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WORLD 8

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Docs strike work over rape, murder in WB

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Doctors at various hospitals across India began their indefinite strike from Monday, halting all elective services — scheduled, non-urgent procedures and outpatient services — until a fair investigation into the alleged rape and murder of a Kolkata doctor is concluded and their demands for safe working environment for their fraternity is met.

The trainee medico worked at the State-run RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata, and her body was found inside the faculty's seminar hall on Friday, sparking outrage within the medical community.

While pause in elective services left many patients visiting the OPDs left them high and dry, emergency care, however, remained operational, to address critical patients needs in the hospitals.

The nationwide indefinite strike is being led by the Federation of Resident Doctors' Associations (FORDA) with the Delhi Medical Association (DMA) also coming out in support of the doctors on strike.

The brutal nature of the crime has intensified calls for justice and has led to the nationwide strike as a mean of expressing solidarity with the victim and demanding systemic changes to ensure the safety of healthcare



Doctors protest against the sexual assault and killing of a postgraduate trainee doctor in Kolkata, in New Delhi, on Monday
Ranjan Dimri/The Pioneer

workers, said Dr Sarvesh Pandey, general secretary of the RDA, RML Hospital. In its letter, FORDA listed five demands including expeditious acceptance of Residents' demands, resignation of all the responsible authorities, which include the principal, MSVP, Dean, HOD of pulmonary medicine, ACP of RG Kar MC&H police outpost, alleging that they could not perform their duty of protecting the dignity and life of a woman who was, in this case, an on-duty doctor, no police brutality, swift justice for the deceased and security protocols for healthcare workers and formation of expert committee.

Dr Aviral Mathur, FORDA president who participated in the protest at a hospital in Delhi, said, "Our cause is that the incident at RG Kar Hospital is the worst that could have happened to any on-duty doctor... rape followed by murder is deeply disturbing. "The services will remain suspended until the acceptance of demands of Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College residents as well as immediate appointment of a Central agency to investigate the case and the establishment of a Central Protection Act." The strike has garnered widespread support across the country.

Mamata hints at handover of case to CBI

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

In yet another climbdown Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday set a deadline for the police department to crack the RG Kar Medical College doctor rape and murder case but her act of bending back failed to pacify the agitating junior doctors who insisted on sustained cease work till all their demands were met throwing the health service in the entire State completely out of gear.

Mamata earlier met the parents of the victim at their Sodpur residence in the northern suburbs of Kolkata and said she would wait till Sunday for the police to crack the case failing which she would transfer the case to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). Emerging from her meeting with the parents of the victim she said, "I am extremely shocked by the incident of a young lady doctor being killed in such a manner ...

this cannot be accepted... I have been told by the parents of the victim that there is an insider angle to the case... if so then I ask the police to hasten the investigation process... I give them time till Sunday to crack the case after which I will hand it over to the CBI." A postgraduate student of the department of chest medicine was in the wee hours of Friday found dead in a semi-nude condition inside the seminar hall of the hospital.

CURTAIN COMES DOWN



India's flag-bearers shooter Manu Bhaker and men's hockey team goalkeeper PR Srejeesh and others during the closing ceremony of the 2024 Summer Olympics at Stade de France, in Paris, France
PTI



Indian soldiers patrol near the LoC ahead of Independence Day, in Rajouri district, on Monday
PTI

Terror module busted in J&K

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The Jammu and Kashmir police claimed to have busted an active terror module by arresting at least eight enemy agents responsible for providing food, shelter, and other logistic support to the Pakistani terrorists behind targeted strikes on the security forces across the Jammu region.

The terror module busted by the police is believed to be behind the recent infiltration that has resulted in increased terrorist activities and terrorist movements in the upper reaches of Doda, Udhampur, and Kathua. The police teams carrying out a detailed investigation have also managed to identify the kingpin of the module as Mohd Lateef alias Haji.

The investigations were launched by the police teams after eliminating three Pakistani terrorists in the Gandoh area of Doda district on June 26, 2024.

Tihar jail terms Kejriwal's letter to LG abuse of privileges

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a strongly worded letter, the Tihar jail has taken exception to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's recent letter to Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena seeking permission to allow Cabinet Minister Atishi to hoist the national flag on the occasion of Independence Day, terming his letter to the LG as "an abuse of privileges" granted to him under the Delhi Prison Rules.

The superintendent of Tihar's jail number 2 cited provisions of the Delhi Prisons Rules, 2018, and advised Kejriwal in a letter "to desist from any such impermissible activity" or his privileges would be curtailed. In a communication, Tihar jail official said it is surprising to note that the contents of the letter... were leaked to the media without any authority which amounts to violation of the prison rules.

Meanwhile, Delhi Cabinet Minister Gopal Rai on Monday directed the General Administration Department to make arrangements for the hoisting of the national flag on Independence Day by his Cabinet colleague Atishi.



SC orders Shambhu border partial opening

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday asked the Punjab Government to persuade the farmers protesting at the Shambhu border since February 13 to remove tractors and trolleys from the road, saying "highways are not parking space". A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan directed the police chiefs of both Punjab and Haryana to hold a meeting along with the Superintends of Police of adjoining Patiala and Ambala districts within one week for partial reopening of the highway at the inter-State Shambhu border.

"We are not directing but we are definitely impressing upon the State of Punjab to immediately persuade the farmers to remove their tractors and trolleys. Even parking will create problems.

Now, we are seized with the issue and we are keeping it pending till some respectable, amicable and fair and just solution of all the problems are found," the bench told the Punjab Government. Underscoring that farmers or the agricultural community don't face difficulty of any kind, the bench said, "After all, we are also concerned. Both the States are concerned and everybody is concerned about it."

"The DGPs of Punjab and Haryana and SPs of Patiala and Ambala along with Deputy Commissioners of both the districts are to meet within one week and lay down the modalities for partial opening of highway, initially for the purpose of ambulances, senior citizens, women, girl students, essential services and daily commuters of nearby areas," the court said.

'At Home' events lined up for icons this I-Day

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Kind of those killed in the line of duty, Olympic Games participants and winners, competitive examination toppers and a host of other prominent people are part of a list shared by the Home Ministry with State Governments for extending invitation to the 'At Home' function at Raj Bhavans on Independence Day.

Those whose names were mentioned during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Mann ki Baat" radio broadcast, "Swachhagrahi" or foot soldiers who have played a key role in cleanliness drives and women sarpanches (village heads) are also part of the list shared by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs to be invited for the function. Every Governor and Lieutenant Governor hosts the respective Chief Minister, Ministers, top civil, police officers, prominent citizens with high tea at their official residence —



Raj Bhavan or Raj Niwas — in the evenings of every Independence Day and Republic Day. The event is called 'At Home'. In a communication to Chief Secretaries of all States, the Home Ministry said the 'At Home' function should be commenced after 6 pm. "This function represents a diverse

set of invitees apart from usual protocol-based invitees, on this occasion, the following indicative categories of guests could be invited," the communication said. They are 'Divyangjans'; achievers in different fields; people who made exemplary contribution to society, including during the Covid pandemic; eco-warriors; people who performed exemplary for environmental conservation; "Swachhagrahi"; references from the state and Union Territories in "Mann ki Baat"; Padma awardees; next of kin of martyrs; participants and winners in Olympic Games; and other important sports events of national and international standards. Exceptional educators, frontline health workers, children bravery awardees, women sarpanches, student toppers, best researchers and innovators may also be invited, the Ministry told the States. "At least 25-50 invites may be

reserved for such achievers. The names of such invitees should be announced in advance to enable the invitees to prepare for the occasion. The majority of the gathering could be under the category of special invitees under different categories," the communication said. The States and Union Territories were told that a system where the invitee list was generated afresh every year should be instituted so that an opportunity was given to a broad set of people.

It could be considered that a person gets an invite just once. The Ministry said special attention might be paid to the band at the Governor or the Lieutenant Governor's house. It should play patriotic songs and not simply songs from movies. A system of competition among school bands should be instituted where the winners get to perform during the reception.

Explore Sikkim's landscape from home soon

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Soon, visitors worldwide will be able to explore the marvels of the famous Dzongri trek in Gyalshing District, Sikkim in India, from their homes through an innovative Virtual Reality (VR) Ecotourism Initiative.

Aiming to promote sustainable tourism in the State which has taken various measures to be eco-friendly, this groundbreaking project from India's first Organic State merges travel delight with cutting-edge technology, offering an

immersive tour of the region's stunning landscapes and breathtaking views. By providing immersive experiences, VR technology provides a unique opportunity to experience natural environments that might otherwise be inaccessible to many travel enthusiasts to explore natural environments in a way that may not be possible due to geographical, financial, or physical limitations.

The Dzongri trek, a popular trekking route that can be completed in about 6-7 days, is a delight for tourists and adventure trekkerst with pristine views.

The VR initiative opens new avenues for experiencing the natural beauty of Sikkim and ensures accessibility to breathtaking locations regardless of adverse weather conditions or natural calamities. Users can virtually trek through the dense forests of the track, encountering zig zag trails in a realistic setting.

An official from the Union Tourism Ministry praised the State's initiative stating the project aims to contribute to the long-term growth and sustainability of the tourism sector in the region.



Family members of the victims mourn after a stampede at Baba Siddhanath temple, in Jehanabad district, Monday morning, Aug. 12, 2024. At least seven people were killed and 16 others suffered injuries in the stampede
PTI

Seven killed in Bihar temple stampede

PNS ■ JEHANABAD (BIHAR)

With the loss of over 100 precious lives in the tragic Hathras stampede still fresh in mind, report comes of shocking deaths of at least seven people, six of them women, in another stampede at Baba Siddheshwar Nath Temple in Bihar's Jehanabad district. Sixteen others were injured in the incident, an official said on Monday.

The deceased, most of them Kanwariyas, have been identified as Pyare Paswan (30), Nisha Devi (30), Punam Devi (30), Nisha Kumari (21), and Sushila Devi (64). The identity of one woman remains unknown, the official added.

Residents prepare to move out over dam collapse fear

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

While people in the districts of Kottayam, Idukki, Ernakulam, Pathanamthitta and Alappuzha are getting ready for the eventuality of the collapse of Mullaperiyar Dam, the Tamil chauvinist outfits like DMK, MDMK, VCK and AIADMK are busy campaigning that the 130-year-old reservoir is safe.

Homemakers like Ganga Gopalakrishnan and Sheela Das in Perumbavoor are ready with suitcases packed with essential clothing and identification papers to move out to safer places. There is a sense of uncertainty and unease across these districts, said Anita Prakash, a municipal councillor. But the Kerala Government is maintaining a stony silence over the warning given by CP Ramaswamy Aiyer, the then Diwan of the

erstwhile Travancore State, which, together with the princely State of Kochi and Malabar, constitute the present-day Kerala.

"The agreement signed between Madras Presidency and the State of Travancore in 1886 is highly discriminatory and detrimental to the interests of Travancore. Travancore was forced to sign on the dotted line by the then Madras Governor conceding the tenancy over Periyar water to the Madras Presidency for a period of 999 years. This was a major fraud committed on a vulnerable Travancore by the British rulers," Ramaswamy Aiyer had told the then viceroy Lord Mountbatten in 1947 itself.

In his notes prepared after meeting the Viceroy, the Diwan pointed out that, while Madras Presidency (the present-day Tamil Nadu) stood to make a cool ₹25 lakh profit per year,



Travancore would get a paltry amount of ₹40,000 per year as compensation. "This is gross injustice," Aiyer wrote in his note. The note has been reproduced ad verbatim by Prof A Sreedhara Menon, a historian of international

repute in his book "Sir CP's Role in Travancore". Professor Menon was a staunch critic of Aiyer because of his intransigent approach to all issues concerning life. His books on history of modern-day India speak a lot

about his reservations about the Diwan. But research led him to information hitherto inaccessible to all and proved the sincerity of Aiyer. A probe by P Sujathan, a chronicler of Kerala's history proves that the 1886 agreement between the two States were signed by K KV Rama Ayangar, the Tamil Nadu-born Diwan of Travancore and the Resident Collector of Madras Presidency.

"The 999-year-long tenancy itself is a mystery as all such agreements are for a period of 99 years. Ayangar and other Tamils working for the Travancore Maharajah manipulated the deal in favour of Madras Presidency," Sujathan told *The Pioneer*.

Though by 1941 Ramaswamy Aiyer argued in favour of Kerala and made the umpire appointed to arbitrate on the dispute to nullify Madras

Hotel Guest Verification System launched in Seraikela Kharsawan

Tourism Nodal Police Officer introduced for the first time

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

In a step towards enhancing security and promoting tourism in the Seraikela Kharsawan district, Kolhan Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Manoj Ratan Chothe, IPS, launched the Hotel Guest Verification System and introduced the Tourism Nodal Police Officer at a program organized at Hotel Cruze, Adityapur. The initiative, a collaboration between the Jamshepur Hotel and Restaurant Association (JHRA) and the Seraikela District Police, is set to revolutionize law enforcement and tourism management in the district. Speaking at the event, DIG Ratan Chothe elaborated on the numerous benefits the Hotel Guest Verification

System will bring to policing and crime management in the district. He emphasized that the system would significantly streamline the process of monitoring hotel guests, making it easier to track and manage criminal activities. The DIG also suggested that the National Informatics Center (NIC) introduce a thumb-based check-in facility in the future to further bolster security measures.

The introduction of a dedicated Tourism Nodal Police Officer, according to DIG Chothe, will have long-term benefits for the district's economy and employment. He highlighted that the establishment of a dedicated Tourist Police Thana, similar to those already operational in states like Kerala and Kashmir, would



be the next step forward. Guest of Honour, Mukesh Kumar Lunayat, IPS, shared his experiences with the Verification System during his tenure as City SP in Jamshedpur. He

noted that the system had greatly facilitated real-time monitoring of hotel guests and contributed to improved public safety. Lunayat also announced that the system would be

fully implemented across the entire district within the next seven days. He emphasized that Seraikela, being the first district in Jharkhand to start Tourism Police, would provide 24/7

support to tourists through the 112 helpline or the dedicated Tourist Police.

The JHRA had initially approached the Jamshepur Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) to streamline the cumbersome and inefficient police verification process for hotel guests. The existing system posed significant challenges for law enforcement in monitoring criminal activities. In response, the State National Informatics Center (NIC) Jharkhand, led by Joint Director Mr. Kishor, developed a cutting-edge software solution.

Kishor noted that Jamshepur was the first district in the country to implement such a Verification System, which has dramatically eased the process of guest data collec-

tion in real time, benefiting both hoteliers and the police. He assured that NIC would continue to upgrade the software to meet evolving needs.

Prashant Sinha, Deputy Director of NIC and the key architect behind the software, emphasized the importance of secure data management. He added that NIC is working towards integrating Aadhar authentication to prevent fraud cases, further enhancing the system's reliability.

In his welcome speech, JHRA President Ravish Ranjan recounted the association's journey from initially approaching the SSP Jamshepur for support following a robbery case at Bistupur Bank in 2022 to the eventual development of the web-based guest verification system.

JHRA Secretary Randeep Singh, who delivered the vote of thanks, acknowledged the joint efforts of the JHRA and Seraikela District Police in achieving this milestone. He expressed confidence that this initiative would set a new standard for law enforcement in Jharkhand.

The event was attended by senior police officials, including all the Dy SPs, Thana Incharges, Police Computer Operators, as well as prominent hoteliers and senior NIC officials. Among the notable attendees were Saroj Kumar Rajan, Dy. Director (IT) NIC Ranchi, and Rituraj Kharyadarshi, DIO Seraikela Kharsawan, along with Gaurav Agarwal, JHRA Treasurer.

Public grievances addressed at Bokaro DC's Janata Darbar

PNS : BOKARO

A large number of citizens gathered at the Janata Darbar held on Monday at the office of the Deputy Commissioner, Vijaya Jadhav, to voice their concerns. The event, aimed at addressing public grievances, saw the hearing of over 61 cases from both urban and rural areas of the district. During the session, DC Vijaya Jadhav listened to the issues brought forward by the citizens in a systematic manner. She took immediate cognizance of the applications received and directed the concerned senior officials to conduct prompt investigations and resolve the issues at the earliest. Several cases were resolved on the spot by the Deputy Commissioner herself.



The grievances presented at the Janata Darbar included matters related to land encroachment, land possession, issues with the supply department, Abua Awas housing, revenue disputes, and concerns related to the labor department.

Also present at the event were Deputy Development Commissioner Girja Shankar Prasad, DTO Vandana Shejwalkar, Officer-in-Charge of Public Grievance Cell Piyush, and Assistant Public Relations Officer Avinash Kumar Singh, among others.

Poetic voices shine at Hindi Kavi Sammelan Competition

PNS : BOKARO

On August 12, 2024, The Pentecostal Assembly School in Bokaro Steel City witnessed a vibrant display of creativity as students from grades 11 and 12 participated in a Hindi Kavi Sammelan Competition. The event featured self-composed poems on themes such as maternal love, parental sacrifice, women empowerment, satire on Indian railways, and patriotism.



A panel of esteemed judges, led by Dr. Asha Pushpa, a renowned poetess and Hindi scholar, along with Mrs. Vibha Sinha and Mrs. Sunita Roy, evaluated the students' performances, praising their creativity and impactful delivery. Special recognition was given to Dr. Sharda Rani for her crucial mentorship in nurturing the students' talents. Principal Dr. Karuna Prasad concluded the event with an inspiring message, applauding the students for their dedication to poetry and encouraging them to continue using their voices to inspire change and make a lasting impact on society.

Meeting held on protest rally in Ranchi, Tiranga Yatra in Bokaro

PNS : BOKARO

A preparatory meeting was held at the residence of Bokaro MLA Biranchi Narayan in Sector 1, Bokaro, to discuss the upcoming Tiranga Yatra on August 14 and the protest rally in Ranchi on August 23. During the meeting, Bokaro MLA Biranchi Narayan and BJP District President Jaidev Rai distributed the national flag to all the Mandal presidents.



Addressing the meeting, MLA Biranchi Narayan criticized the State government, stating that the youth of the state are disappointed and feel betrayed. He accused the government of making false promises before the 2019 elections, specifically the promise to provide jobs to five lakh youths in the first year of their tenure. He alleged that the government has failed to fulfill this promise and instead has been involved in selling jobs meant for poor and tribal youths. He further claimed that the recruitment process has been

marred by corruption, with question papers being leaked and seats being sold to outsiders, leaving the state's youth disillusioned.

The meeting was chaired by BJP District President Jaidev Rai, who detailed the plans for the upcoming events to the party officials and Mandal presidents. He mentioned that thousands of young party workers from Bokaro will participate in the protest rally in Ranchi on August 23.

The meeting was conducted by District General Secretary Sanjay Tyagi, and a vote of thanks was given by District Vice President Dheeraj.

Several other leaders and party workers, including Shashi Bhushan Ojha, Mukul Triloki Singh, Dheeraj Jha, Binod Mahto, Indra Kumar Jha, Ramlal Soren, Mantu Rai, Vishwanath Dutta, Vinay Anand, Rishav Rai, Pehlu Mahto, Sujat Chakravarty, Harish Singh etc attended the meeting.

Sridevi Kapoor- The Enduring Cult of Supremacy

BY DHIRAJ KUMAR

When Sridevi broke into Hindi cinema, in her fourth attempt in 1983 with Himmatwala, no one had predicted her meteoric rise as the numero uno in Hindi cinema. Even as a toddler, the southern film industry, which laid the foundation of her stupendous career, could not have imagined the immense scale and scope of Sridevi's popularity and talent in a fifty-year career. On her 61st birthday, a comprehensive assessment of her extraordinary career provides insight into the unequalled dominance and cult of the supremacy of the first female superstar of Indian cinema.

hood roles in the 1960s to 2018; this longevity created a multi-generational fan base, with older fans remembering her early work and younger fans discovering her through later films.

Additionally, Sridevi's movies are nostalgic for fans who grew up watching them, as her legendary parts have become ingrained in their cultural memory. Sridevi has a substantial and devoted fan base overseas, particularly among the Indian diaspora. Her films garnered popularity in nations with significant Indian diaspora, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East.

Sridevi had a significant impact on fashion trends in India, particularly with her memorable appearances where she wore the iconic outfits, accessories and dazzling ensembles. Her impeccable sense of style set a high standard for sophistication and charm, shaping the representation of women in Indian media. Her unique appearance and attractiveness established innovative benchmarks, motivating several women. Her Amrapali costumes and white sarees in Southern films were groundbreaking for the era. Her wardrobe choices in movies and public events established popular styles that were extensively imitated, creating a cultural sensation and impacting fashion trends in India and SAARC nations.

Sridevi impacted Indian cinema by reshaping the portrayal of women and their roles in Indian films. She depicted women who exhibited strength, autonomy, and intricacy, defying the conventional roles prevalent in her era. Her acting approach,

distinguished by her expressive eyes and subtle performances, set a standard for aspiring performers. She was renowned for her adeptness in expressing a diverse array of emotions, making her roles indelible and influential. Her proficiency in various genres, from comedy to drama to fantasy, demonstrates her versatility as an artist and is frequently analyzed and scrutinized for her remarkable performances. She shattered the glass ceiling by establishing dominance in the cinema industry by portraying powerful female characters who embodied independence. This achievement was particularly significant when women were frequently assigned secondary roles. Her roles in movies in Hindi, Tamil, and Telugu films challenged societal norms and stereotypes, and her performances resonated with audiences and played a significant role in the changing portrayal of women in Indian cinema.

Sridevi's enduring cult of supremacy has remarkably endured over the decades. Hailing from the South Indian film industry, Sridevi helped bridge the gap between Hindi cinema and regional cinema, bringing greater visibility and respect to South Indian culture and actors in the Hindi film industry. Despite her origins in Tamil and Telugu cinema, Sridevi's appeal transcended regional boundaries, making her a household name across India and joining a rare league of Indian icons popular nationwide.

Sridevi, a prominent figure in the Indian entertainment business, has had a profound impact on Indian dance and music with her legendary dynamic and

vibrant dance techniques. Learning under the tutelage of iconic dance masters since 1969, she inspired a large set of young choreographers with her ability to bring life to dance sequences inspired by choreographers and dancers, influencing how female dances were conceptualized and executed in Indian cinema. Although without formal dance training, her dance style showcased a distinctive fusion of classical grace and contemporary energy, resulting in performances characterized by a remarkable combination of elegance and humour. Sridevi's performances, particularly those that integrated classical Indian dance styles, contributed to preserving and promoting these traditions in mainstream cinema.

As Sridevi's exceptional body of work inspires contemporary actors, filmmakers, and artists, her legacy is commemorated through tributes, retrospectives, and awards, solidifying her position as a revered cultural figure. Admired by peers, Sridevi was popular among the masses and classes and highly respected by her peers in the film industry. Actors, directors, and filmmakers have publicly expressed their admiration for her talent and contribution to cinema, and she is often cited as a role model by younger actresses and actors who grew up watching her films and were inspired by her performances, even traveling to Mumbai, aspiring to carve a career like hers. Her impact reaches into Indian popular culture, where allusions to her movies, dialogues, and dance routines are widespread. She remains a cultural touchstone, with her work frequently cited in various art forms, including theatre and literature.

In a defining aspect of her era, she inspired filmmakers to create stories centered around strong female protagonists. Her collaborations with iconic directors across five languages are often studied for their artistic merit and innovative storytelling. Her contribution to the visual aesthetics of her films, particularly the presentation of her characters, has influenced the visual language of Indian cinema, which often combined lush cinematography with rich, detailed costume and set design, contributing to the overall art of filmmaking in India.

Sridevi's immense popularity is a testament to her exceptional talent in captivating and resonating with diverse audiences spanning various periods, geographical locations, and cultural backgrounds. The enduring admiration of both long-time and recent admirers reinforces her status as one of India's most adored artists, ensuring that her legacy remains cherished. Her impact on Indian culture is diverse, and her contributions to movies, fashion, and society are celebrated long after her passing.

DHIRAJ KUMAR IS A WRITER AND COLUMNIST BASED OUT OF MUMBAI AND HE IS WRITING THE BIOGRAPHY BOOK ON SRIDEVI KAPOOR. HE WRITES IMPACTFUL ARTICLES ON CLIMATE CHANGE, POLITICS, LIFESTYLE, ENTERTAINMENT, BUSINESS AND ECONOMY. HE CAN BE REACHED AT INSTAGRAM @DHI_KUM AND X AT @AUTHORDHIRAJ

NTPC SIC celebrates Hariyali Teej Festival



PNS : RANCHI

Swayamsiddha Ladies Club, NTPC Coal Mining HQ organised the Hariyali Teej Festival with pomp and gaiety on Sunday at Ranchi.

The Teej program began with the welcoming of Chief Guest, Meenkashi Srivastava, Senior Member, Sanyukta Mahila Samiti by Rekha Jain, President, Swayamsiddha Ladies Club in the august presence of Presidents, Ladies Club of Coal Mining Project, Hazaribag & senior committee executive members of the club.

On the occasion, Meenkashi Srivastava addressing the august gathering shared the significance of the Teej Festival and appreciated the efforts of club members for organising the colourful event. She conveyed good wishes on Teej Festival and said that ladies should find some time for themselves to refresh themselves from the day to day busy schedule and such programs are necessary for social interaction.

Rekha Jain in her address said that Teej is an important festival celebrated during the Rainy season in the country with a lot of enthusiasm and it is dedicated to Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati.

To celebrate Teej Festival in a festive flavour, various

competition were conducted for the Ladies Club members. In addition, Teej Queen Competition was organised for the members, the winners were selected through three rounds -- Self - Introduction, Ramp Walk and Question and Answer round by the Judges.

In the Teej queen competition, Sunita Pandey was crowned as Teej Queen and Soni Thakur was the first runner-up and Sugandh was declared the second runner-up.

Cultural Programme added attraction during the Teej program which was participated by all members to make the event a grand success.

On the occasion, Vice Presidents, Shika Rastogi & Purnima Shrikhande, Deepa, General Secretary, Joint Secretary, Parmeshwari, Cultural Secretary, Anita Prasad, Mansa Verma, Welfare Secretary, Snigdha Majhi, Treasurer and other members were present on the occasion.

DC conducts surprise inspection of Ghatshila Residential School, issues show-cause notice

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

In a decisive move to ensure better standards in educational facilities, Deputy Commissioner Ananya Mittal conducted an unexpected inspection of the Government Scheduled Tribe Residential School at Upar Pavada in Ghatshila block. The surprise visit aimed to evaluate the school's infrastructure, maintenance, and overall living conditions provided to the students. Project Director ITDA Dipankar Chaudhary, along with several other district officials, accompanied Mittal during this inspection.

The inspection revealed several alarming deficiencies. Classrooms were found without functioning fans and bulbs, leaving students in uncomfortable conditions. The school's toilets and kitchen were in a state of disrepair, with visible

dirt and lack of sanitation. The playground, meant for the students' physical activities, was poorly maintained, and several other essential facilities were found lacking proper upkeep.

Displeased with the findings, Mittal issued show-cause notices to both the Principal and Warden of the school, holding them accountable for the substandard conditions. They were given a strict timeline of seven days to rectify the issues and improve the overall conditions. The District Magistrate warned that failure to comply with these directives would result in further disciplinary action.

The Principal and Warden were specifically instructed to: Ensure all basic facilities, including electricity and clean drinking water, are adequately provided. Maintain hygiene in toilets and the kitchen,

ensuring that meals are prepared and served in a clean environment. Provide nutrition to students according to the prescribed menu, with regular monitoring. Undertake cleanliness drives across the school premises, including classrooms, hostels, and common areas.

Revitalize the playground and ensure it is properly maintained for students' physical activities. Initiate tree plantation around the school premises to enhance the environment and promote greenery.

Beyond immediate corrective measures, Mittal extended directives to the Project Director ITDA and District Welfare Officer, instructing them to conduct regular inspections of all residential schools in the district to prevent similar issues from arising elsewhere.

India should not hesitate in taking 1971 like military action to save minorities of Bangladesh: Dr Survokamal Dutta

PANKAJ : DHANBAD

Acclaimed International Political, Economic and Foreign Policy Expert Dr Survokamal Dutta is of the view that India should not hesitate to take 1971 like military action to save the minority community in Bangladesh if needed in near future. Speaking to

media here in Dhanbad on Monday Dr Dutta said, it's not only the Hindus but Christians and other minority groups are under threat and by the time of Navratri once again the minority groups in general and Hindus in particular may be targeted. This would result in a massive influx of refugees from

Bangladesh as we had witnessed in 1971. The influx of refugees may adversely affect our economy. Thus to save our economy and the minority groups of Bangladesh India must go in for action in larger national interest. Terming the Bangladesh crisis as an international conspiracy hatched by Western coun-

tries besides US and China, Dr Dutta said that filled with scenes of economic debacle, those countries destabilised Bangladesh as they did in Sri Lanka, Maldives and Myanmar. Through that they now are targeting India as in years to come the Indian economy would become the world biggest economy

leaving behind China and US.

Dr. Dutta added Bangladesh was targeted as it was the only friendly country in neighboring countries compared to Pakistan and others. He claimed that the Modi government had warned the West on several international forums.

Maoists infested states to continue operations jointly

DGO attends MHA meeting through video conferencing

PNS : RANCHI

The Union Home Ministry organized a meeting through video conferencing to review Left Wing Extremism in Maoist infested States. In the meeting a plan was made to conduct joint operations against Naxalism and take immediate and strong action by establishing coordination with senior officials of the bordering states from time to time. Coordination with the bordering states was emphasized.

In this meeting, Director General of Police, Jharkhand, Anurag Gupta, Additional Director General of Police Operations, Dr Sanjay Anand Rao Lathkar, Inspector General of Police Operations, Anil Vinukant Homkar, Joint Deputy Director, IB, Utkarsh



DGP Anurag Gupta during a meeting through videoconferencing, Police HQ in Ranchi on Monday. PNS

Prasun, Deputy Inspector General of Police Special Branch, Kartik S Raj and senior police officers of Naxal-affected states participated

through video conferencing from Jharkhand Police Auditorium. Deputy Inspector General of Police, SIB and other senior police officers

participated in this meeting from the Jharkhand Police Headquarters Auditorium. During the meeting, the DGP, Jharkhand discussed

the outline of the system's action plan for timely and active sharing of intelligence received mainly in the context of Jharkhand, appointment of nodal officer, action being taken in the light of Left Wing Extremism scenario, mutual cooperation on problems arising in border areas, curbing the activities of Naxalites in border areas and inter-state coordination meetings at all levels. Strategy made for timely exchange of information, effective action against Naxalites active in border areas.

Inspector General of Police, Operations, Jharkhand emphasized on the exchange of timely intelligence among the States to take effective action against the activities of Naxalites operating in all the border

areas of Jharkhand and also emphasized on coordinating the operations being conducted against Naxalite groups active in the border States of Jharkhand - Odisha and Chhattisgarh.

In this meeting, detailed discussions were held with all the border states on various points and the action to be taken by all the States on the current Naxalite scenario.

In the meeting, a lot of emphasis was laid on mutual relations, cooperation with each other and immediate action on timely intelligence received during the operations being continuously run by Jharkhand Police against Naxalites in recent days. It was also said that all the states should exchange information about Naxalites and their associates active in their states.

SUBROTO MUKHERJEE CUP CM congratulates U-17 girls football team



Jharkhand's Under-17 girls team members pose for photo during 63rd National Subroto Cup Under-17 Girls Football Tournament at Haryana on Monday. PNS.

PNS : RANCHI

Chief Minister Hemant Soren has congratulated the team on Jharkhand's Under 17 girls team reaching the semi-finals in the 63rd National Subroto Cup competition. The Chief Minister tweeted wishing the team all the best on the occasion - Well done children, my best wishes for the final. The daughters of Jharkhand are even more excited by the encouragement of Chief Minister Hemant Soren and have expressed gratitude to the CM for the encouragement.

Jharkhand's Under 17 girls team defeated Haryana 4-2 in the semi-finals. In the semi-final match held on Monday, the Jharkhand girls team performed brilliantly and defeated Haryana 4-2 in the semi-final match. In the semi-final match, Kranti Oraon, Pratibha Bhokta, Lalita Boypai and Sanjana Oraon scored one goal each to give Jharkhand's team victory.

The strong performance of the daughters of Jharkhand was seen from the beginning in the Subroto Cup 2024 Under 17 Girls Category Competition. The

team has left a strong mark by defeating Delhi 7-0, Gujarat 3-0, Arunachal Pradesh 13-0, Tripura 2-0 and Haryana 4-2 in the previous matches. Now the final match will be played between Jharkhand and Bangladesh at Dr. Ambedkar Stadium in Delhi from 5 pm on Tuesday. It will be broadcast live on the Sportscast YouTube channel.

On the excellent performance of the Jharkhand team in the semi-finals, State School Education and Literacy Department Minister Baidyanath Ram, School Education and Literacy Department Secretary Umashankar Singh, State Education Project Director Aditya Ranjan, State Program Officer Dheerens Soreng, International Football Coach cum Former Director of Sports Authority of India (SAI) Sushil Kumar Verma, LMC Member Mukul Toppo, JSSPS Coach Somnath Singh, Team Manager Bindu Kujur and all the officials of the Sports Cell have congratulated the team for the final match and congratulated them for the victory.

BJP rakes up 'demographic change' due to 'Bangladeshi infiltrators'

PNS : RANCHI

Leader of Opposition Amar Kumar Bauri today once again targeted the state government over Bangladeshi infiltrators in State. Bauri said that the Hemant government is afraid to take action against Bangladeshi intruders. These intruders have become the vote bank of JMM. That is why the state government is their protector.

He said that the intruders are occupying the property of the people of the tribal Dalit community. They are occupying the land by marrying the sisters and daughters. Not only this, they are forcing the Hindu population to leave their homes and run away.

He said that the empire of intruders has been established in villages like Taranagar, Gopinathpur, Gai Bathan in Santhal Pargana. He said that the intruders are eating away the state like termites and the state government is silent.

He said that on one hand the High Court has expressed concern regarding the intruders and has given strict instructions to the state government, yet the Hemant government is busy in whitewashing it. He said that the state government denies Bangladeshi intrusion outside, while the court also accepts it by giving an affidavit.

He said that as soon as BJP government is formed in the state, the infiltrators will be identified and action will be taken. Ahead of the Jharkhand elections, BJP leaders are raising the pitch over 'Bangladeshi infiltrators' and changing demography in Santhal Pargana, alleging that the government has pushed the tribals to the margins in the region.

The Jharkhand High Court's 3 July direction has come as a shot in the arm for the BJP that is reeling after the whitewash in the tribal seats in the general elections. It directed the Hemant Soren-led JMM-Congress government to take immediate steps to identify the infiltrators and prepare an action plan to deport them.



Former JPPC President Aditya Vikram Jaiswal holds a meeting today with members of the women's committee in Ward 46, Amravati Colony, Outer Railway Area in Ranchi on their issues on Monday. PNS

BJP MP for action against guilty in H'bagh factory blast

PNS : RANCHI

BJP MP Deepak Prakash has demanded stern action against guilty persons of Hazaribagh's Barhi-based Pawanputra Steel Plant blast incident in which six labourers died and several injured. The explosion occurred at a sponge iron plant in Jharkhand's Hazaribagh district on Tuesday.

The incident took place at Pawanputra Steel and Alloys plant in Barhi police station area, about 135 km from Ranchi. BJP Rajya Sabha whip Deepak Prakash today (Monday) shot off a letter to Chief Minister Hemant Soren demanding immediate action against Steel Plant owners Bhubendra Agrawal and Sneha Jain under different criminal Sections of BNS.

Besides this, the Rajya Sabha MP has also asked the



chief minister for immediate action against the factory inspector of Hazaribagh and other concerned officials for overlooking safety guidelines in the factory. "Had the factory Inspector and other responsible officers followed safety guidelines, such an incident would not have occurred," he said.

On July 6, a major blast took place in Barhi-based Pawanputra Steel Plant in which several workers were seriously burnt. Two of them died the same day, while others later on during treatment in the hospital. "The incident



Union State Defense Minister Sanjay Seth alongwith Kanke MLA Samari Lal, Mahanagar BJP President Varun Sahu, General Secretary Balram Singh, Jitendra Verma, along with all the Mahanagar officials and presidents of all divisions holds tricolors flag during a programme Ghar-Ghar Tiranga on Monday. PNS

CEO launched 'Salute to BLO' and 'Election Quiz' campaigns

'Statistical Report' booklet related to LS Polls also released

PNS : RANCHI

Chief Electoral Officer K Ravi Kumar addressed media persons at Nirvachan Sadan on Monday. On this occasion, he launched "Salute to BLO", "Election Quiz" and released the statistical report and gave detailed information to the media representatives. He also released the posters of Salute to BLO and Election Quiz on this occasion. During the programme, a statistical report booklet containing detailed data related to the Lok Sabha elections was also released.

The Chief Electoral Officer said that to motivate the youth towards elections, the Chief Electoral Office is organizing a state-level election quiz. In which any voter of Jharkhand can participate



Chief Electoral Officer K Ravi Kumar alongwith others launching statistical report booklet on Lok Sabha elections 2024 during a press conference in Ranchi on Monday. Pix by Ratan Lal

by registering from 16 August to 26 September. The said competition is for the general voters of the state, so the workers associated with the election work will not be able to participate in this competition. This competition will be held online on 29 September, after which an

offline quiz competition for the winning participants of all the districts will be held in the capital Ranchi on 5 October. The first prize for the winners is Rs 50 thousand, second prize is Rs 30 thousand and third prize is Rs 20 thousand. The winner of each dis-

trict will be given Rs 10 thousand.

The Chief Electoral Officer said that there is a plan to honour the BLOs who have done excellent work in the elections. For this, a "Salute to BLO" campaign is being started. He said that there are about 29,562 BLOs in the state and they play an important role in the election system of the state. The main objective behind honoring the BLOs is to motivate them. He said that three BLOs will be honored from every assembly constituency, as well as a proposal to honor the BLOs who perform excellently on National Voters' Day. On this occasion, Joint Chief Electoral Officer Subodh Kumar, OSD Geeta Chaubey, R.K. Thakral of India State etc were present.



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Awareness campaign against discrimination of HIV patients to begin in State



PNS : RANCHI

On the occasion of International Youth Day, the Intensified IEC Campaign program was started in the Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee University auditorium on Monday under the aegis of Jharkhand State AIDS Control Committee and Health, Medical Education and Family Welfare Department.

Dr. Tapan Kumar Shandilya, Vice Chancellor of Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee University, praised the Jharkhand government for this campaign. He said that through the IEC campaign, the people of Jharkhand, especially the youth, will be made aware about HIV and sexually transmitted diseases. Apart from this, awareness will be spread about the discrimination being done with HIV patients. This campaign will start from 1 September,

which will run for 2 months.

Project Director of Jharkhand State AIDS Control Committee, Pawan Kumar said that this campaign will be run at the national level, district level, block level and village level. All the departments related to the campaign are also promoting the campaign, so that the correct information related to HIV reaches the people. He said that HIV infection does not occur by shaking hands or hugging an HIV infected person, nor by wearing the clothes of the infected person or eating with him. Therefore, we have to stop the discrimination against HIV patients and make people aware.

Media personnel were also honoured for their excellent performance on the occasion. Media institutions of the state were requested to publicize this campaign on a wide scale. On this occasion, Joint Director, CST

Awareness campaign against discrimination of HIV patients to begin in State

Jharkhand State AIDS Control Committee Dr. Badal Chand Bhakat, Deputy Director, BSD Satya Prakash Prasad, Additional Project Director, Jharkhand State AIDS Control Committee, Dr. S.S. Paswan, NSS Incharge, DPSMU Dr. Sonali and others were present.

CCL organizes 2-day official language technical workshop

PNS : RANCHI

A two-day official language technical workshop began on Monday at Prakash Hall in CCL Headquarters, Ranchi, on the topic 'High-level MS Office and Artificial Intelligence'.

The workshop was inaugurated by CCL Director (Personnel), Harsh Nath Mishra. The keynote speaker at the programme was Mr Om Prakash Agarwal, former Chief Manager of Reserve Bank of India and expert in Advanced Microsoft.

On this special occasion, Mishra said in his address that computers have become essential not only in office but also in daily life. "Today's workshop is also important because we all have the responsibility to take the official language forward with technology. So try to take full advantage of this workshop. Along with learning, share the acquired knowledge with your colleagues as well, only then the objective of this workshop will be fulfilled," he said.

General Manager (Official Language) Sanjay

Thakur said that whatever problem related to MS Word, Excel comes in our daily work can definitely be solved by this workshop.

Chief Guest and Keynote Speaker Om Prakash Agarwal made the participants aware of the latest technologies of computers, especially various technical aspects and tools of MS Word.

Employees from headquarters and various areas participated in this workshop. The workshop is being organized with the active cooperation of General Manager (Official Language) Sanjay Thakur, Divik Divesh, Balram Singh and others.

AFFIDAVIT

I, Kapil Oraon, father Kuthari Oraon, village Adarsh Nagar Juria, P.O. Juria, police station Lohardaga Jharkhand. My daughter's name has been recorded as Asstha Oraon in my service book, which is wrong. By affidavit number 8868 dated 10.8.2024, my daughter's actual and correct name is Aastha Oraon. And it will be valid everywhere.

Indian Bank
इलाहाबाद ALLAHABAD

SSIFB Ramgarh Branch
Main Road Ramgarh, Ramgarh Cantt., Jharkhand - 829122

ANNEXURE IV
APPENDIX - IV-A (See proviso to Rule 8(6))
SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES
E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the below mentioned Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the Constructive (Symbolic/ Physical (whichever is applicable) possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Indian Bank, SSIFB Ramgarh Branch, Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is basis" on 11.09.2024 for recovery of Rs. 16,99,800.31/- (Rupees Sixteen Lakhs Ninety Nine Thousand Eight Hundred and Paise Thirty One Only) on 04.10.2023 due to the Indian Bank, SSIFB Ramgarh Branch, Secured Creditor, from M/s Gayatri Sales (Borrower), Proprietor Shri Manoj Kumar Jain, Main Road, Ramgarh Cantt., Dist. Ramgarh and Binita Jain (Guarantor), W/o Manoj Kumar Jain, Main Road, Ramgarh Cantt., Dist. Ramgarh.

The specific details of the property intended to be brought to sale through e-auction mode are enumerated below:

Detailed description of the Property	Equitable Mortgage of Landed property vide Sale Deed No. 2358 dated 25.07.2015 and rectification deed No-2590 dated 03.09.2015, Khata No. - 298, Plot No - 443, 444, 448, 435 & 446 at Main Road, Ramgarh Cantt., Ramgarh, Thana No. 82, Dist - Ramgarh, Area - 435 sq.ft.
Encumbrances on property	Not Known to the Bank
Reserve Price	Rs. 44.80 Lakhs (Rupees Forty Four Lakhs Eighty Thousand Only)
EMD Amount	Rs. 4.50 Lakhs (Rupees Four Lakhs Fifty Thousand Only)
Bid incremental amount	Rs. 44,800/- (Rupees Forty Four Thousand Eight Hundred Only)
Date and Time of e-auction	11.09.2024; 10:00AM to 4:00PM
Property ID No.	IDB50300362774

ANNEXURE IX

Bidders are advised to visit the website (<https://www.ebkraj.in>) of our e auction service provider PSB Alliance Pvt. Ltd. to participate in online bid. For Technical Assistance Please call 8291220220. For Registration status and for EMD status please email to support.ebkraj@psballiance.com

For property details and photograph of the property and auction terms and conditions please visit: www.ebkraj.in and for clarifications related to this portal, please contact PSB Alliance Pvt. Ltd., Contact No. 8291220220

Bidders are advised to use Property ID Number mentioned above while searching for the property in the website with (<https://www.ebkraj.in>).

Date : 03.08.2024
Place : Ramgarh

Contact Person: 1. Mr. Rahul Jaiswal - 9955542169
2. Mr. Kirti Kunal - 7004481351

BJP rejects Cong's JPC demand, says Hindenburg report plot against India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Monday rejected the Congress' demand for a JPC probe into Hindenburg's allegation against the SEBI Chairperson, saying it is a sham with an eye on weakening the Indian economy and destroying investment in the country. BJP Leader and former Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad reiterated the party's line that the short-selling firm's charge and the Opposition's criticism of the market regulator are part of a wider conspiracy. While India is being globally seen as a safe, stable and promising market, the Congress party wants to project that the Indian investment scenario is not safe, he alleged, suggesting that the Opposition party was seizing on the "chits" provided by foreign entities to damage economy. Billionaire investor George Soros is an investor in Hindenburg and he is known for running propaganda against the Government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Prasad said. The Congress wants stock market, which has given good returns to crores of



small investors, to crash, he said. "After being rebuffed by people, the Congress, its allies and its closest ally in the toolkit gang have conspired together to usher in economic anarchy and instability in India," he told reporters. The 10-year-old rule of the Congress between 2004 and 2014 was marked by several alleged scams, Prasad noted, as he questioned why such critical reports were not brought out then. He alleged, "The Congress party leadership is involved in creating economic anarchy based on this fictitious report." He, however, asserted that investors have come to realise the "conspiracy" and rejected the attempts to

jolt the market. "In its pathological hatred for Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Congress, led by Rahul Gandhi and his toolkit friends, has developed hatred for India." The SEBI had sent a notice to the US-based Hindenburg as part of its probe on the Supreme Court's order following the firm's allegations of stock market manipulation against the Adani group. Hindenburg never replied but has instead launched an attack on SEBI Chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch, he said. With Rahul Gandhi spearheading his party's attack on the Government over the issue, Prasad said he has a habit of throwing unfounded charges and noted that he never

gave his phone for investigation after an investigation was ordered over the Pegasus issue. The BJP will expose the Congress, he claimed. At the press conference, he also slammed the Trinamool Congress Government in West Bengal over the rape and murder of a doctor at a State-run hospital, alleging that it was trying to cover up the incident. The BJP MP said the State Government should hand over the probe to the CBI. Amid attacks on minority Hindus in the unrest-hit Bangladesh, the BJP Leader questioned the silence of the Opposition Leader, including Gandhi, and noted that Modi had spoken about the need to protect them. The Congress has demanded Buch's resignation and urged the Supreme Court to transfer the Adani probe to the CBI or a Special Investigation Team given the "likelihood of SEBI's compromise". The Opposition party also reiterated that the path forward is to immediately convene a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) to investigate the full extent of what it described as the "Modani mega scam".



ICG strengthens surveillance to foil illegal Bangladeshi migration via sea

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Considering the recent political events in the Bangladesh and emerging situation, Indian Coast Guard (ICG) has aptly positioned operational units for robust surveillance in the region and to foil any attempts of illegal migration through sea routes, officials said here on Monday. Giving details, they said surface surveillance has been enhanced along the Indo-Bangladesh International Maritime Boundary Line or IMBL by Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs) and Fast Patrol Vessels (FPVs). Layered surface surveillance has been instituted by additional FPVs. All units at sea have been advised to monitor/Board all fishing boats and undertake positive identification of Indian Fishermen. Sea Air coordinated aerial sur-

veillance has been augmented along IMBL by Coast Guard Aircraft especially during dawn dusk hours to track scooting contacts, if any. Additional assets are also kept on standby at Paradip and Haldia for immediate deployment/response, if any subversive activity is reported. Electronic surveillance has been promptly maintained for all close coast transferring contacts and interrogated. Necessary coordination has been maintained with agencies and stakeholders to prevent any ingress through possible infiltration/ landing points. So far, no instances of infiltration or any such activity have been reported on the maritime front. The enhanced surveillance measures will be maintained in the area until the situation improves and stabilises, they said.

SC rejects plea against cancellation of UGC NET examination

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday refused to entertain a fresh plea filed by some examinees challenging the Government's decision to cancel the UGC-NET examination following alleged question paper leak, saying that entertaining it at this stage will create "chaos". A bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra said the Government is conducting the exam afresh on August 21 and the students, who are around nine lakh, must have some kind of "certainty now". "The Supreme Court stepping now will have a serious effect and there will be chaos all over," the CJ said while declining to entertain the plea filed by Praveen Dabas and others. The bench said the exam was held on June 18 and was cancelled a day after that. "Entertaining the plea at the present stage would only add to uncertainty and add to utter chaos," the CJ said, adding the Central Government must be "doubly cautious after the NEET-UG fiasco and thus it was cancelled. Let this process



go on now". Earlier, the top court had dismissed a PIL on the issue, saying it was filed by a lawyer and not by aggrieved candidates. "Why are you (lawyer) coming? Let the students come here themselves," the CJ had told the lawyer, adding "while declining the above PIL, we express nothing on merits". The bench had asked advocate Ujjawal Gaur, who has filed the PIL as a petitioner, to focus on some legal matters and leave such issues for aggrieved persons. The earlier plea was also filed against the decision of the Union education Ministry and the National Testing Agency to cancel the UGC-NET exam following inputs that its integrity may have been compromised. The Ministry on June 19 had ordered the cancellation of the UGC-NET exam and handed over the matter to the CBI for an investigation.

IIT Madras top in NIRF 2024, IISc ranked best university

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras remained on the top spot in the National Institute Ranking Framework, 2024 for the sixth consecutive year, while the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru was ranked as the best university for the ninth year in a row, according to the Ministry of Education. The ninth edition of the rankings was announced by Union Minister of Education Dharmendra Pradhan on Monday. IISc Bengaluru has bagged the second spot in the "overall" category followed by IIT Bombay while IIT Delhi, which was at the third spot last year in the category, has slipped

to the fourth position. Eight IITs have figured in the top ten besides All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi and the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU). Among universities, IISc Bengaluru is followed by JNU and Jamia Millia Islamia. Nine IITs are in the top ten list for engineering colleges with IIT Madras being at the top for the ninth consecutive year in the category. IIT Delhi and IIT Bombay have also retained their second and third spot respectively in the category. National Institute of Technology (NIT), Tiruchirappalli is the only non-IIT in the top ten list. Among management colleges, the Indian Institute of Management (IIM)



Ahmedabad has retained its top spot, followed by IIT Bangalore and IIT Kozhikode. Two IITs Bombay and Delhi have also figured in the top ten list for management courses. In pharmacy, Jamia Hamdard rose to the top spot from its second position last year while the National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research, Hyderabad slipped to the second rank. BITS Pilani has retained its third position in the category. Delhi University's Hindu

College and Miranda House have switched positions in the colleges' category with the former bagging the top spot. St Stephen's College is in the third position among colleges. Similarly for law, the National Law School of India University, Bengaluru followed by the National Law University, Delhi and NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad have retained first, second and third spots respectively. For Architecture and Planning, IIT Roorkee has been announced as the best, followed by IIT Kharagpur and NIT Calicut. Among medical colleges, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi has bagged the top position followed by PGIME, Chandigarh and CMC Vellore

at second and third spot. Among the dental colleges, Saveetha Institute of Medical And Technical Sciences, Chennai and Manipal College of Dental Sciences retained the top two positions while the third rank has been bagged by Maulana Azad Institute of Dental Sciences, New Delhi. For education, IISc Bengaluru has been acknowledged as the best followed by IIT Madras and IIT Delhi at second and third spot. For education in Agriculture and Allied Sectors, Indian Agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi is at the first spot while ICAR-National Dairy Research Institute, Haryana has bagged the second rank, followed by Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana.

Centre advises news channels to add timestamps on disaster footage

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Monday issued an advisory to private news channels to carry a date and timestamp on visuals of natural disasters and major accidents while reporting on such incidents. The advisory, issued by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, noted that television channels provide continuous coverage of natural disasters, major accidents over several days but keep showing the footage from the day the incident took place. The Ministry argued that the footage shown by television channels several days after the



accident or disaster does not necessarily reflect the real-time ground situation which leads to "unnecessary confusion and potential panic among viewers". "Therefore, to avoid any misunderstanding among viewers, all private satellite TV channels are hereby advised to ensure that visuals of disasters, natural calamity or major acci-

dents should prominently display a 'DATE AND TIME' stamp on the top of the footage," the advisory read. The display of date and timestamp will ensure that viewers are suitably informed about the exact date of the footage being telecast and the fact that it does not necessarily reflect the real time position at the location of the incident. The I&B Ministry advisory also "strongly advised" private news channels to ensure adherence to the Programme Code while telecasting such incidents. The advisory comes in the wake of extensive coverage of the landslides in Wayanad and Himachal Pradesh that claimed several lives recently.



Centre to launch contest to designate Model Solar villages

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

In an ambitious new effort to promote solar energy aimed to reduce dependence of conventional energy amidst climate change threats, the Centre is launching a competitive "challenge" under the PM Surya Ghar Yojana (PMSY) to designate Model Solar Villages. In this regard, the Government has announced a central financial assistance grant of Rs one crore to the winning hamlet in each district with the highest renewable energy capacity. "The goal is to promote solar energy use and help villages become self-reliant in meeting their energy needs," said an official from the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy. The incentive comes under the 'Model Solar Village' initiative under the PM-Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana for which the Guidelines for implementation of 'Model Solar Village' under PM-Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana were notified by the Ministry on August 9, 2024. The initiative aims to inspire and support villages across India to transition to solar power and serve as models for sustainable energy practices," said the official. This scheme, which aims to expand off-grid solar solutions, is part of a comprehensive approach with three key

components: enhancing solar installations on residential properties, commercial/industrial/Government buildings, and creating Model Solar Villages. Through this challenge, villages will compete for a central financial grant, designed to accelerate their transition to solar power and establish them as beacons of sustainable energy adoption. This initiative not only seeks to boost solar energy use but also to inspire other communities to follow suit, added the official. In order to be considered a village under the competition mode, a village must be a revenue village with a population size above 5,000 (or 2,000 for special category states). The selection process involves a competitive mode where villages are assessed on their overall distributed renewable energy (RE) capacity installed 6 months after the declaration of the potential candidate by the District Level Committee (DLC). The Government had given go ahead to the PM-Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana in February this year, with the aim to increase the share of solar rooftop capacity and empower residential households to generate their own electricity. The scheme has an outlay of Rs 75,021 crore and is to be implemented till fiscal 2026-27.

10th India-Sri Lanka military exercise begins

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The 10th edition of India-Sri Lanka Joint Military Exercise Mitra Shakti commenced on Monday at Army Training School, Maduru Oya, Sri Lanka. The exercise is scheduled to end on August 25, army said here. Giving details, officials said Indian contingent comprising of 106 personnel is being represented by a battalion of Rajputana Rifles along with personnel from other arms and services. The Sri Lankan contingent is being represented by personnel from Gajaba Regiment of Sri Lankan Army. Joint Exercise MITRA SHAKTI is an annual training event conducted alternatively in India and Sri Lanka. Last edition was conducted in Pune in November last year. Aim of the Joint Exercise is to enhance joint military capability of both sides to undertake counter insurgency operations in a Sub Conventional scenario under Chapter VII of the



United Nations Mandate. The exercise will focus on operations in the semi-urban environment. Tactical drills to be rehearsed during the exercise include Response to a Terrorist Action, Establishment of a Joint Command Post, Establishment of an Intelligence and Surveillance Centre, Securing of a Helipad/Landing Site, Small Team Insertion and Extraction, Special Heliborne Operations, Cordon and Search Operations besides employment of Drones and Counter Drone Systems, among others. The Exercise will enable both sides to share best practices in Tactics, Techniques and Procedures of conducting joint operations.

Former Foreign Minister K Natwar cremated, leaders pay tribute

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The mortal remains of Former Foreign Minister K Natwar Singh were consigned to flames here on Monday as several political leaders, including External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, joined in paying tribute to him. Natwar Singh passed away on Saturday night after a prolonged illness, according to his family members. He was 93. His funeral was held in the afternoon at the Lodhi Crematorium amid rains in Delhi. External Affairs Minister Jaishankar, Union Culture Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma, National Conference Leader Omar Abdullah, Congress Leader and former Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda, and several other Leaders, besides many family members, friends and admirers



of Natwar Singh gathered at the crematorium to pay tribute. Jaishankar offered a piece of wood to the funeral pyre before Singh's mortal remains were consigned to flames. "Many political Leaders came to pay tribute to Natwar sahab," said a family friend who attended the funeral. The former Union Minister breathed his last at Medanta Hospital in Gurugram near Delhi, where he had been admitted for the past few weeks, they said. Natwar Singh was born in 1931 at Jaghina village in Bharatpur district of Rajasthan.



Priyanka concern at Bangladesh minority attacks

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

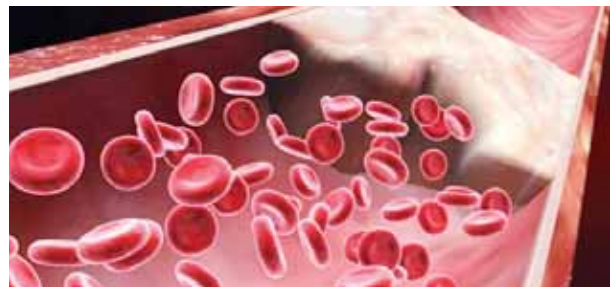
Congress Leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Monday said news of continuous attacks on minorities in neighbouring Bangladesh was disturbing and expressed hope that the Government there would ensure the safety of Hindus, Christians and Buddhists. The Congress general secretary said discrimination, violence and attacks on the basis of religion, caste, language or identity were unacceptable in any civilised society. "The news of continuous attacks on minorities in neighbouring Bangladesh is disturbing. Discrimination, violence and attacks on the basis of religion, caste, language or identity are unacceptable in any civilised society," Priyanka said in a post on X. She expressed hope that the situation in Bangladesh would soon become normal and the interim Government there would ensure the safety and respect for people following Hindu, Christian and Buddhist religions. Bangladesh's interim Leader Mohammed Yunus on Saturday condemned attacks on minority communities in the violence-hit nation, terming them as "heinous", and urged youngsters to protect all Hindu, Christian and Buddhist families from harm. A number of Hindu temples, households and businesses were vandalised, women assaulted and at least two Hindu Leader's affiliated with the Awami League party headed by Sheikh Hasina were killed in the violence in Bangladesh after she fled the country, according to community Leaders in Dhaka.

Indian researchers create xerogel for blood clot relief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Indian researchers have developed a porous composite xerogel dressing incorporating Silica Nanoparticles and calcium, that can help blood clot rapidly and provide relief from uncontrolled hemorrhage. The composite showed significant improvement in rate of blood clotting in comparison to commercial dressing, said scientists from Agharkar Research Institute (ARI) Pune, an autonomous institute of Department of Science and Technology (DST) under the Union Ministry of Science and Technology. Uncontrolled hemorrhage is one of the leading causes of traumatic death resulting from accidents or injuries and dur-

ing military or surgical operations. More than 40 per cent of trauma deaths are due to severe loss of blood. Gauze, a commonly used first aid material or the natural defences of the human body operating through reduction in blood flow to the injury site, platelet plug formation by fibrin activation and activation of blood clotting pathways are inadequate to halt severe hemorrhage. Therefore, improved hemostatic materials are urgently required to reduce blood losses. The scientists said that the highly porous spongy xerogel hemostatic dressing supplemented with substances bind to a receptor inside a cell (agonists) like silica nanoparticles (SiNPs) and calcium. They studied composite material and



found that it increased the blood clotting index by 13-fold in comparison to commercial dressing clotting capacity. The well-characterised xerogel showed presence of multiple pores of around 30 µm size that contributed to the high absorbance capacity of the dressing. The supplements improved the clotting capacity and resulted in quick absorbance of blood.

"Platelets are an important component of blood and contribute to the blood clotting process. Several factors like change in platelet shape, secretion of calcium, and activation of receptors on platelet surface play a role in the intricate pathway of blood clotting. The xerogel hemostatic dressing showed enhanced platelet aggregation due to the development of

well-formed pseudopodia in the activated platelets resulting in agglutination which play a major role in the clotting process. In addition, the composite enhanced calcium release, and its extrusion," said the authors Gokul Patil, Rutuja Pawar, and Vandana Ghormade from the institute. Furthermore, a significant increase of the active form of the protease activated receptor gene (PARI gene-- present in the platelet membranes facilitates thrombin signaling) was noted in human platelets. Platelet calcium release and upregulation of PARI on the platelet surface are critical for platelet shape change and aggregation. The study is published in the Journal Applied Polymer Science.

Work to make India a developed nation: Mandaviya to youth

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Union Youth Affairs and Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Monday urged youth to work with commitment and dedication to become successful and make India a developed nation by 2047.

Addressing the 'Impact With Youth Conclave 2024' here on International Youth Day, the minister said the 'Mera Yuva Bharat - 'MY Bharat' portal launched by the Centre will become a single window platform for the youth.

This year's International Youth Day, themed 'From Clicks to Progress: Youth Digital Pathways for Sustainable Development', emphasises the importance of digitalisation and the pivotal role young people play in this transformation.

"This is a country with a population of 140 crore. It is our collective responsibility to make India a developed nation. In such a situation, youth have a special responsibility," Mandaviya



He highlighted the significance of youth in realising the vision of a developed India by 2047, the 100th year of independence, and said the government will leave no stone unturned to ensure the financial security of the young generation.

The central government is making an effort to empower the youth of the country by creating opportunities for them, he said.

"I found two to three points common in successful

people, which I adopted in my life. One common characteristic was commitment and dedication with which they worked. Commitment and dedication, along with hard work, and the fourth is goal...Set a goal. Work with commitment and dedication to achieve the goal, and nothing can stop you from being successful," the minister said.

"Today, on International Youth Day, pledge to be successful for the country and yourselves. If you move ahead with this goal, you will become successful, and we will make India a developed nation when it celebrates the centenary year of its independence," he said.

The Union minister said around 1.5 crore people have registered themselves on 'MY Bharat', which will become a single window platform for the youth.

"In the coming days, the MY Bharat portal will become a single-window platform for youth, helping them determine their future. It will help them with career opportunities, enrolments and applications," Mandaviya told reporters later.

Users of MY Bharat will be able to connect themselves with national and international systems, he said.

"Volunteers will visit 5,000 college campuses and offer a presentation regarding MY Bharat and how youth will benefit from the internship scheme and other initiatives announced in the Union Budget," he said.

Mandaviya said in the last two months, he interacted with 12-15 youth groups and consulted around 500 youngsters to seek their suggestions to make MY Bharat more robust.

The Union minister urged youngsters to prioritise their commitment to the nation alongside their careers.

UNICEF representative in India and co-chair of the UNICEF YuWaah board, Cynthia McCaffrey, stressed the importance of engaging youth in global action.

"International Youth Day is a reminder of the immense contributions young people make to their communities and the world," she said.

"We are committed to improving young people's access to skilling, volunteering, innovation, entrepreneurship, and other economic opportunities through our deep and longstanding partnership with the Government of India and by harnessing youth potential through digital platforms such as YouthHub," she said.

Karnataka to form expert panel to assess condition of all dams

PTI ■ BENGALURU

In the backdrop of one of the crest gates of the Tungbhadra reservoir being washed away, Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Monday said the state government is constituting an expert committee to assess the condition of all dams in the state.

Shivakumar, also the Water Resources Minister, said efforts are on to restore the crest gate at the dam and there is no need for anyone to worry over the issue.

One of the crest gates (19th gate) of the Tungbhadra reservoir near the district headquarters town of Koppal was washed away after its chain link snapped on Friday midnight, following which the downstream areas were put on alert, as a huge quantity of water was being released.

"Yesterday I visited the T B



(Tungbhadra) Dam, we have taken immediate action. I have spoken to contractors and we have sent the designs. In four to five days, we will try to repair it. We want to save at least one crop for our farmers, we are taking all necessary measures for it. The Chief Minister is also visiting there tomorrow. I have also discussed with the technical team," Shivakumar said.

Speaking to reporters here, he said: "I'm not denying that it was dangerous, for the first time in 70 years such a thing has happened, but there is no need for anyone including farmers to worry."

"We will form a committee for the safety of all dams and will send them to all dams. An expert committee will be formed in a couple of days and will be sent to visit all dams and seek a report from them after assessment," he said.

After visiting the dam on Sunday, Shivakumar had said that as there was a possibility of damage to the structure of the dam, all the gates were opened from where 38,000 cusecs of water is being released to neighbouring Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, while the inflow is 28,000 cusecs.

He had also said out of 38,000 cusecs of water being released, 35,000 is flowing from the 19th gate itself.

Day after Maratha protesters' ire, Sharad meets community leaders

PTI ■ PUNE

Members of a Maratha Organisation on Monday met with NCP (SP) leader Sharad Pawar at his residence in Pune and asked him to clear his stand on the quota issue, a day after protesters stopped the SUV of the veteran politician in Solapur district and shouted slogans during his rally.

Reacting to the meeting between Maratha Kranti Thok Morcha leader Ramesh Kere Patil and Pawar, quota activist Manoj Jarange alleged Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and other leaders of BJP were trying to project a rift in the Maratha community.

He dubbed Kere Patil's meeting with Pawar a "trap" to divide Marathas.

"Fadnavis is dreaming to create a rift in the Maratha community, however, his dream will never become a reality," Jarange told reporters in Pune. BJP leaders (Pravin) Darekar and Fadnavis are trying to project Marathas as a divided community on the reservation issue, Jarange alleged.

Maratha agitators Sunday stopped Pawar's vehicle in



Solapur district and later raised slogans and waved black flags at a rally being addressed by the veteran politician in Barshi town.

Protesters, seeking the reservation for Marathas in the OBC category, asked Pawar to clear his stance on the issue.

Pawar on Monday appealed to Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde to convene an all-party meeting to discuss the quota dispute between the Marathas and Other Backward Class communities. Talking to reporters after Kere Patil met him at his residence, Pawar said steps should be taken to ensure the social fabric of the state remains good and there is no bitterness between communities.

Viewing districts through ethnic lens unfortunate: Manipur CM

PTI ■ IMPHAL

Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh on Monday criticised the mindset of communities which view district boundaries through an ethnic lens, calling it "most unfortunate and detrimental to peace and harmony".

Singh emphasised the need for "reorganisation of districts" and suggested that it should involve thorough discussions with legislators and civil society.

"It is crucial to revise district boundaries based on administrative convenience rather than ethnic lines," Singh told the Assembly.

He acknowledged complaints that some villages were incorrectly assigned to new districts and called for a statewide survey involving village authorities, community leaders, and legislators to address these issues. Singh added that there are also calls for the rollback of some newly created districts.

Addressing concerns raised by Naga People's Front legislator Leishiyo Keishing about the creation of new districts in 2016, Singh



acknowledged that while the stated purpose was administrative convenience, it often served political interests.

"While it is clearly mentioned that creation of districts is for administrative conveniences, it served as political conveniences as regards to some districts," the CM said.

Keishing had highlighted how the formation of the Kangpokpi district in 2016 had affected the political aspirations and other opportunities of many Tangkhul and Rongmei Nagas.

Singh noted that Naga residents in Kangpokpi and Churachandpur have alleged

10 names for 2 RS seats sent to central panel, says Assam BJP chief Kalita

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Assam BJP president A Bhabesh Kalita said on Monday that 10 members have applied for nominations in two Rajya Sabha seats that have fallen vacant in the state. All the names are being forwarded to the central parliamentary committee for a final decision, he said.

Speaking to reporters after a state election committee meeting of the party here, Kalita said, "For the two Rajya Sabha seats from the state that have fallen vacant, we have received 10 applications from our senior and esteemed members."

Among those seeking party tickets are former Union minister Rameswar Teli, ex-MPs Rajdeep Roy and Topon Gogoi, incumbent MLA Manab Deka and former MLA Mission Ranjan Das.

"The state election committee meeting, attended by Union minister Sarbananda Sonowal, CM Himanta Biswa Sarma and state in-charge



Harish Dwivedi, among others, discussed the matter in detail. We have decided to forward all the names to the central parliamentary committee for a final decision," Kalita said.

The two seats have fallen vacant following the election of Sonowal and Kamakhya Tassa to the Lok Sabha.

Assam has seven seats in the Upper House, of which six are currently held by the BJP-led ruling alliance, with the saffron party having four seats and one each by its allies AGP and UPPL One seat is held by an Independent MP.

Four Bangladeshis prevented from entering Assam, says Himanta

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday said police prevented four Bangladeshi nationals from entering India illegally through Karimganj district.

"This morning at 1:30 am, Bangladeshi citizens identified as Motiur Seikh, Mushiar Mullah, Tania Mullah, and Rita Mullah attempted to enter India through the Karimganj sector of the India-Bangladesh border," he said in a post on X.

"However, police effectively intervened at the zero point and promptly repelled them, preventing their unauthorized entry," Sarma added.

The CM had earlier said that the situation in Bangladesh is

a matter of concern for the Northeast from two angles, with people likely to enter through the border and the neighbouring country might also again become a hub of insurgents from the region.

He had maintained that the borders are secure with the state government maintaining a strict vigil and, as of now, nobody has been allowed to cross into the country from Bangladesh except those who have valid passport, visa and are bonafide citizens of India.

Director General of Assam Police GP Singh had said that a high alert has been issued along the Indo-Bangladesh border to ensure that no person can enter the state illegally, with BSF as the first line of defence along the border and the Assam Police as the second line.

Incessant rain affects life in Rajasthan

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Continuous rain has affected life in many districts of Rajasthan, including the capital Jaipur. In the last 24 hours, a record 118 mm rainfall has been recorded in Jaipur and the spell is still continuing. A holiday has been declared in schools in many districts, including Bharatpur, Karauli, Dausa and Sawai Madhopur. It has been raining intermittently in the state capital since Sunday afternoon. Heavy rains started at around 5 am on Monday in many areas and continued intermittently till 9 am. Due to this, many low-lying areas were flooded. People were virtually locked in their homes.

In view of heavy rains, the Education Department has declared a holiday in schools on Monday in many districts, including Jaipur.

According to the Meteorological Centre Jaipur,



118 mm rainfall was recorded at the Jaipur airport during the 24 hours till 8:30 am on Monday.

Amid rains in many districts of the state for many days and warnings of monsoon remaining active for the next several days, Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma held a meeting of senior officials on Sunday.

He directed them to provide all possible and quick relief in the affected areas and to focus

remaining active in many parts of Jaipur, Bharatpur, Ajmer, and Kota divisions of eastern Rajasthan for the next four-five days and heavy to very heavy rains at some places.

Also, there is a strong possibility of moderate and heavy rains in most parts of the Bikaner division of western Rajasthan for the next three-four days.

From June 1 to Aug 12, Rajasthan has recorded 40 per cent more rainfall than the normal. The normal rainfall recorded during the corresponding period in the state is 283.9 mm, which has been 397.8 mm this year.

Western Rajasthan has recorded 56 per cent more rainfall than the normal, whereas eastern Rajasthan recorded 31 per cent more rainfall. According to MeT department data.

Except Dungarpur and Banswara, almost all districts have recorded normal to excess rainfall.

MP BJP working panel member arrested after he 'misbehaves' with CM Yadav's OSD

PTI ■ BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh BJP working committee member has been arrested after he allegedly created a ruckus and misbehaved with the Officer on Special Duty (OSD) to Chief Minister Mohan Yadav at a party function here, a police officer said on Monday.

Harendra Bahadur Singh, according to a police complaint filed by Naib Tehsildar Nimesh Pandey, hurled abuses, created rumpus and misbehaved with his boss, chief executive officer (CEO) of the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Good Governance and Policy Analysis, Lokesh Sharma, at the BJP function organised at the institute on Saturday, he said.

Besides heading the state government-run institute, Sharma is also the OSD to

CM at the secretariat, a close aide of Yadav confirmed to PTI. "We served Singh a notice after registering a case and summoned him to the police station on Sunday where we arrested him," the police officer said.

Singh has been charged with abusing, threatening and trying to obstruct a government officer in discharging his duty, Kamla Nagar police station inspector Nirupa Pandey said. Singh was produced before the Assistant Commissioner of Police's court which sent him to judicial custody the previous day.

The state BJP working committee member was upset over some issue relating to his daughter's job at a facility (run by the MP government), the police said. In the recent LS polls, the BJP won all the 29 seats in Madhya Pradesh.

Preserving natural habitats for elephants helps reduce human-elephant conflict: Karnataka CM

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Preserving the natural habitats for the elephants will reduce the human-elephant conflicts that we are witnessing at an alarmingly high rate, said Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Monday.

He was speaking after inaugurating an international conference that coincides with World Elephant Day. The two-day conference on human-elephant conflict management, which aims to tackle the increased human-elephant conflicts, was

organised by the Karnataka Forest department. The conference will see forest department officials from across India sharing knowledge with academic researchers and civil society organisations to bring about evidence-based inclusive approaches to human-elephant conflict solutions.

At the inaugural event, Siddaramaiah said Karnataka in particular is susceptible to increased human-elephant conflicts as the state has the highest elephant population with 6,395 elephants, which makes approximately 25 per

cent of the nation's total elephant population. "With Karnataka's significant elephant population comes the inevitable challenge of human-elephant conflict. In the last 10 years, the state reported over 2,500 incidents of human-elephant conflicts, resulting in over 350 human fatalities and substantial crop losses," said the CM.

According to him, the conference is a critical platform where to exchange ideas, explore scientific solutions, and foster international collaboration to address the problem.



"As climate change raises temperatures and changes rainfall patterns, resources become even more scarce and elephants get pushed into new areas, including communal lands. Humans face their own challenges as they must move deeper into elephant territory to collect water or firewood," said Siddaramaiah. Therefore, he said this is a challenge with significant ecological, social, and economic implications.

In that context, he said the international conference presents an invaluable opportunity to learn from

one another, explore innovative scientific solutions, and discuss sustainable approaches to fostering coexistence between humans and elephants.

"I am confident that the distinguished delegates present here will contribute valuable insights and recommendations to pave the way for a harmonious coexistence between humans and elephants," he added.

Eshwar B Khandre, Karnataka's Forest, Ecology & Environment Minister who was also present for the

inaugural session on Monday, reiterated that the conference is an attempt towards developing a robust mechanism to address the pressing issue of human-elephant conflict.

"When the idea of the conference was initially floated to me, I was very intrigued by it. I was excited by the prospect that we'll have a chance to come across so many new ideas and setups, which can open up a whole lot of possibilities for us with regards to the conservation of elephants," added the minister.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Capital of monsoon misery

Thee national capital grapples with waterlogging and a host of issues that accompany the rains

TS Eliot wrote, "April is the cruelest month..." in his famous poem *The Waste Land*. He was, of course, speaking of a different context and place, but one might wonder if he would have felt the same had he experienced Delhi in August. This year has brought a good monsoon, but for Delhiites, heavy downpours rarely bring good news. They must brace themselves for waterlogging, traffic snarls, a host of diseases, unclean water, power failures, and what have you. Streets turned into rivers, traffic reached a standstill, and daily life was thrown into disarray. The scene is all too familiar, a recurring nightmare that haunts the city every monsoon. But why does Delhi, with its sprawling infrastructure and resources, continue to grapple with such chaos year after year? More importantly, what can be done to mitigate this annual misery? Heavy rainfall over the past 24 hours has left several key areas in Delhi, including Connaught Place, Minto Road, and the Ring Road, severely waterlogged. Commuters faced long hours in traffic jams, and pedestrians struggled to navigate the flooded streets. The drainage system, overwhelmed by the sheer volume of water, failed to cope, leading to a cascading series of problems: halted public transport and power outages.



The residents of low-lying areas are the worst hit, with water entering homes and causing significant damage to property and belongings. Unfortunately, it's an annual ritual: heavy monsoon showers overwhelm the infrastructure, bringing the city to a standstill. The blame game ensues, followed by knee-jerk responses and funds allocated for improvements. Yet, by the next year, those efforts are washed away, leaving the city again

at the mercy of the weather gods. It is not rocket science to find the root cause of the problem and even fix it. Surely, the authorities would know that but the execution plan is missing. Despite being a metropolitan hub, Delhi's drainage system is outdated and poorly maintained. Besides, rapid and often haphazard urban development has led to the encroachment of natural water bodies and green spaces. These areas, which once absorbed excess rainwater, have been replaced by concrete structures, exacerbating the problem of water runoff. There is an urgent need to remove those encroachments and upgrade the drainage system. But unfortunately, urban planning in Delhi often happens in silos, with little coordination between different departments. This lack of an integrated approach has led to a situation where roads are built without adequate drainage. Delhi needs a multifaceted approach that addresses both the immediate challenges and long-term vulnerabilities: Utilising smart city technologies, such as real-time monitoring of drainage systems and predictive weather modelling, can help in better preparedness and response to heavy rains. While heavy rains are a natural phenomenon, the resulting waterlogging and disruption are largely man-made problems. To tackle this issue, concrete measures and decisive actions must be taken immediately.

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PICTALK



Devotees carry a Lord Ganesh idol for the Ganesh Chaturthi festival, in Mumbai

Progress depends on retentiveness

Today, as political discord echoes through our democracy, I find myself reflecting on those dark days of Emergency and the enduring wounds inflicted on our nation's soul



J S RAJPUT

It was only in 1956 that I got some idea of how the Constitution of India was framed, and who were the major personalities that constituted the historic Constituent Assembly. The teacher who introduced me to it was a great admirer of Mahatma Gandhi and adored Pandit Nehru and Neta Ji Subhash Chandra Bose. The library had a copy of the constitution of India having the signatures of all of the members of the Constituent Assembly and also images representing Indian culture and heritage. We learnt the Preamble by heart. This teacher-created interest amongst students interested in dramatics, and after hectic preparation of a couple of weeks, a mock Constituent Assembly was enacted in the presence of a huge gathering.

This young teacher was also confident that the ancient Indian culture now be resurrected, and the entire world would know how advanced Indians were in 'thought and deed'. In 1975, I read the constitution in all seriousness, and witnessed how it was being mercilessly mutilated! After nearly five decades, as one peruses the print and electronic media, one witnesses a slugfest between the union government and the opposition, it makes one reflect on the emergency days, and one just can't avoid reflecting on the 18 months of democratic darkness that shattered the lives of millions of the people. It ruined the credibility of Indian democracy internationally. No apology could erase the wound inflicted on the constitution and the humiliation of the stalwarts who created the constitution of India. Was it not a shameless humiliation inflicted on Baba Sahib Bhim Rao Ambedkar? He had repeatedly opposed the inclusion of the term 'secular in the Preamble of the Constitution. How could any active and alert citizen forget the fact that the 44th Constitution Amendment Act was passed by a Parliament that was in its arbitrarily-extended sixth year? Practically all of the opposition stalwarts were in jail! Today, any voice that says 'I want my



original Preamble back' should be deciphered in the spirit it deserves to be comprehended in its objectivity. It could certainly be a great tribute to Dr Baba Sahib Ambedkar! This correction would offer a healing touch to persons like me who had witnessed the emergency and also -to a great extent - to those who had suffered damages of an irreversible nature. Let me narrate a personal experience. One senior academic was appointed head of a regional institute in Bhopal in December 1974. In August 1975, he was asked to report to report to his central office New Delhi next day 'for consultations'. I was number two in the institutional hierarchy and had become a full Professor just a year back in August 1974. I assisted him in preparing certain project proposals he would carry that evening for obtaining sanction from New Delhi. The next morning, I received a 'lightening call' to take over as Head of the institution immediately, as the incumbent stood removed from his position. It was shocking, and I was just not ready to comply. I was advised by all my well-wishers including those from senior bureaucracy and police services to quietly 'take over', without in any way indicating unwillingness.

NO APOLOGY COULD ERASE THE WOUND INFLICTED ON THE CONSTITUTION AND THE HUMILIATION OF THE STALWARTS WHO CREATED THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA. WAS IT NOT A SHAMELESS HUMILIATION INFLICTED ON BABA SAHIB BHIM RAO AMBEDKAR?

On return, the summarily sacked academic described the ordeal he suffered. As he was to reach the designated office, a peon was waiting with a letter that he swiftly handed over, obtained his signatures on the peon book, and vanished! I got instructions to ensure that no one even meets him! I insisted that the head of an academic institution should not be humiliated before his students. A lady bureaucrat from the New Delhi office reposed faith in me, but told me that only I, and I alone, would be responsible for any mishap that may occur, and its consequences. The academic who was humiliated and removed never got justice during his remaining lifetime of around two decades. Those who would not like even a mention of emergency could recall how strongly India was proud of the persona of that great intellectual and jurist Nani Palakhivala. He had refused the brief from Mrs Indira Gandhi and fought for the constitution in draconian conditions. His reflections on emergency shall remain ever-relevant: "No period in the history of our republic is of more educational value than 1975 to 1977. George Santayana said, 'Progress far from consisting

in change, depends on retentiveness... Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. If our basic freedoms are to survive, it is of vital importance that we remember the happenings during emergency when the freedoms were suspended". Is it necessary to 'fight facts' to negate the truth? What we witness all around us in the world of the current-day average politicians was envisioned by Sri Aurobindo in his lifetime: "The modern politician in my part of the world does not represent the soul of a people or its aspirations. What he does usually represent is all the average pettiness, selfishness, egoism, self-deception that is about him and these he represents well enough as well as a great deal of mental incompetence and moral conventionalism, timidity and pretence". All of these attributes have grown up in gigantic proportions in our times. The only way out is the sincere acceptance of diversity of every imaginable hue, and revert back to the great dialogical tradition. The adults and elders must realize what the young of India are getting from them in the years of their growing up! (Professor Rajput works in education, social cohesion and religious amity; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT REMEMBERED

Madam — Mahatma Gandhi's relentless efforts were instrumental in India's journey to independence. From the 1930 Dandi March to the 1942 Quit India Movement, Gandhi's leadership was pivotal in challenging British rule. On August 9, 1942, India embarked on a crucial new phase in its fight for freedom—a mass uprising against colonial rule that heralded the imminent end of the British Empire in India. Although Gandhi and the Congress leadership were imprisoned on August 8, the call to "Quit India" ignited a nationwide movement. With the leaders behind bars, the people took to the streets, driven by Gandhi's urgent call to action. Their resolve and sacrifice laid the groundwork for India's eventual independence, a testament to their undying commitment to freedom and self-determination.

Jayanthi Subramaniam | Mumbai

PM VISIT REASSURES WAYANAD

Madam— On Saturday, the Prime Minister visited Wayanad, a region recently struck by an unprecedented disaster that claimed around 400 lives and forced thousands into relief camps. His visit uplifted the spirits of the disillusioned and distressed and fostered the hopes. Their eyes were filled with tears emotionally as they recounted their ordeals to him. The visit also expedited the rehabilitation process, with authorities working tirelessly to restore normalcy, as the Prime Minister promised to provide all possible assistance. This gesture has won the hearts of the people, and such initiatives are now expected in the future. In the aftermath of the Prime Minister's visit, the people of Wayanad find themselves not only comforted by his empathy but also reassured by his commitment to their recovery. The renewed hope in their eyes speaks to the power of genuine leadership in times of crisis. As the region begins to rebuild, the memory of this visit will linger, a reminder that in the face of

Bangladesh on boil



This is in response to the news article, "Bangladesh: Uncertainty and Chaos Grip the Nation" (August 10). The recent vio-

adversity, they are not alone.

Jakir Hussain | Kanpur

RAHUL GANDHI'S EVOLUTION

Madam — Apropos the article, "The Evolution of Rahul Gandhi," published on August 8, this is my response. Rahul Gandhi, once mocked by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his supporters as "Pappu" and an "entitled dynast," staged a remarkable comeback in the 2024 general elections. He became the central figure of an alliance that successfully penetrated BJP strongholds, particularly in Uttar Pradesh. As the heir to India's renowned Nehru-Gandhi political dynasty, Rahul Gandhi led two nationwide marches against what he termed Modi's politics of hate and fear, revitalizing his Congress party and redefining his own public image. Rahul Gandhi has repeatedly emphasized that his fight against Modi's BJP is not merely about seizing power but about challenging the party's and the RSS's "Hindu-first" ideology, which contradicts India's secular principles as outlined in

the Constitution. The results of the last general election significantly boosted Rahul Gandhi's morale, prompting people to view him more positively and take him seriously as a leader. They have come to recognize him as a leader focused on real-life issues—such as unemployment, women's safety, the violence in Manipur, NEET exam paper leaks, rising prices of gas cylinders, petrol, and diesel, and caste-related issues. Most importantly, he is seen as the one who will uphold the spirit of secularism in the nation. These factors have collectively reshaped public perception of Rahul Gandhi. Now, having emerged stronger and as the Leader of the Opposition with substantial support from Opposition MPs in Parliament, Rahul Gandhi, known for his oratory skills, is poised to present significant challenges to Mr. Modi and his party in the days ahead on various issues facing the country.

Yugal Kishore Sharma | Faridabad

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Revamping the English literature curriculum

Once a cornerstone of intellectual pursuit, English literature studies are now facing a troubling decline in popularity among students in India

Once a most demanding course among youngsters, English literature studies has seen a significant decline in the past decade. In many colleges in India seats of B.Literature remain vacant despite its huge potential in this digital age. The policymakers and academicians should brainstorm the reasons and come out with concrete plans to overcome this dilemma. In India, many students see STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) as a subject of intellect and opportunities, compared to humanities. Emerging fields like data science, artificial intelligence, and digital marketing are gaining popularity among students due to their perceived relevance and lucrative opportunities. This trend reduces the appeal of traditional literary studies. The perception that a degree in English offers limited career options and lower earning potential can deter students from pursuing it. This view is compounded by a lack of clear and well-promoted career pathways specifically tied to English studies. Many



English literature programs may have curricula that have not been updated to reflect contemporary literary trends and regional and global issues. The stress on Shakespearean and other literary works doesn't get connected to present-day society. Shakespearean plays and other classical works were written in very different historical and cultural contexts. The social norms, political structures, and everyday concerns of ancient times may seem foreign to modern readers. This historical gap can make it hard for students to see how the themes and issues of these works relate to their own lives. A focus on classic literature without integrating contemporary and diverse voices may alienate students who are more interested in

modern and global literary trends. The rise of digital media and alternative forms of entertainment, such as social media, video games, and streaming platforms, has altered reading habits. Students may be less inclined to engage with traditional literature due to these competing interests. Though science education reformation forms part of national policies, literature education rarely finds its place in national policies, though NEP stresses the need to undertake literary studies. To make literature more relatable and engaging, integrate a diverse range of texts. Include contemporary works from different cultures, genres, and perspectives. For instance, introducing novels, short stories, and poetry from emerging voices around the world, alongside regional literature, can provide students with a broader view of the literary landscape. Academicians should link literature with other fields such as history, psychology, sociology, and environmental studies. For instance, studying dystopian novels alongside discussions of climate sci-

ence and environmental issues can provide students with a deeper understanding of both the literature and the real-world issues it reflects. Thrust should be given to include components that prepare students for the job market, such as resume writing, interview skills, and networking opportunities. Connecting literature studies with science and other relevant fields will enhance career prospects. In the age of bots, literature students should even be taught the fundamentals of computer programming. Revitalising the literary syllabus necessitates a deliberate strategy that incorporates current issues, embraces digital and multimedia resources, fosters interdisciplinary linkages, and emphasises practical skills. Educational institutions can establish a literary program that is relevant and exciting for 21st-century students by using a variety of texts, utilising technology, and regularly updating the curriculum. (The writer is the Academic affairs, GCU and adjunct faculty at NIAS, Bengaluru; views are personal)



BIJU DHARMAPALAN



FIRST COLUMN

CELEBRATING WORLD LEFT-HANDERS DAY

This day honours the 13 percent who navigate a world designed for the right-handed



RACHNA LAKHPATRI

The 13th of August is commemorated as World Left-Handers Day, a day dedicated to the 13% of the world's population who make do in a world that wasn't meant for them. To many of us, left-handedness is just a fascinating statistic, something we mention in passing or wonder at during a discussion. However, for those of us who lean left, this is a quiet, everyday rebellion against a world that expects us to fit in when we don't quite belong. From the moment we grip our first crayon, left-handers are thrust into a world where ease can be transformed into hand-to-hand combat.

Scissors bite painfully; pens spill over the paper; spiral notebooks are a tangle of discomfort. It's completely out of tune, like music played in a different key. However, this dissonance does not weaken us, but rather it strengthens us. In a world designed for right-handers, left-handers learn to improvise, create, and, eventually, prosper. This kind of adaptability lends itself to creativity, which is sometimes cited as a virtue among lefties. To us, however, creativity is more than just an artistic talent; it is a survival ability. Being left-handed means seeing the world from a different perspective and approaching difficulties with a different mindset.

Our brains are wired to think beyond the box because, honestly, the box was never meant for us in the first place. It is no surprise that left-handers such as Leonardo da Vinci, Nikola Tesla, and Marie Curie are among history's most recognised thinkers. They did not think differently; they saw differently, creating visions that changed our per-



ception of what is possible. However, it is not only about inventiveness. Being left-handed entails a quiet fortitude, borne of years of adjusting to a world that frequently forgets to include you. Each southpaw has a story to tell: awkward contortions in class, struggles with right-handed instruments, and ink-stained palms. However, these events do not diminish us; rather, they define us. They teach us how to be resourceful, to face challenges with fortitude, and to see beauty in the unexpected. Being rare has a mystical quality about it.

Being left-handed means standing out in a crowd, but more significantly, in life. It represents the fact that normalcy can be overvalued while the difference is powerful.

The left-handed intellect does not only accomplish what most others avoid; it frequently forges a new path where none previously existed. In art, science, sports, or leadership, a left-hander will do things differently, deviate from the norm, and transform the ordinary into remarkable. As we commemorate World Left-Handers Day, let us remember that being left-handed is much more than a biological quirk; it is a way of life, a sign of creativity, perseverance, and inventiveness that stems from a worldview that sees things not as they are, but as they could be.

Left-handers, living in a right-handed society, remind us that magic sometimes happens in the opposite direction. Here's to the lefties—the visionaries who prove that being different is not only acceptable but also remarkable. In celebrating World Left-Handers Day, we honor more than just a minority group—we recognize a testament to human adaptability and creativity. Left-handers remind us that thriving often means forging our own path, embracing differences, and finding strength in what sets us apart.

As we acknowledge the challenges lefties face, we also celebrate the unique perspective they bring to the world. Here's to the left-handers, whose quiet resilience and innovative spirit show us that being different isn't just okay—it's extraordinary.

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

Can Muhammad Yunus micro manage Bangladesh



NILANTHA LANGAMUWA

As the world watches, the implications of this power shift resonate far beyond Dhaka's borders; the once peaceful country has plunged into anarchy

South Asia's youngest nation has been thrust into a new era following a four-day power vacuum, decisively crossing a point of no return. A new messiah has emerged to rule over 171 million people, arriving from Paris in a full-circle moment. Had Hasina remained in power, he would have been sentenced to life for corruption on the very day Hasina fled the country she had ruled for over 15 years. Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus has assumed the role of head of the interim government. A 14-member interim government including a Hindu psychiatrist and a Buddhist human rights activist led by Prof. Yunus has taken charge.

Alarming, most of these members are heads of Western-funded NGOs, exposing the true manipulators behind the scenes. It was a nightmare for them to run their NGOs during Hasina's tenure, with many facing harassment, intimidation, and even imprisonment. Now, they have set their yardstick. Nobel laureate Prof. Yunus, who has received the Congressional Gold Medal and the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honours in the United States, illustrates the adage that, as Americans say, there's no such thing as a free lunch. The coming months will reveal how Dhaka's political shifts will reverberate across borders. Nearly 300 people have been killed in the post-Hasina period, with rampant looting, attacks on minorities, and intimidation of state institutions. Images show disturbing violence, including the burning of Hindu temples. The riots go beyond protests against the Awami League, revealing deeper conflicts. Simultaneously, one should not overlook the deep-rooted anti-India sentiments in Bangladesh and its diaspora, exacerbated by the 'India Out' campaign. Unfortunately, Delhi policymakers may have underestimated this sentiment and placed undue trust in Hasina.

It was a bloodbath, and the incidents that unfolded suggest it was a well-planned political scheme, executed promptly to overthrow Hasina—a time-tested leader, though surrounded by controversies. The humiliating destruction of Bangabandhu's statue starkly echoes the fall of Saddam Hussein's statue in Baghdad. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, known as Bangabandhu, laid the foundation of Bangladesh with his political ideology and dedication during the struggle for independence. Despite overcoming initial challenges, fear has once again taken hold in the country. The chaotic situation exemplifies a state of total anarchy. This is not a revolution; revolutions are meant to improve the lives of people, not to indulge in bloodlust against unarmed citizens with opposing political viewpoints or religious beliefs. However, given the nation's violent history even before its inception, it seems to be passing through yet another despicable period.

Is this merely a student uprising, or is someone manipulating them behind the scenes to exploit the situation? When the political intelligentsia abstains from protests, reducing them to mere emotional outbursts, it fosters an environment ripe for the creation of new, equally monstrous situations. This cycle will inevitably doom us to repeat the same failures. The harrowing video of an unemployed youth wearing a black t-shirt being shot by a policeman only deepened the unrest. Hasina bears blood on her hands; whether direct-



DESPITE OVERCOMING INITIAL CHALLENGES, FEAR HAS ONCE AGAIN TAKEN HOLD IN THE COUNTRY. THE CHAOTIC SITUATION EXEMPLIFIES A STATE OF TOTAL ANARCHY. THIS IS NOT A REVOLUTION; REVOLUTIONS ARE MEANT TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF PEOPLE, NOT TO INDULGE IN BLOODLUST AGAINST UNARMED CITIZENS

ly or through those who ordered lethal force against protesters, accountability is imperative. Thanks to India, Hasina narrowly escaped a fate akin to Muammar Gaddafi's. In the January elections, she set a trap with her abuse of power and legislative misogyny, even denying medical treatment to opponents. Her opponents seized on the quota issue as the tipping point. Although she addressed it, she failed to recognise it was merely a façade. Her inability to understand that 15 years is too long for any democracy to be managed alone highlights a grim historical lesson. However, history teaches us a valuable lesson: despite Ferdinand Marcos' ousting, his family's influence persisted, and in 2021, his son made a notable comeback in the Philippines. That's the nature of politics. Consequently, whoever comes to power next will face a challenging situation.

The manipulations behind these shocking events, which unfolded within a month while the Prime Minister was in China, may be revealed in the future, much like how America tried to obscure the genocide in Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) during the early 60s, with Henry Kissinger maintaining a political alliance with General Yahya Khan of Pakistan as a secret route to engage with China. Commenting on the situation, Secretary of State Antony Blinken, reflecting his country's global ambitions, urged the Bangladeshi people to ensure that 'any decisions made by the interim government need to respect democratic principles, uphold the rule of law, and reflect the will of the people.' This statement came shortly after the arrival of F-16 fighter jets in Ukraine, continued arms supplies to Israel, and the brutal killing of

Black woman Sonya Massey by law enforcement in her own home—just a few examples that highlight the contradictions in America's respect for the rule of law and international norms. Ironically, many have started comparing the situation in Bangladesh with Sri Lanka. However, there are significant differences between the unprecedented exit of the Bangladeshi Prime Minister this week and the relinquishment of power by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa in Sri Lanka two years ago. One key factor was India's attitude, which was drastically different in these cases.

Reliable sources with knowledge of the events in Sri Lanka have asserted that India believed Gotabaya Rajapaksa should not resign but should stay in power. This stance resulted in no airlift facilities being provided for a safe exit, forcing the then-President to flee to the Maldives in an over-50-year-old Air Force plane. In contrast, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh received swift support from India. Second, Gotabaya Rajapaksa came to power through free and fair elections with a significant majority, whereas Sheikh Hasina was re-elected after a series of repressions against opposition political parties. Her handling of the elections reflected growing public displeasure. Winning over regional powers and maintaining their support certainly made her powerful and influential.

Her development projects offered to India, China, Russia, and Japan highlighted bold decisions in her foreign policy. She effectively balanced both India and China, showcasing her capability more effectively than any other South Asian leader in contemporary political history. However, a com-

mon trait between these two leaders is their stance on China. Despite unprecedented pressure from the West, both leaders continued to work harmoniously with China. For instance, when Mike Pompeo, then Secretary of State and former CIA Director, criticised China during his visit to Colombo, President Rajapaksa directly told him that "the opinion held by America against China in Sri Lanka is factually wrong." Since then, Rajapaksa's politics began to crumble, pointing to the decisions he made and the protests that followed.

Similarly, after successfully concluding a visit to India right after Modi's re-election, Hasina flew to China to initiate more Chinese-funded development projects. By then, her fate at home was already sealed. In this context, Elon Musk's recent comment on Venezuela is apt: 'We will coup whoever we want! Deal with it.' Amidst the social media spectacle dominated by profit-driven motives and emotionally manipulative politics, the unemployed youth who ignited change in Bangladesh may soon face this harsh reality. Western ambitions in unstable countries often focus on destruction and manipulation through proxies rather than genuine improvements in livelihoods. The new interim government may well understand this realpolitik. With Hasina's downfall, the direction of the interim government's foreign policy and its approach towards the Global South, including BRICS, remains uncertain. While it may be premature to fully assess this interim arrangement, the situation poses a significant challenge for India, China, and Asia as a whole.

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

Pushpanjali Medicon 2024: Top doctors share insights on health and wellness

This unique medical conference covered topics ranging from liver health to the often-overlooked connection between sex and wellness

It's not every day that you see India's top medical professionals gathering under one roof to discuss various health conditions and offer advice on leading a healthy life. This rare opportunity drew people of all ages in large numbers to the capital, eager to hear the insights and wisdom of these renowned doctors.



VIVEK SHUKLA

Acute Kidney Injury, Headache Management, the Mystery of Dizziness, Suicide Prevention, Fatty Liver, and issues of reproductive health. The event saw the participation of leading doctors from the capital and various states such as Mumbai, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and beyond. One of the most anticipated sessions was led by Dr. Shiv

Kumar Sarin, a distinguished clinician and gastroenterologist, who captivated the audience with his talk on maintaining liver health. Dr. Sarin emphasised the liver's critical role as the controller and fulcrum of our metabolic well-being, comparing it to a chartered accountant that keeps a meticulous record of our body's intake and expenditure. He highlighted how any surplus, whether from genetic factors or excessive calorie consumption, can lead to fatty liver disease. This condition forces the pancreas to produce more insulin, which can eventually result in diabetes. Moreover, the excess fat in the liver doesn't just stay there; it circulates through-

out the body, potentially leading to complications such as gallstones. Another notable speaker, Dr. Rajeew Sood, the newly appointed Vice-Chancellor of Baba Farid University of Health Sciences and former Dean of Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital and PGIMER in Delhi, shared his expertise on managing prostate health. His session provided valuable insights into a topic that is often overlooked but crucial for men's health, particularly as they age. One of the most engaging sessions was on the topic "Sex Has No Expiry Date," delivered by Dr. Deepak Jumani, a Mumbai-based expert in sexual health. Dr. Jumani spoke with remarkable eloquence on a subject



that is rarely discussed openly, especially in such forums. He stressed the undeniable link between sex and overall health, arguing that sexual activity is one of the

most vital biological functions, essential for a fulfilling life. Addressing a packed audience, Dr. Jumani asserted that sexual pleasure is both a personal business

and a fundamental right, emphasizing that all sexual dysfunctions can be managed, allowing individuals of all ages to lead a sexually satisfying life.

The success of this unique health conference, where top doctors interacted with both medical professionals and the general public, is indeed a great achievement. The importance of conferences like Pushpanjali Medicon 2024 cannot be overstated.

Similar events must be held across the country. Dr. Aggarwal argues that such gatherings are vital for fostering closer ties between doctors, patients, and medical professionals. Healthcare conferences like Pushpanjali Medicon are

more than just formal events; they are epicenters of innovation and collaboration within the medical field. These gatherings offer invaluable networking opportunities with industry peers, critical for both personal and professional growth.

They also provide continuing Medical Education (CME) sessions that are essential for staying updated with the latest advancements in healthcare. Beyond the educational value, these conferences are inspiring and refreshing, offering a chance to recharge while gaining new insights and connections.

(The writer is an author and a columnist; views are personal)

Russians urged to flee Ukraine's cross-border attack

AP ■ KYIV

An official in the Kursk border region of Russia on Monday urged more residents to evacuate due to the "very tense situation" in the area, where Russian forces are still scrambling to respond to a surprise Ukrainian attack after almost a week of fierce fighting. Russia's emergency authorities say more than 76,000 people have fled their homes in areas of Kursk, where Ukrainian troops and armour poured across the border on August 6, reportedly driving as deep as 30 kilometers (19 miles) into Russia and sowing alarm. Ukrainian forces swiftly rolled into the town of Sudzha about 10 kilometers (6 miles) over the border after launching the attack. They reportedly still hold the western part of the town, which is the site of an important natural gas transit station. The Ukrainian operation is taking place under tight secrecy, and its goals — especially whether Kyiv's forces aim to hold territory or are staging a

raid — remain unclear. The stunning maneuver that caught the Kremlin's forces unawares counters Russia's unrelenting effort in recent months to punch through Ukrainian defences at selected points along the front line in eastern Ukraine. Russia has seen previous incursions into its territory during the nearly 2 1/2-year war, but the foray into the Kursk region marked the largest attack on its soil since World War II, embarrassing President Vladimir Putin and constituting a milestone in the hostilities. The advance has delivered a blow to Putin's efforts to pretend that life in Russia has largely remained unaffected by the war. State propaganda has tried to play down the attack, emphasizing the authorities' efforts to help residents of the region and seeking to distract attention from the military's failure to prepare for the attack and quickly repel it. Retired Gen. Andrei Gurulev, a member of the lower house of the Russian parliament, criticised the military for failing to



In this image from a surveillance camera provided by the Ukrainian Presidential Press Office, smoke rises from a cooling tower of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Station in a Russia-controlled area in the Enerhodar, Zaporizhzhia region of Ukraine. AP/PTI

properly protect the border. He noted that while the military has set up minefields in the border region, it has failed to deploy enough troops to block enemy raids. "Regrettably, the group of forces protecting the border didn't have its own intelligence assets," he said in his messaging app channel. "No one likes

to see the truth in reports, everybody just wants to hear that all is good." Pasi Paroinen, an analyst with the Finland-based Black Bird Group open-source intelligence agency, which monitors the war, said the toughest phase of Ukraine's incursion is likely to begin now as Russian reserves enter the fray.

He said that "if the Ukrainians are going to advance any further from where they are now, it's going to be a tough battle, unlike the opening moments of this offensive". Ukraine's progress on Russian territory "is challenging the operational and strategic assumptions" of the Kremlin's forces, according to the

Institute for the Study of War. It could compel Russia to deploy more military assets to the long border between the two countries, the Washington-based think tank said in an assessment late Sunday. It described the Russian forces responding to the incursion as "hastily assembled and disparate". The International Atomic Energy Agency said a fire near Ukraine's Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant had "no impact" on the facility's safety. Radiation levels are unchanged at what is one of the 10 biggest nuclear plants in the world, the UN body said. Russia and Ukraine blamed each other for the blaze at a cooling tower outside the plant's perimeter, and the IAEA chief said late Sunday that the war continues to imperil the Zaporizhzhia facility. "These reckless attacks endanger nuclear safety at the plant and increase the risk of a nuclear accident. They must stop now," Rafael Mariano Grossi said.

Putin: Attempt to stop Moscow's offensive

AP ■ KYIV

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Monday that the Ukraine army's incursion into the Kursk region, which has caused more than 100,000 civilians to flee, is an attempt by Kyiv to stop Moscow's offensive in eastern Ukraine's Donbas region. Speaking at a meeting with top security and defense officials, Putin said the attack that began last Tuesday appeared to reflect Kyiv's attempt to gain a better negotiating position in possible future talks to end the war. He argued that Ukraine may have hoped to destabilize the domestic situation in Russia, adding that it has failed to achieve the goal, and claimed that the number of volunteers to join the Russian military has increased. He said the Russian military is driving on with its eastern Ukraine offensive. Russia has seen previous incursions into its territory during the nearly 2 1/2-year war, but the foray into the Kursk region

marked the largest attack on its soil since World War II, embarrassing President Vladimir Putin and constituting a milestone in the hostilities. It is also the first time the Ukrainian army has spearheaded an incursion rather than pro-Ukraine Russian fighters. The combat inside Russia rekindled questions about whether Ukraine was using weaponry supplied by NATO members. Some Western countries have balked at allowing Ukraine to use their military aid to hit Russian soil, fearing it would fuel an escalation that might drag Russia and NATO into war. Though it's not clear what weapons Ukraine is using across the border, Russian media widely reported that US Bradley and German Marder armoured infantry vehicles were there. It was not possible to independently verify that claim. Ukraine has already used US weapons to strike inside Russia.

Pentagon moves submarine to Middle East

AP ■ WASHINGTON

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin has ordered a guided missile submarine to the Middle East and is telling the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier strike group to sail more quickly to the area, the Defense Department said Sunday. The moves come as the US and other allies push for Israel and Hamas to achieve a cease-fire agreement that could help calm soaring tensions in the region following the assassination of Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran and a senior Hezbollah commander in Beirut. Officials have been on the lookout for retaliatory strikes by both Iran and Hezbollah for the killings, and the US has been beefing up its presence in the region. Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder, Pentagon press secretary, said in a statement that Austin spoke with Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant earlier in the day, and reiterated America's commitment "to take every possible step to defend Israel and noted the strengthening of US military force posture and capabilities throughout the Middle

East in light of escalating regional tensions." The Lincoln, which has been in the Asia Pacific, had already been ordered to the region to replace the USS Theodore Roosevelt aircraft carrier strike group, which is scheduled to begin heading home from the Middle East. Last week, Austin said the Lincoln would arrive in the Central Command area by the end of the month. It wasn't clear Sunday what his latest order means, or how much more quickly the Lincoln will steam to the Middle East. The carrier has F-35 fighter jets aboard, along with the F/A-18 fighter aircraft that are also on carriers. Ryder also did not say how quickly the USS Georgia guided missile submarine would get to the region. He said Austin and Gallant also discussed Israel's military operations in Gaza and the importance of mitigating civilian harm. The call comes a day after an Israeli airstrike hit a school-turned-shelter in Gaza early Saturday, killing at least 80 people and wounding nearly 50 others, Palestinian health authorities said, in one of the deadliest attacks of the 10-month Israel-Hamas war.

Israel widens evacuation orders in southern Gaza

AP ■ DEIR AL-BALAH

The Israeli military ordered more evacuations in southern Gaza early Sunday, a day after a deadly airstrike on a school-turned-shelter in the north killed at least 80 Palestinians, according to local health authorities. The airstrike was one of the deadliest attacks in the 10-month war. Hamas appeared to push back against resuming negotiations on Thursday on any new cease-fire proposals. In a statement, it urged mediators United States, Egypt and Qatar to submit a plan to implement what was agreed on last month, based on US President Joe Biden's proposal, "instead of going to more rounds of negotiations or new proposals that provide cover for the occupation's aggression." Israel has repeatedly ordered mass evacuations as its troops return to heavily destroyed areas where they previously battled Palestinian militants. The vast majority of Gaza's population of 2.3 million people have been displaced, often multiple times, in the besieged territory 25 miles (40 kilometers) long by about 7 miles (11 kilometers) wide. The latest evacuation orders

apply to areas of Khan Younis, Gaza's second-largest city, including part of an Israeli-declared humanitarian zone from which the military said rockets had been fired. Israel accuses Hamas and other militants of hiding among civilians and launching attacks from residential areas. The humanitarian zone has steadily shrunk during the war with the various evacuation orders. Hundreds of thousands of people have crammed into squalid tent camps with few public services or sought shelter in schools, though the United Nations says hundreds of those have been directly hit or damaged. Khan Younis suffered widespread destruction during an air and ground offensive earlier this year. Tens of thousands fled again last week after an evacuation order. The new order came in leaflets dropped from the sky. As smoke rose on the horizon, hundreds of families carrying belongings in their arms left homes and shelters, seeking elusive refuge. One child carried a stuffed Hello Kitty doll as others walked through rubble-filled streets. "We don't know where to go," said Amal Abu Yahia, a moth-

er of three, who had returned to Khan Younis in June to shelter in their severely damaged home. It was the fourth displacement for the 42-year-old widow, whose husband was killed when an Israeli airstrike hit their neighbors' house in March. She said they went to Muwasi, a sprawling tent camp along the coast, but couldn't find space. Ramadan Issa, a father of five in his 50s, fled Khan Younis with 17 members of his extended family, joining hundreds of people walking toward central Gaza. "Every time we settle in one place and build tents for women and children, the occupation comes and bombs the area," he said, referring to Israel. "This situation is unbearable." Gaza's Health Ministry, which doesn't distinguish between civilians and combatants, says the Palestinian death toll from the war is approaching 40,000. Aid groups have struggled to address the staggering humanitarian crisis, while international experts have warned of famine. The war began when Hamas-led militants burst through Israel's defenses on October 7 and rampaged through farm-

ing communities and army bases near the border, killing around 1,200 people — mostly civilians — and abducting around 250 people. Of the roughly 110 remaining hostages, Israeli authorities believe around a third are dead. The conflict has threatened to trigger a regional war, as Israel has traded fire with Iran and its militant allies across the region. "I hope that they will think this through and won't get to a point where they will force us to cause significant damage and increase the chances of war breaking out on additional fronts," Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said Sunday. US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin spoke to Gallant on Sunday, reiterating America's commitment to defend Israel and noting the strengthening of the US military force posture and capabilities in the region, according to the Defense Department. It noted Austin has ordered a guided missile submarine to the Middle East and is telling the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier strike group to sail more quickly to the area. The Lincoln was expected in the region by month's end.

Pro-democracy HK activists fail to get relief in 2019 case

AP ■ HONG KONG

Seven of Hong Kong's most prominent pro-democracy activists lost their final bid to overturn their convictions at the city's top court on Monday over their roles in one of the biggest anti-government protests in 2019. Jimmy Lai, founder of the now-defunct Apple Daily newspaper; Martin Lee, the founding chairman of the city's Democratic Party; and five former pro-democracy lawmakers were found guilty in 2021 of organising and participating in an unauthorised assembly. Their convictions dealt a blow to the city's flagging pro-democracy movement during a political crackdown on dissidents following the protests. Last year, the activists partially won their appeal at a lower court, with their convictions quashed over the charge of organising an unauthorised assembly. But their convictions over taking part in the assembly were upheld and they continued their legal battle at the city's top court. On Monday, judges at the Court of Final Appeal ruled against their appeal over the remaining convictions.

The convictions were linked to their involvement in a rally in August 2019 that drew an estimated 1.7 million people onto Hong Kong's streets to call for greater police accountability and democracy. The march was relatively peaceful compared to other protests that often morphed into violent clashes between police and protesters that year. Hong Kong, a former British colony, returned to China in 1997. Its mini-constitution, the Basic Law, guarantees its people freedom of assembly. When sentencing the seven activists in 2021, a judge at the District Court ruled that the right to such freedom is not absolute and is subject to restrictions ruled constitutional. She ordered Lai, Lee Cheuk-yan, Leung Kwok-hung and Cyd Ho to be jailed between eight and 18 months. Martin Lee, Margaret Ng and Albert Ho were given suspended jail sentences. When the appellate court partially overturned their convictions in 2023, it quashed part of the sentences for the four who were given jail terms on the record. The decision was made after they already served out their sentences.

Harris gains ground in key states, continues her fundraising spree

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris has voiced confidence in winning the November 5 general elections against her Republican rival Donald Trump, as she gained ground nationally and in several key battleground states. US Vice President Harris, who is of both Indian and African origin, continues to be on a fundraising spree, taking her campaign coffers to an unprecedented level. The 59-year-old Democratic leader has also been attracting a record crowd in her rallies. "We will win this election," Harris told a fundraiser in San Francisco on Sunday in which she amassed USD 12 million

more for her presidential bid. The fundraiser was attended by around 700 donors, including several prominent Indian-Americans. In less than a month of her being on top of the Democratic Party ticket, after incumbent President Joe Biden decided to withdraw from the race, Harris has nearly wiped out the national lead of her Republican rival and former president Trump. According to Real Clear Politics, which monitors all the major national and state polls, Harris is now leading Trump by 0.5 percentage points in an average of all the national polls. Harris has also surged ahead in two battleground states, Wisconsin and Michigan,

where Biden was trailing earlier, as per Real Clear Politics. The latest poll by The New York Times said that Harris is leading in three key states — Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Michigan — by four percentage points. Harris told the donors in San Francisco that she is not taking any chances. Speaking about the enthusiasm behind her campaign, Harris said she's "never been one to really believe in the polls, whether they're up or they are down." Still, "what we know is the stakes are so high. And we can take nothing for granted at this moment," she said. "It's really been a good couple of weeks, but we have a lot of work to do," Harris said.

"The people are ready to use their power," she said. The energy around the country is "undeniable," she added, arguing, "The press and our opponents like to focus on our crowd size, and, yes, the crowds are large." But even better is that attendees are signing up for volunteer shifts in the thousands, she noted. On Saturday, Harris and her running mate, Minnesota Governor Tim Walz, addressed more than 12,000 Nevadans — one of the largest political rallies in modern Nevada political history. The rally marked the final stop on a weeklong tour of battleground states launched after she picked Walz to be her running mate.

Major wildfire rages out of control on fringes of Greek capital

AP ■ ATHENS

A major forest fire was raging out of control on the northern fringes of the Greek capital Monday, triggering numerous evacuation orders for Athens suburbs and outlying areas as strong winds hampered the efforts of hundreds of firefighters and dozens of water-dropping planes. The blaze that began Sunday afternoon was racing through pine forests left tinder-dry by repeated heat waves this summer. June and July of this year were the hottest months ever recorded in Greece, which also recorded its warmest winter ever. Authorities were faced with "an exceptionally dangerous fire, which we have been fighting for more than 20 hours under dramatic circumstances," Climate

Crisis and Civil Protection Minister Vassilis Kikilias said mid-morning Monday. The fire was burning mainly on two separate fronts, with some parts in particularly difficult to reach areas on a mountain northeast of Athens, Kikilias said. The fire department said 685 firefighters, backed by 27 teams specially trained to tackle wildfires and including more than 80 armed forces personnel, were battling the flames. More than 190 vehicles were deployed, while 17 water-dropping planes and 16 helicopters were providing aerial support. A children's hospital, a military hospital, two monasteries and a children's home were evacuated early Monday, while more than two dozen emergency push alerts were sent to cellphones in the area. Several homes were burned, although the

exact number was not immediately clear. More evacuation orders were issued for suburbs of the capital as strong winds continued unabated. Fire Department spokesperson Col. Vassileios Vathrakogiannis said authorities had been faced with more than 40 flareups of the blaze since the early hours of Monday in areas where the flames had somewhat abated. Three Athens hospitals were put on heightened alert to treat any potential injuries. Paramedics and ambulances provided treatment to two firefighters — one for light burns and the other for breathing problems — while 13 civilians were also treated for breathing problems from the thick smoke, Vathrakogiannis said. Greece's coast guard ordered all ferries going to and from the

nearby port of Rafina, which serves mainly the Cycladic islands and Crete, to be diverted to the port of Lavrion due to the fire. Authorities in nearby suburbs opened at least one sports hall and were providing rooms in hotels for evacuees, while yet more suburbs were put on stand-by for potential evacuation. The police department said 380 police officers with 77 vehicles, 36 motorcycles, three buses and four vans were assisting in the evacuations, and by mid-morning had helped move more than 250 people away from the path of the flames. It posted a video on its social media channels showing police officers carrying elderly people in their arms out of houses and to waiting vehicles, against a backdrop of a night sky turned red from the flames and smoke.

Democrats launch first paid ad campaign for the Harris-Walz ticket

AP ■ WASHINGTON

With a solidified presidential ticket stumping across the country and a massive amount of money to spend, the Democratic Party is targeting seven critical battleground states with paid advertising for Vice President Kamala Harris and Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz. The Democratic National Committee announced the Harris-Walz advertising push on Monday, which includes more than 70 billboards across the key battleground states: Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, North Carolina, Nevada,



Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. It's the ticket's first paid advertising blitz since Walz joined the campaign — and the first of many to come in areas that are poised to determine the outcome of the presidential election in November. The billboards will be in sever-

al key urban areas across the battleground states, such as Atlanta, Detroit, Charlotte and Philadelphia, according to the DNC. Many are set up along major interstates and highways, including Interstate 95 and Interstate 10. There is also an advertisement

— both in English and Spanish — in the Las Vegas strip, according to the DNC. "The DNC is blanketing the battlegrounds with a clear message: Vice President Harris and Governor Tim Walz are fighting for working people, and Donald Trump and JD

Vance are only out for themselves," DNC spokesperson Abhi Rahman said in a statement. The Harris-Walz campaign boasts significant fundraising numbers, pulling in USD 310 million in July and entering August with USD 377 million on hand. The Trump campaign in comparison raised more than USD 138 million last month and has USD 327 million to spend. The advertising push comes after Harris and Walz completed their battleground state tour last week, attracting exuberant crowds in places such as Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and

Arizona along the way. Their stop in North Carolina was postponed due to inclement weather from Tropical Storm Debby. Donald Trump's running mate JD Vance shadowed the Democratic pair throughout the week by holding news conferences in many of the same cities Harris and Walz visited. Meanwhile, Trump hosted one rally last week in Montana. The Trump campaign also launched its own barrage of advertisements at the end of July, pushing television ads that focus on Harris' record on immigration and call her a "border czar."

Man held in London for stabbing 2 persons

AP ■ LONDON

A man has been arrested after an 11-year-old girl and a 34-year-old woman were stabbed in central London, London's Metropolitan Police said on Monday. The attack occurred in Leicester Square, a magnet for tourists with its shops, theatres and cinemas. The square and surrounding area have an estimated 2.5 million visitors every week. Police said the two victims were taken to a major trauma

centre. The extent of their injuries was not immediately clear. The stabbing occurred as Britain is on edge after violence for the past week as crowds spouting anti-immigrant and Islamophobic slogans clashed with police. The disturbances have been fuelled by right-wing activists who used social media to spread misinformation about a knife attack that killed three girls during a Taylor Swift-themed dance event. It was not immediately clear whether the stabbing had any link to the unrest.

New B'desh CJ warns of stern action against 'misdeeds' by judiciary

PTI ■ DHAKA

Bangladesh's newly appointed Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed on Monday warned of stern action if anybody from the judiciary was found to be involved in any "misdeeds". Speaking at a reception hosted by the Attorney General's Office and the Supreme Court Bar in the Appellate Division, Ahmed commemorated those killed in the student protests that resulted in the toppling of the government led by Sheikh Hasina last week. "I extend my congratulations to the students and the people of the entire country. I also congratulate those who supported this movement," he said. "The students have sparked a great awakening against inequality. Due to the revolution of the students and the public, I have been entrusted with this responsibility, which I will carry out. At this moment, we are standing on the ruins. We have to start anew while standing on this destruction," he said. The Daily Star newspaper reported the chief justice warned that no irregularity would be tolerated in the judiciary. He added that "stern action would be taken if anybody from the judiciary was

found to be involved in any misdeeds as the policy of oppression that prevailed for so long instead of justice was now over."

"I will work with devotion and honesty. I will do everything to establish justice in the society after the mass upheaval. Our sense of justice has been destroyed over the years," he said.



Bangladesh Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed

Ahmed was sworn in as Bangladesh's new chief justice on Sunday, a day after Obaidul Hassan stepped down as the top judge following an ultimatum by the protesters demanding a revamp of the judiciary. Hassan and five other judges of the apex Appellate Division on Saturday tendered their resignation, five days after the fall of Hasina's regime amid massive street protests. His resignation came as protesters of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement gathered at the apex court premises.

President Mohammed Shahabuddin administered the oath to the chief justice, an event also attended by Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, who was sworn in on Thursday as the head of an interim government following the ouster of Hasina in the protests that left more than 200 persons dead.

Protestors told to surrender arms

PTI ■ DHAKA

Bangladesh interim government's Home Affairs Adviser Brigadier General (retd) M Sakhawat Hussain on Monday asked protesters to surrender by August 19 all illegal and unauthorised firearms, including the rifles looted from law enforcers during the recent violence, according to a media report. Hussain said that if those arms were not returned to nearby police stations, then the authorities would undertake a search and if anyone is found in possession of unauthorised weapons, charges would be lodged against them, The Daily Star newspaper reported.

Hussain was talking to reporters at the Combined Military Hospital here after visiting the paramilitary Bangladesh Ansar members who suffered injuries during the mass protest that led to the ouster of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Hasina resigned and fled to India last week leaving the country in turmoil

following deadly protests against her government over a controversial quota system in jobs.

Hussain said that around 500 people, including students, were killed and several thousand others were injured during the protest.

"A youth was seen in the video taking away a 7.62 mm rifle. That means the rifle was not returned. If you did not hand over (out of fear), hand over the firearms through anyone else," he said. Hussain said they would investigate to identify the youth in civilian clothes who opened fire at Ansar members. However, he toned down yesterday's comments about shutting down media outlets if they publish or broadcast false or misleading news.

"I said it out of anger. It is not my job," he said. "I never support shutting down any media."

Last Thursday, Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus took oath as the head of an interim government replacing Hasina. A 16-member council of advisers was announced to assist Yunus in running the state's affairs.

Hundreds join 'Save Hindus in Bangladesh' vigil in Houston

PTI ■ HOUSTON

In a powerful yet peaceful display of solidarity, over 300 Indian-Americans and Bangladeshi-origin Hindus gathered at Sugar Land City Hall in Houston to protest the horrific acts committed by Islamist extremists targeting Hindus and other minorities in Bangladesh. The air was thick with emotion as attendees united for a cause on Sunday morning that resonated deeply with their identities and beliefs. Organisers passionately called on the Biden Administration to

Houston Hindu groups, including Maitri in Houston, Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America, HinduAction, HinduPact, Houston Durgabari Society, Global Kashmiri Pandit Diaspora, and many more. Participants raised their placards high, bearing passionate messages demanding an end to the violence and atrocities against Hindus in Bangladesh. The crowd erupted with fervour as slogans like "Stop Hindu Genocide," "Stand Up and Speak Out Now," "Hindu Lives Matter," and "We Won't Run, We Won't Hide, Stop Hindu Genocide" rang out,

HinduPACT. "With the coup in Bangladesh, the 10 million Hindus are sitting on a ticking bomb of genocide," she warned. "Reports from within Bangladesh reveal unimaginable torture, killings, and the burning of Hindu temples, alongside horrifying stories of women subjected to unspeakable abuse," she said. "This instability poses a grave danger not only to Hindus but also to the very foundations of democracy in countries like India and the US. It is an inevitable threat to Hindus in Pakistan as well. We need the



take immediate and decisive action to prevent further atrocities and to protect vulnerable minority communities in Bangladesh.

The recent surge in violence against Hindu communities poses an urgent and alarming threat to peace and stability in the region, and the time to act is now. The organisers passionately called for immediate protection and safety for all religious minorities in Bangladesh, urging the US government to refuse to remain a silent bystander as these heinous crimes against humanity unfold.

They encouraged Bangladeshi Hindus to stay vigilant and unite in monitoring the ongoing situation, taking necessary initiatives collectively in any emergency. The vigil, titled "Save Hindus in Bangladesh," was organised by the Global Voice for Bangladesh Minorities, an umbrella organisation representing major

echoing their urgent plea for justice.

Quoting the timeless words of Mahatma Gandhi, "To forgive and accept injustice is cowardice," along with the poignant words of Martin Luther King Jr., the organisers passionately declared, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Achlesh Amar, one of the speakers representing VHP and HinduAction, addressed the packed crowd and said, "We strongly condemn the assault on the Hindu community for their pluralistic beliefs. We stand united in unwavering solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Bangladesh. We demand immediate action from the Bangladeshi government to bring the perpetrators to justice and ensure the safety and security of all its citizens, regardless of their religious beliefs!"

Amar also shared a heartfelt statement from Deepti Mahajan, co-convenor of

eyes and ears of all Western nations focused on this crisis in Asia, and we demand safety for all minorities in Bangladesh!" A Bangladeshi-origin American woman present at the vigil spoke with palpable emotion, her voice breaking as she shared, "The horrific acts of violence back home are devastating. When we call home and hear about these brutal acts every single day, it tears us apart. So many innocent lives have been lost! Places of worship have been burned or vandalised, and women have been horrifically abused. This must stop now! We cannot stand idly by while our people suffer." The gathering was a powerful reminder that the struggle for justice knows no borders. United by love and compassion, they stood together to demand action, to raise their voices against oppression, and to ensure that the plight of Hindus in Bangladesh does not go unheard.

Businesses in B'desh hit by cash supply drought

PTI ■ DHAKA

Businesses in Bangladesh are facing a liquidity crunch as the central bank has capped the withdrawal of cash from banks at Tk 2 lakh amidst uncertainty in the country following the fall of the Sheikh Hasin-led government, a media report said on Monday. The Bangladesh Bank set a cash withdrawal limit of Tk 2 lakh (Rs 1.42 lakh approximately) per account on Saturday, increasing it from the Tk 1 lakh announced earlier. The central bank decided this due to security concerns as police are yet to return to work fully, following the clashes between police and students during the widespread protests against Hasina's Awami League-led government over a controversial quota system in

jobs. Interim Finance and Planning Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed on Sunday also said that the limit on cash withdrawals was required given the current situation.

Businesses, especially those mainly dealing with cash transactions, said they would be in a tough situation if the cash crisis lingers and restrictions remain next week. The Daily Star newspaper reported. Ahmed, a former governor of Bangladesh Bank has said that the top priority of Bangladesh's interim government is to bring the economy back on track and restore the people's trust in the banks.

Talking to reporters on Saturday for the first time after assuming office, Ahmed said the government's priority is to restore the trust of common

people in the banks while resuming the operations of the central bank.

Business owners said their operations have halted since the second half of July when the widespread protests erupted. Abu Bakar Siddique, an oil wholesaler in one of the largest kitchen markets in Dhaka, Karwan Bazar, said his bank would not allow more than Tk 1 lakh to be withdrawn. "This is a big problem. As a result, the normal pace of business is being disrupted," the report quoted him as saying. He said most business transactions are being conducted through bank-to-bank transfers or real-time gross settlements. Taslim Shahriar, deputy general manager of a major commodity importer and processor, said not all businesspeople

accept cheques. "We have to pay in cash too, but now, transactions are only taking place through bank-to-bank transfers and cheques. The sooner this problem is resolved, the better for us," Shahriar said.

A senior official of another major commodity importer and processor said, "As such, I am unable to pay the full salaries to those who are daily wage earners. I told the workers to wait this week as there is no way I can manage cash now."

Asserting that daily wage earners are facing a very difficult situation, the official said, "It's inhumane for them. If this situation persists for long, it will be very difficult to conduct business."

Riad Mahmud, managing director of National Polymer

Group, said he believes the situation will hamper business if it persists, according to the report.

However, he said it will not substantially hinder activities if it lasts a short time.

Over 230 people were killed in Bangladesh in the incidents of violence that erupted across the country following the fall of the Hasina government last week, taking the death toll to 560 since the anti-quota protests first started in mid-July.

An interim government was formed after the fall of the Hasina-led government. Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus was sworn in as the head of an interim government last week following the ouster of Hasina.

He announced the portfolios of his 16-member council of advisers on Friday.

Indonesian leaders hold meeting in future capital

AP ■ JAKARTA

Indonesian President Joko Widodo held his first cabinet meeting in the future capital of Nusantara, amid miles of construction sites and doubts about the sustainability of the ambitious mega project. Widodo began working from the city two weeks ago, using an office inside the construction site of the massive new palace in the form of the mythical eagle-shaped Garuda, the symbol of the country. The city is set to hold its first Indonesian Independence Day celebration in less than a week. Appearing with his successor, President-elect Prabowo Subianto, in front of the palace, Widodo insisted that the controversial USD 33 billion construction effort will be worth it. "The Nusantara capital is a canvas that carves the future. Not all countries have the opportunity and the ability to build their capital city starting from zero," Widodo said.



In this photo released by Indonesian Presidential Palace, Indonesian President Joko Widodo (centre) talks with Indonesian Defense Minister and president-elect Prabowo Subianto (left) and Indonesian Vice President Ma'ruf Amin (right) in the new capital city Nusantara in Penajam Paser Utara, East Kalimantan, Indonesia, on Monday. AP/PTI

Subianto vowed that his administration will continue work on the new city after it takes office on October 20. "We will definitely finish it, although the outline plan is dozens of years long, like other capital cities also took a very long time. We should not force it, but I am optimistic that in

five years I think it will function very well," Subianto said. Monday also saw groundbreaking ceremonies for the vice presidential palace, as well as a number of privately funded buildings.

The government expects to pay only 20 per cent of the planned USD 33 billion budget,

relied heavily on private sector investment to build key infrastructure and public facilities. In a bid to lure investment, earlier this month Widodo granted investors in the new capital incentives, including land rights of up to 190 years. Construction of the new city began in mid-2022, after

Widodo announced a plan to relocate the capital from Jakarta. The metropolis suffers from pollution and congestion, is prone to earthquakes, and is rapidly sinking. Officials say it will be a futuristic green city centred around forests and parks that utilises renewable energy sources and smart waste management, spread over an area of about 1000 square miles (2,600 square kilometres). "Cool air, clean air, as we dream of that we want a green capital city, be it its energy, electric vehicles, environment, air and everything," Widodo told reporters.

But the project, which is using land carved out of Borneo's jungle, has been dogged by criticism from environmentalists and Indigenous communities, who say it degrades the environment, further shrinks the habitat of endangered animals such as orangutans, and displaces Indigenous people who rely on the land for their livelihoods.

Former ISI chief Faiz Hameed taken into military custody

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

In an unprecedented move, the Pakistan Army on Monday announced that it has arrested former ISI chief Lt Gen (retd.) Faiz Hameed and initiated court martial proceedings against him in connection with a housing scheme scandal.

"Complying with the orders of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, a detailed court of inquiry was undertaken by Pakistan Army, to ascertain correctness of complaints in Top City Case made against Lt Gen Faiz Hameed (Retd.)" the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) - the media wing of the army- said in a statement.

"Consequently, appropriate disciplinary action has been initiated against Lt Gen Faiz Hameed (Retd.), under provisions of the Pakistan Army Act," it said. "In addition, multiple instances of violation of the Pakistan

Army Act post-retirement have also been established. The process of Field General Court Martial has been initiated and Lt Gen Faiz Hameed (Retd.) has been taken into military custody," it added. Lt Gen (retd.) Hameed was considered extremely powerful when he headed the spy agency from 2019 to 2021.

He was appointed to the coveted post when ISI chief and current Army chief Lt Gen Asim Munir was prematurely removed from the post. It was reported then that then prime minister Imran Khan was not happy with Munir. Later, the army decided to replace Hameed, a move vehemently opposed by Imran Khan and it is believed that it was the beginning of souring of his ties with the powerful military. The Top City case made headlines when on November 8, 2023, Moez Ahmed Khan, the

owner of Top City, filed a petition in the Supreme Court in which he accused Hameed of misusing his authority. He stated in the petition that on May 12, 2017, at the behest of Gen Hameed, ISI officials raided the top city office and his house and seized valuables, including gold, diamonds and money. He also stated that Sardar Najaf, the brother of Hameed, also contacted him to resolve the issue later. The petition also claimed that Gen Hameed later personally met him to resolve the issue. He alleged that the ISI officials extorted Rs 4 crore cash from him. A three-judge bench of the Supreme Court, which included Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Qazi Faiz Isa, Justice Attar Minullah and Justice Aminuddin, heard the case and decided to send it to the Ministry of Defence for probing the allegation.

Chinese Bharatnayam dancer makes history; performs 'Arangetram'

PTI ■ BEIJING

Lei Muzi, a 13-year-old school student scripted history when she performed Bharatnayam "Arangetram" in China, a landmark in the journey of the ancient Indian dance form that is gaining popularity in the neighbouring country. Lei made her solo dance debut here on Sunday in front of the celebrated Bharatnayam dancer Leela Samson, Indian diplomats and a large audience of Chinese fans. For ardent Chinese fans of Indian classical art and dance forms who devoted their lives to learning and performing them for decades, her debut was a moment of history and a milestone as it was the first-ever "Arangetram" — Bharatnayam's graduation ceremony — in China. For the performers of the ancient dance from South India, Arangetram, as it is

called in Tamil, is their debut performance on stage in front of teachers and experts besides the audience.

Only after Arangetram are the students allowed to perform on their own or train aspiring dancers.

"This is the first-ever Arangetram by a student fully trained in China and performed in China," said T S Vivekanand, the First Secretary of the Indian Embassy in charge of culture who attended the event.

It was a properly done Arangetram in a very traditional way, he told PTI here.

"Lei's Arangetram is the first time that Chinese students trained by a Chinese teacher have completed in China, which is a landmark in the history of Bharatnayam inheritance," noted Chinese Bharatnayam dancer Jin Shan Shan, who trained Lei, said. Shrutri Rawat, the wife of Indian Ambassador Pradeep Rawat,



Shrutri Rawat, wife of Indian Ambassador to China Pradeep Rawat, with Lei Muzi, the Chinese Bharatnayam dancer who performed her Arangetram in Beijing on Sunday PTI

was the chief guest at Lei's Arangetram.

The event was attended by a large crowd of fans who cheered her over the two-hour-long performance during which she danced to several classical numbers.

Besides Leela Sampson, a team of musicians who were flown in from Chennai sang the classical numbers for Lei to perform. She is due to perform in Chennai later this month.

Lei was trained for over 10 years at the Bharatnayam school run by Jin, who herself was the first accomplished Bharatnayam dancer to have held her Arangetram in 1999 in New Delhi. Jin was one of the numerous Chinese students who were trained by eminent Chinese dancer Zhang Jun. Lei, also known as Dudu, says she fell in love with Bharatnayam since she joined Jin's school in 2014.

"I completely fell in love with it. I kept dancing till now. For me,

Bharatnayam is not only a beautiful art and dance form but also the embodiment of Indian culture," she told PTI.

"This fascinates me greatly, as well as the gorgeous and graceful movements during a dance item. Overall, I extremely love Bharatnayam. For me, it is already a daily activity to do, and I am truly interested in the culture of India," she said.

Jin, who is widely known in China and India and has held numerous performances, said she is proud to see one of her students complete her Arangetram. "Bharatnayam has brought us close together. For ten years, Lei has come to my home every weekend to attend classes, which not only let me witness her growth but also made us family," she said.

"It reminds me of how my guru, Leela Samson, taught me when I did my Arangetram," she said. Sunday's Arangetram is a festival for us, Jin said.

ICC monitoring events in Venezuela

AP ■ THE HAGUE (NETHERLANDS)

International Criminal Court prosecutors said on Monday that they are "actively monitoring" events in Venezuela, where security forces have launched a crackdown on the opposition in the aftermath of the nation's disputed presidential election.

Forces loyal to President Nicolás Maduro have rounded up more than 2,000 people for demonstrating against the president or casting doubt on his claims that he won a third term in the July 28 election despite strong evidence he lost the vote by a more than two-to-one margin. In a written statement to reporters, the office of ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan said it is "actively monitoring the present events and has received multiple reports of instances of violence

and other allegations following the presidential election of 28 July in Venezuela."

The statement said that Khan's office has "engaged with the Government of Venezuela at the highest-level to underline the importance of ensuring that the rule of law is adhered to in the present moment and emphasize that all persons must be protected from violations that may constitute Rome Statute crimes". The Rome Statute is the court's founding treaty and outlines the crimes over which it has jurisdiction. Maduro has called on Venezuelans to denounce election doubters via a government-run app originally created to report power outages. He also said the government was refurbishing two gang-dominated prisons to accommodate an expected surge in jailing of opponents.

Stock markets close marginally lower

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Stock markets closed marginally lower in highly volatile trade on Monday as gains in private banks helped benchmark Sensex recoup some of the early losses inflicted by allegations against Sebi chief Madhabi Puri Buch and her husband by the US short-seller Hindenburg Research. The 30-share Sensex closed lower by 56.99 points or 0.07 per cent at 79,648.92 with 18 of its constituents ending with losses and 12 with gains. The index had declined by 479.78 points or 0.60 per cent to a low of 79,226.13 in morning trade due to losses in Adani group shares and blue-chips like Reliance Industries. The benchmark later staged a sharp recovery climbing around 880 points from the day's lows to hit a high of 80,106.18. But at the flag-end, the BSE benchmark slipped into the negative territory and closed lower. The NSE Nifty dipped 20.50 points or 0.08 per cent to 24,347. Intra-day, it hit a low of 24,212.10 and a high of 24,472.80.



The Indian market concluded relatively flat, with its initial path being eclipsed by the continuation of the Adani-Hindenburg-SEBI saga. However, the market tried to brush away these noises, taking positive cues from global markets," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services. From 30 Sensex firms, Adani Ports, NTPC, Power Grid, State Bank of India, Nestle, Mahindra & Mahindra, Reliance Industries and Tata Consultancy Services were the biggest laggards.

Axis Bank, Infosys, JSW Steel, Tata Motors, HDFC Bank and Kotak Mahindra Bank were among the gainers from the blue-chip pack. Hindenburg Research on Saturday alleged that SEBI chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch and her husband had undisclosed investments in obscure offshore funds in Bermuda and Mauritius, the same entities allegedly used by Vinod Adani - the elder brother of group chairman Gautam Adani - to round-trip funds and inflate stock prices. Buch and her husband issued

a statement calling Hindenburg's latest tirade an attack on the credibility of SEBI and attempted "character assassination". Adani Group on Sunday termed Hindenburg Research's latest allegations as malicious and manipulative of select public information, saying it has no commercial relationship with the SEBI chairperson or her husband. All the 10 Adani group stocks declined sharply during the early trade, with Adani Energy Solutions tumbling 17 per cent and Adani Total Gas dropping 13.39 per cent. At close, eight of the group firms ended lower, while two of them bounced back. "The Hindenburg allegations now against a key official of the market regulator weighed on the sentiment in early trade, but indices recovered soon to trade higher only to give away all their gains towards the close to end marginally lower on selective profit taking. "In case the row heats up further, it could impact sentiment going ahead and profit-taking could continue, although global cues would

still determine the broader market mood," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said. In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.51 per cent and midcap index went up marginally by 0.04 per cent. Among the indices, utilities declined 1.04 per cent, FMCG by 0.67 per cent, power by 0.62 per cent, and services by 0.41 per cent. Consumer Durables, realty, oil & gas, metal and IT were the gainers. A total of 2,126 stocks declined while 1,941 advanced and 118 remained unchanged on the BSE. In Asian markets, Seoul and Hong Kong settled in the positive territory while Shanghai ended lower. Markets in Tokyo and Bangkok were closed for a holiday. European markets were trading mostly higher. The US markets ended higher on Friday. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) turned buyers on Friday after days of offloading equities. They bought equities worth Rs 406.72 crore, according to exchange data.

Major domestic appliances market sees 18% value-based growth in first half of 2024, says report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The market of major domestic appliances saw an 18 per cent value-based growth in the first half of 2024, helped by a strong demand for essential household items, according to a report from GfK. The growth in MDA (major domestic appliances) market was led by Key categories such as air-conditioners and refrigerators, which reported a growth of 30 per cent and 7 per cent, respectively. "This growth is 3X of growth in 2023 over the previous year," said the report from GfK, which is now an NIQ Company, a leading global market and consumer intelligence firm. The small domestic appliances market recorded a 29 per cent increase in value, reflecting heightened consumer interest in home convenience products, according to the report. The report also added that customers are now looking for feature-rich and premium

products, which is fuelling the value growth in the appliance segment. Now washing machines with capacities of 9kg or above have recorded an "impressive growth rate of 30 per cent", which is driven by consumers seeking enhanced performance and innovative features. Similarly, the air-conditioner segment is benefiting from similar trends, where demand for energy-efficient and high-performance models has grown by 59 per cent in the split inverter and 5-star segments. "Cooling appliances (refrigerator) have seen an 11 per cent increase in the side-by-side, French door, and 3/4 door segments," it said. The report also suggests that despite such gains, the relatively low penetration of these products presents significant opportunities for industry expansion. The smartphone and mobile phones segment had a 6 per cent reduction in volume, it was offset by a substantial 10 per cent increase in overall value.

Gold rises ₹200, silver rallies ₹1,000 per kilogram

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices rose by Rs 200 to Rs 72,350 per 10 grams while silver prices rallied by Rs 1,000 per kg in the local market here on Monday amid firm global trends. In the previous session, the yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed lower at Rs 72,150 per 10 grams on Saturday, according to the All India Sarafa Association. Silver prices jumped by Rs 1,000 to Rs 83,500 per kg from Rs 82,500 per kg in the previous close. Meanwhile, gold of 99.5 per cent purity also climbed by Rs 200 to Rs 72,000 per 10 grams. In the previous trade, it had ended at Rs 71,800 per 10 grams on Saturday. Traders attributed the rise in gold prices to increased demand from local jewellers and a strong trend in the overseas markets. On the global front, Comex gold is trading at USD 2,481.80 per ounce, up by USD 8.40 per ounce. "Gold prices rose on Monday as persisting geopolitical concerns about Middle Eastern crises boosted the safe-haven demand for precious metal," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. Apart from that, traders also increased their bets on the US Federal Reserve's (Fed) aggressive interest rate cuts this year after recent weak macro data provided further support for the yellow metal, Gandhi added. According to Manav Modi, Senior Analyst of Commodity Research at Motilal Oswal Financial Services, gold prices held steady after a sharp rise in the previous session, bolstered by a dip in US Treasury yields, as investors grew confident that the Fed would lower interest rates in September this year. Silver is up at USD 28.01 per ounce in the international markets. Traders shifted their focus to the US consumer price index data, due next week, for insights into the Fed's likely monetary policy path, Modi said. As per Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst - Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities, gold prices are largely driven by escalating tensions in the Middle East, particularly concerns over a potential attack by Iran on Israel.

Govt approves 20% premium for gas from new wells for ONGC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government has approved a 20 per cent premium over the regulated or APM price for any natural gas that ONGC will produce from new wells, the company said on Monday. Currently, two pricing regimes govern the majority of the domestic production of natural gas, which is used to generate electricity, produce fertiliser, turn into CNG for running automobiles and piped to households for cooking. Gas produced from legacy fields given to state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and Oil India Ltd, on nomination basis, is priced at 10 per cent of the prevailing price of crude oil that India imports. This price, subject to a cap price of USD 6.5 per million British thermal units, is called regulated or APM price. So, at the current Indian basket price of USD 77 per barrel, the APM price for gas produced from ONGC's Mumbai High and Bassein fields in the western offshore should come to USD 7.7 per mmBtu, but it is paid the cap



price of USD 6.5. Gas produced from difficult fields, such as those in the deep sea, is governed by a different formula and paid a higher rate because of the higher cost involved in its production. That price for six months starting April 1 is USD 9.87 per mmBtu. When these formulas were adopted last year, it was decided that gas produced from new wells, even in legacy fields, would be paid a premium of 20 per cent over the APM price. Now, that has been notified. "As per guidelines for domestic gas pricing,

domestic natural gas price (APM price) was fixed at 10 per cent of the Indian crude basket price as announced by Petroleum Planning and Analysis (PPAC) on a monthly basis. It was provided in the guidelines that for the gas produced from new wells or well intervention in the nomination fields of ONGC/Oil India Limited, there would be a premium of 20 per cent over APM prices - a total of 12 per cent of Indian crude basket price for new gas. "The modalities for the same had to be worked out by the

Directorate General of Hydrocarbon (DGH) for approval of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MOPNG)," ONGC said in a statement. The ministry, it said, has now notified the allocation of gas produced from new wells or well interventions from nominated fields of ONGC/OIL at a 20 per cent premium over the APM price. "The enhanced price for new gas will make the new gas development projects viable and help the ONGC to augment the production of natural gas from nominated fields in challenging areas that require higher amounts of capital and technology. "This will enhance the investment capacity in the company to take up development projects, which are otherwise capital intensive and involve a higher degree of risks requiring commensurate prices," it said. ONGC Board has recently approved the Daman Upside Development project in its nominated field of Mumbai High for Rs 7,800 crore for increasing domestic gas production, and the job has already been awarded for execution.

Rupee falls 2 paise to close at 83.97 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee consolidated in a narrow range and settled for the day lower by 2 paise at 83.97 (provisional) against the American currency on Monday, as market participants remained on the sidelines ahead of the release of key domestic macroeconomic data. Forex traders said the Indian rupee declined on a positive tone in the US dollar and a surge in crude oil prices. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.95 and touched an intraday low of 83.98 and finally settled at 83.97 (provisional) against the American currency, lower by 2 paise from its previous close. The local unit had slumped 37 paise to settle at an all-time low of 84.09 against the US dollar on August 5.



Forex traders said for the USD/INR pair 84.00 level is acting as a psychological resistance. Market participants are also awaiting cues from the Indian CPI inflation and IIP numbers scheduled to be released later in the day. Moreover, investors may remain cautious ahead of US CPI, retail sales and consumer confidence data from the US this week. "USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 83.75 to Rs 84.25," Choudhary added. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.05 per cent higher at 103.18. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, advanced 0.85 per cent to USD 80.34 per barrel.

Hindenburg claims baseless, misleading: REITs Association

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian REITs Association on Monday said that claims made by the US-based short seller Hindenburg Research suggesting that the REIT framework made by markets regulator Sebi serves the interests of a select few are "baseless and misleading". In fact, the association has commended Sebi and its leadership for crafting a "rigorous regulatory environment" that includes comprehensive periodic reporting requirements,

mandatory independent valuations, and strict governance standards. These measures are designed to enhance transparency and protect investor interests, it added. The statement came after the Hindenburg report on Saturday alleged that recent amendments to Sebi's REIT Regulations 2014 were made to benefit a specific multinational financial conglomerate. In this regard, the markets regulator stated that Sebi (REIT) Regulations, 2014 has been amended from time to time.

In a statement, the association said that since the introduction of REIT (Real Estate Investment Trust) regulations in 2014, India has established a strong and transparent regulatory framework that aligns with global best practices. "Developed in consultation with all market participants, this framework ensures the highest levels of investor protection for both -- domestic and international institutional investors, as well as retail investors," it said. Hindenburg Research on

Saturday launched a broadside against market regulator Sebi chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch, alleging she and her husband had stakes in obscure offshore funds used in the alleged Adani money siphoning scandal. Sebi chairperson Buch and her husband Dhaval denied the allegations as baseless and asserted their finances are an open book. Her husband Dhaval Buch is a senior advisor with Blackstone. The Adani Group termed the latest allegations malicious and based on manipulation of

select public information. The company said it has no commercial relationship with the Sebi chairperson or her husband. Indian REITs Association, which counts Brookfield India Real Estate Trust, Embassy Office Parks REIT, Mindspace Business Parks REIT, and Nexus Select Trust -- as their founding members, said that the sector's growth has drawn significant interest and participation from prominent global institutional investors. These investors' participation not only strengthens the trust

and credibility of India's financial system but also provides investors with a dependable and transparent avenue to engage in the country's expanding real estate market. Currently, there are four listed REITs on the Indian stock exchanges, collectively managing assets worth over Rs 1.4 lakh crore and serving over 2.4 lakh crore unitholders. These REITs have distributed over Rs 18,000 crore, with the market capitalisation of the asset class reaching about Rs 80,000 crore.

Automation Expo to showcase use of AI in manufacturing sectors

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India's largest exhibition for the automation industry, Automation Expo 2024, slated from August 21 to 24 is all set to be a pivotal event in showcasing how Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Robotics are driving transformative changes across manufacturing and production sectors. The integration of AI with traditional robotics is revolutionising the industry by advancing predictive maintenance, reducing material waste, and improving demand forecasting. Attendees will experience a comprehensive display of the latest technologies and solutions, featuring both innovative startups and established industry leaders, said Dr M Arokiaswamy, Founder & Chairman of IED Communications. The exhibition to be held at the Bombay Exhibition Center (BEC), Nesco, Mumbai is supported by various associations including the Technology Development Board, National Small Industry Corporation (NSIC), All India Manufacturers' Organization (AIMO), among others. Dr BR Mehta, Director Projects at Waaree Group, emphasised the expo's importance in exploring



technologies that can revolutionise manufacturing processes and foster industry collaboration while Dr. Kartik Fojdar, Head - CoE Engineering Instrumentation at Reliance Industries Ltd., spoke about the expo's potential to provide innovative solutions that drive operational excellence. Dr Keyur Vora, Advisor and HOD (C&I) at Adani-Petrochemical Business, underscored the opportunity for discovering new technologies and forging strategic partnerships to enhance operational efficiency. At the same time Dr VP Raman, Engineering Consultant, noted that the expo will offer a unique platform for engaging with leading vendors and system integrators to explore solutions that boost operational efficiency. India's industrial automation sector is on a significant growth trajectory, with projections indicating a rise from over USD 15 billion to USD 29.5 billion by 2029.

Naveen appointed Director (Operations) POWERGRID

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Naveen Srivastava has been appointed as Director (Operations) of Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID), a Maharatna CPSE under Ministry of Power, Government of India. Prior to his joining as Director (Operations), he worked as Executive Director (NR-III) handling challenging and flagship works & delivered results consistently in dynamic business environment. "He brings a wealth of expertise to the table. He is an accomplished electrical engineer, having graduated in Electrical Engineering (Hons) from the prestigious National Institute of Technology-Durgapur, and has honed his leadership skills through a



General Management Programme at the Management Development Institute, Gurgaon, and the Harvard Manage Mentor program at Harvard Business School," said a statement issued by the firm. With over two decades of experience in operations,

Srivastava has consistently driven success across multiple facets, including Operations and Maintenance (O&M), Testing and Commissioning (T&C), and cutting-edge SCADA and communication technologies, it said. His leadership was instrumental in completing the renowned underground cabling project in Old Kashi (Varanasi), which garnered accolades from the Chief Minister and international dignitaries, it said. Further, he played a pivotal role towards commissioning of 765kV Pooling Substation at Bilaspur along with adaptation of new Technologies such as Remote Operation of HVDC Rihand-Dadri Link and others, said the company in a statement.

IIP growth slows to 5-month low of 4.2% in June: Govt data

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's industrial production slowed to a five-month low of 4.2 per cent in June 2024, mainly due to poor performance of the manufacturing sector, though power and mining sectors continue to perform well, as per official data released on Monday. The factory output growth, measured in terms of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), was 6.2 per cent in May, 5 per cent in April, 5.5 per cent in March, 5.6 per cent in February and 4.2 per cent in January 2024. During the April-June period this fiscal, the IIP growth was 5.2 per cent against 4.7 per cent in the same period of the

preceding financial year. India's Index of Industrial Production grew by 4 per cent in June 2023, according to a statement by the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation. As per the data, the mining output growth accelerated to 10.3 per cent in June against a 7.6 per cent expansion in the year-ago month. The manufacturing sector's growth decelerated to 2.6 per cent in June compared to 3.5 per cent a year ago. The power generation increased by 8.6 per cent in June against a growth of 4.2 per cent in the same month of the last year. As per use-base classification, the capital goods segment growth fell to 2.4 per cent in

June 2024 from 2.9 per cent in the year-ago period. In June this year, consumer durables output expanded 8.6 per cent compared to a 6.8 per cent contraction in June 2023. Consumer non-durable goods production contracted 1.4 per cent during the reporting month against a growth of 0.5 per cent in May 2023. According to the data, infrastructure/construction goods reported a growth of 4.4 per cent in June 2024, down from a 13.3 per cent expansion in the year-ago period. The data also showed that the output of primary goods logged a 6.3 per cent growth in June this year, up from 5.3 per cent a year earlier.

US WOMEN'S BASKETBALL FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHT

AP ■ PARIS

The USA women's basketball players have been saying for years that winning in the Olympics isn't easy and France showed at the Paris Games that their comments are more than just rhetoric to keep fans interested. The rest of the world is catching up to the U.S., though Olympic gold should continue to run through America. The future for USA Basketball looks bright with A'ja Wilson and Breanna Stewart in their prime. Then there also is an extremely talented young group of players who say they want to be in the pipeline, led by Caitlin Clark, Angel Reese, Paige Bueckers and Juju Watkins. They could help anchor the national team, which is in a bit of a transition with the retirement of Diana Taurasi, who finished her career with a record six gold medals. The Americans captured their record eighth Olympic gold medal Sunday by the narrowest of margins with a 67-66 victory over France. The

U.S. won its six games in the tournament by an average of 15.7 points - the lowest during its streak. "The parity of women's basketball is just only continuing to grow," Stewart said. "So I think, you know, we know it's not easy." France became the first team to come within a hair of beating the U.S. in the Olympics during its record 61-game winning streak that dates back to the 1992 Barcelona Games. Only two other teams had come within single digits of the Americans in those 32 years. "Maybe they won't say it's just easy and we walk in and just win gold," said U.S. center Brittney Griner. Who broke down in tears when she was presented her third gold medal. "Maybe they'll stop saying that, because, like I said, we see everybody's best shot. And we saw the shot that France gave us." The U.S. will get homecourt during the 2028 Olympics, which will be held in Los Angeles. The Americans had played the last two gold medal games against teams from the host nation.



Griner said "we'll see" when asked if she'll be playing in the Los Angeles Games. Even if she doesn't decide to play - she'll be 37 at that point - the U.S. should return its top two stars Stewart and Wilson, who are only 29 and 28 years old respectively. The pair could potentially play in a few more Olympics. With the exception of Taurasi, no one on this year's Olympic team would be older than 37 by the time the 2028 Olympics happen. "I think being able to learn from a lot of the veteran players here, knowing it's kind of my time and a lot of our times that, this younger generation is able to kind of take this legacy and continue to push forward and go for nine," said Sabrina Ionescu, who earned her first Olympic gold medal. "This is a program that has always sort of made it look easy. But I always said it's not." The major question potentially is who will be coaching the team in Los Angeles. Cheryl Reeve could come back to coach the team, although it's

extremely rare that a coach does a second stint. Only Geno Auriemma, who coached in 2012 and 2016, has done that. If the U.S. goes another direction, there's a few potential candidates. Assistant Kara Lawson, who won gold as a player in 2008 and also guided the inaugural 3x3 U.S. Team in 2021 to first place could be on the list. A trio of WNBA coaches have experience with USA Basketball: Curt Miller, Stephanie White and Tanisha Wright also could be considered. A dark horse could be Las Vegas Aces coach Becky Hammon. She hasn't been involved with USA Basketball at all yet and played for Russia in the 2008 Olympics. Yet no WNBA coach has been more successful the last few years than Hammon, who has led the Aces to back-to-back WNBA championships. With the Aces' core of Wilson, Kelsey Plum, Chelsea Gray and Jackie Young potentially back in 2028, Hammon would certainly have their endorsement.



Indian shuttlers sign off Paris Games on dismal note

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India became so used to a badminton medal from the Olympics in the last 12 years that Paris 2024 seems nothing short of a disaster. Lakshya Sen emerged as a notable bright spot with a fourth-place finish, but the Indian badminton team, including medal contenders such as PV Sindhu and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, returned empty-handed from the Olympics for the first time in over a decade. The hopes of a medal were not misplaced, Sindhu was there again eyeing a hat-trick of medals, the ever-tenacious HS Prannoy (men's singles) had finally made it to his debut Olympics, and Ashwini Ponnappa and Tanisha Crasto (women's doubles) seemed in decent form. As for Lakshya and Satwik-Chirag, they were seen as potential podium finishers even before the first match was held. During the Paris cycle, badminton received considerable support too, including 13 national camps and 81 foreign exposure trips, funded under the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS). The Sports Authority of India's (SAI) Mission Olympic Cell allocated Rs 72.03 crore, the second-largest funding among the nearly Rs 470 crore spent on India's Olympic preparations across 16 disciplines. Despite the significant investment, the results in Paris fell short of expectations, highlighting the unpredictable nature of Olympic competition

and also the mental aspect of playing at such an event. Nothing demonstrated it more than Lakshya's implosion first in the semifinals against Viktor Axelsen and then in the bronze play-off against Lee Zii Jia of Chinese Taipei. Sindhu, who had received Rs 3.13 crore in support, was unable to progress beyond the pre-quarterfinals, missing the chance to become the first Indian to win three Olympic medals. "I am a little disappointed as he could not finish it. I am disappointed that we could not even win one medal in badminton. The government, SAI, and TOPS have done their bit. It is high time some of the players also need to take some responsibility," Lakshya's coach and former All England champion Prakash Padukone. The unexpected defeat of former world number one Satwik and Chirag was the most shocking of all and added to the dismay, as they were considered gold-medal contenders. The government had backed the players extensively, including Rs 26.60 lakh and Rs 9.33 lakh sanctioned for Sindhu and Lakshya's training in Germany and France, respectively. Sindhu, a silver and bronze winner from the past two editions, had a 12-member support team in Saarbrücken during her training ahead of the Games but she failed to overcome He Bingjiao of China. Satwik and Chirag had won two titles in four BWF World Tour finals this year and numerous medals in major events such as 2023 Asian Games, 2022 Commonwealth

Games and the 2023 Asia Championships. The government spent a total of Rs 5.62 crores on the celebrated Indian duo for the Paris cycle but they were upset by Malaysia's Aaron Chia and Soh Wooi Yik in the quarterfinals, prompting their Danish coach Mathias Boe to quit coaching. Prannoy, a bronze-medallist at the 2023 World Championships and Asian Games, received Rs 1.8 crore for training but was hindered by Chikungunya ahead of the Games, leading to a loss in the pre-quarterfinals. Ashwini and Tanisha, who received Rs 1.5 crore each in support, exited the tournament after failing to win any match in the group stage. Despite the setbacks, Lakshya demonstrated resilience and skill, finishing fourth -- a notable achievement for an Indian male shuttler. His victories over Indonesia's Jonatan Christie and Chinese Taipei's Chou Tien Chen were commendable, though his losses to eventual champion Axelsen and Zii Jia from comfortable positions exposed some major frailties. As one looks ahead to the Los Angeles Games in 2028, it remains to be seen whether the 29-year-old Sindhu can maintain her fitness. However, there is optimism that Satwik-Chirag and Lakshya will leverage their Paris experience. With emerging talents like Priyanshu Rajawat and Treesa Jolly-Gayatri Gopichand poised to make an impact, India's badminton prospects remain promising for the next four years.

From Paris to Los Angeles: How city preparing for 2028 Olympics

AP ■ LOS ANGELES

It's Los Angeles' turn for the torch. Mayor Karen Bass accepted the Olympic flag at the Paris closing ceremony Sunday, before handing it off to a key representative of LA's local business - Tom Cruise - who in a pre-recorded trek via motorcycle, plane and parachute kicked off the countdown to 2028. The city will become the third in the world to host the games three times as it adds to the storied years of 1932 and 1984. Here's a look forward and back in time at the Olympics in LA. **LA'S OLYMPIC TRILOGY:** Los Angeles got the 2028 games as a consolation prize when Paris was picked for 2024. Back in 1932, LA hosted its first Olympics. The city was the only bidder for the games at a time marred by the Great Depression and the absence of several nations. Yet memorable sport moments came from athletes including American athlete Babe Didrikson Zaharias, who won golds in the new women's events of javelin and hurdles. Financial and cultural success gave 1984 a reputation as the "good" Olympics" which made seemingly every major world city want their own. Emphasizing both the modern and the classical with a hand from Hollywood,

the games opened with decathlon champion Rafer Johnson lighting the torch, a guy in a jetpack descending into the Memorial Coliseum and theme music by "Star Wars" maestro John Williams. With Eastern Bloc countries boycotting, the U.S. Dominated. Carl Lewis and Mary Lou Retton are among the athletes who became household names. A young Michael Jordan led the men's basketball team to gold. The games renewed, for a while, the global reputation of a city that had been perceived to be in decline. "We want our games to be a modern games, youthful, full of the optimism that Southern California brings to the world and the globe," Janet Evans, four-time Olympic gold medalist in swimming and chief athlete officer for the LA 2028 organizing committee, told The Associated Press in Paris. **PASSING THE TORCH:** Bass, who arrives back in LA Monday, spent these games in Paris along with organizers and city officials, learning what it takes to host the world's largest sporting event. Joining her were LA28 Chairperson Casey Wasserman, an entertainment executive, and LA councilmember Traci Park, chair of the city Olympic committee.



IOC President Thomas Bach hands the Olympic flag to Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass during the 2024 Summer Olympics closing ceremony at the Stade de France. AP/PTI

"As we've seen here in Paris, the Olympics are an opportunity to make transformative change," Bass said at a press conference ahead of the closing ceremony. **VENUES OLD AND NEW, PLUS A SWIMMING STADIUM:** Amid a stadium-and-arena boom, LA will

polish existing structures rather than erect new ones. "It's a no-build games," Evans said. After Paris' innovative opening ceremony on the Seine River, LA plans to open with a traditional, stadium-based approach at SoFi Stadium in neighboring Inglewood that also incorporates the century-old Memorial Coliseum in Los Angeles itself. Home to two NFL teams, SoFi has hosted a Super Bowl and several Taylor Swift concerts since opening in 2020. It will become what organizers say is the largest Olympic swimming venue ever. Its opening ceremony role means swimming will come after track and field for the first time since 1972. Intuit Dome, the soon-to-open Inglewood home of the NBA's Clippers, would be the games' newest major venue and is the planned home for Olympic basketball. The Lakers' downtown Crypto.Com Arena will host gymnastics. The toxicity of swimming in the Seine became a serious issue in Paris. That could put renewed focus on the Long Beach area waterfront when it hosts marathon swimming and triathlon races. Its cleanliness history is mixed but its ocean waters got consistently high marks in a 2023 analysis by nonprofit Heal the Bay. The Long Beach shore was home to the pre-recorded performances during Sunday's ceremony of the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Billie Eilish, Snoop Dogg and Dr. Dre, though it was easy to mistake for LA's Venice Beach, where the journey of the flag begun by Cruise was shown ending moments earlier.

Lyles feared bronchitis after positive COVID test, but now pushes through with new career goals

AP ■ PARIS

Asthma didn't stop Noah Lyles from taking on the 200 meter at the Paris Olympics, even after testing positive for COVID-19. Despite fears of bronchitis and conflicting reports about his fever, Lyles won a bronze medal just two days after his positive test. He was concerned more about the virus' severe symptoms than his temperature, which his coach Lance Brauman claimed rose to 102 degrees. "I thought I've had COVID, it's never been about the temperatures. It's always been about the body aches, the chills, the headaches and the cold," Lyles told The Associated Press on Sunday. He spoke during an interview about his new Visa campaign involving his mother,

Keisha Caine Bishop, who narrated a 30-second reel with her son. Lyles said his temperature reached no higher than 99 degrees. The only reason he would have pulled out is if the symptoms of bronchitis had become worse. "Then asthma joining in on that and making it even worse, that was our worst fear," he said. "We were back in the medical bay underneath the track. Their biggest concern was me getting bronchitis because we didn't want something to get infected and the asthma really starts to take form. We really had to jump on top of that." Lyles added: "If that was the case, I probably would have had to get a trip to the hospital, for sure." During the Paris Olympics, the 27-year-old Lyles has had a whirlwind experience. He became the world's

fastest man in the 100 meters before his decision to race in the 200. He faced some criticism about his participating in the race and possibly infecting others, but the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee had no issues with Lyles competing. Lyle has embraced becoming somewhat of an anti-hero. He's used to hearing the criticism about him being overly confident, but he notes that many don't understand his journey toward improving his self worth. Along with asthma, Lyles said he dealt with dyslexia, anxiety, depression and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. "Those are all prime bullying targets right there," he said. "I was getting bullied in school. It was very hard, and I was already not

doing well because I'm not a traditional learner. It was very hard going through that. Going through the school system, it made me feel like I was stupid. I felt like none of my gifts I have now were worth anything." Lyles pushed through the skeptics,



Noah Lyles celebrating on the track, wearing a USA flag.

building himself up with the help of his family - particularly his mother. Even before her son's Olympic medals, she was proud of him. "It's not the critic who counts because it's always easy to be a critic," she said. "I know people see his confidence as cockiness, but what do you want people to do? It makes me feel sad for those people who feel like they have to criticize somebody who has big goals and puts those goals out there." His mother said, "It's better to have goals and put them out there and not achieve them, than to sit there all your life and wonder, 'What if?'" Lyles often leans on his mother's advice when skeptics are speaking his name. "You're still going to count on me to win the day, aren't you?" he

asked. "As my mom used to say, the higher you go up the ladder, the more your underwear shows. People are going to have opinions. ... But everybody who has ever met me comes away saying 'Oh my gosh, I feel so inspired.'" Lyles has since tested negative for COVID-19 and now he's looking to make a bigger name for himself. He'll still be preparing hard for the World Athletics Championships in Tokyo in September, but he'll look to branch out in the next year into other opportunities such as fashion, music, buying a new house and enjoying his relationship with track athlete Junelle Bromfield. "I'm excited to see where the road takes me," he said. "And to be honest, I'm also excited to see what plans God has, because I can only think so far."

New Zealand pick 5 spin options for Tests against Afghanistan, Lanka

PTI ■ AUCKLAND

New Zealand on Monday named a strong squad, which includes five spin bowling options, for next month's one-off Test against Afghanistan and the ensuing two-match rubber against Sri Lanka.

While the one-off Test against Afghanistan will be played in Greater Noida, India, from September 9-13, the Black Caps will fly to Sri Lanka for the two ICC World Test Championship matches, starting September 18 and 26, respectively.

Veteran pacer Tim Southee will lead the side which includes the likes of Kane Williamson, Devon Conway, Glenn Phillips and Rachin Ravindra, while Tom Latham continues to be the vice-captain.

However, head coach Gary Stead hinted that if conditions call for a different balance, the skipper too may have to sit out for a game or two.

"Test tours to the sub-continent can ask some really tough questions of pace bowlers due to the nature of the pitches and the heat and humidity," Stead said.

"While we're going over with an open mind around conditions, there is an understanding that all our bowling options may be needed across the different Tests.

"Tim and I have discussed this, and the need during these overseas tours to balance the work-loads of the pace



bowlers, including himself, to ensure the team is best served," he added. Spin bowling all-rounder

Michael Bracewell returned to the squad for the first time in 18 months after an Achilles injury, which was followed by a

broken finger in February, had kept him out of action. Bracewell will shoulder the spin duties alongside left-

armers Mitchell Santner, Ajaz Patel and part-timers Glenn Phillips and Ravindra. "Michael had to show plenty of

resilience to rehabilitate from his injuries and force his way back into the BLACKCAPS across all three formats," Stead

said. "His all-round skills, and ability to take the ball away from the left-hander make him

a great asset, especially on what we expect will be turning wickets in India and Sri Lanka," he added.

Pacers Will O'Rourke and Ben Sears have been rewarded with maiden overseas Test call-ups. The 23-year-old O'Rourke claimed 11 wickets in his first two Test outings, including the best match-figures by a New Zealander on Test debut (nine for 93 v South Africa in February) before a groin injury ruled him out of the second Test against Australia.

Sears, on the other hand, debuted in the second Test against Australia in March, claiming four for 90 in the second innings.

New Zealand currently occupy the third spot in the ICC WTC points table behind last edition's finalists, Australia and India.

"We know how important the points in Sri Lanka will be to our chances of pushing for a final spot in England next year. "We managed one win from the two Test series in challenging conditions in Bangladesh last December and are keen to build on that.

"The whole squad is looking forward to test their skills in the longest form of the game in the sub-continent," he said.

SQUAD: Tim Southee (captain), Tom Blundell, Michael Bracewell, Devon Conway, Matt Henry, Tom Latham, Daryl Mitchell, Will O'Rourke, Ajaz Patel, Glenn Phillips, Rachin Ravindra, Mitchell Santner, Ben Sears, Kane Williamson, Will Young.

Duleep Trophy first round match shifted to Bengaluru; stars barring Ashwin, Bumrah to play



PTI ■ BENGALURU

With some of the India regulars, except pacer Jasprit Bumrah and senior spinner Ravichandran Ashwin, likely to appear in the first round of the Duleep Trophy, the BCCI has decided to shift one of the opening matches from Anantapur to Bengaluru. Senior batters Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma also might get an exemption, and the choice of appearing in the tournament is entirely on them. The Duleep Trophy was earlier scheduled to kick-off with two sets of first round matches at Anantapur in Andhra Pradesh from September 5, but now one of those games has been shifted to the M Chinnaswamy Stadium here to reduce the

logistical inconveniences. Anantapur is approximately 230 kms away from Bengaluru and the city is not connected via flight. "The decision has been made to accommodate some of the top players, so that they get a feel of the red-ball cricket ahead of the (Test) series against Bangladesh," a source close to the development told PTI. India are slated to play two Test matches against Bangladesh - from September 19 at Chennai and from September 27 at Kanpur. While it is up to Rohit and Kohli to play in the event, some other prominent players such as Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, KL Rahul, Shubman Gill, Shreyas Iyer, Kuldeep Yadav etc are expected to be available for this tournament fully or

partially. However, Bumrah and Ashwin are unlikely to take part in the tournament at any stage as they are expected to join the India squad directly ahead of the Bangladesh series. The selectors are also deciding on giving a go to Rishabh Pant in the Duleep Trophy, and if it happens then this will be his first red-ball assignment after coming back from that horrific car accident in 2022. Since his return, Pant has been a part of India's white-ball set-up and the wicketkeeper batter also donned the national jersey in the T20 World Cup. Mohammed Shami, who has been recuperating from a surgery, will not feature in the tournament. However, the availability of the top players will also be subject to the dates of the preparatory camp that the team management is mulling to hold in Chennai ahead of the Tests against Bangladesh. But the decision to shift the match also align with the shared vision of the BCCI and the team management that the top players should feature in domestic cricket competitions whenever they are free from national duty. It may be recalled that India's T20I skipper Suryakumar Yadav (Mumbai) and out-of-favour wicketkeeper batsman Ishan Kishan (Jharkhand) have made themselves available to play the Buchi Babu Trophy, starting from August 15.

Graham Thorpe took his own life after battling with depression and anxiety, reveals wife

PTI ■ LONDON

Former England cricketer Graham Thorpe took his own life after a struggle fuelled by depression and anxiety in the last two years, his wife Amanda has revealed.

The 55-year-old passed away on August 5. Thorpe's demise was announced by the England and Wales Cricket Board and now his wife has revealed in an interview to former England captain Michael Atherton that he had a long mental and physical battle with himself before he took his own life. "Despite having a wife and two daughters whom he loved and who loved him, he did not get better," Thorpe's wife was quoted as saying by "The Times". "He was so unwell in recent times and he really did believe that we would be better off without him and we are devastated that he acted on that and took his own life."

A ceremony was held before the start of a match between the Farnham Cricket Club and the Chipstead Cricket Club last Saturday in memory of Thorpe, which was attended by his wife and their daughters Kitty (22) and Emma (19). "For the past couple of years, Graham had been suffering from major depression and anxiety. This led him to make a serious attempt on his life in May 2022, which resulted in a prolonged stay in an intensive care



unit," she said. His wife revealed that despite his work assignments, Thorpe continued to suffer. "Despite glimpses of hope and of the old Graham, he continued to suffer from depression and anxiety, which at times got very severe. We supported him as a family and he tried many, many treatments but unfortunately none of them really seemed to work," she said. The report added that the family is now considering starting a foundation in his name. Thorpe's daughter Kitty said he was "not the same person" after a point and that he "could not see a way out". "He had loved life and he loved us but he just couldn't see a way out. It was heartbreaking to see how withdrawn he had become," she said. "It was strange to see this person trapped in the body of Dad. That's why we've been so happy that the many reflections have been about his life before this illness took over. "I am glad that's how everyone does remember him, rightly so, as the complete character he was," Kitty added.



South Africa and West Indies settle for a draw in rain-hit 1st test

AP ■ PORT OF SPAIN (TRINIDAD)

Both South Africa and West Indies had hopes of winning the rain-hit first Test before having to settle for a draw. South Africa set West Indies a target of 298 runs on the fifth and final day at Queen's Park Oval, with Alick Athanaze leading the hosts' chase with 92. West Indies finished on 201-5 in its second innings as each team started to run out of overs to get the required runs or wickets amid light checks in the evening session. South Africa had earlier resumed on 30-0 from five overs in its second innings - an overall lead of 154 - and declared at 173-3 from 29

overs. Tristan Stubbs hit 68 and was bowled by Kumar Roach on the last ball before the declaration, which came in the morning session. Rain had affected every day so far - only 15 overs were bowled on the first day - and lunch was called five minutes early Sunday with West Indies 11-1. The start of the afternoon session was also delayed and, despite Athanaze reaching his half-century, a draw still seemed the likeliest result with West Indies 121-3 at tea. The hosts needed 177 more runs in a maximum of 34 overs remaining. West Indies quickly lost Kavem Hodge, caught behind for 29 in a wicket maiden for left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj. Jason Holder came out to join

Athanaze at 127-4 and the pair shared a 65-run partnership before Maharaj effectively ended the chase having Athanaze caught for 92 after top-edging to Ryan Rickelton. With no more than 10 overs left and West Indies at 192-5, still 106 runs from victory, the hosts proceeded to score only three runs in the next three overs. The draw was agreed after Holder (31 not out) smashed a six to lift the West Indies to 201-5. Maharaj took 4-88 in 26.2 overs. South Africa scored 357 in its first innings and West Indies 233. The second and final Test starts on Thursday at Providence, Guyana.

High hopes, disappointing show: Indian boxers come a cropper at Paris

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian boxing contingent, that featured two reigning world champions in Nikhat Zareen and Lovlina Borgohain, entered the Olympics hoping for an unprecedented medal haul, only to crumble under pressure, leaving behind a trail of disappointment in a medal-less campaign. Boxing became a medal hope for India after Vijender Singh's historic bronze at the 2008 Beijing Games. MC Mary Kom added a women's bronze to it in 2012. Although the 2016 Rio Games saw the boxers return without a medal, Borgohain clinched a bronze at the Tokyo Olympics to revitalise the sport. Expectations were high from Paris and observers of the

game felt at least one, if not two medals, could be expected from the six boxers who qualified. Two-time world champion Zareen (50kg), Borgohain (75kg), and 2023 world bronze-medallist Nishant Dev (71kg) were all seen as strong podium contenders. **POOR SHOW:** But when it came to actual competition, the Indians never seemed to have the momentum needed to go deep into the tournament. With the exception of Nishant, who was denied a podium finish after a contentious result in his quarterfinal, the rest struggled with Borgohain and Zareen unable to overcome formidable opponents, and Amit Panghal (51kg) failing to match his previous form. Borgohain, Panghal and

Nishant needed just two wins to secure medals. Although Borgohain and Zareen were handed challenging draws, with both encountering formidable opponents in their second rounds. However, given that they entered as reigning world champions, the two were expected to overcome such challenges or, at the very least, put up a resilient fight. However, they succumbed rather meekly to their Chinese counterparts. Zareen, who was considered a potential gold medallist, was markedly off-colour in the second round and later revealed that she had been taking some extreme measures to stay inside the prescribed weight limit, that left her exhausted for actual competition.



She opened her campaign with a scrappy win and then lost to Wu Yu in the second round. Borgohain once again fell to old foe Li Qian, who seems to have the Indian's number, having defeated her in three of their four meetings. Among the men, Panghal looked a pale shadow of his



sharp and aggressive self against Zambia's Patrick Chinyemba, who lost in the very next round. Jaismine Lamboria, who came in after dropping down to 57kg weight class from her more comfortable 60kg division, expectedly lost to Tokyo Olympics silver-medallist

Nesthy Petecio. Nevertheless, Preeti Pawar (54kg) delivered a commendable performance in her bout against reigning world silver-medallist Yeni Marcela Arias. **GOVERNMENT FUNDING:** A total of 17 national camps and 23 foreign exposure trips were conducted in the build-up to the Paris Olympics for nine core TOPS (Target Olympic Podium Scheme) boxers and 20 development pugilists. Sports Ministry spent Rs 60.93 crore on this. Significant funds were also allocated to individual athletes, most notably Rs 91.71 lakh for Zareen, Rs 81.76 lakh for Borgohain, Rs 65.90 lakh for Panghal, and Rs 65.86 lakh for Nishant. **COACHING INSTABILITY AND SELECTION POLICY:**

The Boxing Federation of India's inability to provide a stable environment was a key issue in the build-up to the Games. Since the Tokyo Games, coaches have come and gone, denying the boxers the stability that is crucial to an Olympic campaign. Women's High Performance Director Raffaele Bergamasco was the first to depart right after Tokyo followed by men's HPD Santiago Nieva in May 2022. Narendra Rana succeeded CA Kuttapa as the men's head coach, only for Kuttapa to be reinstated later. Bhaskar Bhatt was briefly appointed as the women's head coach before he quit the position in June 2023 while HPD Bernard Dunne, who was appointed in October 2022, stepped down from his

post four months before the Olympics, leaving Indian boxing in a lurch. Foreign coach Dmitriy Dmitruk was the last coach appointed in February last year. The new selection policy that replaced the trial system was also a talking point. Panghal remained out of the national team until the last qualifier with Deepak Bhoria getting the nod based on the assessment system that relied on camp performance as well as competitive results to evaluate the boxers. However, Panghal was sent to the final qualifier, and while he secured a quota, the Haryana boxer struggled to shake off the rustiness after being away from international competition for an extended period.