangements are in place to capture FRIS (facial recognition image system) data. If there are any doubts regarding facial recognition, Aadhaar authentication will be done to confirm the candidate's identity. Additionally, jammers will be deployed at all centres to prevent the use of electronic devices such as mobile phones and Bluetooth. The examination halls and centres will be monitored via CCTV cameras, with live feeds being sent to the control rooms at the centre, district level, and recruitment board headquarters to ensure continuous oversight and security. Meanwhile, in Lucknow, five drones and CCTV cameras will monitor the various centres, with footage securely stored for future reference. Additionally, eight ACPs, 62 inspectors, 11 women sub-inspectors, 173 sub-inspectors, 173 head constables, 346 constables, and 173 women constables have been deployed across

the 81 examination centres in the district. According to JCP (Law and Order) Amit Verma, 81 sub-inspectors have been assigned to CCTV control rooms in all zones. Besides, 162 armed forces personnel, along with the sector magistrate, have been deployed, and 492 constables have been assigned for checking and frisking duties. Furthermore, three deputy superintendents of police, 15 inspectors, and two companies of PAC personnel from headquarters are on duty. The ACPs will oversee large centres, while inspectors will manage smaller ones. Additional traffic police personnel have been stationed at key transportation hubs, including railway, metro, and bus stations, as well as taxi stands, to manage any disruptions. Verma also noted that vehicle transporting question papers is under strict surveillance, with treasury storage secured by double locks and continuous monitoring by police and fire personnel to prevent theft or fire. Temporary accommodation arrangements have been made for candidates and their families at 29 locations across the city's five zones. These arrangements have been made in Naka, Hussainganj, Chowk, Vibhuti Khand, Gudamba, Madiyaon, Krishnanagar, Wazirganj, Thakurganj, Para, Sushant Golf City, Mohanlalaganj, and Chinhath. A helpline has been established at 8867786192 and 9773790762 for candidate assistance.

Shopping complex of SP leader accused of raping minor in Ayodhya demolished

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government led by Yogi Adityanath, on Thursday, demolished the shopping complex of Ayodhya rape accused Moeed Khan, who is a Samajwadi Party leader, days after demolishing his bakery. Reports said that by Thursday night, half of the property of the accused will be demolished. Earlier, an investigation by the tehsil administration revealed that the bakery of the accused was situated on pond land, leading to the demolition of its manufacturing unit. Ayodhya Development Authority Secretary Satyendra Singh stated that the building was constructed illegally by encroaching on pond land and chak road land. Despite multiple notices issued by the development authority, the property owners did not submit the required map or show any interest in complying with the notice. This illegal portion included the bank branch as well as other shops and establishments, which have been vacated following a notice. Subsequently, the demolition order was issued in June, and the action has now been initiated. The sub-divisional magistrate is conducting further investigations, and any additional illegal properties discovered will also face action. Ayodhya Circle Officer Ashutosh Mishra reported that comprehensive security measures were implemented. The surrounding area was evacuated and a substantial police force was present at the site. Traffic was diverted as needed to ensure smooth operations. Security of the Ayodhya gang-

rape victim has been increased. She has now been shifted to home in Bhadarsa town along with her family after undergoing medical termination of her pregnancy in King George's Medical University in Lucknow.

The incident took place in the Pura Kalandar police station area of Ayodhya, where Moeed Khan, a resident of the same area, allegedly raped the minor girl and made a video of the act. After making the video, Moeed

blackmailed the girl and raped her multiple times. The case came to light when the minor girl became two-month pregnant. After discovering the pregnancy, the victim's family filed a complaint with the police.

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Notice under Section 13 (2) of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002

The following borrowers and co-borrowers availed the below mentioned secured loans from IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC FIRST Bank Limited) The loans of the below-mentioned borrowers and co-borrowers have been secured by the mortgage of their respective properties. As they have failed to adhere to the terms and conditions of the respective loan agreements and had become irregular, their loan were classified as NPA as per the RBI guidelines. Amounts due by them to IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC FIRST Bank Limited) are mentioned as per respective notices issued more particularly described in the following table and further interest on the said amounts shall also be applicable and the same will be charged as per contractual rate with effect from their respective dates.

Sr No.	Loan Account No.	Type of Loan	Name of borrowers and co-borrowers	Section 13 (2) Notice Date	Outstanding amount as per Section 13 (2) Notice
1	58502937	LOAN AGAINST PROPERTY	1. SAMPATRAO SHIVAJI LAVATE 2. SANDHYA SAMPAT LAVTE	30.04.2024	8,15,317.06/-

PROPERTY ADDRESS : ALL THAT PIECE AND PARCEL OF 2 SHOPS ON 1ST FLOOR, AREA 18.66 SQ. YDS OR 15.60 SQ. MTRS. AT PREMISES NO. 99/B, SITUATED AT BECONGANJ, KANPUR NAGAR, UTTAR PRADESH-208001, AND BOUNDED AS: BOUNDARIES OF THE SAID SHOPS- EAST: COMMON PASSAGE & PREMISES NO. 99/9, WEST:HOUSE NO. 99/7 NORTH: OTHER SHOP & PASSAGE, SOUTH: AHATA OF HAZI AMIR BOUNDARIES OF THE HOUSIE NO. 99/B- EAST: PREMISES NO. 99/9, WEST: PREMISES NO. 99/7 NORTH: 15 FT. I.E. 4.57 MTR. WIDE ROAD, SOUTH: AHATA OF HAZI AMIR

You are hereby called upon to pay the amounts to IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC FIRST Bank Limited) as per the details shown in the above table with contracted rate of interest thereupon from their respective dates and other costs, charges etc. within 60 days from the date of this publication, failing which the undersigned shall be constrained to initiate proceedings, under Section 13 (4) and section 14 of the SARFAESI Act, against the mortgaged properties mentioned hereinabove to realize the amount due to IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC FIRST Bank Limited). Further you are prohibited under Section 13 (13) of the said Act from transferring the said secured assets either by way of sale/lease or otherwise.

Sd/-
Authorized Officer
IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC FIRST Bank Limited)
Date : 23.08.2024
Place : KANPUR NAGAR

Social media users booked for 'paper leak' rumours

Lucknow (PNS): Inspector Satendra Kumar, in charge of the media cell at the UP Police Recruitment and Promotion Board, lodged a complaint at Husinganj police station on Thursday against several social media users, accusing them of spreading rumours about "paper leak" ahead of an upcoming re-examination. The re-examination for constable positions in the civil police is scheduled for August 23, 24, 25, 30, and 31, 2024. Kumar said that certain individuals are falsely claiming that the question papers for this exam have been leaked. These individuals, he stated, are disseminating misleading information to deceive candidates, aiming to extort money by offering fake question papers. This fraudulent activity, he added, is an attempt to cheat the candidates and jeopardise their future prospects. The complaint highlighted that the accused have been demanding money by posting fake question papers on Telegram accounts with various UPI IDs. The inspector emphasised that these actions involve criminal extortion and are intended to tarnish the reputation of the Uttar Pradesh government. Kumar noted that this conduct is a punishable offence under sections 318(4), 336(3), 338, and 340(2) of the Indian Justice Code-2023, as well as Section 13 of the Uttar Pradesh Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Means) Ordinance-2024.

Two lakh youth to get govt jobs in next 2 years: Yogi

PNS ■ MUZAFFARNAGAR/ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath announced that the state government will provide government jobs to two lakh youth in the next two years. At a district-level employment and loan fair held at BIT College on Thursday, Chief Minister Yogi distributed appointment letters to over 5,000 youth and allocated Rs 30 crore in loans to eligible individuals and MSME entrepreneurs. Additionally, more than 1,000 students were given tablets under the Swami Vivekananda Yuva Sashaktikaran Yojana. He highlighted that unlike in the past when youth from western UP were excluded from job opportunities, young men and women from the region are now securing positions. Chief Minister Yogi also revealed that recruitment for over 60,000 police positions will begin on Friday. He urged enthusiastic participation in these opportunities. He warned that those who undermine the future of the youth will face imprisonment and have their assets seized and distributed to the poor. The chief minister announced that Rozgar Melas will be organised every three months across the state. The chief minister began his address by paying tribute to former prime minister and Bharat Ratna Chaudhary



Charan Singh. He announced that Muzaffarnagar is set to receive projects worth hundreds of crores of rupees. He emphasised that the Meerapour assembly constituency will particularly benefit from this. Reflecting on Muzaffarnagar's transformation from a place marred by riots a decade ago to a now peaceful region that hosts the Kanwar yatra with great enthusiasm, Chief Minister Yogi noted that the area's new identity is being shaped by development, security, youth employment and government jobs. The chief minister also assured that the Mawana sugar mill will be expanded, with a concrete action plan already underway. He highlighted the unique privilege of connecting Shukirtha with the Ganges and noted that the local jaggery is gaining international recognition. Under Prime Minister

Narendra Modi's leadership India has emerged as a global power, he asserted. Chief Minister Yogi took a jibe at the opposition, questioning the fate of their financial bonds and criticising Samajwadi Party chief for allegedly supporting rapists. He condemned the SP's record on safety of women and warned that anyone threatening the security of women would face severe consequences. The chief minister announced that local MLAs have proposed 38 new routes for Muzaffarnagar and the foundation stone for a mini stadium has been laid. He highlighted that the government has appointed Parul Chaudhary, a gold medalist at the Commonwealth Games, as a deputy superintendent of police. Additionally, the state's first sports university is being established in Meerut to nurture young sports talent, aiming to bring Olympic medals to the region.

The chief minister noted that 500 state players have already received government jobs and assured that any youth who wins medals for the country will be guaranteed a government job in UP. The chief minister also remarked on UP's transformation, noting that while migration was once a problem in Kairana and industries fled, the state is now attracting large-scale investments. New airports are being constructed in Saharanpur and Jewar, and the highway network is expanding, he added. He condemned attempts to incite division and violence, asserting that such efforts should be resisted. He emphasised the government's unwavering commitment to the progress and security of the youth, the poor, women and farmers, making the audience feel valued and important.

Target Zero Poverty: Nomadic communities to get govt facilities

Lucknow (PNS): The Yogi Adityanath government is working tirelessly to make Uttar Pradesh a zero-poverty state by rapidly extending government facilities to all deprived and marginalised sections of society, including the nomadic communities who traverse across the state. In line with this mission, the government has committed to providing essential services such as electricity, water and housing to nomadic families living in slums in Kalandar Kheda, Lucknow. This initiative will enable them to benefit from critical schemes like the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, old age pension, destitute women pension and Mukhyamantri Samuhik Vivah. Under this campaign, officials from various departments work together to ensure that the nec-

essary certificates are provided to these communities, allowing them access to government support. The nomadic community has expressed great satisfaction with the government's decision and hopes that its standard of living will significantly improve as a result. Minister of State for Social Welfare (Independent Charge) Asim Arun inspected the Kalandar Kheda colony along with officials and assured the residents that the government will soon extend the benefits of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana to all, ensuring a better quality of life for every family and moving closer to the chief minister's vision of a zero-poverty state. During a previous visit, Asim Arun, in a display of his unwavering commitment, had instructed officials to establish camps to facilitate access to

government schemes for the families residing in the colony. On this occasion, members of nomadic communities from various states gathered to meet the minister and urged for the creation of a nomadic commission for the community's uplift. Minister Arun highlighted that officials from several departments, including Social Welfare, have been conducting surveys over the past few days, setting up camps to identify citizens eligible for government schemes such as old age pension, family benefit schemes and Mukhyamantri Samuhik Vivah scheme. During an inspection two weeks ago, residents informed Asim Arun that around 200 families have been living in huts in this area for nearly 90 years without access to clean drinking water or electricity. The municipal corporation provides clean water to the residents via

tankers, and efforts are underway to supply electricity. According to the Renke Commission's 2008 report, there are approximately 1,500 nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes and 198 free tribes in India, comprising around 150 million people. Many of these tribes continue to face social and economic challenges across the country. However, since the establishment of the Yogi government in Uttar Pradesh, significant efforts have been made to integrate these communities into the mainstream. The government has been committed to protecting the human rights of these communities while ensuring their access to essential civic amenities. On the occasion of the country's 78th Independence Day, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath announced the ambitious goal of transforming

Uttar Pradesh into a zero-poverty state. In his address, Chief Minister Yogi emphasised the 'Antyodaya se Sarvodaya' policy as the foundation for achieving this vision. A comprehensive action plan is being developed to realise this commitment to a zero-poverty state, with the 'One Family, One ID' initiative playing a crucial role in ensuring that every poor and deprived family receives the full benefits of government schemes. Additionally, the Yogi government aims to lift 15 to 25 lakh of the state's poorest families above the poverty line within a year, ultimately making Uttar Pradesh a completely poverty-free state. Over the past decade, the government has successfully lifted six crore people out of multidimensional poverty, providing them a dignified life.

आर्यावर्त बैंक
(A Joint Undertaking of Govt. of India, U.P. Govt. & Bank of India) Regional Office
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POSSESSION NOTICE
(For Immovable Property)
Appendix-IV under the Act-Rule-8(1)

Whereas
The undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Aryavart Bank 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 dated 13.05.2024 calling upon the Borrower-1. Kisan Traders Prop. Mr- Muhammad Hakim S/o Rahim Baksh R/o Gata No.698, Barah Khambha Chhoti Julehati, Ward No.11, Tehsil- Rath, District- Hamirpur, Uttar Pradesh, 2. Mr. Muhammad Hakim S/o Rahim Baksh R/o Gata No.698, Barah Khambha Chhoti Julehati, Ward No.11, Tehsil- Rath, District- Hamirpur, Uttar Pradesh, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being Rs. 539473.57 (Rs. five lakh thirty nine thousand four hundred seventy three rupees and fifty seven paise) plus interest and expenses thereon from 21.10.2019 within 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 borrower/Guarantor 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 Sub-Section (4) of Section 13 of said Act read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest Enforcement Rules, 2002 on this 22nd day of August of the year 2024.
The Borrower/Guarantor in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the Aryavart Bank for an amount **Rs. 539473.57 plus interest and expenses thereon from 21.10.2019**.
The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-Section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Description of the Immovable Property:
A residential house situated at Gata No.698, Barah Khambha Chhoti Julehati Ward No.11, Tehsil-Rath, District- Hamirpur, Uttar Pradesh. Area- 65.12 Sq.Mtr. and bounded as under -
Bounded: (as per Sale Deed)
North: 20 Ft. wide road
South: House of Mahendra Nath
East: House of Ashwani Kumar
West: House of Mahendra Rajput
Area 104.55 Sq.Mtr.
Date : 22-08-2024
Place : Rath

(Ajeet Kumar Shukla)
Authorised Officer
Aryavart bank
Regional Office, Mahoba

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POSSESSION NOTICE
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Appendix-IV under the Act-Rule-8(1)

Whereas
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The Borrower/Guarantor having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower/Guarantor 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 Sub-Section (4) of Section 13 of said Act read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest Enforcement Rules, 2002 on this 22nd day of August of the year 2024.
The Borrower/Guarantor in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the Aryavart Bank for an amount **Rs. 381905.92 plus interest and expenses thereon from 31.12.2021**.
The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-Section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Description of the Immovable Property:
Property 1 - A residential plot in the name of Smt. Jagrani W/o Rajbahadur situated at Gata No.281/1 Mauja and Village Bija Nagar, Tehsil - Mahoba, District- Mahoba, Uttar Pradesh. Area- 104.55 Sq.Mtr. and bounded as under-
Bounded: (as per Sale Deed)
North: Plot of Nisha
South: Plot of Jaypal Singh
East: Khet of Laxmi
West: Road 3.66 Meter
Area- 104.55 Sq.Mtr.
Property 2 - A residential plot in the name of Smt. Nisha W/o Omprakash situated at Gata No.281/1 Mauja and Village Bija Nagar, Tehsil - Mahoba, District- Mahoba, Uttar Pradesh. Area-104.55 Sq.Mtr. and bounded as under-
Bounded: (as per Sale Deed)
North: Plot of Munna Singh
South: Plot of Jagrani
East: Khet of Laxmi
West: Road 3.66 Meter
Area- 104.55 Sq.Mtr.
Date : 22-08-2024
Place : Srinagar

(Ajeet Kumar Shukla)
Authorised Officer
Aryavart bank
Regional Office, Mahoba

Heavy rain hits life, causes waterlogging in Kashi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Heavy rain accompanied by thunderstorms on Thursday afternoon paralysed normal life badly, leading to waterlogging in many areas of the city. The rain brought down the temperature sharply. Rain left several localities, including Andhrapul, Teliabagh, Nagwa, Samneghat, Dashashwamedh, Godowlia, Luxa, Nai Sarak and roads of many other markets and colonies waterlogged. Rain water entered several shops in English Line and many other markets also.



Rain causes waterlogging in a colony near Nagar Nigam in Varanasi on Thursday.

Power supply in some parts of the city was badly disrupted while it all affected the flight services, especially during the afternoon hours. Meanwhile, the water level of Ganga river continued to recede for the second day after several days of rising trend. Though the Ganga is still flow-

ing at a high level, it has continued to pose a flood threat in several low-lying areas increasing the worries of the residents of many localities on both sides of river Varuna and some

newly-developed colonies near Samne Ghat in the southern part of the city. Though the water level is receding 20 mm per hour, the river was recorded at 67.98 metres at 8 am on Thursday against the warning level of 70.262 metres. Whenever the Ganga crosses 69 metres mark, the Varuna river starts reverse flow from its confluence point near Adi Keshav Ghat in the northern part of the city. Besides, as the Ganga is still at a high level and the water level of Gomti continued to rise at upstream Jaunpur, the worries of the residents of four villages of Daab area surrounded by Ganga and Gomti rivers near their confluence at Kaithi village has increased.

As per the report of Middle Ganga Division-III of Central Water Commission (CWC), the Ganga was

recorded falling at Varanasi as well as in upstream at Prayagraj and Mirzapur and downstream Ghazipur and Ballia but the level was steady in upstream Phaphamau in Prayagraj. However, the situation of flood in Uttar Pradesh-Bihar border district of Purvanchal (eastern Uttar Pradesh) Ballia remained grim as the river is flowing above the danger mark and was rising at a speed of 10 mm per hour. It was recorded at 58.4 metres against the red mark of 57.615 metres and is expected that the level will be at 57.92 metres on Friday morning. All-time high record in Ballia was reported at 60.39 metres recorded on August 25, 2016. In downstream Ghazipur, the river continued to rise by 20 mm per hour and recorded at 61.56 metres against the warning level of 62.10 metres.

9 addl judges of HC to be sworn in as permanent judges today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Nine additional judges of the Allahabad High Court will be sworn in as permanent judges on Friday. The swearing-in ceremony will begin at 9.40 am at the court room of Chief Justice. The Central Government has approved the recommendation of the Supreme Court collegium to make nine additional judges of the Allahabad High Court permanent. The Law Ministry also issued a notification to appoint these judges as permanent judges on Wednesday. According to the notification of the Law Ministry, Justice Syed Qamar Hasan Rizvi, Justice Manish Kumar Nigam, Justice Anish Kumar Gupta, Justice Nand Prabhakar Shukla, Justice Kshitij Shailendra, Justice Vinod Diwakar, Justice Prashant

Kumar, Justice Manjeev Shukla and Justice Arun Kumar Singh Deshwal to Allahabad have been made permanent judges in the High Court. All these judges will be administered oath by the Chief Justice Arun Bhansali. PUNCTUALITY PERFORMANCE: The North Central Railway (NCR) administration is striving to provide best services to its passengers under the leadership of General Manager Upendra Chandra Joshi. In this sequence, NCR achieved the best punctuality performance of 89.97 per cent on August 21 achieving 89.97 per cent punctuality, which was ranked 5th in Indian Railways. The previous best performance was on July 15, 2024, which was 88.47 per cent. In this achievement of NCR Prayagraj division contributed 88.26 per cent, Jhansi division 89.54 per cent and

Agra Division 90.64 per cent. The GM congratulated the officers and employees of the Operating department for this success and asked the divisions to further improve this performance and maintain it in the future as well. INAUGURATED: The Inter-house football tournament 2024-25 was inaugurated at football ground of Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture, Technology and Sciences (SHUATS) here on Thursday. Dr C John Wesley, Chairman Athletics Committee and Joint Registrar was the chief guest of the opening ceremony. Dr Sunita B John, Head of Physical Education welcomed the chief guest. The chief guest encouraged the players to play the game with true sportsmanship and congratulated everybody on the occasion of inauguration.

Special trains to run for police exam

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

For the convenience of the candidates appearing in the competitive examinations for police recruitment, the Varanasi Division of North Eastern Railway (NER) will run several special trains. All these special trains will stop at all the small and big stations falling between their originating and terminating destinations, Public Relations Officer (PRO) Ashok Kumar said. The 05129/05130 Gorakhpur-Varanasi City-Gorakhpur Exam Special Train from Gorakhpur will run from August 22 to 25 and August 30 to 31 in six trips and from Varanasi City from August 23 to 25 and August 30 to 31 in five trips. A total of 20 coaches, including two SLR/SLRD and 18 ordinary second class coaches will be installed in the rake structure of this train. The 05175/05176 Azamgarh-

Varanasi City-Azamgarh Exam Special Train from Azamgarh will run from August 23 to 25 and August 30 to 31 in five trips and from Varanasi City from August 23 to 25 and August 30 to 31 in five trips. This train will be operated with MEMU rake. The 05177/05178 Azamgarh-Varanasi City-Azamgarh Exam Special Train from Azamgarh will run from August 22 to 25 and August 30 to 31 in six trips and from Varanasi City from August 23 to 25 and August 30 to 31 in five trips. A total of 20 coaches, including two SLR/SLRD and 18 ordinary second class coaches will be installed in the rake structure of this train. The 05175/05176 Azamgarh-

Exam Special Train from Banaras in one trip on August 25 and from Prayagraj Rambagh in one trip on August 25. A total of 13 coaches will be installed in the rake structure of this train, including two SLR/SLRD and 11 ordinary second class coaches. Likewise the 05182/05181 Prayagraj Rambagh-Ballia-Prayagraj Rambagh Exam Special Train will run from Prayagraj Rambagh from August 23 to 25 and August 30 to 31 in five trips and from Ballia from August 23 to 25 and August 30 to 31 in five trips. The 05183/05184 Ballia-Prayagraj Rambagh-Ballia Exam Special Train will run from Ballia from August 23 to 25 and August 30 to 31 in five trips and from Prayagraj Rambagh from August 23 to 25 and August 30 to 31 in five trips. In the rake structure of this train, a total of 12 coaches

will be installed, including 02 SLR/SLRD and 10 ordinary second class coaches. The 05179/05180 Ballia-Gorakhpur-Ballia Exam Special Train will run from Ballia from August 22 to 25 and August 29 to 31 in seven trips and from Gorakhpur from August 23 to 25 and August 30 to September 1 in seven trips. In the rake structure of this train, a total of 12 coaches will be installed, including 02 SLR/SLRD and 10 ordinary second class coaches. The 05185/05186 Azamgarh-Gorakhpur-Azamgarh Exam Special Train will run from Azamgarh from August 22 to 25 and August 29 to 31 in seven trips and from Gorakhpur from August 23 to 26 and August 30 to September 1 in seven trips. In the rake structure of this train, a total of 14 coaches will be installed including two SLR/SLRD and 12 ordinary second class coaches.

3 labourers die as wall caves in

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Three labourers died and two others were seriously injured when the wall of a house suddenly caved in on them in Bakewar police station area of Etawah on Thursday. The incident took place around 12.15 pm when the labourers working under MGNREGA were busy constructing the drains of gram panchayat in Mehandipur village under Mahewa development block. As many as 10 labourers were engaged in the work. On the other side, the construction work at the house of Parashuram of the village was also going on. Suddenly, around 10x15 ft wall of his house caved in on the labourers and crushed them under the debris. This led to killing of Pradipt (40), Chandra Prakash (35) and Ramanand (45) on the spot. Omprakash (30) son of Lalaram Dohre and Arun



Kumar son of Hari Chandra Dohre were seriously injured. ADM Chakar Nagar Brahmanand Katheria, Circle Officer (CO) Chakarpur Prem Kumar Thapa, BDO Mahewa Suraj Singh, ADO Panchayat Indrapal Bhadauria, Tehsildar Chakravarthy Vishnu Dutt Mishra and inspector Bakewar Rakesh Kumar Sharma rushed to the spot and took stock of the situation. The injured were sent to the CHC and later referred to the district hospital.

YOUTH FOUND HANGING: A youth who had left the house after a quarrel with family members, was found hanging from the window of an inter college on the outskirts of Saibus village under Bilahur police area on Thursday morning. On getting information police rushed to the spot and carried out investigation. Barsati of Saibus village is a farmer. Of his three sons, youngest bachelor son Raj Kumar (30) used to assist him in the farming work. According to villagers, Raj Kumar was addicted to liquor. After a quarrel with family members late on Wednesday night, he went out of the house and was found hanging from the window of an inter college on Thursday morning. Police sent the body for autopsy. SHO said on the basis of autopsy report, further action will be taken in the matter. Meanwhile on being scolded by

husband, a woman committed suicide by setting herself ablaze in Hasanganj Kotwali police station area of Unnao on Wednesday night. Her husband took her to CHC and then to the district hospital where the woman succumbed to her burns during treatment late at night. Usha (28) wife of Virendra Kumar lived separately from family members in Purabrauna village under Hasanganj Kotwali police station area. On Wednesday night, around 8 pm, on beating up the son Sharad, Usha was scolded by husband. Kotwali incharge Chandra Kant Mishra said he had come to know about the matter and deputed outpost incharge to the spot. On the other hand, an elderly cyclist was killed after being hit by a train between Prempur railway station and Baragoon Purani Crossing in Maharajpur police station area late on Wednesday evening.

Cong workers gherao ED office

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The Congress workers in large numbers gheraoed the Enforcement Directorate (ED) office here on Thursday. The office-bearers and workers from Prayagraj as well as many districts of entire Purvanchal reached here and protested. This protest has been done on the call of All India Congress Committee under the leadership of district president Suresh Yadav. The Congress workers reached the protest site near All Saints' Cathedral in Civil Lines. From here everyone came to the ED office raising slogans. State Congress Committee Secretary Satyaveer Singh said that this protest was lodged against ED. He alleged that this government is misusing ED. He said that ED is an impartial agency but it is being 'misused'. The Congress workers will not let this happen, he said. PROTEST: Anger erupted

against Bangladesh here on Thursday. Hundreds of protesters gathered at KP College ground and raised slogans. Woman protesters also raised slogans like 'Bangladesh Murdabad' etc. The enraged protesters also torched the symbolic effigy of Bangladesh to vent out their anger. The protesting people took out a march. People from Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) as well as from Bajrang Dal and other organisations joined the protest. Leaders of business organisations also extended their support. The organisations came out on the road here in protest against the 'atrocities' on Hindus in Bangladesh. The Hindu Raksha Samiti at Shri Ram Vatika Katra announced a protest several days ago. Other organisations, including Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Vishwa

Hindu Parishad, Allahabad Medical Association (AMA), Advocates Association, Teachers Association, Civil Lines Vyapar Mandal, ISKCON Temple Gurdwara, Jain Temple and others also took part in the protest. WORKSHOP: A two day international workshop on "Recent Developments in Applied Biotechnology" (RDAB-2024), hosted by the Department of Applied Sciences, Indian Institute of Information Technology (IIIT) Allahabad will begin from August 23. The event in online mode will be inaugurated by Prof Mukul Sharad Sutaone, Director, IIIT Allahabad and Dr Pramod Kumar, Head of the Department of Applied Sciences will preside over the programme. Dr Suntu Kumar Samanta, Convener said that this webinar-cum-workshop is set to bring together leading experts from around the world

to discuss cutting-edge advancements in Applied Biotechnology and their implications for the future. WOMAN ENDS LIFE: A 24-year-old woman living near Netram Crossing of Katra area under Colonelganj police station ended her life by hanging herself. Her body was found hanging from the noose. She was preparing for competitive examinations. On getting information the police reached the spot with the forensic team and investigated the matter. Reports said Aashifa of Pathanpur village under Marda police station area of Ghazipur district, was preparing for competitive examinations by taking room on rent near Netram Intersection in Katra here. Colonelganj police station incharge PK Singh said the reason behind her taking this extreme step is not clear yet. However, investigation in the matter is underway, he added.

'Space has always fascinated humankind'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The inaugural session of the three-day National Space Day was held at IIT (BHU) Varanasi on Wednesday. Renowned Indian physicist and Padma Shri awardee, Prof Harish Chandra Verma from IIT Kanpur, graced the event as the chief guest and delivered a keynote lecture. In his lecture, Prof Verma emphasised the importance of studying subjects with genuine interest rather than just for exams. He noted that space with its vastness has always fascinated humankind. He cited how ancient scholars observed planetary movements with the naked eye and developed accurate calendars, showcasing the brilliance of ancient Indian astronomy. Prof Verma also highlighted the efforts being made to introduce space science to students in classes VI, VII and VIII through storytelling, in collaboration with the Indian Education Boards. This initiative aims to ignite interest in space science among young students. He referenced Maharishi Valmiki, who had profound knowledge of constellations, zodiac signs and planets, as evident from the Ramayana. He further discussed how the decimal system, which originated in India, revolutionised mathematics in Europe. Despite having such a rich heritage, India lagged behind due to a focus on exam scores rather than critical thinking and inquiry. Prof Verma urged students to question their teachers and not accept information blindly. He stressed that asking questions and exploring answers is crucial for scientific progress and that this inquisitive mindset will help India regain its ancient scientific glory. During the event, Prof Verma engaged with students, answering their questions. The inauguration ceremony was marked by the singing of the Institute's Kulgeet and the garlanding of the statue of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya. Prof Amit Patra, Director of IIT (BHU), welcomed the chief guest and spoke about the significant strides India has made in space research over the past 50 years.

Knp Metro: Installation of various systems advancing swiftly



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The installation of various systems is advancing swiftly in approximately 4 km-long Chunniganj-Nayaganj underground section of the Kanpur Metro. This section includes four stations — Chunniganj, Naveen Market, Bada Chauraha, and Nayaganj. The work of installing CCTV cameras has begun at each of these stations. To enhance safety and convenience on the Kanpur Metro, CCTV cameras equipped with advanced video analytics technology are being installed at the stations. These intelligent cameras will monitor the premises, detect suspicious or unusual activities and automatically alert the station controller and other metro officials. For example, if an abandoned item is detected and remains unattended for a few minutes, the system will notify the station

controller. Additionally, the cameras will track suspicious passenger behaviour and ensure that no one crosses the safety yellow line on the platform. If someone attempts to breach this line and approach the tracks, the cameras will immediately alert metro staff. On an average 40-45 CCTV cameras will be installed in all the underground stations of Kanpur Metro, through which the stations will be continuously monitored. There will also be about 12 cameras installed on each metro train. The real-time footage from these cameras will be transmitted directly to the control rooms at each station, the Operations Control Centre and the Central Security Room at the metro depot. Uttar Pradesh Special Security Force (UPSSSF) staff will keep a constant eye on the metro system with the help of this CCTV surveillance system. The state-of-the-art CCTV sur-

veillance system being installed includes infrared cameras, which will provide clear footage even in low light or at night. These cameras will primarily be placed outdoors. Inside the station and on the trains, box cameras will be used for detailed monitoring. Dome cameras will be installed to capture wide-angle views, allowing for comprehensive surveillance of the entire station. Additionally, advanced Pan-Tilt-Zoom (PTZ) cameras will be positioned at critical points. These cameras with remote control can rotate 360 degrees and zoom in, enhancing their ability to monitor and respond to various situations. Managing Director Sushil Kumar said, "Safety is our top priority in the construction of metro stations. Complete surveillance will be maintained on all stations and trains through a CCTV surveillance system. These cameras will be installed in such a way that there remain no dark spots. Also, keeping in mind the safety and convenience of women passengers at the stations, the presence of women security personnel and women housekeeping staff will be ensured on the lines of priority corridor stations. We have designed the concourses of all the stations in such a way that no area is unmonitored. Transparent glass has been used in the construction of lifts, station control rooms and ticket counters to improve visibility and security."

Need for collaboration between human & veterinary oncologists emphasised

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Advisor to the Indian Society for Veterinary Surgery (ISVS) Prof Ambika Prasad Singh emphasised the need for collaboration between human and veterinary oncologists to accelerate progress in cancer treatment and prevention. He was delivering a thought-provoking speech on the significance of interdisciplinary research in advancing oncology at the inaugural session of the International Conference on Human-Veterinary Oncology (HVO) 2024 at Prof KN Udupa Auditorium, Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University (IMS-BHU) here on Wednesday. President and convener of the ISVS-UP Chapter Dr Amarpal highlighted the challenges faced in treating cancer in both humans and animals. He emphasised the importance of early detection, advanced diagnostics and personalised treatment approaches. Convener and chief organising secretary of the conference Prof Naresh Kumar Singh welcomed the gathering, emphasising the importance of bridging the gap between human and veteri-



The Human-Veterinary Oncology Conference being inaugurated at BHU in Varanasi on Wednesday.

nary oncology for improved health outcomes. He highlighted the conference's theme, 'Bridging the Gap: Veterinary and Human Oncology in Concert for Improved Health', and expressed his hope for fruitful collaborations and knowledge exchange among participants. The inaugural session concluded with a presidential address by ISVS president Dr B Ramesh Kumar who in his address emphasised the critical role of veterinary oncology in improving animal health and its poten-

tial to contribute to human cancer research. He called for increased collaboration between human and veterinary oncologists to accelerate advancements in the field. SPECIAL CAMPAIGN: As per the instructions of the government in relation to getting the undisputed heirs registered in the Khatauni by running a campaign in all the villages, Additional District Magistrate (Administration) Vipin Kumar has written a letter to the sub-divisional magistrates (SDMs)

and tehsildars of Sadar, Pindra and Rajatalab tehsils and informed that for this a two-month special campaign is being run from August 16 to October 16. He has directed that as per the instructions of the government, taking personal interest in this campaign being run to get the names of undisputed heirs registered in the Khatauni, ensure action as per the instructions and also make the relevant information available on the prescribed format letter. Giving information about the special campaign programme regarding registration of undisputed inheritance, he said that according to the scheduled programme, from August 16 to 31, revenue/ tehsil officers/ lekhpals have to visit revenue villages and publicise/ read the khatauni. Then the lekhpals have to receive the application forms for inheritance to be filled online and do the process of online investigation from September 1 to 15. After that the revenue inspectors as per the arrangement given in the Revenue Board order will do the entries of the khatauni and update the same in Bhulekh software from September 16 to 30.

International seminar from today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Economists, bankers, journalists and scholars from all over the world will gather together at DAV PG College for the next two days for a comprehensive discussion on contemporary topics like employment, livelihood and challenges of regional development. A two-day international seminar will be organised on this subject from August 23 to 24 under the aegis of the Economics department of the college. Giving this information, convener Prof Anoop Kumar Mishra said the seminar will be held in hybrid mode in which academic scholars from various universities of the country along with scholars from abroad will also express their

views. He said that more than one-and-a-half-dozen speakers will participate in the seminar, while more than 150 research papers will be presented. In the seminar, about 80 participants and speakers from various states apart from western countries like England, United States of America, Germany etc will join in online mode. Along with this, separate sessions will be held on all three subjects. Prof Mishra said that the seminar will be inaugurated on Friday at PN Singh Yadav Smriti Auditorium of the college in which the chief guest will be former Vice-Chancellor of Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Agra, Prof Ashok Kumar Mittal while special guests will be former head of

CSRD, JNU, Prof Amresh Dubey and DGM of HPCL (North Central Zone) Dayashankar Singh. The function will also be attended by school secretary and manager Ajit Kumar Singh Yadav. The college's acting principal Prof Satyagopal will preside over the seminar. Apart from this, economic journalist Shishir Sinha, Dr Amarnath Tripathi, Prof Mrityunjay Mishra and others will present their views in different sessions. In the closing session, AGM of Canara Bank, Gurugram (Haryana) Dr Shashank Shekhar Singh will attend as the chief guest. Dr Siddharth Singh, organising secretary of the seminar, said that more than 250 participants have agreed to attend it.

Shah assures Tripura CM of all help as thousands hit by flood

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday called up Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha to take stock of the flood situation in the State and assured him of all assistance from the Centre.

Shah also said the Central Government is rushing teams of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) as well as boats and helicopters to the State to assist the local Government in relief and rescue operations. "Spoke with CM

Tripura, @DrManikSaha2, and took stock of the flood situation in the State. The Centre is rushing teams of NDRF, apart from boats and helicopters to the State to assist the local Government in relief and rescue operations," he said in social media post. Assuring the Chief Minister of all possible assistance as and when required, the Union Home Minister said the Narendra Modi Government firmly stands with "our sisters and brothers in Tripura during this hour of crisis".

At least 10 people were killed and one was missing in landslides and flood-related incidents in Tripura since



Sunday. Over 32,000 people have taken shelter in 330 relief camps due to heavy rainfall. Following a request from the Chief Minister to the Home Minister, four additional NDRF teams arrived in the State to assist in the rescue operations, Tripura Government officials said.

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Thursday said NDRF teams along with relief materials and disaster management equipment have arrived to assist the State Government in flood relief operations, reported PTI from Agartala.

At least 10 people were killed and one was missing in landslides and flood-related

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

"Spoke to Hon'ble Home Minister Shri Amit Shah Ji on

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

Parl panel 1st meet on Waqf Bill held amid Opp MPs objections

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Joint Committee of Parliament on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill held its marathon first meeting on Thursday amid objections by Opposition MPs over a host of provisions in the proposed law as the Union Minority Affairs Ministry made a presentation.

Heated words were exchanged at times during the meeting but members from various parties sat through several hours, recording their views on the provisions of the Bill, offering suggestions and seeking clarifications.

The Trinamool Congress' Kalyan Banerjee, Sanjay Singh of AAP, Asaduddin Owaisi of the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) and A Raja of the DMK were joined by some other Opposition members in raising questions over the need for several clauses, including the move to give more powers to the collector and have non-Muslim members on Waqf boards.

There was a view among the members, some of them said, that the ministry was not "adequately prepared" to address the queries raised in the meeting. The next meeting of the committee will be held on August 30, a member said. Committee Chairperson Jagdambika Pal assured the members that the panel would speak to all stakeholders, including various Muslim bodies. The 31-member committee has been tasked by the Lok Sabha to scrutinise the contentious Bill, which has drawn protests from the Opposition parties and



Muslim organisations.

The representatives from the Minority Affairs Ministry were expected to brief the committee on the "amendments proposed on the Bill", the Lok Sabha Secretariat said. The committee will discuss the Bill threadbare and also the concerns over it, Pal said ahead of the meeting, adding that voices of different stakeholders would be heard.

"We will discuss all the 44 amendments and bring a good and comprehensive Bill by the next session," he said. Pal said the committee would call various Muslim bodies representing the different sects to hear their views. The Bill is the first major initiative from the BJP-led NDA Government aimed at reforming the registration process for Waqf properties through a centralised

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



EC's 400 observers in J&K, Haryana to keep an eye on false narratives to derail elections

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission (EC) on Thursday advised its over 400 observers being deployed for Assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir and Haryana to stay vigilant to false narratives trying to derail the election process and to ensure a quick counter.

Reminding the observers of their crucial role, Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar emphasised that accessibility, visibility and responsiveness are essential to develop a virtuous spiral enhancing the conduct of the elections.

According to the poll authority, observers were strictly directed to remain accessible to all parties, candidates and voters for timely redressal of their grievances. Any complaints in this regard will be viewed seriously by the Commission. As the eyes and ears of the Commission on the ground, the observers were asked to exercise constant vigilance with utmost sincerity. The EC deploys observers under Section 20B of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 and plenary powers of the Constitution. IAS, IPS, IRS and those from other central services are deployed as observers.

process. Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar emphasised that the officials should observe the complete election ecosystem for free and fair polls. Noting that the Assembly elections are keenly contested, he said the role of observers becomes all the more critical in these polls.

The commission took cognisance of a complaint from Congress General Secretary Jai Ram Ramesh regarding violation of the model code of conduct in the process of recruitment against 5,600 vacancies for the post of constable in the Haryana Police, 76 posts of two categories of teachers by the Haryana Staff Selection Commission (HSSC) and recruitment for various posts by the Haryana Public Service Commission (HPSC). Ramesh said in a social media post in Hindi, "The double-break BJP Government of Haryana harassed the youth during the last 10 years, kept recruitment on hold and whatever little recruitment was

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

The commission took cognisance of a complaint from Congress General Secretary Jai Ram Ramesh regarding violation of the model code of conduct in the process of



recruitment against 5,600 vacancies for the post of constable in the Haryana Police, 76 posts of two categories of teachers by the Haryana Staff Selection Commission (HSSC) and recruitment for various posts by the Haryana Public Service Commission (HPSC). Ramesh said in a social media post in Hindi, "The double-break BJP Government of Haryana harassed the youth during the last 10 years, kept recruitment on hold and whatever little recruitment was

made was given to their own people. The talented youth of Haryana were exploited in the name of Kaushal Rozgar Nigam ie Government contracts." "There was a lot of rigging in Government recruitment, papers were leaked... Keeping the elections in mind, on the day of announcement of the elections, to lure youths, recruitment was announced that would never fructify," he said.

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

Sanjeev appointed ITBP ADG

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Sanjeev Raina, a 1987-batch Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) officer, has been appointed Additional Director General (ADG) in the India-China Line of Actual Control (LAC) guarding force, only the second time when a non-IPS officer has been elevated to this post in the force.

An order issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Wednesday said Raina, serving as an Inspector General (IG) at the force's central sector headquarters in Bhopal, is being elevated to the ADG rank apart from another officer, IG Jaspal Singh, for the panel year 2024. However, Raina, 59, will serve in the new post for just over a month as he is scheduled to retire next month.

A rank piping ceremony was held at the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) headquarters on Lodhi Road here on Thursday in the presence of Director General Rahul Rasgotra and other senior



officers. Raina has now been posted as the ADG (western command) of the ITBP headquartered in Chandigarh, the order said.

The formation looks after the deployment of the force along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh apart from supervising units located in Punjab, Delhi and Jammu and Kashmir. As per officials, this is only the second time in the 1962 raised ITBP when a cadre officer has been elevated to the

ADG post, the second highest rank in the force after the DG.

The ADG post in the ITBP and other central armed police forces (CAPFs) is essentially headed by officers who come on deputation to these organisations from the Indian Police Service (IPS).

"This appointment also came late as the departmental promotion committee meeting was delayed. Jaspal Singh will be appointed ADG after Raina's retirement and he too will retire in a few months in December," a senior officer said.

Raina, who hails from Kashmir, joined the ITBP in November, 1987 and has served tenures in Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir, and northeast, and is credited with setting up the famed counter insurgency and jungle warfare (CIJW) school of the mountain-warfare trained force in Mahidanda, Uttarakhand.

Apart from the LAC, the ITBP having strength of about 98,000 personnel is deployed for rendering a number of internal security duties in the country including conduct of anti-Naxal operations.



Smart lab launched to revive small rivers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

This initiative, part of the Green Strategic Partnership between India and Denmark, aims to rejuvenate small rivers through innovative and sustainable approaches, the Ministry said in an official statement. A hybrid lab model will be established at IIT-BHU, coupled with an on-field living lab at the Varuna River.

This model will allow for real-world testing and scaling of solutions aimed at improving river health, the statement said. The SLCR's institutional framework includes a robust appraisal mechanism to ensure excellence and diligence in project execution. The Indo-Danish Joint Steering Committee (JSC), the highest authority within the SLCR, will provide strategic guidance and review the project's progress. Additionally, a Project Review Committee (PRC), comprising members from the National Mission on Clean Ganga

(NMC), Central Water Commission (CWC), Central Ground Water Board (CGWB), IIT-BHU and Denmark's Urban Sector Counsellor, will oversee quality control at the project level. Coordination efforts will be managed by the Multi-Stakeholder Working Group (MSWG), chaired by the district magistrate of Varanasi and co-chaired by representatives from NMC and IIT-BHU.

The Joint Steering Committee has already cleared four key projects under the SLCR initiative. Among them is the development of a Decision Support System (DSS) for water management aimed at analysing basin water dynamics through advanced hydrological models and data analytics. This project, expected to last two to three years, will facilitate real-time monitoring and scenario simulations to support holistic planning and effective water management. Another vital project focuses on the characterisation of emerging pollutants in the Varuna River. Over the next 18 months, advanced analytical techniques will be employed to identify and quantify contaminants, creating a comprehensive fingerprint library for water quality monitoring and proposing effective remediation strategies, the statement said. Utilising advanced geophysical techniques, the project will identify optimal recharge sites and develop a comprehensive river-aquifer flow dynamics model over the next 24 months, supporting informed decision-making and water resource optimization.

Hearing-impaired youths moved by movie screened in Indian sign language

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a special gesture towards promoting inclusivity, which was warmly received by hearing impaired young audience among others, the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) organised a screening of Rajkumar Rao's starrer Srikanth in Indian Sign Language (ISL) at PVR, Chanakyapuri here on Thursday. Vikram, an 18-year-old hearing-impaired individual, expressed his joy in ISL, saying, "It felt amazing to watch a film in sign language. It was like the movie was made just for us." His sentiment was echoed

by others who attended the screening. One child shared their hope for more films to be made available in ISL, adding, "We want to enjoy and be part of all the fun and stories like everyone else."

For many like him, this was the first time they had experienced a film in ISL. Their faces lit up with delight as they watched Srikanth in a format that was accessible to them.

Rajesh Aggarwal, Secretary of the DEPwD, emphasised the Government's commitment to inclusivity, stating, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi has consistently highlighted the

importance of Indian Sign Language, and we are dedicated to advancing these efforts." He also referenced the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting's recent guidelines aimed at increasing accessibility in films.

"Entertainment should be inclusive, allowing everyone—whether they are part of the hearing-impaired community or have other disabilities—to enjoy it. Srikanth is an inspirational film that carries a powerful message."

Directed by Tushar Hiranandani, Srikanth is based on the life of visually impaired industrialist Srikant Bolla. The film chronicles Bolla's



inspiring journey as he overcame significant challenges to pursue his dreams and ultimately

establish Bollant Industries. Aggarwal also encouraged producers and directors from the

Indian film industry to support similar efforts in fostering an inclusive society. Dr. Satendra Singh, Director-Professor at the Delhi-based University College of Medical Sciences and a disability justice advocate commended the initiative, stating, "Such gestures are crucial in sensitising the community and promoting greater understanding and inclusion." He emphasised that making films accessible in ISL is not only a step towards inclusivity but also helps in raising awareness about the needs and rights of individuals with disabilities.

Visually challenged Preeti Monga, Founder and CEO at Silver Linings, an organisation working for the empowerment of blind people, echoed similar sentiments. "Such initiatives foster inclusivity and bridge gaps between different segments of society in the long run. The screening of Srikanth in ISL is a testament to the growing recognition of disability rights and the need for accessible entertainment options," Monga asserted. The deaf children were from various NGOs supporting the hearing-impaired community in the Delhi-NCR region.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Witaj Poland!

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

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



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

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

PICTALK



Visitors at the Taj Mahal in Agra

The shadow games of Pakistan's ISI



BHOPINDER SINGH

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

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

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

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



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

There is a curious case of one DG-ISI who did get appointed as the Army Chief, but his tenure was only for a few hours and the same does not go in official records as having become the Pakistani Army Chief. Lt Gen Ziauddin Butt was a typical DG-ISI who went across the Afghan border to meet the dreaded leader of the Taliban, Mullah Omar, to negotiate – he was in the thick of the dark corridors and machinations of the Pakistani State.

Ziauddin had direct access to the other competing power centre i.e., PM Nawaz Sharif, and was a willing accomplice in Sharif's attempt to remove Pervez Musharraf as the Army Chief. Before the coup (or counter-coup as Musharraf calls it), 'General' Ziauddin was hastily appointed the Army Chief and then immediately dumped by the Pakistani Army which refused to back their DG-ISI's ambition. Spymaster's gambit failed. Ziauddin was not the first or the last of DG-ISIs to harbour personal ambition beyond what was warranted constitutionally. The shadowy likes of Lt Gen Akhtar Rahman,



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

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

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

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

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

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DARKNESS BEHIND THE SILVER SCREEN

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

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

M Pradyu | Kannur

A BELLWEATHER ACT

Madam — This happened in a temple in a remote village, somewhere in a remote district of MP. A temple priest wanted his temple to be a serene place, free from the constant jangle of temple bells that were hung from several places in and around the temple. He wished to be left in silence while offering his prayers and doing his daily "pooja" before the temple deity. At the same time, he did not wish to do

Ensuring safety of health workers



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

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

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

DVG Sankara Rao | Vizianagaram

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

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

Avinash Godbole | Devwas

SC TURNS DOWN HC VERDICT

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

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

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

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

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

Gopalaswamy | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

The catalyst for corporate success

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

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

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

Only then will the aspiration reveal its magic. Many times, the biggest obstacles we face



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

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

true basis of ambition stems from the constant trust with-in oneself.

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

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

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



RACHNA LAKHPATRI



FIRST COLUMN

THAW IN
INDO-MALDIVES TIES

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



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Monsoon mayhem:
Tackling urban flooding

B K SINGH

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



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

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

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

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



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

of electrocution are chilling reminders of the apathy of the civic body. We must know the precautions that must be undertaken by the agencies and the building occupants to make sure that such incidents are not repeated. Civic Body of Mumbai had earlier designed stormwater drains and related infrastructure to take care of 25 mm of rain in an hour.

Severe flooding repeatedly occurring during the past several years has forced them to remodel their drainage system to take care of more intense rains up to 50 mm per hour. However, in places like Mumbai, Ratnagiri, Satara, Mahabaleshwar and many other locations 80 to 100 mm of rain per hour has been recorded. Similarly, places in some other regions of the country are also experiencing frequent cloud bursts resulting in 80 to 100 mm of rainfall per hour for three to four hours. Wayanad tragedy was the result of 570 mm of rain in 48 hours.

All Civic authorities in cities like Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Delhi, Gurugram etc should remodel the drainage system to take care of at least 100 mm of rain per hour. The encroachments on storm water drains as well as on lake beds should be removed.

Further, the drains should be regularly de-silted and cleaned up so that plastics, polythene bags silts etc are removed and disposed of at far-off places. The lakes in the cities are balancing reservoirs where the water level should be regulated by opening the sluice gates. De-weeding and de-siltation of lakes are also required to be done periodically to ensure that the water reservoirs are kept clean up to maximum flood level. All the inlets of the lakes are

monitored to ensure that none carry untreated sewage into them. There is the possibility that lake water may enter people's houses at the time of flash floods; it must be ensured that sewage water does not enter houses. Stormwater drains in metropolitan cities are often found partly encroached and occupied for living by erecting small huts. Such occupants must be rehabilitated elsewhere and drains must be fully opened for flow of water. Let us not forget that the existing stormwater drain is insufficient to take the load of more than 25 mm of rainfall per hour.

Beds of many urban lakes have also been encroached. Lake beds up to high flood levels are meant for storage of water. The reduction in volume for storage indicates that the water flows in the basement and ground floor of the buildings, causing undue hardship for the people. Incessant rains in November 2015 (approximately 483 mm in 24 hours) led to one of the biggest catastrophes in Chennai. 500 people were killed and nearly 10 lakh houses were submerged resulting in the displacement of 1.8 million people. Two reasons were attributed to the disaster.

One was the encroachments on lake beds in Chennai and the other was the delay in regulating the water level in the Chembaram Bakkam reservoir. The situation came under control only when 1.5 lakh cusecs water from this reservoir was released into the Adiyar river.

Many wetlands in Chennai have been occupied by communities. Pallikarnai wetland used to have an extent of over 5000 ha has shrunk to 10% and only 500 ha is remaining as wetland at present. Unless the encroachments are cleared, we are likely to face

a similar tragedy in future. Civic bodies while working on drainage systems for stormwater as well as sewer lines must take enough precautions and keep the drains and man-hole covered, so that no person accidentally falls into them and perishes.

When the road is flooded and becomes a flowing river, uncovered drains and sewer lines cannot be identified by people wading through. People in Mumbai, Delhi, Gurugram and many other metropolitan cities find flood water trapped in the basements of their houses. Often they resort to pumping it out, which requires time and energy. It is advisable to construct a sump underneath so that the rainwater can be effectively harvested and later used for various purposes.

If the basement is kept clean, then flood water collected would be of drinkable quality. Several Civic Bodies mandate water harvesting structures along with new constructions while approving Plans. At the implementation stage, however, such structures generally take care of harvesting water from the rooftop and ignore basements, prone to flooding during cloud bursts.

Water harvesting for basements should be made compulsory and must be seriously implemented. Building by-laws if necessary be amended by respective civic agencies to make sure that the basement of the buildings is used for parking vehicles, storing unserviceable items and water harvesting/ storage only. In no circumstances should people be permitted to use it for housing, hotels and businesses.

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

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

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

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

While some observers suggest that Modi's visit is intended to placate Western disappointment following his two recent visits to Russia, the reality appears more complex. Modi's trip to Ukraine serves primarily as a subtle signal to Moscow that India can engage with Ukraine as well. This visit



AKHILESH SUMAN

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

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

and advocating for peaceful resolutions. Despite this, India has refrained from condemning Russia's actions, continuing to purchase oil from Moscow, which has been crucial for Russia during the conflict.

However, Russia's increasingly close ties with China have become a point of concern for India, particularly regarding China's aggressive behavior along the Indian border. The 2020 Galwan Valley clash and subsequent military tensions have strained India-China relations, making Russia's perceived indifference to India's security concerns troubling. The frequent meetings between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping have heightened these concerns,

prompting India to reassess its foreign policy strategy.

Modi's visit to Ukraine can be seen as a diplomatic effort to subtly pressure Russia into reconsidering its relationship with China. By engaging with Ukraine, India signals to Moscow that its close ties with Beijing cannot be taken for granted without potential consequences. Historically, India has enjoyed a strong relationship with Russia, especially in defense, but the evolving geopolitical landscape requires India to prioritize its national interests.

Modi's visit also underscores India's independent foreign policy, a principle that has guided the country since the Cold War era. India has long prided itself on its non-aligned stance, making decisions based



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

Instead, it reflects a nuanced approach, balancing relationships and interests while encouraging Russia to reconsider its military strategy.

As India seeks to strengthen its ties with Western nations, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region where China's assertiveness is a growing concern, Modi's visit to Ukraine reaffirms India's commitment to a multipolar world. India values its strategic autonomy, making decisions based on its national interests—a stance that has occasionally drawn criticism from its allies.

Another important aspect of Modi's visit is India's interest in contributing to Ukraine's reconstruction efforts. The war has left Ukraine in ruins, and India sees an opportunity to play a role in its rebuilding

process. This involvement would not only be a humanitarian gesture but also a strategic investment that could benefit the Indian economy. India has already provided humanitarian aid to Ukraine, and Modi's visit could pave the way for more substantial support, including infrastructure projects and logistical assistance, which would also benefit related Indian industries.

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

India's broader goal of positioning itself as a global leader and a moral force in international diplomacy.

As the world closely watches Modi's visit to Ukraine, the potential outcomes could have far-reaching implications for global power dynamics. Should Modi's diplomacy contribute to a ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine, India could emerge as a significant peacemaker and problem solver on the world stage. This would enhance India's reputation as a nation capable of navigating complex geopolitical landscapes while maintaining its principles and strategic autonomy.

(The writer is a senior journalist who has been covering foreign affairs for many years; views are personal)

Badlapur sexual abuse case: HC slams cops for lapses in probe

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Taking suo motu cognisance of the case of alleged sexual abuse of two 4-year-old girls in a school at Badlapur in Maharashtra's Thane district, the Bombay High Court on Thursday upbraided the local police for lapses in the investigations and the school authorities for not reporting the serious crime to the probing agency. Acting on the basis of newspaper reports about the incident, a HC division bench of Justice Revati Mohite-Dere and Justice Prithviraj K. Chavan pulled up the Badlapur police for not playing the role it ought to have and demanded to know as to why the state government was not acting against the Adarsh Vidya Prasarak Sanstha (AVPS) for not reporting the crime to the police. Applauding the victim girls for showing courage to speak out about the crime, the bench observed: "These girls

have complained but several cases go unreported. It takes a huge amount of courage to speak about all this. Definitely the Police haven't played its role the way it ought to be. Had the police been sensitised, this wouldn't have happened." Picking holes in the investigations into the sensational crime, the HC bench expressed its displeasure over the delay in the delay in registration of the case and observed that "it discourages people from coming to the police". It also slammed the police for their failure to record the statement of the second victim girl so far. "The first thing in such cases of minors is that the police must have registered an FIR. But they made the family wait for hours. This discourages the public from reporting such incidents," the HC bench noted. "We are appalled by the fact that the Badlapur Police has taken no efforts to record the statement of the second vic-



tim girl with either under Section 161 and 164," the Judges said. It may be recalled that two 4-year-old nursery girls were sexually abused by a sweeper when they in the washroom of the kindergarten school run by Adarsh Vidya Prasarak Sanstha (AVPS) on August 13 for using the toilet there. The sexual assault on the two

four-year-old girl students took place in the washroom of the kindergarten school run by Adarsh Vidya Prasarak Sanstha (AVPS) on August 12 and 13 when the two girls had gone to use the toilet there. Later on, the parent took up the matter with the school management which lodged a complaint with the police on August 16. However, the police registered a First Information Report (FIR) only 11 hours after their complaint. The accused sweeper Akshay Shinde (23) was arrested on August 17. He will remain in police custody till August 24. On being told by the state that the officers responsible for such lapses were suspended, the Judges noted: "People shouldn't lose faith in public. You should know what the motto of the Maharashtra Police is Sadarakshanaya Khalanigrahanay. It means to protect the good and restrain the wicked. Please be reminded of this...People should not come out on the streets like this for getting an FIR lodged". Alluding to the fact that the police had recorded the statement of one of the victim girls only on Thursday, the HC bench demanded to know: "How can the Police take it so slightly? The HC bench called for sensitisation of the police force on how to handle cases

involving sexual offences. Advocate General Birendra Saraf informed the HC bench that a Special Investigation Team (SIT) has been constituted to probe the case. "The accused has been arrested and everything will be done on a speedy basis," Saraf told the Court. The HC bench wanted to know if the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act had been invoked against the accused and the school authorities. The HC went on to peruse the case diary and the copy of the FIR. The AG Saraf informed the court that they would be invoking the POCSO Act against the school authorities. "It should have been done immediately after the registration of an FIR," the HC bench said. While directing the police to produce all case files and other documents before the court, the HC bench scheduled the next hearing of the case for August 27.

Mahila Congress demands resignation of CM, two DCMs

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI



Upping the ante on the sexual abuse issue, the Maharashtra Mahila Congress on Thursday rooted for the resignations of chief minister Eknath Shinde and the two deputy chief ministers over their failure to protect women in the state. Addressing a news conference at the state Congress headquarters "Tilak Bhavan", Maharashtra Congress president Sandhya Sawalalke said: "Both the chief minister and two deputy chief minister have failed to do justice to women across the state. There has been a tremendous increase in the atrocities against women. Even girls are being spared from the increasing crimes. The situation is worsening in

the state. We demand the resignations of both the chief minister and two deputy chief ministers for their failure to protect women in the state." "The Badlapur incident is a blot on the face of humanity. The parents of the victims were made to wait at the police station before an FIR was registered. The incident took place on August 12-13. The chief minister had gone to Badlapur on August 15. He did not know till then that this incident had taken place in a school there," Sandhya said.

CISF takes charge of RGK Hospital

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Central Industrial Security Forces on Thursday took formal control of the internal security system of the RG Kar Medical College Hospital with a sizeable deployment of 151 jawans including women security personnel led by an Assistant Commandant, sources said. "The CISF shall be responsible for security of 26 points inside the medical college including the Emergency, Trauma Centre, Department of Gynaecology, academic and administrative building and the hostels," sources said adding the Kolkata Police which hitherto guarded these facilities would now be responsible for ensuring the law and order situation outside the hospital. The security paraphernalia of the RGKMCH goes into the hands of the CISF a couple of days after the Supreme Court ordered deployment of central forces inside the campus. The striking junior doctors and the other medical staff had for the past two weeks been demanding a foolproof security system inside the hospital premises. The deployment of CISF comes in tandem with the State Government accepting the junior doctors' demands ordering transfer of a number of senior doctors from administrative positions of the hospital. The newly appointed principal



of RGKMCH, Suhrita Pal who had replaced Sandip Ghosh was once again removed and was replaced by Professor Manas Kumar Bandyopadhyay a former Principal of Barasat Medical College. The State Health Department also transferred the Head of the Department of Chest Medicine. A new Medical Superintendent cum vice Principal, Saptarshi Chattopadhyay was brought in from Bankura Christian Medical College Hospital sources said. "We will work as a team and try to ensure that security and safety apart from academics of the hospital remains our prime concern," Chattopadhyay said soon after joining. A nationwide protest after erupted after a postgraduate lady doctor was in the morning of 9 found allegedly raped and murdered inside the seminar hall of the department of Chest Medicine inside the RGKMCH. Though the

CBI may conduct polygraph test on RG Kar principal



Kolkata Police arrested Sanjoy Das a civic police volunteer for the crime the students and junior doctors demanded a thorough investigation alleging the lady doctor had been a victim of gang rape and murder. The students also demanded investigation into the role of some top officials including the principal of the College Sandip Ghosh in the felony following which he was sent on forced leave by the Calcutta High which also ordered a CBI investigation into the matter. All this while Supreme Court on Thursday asking the protesting doctors to resume work, assuring them that no adverse action would be taken once they rejoin work. The students and junior doctors of the Hospital who had still not resumed duty on Thursday welcomed the new developments and said that they had not yet taken a decision but "would soon review the situation and act accordingly".

Delhi Police deals death blow to Al Qaeda...

From Page 1 "The module, as per current state of operations, was being led by one Dr. Ishiyaq of Ranchi (Jharkhand), and it was aspiring to declare 'khilafat' and execute serious terrorist activities within the country." Deputy Commissioner of Police (Public Relations Office) Suman Nalwa stated. Members of the Al Qaeda inspired terror module were indoctrinated by the extremist ideologies and were also being trained at various locations to execute terrorist activities. "The members of the module have received indoctrination and weapons training at various locations. Six people were detained from Bhiwadi in Rajasthan while they were undergoing training to handle weapons, and eight from Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh for questioning," it said. The members of the terror module were trained, including in handling weapons, at various locations, including in the jungles of the Aravalli Hills in Rajasthan, another officer said. He said a massive operation was launched in the hill's jungles to nab the suspects. The Delhi Police said three more people were detained from Uttar Pradesh's Aligarh for questioning.

INBRIEF

AYURVEDA IS ULTIMATE TRUTH: BALKRISHNA
Haridwar: A baseless and conspiratorial rumour was spread in the country that Ayurvedic medicines harm the kidneys. However, the Ayurvedic formulation Renogrit not only heals kidneys damaged by the allopathic anti-cancer drug Cisplatin but also alleviates oxidative stress on kidney cells. On this occasion, Acharya Balkrishna stated that various Ayurvedic texts describe remedies for kidney diseases, and these conditions have been effectively treated since ancient times. He further emphasised that Ayurveda is the ultimate truth, substantiated by research evidence.

NFR ENSURING SAFETY OF FLOOD AFFECTED PEOPLE
Maligaon: In the prevailing inclement weather and continuous rain in Tripura, the alertness of Railway loco pilots, loco inspectors, traffic inspectors and station staff is ensuring the safety of railway passengers. On 21.08.2024, Loco Pilot, Shri R. N. Kumar & Asst. Loco Pilot, Shri Surajit Deb Nath prevented a possible mishap while they were working in train 05676 UPDharmanagar - Agartala Passenger Special.

RECPDCL HANDS OVER PROJECT SPECIFIC SPV TO AEPL
Gurugram: REC Power Development and Consultancy Limited (RECPDCL), a wholly owned subsidiary of REC Limited, theMaharatma 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 (AEPL). The project will facilitate evacuation of power from Rajasthan Renewable Energy Zone Ph-IV (Jaisalmer/Barmer Complex).

Delhi Doctors resume work

From Page 1 "Justice and medicine cannot afford to be stopped. Can we (judges) go and sit outside the Supreme Court now? How can public health infrastructure run if doctors don't resume work? ... Justice and medicine cannot go on strike. Can we go and sit outside the Supreme Court now?" CJI Chandrachud remarked. The bench also ordered the West Bengal government not to penalise those peacefully demanding justice. The court, however, clarified that it has not enjoined the state government from exercising such lawful powers. "When we say peaceful protesters will not be disturbed, we also mean proper protocol will be followed," the bench said. "... this Court has taken measures to ensure the institutionalization of the concerns of the medical professionals in terms of the previous order dated 20 August 2024, it is only to be expected that doctors would now return to work," the bench said in its order. "An apprehension has been expressed on behalf of the doctors stating that they are being

proceeded against for the protests which took place in the past. We are expecting compliance with the assurance which has been given to the Court that the doctors would join normal duties. In the meantime, if any adverse action has been taken against any protesting doctor for protests which have been carried out prior to the date of this order, no coercive steps shall be taken against them." "During the course of the hearing, counsel representing several resident doctors associations have indicated to the Court that the doctors are willing to go back to work and their duties. However, it has been submitted that the State Governments may take a considered view on putting into place at least some safety measures to assuage the concerns of the doctors," the bench said in its order. The bench expressed its worries over the 'inhuman working hours' of resident doctors all over the country flagged the hectic work schedules to also be considered by the National Task Force (NTF) which is mandated to recommend uniform safety protocols for medical professionals.

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

Punjab and Haryana governments to convey to the agitating farmers that the court as well as the two states are concerned about their issues and a forum is being constituted for the redressal of their grievances. "We have suggested to the advocate general and the AAG of Punjab and Haryana respectively to submit the proposed issues, which will be the subject matter of reference for the committee to be constituted by this court," the bench noted in its order. It further said, "We have clarified that the reference to the committee will have a wider mandate, so that the

issues which are time and again causing law-and-order problems can be amicably resolved in a fair and just manner. That is why the needful shall be done in this regard within three days." One of the counsel, appearing in the matter, said Leader of Opposition in the Punjab Assembly Partap Singh Bajwa be included in the committee as he was one of the original petitioners before the high court. The submission was opposed by Senior Additional Advocate General Lokesh Sinhal for Haryana, who said no political person should be included in the panel.

Congress, National...

From Page 1 "I have heard and seen UTs being converted into states but J&K is an exception. We have made it clear in our election manifesto that it was our priority to restore the democratic rights of the people of J&K and Ladakh. Speaking on the occasion, All India Congress Committee (AICC) chief, Mallikarjun Kharge said that efforts are on to forge an alliance based on feedback from "our local leaders" "We want to keep the entire opposition along," he said. Kharge said that Congress is committed to ensuring the return of statehood. He said that BJP couldn't ensure elections in J&K. "The party announced polls under pressure in the wake of Supreme Court directions," the AICC chief said. "I want to put it on record that BJP can't suppress the peoples' voices anymore in J&K. Congress is committed to work for the welfare of the people of J&K." About Jammu and Kashmir, Kharge said not a single promise made by the BJP to the people of the region before elections has been fulfilled. "Not a single promise made to the people of Jammu and Kashmir before polls have been kept. They are all jumla," Kharge said.

Supreme Court extremely disturbed over delay in...

From Page 1 RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, who has come under the scanner in the aftermath of the ghastly crime. As the hearing commenced after lunch, the court asked what was the reason for a 14-hour delay in lodging the FIR in connection with the incident. "Who was in touch with the principal of

the RG Kar Medical College? Why did he delay the FIR? What was the purpose?" the bench asked. "Procedure is a separate issue, but the point remains. What is the reason the FIR is lodged almost 14 hours after the discovery of the body. The most important thing is that the principal of the college should have come straightaway to the college and directed the filing of the FIR. Who was he in touch with? What was the purpose?" the bench asked senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the West Bengal government. The moment the principal tenders the resignation, he is appointed as principal of another college, the bench noted.

Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) entered the probe on the fifth day after the crime. "We entered the probe on the fifth day. Before that, whatever was collected by the local police was given to us. The investigation itself was a challenge because the scene of offence was altered. The FIR was registered only after the (victim's) cremation at 11:45 pm. "First, the parents of the victim were informed by the deputy superintendent (of the hospital) that she was not well. When they reached the hospital, they were told that she had committed suicide.... Fortunately, the colleagues of the deceased insisted for videography. This suggests that they were suspecting a cover-up," Mehta submitted.

Sibal opposed Mehta's submissions, saying everything was videographed and claimed nothing was altered at the crime scene. He contended that the Kolkata Police followed the procedure scrupulously and the CBI's status report only attempts to muddy the waters. The bench later issued a slew of directions on the safety of doctors, norms for protests, rights of protesters as well as the West Bengal government. The bench directed the secretary in the Union health ministry to engage with the chief secretaries and directors general of police to ensure that the states and Union territories put in place certain basic minimum requirements for safety measures for doctors.

LoP Vijender leads MLAs' delegation to seek early probe into graft in construction of hospitals

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI



Today, on 22nd August 2024, a delegation of MLAs led by the Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Legislative Assembly, Vijender Gupta, met with the Head of the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB), Madhur Verma, to formally submit a complaint demanding an immediate and thorough investigation into the widespread corruption within the Delhi Health Department. The delegation included prominent MLAs Abhay Verma, Ajay Mahawar, Anil Bajpai, O.P. Sharma, and Jitender Mahajan. The complaint highlights the

rampant financial misconduct and systemic corruption that has taken root under the current Health Minister, Saurabh Bhardwaj, and the former Health Minister, Satyendra Jain. The scale of the corruption is staggering, with numerous projects in the Health Department being delayed, budgets inflated, and public funds siphoned off in a deliberate and organized manner. The complaint outlined a disturbing pattern of financial mismanagement, deliberate delays, and budget manipulations, all designed to facilitate the large-scale embezzlement of public funds meant for the welfare of Delhi's citizens. Between 2018-19, the Delhi Health Department sanctioned 24 hospital projects, comprising 11 greenfield and 13 brownfield projects, with a total budget of Rs. 5,590 crore. Despite the substantial funds allocated, these projects have seen unexplained delays and exorbitant cost overruns.

India, Poland unveil 5-year, 'Action Plan', upgrade ties

PTI ■ WARSAW

India and Poland on Thursday upgraded their ties to the level of a "strategic partnership" and inked a social security pact to promote the mobility of skilled workers following wide-ranging talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Polish counterpart Donald Tusk.

In the meeting, both sides vowed to significantly expand the bilateral defence and security ties with Tusk expressing Warsaw's eagerness to be a key partner in New Delhi's aim to boost domestic defence production and modernise its armed forces.

Modi arrived in this Polish capital on Wednesday, in the first visit by an Indian prime minister to Poland in nearly

half a century. In the second leg of his two-nation trip, Modi will be in Kyiv for around seven hours on Friday.

The prime minister also held talks with Polish President Andrzej Duda.

Following the Modi-Tusk talks, the two sides unveiled a five-year "Action Plan" (2024-2028) for the India-Poland strategic partnership identifying a range of areas including defence, trade, agri-tech, energy, green technologies, infrastructure, pharmaceuticals and mining for cooperation.

"This year we celebrate 70 years of our diplomatic relations. On this occasion, we have decided to reshape our relation into a strategic partnership," Modi said in his media statement with Tusk by his side.

"Today we have identified several initiatives to give a new

direction to our relations," he said.

The 'Action Plan' lists various priority areas for boosting engagement under different pillars including political and security cooperation, trade and investment, transport and connectivity, climate, energy, mining, science and technology and EU-India.

It specifically mentioned supporting the early conclusion of the ongoing India-EU trade and investment negotiations, the operationalisation of the India-EU Trade and Technology Council (TTC) and the implementation of the India-EU Connectivity partnership.

In his remarks, Modi said the social security agreement will promote the mobility of the workforce and ensure their welfare.

The prime minister also thanked Poland for facilitating the evacuation of Indian students from Ukraine after the conflict began in 2022.

Tusk said Poland wants to expand its defence cooperation with India. "We are ready to take part in the modernisation of military equipment."

A joint statement said both sides recognised the need to strengthen and deepen cooperation in the defence sector.

To this end, they agreed to fully utilise existing bilateral mechanisms, including the Joint Working Group for Defence Cooperation.

Modi said both sides identified several initiatives to give a new direction to the relations.

"Efforts will be made to connect the private sector to broaden economic cooperation," he said.

29 mariners rescued from tanker struck in Red Sea

AP ■ DUBAI

A French destroyer rescued 29 mariners from an oil tanker that came under repeated attack in the Red Sea, officials said on Thursday, while also destroying a bomb-carrying drone boat in the area.

Yemen's Houthi rebels are suspected to have carried out the assault on the Souinion, now abandoned in the waterway. The attack, the most serious in the Red Sea in weeks, comes during a monthslong campaign by Houthis targeting ships over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip that has disrupted a trade route through which USD 1 trillion in cargo typically passes each year.

The Souinion is now at anchor in the Red Sea and no longer drifting, the European Union's Operation Aspides said.

Zelensky visits border area as Ukraine gains ground in Kursk

AP ■ KYIV

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

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

"Another settlement in the Kursk region is now under Ukrainian control, and we have replenished the exchange fund," Zelenskyy wrote on the social media platform X after hearing a report from the military commander, Col Gen Oleksandr Syryski.

But the gains there come as Ukraine continues to lose ground in its eastern Donetsk region. The Russian Defence Ministry announced Thursday that its military has claimed control of the village of Mezbove.

Ukraine's push into Russia marks the first capture of Russian territory since World War II.

It comes as both sides in the war use drones to attack far within enemy lines.

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

Andrei Bocharov, governor of the Volgograd region, said Thursday that a "defence ministry facility" was on fire after

Ukraine ratifies statute for joining ICC

Kyiv (AP): Ukraine ratified the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, taking a step toward membership and opening the possibility of more prosecutions of Russian officials for war crimes.

Ukraine's parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, voted Wednesday to ratify the ICC statute.

Membership of the ICC is a requirement for joining the European Union, which Ukraine hopes to do. It was formally accepted as a candidate in June 2022, four months after Russia began its full-scale invasion.

The document was initially signed by the Ukrainian government in 2000, but the Constitutional Court blocked ratification in 2001 and declaring it unconstitutional to authorize the ICC to rule on Ukraine's actions.

The question of ICC membership resurfaced in 2014, after Russia illegally annexed the Crimean peninsula from Ukraine and occupied parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

being attacked by drones in the area of Marinovka, in a sign that Ukraine is not letting up on its attacks. He did not specify what was damaged.

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

Russian Telegram channels said drones attempted to attack a military air base near Marinovka in the village of Oktyabrskiy. Videos shared on Russian social media showed an explosion in the night sky, reportedly near the base.

Marinovka is about 300 km (185 miles) east of the Ukrainian border and about the same distance west from the border with Kazakhstan. Ukraine claimed responsibility for the attack.

Ukraine's Security Service and the Special Operation Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine conducted the drone attack Wednesday night striking the Marinovka airfield in Russia, a law enforcement official told The Associated Press.

The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to speak publicly.

The attack came as the ground offensive in Russia's Kursk region rattles the Kremlin. The daring operation could involve as many as 10,000 Ukrainian troops backed by armour and artillery, military analysts say.

The Baza Telegram channel, which is close to Russian law enforcement, said one drone was taken down several km (miles) from the airfield near Marinovka and that wreckage from another fell on a trailer near the air base, causing it to catch fire.

UN team reaches Dhaka

PTI ■ DHAKA

A team of UN experts arrived in Bangladesh on Thursday on an eight-day visit to discuss the process for investigating human rights violations during the recent unrest before and after Sheikh Hasina's resignation as the prime minister.

A team from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights will be visiting Dhaka from August 22 to August 29 for preliminary discussions with the Interim Government and other stakeholders," according to a media advisory sent by the Communication Team of the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office in Bangladesh.

It said that the purpose of this visit is to understand their priorities for assistance in promoting human rights in Bangladesh.

"It is important to note that this visit is not an investigation, but rather it will focus on discussing the process for investigating human rights violations in light of the recent violence and unrest," the state-run BSS news agency quoted the advisory as saying.

Bangladesh witnessed chaos after Hasina's government collapsed and she fled to India on August 5 amid violent protests over quota reforms for government jobs, while the Army stepped in to fill the power vacuum on August 5. Before that, the anti-government protests had killed more than 500 people since mid-July. Yunus took oath as the Chief Adviser of the interim government on August 8.

The UN Resident Coordinator's Office

said that the visit is in response to a request from Bangladesh's Interim Government.

Once the details are finalised, it said, a separate fact-finding team will be dispatched in the coming weeks to conduct the investigation.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has conveyed admiration, solidarity, and support to the people of Bangladesh, particularly the youth, as they work towards advancing human rights for all, said the advisory. The team is expected to meet with several government advisers and civil society members during their visit to gather information.

The move was announced by UN human rights chief Volker Turk during a recent call with Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus.

Venezuela's SC backs Nicolas Maduro's claims

AP ■ CARACAS

Venezuela's Supreme Court has backed President Nicolas Maduro's claims that he won last month's election and said voting tallies published online showing he lost by a landslide were forged.

The high court is packed with Maduro loyalists and has almost never ruled against the government. Its ruling on Thursday came in response to a request by Maduro to review vote totals after the opposition published online voting records from 80 per cent of voting booths showing opposition candidate Edmundo Gonzalez won by a more than 2-to-1 margin.

Indonesia cancels ratification of controversial election law

AP ■ JAKARTA

Indonesian lawmakers cancelled plans to ratify controversial revisions to the country's election laws, the deputy speaker of Parliament said, after thousands of protesters rallied in front of the parliament building.

If implemented, the changes could have further enhanced the political influence of outgoing President Joko Widodo. Parliament met in an emergency session Thursday to overturn one decision made by Indonesia's Constitutional Court on election procedures, while amending another. But the legislature cancelled the ratification after failing to achieve a quorum amid the protests outside.

"It was stated that the revision of the regional election law cannot be implemented. This means that today the revision of the regional election law will not be implemented," Deputy Speaker Sufmi Dasco Ahmad told reporters in Jakarta.

Indonesian police fired tear gas and water cannon to disperse thousands of protesters who attempted to storm the parliament building after they tore down a section of fence and threw rocks at police. Protesters



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

occupied roads in front of the building. Some held banners and signs, while others started a fire and burned tires. The Constitutional Court on Tuesday dismissed a challenge to an age limit that prevents people under 30 from running for regional governorships, which would prevent Widodo's youngest son, Kaesang Pangarep, 29, from running in a regional contest in Central Java.

The court also made it easier for political parties to nominate candidates by cutting back a require-

ment that they hold 20% of a local legislature. Parliament on Wednesday passed an emergency motion to change the minimum age to serve as governor to 30 at the time of inauguration and further ease nomination requirements, and had planned to ratify the change in a plenary session on Thursday. The moves triggered widespread condemnation on social media and raised concerns about a potential constitutional crisis. The legislature was forced to cancel passing the law after failing to

achieve a quorum. Widodo, popularly known by his nickname Jokowi, began his second and final five-year term in October 2019 and is not eligible to run again. He leaves office in October.

Widodo's eldest son, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, is the incoming vice president after the same court created an exception to the age limit for the post for former regional leaders. The decision was made while Widodo's brother-in-law, Anwar Usman, was serving as chief justice. Usman was criticised for participating in a case involving a close relative and later dismissed.

Activists, students, workers and Indonesian celebrities and musicians joined the protest Thursday, voicing concerns about democracy in Indonesia.

Protests were also reported in other big cities, including Bandung, Yogyakarta, Surabaya and Makassar. In Yogyakarta, at least 1,000 protesters rallied in front of Yogyakarta's parliament building, the state palace and the city's ceremonial center. Their demands included voting down the regional election bill, respecting the Constitutional Court's ruling and rejecting political dynasties.

Pak man to remain in custody over fomenting trouble in UK

AP ■ LAHORE

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

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

Asif, who is a freelance web developer, was produced before the court amid tight security. He was not allowed to talk to the media.

Kiran Muqem, a prosecutor for the Federal Investigation Agency, told the court that Asif did not cooperate with officers after the same court the previous day allowed them to question him for a day. They demanded his custody for two weeks but the court said it would only allow it for four more days.

Muqem later told reporters that Asif disseminated fake news and caused riots in



Plainclothes police officers escort Farhan Asif (centre), a freelance web developer who was arrested and charged with cyber terrorism for his alleged role in spreading misinformation that led to widespread rioting in the UK earlier this month, after his court appearance, in Lahore, on Thursday.

England. Asif was handcuffed and wearing blue shalwar kameez garments when brought to the court. His lawyer Rana Rizwan told reporters that the court remanded his client into the custody of the federal agency in

a hurry and without hearing him. "We were informed by the court that the case of Asif would be taken up after lunch break. But the court took up the matter before the lunch break, and allowed FIA to keep him in

their custody," Rizwan said. Asif is accused of spreading misinformation from YouTube and Facebook about the British teenage suspect in a stabbing attack that killed three girls and injured 10 other people on July 29 at a dance class in Northwest England.

The false information claimed that the suspect was a recently arrived asylum-seeker and had a name that suggested he was Muslim. After the misinformation led to a violent mob attacking a mosque near the site of the stabbing the next day, police took the unusual step of clarifying that the suspect was born in the UK. British media has widely reported that his parents are from Rwanda and are said to have Christian beliefs. Channel3 Now, an account on the X social media platform that purports to be a news channel, was one of the first outlets to report the false name, Ali Al-Shakati.

A Facebook account for the channel said it is managed by people in Pakistan and the US. But, officials say Asif was solely running the Channel3 Now, and he spread misinformation to gain more viewers.

2,492-carat diamond mined in Botswana

AP ■ GABORONE (BOTSWANA)

Botswana says one of the largest diamonds ever found has been unearthed at one of its mines and will be put on show on Thursday.

The Botswana government believes the huge 2,492-carat stone is the biggest discovered in the country, and the second-biggest ever brought out of a mine.

Canadian mining company Lucara Diamond Corp said in a statement Wednesday that it recovered the "exceptional" rough diamond from its Karowe Mine in western Botswana. Lucara said it was a "high-quality" stone and was found intact. It was located using X-ray technology.

The weight would make it the largest diamond found in more than 100 years and the second-largest ever dug out of a mine after the Cullinan Diamond discovered in South Africa in 1905. The Cullinan was 3,106 carats and was cut into gems, some of which form part of the British Crown Jewels.

A bigger black diamond was discovered in Brazil in the late 1800s, but it was found on



The surface and was believed to have been part of a meteorite. Botswana is the second biggest producer of diamonds and has unearthed all of the world's biggest stones in recent years. Before this discovery, the Seweloa diamond, which was found at the Karowe Mine in 2019, was recognised as the second-biggest mined diamond in the world at 1,758 carats. It was bought by French fashion house Louis Vuitton for an undisclosed amount. The 1,111-carat Lesedi La Rona diamond, also from Botswana's Karowe Mine, was bought by a British jeweller for \$53 million in 2017.

Curbs on kin weans Indian students away from UK varsities

PTI ■ LONDON

Indians may continue to top the tally of student visa grants but they are beginning to show signs of being put off applying to UK universities amid greater migration curbs, the latest Home Office statistics revealed on Thursday.

The Home Office data for the past year until June 2024 shows a 23 per cent fall in Indian students coming to the UK for higher studies, even as they continue to represent the largest group granted leave to remain on the Graduate Route visa which allows foreign students to work in Britain for two years after their degree.

This fall in Indian student numbers is the first indication of the impact of tighter curbs on the right of most student visa holders to bring along dependent family members, which came into effect earlier this year.

"There were 110,006 sponsored study visa grants to main applicants who were Indian nationals in the year ending June 2024 (25 per cent of the total), 32,687 fewer than the previous year," the Home Office statistics reveal. "Most of the increase in foreign students between 2019 and 2023 were from Indian and Nigerian nationals, but numbers for these nationalities have fallen in the latest year (by 23 per cent and 46 per cent respectively)," it

notes. The India-UK Young Professionals Scheme, which involves a two-way flow of young graduates to live and work in either country for up to two years, brought in 2,234 Indian nationals since the first ballot was held in February last year - well below the annual 3,000 visa cap.

"In the year ending June 2024, Indian nationals represented the largest group of students granted leave to remain on the Graduate Route (67,529), representing almost half (46 per cent) of grants of Graduate Route extensions to main applicants," the data reveals. However, a gradual decline in student numbers will cause concern among UK universities as they struggle through financial pressures and rely on the much higher fees paid by overseas students.

The National Indian Students and Alumni Union (NISAU) UK fears a review launched into the Graduate Route visa last year, which concluded only in May to confirm it would not be abandoned, put many Indians off applying.

"It is critical that we ensure that the chaos and uncertainty that the review of the Graduate Route had led to is now fully put to rest. NISAU has engaged with millions of students in India to spread the message that the UK remains a warm and welcoming des-



Indian students celebrating.

6,564 grants between April and June 2024, compared with the same period in 2023 when there were 35,470 grants. "The number of grants to main applicants on other routes in the 'Worker' category (which includes 'Skilled Worker' visas) has increased by 79 per cent since 2021, but in the latest year has fallen by 3 per cent."

It comes as the Home Office had earlier announced an independent review by its Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) into two specific job sectors of IT and engineering to reduce the UK's reliance on foreign workers. Indian IT professionals, who make up a large chunk of these visas, are likely to be impacted once the MAC review is tabled in the coming months.

"These sectors are vital to the UK's economic growth and national infrastructure. They should be drawing from a growing pool of homegrown talent," Seema Malhotra, Indian-origin minister for migration and citizenship in the Home Office, wrote in 'The Daily Telegraph' this week. "Lack of domestic training for occupations ranging from healthcare to IT meant employers having to increase their dependence on overseas recruits instead," she notes, criticising the previous Tory regime's handling of immigration - an issue which dominates the cross-party agenda amid pledges to bring down soaring numbers.

India sustains growth momentum

Set to achieve 6.5-7% growth: FinMin Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's economic momentum remains intact despite a somewhat erratic monsoon, and real GDP growth of 6.5-7 per cent projected in the Economic Survey seems appropriate, a finance ministry report said on Thursday. According to the Monthly Economic Review for July, the Indian economy has sustained its momentum in the first four months of FY25. Goods and Services Tax collections in the first four months of FY25 underwent a level shift pushed up by the widening of the tax base and heightened economic activity, the report released by the finance ministry said. "The resilience of domestic activity is also reflected in the strong performance of the manufacturing and services sector purchasing managers' indices. The manufacturing growth has been driven by expansion in demand conditions, a rise in new export orders and growth in output prices," it said. On the fiscal front, it said, the Union



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

expenditure is maintained at high levels, supporting the fledgling private investment cycle. Retail inflation decreased to 3.5 per cent in July 2024, the lowest since September 2019, driven by moderation in food inflation, it said, adding that steady progress in the southwest monsoon has supported kharif sowing. Replenishing water levels in the reservoir bodes well for the current kharif and upcoming rabi crop production and this will further aid in reducing food inflation in the coming months, it said. "On balance, India's economic momentum remains intact. Despite a somewhat erratic monsoon, reservoirs have been replenished. Manufacturing and services sectors are expanding, according to the Purchasing Managers' indices," it said. Tax collections, especially indirect taxes, which reflect transactions, are growing healthily, and so is bank credit, it said. "Inflation is moderating, and exports of both goods and services are doing better than they did last year. Stock markets are holding on to their levels. Foreign direct investment is looking up as gross inflows are rising," it said. As of now, it said, the projection of real GDP growth of 6.5-7.0 per cent for FY25, made in the Economic Survey for 2023-24, seems appropriate.

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The investments in process and digital technologies across the steel value chain in the country are expected to grow up to USD 2.7 billion by 2030, according to a report. These investments will advance technological capabilities and drive progress toward a more efficient and sustainable mining and steel industry, the FICCI-Deloitte Report said on Thursday. "The investment in process and digital technologies across the steel value chain in India is projected to increase from USD 1-1.2 billion in 2024 to USD 2.3-2.7 billion by 2030, excluding ERP upgrades," said the report on 'Automation, Digitalisation and Technology Integration for the Indian Mining and Steel sector'. The year 2030 is significant for the domestic steel industry as the government's National Steel Policy 2017 aims to scale up India's installed steel-making capacity to 300 million tonne by 2030.

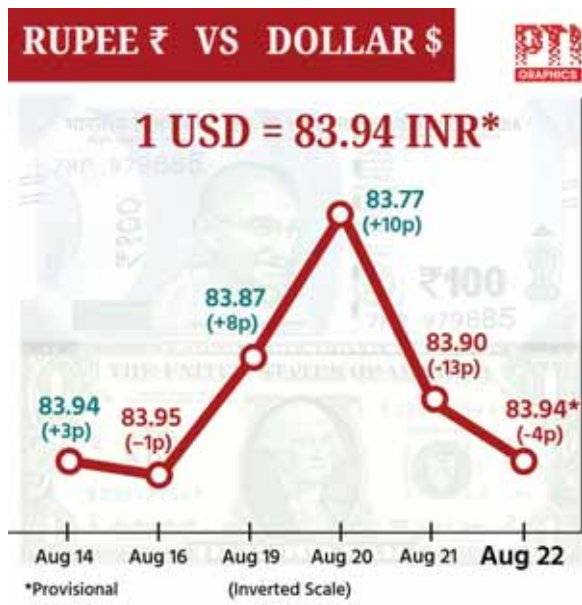


As per the report, the per capita steel consumption is anticipated to reach 160 kg by 2030 and around 220 kg by 2047. Digital tools can help to enhance compliance with environmental regulations through better energy efficiency and emission monitoring, it said. Furthermore, digital technologies offer the flexibility and scalability necessary to adapt to market changes, drive innovation, and improve worker safety, the report noted. Integrating digital technologies across the value chain can thus unlock transformative capabilities, it said. Rajib Maitra, Partner, Deloitte India, said, "The Indian mining and steel sector is on a transformative path, spurred by innovations in AI and digital technologies. The operators, on the ground, face practical challenges like integrating new systems with legacy infrastructures and managing the costs associated with technological upgrades." Gajraj Singh Rathore, Co-Chair, FICCI Steel Committee said "By fostering a culture of innovation, tech adoption, digitalisation and partnerships, we can collectively shape a resilient, prosperous and sustainable future for all."

Rupee falls 4 paise to close at 83.94 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee traded in a narrow range and settled lower by 4 paise at 83.94 (provisional) against the American currency on Thursday, as relentless dollar demand from importers and relentless foreign fund outflows dampened investor sentiments. However, a positive trend in domestic equities and lower global crude oil prices supported the domestic currency and restricted its fall, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened weak at 83.93 and touched an intraday low of 83.97 against the US dollar. The domestic currency finally settled at 83.94 (provisional), 4 paise lower from its previous close. On Wednesday, the rupee fell 13 paise to 83.90 against the US dollar. "We expect the rupee to trade with a slight negative bias on outflows by foreign investors and demand for the greenback by importers. However, a positive tone in the domestic markets and



declining global crude oil prices, may support the rupee," said Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas. Traders will now take cues from the weekly unemployment claims, existing home sales and PMI data from the US. "Investors may remain cautious ahead of Fed Chair Jerome Powell's speech at Jackson Hole Symposium for any cues on rate cuts by the central bank. USD/INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 83.75 to Rs 84.20," Choudhary added. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.19 per cent higher at 101.23.

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

TVS Motor Company expects the scooter segment to grow further and account for around 40 per cent of the overall two-wheeler sales, its CEO KN Radhakrishnan said on Thursday. The company, which on Thursday introduced the new Jupiter 110, said it has outpaced the industry in scooter sales with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 12 per cent compared with the industry's 8 per cent. "Scooter category share is currently around 32 per cent. I am a firm believer that the scooter segment will substantially expand, it may even go to 40 per cent and above, that's my expectation," Radhakrishnan told reporters. He noted that the share of the scooter segment is witnessing growth in both urban and rural regions. "We are confident that the Jupiter 110 with its many first-in-segment features will further build our position in the two-wheeler market," Radhakrishnan stated.

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

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark BSE Sensex rose by 147.89 points to settle above 81,000 level while Nifty closed above 24,800 following buying in commodity, telecom and consumer stocks amid a firm trend in global markets. Rising for the third straight day, the 30-share BSE Sensex rose by 147.89 points or 0.18 per cent to close at 81,053.19, registering gains for the third day in a row. During the day, it climbed 331.15 points to hit an intra-day high of 81,236.45. Extending gains to a sixth session in a row, the NSE Nifty went up by 41.30 points or 0.17 per cent to end at a two-week high of 24,811.50. Bharti Airtel was the biggest gainer in the Sensex pack, rising 1.63 per cent, followed by Tata Steel, ICICI Bank, Titan, Asian Paints and Ultratech Cements. On the other hand, M&M, NTPC, Tata Motors, TCS and PowerGrid were the major losers. "The domestic market witnessed modest gains owing to the positive global



sentiments. Particularly, the recent signs of weakness in the US non-farm payroll data have strengthened the case for potential interest rate cuts in September," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services said. In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge jumped 0.47 per cent, and the midcap index climbed 0.67 per cent. "Markets are closely monitoring global indices for direction, and the recent pause in US markets ahead of the Jackson Hole Symposium is leading to some caution locally also," Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare

Utilities, Power, Oil & Gas, Energy and IT were the laggards. In the broader market, Awfis Space Solutions jumped 9.54 per cent to close at Rs 863.25 apiece. In the intraday trade, it advanced 19.99 per cent to hit its 52-week high of Rs 945.70 after the company expanded its footprint in Bengaluru. Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Ltd shares rallied more than 7 per cent after the company said its board will consider a proposal to raise up to Rs 4,500 crore through issuance of shares. On the other hand, scrip of Adani Power fell a little over 3 per cent amid media reports that the promoters of the company may sell stakes in Adani Power and Ambuja Cements to trim debt. In Asian markets, Tokyo, Seoul and Hong Kong closed with gains, while Shanghai ended in the negative territory on Thursday. European markets were trading with significant gains in the mid-session deals. The US stock markets gained in overnight trade on Wednesday. Broking Ltd said. "Investors are waiting for the outcome of the Fed chair's speech at the Jackson Hole meeting on Friday, which could provide some indication on whether the Fed would announce a rate cut next month," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said. Among the indices, Telecommunication surged by 1.60 per cent, Commodities by 1 per cent, Consumer Durables by 0.91 per cent, Services by 0.70 per cent, FMCG by 0.59 per cent, Metal by 0.57 per cent and Realty by 0.49 per cent.

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's organised gold loan market is projected to double in next five years to Rs 14.19 lakh crore despite expected moderation in growth due to stricter regulations, said a PwC India report. In fiscal 2023-24, the organised gold loan market demonstrated substantial growth, reaching a valuation of Rs 7.1 lakh crore, according to the report titled 'Striking gold: The rise of India's gold loan market'. "It is expected to reach around Rs 14.19 lakh crore by FY 2029 at a five-year CAGR of 14.85 per cent," it said. Indian families own massive



quantities of gold, estimated at 25,000 tonne. Existing gold holdings with Indian households are valued at roughly Rs 126 lakh crore, the report said. It further said the gold loan market is poised to see moderate growth over the next two years, as gold lenders are facing increased scrutiny from regulatory authorities

regarding loan-to-value (LTV) maintenance and auction-related procedures. "The second-largest player in the gold loan market being inactive would have an impact on market growth in FY25," the report said. Also, the RBI's advisory to NBFCs on cash disbursement, which limits the amount of cash disbursement to Rs 20,000, could push customers to rely on the unorganised sector. The regulator has also raised concerns about the evaluation process for lending activities through fintech startups. The increased regulatory scrutiny and revised guidelines have led to a dip in the share prices of leading NBFCs, PwC said.

GoM on GST rate rationalisation discusses tax cut for some items

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The ministerial panel on GST rate rationalisation on Thursday broadly converged towards retaining a 4-tier slab structure and asked the committee of tax officers to analyse the implication of tinkering rates on some items and present it before the GST council. The issue of GST on health and life insurance was also raised by some states in the meeting of the Group of Ministers (GoM) on rate rationalisation and referred to the fitment committee, comprising central and state tax officers, for further data analysis. The suggestions of the GoM will be taken up on the September 9 meeting of the GST Council headed by Union Finance Minister

Nirmala Sitharaman and comprising state counterparts. Talking to reporters after the first meeting of the GoM under his convenorship, Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Chaudhary said, "Some GoM members are demanding that there should be no change in tax slabs under GST". "More discussions will happen, and then only a final decision will be taken," Chaudhary said, adding the GoM has received representations from restaurants, beverages and online gaming sectors, which will be reviewed and some of them will be sent to the Fitment committee. West Bengal Finance Minister Chandrima Bhattacharya stated, "I have said there should be no changes in the



GST slab. A presentation will be made before the Council". The next GoM meeting will be held after the September 9 Council meeting, she added. Asked if the GoM deliberated on reducing 4 slabs to 3, Bhattacharya said, "That will not happen for now. Slabs will be retained at 5, 12, 18, and 28 per cent. This will be

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

that we will discuss it (reducing slabs)," she added. On health and life insurance taxation, Byre Gowda said, "We have asked for further report (from fitment committee). We are not sure if it's part of the agenda". The Opposition has been demanding the removal of GST on health and life insurance premiums, which attract an 18 per cent rate. Sitharaman had earlier this month said that tax was levied on insurance premiums even before the imposition of GST, and GST revenues are shared between the Centre and states. Gowda said the GoM had asked for a break up of changes in tax rates on some items. "What will be the implication of tax rates going up or down on those items," he said.

POWERGRID acquires STL

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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



sector players and emerging as successful bidder in Tariff Based Competitive Bidding (TBCB) process. Sirohi Transmission Limited shall implement a Transmission System comprising establishment of new 765/400 kV sub-station near Sirohi in Rajasthan, 765kV & 400kV D/C Transmission Lines and associated bays extension works at existing substation in the state of Rajasthan.

Adopt more supportive, empathetic approach towards MSMEs, lenders told

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Reserve Bank Deputy Governor Swaminathan J has asked financial institutions to adopt a more sensitive and empathetic approach towards MSMEs, and deploy supportive measures like restructuring options for loans, to support the sector which plays a key role in the economy. In a speech at the Annual Day of the Foreign Exchange Dealers Association of India (FEDA) here, the deputy governor said MSMEs face challenges like access to affordable finance, delayed payments, infrastructure bottlenecks, and

requirements of compliance, among others. The journey of India's economic transformation cannot be complete without the robust development of the MSME sector. "MSMEs are not just the backbone of our economy, they are the engines of growth, innovation, and employment," he said at the event held on Wednesday. However, for these enterprises to truly thrive and scale up, the financial sector must step up with innovative solutions, sensitivity, and a forward-looking approach, Swaminathan said. "This is not just about

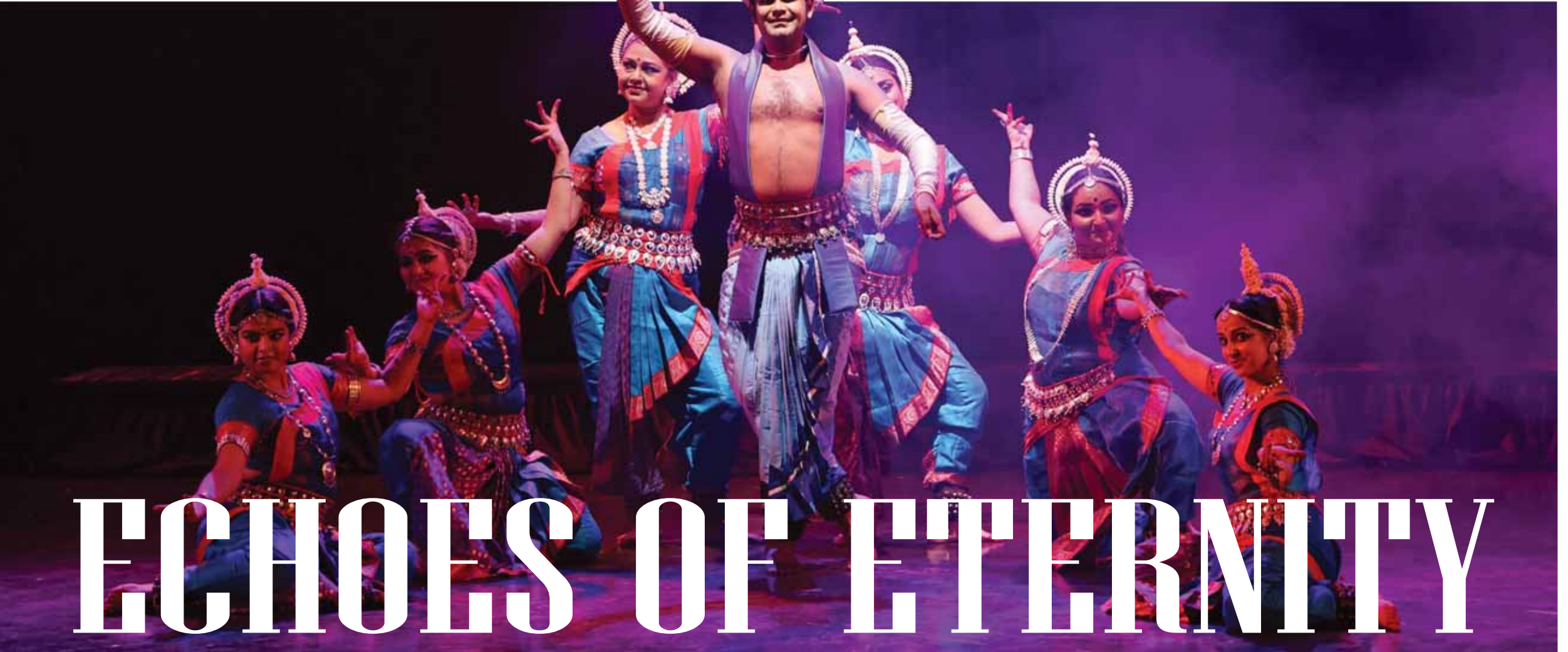


providing credit; it's about enabling these enterprises compete globally, drive exports, and contribute to

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

mechanisms are crucial, the way we engage with the MSME sector, our sensitivity to their challenges and our commitment to their success, will ultimately determine the strength and sustainability of this partnership," he said. The deputy governor also emphasised that considering the key role that MSMEs play in the economy, the financial sector should adopt a more sensitive and empathetic approach towards them. "While financial discipline is crucial, the unique challenges faced by MSMEs, such as low capital base, lack of scale, cash flow constraints from delayed payments, fluctuating market

conditions, and external economic pressures, necessitate a more nuanced approach to assessment as well as follow-up," he said. While timely repayment of dues is crucial to maintain the health of the financial system, financial institutions should focus on deploying supportive measures such as restructuring options, grace periods, and tailored repayment plans that give MSMEs the breathing space they need to recover and get back on track while encountering difficult situations, the senior official said at the event attended by representatives of financial sector, among others.



ECHOES OF ETERNITY

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

PIONEER CULTURE DESK

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



Through these festivals, Utsav continues to foster a deeper appreciation for India's cultural heritage, ensuring that the traditions of classical dance are passed on to future generations. As Utsav marks its 37th year, the legacy of Smt. Ranjana Gauhar and her unwavering commitment to the arts remains as vibrant as ever, inspiring artists and audiences alike.

Ranjana Gauhar, the visionary founder of Utsav Educational and Cultural Society, is a distinguished figure in the Indian classical dance community. A recipient of the prestigious Padma Shri and the Sangeet Natak Akademi (SNA) Award, Gauhar has dedicated her life to the art of Odissi. Her contributions to Indian classical dance are profound, extending

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



Photos: Pankaj Kumar

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

A TWO-DAY CELEBRATION OF DANCE AND CULTURE

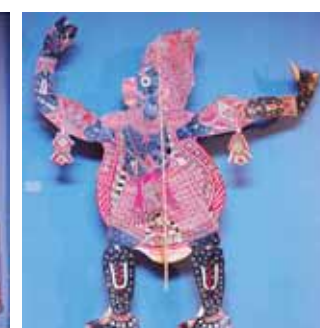
The highlight of the first evening was an enchanting Odissi dance drama titled "Ksheer Sagar," choreographed and performed by Utsav's Repertory

under the artistic direction of Guru Ranjana Gauhar. The dance drama, which depicted the mythological narratives of Chandrabhaga and Matsya Avatar, captivated the audience. Through intricate choreography and evocative storytelling, the performance underscored the timeless relevance of ancient tales, particularly emphasizing the importance of water conservation and environmental preservation.

The second day of the festival continued to enthrall audiences with solo performances by senior disciples of renowned dance gurus. The event was inaugurated in the presence of distinguished guests, including Ambassador Bhaswati Mukherjee and Shri Sunit Tandon. Esteemed artists such as Dr. Ananda Shankar Jayant, Smt. Geeta Chandran, and Smt. Shobhana Pillai were among those honored for their outstanding contributions to Indian classical dance. The one of a kind cultural event featured a diverse range of classical dance forms, including Odissi, Bharatnatyam, Kathak, and Manipuri, performed by the disciples of illustrious gurus. Each performance was a testament to the depth and diversity of India's classical dance heritage, leaving the audience spellbound.

EMBRACING SHADOWS THE ENDURING LEGACY OF LEATHER PUPPETS

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



Photos: Pankaj Kumar

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



PTI ■ LONDON

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

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

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

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

'Future economist' Archana bids farewell to TT

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

FROM PARIS TO MICHIGAN IN A FORTNIGHT



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

as much as table tennis. I had inquired about this course in Michigan last year as well but then we qualified for the Paris Olympics as a team for the first time and I wanted to focus on that. "Now that the Olympics are done, I want to study more and come back to India after two years and serve the people in a different capacity. My decision has nothing to do with financial returns. "I have got all the support I have needed while playing for India, which has been the biggest honour," said the soft-spoken athlete, who has gone to Michigan after applying for

a study leave with her employer. She comes from a financially secure family of doctors with both her parents being ophthalmologists. Her brother is currently pursuing a PHD in aerospace engineering in the USA. But her memories cannot be ripped away from table tennis as it was the first time that both Indian men and women had qualified for the team event of the Olympics. Archana hopes to continue playing table tennis in the USA and will miss the team environment the most. "The best thing about the Olympics was being with seniors like Sharath Kamal and Manika Batra. The environment was so good. I also got to meet Novak Djokovic, Rafael Nadal and Carlos Alcaraz. I made memories for life there. "I have also loved fighting for my country and that is something I will miss the most. I hope to keep playing here (in the US)," she said. Archana is certain about being a public servant in India after her course in Michigan but she is yet to work out the finer details.

Berge joins Fulham and Liverpool sells teenager Clark

AP ■ LONDON

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

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

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

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



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

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

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

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

PTI ■ GOTEEMBA (JAPAN)

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

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



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

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



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

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Batting great Matthew Hayden feels Rishabh Pant will be a key player for India when they travel to Australia for a five-Test series later this year owing to his "muscle memory and thirst for victory" that made him such a sensation during the team's previous tour Down Under. The eagerly-anticipated five-Test series starts on November 22 at Perth. "Guys like Rishabh Pant have got a muscle memory and the thirst for victory. He was such a key player last time he played there and the Australian public loved him as well, because of the nature of the way he played his game," Hayden told media on the sidelines of 'CEAT Cricket Rating Awards' here on Wednesday. "It was exciting. It was innovative. It was just fresh and good. Then you have got your old stewards, like Virat Kohli, (he) will want to make an impression again. From a batting point of view, I'm excited to see how India have that strategy to take on the Australian conditions," the Australian added. Pant, who has made a successful return to cricket after a life-threatening accident in 2022, was an outstanding performer for India in the 2020-21 tour, nothing up brilliant knocks of 97 and 89 not out in the landmark trip. India outgunned a full-strength Australia despite missing several frontline players in one of the most dramatic turnarounds in the history Test cricket. The visitors bounced back from the ignominy of 36 all out in the opening Adelaide Test to win the Border-Gavaskar Trophy 2-1 for a second

consecutive time. Kohli had to return home after the Adelaide game due to personal reasons and five other players, including key pacers Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami, were forced out due to injuries and fitness issues. "The great thing from an Indian perspective is that when you look at the last victory, there was no Virat Kohli. There was a very much a second team bowling line-up that won at the Gabba," Hayden said. "That's the kind of confidence that you can expect this Indian unit to go to our shores (with) and go, 'guys, we've done this before, and we've done it in a way that's second to none, even without our key players,'" he said. **PINK TESTS TAKE AWAY AUSTRALIA'S HOME ADVANTAGE:** Hayden said scheduling a day-night Test tends to take away the advantage enjoyed by Australian teams in the past. Even in the upcoming tour, the two teams will play a Pink Test in Adelaide. "Once you get those overhead conditions under that twilight zone, they can be really difficult," he said. "I would go as far as to say that the home advantage in Australia has been taken away quite a lot, simply on the basis that if you get (on) the wrong side of a certain session, be that you are four for 130 at twilight, you can (soon) be eight for 150. "There's no chance to actually really, naturally dominate a game," he added. Hayden said Pat Cummins, who led Australia to the World Test Championship and ODI World Cup wins last year, has rallied his troops like no other Australian captain in the past.

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

AP ■ MONACO

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

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



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

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

Cash-strapped Barcelona sheds players one year after their arrival

AP ■ BARCELONA (SPAIN)

If trying to compete with Real Madrid and newly arrived Kylian Mbappé wasn't daunting enough, now Hansi Flick's Barcelona squad is being thinned out by departures. Barcelona looks set to lose both Ilkay Gundogan and Vitor Roque in the coming days - or even hours - with both players reportedly close to exits. Gundogan appears set on returning to Manchester City a year after the midfielder left the serial winners to start a new chapter in Spain.

That could be cut short because of Barcelona's need to trim its salary burden, leaving the team without one of its top playmakers from last season. Roque is also reportedly close to leaving on loan for Real Betis, although Portugal's Sporting has made inquiries. The young Brazilian forward cost Barcelona a 30-million-euro (USD 33-million) transfer last summer. He arrived in the winter transfer market but never earned consistent playing minutes despite the significant investment made to sign him. When their exits are made official, it will confirm that the



club's efforts last summer to strengthen the squad turned out to be makeshift moves. Last summer, Barcelona maintained the quality of a

squad that lost veteran leaders Sergio Busquets and Jordi Alba without spending much money. Gundogan and former Athletic Bilbao defender Inigo

Martinez arrived as free agents, Oriol Romeu's move from Girona cost a reported 4 million euros, and João Félix and João Cancelo both arrived on loan deals from Atletico Madrid and Manchester City, respectively. But a year later, only Martinez appears set to continue with the team that finished last season without a title and the departure of coach Xavi Hernández, who was pushed out after he publicly complained that the club's lack of money would make it hard to compete with Madrid or the other top European clubs. Barcelona has locked up the

arrival of Spain midfielder Dani Olmo from Leipzig. But, it has yet to meet the financial requirements of the Spanish league necessary to register him to play. Flick is also without key players Gavi Páez and Ronaldo Araújo, who are recovering from leg injuries. With players hurt or leaving, Flick has not hesitated in relying heavily on the products of Barcelona's famed La Masia youth academy. He gave debuts to midfielders Gerard Martín and Marc Bernal at the always demanding outing at Valencia in their Spanish league opener when Robert Lewandowski scored a brace for a 2-1 victory.

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