

OPINION 6

THE RISE OF
SUNITA KEJRIWAL

WORLD 8

ISRAEL'S WEST BANK OPERATION
KILLS NINE PALESTINIANS

MONEY 10

NIFTY GAINS marginally
TO HIT LIFETIME HIGHPublished From
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PATHAK NAMED
INDIA GOALKEEPER
IN TROPHY SQUAD
11 SPORTS

PRESIDENT MURMU READS THE RIOT ACT TO MEN: ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu has voiced her dismay and horror in her first public remarks regarding the rape and murder of a trainee doctor in Kolkata earlier this month and said "enough is enough." She urged society to confront the chronic issue of violence against women and should force honest self-inspection to uncover the roots of the malaise. In a statement, President Murmu said the gruesome incident of rape and murder of a doctor in Kolkata has left the nation shocked. "I was dismayed and horrified when I came to hear of it. What is more depressing is the fact that it was not the only incident of its kind; it is part of a series of crimes

against women. Even as students, doctors and citizens were protesting in Kolkata, criminals remained on the prowl elsewhere. The victims include even kindergarten girls. No civilised society can allow daughters and sisters to be subjected to such atrocities. The nation is bound to be outraged, and so am I," she said. "On the occasion of Women's Day last year, I had shared my thoughts and hopes about women's empowerment in the form of a newspaper article. I remain an optimist, thanks to our past achievements in empowering women. I consider myself as an example of that spectacular journey of women empowerment in India. But I myself feel deeply anguished when I hear about brutality against women in any

part of the country," President Murmu said. "More recently, I was in a unique predicament when some schoolchildren who had come to celebrate Rakhi at the Rashtrapati Bhavan asked me innocently if they could be assured that there would be no recurrence of the Nirbhaya-type incident in future. I told them that though the State is committed to protect every citizen, training in self-defence and martial arts is essential for all, particularly girls, to make them stronger. But that's not a guarantee for their security as women's vulnerability is influenced by many factors. Obviously, the full answer to that question can only come from our society." President Murmu said, "For that to happen, what is needed first of all



is honest, unbiased self-inspection. The time has come when we as a society need to ask ourselves some difficult questions. Where have we erred? And what can we do to remove the errors? Without finding out the answer to that question, the half of our population cannot live as freely as the other half. "To answer it, let me explain it right at the beginning. Our Constitution granted equality to all, including women, when it was only an ideal in many parts of the world. The State then created institutions to establish this equality, wherever needed, and promoted it with a series of schemes and initiatives. Civil society came forward and supplemented the State's outreach in this regard. Visionary leaders in

all spheres of society pushed for gender equality. Finally, there were exceptional, feisty women who made it possible for their less fortunate sisters to benefit from this social revolution. That has been the saga of women's empowerment." She said, "Yet, this journey has not been without its obstacles. Women have had to fight for every inch of ground they have won. Social prejudices as well as some customs and practices have always opposed the expansion of women's rights. This is a rather deplorable mindset. I won't call it a male mindset, because it has little to do with the gender of the person: there are many, many men who don't have it. This mindset sees the female as a lesser human being, less powerful, less capable, less intelligent. Those

who share such views then go further and see the female as an object. "It is this objectification of women by a few that is behind the crimes against women. It is ingrained deeply in the minds of such people. Let me also note here that, regrettably, this is the case not only in India, but across the world. Difference between one place and the next is more of a degree than kind." President Murmu said "Countering this mindset is a task for both the State and the society. In India, over the years, the two have fought hard to change the wrong attitude. There have been laws and there have been social campaigns. Yet, there is something that continues to come in the way to torment us.

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Cabinet approves massive boost to manufacturing horizons

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

In a determined effort to boost domestic industry and create jobs, the Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved establishment of 12 new industrial cities in 10 States with an estimated investment of ₹28,602 crore. More than one million direct jobs will be created in these projects. Spanning 10 States and strategically located along six major corridors, these projects represent a significant leap forward in India's quest for enhanced manufacturing capabilities and rapid economic growth. These industrial areas will be located at Khurpia in Uttarakhand, Rajpura-Patala in Punjab, Dighi in Maharashtra, Palakkad in Kerala, Agra and Prayagraj in UP, Gaya in Bihar, Zaaheerabad in Telangana, Orvakal and Kopparthi in AP, and Jodhpur-Pali in Rajasthan. The Union Cabinet has approved 12 new project proposals under the National Industrial Corridor Development Programme (NICDP) with an estimated



Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw briefs the media over Cabinet decisions in New Delhi on Wednesday PTI

investment of ₹28,602 crore, said Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw after the Cabinet meeting. The move will transform the industrial landscape of the country, creating a robust network of industrial nodes and cities that will significantly boost economic growth and global competitiveness. They will be developed as green field smart cities of global standards. The approach ensures that the cities are equipped with advanced infrastructure that

supports sustainable and efficient industrial operations. The NICDP is expected to generate significant employment opportunities, with an estimated 1 million direct jobs and up to 3 million indirect jobs being created through planned industrialisation. These projects will create an investment potential of about ₹1.52 lakh crore. The NICDP is designed to foster a vibrant industrial ecosystem by facilitating investments by large anchor

industries and micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). These industrial nodes will act as catalysts for achieving \$2 trillion exports by 2030, reflecting the Government's vision of a self-reliant and globally competitive India, a Government statement said. It also said India will soon wear a grand necklace of industrial smart cities and termed the decision as landmark. The new industrial cities will be developed as green field smart cities of global standards, built "ahead of demand" on the "plug-n-play" and 'walk-to-work' concepts. This approach ensures that the cities are equipped with advanced infrastructure that supports sustainable and efficient industrial operations. Aligned with the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan, the projects will feature multi-mode connectivity infrastructure, ensuring seamless movement of people, goods, and services. The industrial cities are envisioned to be growth centers for transformation of the whole region.

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Bangla Bandh call by BJP unsettles West Bengal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
KOLKATA

Violent clashes marred the BJP-sponsored 12-hour shutdown in West Bengal on Wednesday, disrupting road and train services, and sparking scuffles between the police-ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) workers and bandh supporters at several pockets of the State. The BJP claimed the bandh was successful while the TMC said it has failed to evoke overwhelming response. Several BJP leaders, including former MPs Roopa Ganguly and Locket Chatterjee, Raja Sabha MP Samik Bhattacharya and MLA Agnimitra Paul, were detained for blocking roads and urging people to enforce the bandh since morning. The most significant of these clashes was reported from Bhatpara in North 24 Parganas district where, the BJP alleged, TMC goons fired multiple rounds on its local leader Priyangu Pandey's car and shared a purported video of the crime on social media platforms. He claimed that the



BJP leader Rahul Sinha (sitting, 3rd from left) along with party workers raises slogans as security personnel stand guard during the party's 12-hour general strike in Bengal to protest the police action against participants of Tuesday's 'Nabanna Abhijan' rally which was held against the RG Kar incident, in Kolkata, on Wednesday PTI

Trinamool workers opened fire at him and hurled bombs when he was travelling in a car in Bhatpara. Four people have been arrested, the Kolkata Police said. The shutdown affected daily life in the State with many people choosing to remain indoors apprehending trouble on the roads. In Kolkata, the usual weekday flurry was missing with a lesser number of buses, auto-rickshaws and taxis plying. Private vehicles were also significantly fewer, even as

markets and shops remained open as usual. Schools and colleges were open, though the number of students was less. In many private offices, attendance was low with employees asked to work from home. However, attendance was as usual in Government offices. An Eastern Railway official said bandh supporters blocked tracks at 49 places under its jurisdiction in the State in both Sealdah and Howrah divisions. While the blockades were lifted at most

places, it continued for longer durations in nine stations, mostly in the Sealdah South section, he said. BJP workers demonstrated at various stations in North and South 24 Parganas, Hooghly, Nadia and Murshidabad districts in support of the bandh. Suburban railway services were also disrupted when bandh supporters dropped banana leaves on overhead electrical wires at various places, railway officials confirmed. The violence was followed by a showdown between local BJP leader Arjun Singh and his TMC counterpart Somnath Shyam, with both leaders and their supporters standing face to face in altercation further triggering tensions and the police finding it tough to disperse the warring groups. "Miscreants owing allegiance to the Trinamool Congress fired the shots. If police are not around we will show TMC what people's power looks like," Singh said. Shyam countered by saying that the BJP leader was trying to "incite violence in a peaceful area".

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Noose tightens, 17 cases filed for Mollywood sleaze

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) consisting of women IPS officers commenced its probe into allegations of sexual abuse made by Malayalam film actresses against senior artistes like Mukesh, Siddique, Babu Raj, Manian Pilli Raju, Jaayasoorya and movie maker Ranjith (who quit as chairman of Kerala Chalachitra Academy, the Kerala Government-run institution for holding International Film Festival of the State). Sources in the SIT told *The Pioneer* that they would ask Mukesh and Ranjith to present themselves before the team for questioning. Bengali film actress Sreelekha Mitra has lodged a complaint against Ranjith by e-mail with the SIT about the harassment meted out to her by the movie maker in 2009. Minu Muneer, Sonia Malhotra and Revathi Sampath are the other artists who have complained against their male co-artists alleging rape, physical assault and violation of modesty. Muneer said in her complaint that Mukesh, who is a CPI(M) MLA asked her to sleep with him for a positive response to her application for the membership of Association of Malayalam Movie Artists (AMMA), a stepping stone to the film industry's welfare programme.

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Bail for laundering funds remains the rule, says SC

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

In a judgment having significant implications, the Supreme Court on Wednesday reiterated that the principle of bail is the rule and jail is the exception applied even to money laundering cases under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) while granting bail to one Prem Prakash, an alleged aide of Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren in a money laundering case. This comes a day after the Supreme Court granted relief to Bharat Rashtia Samithi leader K Kavitha, who was arrested in March in a money laundering case linked to Delhi's now-scrapped liquor policy. Earlier this month, AAP leader Manish Sisodia was also granted bail in the same case. A Bench of Justices BR Gavai and KV Viswanathan held that liberty of individual is always the rule and deprivation of the same by procedure established by law, is the exception. The Bench made it clear that the stringent conditions for bail under PMLA will override this principle. "The appeal is allowed and impugned order dated 22.03.2024 of the High Court of Jharkhand at Ranchi is quashed



File photo: Ranjan Dimri

and set aside," the Bench said in its 44-page order. "...the appellant has satisfied the twin conditions under Section 45. Inasmuch as from the material on record, this Court is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for believing that the appellant is not guilty of the offence of money laundering as alleged under Sections 3 and 4 of the PMLA and the Court is further satisfied that the appellant is not likely to commit any offence if enlarged on bail," it said. The Bench referred to the August 9 verdict in the money laundering and corruption cases involving former Deputy Chief Minister

Sisodia to say that liberty of the individual is always the rule and deprivation of it by procedure established by law is the exception. The Bench said, "Relying on the judgment in Manish Sisodia case, we have said that even in PMLA (Prevention of Money Laundering Act), bail is a rule and jail the exception." The Bench referred to Section 45 of the PMLA that mentions twin conditions for bail — there should be prima facie satisfaction that the accused has not committed the offence and that he is not likely to commit any offence while on bail. All that Section 45 specifies, the court said, is the conditions to be met for bail. "Liberty of the individual is always the rule and deprivation, by procedure established by law, the exception. Twin test does not take away this principle," it added. The bench clarified that any incriminating statement made by an accused in custody in a PMLA case before an investigating officer will not be admissible in court. "It will be extremely unfair to make such statements admissible as it will be against all canons of justice."

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UP Government deals death blow to anti-national social media

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
LUCKNOW/NEW DELHI

The Uttar Pradesh Government has come up with a new social media policy that will not only regulate content on platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and X but also encourage influencers to promote the State Government initiatives. Under the policy, posting objectionable, anti-national content will be considered a serious offence that carries penalties. The State Government will also pay up to Rs 8 lakh per month to influencers and holders of these accounts on different social media platforms such as Facebook, X, Instagram and YouTube depending on their followers and subscribers. Yogi Adityanath's cabinet approved the Uttar Pradesh Digital Media Policy, 2024, prepared by the State's Information Department, on Tuesday. "In case of uploading objectionable content on Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram and YouTube, legal action has been arranged against the concerned agency/ firm as per rules. Under no circumstances should the content be indecent, obscene and anti-

national," stated the Press note signed by Principal Secretary Sanjay Prasad. The police will also help create jobs, the statement noted. According to the digital media policy, posting anti-national content is a serious offence that will carry severe consequences including penalties ranging from three years' imprisonment to life term. Earlier, such actions were addressed under Sections 66E and 66F of the Information Technology (IT) Act, which deal with privacy violations and cyber-terrorism, respectively. Under the new policy, digital mediums like X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Instagram and YouTube will also be encouraged to display content, videos, tweets, posts, reels based on the schemes and achievements of the State Government by listing the related agencies or firms and issuing advertisements. "With the release of this policy, the residents of the State who are residing in different parts of the country and abroad will be ensured to get employment in large numbers," it said.

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ED slaps DMK MP with ₹908 crore penalty over FERA violation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate on Wednesday said a penalty of ₹908 crore has been imposed on DMK MP S Jagathrathchakan and his family members in a case related to the alleged violation of foreign exchange rules. The federal agency issued a statement which said properties worth ₹89.19 crore, seized in September 2020, have been confiscated following an adjudication order issued on August 26 under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA). Jagathrathchakan, 76, represents the Arakkonam Lok Sabha seat in Tamil Nadu. He had earlier served as a Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting in the Union Government. The agency said a FEMA violation probe was initiated against the MP, a businessman from Tamil Nadu, his family members and a related Indian entity. This investigation, it said, resulted in the passing of seizure order, dated September 11, 2020, under section 37A of FEMA, for various movable and immovable properties in the name of the MP and his family members. These are valued at ₹89.19 crore. "The properties worth ₹89.19 crore which were seized in terms of section 37A of FEMA were also ordered for confiscation, and penalty of ₹908 crore is levied vide Adjudication Order dated 26/08/2024," the ED said.

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Medal winning hockey player at Paris Olympics humiliated by Kerala Government

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The legendary hockey star of India PR Sreejesh (member of the Indian hockey team that won the bronze medal in Paris Olympics) and his family were humiliated by the Government of Kerala which has shocked the sporting fraternity in the State. The CPI (M)-led Kerala Government had invited Sreejesh to Thiruvananthapuram to felicitate him in a State function for his feat in the hockey field. The hockey star reached Thiruvananthapuram

accompanied by his family members. But what happened unknown to Sreejesh was the last-hour cancellation of the felicitation programme. It seems Sreejesh's act of speaking to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and attending the reception hosted by the latter had not gone down well with the Marxists and Muslim members in the Council of Ministers that may have led to the ungainly treatment meted out to the hockey icon. The reason why the reception was cancelled, according to sources in the State Secretariat,

was the differences between Education Minister V Sivankutty and Sports Minister V Abdul Rehman over who should foot the bill. While Sivankutty is a CPI (M) ideologue, Abdul Rehman is an erstwhile Congress leader who switched sides and joined the CPI (M) hours before the announcement of the 2021 election schedule. A business baron, Rehman wields enormous influence in the CPI (M). The sources would have us believe that both the ministers wanted to teach Sreejesh an



unforgettable lesson, and hence the last-minute cancellation of the programme. It was only on Tuesday morning that an unwary Sreejesh was informed that the felicitation stood cancelled and that he would be "summoned" to the capital city later on. Left in the lurch, Sreejesh and family decided to turn an unpleasant incident into a spiritually uplifting experience. They visited for "darshan" Sree Padmanabha Swamy Temple and Lord Ganapathy Temple at Pazhavangadi where the hockey wizard came across

Union Minister Suresh Gopi. Gopi was taken aback to hear about the sudden cancellation of the felicitation, and took Sreejesh and family to the former's residence and treated them to a sumptuous Onam lunch. Sreejesh's wife, children, father and mother had a nice time with the actor-turned-politician and took selfies before boarding the train to return home on Tuesday. Since he happens to be an employee of the Kerala Government, Sreejesh is not in a position to make his feelings public.

Striking docs refuse to budge as Mamata uses FIR threat

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The striking doctors of the RG Kar Medical College Hospital and other medical colleges remained nonchalant to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's veiled threat on Wednesday asking them to resume work "as I do not want to take stringent action against you that might spoil your career."

Even as the doctors carried out long processions in various parts of Kolkata, Banerjee from a students' rally in central Kolkata said, that she too was sympathetic towards their cause and that she had done all that she could do to get justice for their departed colleague — a postgraduate lady doctor whose semi nude corpse was recovered from inside the seminar of the RG Kar Medical College in the morning of August 9 — but appealed to them to resume work as many poor people were getting affected by doctors' strike.

She said, "even the Supreme Court has given us the power to act ... unlike some authorities elsewhere we did not file any FIR against the doctors in Kolkata because we had been



very sympathetic towards their movement ... but we will have to consider that the greater cause is suffering ... the poor people are not getting their treatment ... already 16 days have passed since the incident took place ... now I request you to come back to work ...

"I do not want to register FIR and take action against the doctors who have long careers ahead of them ... we want them to shine and prosper in life ... we appreciate that ... but they will also have to understand the Government's compulsion ... so I request them to join work."

The doctors however remained adamant on their demand saying they would not join work till they get justice for their departed colleague.

"It is not only a heinous crime but an unprecedented crime that has taken place where a

lady doctor has been raped and murdered inside her work place ... which has hit everyone's confidence ... if justice is not delivered ... if the culprits are not arrested then there is no point creating these hullabaloo for these many days ... so we are not going to work ... we want justice to be delivered first," one of the agitating doctors said.

Meanwhile, in a parallel and related development the Indian Medical Association on Wednesday cancelled the membership of Dr Sandip Ghosh the ex-principal of RGMCH. The IMA step comes a day after the Enforcement Directorate registered a case of economic offence on the RG Kar issue.

"It is going to be a tough situation for Sandip Ghosh as he may get arrested soon and all his corrupt works will soon come to the fore," Akhtar Ali a former Assistant Superintendent of the medical college said.

His statement came almost in tandem with the Central Bureau of Investigation officials revisiting the RG Kar campus to inspect the accounts books, sources said.

Lankan population homogeneous; Sinhala, Tamils have genetic mixing: Study

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

An international team of scientists, drawn mainly from Sri Lanka and India, have demolished the concept of Eelam Tamils in the island nation through a comprehensive genetic study. A three-year long molecular biology research spanning across Sri Lanka and India have established that the population in the island nation is homogeneous in nature and there is no scientific basis for the claims by the Tamils that they had their origin in that country. The findings probe that the demand for a separate Eelam (country) for Tamils is bunkum and thousands of Tamils and Sinhalese massacred in the war for Eelam died for a non-existent cause.

"The Sri Lankan population, mainly the Sinhala and Tamils have massive genetic mixing. If the Tamils had their origin in Sri Lanka, their DNA should be visible and discernible. But it is missing," said Prof Gyaneshwer Chaubey, Department of Zoology, Banaras Hindu University who led the team of scientists in this path breaking research.

The peer-reviewed research paper "Reconstructing the Population History of the Sinhalese, the major ethnic



group of Sri Lanka," has been published in iScience, a widely respected scientific portal. While Dr Chaubey led the team of Indian scientists, R Ranasinghe (Institute of Biochemistry, Molecular Biology and Biotechnology, University of Colombo) led the researchers from the island nation. It may be remembered that Dr Chaubey and a team of researchers from Estonia, Harvard and Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (Hyderabad) had demolished the Aryan and Dravidian linguistic theory and proved that both of these groups share same forefathers.

"The analysis based on the frequency of various genetic mutations showed a tight cluster of Sinhalese and Tamil populations, suggesting strong gene flow beyond the boundary of ethnicity and language. A further connection of Sinhalese with the West of India has been estab-

lished based on the traces of DNA segments. Over all in the South Asian context, Sri Lankan ethnic groups are genetically more homogenous than others," said the team leaders.

The study also found that the Sinhala language spoken in the country is a combination of Konkani, Marathi, Sanskrit and Gujarati and reached the island nation through Arabian Sea. According to KM Raghavan, a Sri Lankan historian, the Tamils could have reached Sri Lanka as part of the Kaurava army units hired by the princes of the island nation to fight for them as private army warriors. The Kauravas, who were defeated by the Pandavas in the Mahabharata War took refuge in the East Coast of India and reached Sri Lanka at the invitation of various Kings in the island nation. Following the Portuguese occupation of Sri Lanka, the Kauravas got converted to Christianity and their name was changed to Karavas, writes Raghavan in his book. Ramaswami Vijayabalan, a plantation owner and Tamil scholar based in Colombo, told *The Pioneer* that the Tamils in north and north east of Sri Lanka are descendants of migrant workers from Malabar province in present day Kerala.

Maha Dy CM Ajit apologises for collapse of Shivaji statue

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a damage-control exercise undertaken ahead of the State Assembly polls, Maharashtra's deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar on Wednesday apologised publicly to "13 crore people of the people of the state" over the collapse of the 35-foot tall Shivaji statue in Sindhudurg district, even as the Opposition Shiv Sena (UBT) and the ruling BJP workers had a face-off at Malvan where the statue crashed on Monday.

The political temperatures in the state rose in the state over the collapse of Shivaji's statue for the third consecutive day, as the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) announced its plan to hold q "Jode Maro" (hit with slippers) protest against the MahaYuti government in Mumbai on September 1.

The 35-foot tall Shivaji statue at 12.30 pm on August 26, within nine months after it was unveiled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on December 4, 2023 as part of the Navy day celebrations. In an apparent effort to blunt the continued protests by the Opposition, Ajit Pawar tendered apology to the people of

the state and said that the state government would initiate stern action against the contractor and state government officials responsible for the collapse of the statue of Mararath king at Malvan in Maharashtra's coastal Konkan region.

Speaking at a public function held at Latur in Marathwada region, Ajit Pawar said: "Shivaji Maharaj is our deity. The collapse of the Shivaji statue at Rajkot fort in Sindhudurg has come as a big shock for us. On behalf of the MahaYuti government, I apologise to the 13 crore people of the state.... We will take stern action against the contractor and officials responsible for the erection of the Shivaji statue."

Ajit Pawar also said that the state government would re-erect Shivaji's statue at the same spot where it collapsed on Monday.

In a related development, the supporters of Union Minister and senior BJP leader Narayan Rane and Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aditya Thackeray virtually clashed at Malvan where both the leaders were on a visit to inspect the site where Shivaji's statue collapsed on Monday.

Azad not to campaign in Assembly polls, cites health reasons

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

In his heydays in politics, Ghulam Nabi Azad was labeled the 'lucky mascot' and 'master strategist'. He won many difficult elections in his long political career. But ever since Azad severed his ties with the Congress party he has been struggling to find a foothold and consolidate his support base in his home state.

Azad launched his political party Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) in September 2022 and campaigned extensively across different corners of Jammu and Kashmir to prepare ground in support of the party.

The party's performance was not up to the mark in the recently held Lok Sabha polls in Jammu and Kashmir.

Azad was left stranded midway after several senior party leaders jumped the ship in search of greener pastures. The exit of leaders like Taj Mohiuddin, Haji Abdul Rashid Dar, Sham Lal Bhatt, Abdul Majeed Wani and Gulzar Wani among others had weakened the DPAP. Upset with these developments Azad was maintaining a low profile to avoid media glare.

Ironically, even before launching the poll campaign for the upcoming Assembly elections

in Jammu and Kashmir, Ghulam Nabi Azad on Wednesday communicated to his party workers and senior leaders that he has decided not to campaign for his Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) owing to health reasons. He also advised party candidates that they could withdraw from the race due to his absence in electioneering.

In a statement issued to media houses in Srinagar, Azad said that on the night of August 25, he suffered acute chest pain in Srinagar.

"Following morning, I took the earliest available flight to Delhi and was admitted to AIIMS hospital, where I stayed for two days," the statement added. While doctors assured him that there was no immediate danger, Azad said that he was dealing with other health concerns that require both medication and rest. "These unforeseen circumstances have forced me to step back from the campaign trail," he added.

Meanwhile, J&K BJP Chief Ravinder Raina is also facing tough times as party workers have come out in the open at several places in protest questioning the selection of candidates for the Assembly segments by the party's high command.

Modi chairs PRAGATI meeting to review seven key projects progress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday chaired a PRAGATI meeting to review the progress of seven key projects which included two projects relating to road connectivity, two rail projects and one project each of the Coal, Power and Water Resources sectors, having a cumulative worth of around Rs 76,500 crore. All these projects are related to 11 States and UTs viz., Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Odisha, Goa, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh and Delhi. This was the first meeting in the third term.

Prime Minister Modi emphasised the fact that every official in the government, at Central or State level, must be sensitized about the fact that delay in projects not only leads to cost escalation but also deprives the public of the intended benefits of the project, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said in a statement.

Prime Minister Modi earlier on Wednesday chaired the meeting of the 44th edition of PRA-

GATI, the ICT-based multi-modal platform for Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation, involving the Centre and state governments. This was the first meeting in the third term.

Prime Minister Modi said that the 'Ek Ped Maa ke Naam' campaign can help safeguard the environment while undertaking project development. During the interaction, the prime minister also reviewed AMRUT 2.0 and public grievances related to Jal Jeevan Mission. These projects together inter alia address water issues in the urban and rural areas. Prime Minister Modi emphasised that water is a basic human need and quality disposal of grievances at the district level as well as state level must be ensured by the state governments, according to the statement. Adequate Operation and Maintenance mechanism of Jal Jeevan projects is critical for its success and the prime minister suggested involvement of women self help groups where possible and skilling of youth in Operation and Maintenance works, the statement said.

PowerGrid acquires SPV project

PNS ■ GURUGRAM

Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID) - a Maharatna CPSU under Ministry of Power has on 28th August 2024, acquired the Project Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) viz. "Bhadla-III Power Transmission Limited" for establishing the transmission system associated with "Additional Transmission System for Evacuation of Power from Bhadla-III PS as Part of Rajasthan REZ Phase-III Scheme (20 GW)".

POWERGRID emerged as the successful bidder for the aforementioned project after competing with other private sector player and emerging as successful bidder in Tariff Based Competitive Bidding (TBCB) process.



Noose tightens, 17 cases...

From Page 1

Meanwhile Mukesh accused Muneer of blackmailing him and demanded a lakh of rupees for her silence. There is a complaint filed by Geeth Vijayan, a star of the yesteryears that she was molested by movie makers in 1991.

Minu Muneer alleged to the media that she has been receiving threat calls in her phone and the police had identified that the calls were made from Andhra Pradesh. Though Wednesday was by and large peaceful from the film fraternity, a silent war of nerves is going on among various camps of AMMA. Actor Jagadeesh said that the

decision of AMMA office bearers to quit en masse following the disclosures made by the actresses was shocking.

"They should have shown courage and presence of mind to tackle the situation," he told reporters.

Joy Mathew, a Leftist movie artist, demanded strong action by the law enforcing agencies against the perpetrators of the crime. But Shanthivila Dineshan, movie maker with more than three decades of professional experience in the movie industry told *The Pioneer* that there was nothing new in the allegations or disclosures made by the female artists.

Delhi Govt accused of hiding truth behind Delhi Jal Board 'scam'

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Leader of the Opposition in the Delhi Legislative Assembly, Vijender Gupta, has blamed the Delhi Government for attempting to hide the truth behind astounding financial irregularities in Delhi Jal Board. Citing a report by the Chief Secretary of the Delhi Government, Vijender Gupta pointed out that due to the rampant corruption in the Delhi Government, the balance sheets of the Delhi Jal Board for the years 2011-22 and 2022-23 have not been prepared, which has prevented the CAG from conducting an audit.

Gupta expressed surprise that this report, which exposes the irregularities of the Delhi Jal Board, was presented by the Chief Secretary on 15th March 2024, upon being called after a resolution passed in the assembly, but instead of presenting this report in the Assembly, it was kept hidden in the files.

According to the rules, if a report was requested from the Chief Secretary through the assembly and he provided it to the minister, then why was a

copy of this report not given to the opposition MLAs? The reason is clear: the government wanted to hide its corruption and malpractices.

He also mentioned that earlier, the Delhi government had not prepared the balance sheets for 2018-19, 2019-20, and 2020-21. However, following an order from the High Court, the balance sheets for these three years were prepared, and due to the delay, the CAG audit was also delayed. It is evident from this that the Delhi Government's intention to not prepare the balance sheets was to hide its financial irregularities and corruption.

However, after these three years, the balance sheets for the next two years, i.e., 2021-22 and 2022-23, have again been stalled and are still pending. Gupta further stated that the current Water Minister, Atishi, often complains about not receiving funds, but the reality is that the Delhi Jal Board is not utilising the funds allocated to it in the budget.

He alleged that the Delhi Jal Board inflates its budget but is unable to use the allocated funds according to the sanctioned conditions.

ED slaps DMK MP with ₹908 cr..

From Page 1

The 2020 seizure order was "set aside" by the Competent Authority (under the FEMA) in February 2021 and the ED challenged it before the Appellate Tribunal where, the ED said, the "appeal is pending".

Later, the agency filed a complaint in December 2021 before the FEMA Adjudicating Authority against the MP, his family and a linked company "charging them for violations of various FEMA provisions, particularly in respect of their investment to the tune of Rs 42 crore in a shell company incorporated in Singapore in

2017". The accused were also charged by the agency with "acquisition and holding" of Singapore foreign shares and its subsequent transfer amongst the family members "in defiance of" extant provisions of FEMA, and also with regard to the investment of around Rs 9 crore made into a Sri Lankan entity.

This complaint was filed with a prayer to confiscate the properties seized under the order dated September 11, 2020, it said. The ED said the notices (Jagathrachakan and noticees) filed individual writ petitions before the Madras High Court.

UP Government...

From Page 1

For listing, each of X, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube has been divided into four categories based on subscribers and followers, it said. "The category-wise maximum payout limit for payments to account holders or operators or influencers of X, Facebook, Instagram has been fixed at Rs 5 lakh, Rs 4 lakh, Rs 3 lakh and Rs 2 lakh per month respectively.

"The category wise maximum payout limit for videos, shorts, podcast payments on YouTube has been fixed at Rs 8 lakh, Rs 7 lakh, Rs 6 lakh and Rs 4 lakh per month, respectively," it added.

While the BJP lauded the policy, saying it was an "innovative move" of the Yogi

Adityanath-led government by creating employment and also checking rumour-spreading on social media, the opposition parties called it an attempt to curb freedom of expression on social media and misuse of public funds. BJP spokesperson Rakesh Tripathi said, "The Yogi Adityanath government moves forward with innovations.

"It pays attention to the changes happening in society. Digital media policy will create new jobs. "Those who play with law and order by spreading rumours on social media will be strictly punished. UP's social media policy will become an example across the country," he said. The opposition Samajwadi Party (SP) and the Congress said the state government's move is aimed at stifling freedom of expression.

Bail for laundering funds...

From Page 1

In a 13-page judgement on BRS leader K Kavitha, uploaded on the apex court website on Wednesday, a bench comprising Justices B R Gavai and K V Viswanathan reiterated the well-established principle that "bail is the rule and refusal is an exception". Referring to various judgements, including in the case of Manish Sisodia, a former Delhi deputy chief minister and a co-accused, the verdict said, "The prolonged incarceration before being pronounced guilty of an offence should not be permitted to become punishment without trial."

"We had further observed that the fundamental right of liberty provided under Article 21 of

the Constitution is superior to the statutory restrictions (of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act)," the judgement said.

The 'bail is the rule, and jail is the exception' principle was first used in the 1977 landmark judgment of the 'State of Rajasthan vs Balchand alias Baliya' case. In 2019, the court granted bail to P Chidambaram in the INX Media case, despite the seriousness of economic offenses, affirming that the fundamental jurisprudence of bail remained unchanged. In November 2020, the Supreme Court extended interim bail to journalist Arnab Goswami, highlighting the critical nature of personal liberty and the principle of bail as the norm.

Bangla Bandh...

From Page 1

The 'Bangla Bandh', which began at 6 am, was called by the BJP in protest against Tuesday's police action on participants of 'Nabanna Abhijan' or march to the secretariat, organised by the newly formed students' group Chatra Samaj over the rape and murder of the doctor at RG Kar hospital.

Ganguly and Paul were detained from south Kolkata's Gariahat area when they were urging traders to down their shutters and requesting people to support the bandh. Chatterjee along with party leaders Rahul Sinha and Tamaghna Ghosh were detained from Shyambazar, while Bhattacharya was picked up in Salt Lake. Kolkata's councillor Sajal

Ghosh was arrested from his residence after BJP workers scuffled with TMC supporters while trying to enforce the bandh in the nearby Koley Market. His wife Tania Ghosh alleged that police held him without a warrant. Later, Deputy Commissioner (Central) Indira Mukherjee said Ghosh was arrested for making provocative comments.

State BJP president and Union minister Sukanta Majumdar led a procession at Baguihati in the northern fringes of the city and had an altercation with the police who tried to stop him. Former MP Debasree Choudhury and hundreds of party workers accompanied him. Majumdar later went to central Kolkata and blocked the CR Avenue outside the state BJP headquarters along with his supporters.

PRESIDENT MURMU READS...

From Page 1

In December 2012, we had come face to face with that element when a young woman was gang-raped and murdered. There was shock and rage. We were determined not to let another Nirbhaya meet the same fate. We made plans and devised strategies. These initiatives did make a difference to an extent.

Yet, our task remains unfinished as long as any woman feels unsafe in the environment where she lives or works.

"History often hurts. Societies scared to face history resort to collective amnesia to bury their heads in the sand like the proverbial ostrich. Now the time has come not only to face history squarely but also to search within our souls and probe the pathology of crime against women," President Murmu said.

"I am of the firm belief that we should not let amnesia prevail over the memory of such criminality. Let us deal with this perversion in a comprehensive manner so as to curb it right at the

beginning. We can do this only if we honour the memory of the victims by cultivating a social culture of remembering them to remind us of our failures in the past and prepare us to be more vigilant in future," she said.

"We owe it to our daughters to remove the hurdles from their path of winning the freedom from fear. Then we can collectively give a firm answer to the innocent query of those children in the next Raksha Bandhan. Let us collectively say enough is enough," President Murmu said.

and up to 3 million indirect jobs being created through planned industrialisation. This will not only provide livelihood opportunities but also contribute to the socio-economic uplift of the regions where these projects are to be set up.

The projects under the NICDP are designed with a focus on sustainability, incorporating ICT-enabled utilities and green technologies to minimise environmental impact. By providing quality, reliable, and sustainable infrastructure, the Government aims to create industrial cities that are not just hubs of economic activity but also models of environmental stewardship. The approval of 12 new industrial nodes under the NICDP marks a

Cabinet approves massive boost to manufacturing horizons

From Page 1

The approval of these projects is a step forward towards realising the vision of 'Viksit Bharat' — a developed India. By positioning India as a strong player in the Global Value Chains (GVC), the NICDP will provide developed land parcels ready for immediate allotment, making it easier for domestic and international investors to set up manufacturing units in India. This aligns with the broader objective of creating an 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' or a self-reliant India, fostering economic growth through enhanced industrial output and employment.

The NICDP is expected to generate significant employment opportunities, with an estimated 1 million direct jobs

significant milestone in India's journey towards becoming a global manufacturing powerhouse. With a strategic focus on integrated development, sustainable infrastructure, and seamless connectivity, these projects are set to redefine India's industrial landscape and drive the nation's economic growth for years to come. In addition to these new sanctions, the NICDP has already seen the completion of four projects, with another four currently under implementation. This continued progress highlights the Government's commitment to transforming India's industrial sector and fostering a vibrant, sustainable, and inclusive economic environment.

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Govt issues advisory to tackle Mpox

Chhattisgarh to hold camps to raise awareness

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

The Chhattisgarh government on Wednesday issued an advisory for the prevention and control of monkeypox (Mpox) and called for strict compliance with the Centre's guidelines.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) declared monkeypox a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) on August 14.

Although it is mainly found in Central and West Africa, cases are being recorded in other countries including in Kerala in India.

Taking cognisance of the



disease, Health Minister Shyam Bihari Jaiswal has told the Health Department to organise camps at all levels to educate people about the disease and preventive measures.

The guidelines include surveillance of possible cases of Mpox for prompt

identification, investigation and treatment. Patients are to be isolated to stop the spread of infection.

Monkeypox virus can transmit from animal to humans and among humans. Symptoms include a rash that forms blisters and then crusts over, fever as well as swollen lymph nodes.

People experiencing the symptoms have been urged to immediately seek medical attention.

For prevention, the advisory says to avoid close contact with people who have a rash that looks like Mpox.

Avoid handling clothes, sheets, blankets or other materials that have been in contact with an infected animal or person. Isolate people who have Mpox from healthy people.

Wash your hands well with soap and water after any contact with an infected person or animal. If soap and water aren't available, use alcohol-based hand sanitiser.

Avoid animals that may carry the virus. The virus can be transmitted through direct contact of body fluids, wounds or indirect contact such as the use of contaminated clothing or utensils, the advisory said.

The symptoms last for two to four weeks. The mortality rate in severe cases is one to 10 percent. Severe cases of infection are usually found in children.

National Deworming Day to be observed today

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

The National Deworming Day will be observed in Chhattisgarh on Thursday.

On this day, deworming medication will be administered to all children and adolescents from 1 to 19 years at Anganwadi centers, government schools, health centers, grant-in-aid private schools and technical education institutions.

Deworming is essential to ensure good health, better nutrition, regular access to education, and improved quality of life for children and adolescents.

Dr. V.R. Bhagat, Deputy Director of the Child Health Programme, said the state government has set a target to administer deworming medication to 107.97 lakh children and adolescents.

The medication, Albendazole 400 mg, will be provided by teachers in schools and by Anganwadi workers at Anganwadi centers.

A mop-up day will be organized on September 4 to administer the medication to



children and adolescents who missed the initial dose. This initiative aims to improve health and nutritional levels, prevent anemia, enhance intellectual development and increase school attendance.

Dr. Bhagat emphasized that deworming medication was safe. Some children may experience mild adverse effects such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, mild abdominal pain and fatigue due to the presence of worms in the body.

Children with severe worm infections may exhibit temporary symptoms which can be managed with care at schools and Anganwadi centers. If such symptoms are observed, children should be given clean drinking water and monitored closely, he said.

C'garh Sports Excellence Award ceremony today

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai will honour talented sportspersons of Chhattisgarh at the State Sports Excellence Award ceremony on Thursday.

The programme will be presided over by Assembly Speaker Dr. Raman Singh.

The special guests will be Union Minister of State for Housing and Urban Development Tokhan Sahu, Deputy Chief Ministers Arun Sao and Vijay Sharma, and Sports and Youth Welfare Minister Tankram Verma.

The event will be organized by the Sports and Youth Welfare Department at the Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay Auditorium in Raipur.

The government will honour six players with the Shaheed Rajiv Pandey Award for 2021-22, six players with the Shaheed Kaushal Yadav



Award, two players will get the Veer Hanuman Singh Award, 11 players the Shaheed Pankaj Vikram Samman, five players the Shaheed Vinod Choubey Samman and 11 players will be awarded the Chief Minister Trophy for 2021-22.

Similarly, for 2022-23, four players will be honoured with trophies.

Officials said prize money of Rs 76 lakh will be given to 97 awardee players and Rs 60.33 lakh will be transferred to the bank

Prize money of Rs 76 lakh will be given to 97 awardee players and Rs 60.33 lakh will be transferred to the bank accounts of 502 medal winning players

accounts of 502 medal winning players, aggregating a total of Rs 1.33 crore.

Chhattisgarh completes 79 pc of Jal Jeevan Mission's target



STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

The Chhattisgarh Public Health Engineering Department has completed 79 percent of Jal Jeevan Mission's work, an official communiqué said on Wednesday.

Under this, drinking water connections have been provided to 39,35,597 houses, against a target of 50,05,111.

The mission aims to provide potable water in 19,657 villages of 11,658 gram

Under this, drinking water connections have been provided to 39,35,597 houses, against a target of 50,05,111.

panchayats in the state.

The department is taking all possible steps to complete the work within the prescribed time of December 2024. The communiqué said strict action will be taken against negligent officers.

Two killed in hit-and-run



STAFF REPORTER ■
KORBA

Two persons were killed and two others were

injured when a speeding car hit them in Chhattisgarh's Korba city, police said on Wednesday.

The incident took place on Tuesday night. The driver of the car sped away from the spot, a police officer said.

The injured were rushed to a private hospital where Shiv Kumar Miri (35) and Manoj Kumar Giri (37) succumbed to their injuries, he added.

The others are being treated and are said to be out of danger. Efforts are on to nab the car driver.



In a bid to prevent human-tiger conflicts, the Chhattisgarh Forest Department on Wednesday educated shepherds at the Barnawapara sanctuary about tiger behaviour and their habitat. The department also sought their cooperation in preventing poaching.

AIIMS-R gets prepare for NABL accreditation

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

The Department of Biochemistry at AIIMS Raipur along with the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) conducted an orientation programme for the faculties, residents, quality managers and laboratory technical assistants on NABL accreditation.

An official communiqué from AIIMS-R said that as per directives of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), NABL accreditation is a priority for all AIIMS.



An earlier four-day training of all lab personnel has already been conducted at AIIMS Raipur and this orientation programme is a follow-up of the previous training.

The event was inaugurated by Lt Gen Ashok Jindal (Retd), Executive Director and CEO of AIIMS Raipur. In his address, he

AXIS BANK LTD
Branch Office: Asset Sales Centre, 2nd Floor, Chawla chambers, Opp. New Bus Stand, Jeevan Bima Marg, Pandri, Raipur 492004

Without Prejudice Date: 17.08.2024

To
1. Mr. Swapnil Mittal
S/O Mr. Suresh Mittal
2. Mr. Garima Mittal
W/O Mr. Swapnil Mittal

Both are residing at, D-06, Sector-2 Agroha Society, Ring Road No. 01 Raipura, Beside Anusha Garden, Raipur, Chhattisgarh 492001.

Also At Plot No. 14, Mouja-Kota Khasra no. 46/3 shahid Manmohan Singh Bakshi Ward no. 20, P.H. no. 107/51, RNM Raipur-03, Tahsil and District Raipur C.G. Pin 493221.

Sub: Final Intimation regarding vacating of movable assets from the mortgaged property as per the Inventory of Physical Possession dated 22nd February 2024.

Sr,

You are already aware that, both of you, have availed financial assistance from our bank after creating mortgage of the immovable property as fully mentioned in the demand notice. But unfortunately, both of you have defaulted in paying the interest & principal of the loan/s availed under the security agreement with us and as such the said loan account have been declared as NPA. Thereafter legal proceedings under the SARFAESI Act, 2002 has been initiated. On 22nd February 2024 physical possession of the mortgaged property has already been taken by the Bank as per the proceedings under the SARFAESI Act, 2002 with some movable assets as mentioned in the Inventory dated 22.02.2024. The Bank gives you the last opportunity to remove the movables property as per inventory from the mortgaged property.

Hence, both of you are requested to kindly vacate the movable assets from the below mentioned mortgaged property within 7 days from the date of receipt of the instant letter, failing which the Bank shall take further steps to dispose off the said movable assets as per the proceedings under the SARFAESI Act, 2002. Please note that this last and final opportunity to both of you to vacating of movable assets from the Mortgaged property as per the Inventory of Physical Possession dated 22nd February 2024.

This is for your information and record.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPERTY: All that piece & parcel of Land PLOT NO 14, MAUJA-KOTA, KH.NO. 46/3 SHAHID MANMOHAN SINGH BAKSHI WARD NO. 20, PH.NO. - 107/51, R.N.M.-RAIPUR-03, TEHSIL & DISTRICT - RAIPUR, STATE CHHATTISGARH PINCODE 493221, INDIA. North: ROAD South: ROAD; East: PLOTNO - 15; West: PLOTNO - 13

Enclosed - Annexure of Inventory Dated 22/02/2024.

Date: 29.08.2024
Place: Raipur
Authorised Officer
Axis Bank Ltd

Menopausal women face adverse changes in heart health: Study

AGENCIES ■

Women going through the menopause transition period are likely to experience changes that can be detrimental to their cardiovascular health, according to research.

Despite the myth that cardiovascular disease (CVD) is a "man's disease," it accounts for 40 per cent of all deaths in women, making it the leading cause of mortality for women.

Although women typically get CVD 10 years later than males, they are more at risk for developing heart disease following menopause.

"There is an increase in 'bad' low-density type lipoprotein (LDL) particles and a decrease in 'good' high-density lipoprotein particles (HDL) that takes place during and after the menopause transition," said study author Dr Stephanie Moreno, University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, US.

"Taken together, these changes suggest that menopause is associated with



a transition to a higher-risk lipoprotein profile that could be more likely to cause cardiovascular disease, such as coronary artery disease," she added.

The study analysed changes in lipoprotein particles during the menopause transition in 1,246 participants. They measured common lipoproteins associated with CVD, including atherogenic LDL-P and small dense LDL.

The researchers compared longitudinal changes in lipoprotein measures between pre-, peri-, and post-menopausal women and men as well using nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) technology.

The results showed that all three female groups had an increase in LDL-P, with the greatest percent change between the peri and post groups. Compared to men, whose percent change was 213 per cent, small-dense LDL had a higher percent change in the peri-group. Compared to both pre- and post-menopausal populations, this percent change is approximately 15 per cent higher.

"We found that menopause is associated with adverse changes in lipoprotein profiles, with the most pronounced changes found to be in increases in 'bad' LDL particles and subfractions observed for peri-menopausal

women," Moreno said.

The findings may help explain the rise of heart disease in post-menopausal women and help determine if earlier interventions are warranted, said the team calling for more studies.

The findings will be presented in the forthcoming meeting of the European Society of Cardiology (ESC) Congress 2024 from August 30 to September 2 in the UK.

AXIS BANK LTD
Branch Office: Asset Sales Centre, 2nd Floor, Chawla chambers, Opp. New Bus Stand, Jeevan Bima Marg, Pandri, Raipur 492004

Without Prejudice Date: 16.08.2024

To
1. Mr. Sanjeev Kumar Chincholkar
S/O Mr. Manohar Rao Chincholkar
2. Mr. Anurag Chincholkar
S/O Sanjeev Kumar Chincholkar

Both are residing at,
QTR No. 545 Road No.57, Near Kendriya School RTS colony, Bilaspur, C.G.-495004.

Also At, Flat No. 610 Block F Avinash Capitals Home-II Apartment, Saddu, Ward No. 26 "Kusha Bhau Thakre Ward", P.C. No. 44, Raipur, Tah & Dist. Raipur.

Sub: Final Intimation regarding vacating of movable assets from the mortgaged property as per the Inventory of Physical Possession dated 27th December 2023.

Sr,

You are already aware that, both of you, have availed financial assistance from our bank after creating mortgage of the immovable property as security as fully mentioned in the demand notice. But unfortunately, both of you have defaulted in paying the interest & principal of the loan/s availed under the security agreement with us and as such the said loan account have been declared as NPA. Thereafter legal proceedings under the SARFAESI Act, 2002 has been initiated. On 27th December 2023 physical possession of the mortgaged property has already been taken by the Bank as per the proceedings under the SARFAESI Act, 2002 with some movable assets as mentioned in the Inventory dated 27.12.2023. The Bank gives you the last opportunity to remove the movables property as per inventory from the mortgaged property.

Hence, both of you are requested to kindly vacate the movable assets from the below mentioned mortgaged property within 7 days from the date of receipt of the instant letter, failing which the Bank shall take further steps to dispose off the said movable assets as per the proceedings under the SARFAESI Act, 2002. Please note that this is last and final opportunity to both of you.

This is for your information and record.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPERTY: All That Completely Constructed Apartment bearing no. 610 in block "F" on Sixth Floor admeasuring Carpet area 403 Sq. Ft. Balcony Area 41 Sqft. (super Built-up area 588 Sqft.) in the building known as "Avinash Capital Homes-II Apartment" Condominium Situate at Saddu, Ward No. 26 "Kusha Bhau Thakre Ward", P.C.No. 44, Raipur, Teh & Dist. Raipur C.G. Which is approx. 50 mt. Away from the housing board road & bounded in the Boundaries: North by - Open Area, South - Lobby, East by - Flat No. F-612, West by - Open Area Enclosed :- Annexure of Inventory Dated 27/12/2023

Date: 29.08.2024
Place: Raipur
Authorised Officer
Axis Bank Ltd

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT, CIRCLE NO-1 RAIPUR (C.G.)

Tender Notice

Contractors, Registered appropriate class in Unified Registration System [e-Registration] invited Online tenders for the following works:-

NIT No./ System Tender No.	Name of Work	Probable amount of contract
120/ 157912	B.T. & WMM PATCH REPAIR WORK IN VARIOUS ROADS UNDER SUB DIVISION, TILDA-NEORALINCA-पुस्तुवा-गुजरा- सिलापुडी-मोहदा मार्ग 2. सैखुट्ट-तपोली-किरना- जलसी-कुदरु-बहेस-तुलसी मार्ग 3. किरना-कुदरु मार्ग 4. कोदवा जंगलीला नकदी- स्यापी-बरोली- रजिया-खोरा-नानापुर-तुलसी- सरपोना अचवा बजेरा मार्ग 5. विचोली-सुरखेड़ा- सोनरा-देवावा-खोना मार्ग 6. खोरा-कटिया मार्ग 7. देवावा-नडी मार्ग 8. सोनरा-नडी मदिरे मार्ग. पचोरी पचरावुडी मार्ग 10. नहरडीह पट्टा मार्ग 11. मन्कडीह सुर्द पट्टा मार्ग 12. मलौद से फाटक से शांतिनगर कोदवा 13. सोनरात से स्यापी जंगली मार्ग 14. राखेखे से माटावा मार्ग। (2nd Call)	Rs. 54.94 Lakh
84/ 157914	S/R. And Other Work Of Various Roads at Bhatagaon Section & Raipura Section Under Maintenance Sub Division Raipur (C.G.) (1 st Call)	Rs. 25.00 Lakh
103/ 157915	ORDINARY MAINTENANCE OF VARIOUS ROADS UNDER SUB DIV. TILDA. (2nd Call)	Rs. 49.94 Lakh

NIT No.120 System Tender No.157912 & NIT No.103 System Tender No.157915 Last date of tender Download Date up to 07.09.2024 Time 17:30 PM NIT No.84 System Tender No.157914 Last date of tender Download Date up to 12.09.2024 Time 17:30 PM

Note :- All eligible/interested contracTors are mandated to get enrolled on the Procurement portal <https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in> in order to download the tender documents and participate in the subsequent bidding process.

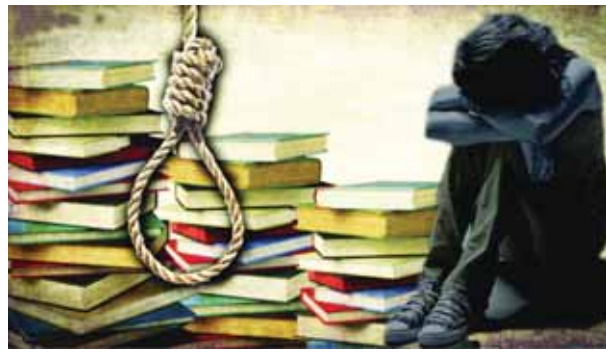
Superintending Engineer
P.W.D. Raipur Circle No-1
Raipur (CG)
G- 242502046/3

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Suicide by students surges by 4 per cent annually: NCRB data

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Incidents of student suicides in India have grown at an alarming annual rate, surpassing the population growth rate and overall suicide trends, according to a new report. Based on the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data, the "Student suicides: An epidemic sweeping India" report was launched on Wednesday at the Annual IC3 Conference and Expo 2024. The report pointed out that while the overall suicide numbers increased by 2 per cent annually, student suicides cases surged by 4 per cent, despite a likely "under reporting" of student suicide cases. "Over the past two decades, student suicides have grown at an alarming annual rate of 4 per cent, double the national average. In 2022, male students constituted 53 per cent (per cent) of the total student suicides. Between 2021 and 2022, male student suicides decreased by 6 per cent while female student suicides increased by 7 per cent," noted the report compiled by IC3 Institute. "The incidence of student suicides continues to surpass both population growth rates and overall suicide trends. Over the last decade, while the population of 0-24-year-olds reduced from 582 million to 581 million, the



number of student suicides increased from 6,654 to 13,044," it added. The IC3 Institute is a volunteer-based organisation that provides support to high schools around the world through guidance and training resources for their administrators, teachers and counsellors to help establish and maintain robust career and college counselling departments. According to the report, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Madhya Pradesh are identified as the states with the highest number of student suicides, together accounting for one-third of the national total. Southern states and union territories collectively contribute 29 per cent of these cases, while Rajasthan, known for its high-stakes academic environment, ranks 10th, highlighting the intense pressure associated with coaching hubs like Kota.

"The data compiled by the NCRB is based on police-recorded first information reports (FIRs). However, it is important to acknowledge that the actual number of student suicides is likely underreported. This under-reporting can be attributed to several factors, including the social stigma surrounding suicide and the criminalisation of attempted and assisted suicide under Section 309 of the Indian Penal Code. Although the 2017 Mental Healthcare Act decriminalises suicide attempts for individuals with mental illness, the legacy of criminalisation continues to impact reporting practices, it said. "Moreover, there are significant data discrepancies due to the lack of a robust data collection system, particularly in rural areas, where reporting is less consistent compared to urban regions," it said.

Ganesh Kohli, the Founder of the IC3 Movement, said the report serves as a reminder of the urgent need to address mental health challenges within our learning institutions. "Our educational focus must shift to fostering the competencies of our learners such that it supports their overall well-being, versus pushing them to compete amongst each other. "It is imperative that we build a systematic, comprehensive, and robust career and college counselling system within each institution, while seamlessly integrating the same within the learning curriculum," he said. Additionally, the report noted a dramatic increase in student suicides, with male suicides rising by 50 per cent and female suicides by 61 per cent over the past decade. "Both genders have experienced an average annual increase of 5 per cent (per cent) in the last five years. These alarming statistics underscore the critical need for enhanced counselling infrastructure and a deeper understanding of student aspirations. "Addressing these gaps is essential for shifting the focus from competitive pressures to nurturing core competencies and well-being, thereby supporting students more effectively and preventing such tragedies," the report said

India to commission its 2nd indigenous nuclear-powered submarine INS Arighat today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



Giving a major boost to operation readiness and nuclear deterrence, India is likely to commission its second indigenously designed and manufactured nuclear powered submarine INS Arighat on Thursday. The first submarine INS Arihant was commissioned in 2016. As regards, INS Arighat, it was launched in 2017 at its manufacturing base, Ship Building Centre (SBC), Visakhapatnam. In fact, the SBC is building five nuclear powered submarines. While Arihant is already operational and Arighat to be commissioned on Thursday, work is now on the remaining two submarines. They are in advanced stage of construction, it was learnt. INS Arighat is 111.6 meters long and weighs 6,000 tonnes. It plays a crucial role in India's nuclear triad, enabling the nation to launch nuclear missiles from land, air, and sea. Powered by an 82.5 MW pressurized light water reactor developed with Russian assistance, INS Arighat can achieve a top speed of 24 knots submerged and 10 knots on the surface. Its primary armament consists of 12 K-15 Sagarika submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), each with a range exceeding 700 kilometers. These missiles are housed in four large vertical launch system (VLS) tubes

and are a testament to India's indigenous missile development capabilities. The submarine is divided into seven compartments, housing propulsion and combat management systems, a platform management center, and a torpedo room. Additional safety measures include two standby auxiliary engines and a retractable thruster for emergency power and mobility. INS Arighat follows in the footsteps of INS Arihant, India's first SSBN, which was commissioned in 2016. A third, yet-to-be-named SSBN was launched in 2021, further solidifying India's commitment to developing a credible sea-based nuclear deterrent. The commissioning of INS Arighat is expected to be attended by top defence, national security, and military officials. The Arihant class submarines, named after the Sanskrit word meaning "Destroyer of the Enemy," signify the strategic importance of nuclear-powered submarines. India is actively working on having five Arihant class boats along with six nuclear attack submarines to be built in three blocks.

Cabinet approves three railway projects worth ₹6,456 crore

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved three railway projects with a total estimated cost of Rs 6,456 crore. According to a statement from the Ministry of Railways, the approved projects will improve logistical efficiency by connecting the unconnected areas, increase the existing line capacity and enhance the transportation networks, resulting in streamlined supply chains and accelerated economic growth. "The new line proposals will provide direct connectivity and improve mobility, providing enhanced efficiency and service reliability for the Indian Railways. The multi-tracking proposal will ease operations and reduce congestion, providing the much-required infrastructural development on the busiest sections across the Indian Railways," the ministry said. "The projects are in line with Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's vision of a New India which will make people of the region 'Atmanirbhar' by way of comprehensive development in the area which will enhance their employment/self-employment opportunities," it added. According to the Ministry, the projects are result of PM-Gati Shakti National Master Plan for multi-modal connectivity which have been possible through integrated planning

and will provide seamless connectivity for movement of people, goods and services. "The three projects covering seven districts in four states i.e., Odisha, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Chhattisgarh will increase the existing network of Indian Railways by about 300 kms," the Ministry said. "With these projects, 14 new stations will be constructed, providing enhanced connectivity to two aspirational districts (Nuapada and East Singhbhum)," it added. Highlighting the benefits of the new line projects, the ministry stated these will provide connectivity to approximately 1,300 villages and about 11 lakh population. "Multi-tracking project will enhance connectivity to approximately 1,300 villages and about 19 lakh population," it said. The Ministry also emphasized the benefits to the freight traffic as these are essential routes for transportation of commodities such as agriculture products, fertilizer, coal, iron ore, steel, cement and limestone etc. "The capacity augmentation works will result in additional freight traffic of magnitude 45 MTPA (Million Tonnes Per Annum)," the ministry said.

IAF launches comic book to motivate youth to join force

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



The Indian Air Force on Wednesday launched a comic book telling the story of legendary IAF Marshal Arjan Singh and the epic Battle of Boyra fought during the 1971 Indo-Pak war, aiming to educate the youth about the glorious history of the force and motivate them to join it. The 32-page 'Heroes of the Indian Air Force - Vol. I' was released by IAF Chief Air Marshal V R Chaudhari at an event held at the Vayu Bhawan here. Arjan Singh, who fought in the Burma campaign during the World War II and the 1965 Indo-Pak war, was the IAF officer to be conferred the rank of the Marshal of the Indian Air Force and he had also earned the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) before Independence. The project conceived last year was led by DISHA (Directorate of Induction and Selection in a Holistic Approach) Cell of the IAF under Air Chief Marshal Chaudhari's vision. The medium of comic books was chosen to reach young minds especially those in schools and motivate them to take up career in the Indian Air Force, according to a video played at the launch event. The first volume has two stories -- 'Find Your Calling' which tells the tale of a boy named Arjan Singh who went on to become the first Marshal of the Indian Air Force; and 'Battle of Boyra' that narrates the story of the epic battle in the IAF's war history fought during the 1971 Indo-Pak war.

The stories with compelling visuals aim to foster among the children better appreciation for values of courage, motivation and perseverance, and to let them learn to walk in his footsteps, said a senior official. The second story has "adrenaline-pumping action sequences" seen through the pilot's eyes. "This air combat engagement was a significant engagement of the fighting prowess and valour of young pilots of No.22 Squadron, the Swifts, which earned the squadron the moniker Sabre Slayers," he said. The comic book's purpose is to educate young readers and depict heroics embodied in an air combat, the IAF official said. "For youngsters, it is a direct call to action," he said. A pdf version of the book will be launched online and it will be available for "free sharing" on social media, the official added. Air Force History Cell and the Air Force Museum played a key role in providing and vetting historical facts while the IAF's Directorate of Ceremonials ensured the uniform was correctly depicted as per the period described in the stories. This project aims to educate the youth about the glorious history of the IAF and motivate them to join the force, he said.

PM Modi: PMJDY personifies dignity, empowerment as it marks 10th year

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

As the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana completed 10 years, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said the scheme personifies dignity, empowerment and the opportunity to participate in the economic life of the Nation. Modi also hailed those who worked to make the Jan Dhan Yojana a success, and said the scheme has been paramount in boosting financial inclusion. "Today, we mark a

momentous occasion - #10YearsOfJanDhan. Congratulations to all the beneficiaries and compliments to all those who worked to make this scheme a success," the Prime Minister said in a social media post. The Jan Dhan Yojana has been paramount in boosting financial inclusion and giving dignity to crores of people, especially women, youth, and the marginalised communities, he said. Later, on a LinkedIn post, Modi said today marks a decade since the Pradhan

Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana was launched and for him, this initiative was more than just a policy it was an endeavour to build an India where each and every citizen, irrespective of one's economic background, has access to the formal banking apparatus. "Many of you, especially the youth, would be thinking -- why does this matter so much? After all, in this age, having a bank account would be very basic and even taken for granted. However, when we assumed office in 2014, the situation was very different. It



was almost 65 years since Independence, but access to banking was a distant dream for almost half of our households," the Prime Minister said. There's a world where savings were kept at home, vulnerable to loss and theft, he noted. "Access to credit was often at the mercy of predatory lenders. The

absence of financial security held back so many dreams," Modi said. "This problem becomes even more ironical considering the fact that four and a half decades ago, banks were nationalised by the then (Congress) Government and that too in the name of the poor! Yet, the poor never got access to banking," he said. "When the Jan Dhan Yojana was rolled out, I remember the scepticism that surrounded it too. Some people asked -- could it really be possible to bring such a large number of

people into the banking system? Will this effort lead to any concrete changes? Yes. The scale of the challenge was enormous, but so was the determination of the people of India to ensure it becomes a reality," he said. The success of the Jan Dhan Yojana has two parts to it, Modi pointed out and said one is in the numbers with over 53 crore people who never imagined they would enter a bank having bank accounts now. These accounts have a deposit balance of over Rs. 2.3 lakh crore, he said.

Vice Admiral Rajesh Dhankhar takes reins of Project Seabird

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Vice Admiral Rajesh Dhankhar on Wednesday assumed duties of the Director General Project Seabird, with a charter to oversee largest defence infrastructure project currently progressing at the Karwar Naval Base, from Vice Admiral Tarun Sobti., navy said here. The change of guard took place at the Headquarters, Project Seabird, New Delhi. Dhankhar was commissioned into the Indian Navy in 1990 and is a specialist in Navigation and Direction. The Flag Officer is an alumnus of the prestigious Naval Academy, Defence Services Staff College, and has undergone the Higher Command Course in Japan. During his illustrious career spanning 34 years, the Flag Officer has tenanted specialist appointments onboard warships Pondicherry, Godavari, Kora and Mysore. The officer has also done



instructional tenures in the erstwhile Project 15 Training Team, Navigation and Direction School and at the MIDS Wing Officer's Cadet School, Singapore. His command appointments include Executive Officer onboard INS Delhi, and as Commanding Officer onboard INS Gharial, Mumbai and Vikramaditya. His notable staff appointments include those as Joint Director and Director at Directorate of Naval Plans, Principal Director/Commodore(Pers) at the Directorate of Personnel.

In Flag rank, he has tenanted duties of Chief Staff Officer (Training), Flag Officer Sea Training, Commandant Naval War College and the Flag Officer Commanding Eastern Fleet. The Flag officer has also tenanted additional duties of the Chairman, Carrier Acceptance Trials Team to oversee the acceptance trials of INS Vikrant. The Flag Officer is a recipient of the Nao Sena Medal (Gallantry) in 2015 for Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations (NEO) of Indian nationals from Aden and Al-Hodeida, Yemen. During his tenure as Fleet Commander, over the past ten months, the Eastern Fleet maintained high level of combat readiness and operational tempo undertaking multiple Mission Based and operational deployments, and numerous bilateral and multilateral engagements including MILAN 24 with friendly foreign navies.

Help victims of Gujarat flood: Cong to Centre

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge and Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday expressed concern over the flood situation in Gujarat and urged the Government to take all necessary steps to reduce the impact of the natural calamity. Rain-related incidents claimed nine more lives in Gujarat, taking the death toll to 16 in two days, while another 8,500 people were relocated and rescued from flood-affected areas with rains continuing to lash some parts of the State for the fourth consecutive day on Wednesday, officials said. In a social media post, Kharge said, "The flood situation in Gujarat is extremely worrying as several people have lost their lives and are missing. Our heartfelt condolences to the families of those who have lost their loved ones. Our

thoughts are with the affected people, who are in need of urgent food and medical assistance." "We request the Central Government to ensure more NDRF & SDRF teams. We are proud of our Armed Forces and Coast Guard, who are undertaking rescue efforts. Congress leaders and workers must coordinate all possible relief efforts, in this hour of tragedy," Kharge, who is also the Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, said. Rahul Gandhi said the flood situation in Gujarat is getting more severe day by day. "I express my deepest condolences to the families who have lost their loved ones and whose property has been damaged in this calamity. I hope that the injured recover soon," the former Congress Chief said. "An appeal is made to all Congress workers to provide all possible help to the affected people and the administration in relief and rescue work," he said.



DRDO, TIFR scientists complete testing of 6-qubit quantum processor

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Scientists from Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) Young Scientists Laboratory for Quantum Technologies (DYSL-QT), Pune and Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR), Mumbai have completed end-to-end testing of a 6-qubit quantum processor based on superconducting circuit technology, defence ministry said here on Wednesday. The demonstration was carried out in front of the apex committee overseeing the DYSL-QT. This included submitting a quantum circuit from a cloud-based interface, the execution of the programme on the quantum hardware and updating the cloud interface with computed results. The project being executed at TIFR Mumbai's Colaba campus is a three-way collaboration between DYSL-QT, TIFR and Tata Consultancy Services (TCS). The DYSL-QT scientists put together the control and measurement apparatus using a combination of commercial off-the-shelf electronics and custom programmed development boards. The qubits were designed and fabricated at TIFR and the quantum processor architecture is based on a novel ring-resonator design invented at TIFR.

Insufficient pollinator activity poses threat to global food security

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Analysing over 1,500 fields across six continents and over 200,000 'bee visitations' to crop flowers, researchers have uncovered a troubling global trend that shows that one-third to two-thirds of farms worldwide are facing reduced yields of essential, nutrient-rich crops due to insufficient pollinator activity, thus posing threat to global food security. This phenomenon, known as "pollinator limitation," poses a serious threat to global food security and is exacerbated by the alarming decline in insect

populations, which are crucial for pollination and, consequently, for maintaining agricultural productivity. The disturbing trend comes amid various reports about the decline of insects including bees, responsible for pollination, all across the world. The study led by scientists from Rutgers University-New Brunswick highlights the critical role of pollinators in the production of vital foods such as fruits, vegetables, nuts, and legumes. Published in Nature Ecology & Evolution, the study reveals



that inadequate visits by pollinators are leading to significant yield deficits in vital crops such as fruits, vegetables, nuts, and legumes.

Researchers conducted a rigorous statistical analysis of over 200,000 'bee visitations' to crop flowers, utilising one of the most extensive databases on crop pollination available. Katie Turo, a postdoctoral fellow at the University and co-author of the study said, "Our findings are a cause for concern and optimism. We did detect widespread yield deficits. However, we also estimate that, through continued investment in pollinator management and research, it is likely that we can improve the efficiency of

our existing crop fields to meet the nutritional needs of our global population." Rachael Winfree, the senior author of the study and a professor in the Department of Ecology, Evolution and Natural Resources, worked with colleagues from Europe and South America to develop the most extensive database of crop pollination research globally. This open-access resource encompasses 30 years of field data on bee and other pollinator visits to plants. The research focuses on crops that require pollination, such

as fruits, vegetables, nuts, and legumes — foods that are both nutrient-rich and culturally significant. It does not address major staple crops like rice and wheat, which do not depend on pollinators for reproduction. Pollination involves transferring pollen from the male part of a flower to the female part, enabling the plant to fertilise and produce seeds, fruits, and new plants. This transfer can be accomplished by various methods, including wind, water, or by pollinators like honeybees, wild bees, other

insects, and even bats. World over, pollinators support the reproduction of about 88 per cent of the world's flowering plants and 76 per cent of the leading global food crops. Bees are widely recognised as the most efficient pollinators, a fact highlighted by Rutgers scientists who found that blueberry, coffee, and apple crops were particularly vulnerable to pollinator limitations. The study revealed that yield deficits were evident in 25 distinct crop types across 85% of the countries examined.

K'taka HC to resume hearing on CM's petition challenging Guv prosecution order

PTI ■ BENGALURU

The Karnataka High Court is set to resume hearing on Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's petition challenging the legality of the Governor Thaaawarchand's sanction for his prosecution in the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) case on Thursday. The Governor on August 16 accorded sanction under Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and Section 218 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 for the commission of the alleged offences as mentioned in the petitions of Pradeep Kumar S P, T J Abraham and Snehamayi Krishna. On August 19, Siddaramaiah moved to the High Court challenging the legality of the Governor's order. The HC had directed the special court for people's representatives that was slated to hear complaints against him in the case, to defer its proceedings till the next date of hearing on August 29. In the petition, the Chief Minister submitted that the sanction order was issued without due application of mind, in violation of statutory mandates, and contrary to constitutional principles, including the advice of the Council of Ministers, which is binding under Article 163 of the Constitution of India.



The court proceedings will be keenly watched for its possible political impact. The Congress has rallied behind Siddaramaiah and ruled out his resignation over the issue and said it would wage a legal and political fight. Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, who is also state Congress chief, and several senior Ministers recently met AICC President M Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi in New Delhi and held discussions on the Governor's order and strategy to be adopted going forward. On the Chief Minister's petition coming up for hearing in the High Court on Thursday, Home Minister G Parameshwara said there is hope that the HC will not consider the argument in favour of the Governor's decision. "There should be

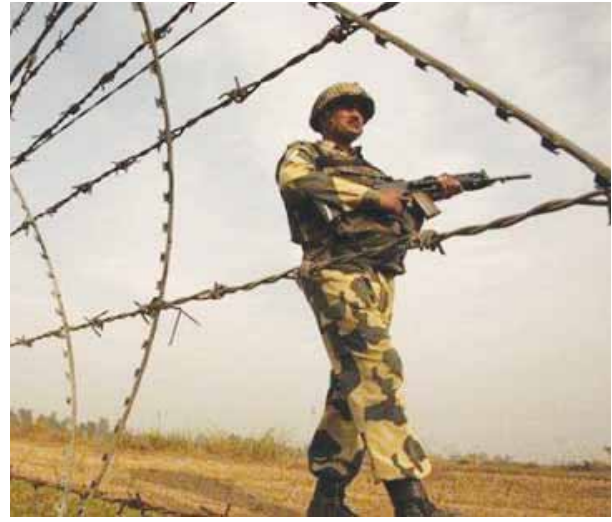
material about Siddaramaiah's involvement. If they (materials) are there, they can be taken into cognisance. When there are no materials like -- his signature, his order, involvement and name... Even in the registration his name is not there. When such is the case, the court will look into all these things and will decide on it," he said. Responding to a question on whether there have been any discussions by the high command regarding the next course of action, in case the developments in the court on August 29 go against Siddaramaiah, the Minister said: "What developments will happen cannot be speculated, once things happen let's discuss, this is what they have told." Asked about speculations that he may become CM (in the event of Siddaramaiah quitting), Parameshwara, who

held a prolonged discussion with Congress leadership -- Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi -- during the recent Delhi visit, said that question doesn't arise at all, and the issue has never come up for discussion. "(My) seniority may be there...It is true that Rahul Gandhi spoke to me separately, but what was discussed cannot be speculated. I'm a disciplined member of the party and have fulfilled the responsibility given to me from time to time. He (Rahul) spoke to me regarding party things, other than that nothing was discussed," he added. Chief Minister's Legal Advisor and Virajpet Congress MLA, A S Ponnanna said: "According to us, the Governor's order is contrary to the law and seems to have been taken in a hurry." "Unilateral decision was taken by the Governor without any inquiry or examining evidence, so we are hopeful of winning in the court. Necessary action will be taken based on what the court decides," he said. Claiming that there is situation in the country where all non-BJP governments in the states are "forced to go to court for everything," Ponnanna accused ruling BJP at the Centre of "using" the Raj Bhavan and said: "in the days to come after getting admonished by the court, they will learn a lesson."

Rajasthan Guv calls for developing strong system of internal security on borders

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Rajasthan Governor Haribhau Bagde on Wednesday called for making continuous efforts to develop a strong system of internal security along with vigilance and protection on the borders. The Governor also emphasised on talking to the families living on the border and making efforts for their cooperation. He praised the soldier of the party and have fulfilled the responsibility given to me from time to time. He (Rahul) spoke to me regarding party things, other than that nothing was discussed," he added. Chief Minister's Legal Advisor and Virajpet Congress MLA, A S Ponnanna said: "According to us, the Governor's order is contrary to the law and seems to have been taken in a hurry." "Unilateral decision was taken by the Governor without any inquiry or examining evidence, so we are hopeful of winning in the court. Necessary action will be taken based on what the court decides," he said. Claiming that there is situation in the country where all non-BJP governments in the states are "forced to go to court for everything," Ponnanna accused ruling BJP at the Centre of "using" the Raj Bhavan and said: "in the days to come after getting admonished by the court, they will learn a lesson."



While visiting the border area of Bikaner district, he interacted with the BSF jawans deployed there and especially praised their commitment and dedication to protect the country by constantly remaining alert even in adverse geographical conditions. On reaching the Sanchu border, Governor Bagde was informed about the battles fought between India and Pakistan between 1965 and 1971. Describing Sanchu as important from the point of view of the history of the war of the Indian Army, the governor saluted the valour of the soldiers of the Indian Army. He later visited the 'War Museum' there.

While interacting with the BSF jawans on the border area, the governor said the word soldier itself inspires the mind. Soldiers not only secure the country but also work for the integrity and unity of the nation, he said. He expressed the need to maintain mutual cooperation for development in the border districts, to hold regular meetings of officials in the border areas and to keep a constant dialogue on issues related to internal security so that any unpleasant situations in the future can be dealt with. Bagde also reiterated making effective strategies to control and prevent criminal activities in the border areas.

Coast Guard rescues 13 fishermen on boat adrift in Arabian Sea off Gujarat coast

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Amid heavy rains in Gujarat, the Indian Coast Guard has rescued 13 fishermen on board a boat adrift in the Arabian Sea off the coast in the state's Devbhumi Dwarka district, the maritime security agency said on Wednesday. Acting on an SOS message from the owner of the fishing boat 'Padmawati' on Tuesday, the ICG deployed its advanced light helicopter (ALH) and a ship for their rescue, it said in a statement. The vessel was around 15 km from Dwaraka and had suffered a machinery breakdown due to rough weather and inclement sea conditions off the coast, it said. "The ICG, as 'First Responder At Sea', immediately deployed an ALH helicopter to take stock of the situation. Meanwhile, ICG ship Abheek was diverted for the rescue operations, despite adverse weather and very rough sea conditions," it said. In a nightlong operation, the ship towed the boat amid hostile weather conditions and brought it to Okha safely on Wednesday morning. All 13 crew members were safe, said the statement.

Champai Soren under own Govt surveillance for 5 months: Himanta

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday alleged that Jharkhand minister Champai Soren had been under "surveillance of his own government" for last five months. Two sub-inspectors (SIs) of Special Branch of Jharkhand Police were nabbed by Soren's people in a Delhi hotel on Tuesday while they were keeping watch on the ex-chief minister, Sarma said. "We all know that Champai Soren is a minister in the Jharkhand government, he is also an ex-chief minister. He has decided to join BJP on August 30, but he is yet to resign and remains a minister...but his own government has put him under surveillance," Sarma claimed at a press conference here. "Soren had been put under surveillance five months ago, even before he was in talks with the BJP," the Assam CM claimed. He claimed the two SIs had been following Soren on his Delhi trips, taking the same flight and staying in the same five-star hotel as the minister. "Champai Soren's people spotted these two persons at the Delhi hotel on Tuesday



and nabbed them. Initially, they claimed to be journalists but later admitted to be Special Branch SIs. They were handed over to Chanakyapuri Police Station there and Soren has also filed an FIR," Sarma said. "Whether Delhi Police will arrest them or not, we don't know as the SIs claimed to be on duty," he said, without sharing the names or photographs of the two officials as "they might have been involved in Naxal or other undercover operations". The CM said the two SIs have claimed that a "person in Constitutional position" and the Special Branch chief, Inspector General Prabhat Kumar, had put them on duty to "track" Champai Soren.

Terming it a "serious case of espionage", Sarma said, "This is one of rarest case of surveillance in Indian politics, we will raise it at the highest levels." Hitting out at the JMM-Congress, he said, "They claim to be the protectors of the Constitution. And here they are, intruding the basic right of privacy and life of a colleague of their own. Is Soren a Naxal, an extremist?" The Assam CM said it is also suspected now that Soren's phones could be tapped and there might have been a plan to "honey trap" him as a woman had also been meeting the two SIs. "We demand a thorough investigation into the matter," Sarma added.

419 HP Govt schools having low enrolment merged with nearby schools: Education Min

PTI ■ SHIMLA

As many as 419 government schools in Himachal Pradesh with five or less students have been merged with nearby schools, Education Minister Rohit Thakur informed the Vidhan Sabha on Wednesday. The move was taken to rationalise the deployment of teachers, Thakur said while responding to a question of BJP member Vipin Parmar, which was asked by his party colleague Rakesh Jamwal in his absence during the 'Question Hour'. A total of 361 primary schools with less than five students have been merged with other schools within a 2-km radius, while 58 middle section schools have been merged with schools within a 3-km distance, the minister said. The enrolment of students in government schools dropped in the last two decades, Thakur said, citing parents' inclination towards private schools and opening of private schools in the vicinity of existing government schools. Further, the rising migration of people from rural to

urban areas is also a factor for low enrolment in government schools located in rural areas, he added. Sharing figures on the declining trend, the education minister said the number of students in primary schools (up to Class 5) was 90 lakh in 2003, but it dropped to 2.99 lakh in 2023, while the strength in middle schools (Classes 6 to 8) reduced from 3.81 lakh to 2.50 lakh in the same period. In government senior secondary schools, the number of students dipped from 1.84 lakh to 1.34 lakh from 2003 to 2023, Thakur said, adding that the situation could turn worse in the next ten years. He said that as per the latest Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), Himachal Pradesh has slipped to 21st position and students of Class 8 are now unable to read the books of Class 2. In a cabinet meeting on July 25, the state cabinet had decided to close 89 government primary schools (GPS) and 10 government middle schools (GMS) with zero enrolments and approved the merger of GPS and GMS with five or less students within two and three kilometre radius.

Bengaluru court extends judicial custody of Darshan & other accused till September 9

PTI ■ BENGALURU

A court here on Wednesday extended till September nine the judicial custody of Kannada actor Darshan Thoogudeepa along with his friend Pavithra Gowda and others, who are accused in the Renukaswamy murder case. All the 17 accused, including Darshan and Pavithra, were produced before the magistrate court through video conferencing from Bengaluru and Tumakuru prisons, where they are lodged, as their judicial custody ended today. The extension of judicial custody follows a remand application filed by the Police. The 24th Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate on Tuesday granted permission to shift Darshan, who is currently in judicial custody at Parappana Agrahara Central jail here, to a jail in Ballari. After a photograph of him hanging out with three others, including a rowdy-sheeter, on the lawns of the jail had gone viral on Sunday, sparking an uproar. The court has also permitted shifting of other co-accused in the murder case to various prisons in the state. In the picture, the actor is seen in a relaxed mood, sitting on a chair and holding a cigarette and a coffee mug.



Also, a purported video of Darshan speaking to a person over a video call from the prison too had surfaced on social media. Other accused — Pawan, Raghavendra and Nandish — will be shifted to Mysuru Jail, Jagadish and Lakshmana to Shivamogga Jail, Dhanraj to Dharwad Jail, Vinay to Vijayapura Jail, Nagaraj to Kalaburagi/Gulbarga Jail, and Pradosh to Belagavi Jail, official sources said. Three accused — Pavithra Gowda, Anukumar, and Deepak — will continue to remain at Parappana Agrahara Central Jail here. Four accused — Ravi, Karthik, Nikhil and Keshavamurthy — were earlier shifted to Tumakuru prison. Nine prison officials, including the Chief Superintendent of the Parappana Agrahara jail, were suspended on Monday over their "lapses" after a preliminary probe into

"special treatment" to Darshan. Also, three FIRs were registered, including against Darshan, under sections of the Prisons Act and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). According to police sources, 33-year-old Renukaswamy, a fan of the actor, had sent obscene messages to Gowda, which enraged Darshan, allegedly leading to his murder. His body was found near a stormwater drain next to an apartment in Sumanahalli here on June nine. Raghavendra, one of the accused who is part of Darshan's fan club in Chitradurga, had brought Renukaswamy to a shed in R R Nagar here, on the pretext that the actor wanted to meet him. It was in this shed that he was allegedly tortured and murdered. According to the post-mortem report, Renukaswamy, a native of Chitradurga, died due to shock and haemorrhage as a result of multiple blunt injuries. Police sources said Pavithra, who is accused number one, was the "major cause" for Renukaswamy's murder, claiming that it has been proved from the probe that she instigated other accused, conspired with them, and took part in the crime.

BJP dares Cong to nominate Kumari Selja as Haryana CM candidate to prove SC support

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

The Haryana unit of ruling BJP on Wednesday dared Congress to declare Kumari Selja as its chief ministerial candidate for the state assembly polls, to prove how committed it is to the well-being of the SC community. The state BJP also said they nominate Nayab Singh Saini, who belongs to the OBC category, a chief minister. Saini is also the BJP's chief ministerial face for the upcoming assembly elections, scheduled for October 1. "The BJP has already nominated a chief minister from the backward class. Rahul Gandhi claims to strongly support the SC community. Let them (Congress) declare Selja ji as the chief ministerial candidate from Haryana so that one can know how much of a well-wisher of the (SC) community they are," Haryana BJP posted on X in Hindi. Notably, Selja, who is a Lok Sabha MP from Sirsa, is a prominent Dalit face of the



to work in the state but the high command will take a final call on the matter. Meanwhile, reacting to BJP's post on X, Haryana Congress president Udai Bhan told PTI over phone that the ruling party should worry about itself as its government in the state was on its way out. Speaking about selection of the chief ministerial candidate, Bhan said Congress MLAs and the party high command will take a call on who would serve as the chief minister only after the poll results are out. He also said that the party had earlier nominated leaders from the Dalit community as chief ministers in four states, including Punjab and Maharashtra. "The BJP should tell whom they have made a CM from the SC community. Moreover, they should tell if they declared Bhajan Lal Sharma as CM candidate when they fought the last assembly elections in Rajasthan. Did they fight the polls (in MP) on Mohan

Yadav's face. In Haryana, did they fight polls in 2014 with Manohar Lal Khattar as their face?," Bhan asked. He further said that Congress national president Mallikarjun Kharge and Leader of Opposition in Rajasthan Assembly Tika Ram Jully come from the Dalit community. Bhan said, "One thing is clear: the BJP has accepted that Congress is coming to power in Haryana..." "That is why they are coming up with excuse of string of holidays falling around the polling date of October 1 and writing to the Election Commission to defer the polls by some days... We are saying even if polling is held even before October 1, we have no objection and we are ready," he added. The Haryana BJP had last week written to the Election Commission requesting a brief postponement of the assembly polls slated for October 1, citing holidays before and after the election date that could lead to lower voter turnout.

Yadav's face. In Haryana, did they fight polls in 2014 with Manohar Lal Khattar as their face?," Bhan asked. He further said that Congress national president Mallikarjun Kharge and Leader of Opposition in Rajasthan Assembly Tika Ram Jully come from the Dalit community. Bhan said, "One thing is clear: the BJP has accepted that Congress is coming to power in Haryana..." "That is why they are coming up with excuse of string of holidays falling around the polling date of October 1 and writing to the Election Commission to defer the polls by some days... We are saying even if polling is held even before October 1, we have no objection and we are ready," he added. The Haryana BJP had last week written to the Election Commission requesting a brief postponement of the assembly polls slated for October 1, citing holidays before and after the election date that could lead to lower voter turnout.

Gujarat rain: Parts of Vadodara city remain flooded for 2nd day, Army called in

PTI ■ VADODARA

With many parts of Gujarat's Vadodara city remaining inundated on the second consecutive day, the situation is "alarming" and the Army has been called in to carry out relief and rescue work, the state government said on Wednesday. Some areas were under 10 to 12 feet of water, said Health Minister and government spokesperson Rushikesh Patel. The Vishwamitri river which flows through the city crossed the danger mark of 25 feet on Tuesday morning following heavy rains and the release of water from Ajwa dam, he told reporters here after a review meeting with senior officials. "Water level of Ajwa Dam is 213.8 feet at present. We have closed the gates so that no additional water goes into Vishwamitri river. The river is currently flowing at 37 feet, well above the danger mark. Water has spilled into the city and many areas are flooded," he said. Four columns of the Army are at present engaged in relief and rescue work in the city,



the minister said. As a long-term solution, the state government is considering a proposal to divert floodwaters into the Narmada canal instead of releasing it in the Vishwamitri river, he said. "The situation is alarming in Vadodara because many areas on both sides of the river are still under 10 to 12 feet of water. Some areas are under four to five feet of water. The local administration has

shifted more than 5,000 people to safer places and rescued nearly 1,200 stranded people," Patel said. "In addition to a team each of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and SDRF along with a column of the Indian Army already working in the city to help stranded people, we have pressed into service three new Army columns and one more team each of NDRF and SDRF to

evacuate people and distribute food packets," he added. Local leaders of the ruling BJP too were helping people though the houses of many of them too are partially submerged, he noted. Siddharth Nagar, Akota, Harni-Sama road, Fatehgunj, Munjmahuda and Vadsar were among the worst-affected areas, said Patel, adding that more boats have been sent to expedite the relief and rescue work. More than 38,000 food packets have been distributed and another one lakh packets are ready for distribution, the minister informed. "Such a situation has arisen after nearly 20 years. The Vishwamitri gets water from Ajwa, Pratappura and three other non-gated reservoirs. As a long-term solution to flooding, we are considering diverting the dam water into Narmada canal instead of releasing it into Vishwamitri. The plan has been discussed with Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel," he said. Across Gujarat, rain-related incidents have claimed 16 lives in two days and thousands have been evacuated.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Best of luck!

India sends largest ever contingent of 84 para-athletes for the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games

The 2024 Paralympic Games opened in Paris yesterday where differently abled athletes from 164 countries would be participating. India has sent its largest-ever contingent of 84 athletes this year. This year's event is a testament to the unyielding spirit of athletes who continue to inspire the world with their incredible stories of perseverance and triumph over adversity. India's participation in the 2024 Paris Paralympics is a landmark moment for the nation. With 84 athletes across various disciplines, India is fielding its largest and most diverse contingent ever. This reflects the growing recognition and support for para-sports in India, as well as the increasing number of athletes who are challenging stereotypes and redefining excellence. The Paralympic Games have a rich history, dating back to 1948, when Sir Ludwig Guttmann organized a sports competition for World War II veterans with spinal cord injuries in Stoke Mandeville, England. This event is widely regarded as the precursor to the modern Paralympic Games. Over



the decades, the Paralympics have grown exponentially, becoming a global platform for athletes with disabilities to showcase their extraordinary talents and push the boundaries of what is possible.

Among the Indian athletes, one name that stands out is that of Sheetal Devi, a young archer who has defied all odds to compete at the highest level despite being born without hands. Sheetal's journey is nothing short of extraordinary. Using her feet to handle the bow and arrow, she has developed a unique technique that has made her one of the most promising archers in the world. Her story is a powerful reminder that limitations are often only in the mind, and with determination and

innovation, they can be overcome. Sheetal Devi's participation in the 2024 Paralympics is more than just a personal achievement; it symbolizes hope and resilience for millions of people around the world. Her ability to turn her perceived limitations into strengths has captivated audiences and earned her recognition as a true champion of the human spirit. The 2024 Paris Paralympics continue the tradition of celebrating the incredible capabilities of athletes with disabilities. The Games are not just about winning medals; they are about breaking barriers, challenging societal perceptions, and inspiring future generations. The inclusion of more sports and the increasing participation of countries like India signify a broader acceptance and encouragement of para-sports worldwide. As the athletes compete in Paris, their stories of courage, like that of Sheetal Devi, remind us of the power of sport to transcend physical limitations and bring people together in a shared pursuit of excellence. The Paralympic Games serve as a global stage where athletes demonstrate that with perseverance, anything is possible. India's largest-ever contingent and the inspiring story of Sheetal Devi exemplify the spirit of the Paralympic movement. As these athletes compete, they continue to inspire millions, proving that no obstacle is insurmountable when met with determination and heart.

PICTALK



A beautifully painted bus at display in the Heritage Transport Museum, in Gurugram

PANKAJ KUMAR

Dealing with the eternal conflicts

Conflicts have been an inevitable part of human experience throughout history.

Each of us faces them in our own unique way at different points in life

We face conflicts and dilemmas many times in our lives. We resolve a few of those, avoiding others to avoid confrontation.

We went through some fascinating times recently. We cast our votes to elect the next central government. The excitement of the crowd at the polling booth was palpable even early in the morning. There was another major event, which was at our society level. We also had elections for the governing body of our residents' welfare association. I realised that the two elections mirrored each other. New alliances were formed, and old ones were discarded. Sworn foes smiled at each other with a warmth not unlike the hot Delhi summers. There were many heartbreaks too if friends vied for the same position. Two of the prospective candidates for a position went about venting their frustration when told by well-meaning friends about the intent of the other. I suggested a mutual tete-a-tete. The conflict was resolved. I faced a dilemma as an ado-



lescent half a century back. One afternoon, I had an argument with a friend, which went a little overboard, and I punched him. He was taller than me and did not take kindly to my aggression. He punched me back. It did not erupt into a full-blown fist fight only because I had already rationalised his punch a little before it had connected with my soft abdomen. After all, I had started the battles; he was entitled to retaliate. Many of us hesitate to ask for personal favour, apprehensive of facing rejection. It is also a dilemma, albeit in our minds. I had no say in the allotment of the zonal

railways after the completion of our railway probation training. I did get an opportunity to express my heart's desire, when my senior asked me if I had any preference for the place of posting. I was diffident and I gave a convoluted reply, "Anywhere, though my preference would be Mughalsarai." This was a small town in my native state. He took the first part of my statement at face value. I was posted at Sealdah, the other end, and a long way from my hometown - physically, linguistically, and culturally. I understood much later in life the importance of plain speaking, however unpalatable it might be. It may cause initial bitterness, but the relationship would be stronger eventually. The self-realisation still did not give me the courage to upbraid a junior colleague for his tardiness. I chose to walk away from confrontation by not allocating him any responsibilities. I envy those who have mastered sugar-coating the bitter pill. It softens the blow, yet hits the person equally

hard. But it might even convey a wrong meaning. During a recent conversation, my wife and her friend contemplated conveying a rather difficult sentiment to another friend through a message. A small phrase was added to be polite. I felt that this changed the intent to something entirely different. They did not agree and chose not to send the message. Yet, the friend had not hesitated to upbraid another friend a few days earlier over a trivial issue. I saw conflict in the two situations, she did not. Conflicts have been a part of our lives since ages. I would not like to be the Arjun who faced the biggest challenge of his life. I am a mere mortal. I have my follies. It is not for me to preach to be perfect. I would look at the words of author Jo Coudert to give me strength, "Every life is a dilemma that must be solved by the person living it."

(The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)



SANJAY CHANDRA

Whoever thought the low-profile Sunita, wife of Delhi Chief Minister

Kejriwal, would emerge as an acceptable leader in the Aam Admi Party? Her increasing involvement is particularly significant after her husband has been jailed for a liquor scam since March. She has become a crucial link between her husband and the Party.

The recent Lok Sabha and Assembly elections provided her an opportunity to demonstrate her potential. It is still unclear whether she will continue working for the Party after Kejriwal is released on bail. Women from political families often enter politics as substitutes for their relatives. One successful example is Sonia Gandhi. She was the power behind the throne. Rabri Devi, the wife of former Bihar chief minister Lalu Prasad Yadav, served as the Chief Minister of Bihar from 2000 to 2005. Lalu had to resign due to his alleged involvement in a scam. Rabri was merely a rubber stamp while her husband was the de facto chief minister.

She may be a novice in politics, but Sunita brings a wealth of experience and a solid professional background. Her 22-year tenure in the income tax department, ending as I-T commissioner at the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT), showcases her competence.

Sunita supported her husband, Kejriwal, keeping a low profile, even during India Against Corruption, when he became a political leader and activist. Kejriwal projected himself as a family man and campaigned with Sunita during the polls. Sunita's increasing involvement in the Aam Admi Party, particularly after Kejriwal's imprisonment, demonstrates her commitment and determination. Kejriwal is the only incumbent chief minister in Indian history who refused to resign his chief ministership even after his arrest. Speculations about her possibly succeeding Kejriwal if he resigns have been doing the rounds.

Secondly, Sunita's leadership is



KALYANI SHANKAR

The rise of Sunita Kejriwal

As Arvind Kejriwal remains behind bars, Sunita Kejriwal steps up to bridge the gap between her husband and the party, taking on the mantle of leadership in his absence

crucial. She has arrived at a when the Aam Admi Party grapples with a crisis. The Assembly elections in Haryana will be held next month, and Delhi polls are due in January 2025. Many senior leaders are facing allegations of corruption charges. The recent arrest of Kejriwal has added to the Party's challenges. The Centre gave him a long rope and did not dismiss his government based on a constitutional breakdown. Manish Sisodia, Kejriwal's deputy, says Sunita's role in the Party will end when Kejriwal is out of jail. Sisodia was also arrested last year in connection with an excise policy case. AAP MP Sanjay Singh claims Sunita's role as Kejriwal's messenger is growing. Still, Kejriwal says Sunita has no interest in politics.

While Sunita may be seen as a stop-gap replacement, her growing influence in the Party makes it challenging to sideline her. Sunita's role in the Party will remain significant even if Kejriwal returns. Fourthly, the Party faces a crisis of leadership. With the upcoming Haryana and Delhi polls, AAP needs a credible leader and a good campaigner. Sunita's role as a morale



SUNITA HAS LAUNCHED HER CAMPAIGN WITH FIVE "KEJRIWAL'S GUARANTEES" FOR THE UPCOMING HARYANA ASSEMBLY POLLS

booster is to fill the gap and give pep talk.

Fifthly, the AAP members have accepted Sunita as the link, though Sunita holds no official position in AAP. She has campaigned during the 2024 Lok Sabha polls and has just begun campaigning in Haryana. She has been hard-hitting on the Modi government and the BJP. Her line of defence was that some political forces were involved in discrediting her husband.

The opposition coalition INDIA has acknowledged Sunita's increasing involvement and acceptability. She was seated in a prominent position alongside Sonia Gandhi at a recent rally in Ramliha Maidan.

Sunita has launched her campaign with five "Kejriwal's Guarantees" for the upcoming Haryana Assembly polls. They include free electricity, medical treatment, education, \$1,000 monthly aid for women, and youth employment. She lauded the AAP government for its initiatives and urged people to vote for AAP. Sunita has some downsides. Despite Kejriwal's political success, she is untested. Whether she can keep the Party intact is still being determined. Her limit-

ed purpose is to convey Kejriwal's message from prison and campaign for the upcoming elections.

Sunita is in talks with other parties like the Nationalist Congress Party and has gained access to top opposition leaders. Her strategy for selecting candidates and forming coalitions depends on the Aam Admi Party's future alliances. Overcoming anti-incumbency as AAP seeks a third term in Delhi is challenging.

When Kejriwal returns, he must ensure that the Party is under control. And that his image in public is not tarnished. He must also keep an eye on Punjab, where AAP is ruling. He must ensure a chain of command between the Party and the government. He must develop a second line of leadership, as he has not allowed any leader to emerge. He needs to keep his team united and realistically evaluate his promises of benefits. The results of the upcoming elections in Haryana and Delhi could significantly shape Delhi's future political landscape. The results will show whether Sunita succeeds.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Remember the Hippocratic Oath!



Kudos to Mr. Sujit De for the letter titled "Don't make patients suffer" (August 26). Based upon professional fraternity (not human fraternity), the Doctors of the government hospitals are in strike in West Bengal! May it be asked what is the fault of the poorest of poor patients who have no option but to visit government hospitals during medical emergency! Why are they being denied medical treatment prolonging their suffering! Is providing treatment to patients and protesting against the murder mutually exclusive to each

other! Can't the two coexist together! What compensation would the Doctors provide to a family if their member passes away due to lack of treatment! How can the hypocrite Doctors make a cruel mockery of the Hippocratic oath! Hasn't any Doctor indulged in sexual atrocities in India previously!

What about that horrific incident (almost a decade ago) revolving around the poor mentally-retarded innocent Korpan Shah who was lynched to death by the trainee Doctors right within the campus of NRS Hospital Kolkata just on the baseless apprehension of stealing a cell phone! Will today's "revolutionary" Doctors dare to have a look at the mirror and indulge in a bit of self-inspection! Of course Doctors must enjoy rights as entitled to human beings; but perhaps the last person in the queue like Korpan Shah was also entitled to the same human rights!

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

about 90 nautical miles south of Sagar Island. With an immediate response, the Maritime Search & Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) in Chennai received a distress signal late on August 25.

The ICG immediately dispatched two of its ships, Sarang and Amogh, and also a Dornier aircraft outfitted with enhanced night-capable sensors, to locate and rescue the stranded crew. The Dornier aircraft was crucial in spotting drifting life rafts and identifying the crew's survival red flares. The aircraft guided the ICG ships to the coordinates where two life rafts had been found tied together, sheltering the survivors.

Dimple Wadhawan | Kanpur

MIDDLE PATH ON PENSION

Madam — Government seems to have adopted the mid way approach amid the growing demand for the rollback of the OPS, the government has filled the gap between market returns and a 50% assured pension. Under the Unified Pension Scheme government contribu-

tion will increase from 14% to 18.5%. And it will take a stock of the situation after three years whether to increase this or not. What is really beneficial for the government employees who joined after 1st January 2004 is that UPS will provide them assured pension, inflation indexation and family pension.

At the moment it looks like that employees will be content with the new rolled out scheme but they may come on to the streets to demand the difference between OPS and UPS.

With life expectancy going higher and higher, how the government will be able to fund these expenses for such long durations would be a million dollar question. Employees should not forget that NPS has the unique advantage of having the equity exposure over a long period of time and invariably it will fetch far better returns over any other product or Pension scheme.

Bal Govind | Noida

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

CHOOSE DIALOGUE NOT DEBATE

By fostering a mindset of dialogue over argument, we contribute to a more harmonious society



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJJI

There is a famous saying: "Two wrongs don't make a right," meaning it is not right to do something bad to someone just because they did something bad to you. In our day-to-day life, we end up doing many things that are wrong, but we still justify them as right by arguing well. Argument has always been a very powerful self-defense tool for people since ages. But one must know an important fact: behind every argument that we engage in, lies our ignorance towards truth and sometimes deceiving ourselves by knowing the truth. Hence, the best way to sort things out is through dialogues and healthy discussions. The beautiful part of a dialogue is that it's a mutual exploration for reaching an amicable resolution with an open exchange of views, as compared to an argument, which leads to a battle of opinions. In dialogue, there is much more listening than talking, and in an argument, there is war! A dialogue is possible only when two parties collaborate to uncover deeper wisdom and co-create a new understanding with a positive attitude.

We all argue in our day-to-day life because we have an opinion on almost everything, based on our beliefs. More so, when we see the beliefs of others as a personal threat, we either start defending or attacking, creating an environment of fear and aggression. There are many who are always armed with their opinions, prepared to defend their beliefs, and ready to do battle. The best way to avoid an argument with such people is first to support their beliefs positively to make them feel happy



from inside, and then after some time, make them realize their mistake with utmost love and care.

Many of us have experienced that if we do not have an opinion about important issues, then we are considered to be weak and conciliatory. But we must not forget that if our opinion is in defense of a position or against someone else's opinion, then it might result in a huge conflict that could lead to a war-like situation. History has shown that, at the root of the majority of wars fought were differences of opinion and clash of beliefs. Hence, it takes a lot of courage to have a point of view and yet be receptive to others' to the extent that you are prepared to shift your contention. This shows that you are flexible and acknowledge there are many other ways of looking at a situation. It also demonstrates that you have the humility to learn from others' points of view. However, to possess such courage, one needs to be enlightened with spiritual powers, for it is an enlightened soul that moves from an argument to a discussion to a dialogue, a process that is driven not just by the need, but by genuine curiosity and the intention to understand others to create a peaceful and harmonious environment.

In today's fast-paced world, arguments often arise from misunderstandings, impatience, and a lack of willingness to understand the other side. Technology, while connecting us globally, has also distanced us from face-to-face interactions where emotions and intentions are better understood. This digital age has made it easy to voice opinions without accountability, often leading to heated debates rather than constructive discussions. Moreover, the culture of instant gratification has diminished our capacity for patience, making us less tolerant of differing viewpoints. We must realize that true progress, both personally and collectively, comes from understanding and empathy. When we take the time to engage in dialogues rather than arguments, we open doors to new perspectives and solutions that we might not have considered otherwise. In doing so, we not only resolve conflicts but also build stronger, more meaningful relationships. Therefore, it is essential to cultivate the habit of active listening, where we fully engage with the speaker, seeking to understand before being understood. This approach can transform potential conflicts into opportunities for growth and learning.

(Writer is a spiritual educator & popular columnist, views are personal)

A saga of violence and betrayal in Afghanistan



NILANTHA LLANGAMUWA

Kabul has long stood as a symbol of Afghanistan's resilience but conduct of many of its leaders like Hafizullah Amin remains shrouded in mystery and contention

Kabul, situated over a mile above sea level, is complemented by the Paghman Hills to the west, traditionally a retreat for Kabul's elite. Paghman, known for its pleasant climate and historical significance, was also the site of significant events, including King Amanullah's struggle for independence and the 1920 asylum of the Amir of Bukhara. The town symbolises Afghanistan's resistance to foreign dominance.

Hafizullah Amin, born in Paghman in 1929, rose to prominence as a staunch opponent of superpower influence. His brief tenure as leader, lasting only 104 days, ended with his assassination in 1979, marking a pivotal moment in Afghan politics. Amin's early education in Kabul and further studies at Columbia University, interrupted by political turmoil, solidified his political engagement. His relationship with Nour Mohammad Taraki and his subsequent return to Afghanistan via Moscow shaped his radical stance and political trajectory.

However, the accusation that Amin was a CIA agent, levied with equal fervour from the left, has been eagerly embraced by Babrak Karmal as a means to legitimise his own rule. Despite Karmal's claims of having known about Amin's alleged CIA ties since the 1950s and his assertion of possessing documentary proof, he has yet to present any credible evidence. Some foreign socialists privately dismiss this claim, suggesting that the new regime's intent was to tarnish Amin's reputation, particularly among the unassuming Afghan peasantry, by branding him as an American agent. A more nuanced explanation from a Karmal sympathiser posits that the Afghan populace, repelled by Amin's policies which they viewed as detrimental to the revolution, resorted to the CIA agent narrative as a simplistic justification. Although the USSR propagated this narrative domestically in an early 1980 film on Afghanistan, it has been notably cautious in its international communications.

An article on CIA interference in the Third World, published in International Affairs, notably omits any reference to Amin. As one commentator noted, "The uncomfortable reality for both Russians and Americans is that Amin resisted manipulation from either side." If Amin's portrayal as a genocidal dictator, a Soviet puppet, or a CIA operative is unsupported by evidence, what then is the truth? What was Amin's actual role in the Afghan revolution, and why did the Soviet Union deem it so crucial to eliminate him?

In August 1978, Nour Mohammad Taraki addressed the Islamic protest movement with a defiant stance, denouncing capitalist and reactionary forces for using religion to undermine his progressive agenda. He believed these tactics, driven by imperialistic ambitions, were outdated and doomed to fail. Despite his confidence, Taraki faced significant internal strife, particularly with Hafizullah Amin, whose ambitions threatened his leadership. Taraki's reliance on Soviet support proved insufficient as his political blindness and failure to address social realities created



HAFIZULLAH AMIN WAS WIDELY SUSPECTED OF USING MARXISM AS A POLITICAL TOOL RATHER THAN ADHERING TO ITS PRINCIPLES, WHILE PUBLICLY PRESENTING HIMSELF AS A STRICT RELIGIOUS PERSON

opportunities for extremist groups.

Taraki's plan to correct his previous mistakes and form a new government with Babrak was thwarted by Amin's swift action. Despite Taraki's efforts to arrest Amin and align with Babrak for national reconciliation, the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan necessitated external military intervention. Amin's quick consolidation of power and Taraki's subsequent political struggles illustrate the volatile and precarious nature of Afghan politics during this tumultuous period.

Hafizullah Amin was widely suspected of using Marxism as a political tool rather than adhering to its principles, while publicly presenting himself as a strict religious person. Despite his significant position as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, he faced substantial opposition, particularly from the Parcham faction. This internal discord delayed his rise to a full member of the PDPA's political committee. Amin's ability to navigate these challenges and become a prominent figure in Afghan politics, including his role in the Moscow friendship treaty, marked his personal success amidst a turbulent environment.

In September 1979, Taraki's visit to Cuba and subsequent meeting with his rival Babrak Karmal in Moscow remains enigmatic. There is speculation that Taraki sought to reconcile with Babrak to remove Amin and redistribute power, though Soviet influence likely played a crucial role in these negotiations. The depth of the animosity between Taraki and Babrak suggests that Soviet intervention was necessary to facilitate

any form of political reconciliation, particularly given Taraki's longstanding hatred for Babrak and Amin's role as a significant obstacle to his power.

The political instability within the Khalq and Parcham factions weakened Afghanistan's administration, making it vulnerable to extremist support. With the security situation deteriorating and the Afghan army struggling, Taraki saw the need for Soviet intervention to restore order. Despite plans to arrest Amin and form a new government with Babrak, Taraki's efforts faltered, and Amin swiftly resolved his political predicament. The complexities of this period highlight the challenging dynamics of Afghan politics and external influences shaping its trajectory.

In early December 1979, Yuri Andropov alerted Leonid Brezhnev to Amin's covert activities, his pro-Western inclinations, and the potential end of communist rule in Afghanistan, which could threaten Soviet influence. Andropov emphasized the need for military aid to support Babrak Karmal and his allies, though he did not explicitly propose a full-scale Soviet invasion. However, Andropov's primary goal was to finalize plans for the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.

Following this, key figures including Andropov, Dmitriy Ustinov, Andrei Gromyko, and Boris Ponomarev, convened with Brezhnev and secured approval for Soviet military action. The Politburo authorized these officials to manage the invasion's execution in utmost secrecy. The documents related to the plan were handwritten by Politburo mem-

bers, and even typists were excluded from the process. Marshal Akhromeyev and the General Staff Operations Group established their base near the Afghan border, while KGB operatives traveled to Kabul to oversee Amin's removal, marking the commencement of Operation Agate.

The KGB's secrecy surrounding the assassination plan was intense. A covert team, including a chef planted in Amin's palace, was tasked with administering poison. The same toxicology laboratory that had been involved in previous assassinations, like that of Georgi Markov, handled the preparation of the poison. Talebov, an Azerbaijani operative, infiltrated Amin's kitchen and poisoned the food, ensuring the execution of the assassination plan without arousing suspicion.

On December 13, 1979, Babrak Karmal and key members of his future government secretly flew from Moscow to Bagram Air Base, positioning themselves to take control of Afghanistan immediately after Amin's removal. Meanwhile, on December 17, Asadullah Amin, Hafizullah Amin's son-in-law and head of the security service, fell gravely ill from food poisoning and was rushed to Moscow for treatment. The meal that led to his illness had been prepared for Hafizullah Amin, indicating that the poisoning attempt, orchestrated by Talebov, had not gone as planned. Despite Talebov's efforts, Amin's cautious behavior, including frequent changes in his food and drink, thwarted the poisoning plot.

(The writer is a journalist and author. Views expressed are personal)

The impact of CHETNA: Saving lives and empowering communities

'CHETNA@40-Nurturing Dreams, Empowering Destinies,' chronicles four decades of transformative work in women's health and community empowerment across India

When Julkiben, a dai or traditional birth attendant (TBA), received a call from a pregnant woman, she immediately swung into action. First, she dialled 108, the number of the state government emergency ambulance. After she reached the pregnant woman's house, she cut a clean cloth into pieces to be used at the hospital and kept an empty lota (water container) ready to fetch and store water. But when the woman's labour pains increased and it became impossible for her to climb down the hillock to reach the ambulance, Julkiben summoned young men from the neighbourhood to make a sling from a bed sheet and carry the pregnant woman to the ambulance. They had bare-



SWAPNA MAJUMDAR

ly reached the hospital labour room when the woman delivered. Julkiben's presence of mind and timely action helped to save the lives of mother and child.

It was not just TBAs like Julkiben but women, their families and community members in 60 villages in Vansada and Chikhali, two tribal blocks of Gujarat's Navsari district, who learnt that maternal deaths could be

prevented by accessing the public health system's maternal healthcare services. In fact, the three-year initiative in these two blocks by the Centre for Health Education Training Nutrition and Adolescents (CHETNA), the Ahmedabad-based not-for-profit working to empower women, adolescents and children, led to remarkable changes. There was an increase in institutional deliveries from 58% to 82% in Vansada block. More importantly, of the 776 deliveries that took place during the last phase of the intervention, not a single maternal death was registered in the area.

How was this achieved? What was done differently that brought about behavioural change? Could this success be replicated in other districts

with poor health indicators for women?

Answers to all these questions and more have been given in the recently published coffee table book to mark their milestone of turning forty. Titled 'CHETNA@40-Nurturing Dreams, Empowering Destinies', the book chronicles the organization's four decades of collective efforts, its distinctive approaches and the impact made by its innovative communication strategies that transformed countless lives and communities in 78 districts, 124 blocks and 439 villages in seven states.

One of the biggest reasons behind its ability to make a difference has been its focus on incorporating a gender lens to all its work, says Pallavi Patel, co-founder and Director,



CHETNA. Being the country's first all-women health initiative helped make CHETNA a trendsetter in women's health, nutrition and gender. It's pioneering approaches and impactful communications material gave it an edge over others. The popularity of their resources can be gauged by the fact that in 2022-2023 alone, over 2,77,981 copies of CHETNA's materials were sought by various government and NGOs based in 11 states.

The book unpacks their hands on, people-centred strategies to tackle not just the challenges in dealing with child birth complications in remote tribal areas with minimal health facilities in Rajasthan and Gujarat, but widespread nutritional anaemia in Gujarat, Rajasthan and MP. It also reveals how CHETNA fostered a change in behaviour in getting 70 schools certified tobacco free in Ahmedabad as well as in mindsets especially in Mehsana, Gujarat, one of the districts with the worst child sex ratio (CSR) in the eighties and nineties. The deeply entrenched son preference psyche and practice of placing the blame on the woman when a girl was born was addressed through saas-bahu meetings, engaging with caste panchayat leaders

and innovative dal-chawal games to explain the role of the X and Y chromosomes in determining the sex of the child. At the centre of these efforts has been CHETNA's ability to be adaptable, flexible and, creative. Besides out of the box thinking, health messages have been tweaked according to local needs, traditions and practices. Their innovative anaemia kit has undergone several adaptations as has their unique and highly popular cloth aprons with several flaps that are worn by male and female trainers to show the reproductive organs in the two sexes. Songs, games and animation films have been created to share knowledge on child care, nutrition, puberty, menstruation, adolescent

health, anaemia and contraception. The book details how CHETNA, which works under the symbiotic umbrella of the Nehru Foundation for Development set up in 1966 by the eminent scientist Vikram Sarabhai, strategically used their scientific and inventive health communications to make a lasting impact. Whether it has been to break the silence on menstruation, or creating an enabling environment for girls, CHETNA has shown that the dream it began with 40 years ago, of making women the mistress of their own destinies, was not an impossible one.

(The writer is a journalist writing on development and gender. The views are expressed are personal)

Israel's West Bank major operation kills 9 Palestinians

AP ■ AL FARAA

Israel launched a large-scale military operation in the occupied West Bank on Wednesday, with its forces killing at least nine Palestinians and sealing off the volatile city of Jenin, according to Palestinian officials.

Israel has carried out nearly daily raids across the West Bank since Hamas' October 7 attack out of Gaza triggered the ongoing war there. Israel says it is routing out militants to prevent attacks on its citizens, while Palestinians in the West Bank fear it intends to broaden the war and forcibly displace more of them.

Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani, an Israeli military spokesman, said "large forces" had entered Jenin, long a militant stronghold, as well as Tulkarem and the Al-Faraa refugee camp dating back to the 1948 Mideast war, all in the northern West Bank. He said the nine dead were all militants, including three killed in an airstrike in Tulkarem and four in an airstrike in Al-Faraa. He said another five suspected militants were arrested, and that the



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

raids were the first stage of an even larger operation. Palestinian militant groups said they were exchanging fire with Israeli troops. The governor of Jenin, Kamal Abu al-Rub, said on Palestinian radio that Israeli forces had surrounded the city, blocking exit and entry points

and access to hospitals, and ripping up infrastructure in the camp. The Palestinian Health Ministry in the West Bank said Israeli forces had blocked the roads leading to a hospital with dirt barriers and surrounded other medical facilities

in Jenin. Shoshani said the military was trying to prevent militants from taking shelter in hospitals. An Associated Press reporter saw army vehicles blocking all the entrances to Al-Faraa camp. Military jeeps and bulldozers entered the camp and soldiers were seen

patrolling its alleyways by foot. Water leaked onto the damaged streets from houses where fighting had damaged tanks and pipes. Shots rang out every few minutes. Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz drew comparisons with Gaza and called for similar measures in the West Bank. "We must deal with the threat just as we deal with the terrorist infrastructure in Gaza, including the temporary evacuation of Palestinian residents and whatever steps might be required. This is a war in every respect, and we must win it," he wrote on the platform X. Shoshani said there was no plan to evacuate civilians.

Hamas called on Palestinians in the West Bank to rise up, calling the raids part of a larger plan to expand the war in Gaza and blaming the escalation on US support for Israel. The militant group called on security forces loyal to the Western-backed Palestinian Authority, which cooperate with Israel, to "join the sacred battle of our people".

Nabil Abu Rudeineh, a spokesman for Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud

Abbas, condemned the raids as a "serious escalation" and called on the United States to intervene. Abbas later announced he was cutting short a visit to Saudi Arabia and returning to the West Bank, where his government is based.

At least 652 Palestinians in the West Bank have been killed by Israeli fire since the war in Gaza began over 10 months ago, according to the Palestinian ministry. Most have died during raids, which often trigger gunbattles with militants. Israel says the operations are required to dismantle Hamas and other militant groups. Attacks on Israelis have risen since the start of the war.

The Palestinian Health Ministry said the bodies of seven people were brought to the hospital in Tubas, another West Bank city, and another two were brought to the hospital in Jenin. The ministry identified two killed in Jenin as Qassam Jabarin, 25, and Asem Balout, 39. Israel captured the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast war. The Palestinians want all three for a future state. Israel has built

scores of settlements across the West Bank, which are home to over 500,000 Jewish settlers. They have Israeli citizenship, while the 3 million Palestinians in the West Bank live under Israeli military rule, with the Palestinian Authority exercising limited control over population centers.

The war in Gaza erupted when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel and rampaged through army bases and farming communities, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting around 250. The militants are still holding some 110 hostages, around a third of whom are believed to be dead, after most of the rest were released during a November cease-fire.

Israel responded with an offensive that has killed over 40,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not say how many were militants. Around 90 per cent of Gaza's population has been displaced, often multiple times, and Israeli bombardment and ground operations have caused vast destruction.

Israeli strikes in Gaza overnight and into Wednesday killed at

least 24 people, including five women and five children, according to Palestinian health officials. AP reporters at two hospitals confirmed the toll.

One strike hit tents housing displaced people near the central town of Deir al-Balah, killing eight including two brothers, 6 and 17 years old. "He's alive!" their mother shouted as the teenager's body was carried to the morgue. She later sobbed and cradled both of them.

Israel says it tries to avoid harming civilians and blames their deaths on Hamas because the militants fight in dense residential areas. The military rarely comments on individual strikes in Gaza, which often kill women and children.

The US, Qatar and Egypt have spent months trying to mediate a cease-fire that would see the remaining hostages released. But the talks have repeatedly bogged down as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed "total victory" over Hamas and the militant group has demanded a lasting cease-fire and a full withdrawal from the territory.

Germany, UK seek new bilateral treaty as Starmer pursues 'reset' with EU

AP ■ BERLIN

The leaders of Germany and the United Kingdom announced plans on Wednesday to draw up a treaty meant to deepen the two nations' trade, defence and other ties.

The move comes as new UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer moves ahead with plans for a "reset" of relations with the European Union. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said that he welcomes fellow centre-left leader Starmer's desire for a new beginning in relations with the EU, and "we want to take this outstretched hand". Starmer took office in early July after the previous Conservative government was trounced in an election. Four years after the UK left the EU, he says he wants to rebuild ties strained by years of ill-tempered wrangling over Brexit terms. He said that he hopes to conclude the bilateral agreement with Germany,



which has Europe's biggest economy, by the end of this year. "That will be ambitious, it will be wide-ranging, covering trade, the economy, defence and many other issues," he told reporters. The two leaders are among Ukraine's biggest military backers and stressed their commitment to keeping up that support. Starmer said that the two countries also plan to draw up a "joint action plan to tackle illegal migration". His government still faces pressure to stop migrants cross-

ing the English Channel in small boats, though it scrapped the Conservatives' contentious plan to send them on a one-way trip to Rwanda. Migration is also an issue on which Scholz's government has long been under heavy pressure, even more so since Friday's attack in Solingen in which a suspected extremist from Syria who had avoided being deported is accused of killing three people. The proposed UK-Germany treaty is modelled in part on

agreements that Britain struck in recent years with France on defense, security and closer law enforcement cooperation against people-smuggling gangs.

Starmer sent a signal by visiting Berlin early in his term — unlike predecessor Rishi Sunak, who took 18 months. But his talk of starting anew with the EU has its limits.

He has ruled out many of the major possible steps to closer ties and has been cool to the idea of a youth mobility agreement with the 27-nation bloc. "I'm absolutely clear that we do want a reset ... with Europe, a reset with the EU," Starmer said in Berlin. However, "that does not mean reversing Brexit or reentering the single market or the customs union, but it does mean a closer relation on a number of fronts — including the economy, including defence, including exchanges, but we do not have plans for the youth mobility scheme".

Bdesh's interim govt lifts ban on Jamaat-e-Islami

PTI ■ DHAKA

Bangladesh's interim government Wednesday revoked a ban on the rightwing Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir, less than a month after it was imposed on the Islamist party by former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, who was forced to resign following massive protests against her government.

"(Lifting the ban) will come under effect immediately," the Home Ministry said in a gazette notification, noting that there was no particular evidence against the organisation. The erstwhile Awami League government led by Hasina had imposed a ban on Jamaat on August 1, 2024, accusing the Islamist party as a "militant and terrorist" organisation. The government blamed Jamaat's student wing for inciting chaos over a quota system for government jobs.

The notification said the ban under the Anti-Terrorism Act 2009 has been lifted as there was no particular evidence against the organisation. The government believed that Jamaat and its associate bodies, including its student front Chhatra Shibir, were not involved in terrorist activities and violence.

The decision, formally published in a gazette notification on Wednesday, represents a significant change from the decision taken by the erstwhile Awami League government earlier this month, just days before its ouster.

The development came a day after Attorney General Mohammad Asaduzzaman urged the High Court to summarily reject a writ petition seeking an order on the government to ban Hasina's Awami League as a political party and scrap its registration.

"The current (interim) government has no intention to ban any political organisation," the government's top law officer told a two-judge High Court bench, which set August 29 for its decision on the writ filed by one Sarda Society as a public interest litigation. The interim government's law adviser, equivalent to a minister, Asif Nazrul

Jamaat-e-Islami leader denies party's role in attacks on Hindus

Dhaka (PTI): Jamaat-e-Islami supreme Shafiqur Rahman has said that his party was not involved in attacks on the Hindu community in Bangladesh and attributed the negative portrayal of the party to a "malicious" media campaign. He also refuted allegations that the party was involved in anti-India activities in Bangladesh and asked India to provide proof if any. Replying to a query on allegations of attack on Hindus in Bangladesh by Jamaat activists, Rahman refuted the allegations as "baseless". The minority Hindu population has faced vandalism of their business and properties and devastation of Hindu tem-

ples in the students' violence that ensued for days following the ouster of prime minister Sheikh Hasina, who fled to India on August 5. "We don't believe in the concept of minority and majority, we believe in unity. We don't consider Hindus as minorities, they are our brothers and friends in Bangladesh. We are with our Hindu brothers and we will stand by them," Rahman said. Refuting allegations of attack on Hindu properties by the Jamaat cadres, Rahman said: "The activists and workers of Jamaat guarded the temples and houses of Hindus after August 5 so that no untoward incident takes place."

on Wednesday told reporters he was opposed to the call for a ban on Awami League or any other political parties unless there was any strong evidence of their involvement in terrorist activities.

"Awami League is the party which led Bangladesh's independence movement and contributed to different democratic movements. (But) what they did in the past 15 years does not go with their heritage, the spirit of the Liberation War," Nazrul said.

He said the party had established the "most barbaric fascism" in Bangladesh's history for which someone might have individual or its leaders might have collective responsibility "but I don't think it will be a wise decision to ban it as a political party". Secretary General of premier Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said that anyone should be able to form an independent political party, that is the main goal of democracy.

"We are not in favour of banning any political party; any party and any individual has the right to form an independent party. But

they must be on the side of freedom and sovereignty. Those who do not believe in freedom cannot be supported," he said at a media briefing on Tuesday.

No senior leader of the Awami League, which ran the country for the past 15 years, is seen in the public domain while several ministers of Hasina's cabinet were arrested, on the run or believed to have fled the country since the ouster of the regime. The Jamaat opposed Bangladesh's 1971 independence from Pakistan and sided with the Pakistani troops during the Liberation War.

The Jamaat, founded in 1941 in undivided India, was first banned in 1972, the year Bangladesh framed its Constitution, which disbanded the functioning of any association, union or political party based on religion.

But the subsequent military government led by General Ziaur Rahman revoked the ban by issuing a martial law proclamation, which allowed Jamaat to refloat and years later became a crucial partner of the then prime minister Khaleda Zia's 2001-2006 four-party alliance government.

Woman TV journalist's body recovered from lake in Dhaka

Dhaka (PTI): The body of a 32-year-old woman TV journalist in Bangladesh was recovered from a lake here in the capital on Wednesday, according to media reports.

The deceased was identified as Sarah Rahanuma, a newsroom editor at Gazi TV, a Bengali-language satellite and cable television channel owned by Gazi Group.

Her body was found floating in Hatirjheel Lake in Dhaka, The Dhaka Tribune newspaper reported. Inspector Bachchu Mia, in charge of the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) police outpost, confirmed the recovery of her body.

Doctors pulled the body from the lake and took it to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), where the doctor declared her dead around 2:00 am.

A man named Sagar, who brought Sarah to the hospital, said: "I saw the woman floating in Hatirjheel Lake. Later, she was brought to DMCH, where doctors declared her dead."

Before her death, Sarah posted a status on her Facebook on Tuesday night tagging one Fahim Faysal. "It was nice having a friend like you. God bless you always. Hope, you'll fulfil all your dreams soon. I know we had a lot of planning together. Sorry, can't fulfil our plans. May god bless you in every aspect of your life," she wrote.

In an earlier post, she wrote: "It is better to die than to live a life akin to death." Inspector Bachchu Mia said the body was kept in the DMCH morgue.

Police have stated that an investigation will be conducted to determine the cause of her death. However, deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina's US-based son, Sajeb Wazed, gave a political colour to the journalist's death, saying that it was "another brutal attack" on the freedom of expression in the country.

Feds refine indictment in Trump Jan 6 case, charges unchanged

Washington (AP): Special counsel Jack Smith filed a new indictment Tuesday against Donald Trump over his efforts to undo the 2020 presidential election that keeps the same criminal charges but narrows the allegations against him following a Supreme Court opinion that conferred broad immunity on former presidents. The new indictment removes a section of the indictment that had accused Trump of trying to use the law enforcement powers of the Justice Department to overturn his election loss, an area of conduct for which the Supreme Court, in a 6-3 opinion last month, said that Trump was absolutely immune from prosecution.

The stripped-down criminal case represents a first effort by prosecutors to comply with a Supreme Court opinion likely to result in a significant revision of the allegations against Trump over his efforts to block the peaceful transfer of power. It was filed three days ahead of a deadline for prosecutors and defense lawyers to tell the judge in the case how they wanted to proceed in light of that opinion, which said former presidents are presumptively immune from prosecution for official White House acts.

The two sides will be back in court for a status hearing next week, the first such appearance in months given that the case had been effectively frozen since last December as Trump's immunity appeal worked its way through the justice system. In a statement on his Truth Social platform, Trump called the new indictment "an act of desperation" and an "effort to resurrect a dead Witch Hunt."

Far right's rise in eastern Germany hinders skilled worker recruitment

AP ■ JENA

When electrical engineer Preetam Gaikwad first moved to Jena in 2013, she was smitten by what the eastern German city had to offer: a prestigious university, top research institutions, and cutting-edge technology companies, global leaders in their field. Eleven years later, the Indian native takes a more sober view.

"I'm really worried about the development of the political situation here," Gaikwad, 43 said. Jena is in the eastern German state of Thuringia, which has elections on September 1.

The far-right Alternative for Germany party, or AfD, is currently leading the polls with about 30 per cent support, far ahead of the centre-right Christian Democrats (21 per cent) and the centre-left Social Democrats of Chancellor Olaf



Scholz (7 per cent). The AfD's anti-foreigner stance is the cornerstone of its campaign, raising concern among businesses like Jenoptik, Gaikwad's employer. The company, which supplied lens assemblies for Perseverance, the NASA remote vehicle on Mars, employs 1,680 people in Jena and more than 4,600 glob-

ally. Jenoptik, one of the few internationally successful businesses in Jena, depends on being able to attract and retain a highly skilled workforce, much of it from outside Germany. The rise of the AfD is making that more difficult, says Jenoptik CEO Stefan Traeger.

More and more prospective employees tell Traeger that while they would love to work for Jenoptik, they won't take a job there because they don't want to live in a state dominated by a hard-right party that ostracizes migrants or other minorities such as members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Traeger, a Jena native who studied in the US, told the AP he hopes that after the election "we will still be as open, free and democratic a country as we are now. That's what we need in order to move the company forward".

Maduro taps hardline loyalist to oversee police forces, prompting fears of deepening crackdown

Caracas (AP): Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro on Tuesday appointed a ruling socialist party boss to oversee the country's police forces, empowering a hardline loyalist who has vowed to pursue government opponents as part of an ongoing crackdown that has alarmed human rights groups. Maduro named Diosdado Cabello Interior Minister as part of a Cabinet shuffle following last month's contested presidential election. Along with Maduro, Cabello is one of the most fervent stalwarts of the so-called Bolivarian revolution started by the late Hugo Chávez and has long been considered the second most powerful person

in Venezuela after Maduro. A retired army lieutenant, he fought alongside Chávez in a failed military uprising in 1992 and later served as acting president when Chávez himself was removed in a brief coup a decade later. However, Chávez passed him over when he picked Maduro — a civilian with no military pedigree — as his successor shortly before he died of cancer in 2013. Since then, he's served in a number of roles, including National Assembly president and head of the ruling socialist party. Until now, he never served in Maduro's Cabinet, an omission that has long fuelled speculation of an unspoken rivalry between the two.

Human rights groups fear that Cabello's appointment to Interior Minister, with oversight of Venezuela's police forces, will intensify the government's heavy handed response to protests that erupted after last month's presidential election, when Maduro was declared the winner despite strong evidence presented by the opposition that its candidate prevailed by a 2-to-1 margin. More than 2,000 people — including journalists, politicians and aid workers — have been arrested since the July 28 election. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on Wednesday is expected to deliver a report in Washington at a special meet-

ing of the Organization of American States to discuss the crackdown.

"If the new Cabinet is a bellwether of what Maduro intends to do, Cabello's appointment is an indication of even more repression to come," said Juanita Goebertus, director for the Americas at Human Rights Watch. Cabello, 61, has been among key insiders calling for a forceful response to those casting doubt on Maduro's victory. With deep roots in the security forces, he's seen his influence expand as Venezuelans have tired of Maduro, blaming him for wrecking the oil-rich economy.

Denmark creates three new ministers in govt reshuffle

Copenhagen (AP): Denmark's three-party centrist government said on Wednesday it will create three new ministries, including a government office in charge of emergency preparedness.

The government wants a minister in charge of European Union affairs ahead of Denmark's rotating EU presidency in the second half of 2025.

The shuffle means Denmark, like Sweden, will have a minister in charge of emergencies and preparedness for climate change or cyberattacks. The third new minister will be in charge of carrying out and coordinating Denmark's green policy.

"I hope this can inspire the rest of the world," Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen



said of the new green policy ministry. The Scandinavian country has a goal of 70 per cent emissions reductions by 2030 and achieving net zero by 2050.

Frederiksen did not give any names nor say whether any of the current government's 23 ministries would be made redundant. She said the changes will be announced on

Thursday when the new government is formally presented to King Frederik X. Also Wednesday, Frederiksen named 49-year-old Dan Jørgensen as Denmark's candidate for the new commissioner to the European Union's powerful executive arm which polices EU laws and negotiates trade on behalf of member countries.

Traders observe strike across Pak to protest new taxes

AP ■ ISLAMABAD

Traders in Pakistan went on strike on Wednesday, shutting down their businesses in all major cities and urban areas to protest a rise in electricity costs and new taxes imposed on shop owners. The government of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has steadily raised electricity prices since Pakistan last month struck a deal with the International Monetary Fund for a new USD 7 billion loan. The higher cost of living and price hikes have triggered widespread discontent and drawn protests. Most of the public markets across Pakistan were closed on Wednesday, though pharmacies and grocery stores selling basic food items



remained open. Kashif Chaudhry, a strike leader, said those were not closed so as not to inconvenience the general public. Stores were shuttered in the Pakistani capital of Islamabad, the nearby garrison city of Rawalpindi, as well as in

associations. However, traders in the northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the southwestern Balochistan provinces observed a partial strike, keeping some stores open while closing others. The strike is aimed at forcing the government to reverse the recent hikes in power bills and the controversial tax that followed the recent talks with the IMF, which wants to see Pakistan broaden its tax base. The July deal was Pakistan's latest turn to the global lender for help in propping up its economy and dealing with its debts through big bailouts. Earlier this year, the IMF approved the immediate release of the final USD 1.1 billion tranche of a \$3 billion bailout to Pakistan.

'Working on identifying culprits in alleged financial coup'

PTI ■ MALE

Maldivian police on Wednesday said that they are working on identifying the possible culprits in an alleged 'financial coup', two days after President Mohamed Muizzu accused the opposition of plotting to topple his government using a decision by the national bank to suspend foreign transactions from Rufiyaa cards. On Sunday, the Bank of Maldives (BML) suspended foreign transactions for existing debit cards, as well as new debit and credit cards linked to MVR (the Maldivian rufiyaa) accounts. It also lowered the monthly standard and gold credit card limit to USD 100. However, it reversed the decision within hours, saying it was based on instructions

from its regulator, the Maldives Monetary Authority (MMA). The police opened a criminal investigation on Monday, citing there's room to believe the opposition had attempted to topple President Muizzu's administration by stoking up fears of a financial crisis and inciting people to take to the streets. In a statement on Wednesday, the police said they are working on "collecting all necessary information and conducting a detailed review of everything that needs looking into" in their investigation, the Sun news portal reported. "We are also identifying the people who possibly need to be taken action against and all other works pertaining to the investigation," said the police. Speaking at a party meeting of the ruling People's National

Congress (PNC) on Monday night, President Muizzu said that he had worked to find a resolution for the Bank issue alongside his ministers as soon as he had become aware of the situation. He asserted that the bank's decision had been against his advice. Muizzu said that many had raised questions as to why a government-majority holding bank had made such a decision against government advice. However, most people were unaware that BML's Board of Directors does not have a government majority at this time, he said. Muizzu, known for his pro-China leanings, was sworn in as the President in November last year. "As of now, there's only four government directors there. The remaining five directors

are not government-aligned. So we don't have a majority yet. We have nominated two directors, but it will take a couple of weeks for them to be appointed through the existing procedures there. Even though the Chairman has not been appointed yet, the name has been sent," he said. Muizzu, who also heads the ruling People's National Congress (PNC) party, alleged that this was a calculated coup attempt by a select group of people and added that the Police have now commenced investigations into the matter. The main opposition Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) chairperson Fayyaz Ismail, however, said that the events show a coup brewing within President Muizzu's administration and not one instigated by outside forces.

Two killed in sectarian violence in Pak's Punjab province

Lahore (PTI): At least two Shia men were killed and over 30 others injured in a deadly sectarian clash in Pakistan's Punjab province, forcing authorities to deploy paramilitary forces in the area, police said on Wednesday. The clash between two sects — Shia and Sunni — took place in Kalabagh Town Mianwali district, some 400 km from Lahore starting on Monday evening and continuing through Tuesday till late evening. Tension was simmering between the two sects over taking out a procession in connection with the Chehlum of Imam Hussain, grandson of Prophet Muhammad, in Kalabagh Town through a certain route. A senior police officer told PTI on Wednesday that the Sunnis had objected that the Shias should not be allowed to take out a procession on a route which had their mosques. However, the Shias insisted that they would take out the procession in the town without caring about any restrictions.

The officer said that the Shias took out the procession on the 'certain route' that caused the sectarian clash. "The crossfire between the two sects started on Monday evening and lasted till late on Tuesday night. Some 33 people with bullet wounds were shifted to hospital where two Shia men succumbed to their injuries while the condition of three to four others is critical," he said. Some armed Sunni men first opened fire on the Shia procession which led to the armed clash. Besides the dead, most of the injured belong to the Shia sect.

The police officer further said elements of the banned Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), an anti-Shai outfit, could be behind this incident. Punjab Inspector General Police Dr Usman Anwar rushed to the troubled town and imposed a ban on the assembling of four people, in the whole district of Mianwali.

Following the deadly clash, Pakistan Rangers were deputed to the area to maintain law and order and both rangers and police personnel deployed in Mianwali held patrolling in the town on Wednesday.

Ukraine seeks more US weapons support for Russia offensive

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Ukraine's daring ground offensive has taken the fight to Russia, but not nearly as much as its leaders would like because, they say, the United States won't let them. The U.S. restricts the use of long-range ballistic missiles it provides to Ukraine, which wants to aim them at military targets inside Russia. Ukraine's offensive, along with a barrage of drones and missiles that Moscow launched this week, has intensified pressure on the Biden administration to ease its cautious approach to the use of Western weapons in escalating Ukrainian attacks. The Biden administration says its careful deliberations, including which advanced weapons it supplies to Ukraine and when, are necessary to avoid provoking retaliation from Russian President Vladimir Putin. Some analysts agree Putin would take a Ukrainian strike by an American long-range ballistic

missile within Russia as an attack by the U.S. itself. But many other American and European supporters of Ukraine say the White House should see that Putin's threats of attacking the West, including with nuclear weapons, are bluster. Their fear is the U.S. support that has allowed Ukraine to withstand Russia's 2022 invasion comes with delays and caveats that could ultimately contribute to its defeat. "This war is going to end exactly how Western policymakers decide it will end," said Philip Breedlove, a retired U.S. general who led NATO in Europe from 2013 to 2016 and is among the retired U.S. military leaders and diplomats, Republican lawmakers, security analysts and others pushing for a loosening of restrictions on how Ukraine uses Western-provided weapons. "If we keep doing what we're doing, Ukraine will eventually lose," Breedlove said. "Because right now ... we are purposely not giving Ukraine what they

need to win." Lifting such restrictions "would strengthen Ukrainian self-defense, save lives and reduce destruction in Ukraine," European Union foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell wrote Monday on the social platform X after Russia launched more than 200 missiles and drones at Ukraine. The next day, Russia launched 91 more. The push and pull is playing out during Ukraine's surprise offensive into Russia's southern Kursk region, the first ground invasion of Russia since World War II. Throughout the war, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has balanced copious thanks for U.S. support with frustrated appeals for more arms and ammunition. Upping the pressure this month, he again said Ukraine must fight the war as it sees fit with all the weapons at its disposal and appealed for the U.S. to drop a ban on using American long-range ATACMS missiles to strike deeper into Russia.

"A sick old man from the Red Square, who constantly threatens everyone with the red button, will not dictate any of his red lines to us," Zelenskyy said recently of Putin. The Biden administration this year allowed Ukraine to fire shorter-range U.S.-provided munitions across the border in self-defense, but not ATACMS. Security analysts say Ukraine is using U.S.-provided HIMARS rocket systems in its offensive. Ukraine also announced it has used a U.S.-supplied glide bomb against Russian forces and deployed its own prototype of a long-range drone-missile hybrid. Zelenskyy's military appeared to have launched the ground offensive on Aug. 6 without consulting American leaders. As Ukraine has claimed nearly 500 square miles (1,300 square kilometers) of Russian territory, it has taken a message from another U.S. ally that receives military support, said Roman Kostenko, a Ukrainian lawmaker and military commander.

'US military may escort Philippine ships in SCS'

AP ■ MANILA

The US military is open to consultations about escorting Philippine ships in the disputed South China Sea, the head of US Indo-Pacific Command said Tuesday amid a spike in hostilities between Beijing and Manila in the disputed waters. Adm. Samuel Paparo's remarks, which he made in response to a question during a news conference in Manila with Philippine Armed Forces chief Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr., provided a glimpse of the mindset of one of the highest American military commanders outside the U.S. mainland on a prospective operation that would risk putting U.S. Navy ships in direct collisions with those of China. Chinese coast guard, navy and suspected militia ships regularly clash with Philippine vessels during attempts to resupply Filipino sailors stationed in parts of the South China Sea claimed by both countries. As these clashes grow increasingly hostile, resulting in injuries to Filipino sailors and damage to their ships, the Philippine government has faced questions about invoking a treaty alliance with Washington. Paparo and Brawner spoke to reporters after an international military conference in Manila organized by the US Indo-Pacific Command, at which China's increasingly assertive actions in the South China Sea were spotlighted. Military and defense officials and diplomats from the US and allied countries attended but there were no Chinese representatives. Asked if the US military would consider escorting Philippine ships delivering food and other supplies to Filipino forces in the South China Sea, Paparo replied, "Certainly, within the context of consultations."



"Every option between the two sovereign nations in terms of our mutual defense, escort of one vessel to the other, is an entirely reasonable option within our Mutual Defense Treaty, among this close alliance between the two of us," Paparo said without elaborating. Brawner responded cautiously to the suggestion, which could run afoul of Philippine laws including a constitutional ban on foreign forces directly joining local combat operations. "The attitude of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, as dictated by the Philippine laws, is for us to first rely on ourselves," Brawner said. "We are going to try all options, all avenues that are available to us in order for us to achieve the mission...in this case, the resupply and rotation of our troops." "We will then seek for other options when we are already constrained from doing it ourselves," Brawner said. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has said there has been no situation so far that would warrant activating the treaty, which requires the allies to come to each other's aid if they come under external attack. President Joe Biden and his administration have repeatedly renewed their "ironclad" commitment to help defend the Philippines under the 1951 treaty if Filipino forces, ships and aircraft come under an armed attack, including in the South China Sea. Philippine Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr said at the conference that China is "the biggest disruptor" of peace in Southeast Asia and called for stronger international censure over its aggression in the South China Sea, a day after China blocked Philippine vessels from delivering food to a coast guard ship at the disput-

ed Sabina Shoal in the contested waters. Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said that "the label of undermining peace can never be pinned on China," blaming unspecified other actors for "making infringements and provocations in the South China Sea and introducing external forces to undermine the large picture of regional peace and stability." Teodoro later told reporters on the sidelines of the conference that international statements of concern against China's increasingly assertive actions in the disputed waters and elsewhere were "not enough." "The antidote is a stronger collective multilateral action against China," Teodoro said, adding that a UN Security Council resolution would be a strong step, but unlikely given China's security council veto. He also called for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to do more. The 10-nation Southeast Asian bloc includes the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei, which have South China Sea claims that overlap with each other, as well as China's and Taiwan's. "ASEAN, to remain relevant and credible, cannot continue to ignore what China is doing in the South China Sea," Teodoro said. In the latest incident in the South China Sea, Philippine officials said China deployed "an excessive force" of 40 ships that blocked two Philippine vessels from delivering food and other supplies to Manila's largest coast guard ship in Sabina Shoal on Monday.

Ukraine first lady wants country's kids to see themselves as 'generation of winners'

Uzhhorod (Ukraine)(AP): Ukraine's first lady wants her country's children to view themselves not as a generation enduring a grinding war, but rather as "a generation of winners." On the sidelines of a day spent at a rehabilitation camp for Ukrainian children in the relatively safe western city of Uzhhorod, Olena Zelenska said Tuesday that working with the next generation was both a moral obligation and a "strategic priority" for Ukraine's future. Many of the children will return to front-line cities after spending a few weeks at the camp, barely enough time to overcome the trauma they face over and over. "This issue needs to be addressed immediately, as soon as it arises, before it grows into something more," Zelenska told The Associated Press in a brief interview at the camp.



The foundation that bears her name, which is funded entirely by foreign donations, created the camp along with the Voices of the Children charity. A study by the Olena Zelenska Foundation and the Kyiv School of Economics this year found that 44% of Ukrainian children show signs of post-traumatic stress disorder. Dressed casually with white sneakers, black pants, a white

T-shirt and pearls around her neck, Zelenska blended into the camp's activities with the children. Since the start of the war, she has emerged as an unofficial ambassador for Ukraine globally. She was the first from President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's family to leave the country after Russia invaded in February 2022 to promote Ukraine's cause. But she is

equally active within Ukraine, and easily recognizable to the displaced families and wounded soldiers she visits. At the camp, she joined an art therapy session midway, sitting beside a boy whose home was struck by an aerial bomb and who was later forced to evacuate from his hometown ahead of the Russian advance this summer. Zelenska smiled and engaged with the children, examining each watercolor they presented. She even joined in, drawing a pink flower, a star and a heart. The conversation stayed away from the war. "To ensure our children do not become a lost generation, we as adults must be not just active but also swift," Zelenska said. "It's difficult, but there is still the ongoing defense of the country. However, I am confident that political will combined with international cooperation can work wonders."

UN resolution on Myanmar condemns military attacks on civilians, urge peace

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

Renewed peace efforts, condemning attacks on civilians — especially by the Myanmar military — and calling for a halt to illicit arms transfers. The draft resolution obtained Tuesday by The Associated Press expresses "alarm at the increased violence across Myanmar," which is engulfed in civil war between the military-led regime and resistance forces. It calls for "safe, rapid, and unhindered humanitarian access at scale," expressing "grave concern" at the deteriorating humanitarian situation and restrictions on humanitarian access in the country that led to rising food insecurity and hunger. The proposed resolution warns that the current situation has the potential to further exacerbate discrimination, ethnically motivated violence, violations of international humanitarian law, human rights abuses, and con-

flict-related sexual violence. Myanmar's military ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi on Feb. 1, 2021. It was the day Parliament was to reconvene following November 2020 elections, which her National League for Democracy party won overwhelmingly — an outcome the military claims without evidence was based on fraud. Suu Kyi and party members remain under arrest. The takeover was met with massive public opposition, which has since turned into armed resistance and civil war. The military regime now faces its greatest challenge from the ethnic minority militias and people's defense forces who support the main opposition and have captured wide swaths of territory in fierce fighting in recent months. The draft resolution stresses the central role of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the 10-country bloc whose 2021 peace plan has so far

been rejected by Myanmar's generals. It calls for an immediate end to the violence and dialogue among contending parties brokered through an ASEAN envoy. The draft resolution urges renewed efforts by the ASEAN special envoy to Myanmar, Alounkeo Kittikhoun, and new U.N. special envoy, Julie Bishop, "to engage all relevant stakeholders to seek a peaceful, inclusive solution to the crisis in Myanmar." Security Council negotiations on the draft resolution are expected to be tough. The 15-member council approved its first-ever resolution on Myanmar in December 2022 by a vote of 12-0 with three abstentions — Russia, China and India, who all have ties to the Myanmar regime. India's two-year term on the council ended that month, but Russia and China are veto-wielding permanent members of the council.

24 missing after floods in Yemen

Cairo (AP): Floodwaters swept through a village in northern Yemen, inundating homes and shops and leaving at least 24 people missing, authorities said Wednesday. Heavy rains over the past few days pounded the Melhan district in Al-Mahwit province, triggering floods that caved in seven homes and four shops, according to a statement. Yemen is already the poorest Arab nation before it was plunged into civil war in 2014, when Iran-backed Houthis rebels took control of the capital, Sanaa, and much of the country's north, forcing the government to flee to the south, then to Saudi Arabia. Seasonal monsoon rains in the late summer often turn into flooding in Yemen, but there are indications that the country is experiencing more extreme weather events due to climate change.

Haiti's army wants recruits to fight gangs, and youths jump at rare job offer

Port-Au-Prince (Haiti) (AP): The announcement that Haiti's military wanted recruits crackled through a small radio perched on a street stall in downtown Port-Au-Prince where Maurenceley Clerge repairs and sells smartphones. It was early morning, and the 21-year-old paused, eager to hear the details. He envisioned earning enough to afford his own food and rent. Two weeks later, he completed the required paperwork and stood in line with hundreds of other Haitians under a brutal sun for the chance to join up. "It's the moment I have been waiting for," said Clerge, who stays with a friend who also provides him with food. "I want to serve as a citizen of this country and also to move up and upgrade my life." Thousands of young Haitians are jumping at the chance to become soldiers as widespread gang violence creates a rare job opportunity in a deeply impoverished country where work is scarce.

Brushing aside the possibility they could be kidnapped, tortured or killed, Haiti's youngest generation is answering the call of a government seeking to rebuild a once-reviled military, reinstated just years ago with the aim to crush gangs. "I thought about it a lot because I know that being a soldier requires a lot of sacrifice," said Samuel Delmas, who recently applied. "Everything that you're doing is risky." The 20-year-old is taking computer repair courses but doesn't have a job. He heard about the recruitment via a Facebook group. "I have always wanted to be useful to my country," he said. Gangs forced Delmas and his family to flee their home two years ago, with only enough time to grab a handful of clothes amid a barrage of gunfire. "I want to protect citizens who are on the run like me," he said. Haiti's government has not said how many soldiers it aims to hire nor how many have applied so far, but documents published

online by the Defense Ministry show that at least 3,000 people were selected in mid-August and asked to submit documents as they await physical and mental tests. If all were hired, that would more than double the force strength of 2,000 of early last year. About 60% of Haiti's population of nearly 12 million people earn less than \$2 a day, with inflation soaring to double digits in recent years. "Most young kids are not working," said Emerson Celadon, a 25-year-old mechanic who applied and was selected for the next round. "I was making some money, but ... that is still not enough for a family of four." It's not clear how much soldiers earn, Defense Minister Jean-Marc Bernier Antoine did not return messages for comment. However, Celadon said friends in the army told him they make about \$300 a month. On a recent afternoon, Celadon joined hundreds of mostly young men lined up outside a former U.N. base, a yellow envelope under his arm,

waiting to take the first of several required tests to join the army. Haiti's armed forces were once widely feared and hated, with soldiers accused of horrific human rights abuses. The military organized several coups in the second half of the 20th century, even after so-called "dictator for life" François Duvalier diluted its strength. After the last coup in 1991, to oust former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the government disbanded the armed forces in 1995. At the time, there were some 7,000 soldiers. "The decision to demobilize the army ... proved to be one of the most catastrophic decisions in the country's history," said Michael Deibert, the author of two books about Haiti. He noted that, as a result, the first generation of politically-aligned gangs took root in the late 1990s and early 2000s. "They stepped into a security void left by what would have been a security force, one whose role the Haitian police have never been fully able to assume," Deibert said.

Nifty gains marginally to hit lifetime high

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark Nifty rose marginally to hit a fresh lifetime high of 25,052 and Sensex gained over 70 points on Wednesday, helped by buying in IT stocks amid a largely positive global market. Recent foreign fund inflows and lower global crude oil prices also strengthened investor sentiments, traders said.

Rising for the tenth straight session, the NSE Nifty went up by 34.60 points or 0.14 per cent to settle at a new closing high of 25,052.35. The benchmark surged 111.85 points or 0.44 per cent to hit a fresh intra-day all-time peak of 25,129.60. Extending its winning run to the seventh day in a row, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 73.80 points or 0.09 per cent to settle at 81,785.56. During the day, it jumped 327.5 points or 0.40 per cent to 82,039.26. Among the 30 Sensex firms,



Bharti Airtel, Infosys, IndusInd Bank, Sun Pharma, Tech Mahindra, Mahindra & Mahindra, Bajaj Finance and JSW Steel were the biggest gainers. Asian Paints, Maruti, Nestle, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Axis Bank and UltraTech Cement were among the laggards. In Asian markets, Seoul and Tokyo settled higher while Shanghai and Hong Kong ended lower.

European markets were trading in positive territory. The US markets ended with marginal gains on Tuesday. "The market has entered a consolidation phase with low volatility and this trend is likely to continue in the near-term. Falling bond yields in the US have restrained FII selling and they have even turned marginal buyers. Going by previous trends, DIIs are likely to sell if FIIs

continue to buy. "This trend will keep the market within a range with a slight upward bias. This is a desirable and healthy trend, given the elevated valuations in the market," V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services, said. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 1,503.76 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data. Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 604.08 crore. Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.82 per cent to USD 78.90 a barrel. After oscillating between highs and lows, the BSE benchmark eked out a marginal gain of 13.65 points or 0.02 per cent to settle at 81,711.76 on Tuesday. The NSE Nifty ended almost flat, up 7.15 points or 0.03 per cent, at 25,017.75 — its ninth straight session of gains.

SBI MD hopes market correction over time will get funds back to banking system

PTI ■ MUMBAI

SBI Managing Director Ashwini Tewari on Wednesday said a correction in the equity markets "over time" can help banks get back the deposits it has ceded. He also said the country's largest lender is betting on the small-ticket Prime Minister Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) accounts to drive deposit growth. Speaking on the sidelines of the GFF, he told reporters that the capital markets rally has seen a shift of money away from the banks to the higher yielding alternatives. "As the market corrects over time, some of the money that was earlier with us, will come back," he said. Interestingly, he said the bank is also looking at the small-ticket deposits from the decade-old PMJDY across its vast network as well to drive its deposit growth. "(We are focusing) on the small-value, small ticket accounts to raise deposits. Jan Dhan is something we have not focused on (previously), which we will do," he said. It can be noted that for nearly



18 months, the credit growth has been racing ahead of the deposit growth, forcing lenders to raise rates and compromising margins, and has also led to fears of banks being forced to temper loan growth. The Indian markets have witnessed an impressive rally in the last few months and the banking system has been complaining about the shift of funds being one of the reasons for slower deposit growth. Tewari on Wednesday said the regulator's moves on higher risk weights on unsecured loans and proposals on higher provisioning for project loans

are a "signal" for tempering deposit growth. He also said if the market demands, the bank will have to raise deposit rates. The MD of the bank said nearly 90 per cent of the funds fuelling credit for the banking system used to come from deposits, and the share is coming down as the banks are forced to go for other instruments like infrastructure bonds. Meanwhile, Tewari said the bank is not seeing any higher delinquency on the micro loans portfolio. He also said there is a scope for the volumes on central bank digital currency to go up.

Family Offices AUM growth projected at 14 per cent over three years: Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Family Offices in India projected for 14 per cent growth in Asset Under Management (AUM) and a 5 per cent increase in alternative investments over the next 3 years, a report said. AUM for mid to large-sized family offices in India will grow at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 14 per cent over the next three years, potentially increasing by 1.5 times, a report by Sundaram Alternates titled 'From Legacy to Leadership' said. This report highlights the significant evolution of family offices as they transition from wealth preservation to a growth-focused mindset. Indian family offices are increasingly embracing alternative investments, with a projected 5 per cent increase in allocations to 18 per cent over the next three years, it said. This aligns with a global trend, where family offices allocate more than 50 per cent of their assets to alternatives, it said.

GAIL says LNG under new pacts to flow from 2026, gets one more ship

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned gas utility SGAIL (India) Ltd will start importing LNG under two new contracts from 2026 and has added one more ship to transport the fuel, its Chairman Sandeep Kumar Gupta said on Wednesday. The company had in January this year signed back-to-back deals to import liquefied natural gas (LNG). It first signed deal to import 1 million tonnes of LNG from Dutch energy trader Vitol for 10 years and then another agreement to buy 0.5 million tonne per annum of LNG from UAE's ADNOC-Gas. "As a leading natural gas player, your company

recognises the importance of ensuring supply security. In this direction, we have signed two 10-year LNG supply agreements, starting in 2026: 1 million tonnes from Vitol Asia Pte Ltd, Singapore and 0.5 million tonnes from ADNOC Gas, UAE," he said at the company's annual general meeting. LNG is natural gas, extracted from below the surface, that has been cooled down to liquid form for ease and safety of non-pressurised storage or transport. GAIL will import LNG in cryogenic ships and turn it back into its gaseous state before piping it to users that may include power plants for generating electricity,

fertiliser units for producing crop nutrients or city gas operators for selling to automobiles as CNG or piping to household kitchens for cooking. India imports roughly half of its gas needs as local production is insufficient to meet demand. GAIL operates a 5 million tonnes a year LNG import facility at Dabhol in Maharashtra and has leased space at terminals in Gujarat and Odisha. It is scouting for a 26 per cent stake in a US-based LNG plant to source 1 million tonnes-a-year of LNG for 15 years. "Additionally, GAIL's volume of 4.5 million tonnes per annum is now renewed under LNG SPA signed between Qatar Energy LNG

and Petronet LNG Ltd, with supplies commencing in 2028 for a period of 20 years," he said. GAIL has hired the long-term LNG vessel, GAIL Urja, and has entered into a 14-year time charter party agreement for a newly built LNG carrier. "The time charter for this LNG carrier will begin in early 2025," he said, adding that GAIL's fleet of five LNG carriers will enable the company to meet the requirement of transporting contracted LNG volumes to India. Gupta said GAIL, which is India's largest gas transportation and marketing firm, is also solidifying its position as a

key player in the Indian petrochemical industry by establishing a diverse range of product offerings. "GAIL's 500,000 tonnes PDHPP project at Usar (in Maharashtra), 60,000 polypropylene plant at Pata (Uttar Pradesh), 1.25 million tonnes PTA plant at GMPL, Mangaluru and 50,000 tonnes Isopropyl Alcohol (IPA) Project at Usar will diversify and expand GAIL's existing petrochemical portfolio and provide robust growth in years to come," he said. "GAIL is also exploring the feasibility of setting up a world scale greenfield ethane cracker." It is also working on feasibility of coal gasification

project in a joint venture with Coal India Ltd to produce synthetic natural gas. Stating that GAIL was well-positioned to become a leader in the energy transition, he said the company board has approved the advancement of the net zero carbon emission target by five years from the earlier 2040 to 2035. "Advancing its endeavours to reduce its carbon footprint, GAIL has installed the country's first MW scale green hydrogen electrolyser in Vijaipur, Madhya Pradesh," he said, adding that the firm was also working on setting up of 500 kilo litres per day 1G ethanol plant.

Govt to soon launch scheme to train adolescent girls for non-traditional jobs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government will soon launch a scheme to train 14-18 years old girls in non-traditional job roles, a move aimed at increasing women's participation in the labour force, a top official said on Wednesday. The pilot of the scheme will be launched in the next 2-3 weeks, Secretary in Ministry of Women and Child Development Anil Malik said. The scheme, which is being launched in 27 districts in the pilot phase, will eventually be expanded to cover 218 districts across the country, he said. A non-traditional career is generally defined as a certain

role that has less than 25 per cent of a specific gender, either men or women. As part of the 'Introduction of Special Project for Empowering Adolescent Girls & Women, 14-18 years old girls would be provided training near their schools and homes while they continue their education. The secretary shared that the pilot will be launched in 2-3 weeks under which training in non-traditional job roles will be provided along with digital skilling, digital marketing and general personality orientation. This programme would ultimately lead to higher participation of women in the labour force, he added.

Rupee falls three paise to close at 83.96 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee depreciated 3 paise to close at 83.96 (provisional) against the American currency on Wednesday, amidst strong dollar demand from importers particularly oil companies. Forex traders said a positive trend in domestic equities, foreign fund inflows and overnight decline in crude oil prices cushioned the downside.



Anuj Choudhary -- Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas. Choudhary further noted that rise in global risk sentiments amid dovish Fed speak and rising expectations of a rate cut by the US Fed in September may support the rupee. "Traders may remain cautious ahead of US GDP and core personal consumption expenditures (PCE) data from the US this week. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading

0.36 per cent higher at 100.91. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, declined 0.93 per cent to USD 78.81 per barrel. On the domestic equity market front, Sensex rose 73.80 points, or 0.09 per cent, to close at 81,785.56 points. The Nifty closed 34.60 points, or 0.14 per cent, up at 25,052.35 points. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net buyers in the capital markets on Tuesday, as they purchased shares worth Rs 1,503.76 crore, according to exchange data.

Fast cross-border payments to make it difficult to check money laundering, terror funding: Fed official

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Days after RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das sought to bring greater efficiency to trans-border transactions, a senior US Fed official on Wednesday said that frictionless cross-border payments will make it difficult to check money laundering and terror funding. Speaking at the Global Fintech Fest 2024 here, Christopher J Waller, a member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, made it clear that "not all frictions that slow payments down are bad". The US Fed official overseeing payment systems said slowing down the speed at which payments are cleared and settled helps banks prevent money laundering and counter the financing of terrorism, detect fraud, and recover fraudulent or misdirected cross-border payments. He said unless new solutions are found, interlinking fast payment systems "might



increase" the risk-management burden for banks that participate in them. Acknowledging that consumers and businesses want cheaper and faster cross-border payments, Waller expressed his reservations. "I am not entirely convinced that interlinking arrangements will necessarily deliver," he said. Delivering a lecture in India's tech capital Bengaluru on Monday, Das advocated a faster interlinking of domestic payment systems to overcome the concerns of high costs and delays. "With the emergence of Fast

Payment Systems across countries and experimentation around CBDC, new possibilities are opening up to bring in greater efficiency to cross-border payments. Maximum efficiency gains in such initiatives would come from ensuring inter-operability as a key design element," Das had said. Waller, however, said that it may not be easier. "There is no silver bullet that increases speed and efficiency without tradeoffs," he added. He said certain frictions are built "purposely" into the global payment system for compliance and risk-

management reasons. The professor of economics said legal, compliance and operational considerations will have to be looked at, along with governance, oversight, data privacy and settlement arrangements when thinking about interlinking. He said the right incentives for the sender in a cross-border payment is essential, and also conceded that it exists in remittances. However, these are very small value transactions, he said, wondering whether the senders need to be incentivised at all. "We need to ask ourselves whether banks would find a central bank interlinking service more effective than their existing arrangements for cross-border payments, and if they would actually use it," Waller said. He also made it clear that having strong domestic networks is a necessity before one can embark on interlinking and added that the US Fed's system will take two years to be ready.

Gold prices remain steady; silver declines ₹400



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices remained flat at Rs 74,350 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday in scattered deals even as it weakened in the overseas markets. Silver prices, however, declined Rs 400 to Rs 87,800 per kilogram. It had ended at Rs 88,200 per kg in the previous session on Tuesday. Meanwhile, gold of 99.5 per cent purity also ruled flat at Rs 74,000 per 10 grams. Traders attributed the fall in silver price due to poor offtake by industrial units and global influences. In the international markets, comex gold is trading at USD 2,542.20 per ounce, down USD 10.70 per ounce or 0.42 per cent. "Gold prices were slightly lower during European trading hours on Wednesday, due to a rebound in the US dollar," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. According to Kaynat Chainwala, AVP-Commodity Research, Kotak Securities, comex gold is trading above USD 2,500 per ounce, supported by the FOMC meeting minutes, which reinforced expectations of a September rate cut. Rising geopolitical tensions, particularly the escalating Israel-Hezbollah conflict, also bolstered gold prices as a safe-haven asset, Chainwala said. Silver was also quoting lower at USD 29.93 per ounce in the global markets.

Shipping Ministry approves wage structure revision for workers of major ports

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways has approved wage structure revision for workers at major ports, an official statement said on Wednesday. According to the statement, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between the Bipartite Wage Negotiation Committee (BWNC) and the Indian Port Association (IPA), averting an indefinite strike that was set to disrupt operations across 12 major ports in India. The MoU facilitates the revision of the wage structure and addresses other service conditions, including

penonary benefits, it added. It was also agreed that the fitment benefit of 8.5 per cent on the aggregate amount of basic pay as of December 31, 2021, plus 30 per cent VDA (variable dearness allowance) as of January 1, 2022, will be granted. "The periodicity of the settlement is set for five years, from January 1, 2022, to December 31, 2026. "The new pay scales, effective from January 1, 2022, will be formulated according to existing practices," the statement said. Both parties agreed to consider aligning the periodicity of future wage revisions for both officers and employees, starting from

January 1, 2027, to avoid any potential anomalies, the ministry said. Additionally, the statement said, a special allowance of Rs 500 per month will be provided to working employees during the operative period of the settlement, from January 1, 2022, until December 31, 2026, or until the date of the employee's superannuation, whichever comes first. Ports, Shipping and Waterways Minister Sarbananda Sonowal said the timely resolution of these issues reflects MoPSWs commitment to fostering a harmonious and productive working environment across all Indian ports.

A draft committee meeting, scheduled to convene on August 28, 2024, will prepare the settlement within ten days. This committee will include one representative from each federation as well as management representatives appointed by the IPA Chairman. "The management assured that the BWNC proceedings will be concluded, with the final settlement reached within 15 days," the statement said, adding that considering this development, the six federations have unanimously decided to defer the strike previously planned for August 28, 2024.

UPI transaction volume expected to rise to 439 bn by FY29: PwC India report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The total transaction volume on UPI is expected to increase to 439 billion by 2028-29 from about 131 billion in the last financial year and account for 91 per cent of overall retail digital payments, said a PwC India Report. The report titled "The Indian Payments Handbook -- 2024-29" also said India's digital payments landscape has witnessed remarkable growth over the past eight years and the industry is projected to expand more than three times in volume, from 159 billion transactions in 2023-24 to 481 billion by 2028-29. In terms of value of payment transactions, the market



growth is expected to double, from Rs 265 lakh crore to Rs 593 lakh crore over the same period. The PwC India report said UPI continues its remarkable growth trajectory with a year-on-year growth in transaction volume of 57 per cent, it said. "In FY 2023-24, the total transaction volume was slightly over 131 billion and is

expected to grow to 439 billion by 2028-29. UPI now accounts for over 80 per cent of the overall retail digital payments in India and is expected to contribute to 91 per cent by 2028-29," the report said. It further said credit cards have witnessed a formidable growth in 2023-24 with the industry adding more than 16 million new ones. With the addition of new cards, the industry has also seen 22 per cent and 28 per cent surge in transactional volume and value, respectively. On the other hand, debit cards have seen a dip in both transactions volume and value owing to the shift in preferences by cardholders.

KOHLI, JAISWAL MOVE UP IN TEST RANKINGS, ROHIT DROPS TO 6TH



PTI ■ DUBAI
Senior India batter Virat Kohli moved up two rungs to eighth place while his captain Rohit Sharma dropped a spot to sixth in the latest ICC Test rankings released here on Wednesday. Joining Rohit and Kohli in the top 10 is young Yashasvi Jaiswal, who has moved up a spot to seventh. Veteran England batter Joe Root maintained his place as the top ranked Test batter in the world following their success in the opening Test

against Sri Lanka in Manchester. But Root's teammate Harry Brook has made a massive jump on the back of scores of 56 and 32 during that Old Trafford contest. The 25-year-old has risen three places to fourth overall, leaping past Pakistan's Babar Azam, Australia's Steve Smith and Rohit. Babar has dropped a whopping six places to fall from shared third to ninth following a rare failure in the first innings of Pakistan's Test against Bangladesh in

Rawalpindi. But teammate Mohammad Rizwan gained seven spots, achieving a new career-high rating by moving inside the top 10 at a shared 10th following his century in the same match. Bangladesh's Mushfiqur Rahim has achieved a career-high rating as he climbed seven spots to move to 17th. Seasoned India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin continues to hold the top spot among bowlers while pacer Jasprit Bumrah and left-arm spinner Ravindra Jadeja have maintained their third and

seventh spots respectively. England seamer Chris Woakes, who is up four rungs to 16th, and Sri Lanka's Asitha Fernando (up 10 spots to 17th) have gained some ground while Pakistan's right-arm pacer Naseem Shah (up four spots to 33rd) and England's Gus Atkinson (up four places to 42nd) have attained career-best ratings following good returns from their recent appearances. Among all-rounders, Jadeja and Ashwin continue to occupy the top two spots while Axar Patel is ranked sixth.

LLC returns with Season 3 Takes legendary cricketers to Kashmir after nearly 40 years

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Legends League Cricket, featuring retired swashbucklers like Shikhar Dawan and Dinesh Karthik among others, will return for a third season on September 20, criss-crossing Jodhpur, Surat, and Jammu before finally bringing the high-profile cricketers to Srinagar after close to 40 years. The league will kick off at the Barkatullah Khan Stadium in Jodhpur on September 20. A total of 25 matches will be played among six teams and the last two sides standing will play the final on October 16. The franchise-based tournament, which features a pool of over 200 players, will have its final at the Bakshi Stadium in Srinagar. "Legends League Cricket is back for another season and we are very excited to also be playing in Kashmir this season. This is a huge opportunity for the people of Kashmir to come to the stadium and



watch live cricketing action for the first time in almost 40 years," said Raman Raheja, Co-Founder, Legends League Cricket. "It also presents a unique opportunity for the cricketers to experience the beauty of Kashmir and enjoy the hospitality and

love of the wonderful people of Srinagar." The organisers stated that the league attracted a massive audience of 180 million across India during the previous season, spanning 19 matches. "With an extended schedule and a star-studded lineup, including the recently retired Dhawan and Karthik, the upcoming season is poised to surpass previous records," the organisers stated. In the previous edition held in India, former international stalwarts such as Suresh Raina, Aaron Finch, Martin Guttill, current India head coach Gautam Gambhir, Chris Gayle, Hashim Amla, Ross Taylor, and many others played alongside 110 other legendary cricketers. The league will kick off in Jodhpur and then make its way to the Lalbhai Contractor Stadium in Surat. The third leg will be played at the Maulana Azad Stadium, Jammu. The players' auction for the event will be held here on Thursday.

Dawid Malan, former top-ranked T20 batter, retires from England cricket

AP ■ LONDON

Dawid Malan, the former top-ranked T20 batter who scored centuries for England in all formats, has announced his retirement from the international arena. The 36-year-old Malan told British newspaper The Times of London that he exceeded expectations with his success in the white-ball game but was disappointed that he couldn't

handle the intensity of Test cricket. Malan, a top-order batter, played 22 Tests as well as 30 ODIs and 62 T20 internationals. It was in the T20 game where he excelled, becoming No. 1 in the batting rankings in 2020 and winning the T20 World Cup in 2022. Malan was left out of the squad for the upcoming white-ball series against Australia and hasn't played for England in any format since the 50-over



World Cup last year. It was his inability to forge a career as a Test batter that leaves him with most regrets. "I took all three formats extremely seriously but the intensity of test cricket was something else - five days plus the days building up," Malan told the Times. "I'm a big trainer; I love hitting lots of balls and I'd train hard in the build-up, and then the days were long and intense. You can't switch off. "I found it very mentally draining, especially the long test series that I played, where my performances dropped off from the third or fourth test onwards.

Impact Player rule gives little more value for strategy and makes game fairer: Ashwin



PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Seasoned India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin feels that the IPL's 'Impact Player' rule has made the game fairer and added "value for strategy" in the event. Senior India players like Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma have been critical of the rule as they feel it holds back development of Indian all-rounders and upsets the balance between bat and ball. However, Ashwin feels the rule, introduced in the 2023 season which allows all IPL teams to substitute a player -- batter or bowler -- during their respective innings as per the demands of the match, makes the game fairer. "Why I think the Impact Player rule is not so bad is because it gives a little more value for

strategy," 'ESPNCricinfo' quoted Ashwin as saying on former India captain Krishnamachari Srikkanth's YouTube show, which is in Tamil. "The other side of that argument is it doesn't encourage all-rounders. But no one is stopping them. In this generation, they don't do it (batters bowling and vice-versa). "It's not like they're discouraged because of the Impact Player rule. Look at Venkatesh Iyer, he's currently rocking for Lancashire. There's an opportunity for innovation and it makes the game fairer," Ashwin added. The 37-year-old backed his stance by citing the Qualifier 2 match in which Sunrisers Hyderabad replaced opener Travis Head with spinner

Shahbaz Ahmed against Rajasthan Royals at this year's IPL. Ahmed went on to become the player of the match, claiming three wickets including Ashwin's. "Sunrisers brought in Shahbaz Ahmed as an Impact Player (after hitting 175 for 9 batting first). He went on to become a match-winner. Ashwin argued that the rule can play a significant role in balancing matches when there is dew. "When dew has the potential to make games one-sided, teams bowling second get an extra option as a counter. If you're batting second, you can tactically make a substitution by off-loading the extra bowler for a batter," he said. "Games are tighter, an extra player is getting to play. Barring Kolkata or Mumbai, where scores skyrocketed, they haven't been a drastic change elsewhere. Like at Punjab Kings' home venue (Mullanpur), they were all 160-170 games." On the other hand, the rule has helped several players advance in their careers, even earning spots in the national team, reckoned Ashwin. "Shahbaz Ahmed, Shivam Dube most importantly, Dhruv Jurel... If not for the Impact Player rule, he may have never gotten the chance. So the emergence of a lot of players has happened. I'm not saying that's the only way for players to emerge, but it's not so bad," he said.

Five-wicket burst from Aayush secures Purani Dilli 6's win over North Delhi Strikers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Pacer Aayush Thakur's five-wicket haul powered Purani Dilli 6 to a 20-run win over North Delhi Strikers at the Delhi Premier League here. Aayush (5/27) wreaked havoc, blowing away NDS's top-order as they were restricted for 172/7 in their chase of 193. Aayush struck in his first over dismissing opener Sarthak Ranjan for a duck. He returned to get rid of Yash Dabas in the third over followed by Kshitiz Sharma in the fifth over. Opener Vaibhav Kandpal (57) and Yajas Sharma (41) stitched a 55-run partnership for the fourth wicket and looked on course to chase the target but the latter was run out.



Kandpal along with Vaibhav Rawal then took on the responsibility of chasing the target. The duo started finding boundaries at regular intervals keeping the run rate in their control.

However, Purani Dilli 6 got back in the game as Rawal was run out at a crucial time leaving NDS needing 58 runs off 32 balls. But Aayush swung into action get the key wicket of Kandpal. Aayush completed his five-wicket haul, dismissing Pranshu for a duck. Earlier, Purani Dilli 6 captain Arpit Rana (42) and Sanat Sangwan (47) put up a 94-run opening stand. With Rana back in the pavilion, Sangwan was next to take the long walk back as he was dismissed by Manan Bhardwaj. Arnav Bugga (39) and Lalit Yadav (9) stitched a 38-run partnership before Mayank Gusain blazed away to 40 off just 12 balls with the help of one boundary and five sixes to provide the final flourish.



Zaheer Khan set to join LSG as team mentor

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Lucknow Super Giants are set to appoint former India speedster Zaheer Khan as their mentor ahead of the IPL mega auction. The appointment marks the return of the 45-year-old left-arm pacer to the IPL fold after two years, having been associated with five-time champions Mumbai Indians from 2018-2022. A formal unveiling is scheduled at the RPSG Group Headquarters here on Wednesday. "Zaheer has been appointed as team mentor and the unveiling will happen later today," sources told PTI. Zaheer will thus take up the role left vacant by Gautam Gambhir last year when he went to join his former franchise Kolkata Knight Riders and guided them to the IPL title in 2024. Gambhir is now the Indian head coach. At Mumbai Indians, Zaheer first served as the director of cricket before taking on the role of head of global development. LSG currently do not have a bowling coach after the departure of South African speedster Morne Morkel, who has joined Gambhir's coaching staff. It is learnt that Zaheer will also be involved in scouting and player-development programme during the off season. Before his coaching career, Zaheer played for three IPL teams -- Mumbai Indians, Royal Challengers Bangalore, and Delhi Daredevils. Over 10 seasons, Zaheer appeared in 100 matches for these teams, claiming 102 wickets with an economy rate of 7.58. His final appearance in the IPL was in 2017 when he captained the Delhi Daredevils, after which he retired from all forms of cricket. LSG have Justin Langer as head coach with the Australian replacing Andy Flower before the last IPL as he is set to continue with his deputies Lance Klusener and Adam Voges.

Will ensure Test cricket remains priority as it forms bedrock of game: ICC chairman Jay Shah

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Newly-elected ICC Chairman Jay Shah says he will look to ensure that Test cricket forms the "bedrock" of the game in his tenure during which he will also try to "dismantle barriers that have hindered cricket's progress". The 35-year-old will relinquish his current position of BCCI secretary to succeed incumbent Greg Barclay on December 1 as the youngest ICC Chairman for a term of two years. "While the T20 is a naturally exciting format, it is equally important that Test cricket

remains a priority for everyone as it forms the bedrock of our game," Shah said in a statement issued by the BCCI on Tuesday. "We must see to it that cricketers are driven to longer format and our efforts will be channelised towards this goal," he added. Shah said he would also like to work towards setting up a separate program for talent search. He emphasised on lifting the standard of the game across the globe. "I want to assure you that I will do everything possible to elevate the standard of our game across the globe. As I



step into this pivotal role, I am resolutely committed to meeting your high expectations and dedicating myself to the beautiful game of cricket," he said. Shah, who is the son of union home minister Amit Shah, will

relinquish his position as the BCCI secretary at the board's Annual General Meeting likely to be held towards the end of next month or in October. Shah became the fifth Indian after the late Jagmohan Dalmiya, Sharad Pawar, N Srinivasan and Shashank Manohar to be elected for the high-profile job. "With cricket poised to make its historic debut at the Olympics in 2028, we stand at the precipice of a transformative era. This juncture is not merely a milestone, it's a clarion call for all of us involved in this magnificent sport.

West Indies beat South Africa by 8 wickets in 3rd T20, sweep series 3-0

AP ■ TAROUBA (TRINIDAD)

Nicholas Pooran blasted 35 runs from 13 balls to lead the West Indies to an eight-wicket win over South Africa in the rain-shortened third Twenty20 cricket international, securing a 3-0 series sweep. Rain delayed the start of play by an hour and returned in the fifth over of the South Africa innings, reducing the match to 13 overs per innings. South Africa was 23-0 when the rain started and Tristan Stubbs dashed 40 from 15 balls to help the visitors post 108-4 after a slow start. Stubbs hit five fours and three sixes for 38 runs from boundaries. He finished the series with 144 runs at a strike-rate of 178. Pooran almost matched him, hitting two fours and four sixes. The West Indies was 60-2 when Pooran was out to the fifth ball of the fourth over and coasted to victory with 22 balls remaining.

Shai Hope made an unbeaten 42 from 24 balls and Shimron Hetmeyer scored 31 from 17 deliveries in an unbroken partnership of 56 for the third wicket. "Obviously coming out on top is what we wanted. We wanted to win the series 3-0," West Indies captain Roston Chase said in a television interview. "Before the match, at the team meeting after everyone had spoken, I just asked the boys to give me the victory because you want to start well and I just want to thank the guys for the support and the way they played with their heart today." No overs were lost when rain delayed the toss. The West Indies eventually won the toss and chose to bowl, with an eye on the threat of further rain. South Africa began cautiously in humid conditions and the first boundary of its innings didn't come until the fourth over, hit by Ryan Rickelton from the bowling of Matthew Forde. The first six of the innings came from the next



ball. The rain returned and forced the players from the field for 70 minutes, leaving South Africa on the back foot when

it resumed. Reeza Hendricks was out three balls after the resumption, but that brought Stubbs to the crease and he did his best to blast South

Africa to a competitive total. Stubbs hit 6, 4, 6 from consecutive balls in the 11th over bowled by Obed McCoy and 4, 6, 4 in the final over

bowled by Forde. He was out with two balls left in the innings. Pooran then blasted the West Indies into an winning

position with his brilliant 13-ball cameo. He finished with a strike rate of 269. Hope hit four sixes in his innings and Hetmeyer hit four fours and a six as the West Indies completed a comprehensive win. The West Indies beat South Africa 3-0 in a Twenty20 series prior to this year's T20 World Cup, which it co-hosted with the United States, and now has swept South Africa again. But in between, South Africa eliminated the West Indies from the World Cup. "It was a tough one today. Obviously it was stop-start with the rain which hurt us quite a bit," South Africa captain Aiden Markram said. "Conditions changed quite a bit throughout the game as well. "I think we got the tougher of the conditions. That being said I think there are several areas we can improve on as a team to play better cricket in tough conditions.