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## SC takes cognisance of Kolkata rape horror

RAJESH KUMAR/SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has taken suo-motu cognisance of the alleged rape and murder of a trainee doctor at Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College and Hospital. The case is set to be heard by a bench led by Chief Justice of India (CJI) DY Chandrachud on Tuesday. According to the cause list for August 20, uploaded on the apex court's website, a bench headed by CJI Chandrachud is scheduled to hear a matter titled 'In Re: Alleged rape and murder incident of a trainee doctor in RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, Kolkata, and related issues.' The Supreme Court's intervention comes in the wake of mounting public pressure and allegations of mishandling by State authorities. Earlier two lawyers practising in the Supreme Court — Ujjawal Gaur and Rohit Pandey, penned a letter to the CJI on Thursday, urging him to take immediate action in the case. In their letter, the advocates emphasised the urgent need for the highest court in the country to step in, given the gravity and seriousness of the incident. "The nation looks to the judiciary as the ultimate guardian of justice, the last refuge for those whose cries



Members of various Resident Doctors' Associations protest during a candle march against the alleged rape and murder of a trainee doctor at Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, at Connaught Place, in New Delhi, on Sunday Ranjan Dimri

have been silenced by brutality. "The victim in this case, a young doctor whose life was dedicated to serving others, deserves nothing less than the full measure of justice that our legal system can provide. Her death must not be in vain, it must galvanise us to act, to ensure that no

other woman suffers such a fate," stated the letter. "The time has come for the judiciary to send a clear and resounding message that such heinous crimes will not be tolerated, that the sanctity of life and the dignity of women must be fiercely protected by the full might of the law," it said.

The Calcutta High Court recently transferred the probe from the Kolkata Police to the CBI. The case has raised serious concerns about the safety of medical professionals in India, particularly women, who are often left vulnerable in their workplaces.

## CBI closes in on crucial evidence in murder case

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The call detail records of Sandip Ghosh, the former principal of RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, along with the personal diary of the slain lady doctor, could hold crucial clues to unraveling the mystery behind her rape and murder, according to some Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) officials. During his interrogation, Ghosh has not been forthcoming about his phone call activities before and after the murder, prompting the CBI to seek the details from service providers, sources said. Ghosh, who has already been grilled by the CBI for more than 28 hours over two consecutive days, also failed to provide explanations for the torn pages from the victim's diary, which were previously recovered by the police. The victim's family members have expressed their suspicions about certain individuals, noting that she had mentioned her

reluctance to perform night shifts at the hospital. "Clearly, she was under pressure for some reason or was privy to something she should not have known," one family member speculated, questioning why the victim would tear out 4-5 pages from her personal diary. On Sunday, the CBI summoned several security staff members and a subaltern police officer for questioning. However, investigators have yet to determine why hospital authorities delayed informing the police by two hours after discovering the body or why students and staff were instructed not to go to the third floor, where the seminar room — and the victim's body — was found early on the morning of August 9. The officials also have asked the former principal of the college as to why the common wall between the bathroom and the seminar hall was pulled down after the incident and why the washbasins and such other things were replaced in a hurry.



Former Jharkhand Chief Minister Champai Soren speaks with the media upon his arrival at Delhi airport on Sunday PTI

## All does not seem well with Jharkhand Mukti Morcha

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

All is not well within the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) as the state approaches its upcoming Assembly polls. Senior JMM leader and former Chief Minister Champai Soren, popularly known as the "Jharkhand Tiger," has sparked speculation about his possible defection to the BJP. Adding fuel to the rumours, Soren recently removed JMM's name from his X (formerly Twitter) profile and said he is considering three options: retiring from politics, starting a new party, or joining another party. Notably, his X profile now only describes him as the former Chief Minister of Jharkhand, with no reference to the JMM. This development comes less than two months after Soren

handed over the reins of Jharkhand to his successor, Hemant Soren. In a strong indication that he may quit the party, Champai penned an emotional letter on X detailing the "insults and contempt" he has had to bear recently at the hands of his own partymen that eventually forced him to look for an "alternative path." "After so much insult and contempt, I was forced to look for an alternative path," he said. "With a heavy heart, I said in the same meeting of the legislative party that — "A new chapter of my life is going to start from today." I had three options: First, to retire from politics, second, to form my own separate organisation and third, if I find a companion on this path, then to travel further with him," Champai wrote on his social media post.



## 10 killed, 27 hurt in UP road tragedy

PNS ■ BULANDSHAHR (UP)

Ten people were killed and 27 injured when a pickup van collided head-on with a private bus in the Salempur area here on Sunday, officials said. The accident occurred on the Budaun-Meerut State highway, around 14 kilometres from the district headquarters. The traffic on the road was briefly affected due to the incident. According to locals, the pickup van was coming from Ghaziabad when it collided with the bus. "Ten people were killed and 27 were injured in the accident. The injured have been sent to different hospitals," District Magistrate Chandra Prakash Singh told reporters. The deceased were identified as Mukut Singh (45), Deen Nath (45), Brijesh (18), Babu Singh (19), Shishupal (27), Girraj Singh (26), Sugarpal (35) and Omkar (30). Two of the deceased are yet to be identified, he said. Nine of the injured are undergoing treatment at a private hospital. The condition of four of the injured was serious and they were referred to the Meerut Medical College. The remaining injured people have been admitted to the district hospital, Singh said. The DM said Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has taken cognisance of the incident and directed him and other officials to ensure that the injured get the best medical treatment. He said fitness documents of both vehicles were updated.

## Bitter Football Foes of Bengal unite against rape horror

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

A day after the Kolkata Police cancelled the highly anticipated Derby Match between Mohun Bagan and East Bengal FC — citing a shortage of manpower and concerns about potential disturbances due to ongoing protests over the doctor's rape and murder — more than 10,000 supporters from the three clubs took to the street of Kolkata to demand justice. This unity was unprecedented, as for years, the fans of Mohun Bagan Club, East Bengal Club, and Mohammedan Sporting Club have been fierce rivals in Kolkata's football scene. These three century-old giants, whose supporters have a long history of street clashes



and even fatalities due to their intense rivalries, found common ground in their shared call for justice for the slain doctor. The fans, defying prohibitory orders under Section 163 (formerly Section 144, CrPC) of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, gathered at the iconic Salt Lake Stadium to voice their outrage over the brutal crime. The victim's semi-nude body had been found inside the hospital on the morning of August 9. Dramatic scenes unfolded in front of the stadium, where police struggled to disperse the

football fans, resorting to lathi charges as the supporters chanted, "Lobster and Hilsa unite at the death of our own sister." The chant symbolised the unlikely unity between Mohun Bagan supporters (represented by Lobster, associated with western Bengal) and East Bengal supporters (represented by Hilsa, symbolising those who migrated from East Bengal), highlighting the cultural divide that the tragedy bridged. Mohun Bagan, known as the National Club of India, was founded on August 15, 1889. Mohammedan Sporting Club followed in 1891, and East Bengal Club was established in 1920.

## Child Rights head red flags radical curriculum of Bihar madrasas

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) chairman Priyank Kanoongo on Sunday expressed concerns over the "radical" curriculum being taught in Government-funded madrasas in Bihar and the enrollment of Hindu children in such institutions. Also, he questioned the involvement of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in designing this curriculum, calling it the "height of appeasement" by both UNICEF and the Bihar Madrasa Board. Kanoongo urged the United Nations to investigate these activities and called for the dissolution of the Madrasa Board. In a recent post on the microblogging platform X, he highlighted that textbooks like Talimul Islam used in these madrasas label non-Islamic individuals as "kafir" (infidels). He noted with alarm that Hindu children are reportedly enrolled in these madrasas, though the Bihar Government has yet to provide official figures. Regarding the transfer of



Hindu children from madrasas to regular schools, Kanoongo said the Bihar Madrasa Board claimed the curriculum was prepared by UNICEF India. In his post, Kanoongo criticised UNICEF, stating, "It is not UNICEF's job to create a radical curriculum using money received as donations and grants from governments, under the guise of child protection." A response from UNICEF on this matter is still awaited. Kanoongo also revealed that many of the textbooks used in these madrasas are published in Pakistan and that research on their content is ongoing. He said, "A madrasa is not a place for basic education of children in any form; children should study in regular schools, and Hindu children should not be in madrasas at all." Kanoongo emphasised that the use of funds for activities beyond the scope of the Right to Education (RTE) Act violates both the Indian Constitution and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). He demanded that the United Nations and its agencies in India conduct a thorough investigation into these activities.

## Sriram's IAS coaching centre penalised

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has imposed ₹3 lakh penalty on coaching institute Sriram's IAS for publishing misleading advertisements and violating consumer rights. The misleading advertisement was related to its claims regarding UPSC Civil Service Exam 2022. In a

statement, the CCPA said because of the violation of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, the CCPA, headed by Chief Commissioner, Nidhi Khare, and Commissioner, Anupam Mishra, has issued an order against Sriram's IAS for misleading advertisement regarding UPSC Civil Service Exam 2022. Coaching institutes and online edtech platforms use

pictures and names of some successful candidates to influence prospective aspirants (consumers), without disclosing the courses opted by such candidates and length of the course so attended. According to an official statement, the CCPA has imposed a "penalty of ₹3 lakh for misleading advertisement on Sriram's IAS".

## This Rakhi, markets to cross all bandhan with record sales

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

As people prepare to celebrate Raksha Bandhan on Monday, sales across the country are expected to surpass ₹12,000 crore, marking a ₹2,000 crore increase from last year. This year, Rakhi sales are expected to generate over ₹12,000 crore in revenue nationwide, with markets experiencing a surge in demand for "Made in India" Rakhis. Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) national general secretary and Chandni Chowk BJP MP, Praveen Khandelwal, said the demand for Rakhis has surged in recent days, with sales setting new records in 2023. "It is expected that this year, the business during the Rakhi festival will reach ₹12,000 crore, compared to last year's trade of approximately

₹10,000 crore. In 2022, the business was around ₹7,000 crore, in 2021 it was ₹6,000 crore, in 2020 it was ₹5,000 crore, and in 2018 it was ₹3,500 crore," he said. Buyers who previously purchased cheaper Chinese Rakhis are now turning to local made Rakhis. These include Khadi Rakhis from Nagpur, Sanganeri Art Rakhis from Jaipur, Seed Rakhis from Pune, Woollen Rakhis from Satna in Madhya Pradesh, Bamboo Rakhis made from tribal materials, Tea Leaf Rakhis from Assam, Jute Rakhis from Kolkata, Silk Rakhis from Mumbai, Date Rakhis from Kerala, Pearl Rakhis from Kanpur, Madhubani and Maithili Art Rakhis from Bihar, Soft Stone Rakhis from Pondicherry, and Flower Rakhis from Bangalore. CAIT's national president BC



Bhartia said a unique aspect of this year's festival is the wide variety of Rakhis made from famous products of various cities across the country. Additionally, there is a high demand for Rakhis that showcase national pride, such as Tricolour Rakhis, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam Rakhis, and Bharat Mata Rakhis. Designer and silver Rakhis are also selling well in the market. He said from Raksha Bandhan on

August 19 until the festival period concludes with Tulsī Vivah on November 15, festive sales in the country's markets are expected to surpass ₹4 lakh crore, predominantly through the sale of Indian-origin goods. This festive series begins with Raksha Bandhan and continues through Janmashtami, the 10-day Ganesh Utsav, Navratri, Durga Puja, Dussehra, Karva Chauth, Dhanteras, Diwali, Govardhan Puja, Bhai Dooj, Chhath Puja, and other festivals, culminating with Tulsī Vivah. During this time, the business community is fully prepared to meet consumer demands, with traders across all States stocking up adequately on Indian products. For the past four years, CAIT has successfully promoted a campaign encouraging the purchase of Indian

products and the boycott of Chinese goods, especially during festivals. While Chinese products used to dominate the market due to their lower prices, indigenous Rakhis have been the sole focus for several years. This year, too, there was neither demand for nor presence of Chinese Rakhis in the market. The chairman of CAIT's Vedic Committee and Vedic scholar from Ujjain, Acharya Durgesh Tare, said on August 19, there is a 'Bhadra' period lasting until 1:30 pm, during which no auspicious activities should be performed. As a result, the sacred festival of Raksha Bandhan will be celebrated across the country starting from 1:31 pm onwards. CAIT has issued this advisory to all trader organisations across the country, recommending that all traders celebrate Raksha Bandhan during the auspicious time.



# KANHAIYA MITTAL TO PERFORM AT BHAJAN SANDHYA TODAY

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

The much-awaited Bhajan Sandhya organized by the Har Har Mahadev Seva Sangh will take place on August 19 on the last Monday of the holy month of Sawan. The event will be held at the Sakchi Gurudwara Ground starting at 6:30 pm.

This year's Bhajan Sandhya is set to feature renowned Bhajan singer Kanhaiya Mittal, who will be performing for the first time on the Har Har Mahadev Seva Sangh stage. Mittal, accompanied by his singing and instrumental troupe, is expected to draw a large crowd of devotees.

The event will be grandly organized with a special concrete pandal constructed at the Sakchi Gurudwara Ground to accommodate thousands of attendees. A grand stage will be set, and a Shiving made of ice, designed to resemble Baba Barfani, will be installed at the entrance gate. The evening will commence with local Bhajan



singer Krishnamurthy performing melodious bhajans, and the program will conclude with a formal Aarti. Arrangements for Bhog Prasad and drinking water

will be made available for all devotees.

While entry to the event is free, it will be strictly controlled via invitation cards distributed by the Sangh.

Attendees are urged to arrive and take their seats before the program begins at 6:30 pm. Some sections of the seating area will be reserved, and devotees are

requested to cooperate in maintaining order during the event.

The Sakchi Kalimati Road will be adorned with festive decorations, and comprehensive arrangements for electrical lighting, traffic management, and fire safety have been made. A team of volunteers will be on hand to assist attendees. The district and police administration are providing full support to ensure the event's smooth conduct, which will be dedicated entirely to Bhole Baba. Devotees are encouraged to participate with enthusiasm and discipline.

This year marks the 24th edition of the Har Har Mahadev Seva Sangh's Bhajan Sandhya. As in previous years, the Sangh will honor four individuals who have made significant contributions to society with the prestigious 'Sangh Ratna Seva Award.' This tradition has been upheld for the past decade, and the recipients of this year's awards will be announced soon.

# Core Committee formed for Thalassemia Control

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

In a significant step towards combating the growing threat of Thalassemia in East Singhbhum, District Magistrate cum Deputy Commissioner Ananya Mittal has taken a proactive approach by constituting a District Core Committee. This initiative aims to enhance public awareness about the disorder and ensure the timely availability of blood for patients in need.

The newly formed District Core Committee will be chaired by the Deputy Development Commissioner, with the Civil Surgeon of East Singhbhum serving as its Secretary. The committee brings together key officials from the District Administration and notable members of the Thalassemia Society of Jamshepur, fostering a collaborative approach to tackle the issue. Among the members are the District Panchayati Raj Officer, District Social Welfare Officer, District Education Officer, District Superintendent, District Sub Registrar, and Sub Registrar of Ghatshila.

Prominent figures from the Thalassemia Society of Jamshepur are also part of the committee, including its President, Sharat Chandran; Tata Steel's Indrajit Paul; Dr. Amit Chatterjee from Rotary Club; Rajneesh Kumar, former District Governor of Lions International and a member of the State Task Force on



Disability Management; Sanjay Chaudhary, General Manager of Jamshepur Blood Bank; and Smita Raj Parikh, a well-known hotelier and industrialist. The committee also includes representatives from the Voluntary Blood Donor Association, such as President Sunil Mukherjee and Jitesh Kumar.

The first meeting of the core committee is expected to take place soon, with the agenda of formulating an effective action plan. The committee aims to address all potential risks associated with Thalassemia and to develop strategies that will extend the campaign's reach throughout the district.

Thalassemia is a rapidly spreading hereditary blood disorder characterized by anemia caused by an abnormal or insufficient production of hemoglobin. Hemoglobin, the protein in red blood cells responsible for carrying oxygen, is crucial to the body's function. The disorder leads

to the destruction of a significant number of red blood cells, resulting in severe anemia.

The District Administration's campaign targets multiple objectives, including increasing awareness among parents and guardians about Thalassemia, identifying new cases for early intervention, and promoting preconception testing during marriage registration. By taking these measures, the campaign aims to curb the spread of the disorder and provide better care for those affected.

"This initiative underscores the District Administration's commitment to public health and its proactive stance in addressing serious health concerns at the grassroots level. With the support of the community and the expertise of the core committee, the district is poised to make significant strides in the fight against Thalassemia," said an official.

# Bokaro DC's Rudra abhishek puja: A Blend of Spirituality and Social Welfare

R SHARMA : BOKARO

Bokaro—In a remarkable demonstration of spiritual devotion and commitment to the welfare of society, Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Bokaro, Vijaya Jadhav, performed the Rudra Abhishek Puja at her residence. This significant Vedic ritual, dedicated to Lord Shiva, drew the participation of officials from the entire district administration and members of the media, underscoring the solemnity and importance of the occasion.

The atmosphere at DC Jadhav's residence was charged with spiritual energy. The space was beautifully adorned with vibrant floral decorations, and the rhythmic chanting of Vedic mantras filled the air, creating a deeply serene and spiritual ambiance. Dressed in traditional attire, DC Jadhav led the puja with profound reverence, invoking the blessings of Lord Shiva for the welfare, prosperity, and harmony of the district.

The Rudra Abhishek Puja, an ancient and powerful ritual, involves the sacred bathing of the Shivalinga with a mixture of water, milk, honey, and other auspicious items. The significance of this event was further amplified by its alignment with a rare celestial occurrence—a once-in-72-year alignment during the auspicious month of Sawan. This rare conjunction is considered highly beneficial, making the Rudra Abhishek Puja even more potent in bringing spiritual and material benefits to the community.

DC Vijaya Jadhav's initiative to conduct the Rudra Abhishek Puja during this unique celestial alignment reflects her deep commitment to the well-being of the community she serves. By invoking divine blessings through this powerful ritual, she underscored the importance of spiritual practices in promoting societal welfare and harmony.

The event concluded on a positive note with the distribution of prasad to all attendees. Those present left with a sense of spiritual fulfillment and a renewed sense of purpose, reflecting on the rare and spiritually significant experience they had just been part of.

# Dhanbad Cong hails appointment of Kamlesh as state prez

PNS : DHANBAD

The Congressmen of district have expressed happiness and have congratulated former MLA Keshav Mahato Kamlesh on being appointed as state Congress replacing Rajesh Thakur.

On Sunday a meeting of Congress leaders was held in Dhanbad Parishad, under the chairmanship of Brajendra Prasad Singh, former district president cum Chairman of Jharkhand Pradesh Congress Committee Discipline Committee and Vice President of Dhanbad District 20-Point in which leaders expressed happiness on replacement and congratulated Kamlesh while thanking Jharkhand in-charge Ghulam Ahmad Mir, BP Singh said that the newly appointed Jharkhand Pradesh Congress Committee President Keshav Mahto Kamlesh is a very old and grounded leader of the Congress party and his experience would help in revival of party in Jharkhand. The Congress as an organization will become stronger at the ground level in the entire Jharkhand and party would perform well during the upcoming assembly elections.

Among those who congratulated were Madan Mahto, Shamsheer Alam, Vaibhav Sinha, Dugar Singh, Pankaj Rai, Manoj Yadav, Yogendra Singh Yogi, Prabhakar Nonia, Virendra Gupta, Mrityunjay Singh, Intiaz Alam, Pappu Arora, Randhir Thakur, Madhav Singh, Pradeep Pandey, Manoj Singh, Aamir Khan, Bablu Das, Mantu Das, Raju Das, Rajeshwar Rahul Yadav, Dilip Mishra, Rahul Raj besides others.

# Minority commission announces reallocation of land for Mosque and Momin School

PNS : BOKARO

Bokaro, August 18, 2024—In a significant move towards ensuring the welfare of minority communities, the Jharkhand State Minority Commission, under the leadership of its Chairman Hidayatullah Khan (Minister Status), held an important press conference at the Bokaro Parishad Auditorium today. The event was attended by Vice-Chairpersons Shamsheer Alam, Jyoti Singh Matharu, and Pranesh Solomon, along with BSL TA Chief Kundan Kumar.

During the press conference, it was officially announced by Chairman Hidayatullah Khan that the land originally allocated by Bokaro Steel Limited (BSL) for the construction of a mosque and Momin School would be reallocated. This decision has been made necessary due to the construction of highway, which has rendered the current site unsuitable for these community projects.

BSL -TA Chief Kundan Kumar has confirmed the reallocation of projects, noting that efforts are underway to identify alternative sites. He stressed the importance of carefully choosing these new locations to prevent additional disruptions and to more effectively meet the community's needs. This announcement has been welcomed as a positive development by the minority community.

Further Chairman Hidayatullah Khan addressed the media to reaffirm the state government's dedication to protecting the interests of minority communities. During his statement, Khan emphasized that the government remains steadfast in its commitment to ensuring equitable treatment and opportunities for all minority groups.

At the press conference, DPRO Shaket Pandey, APRO Avinash Kumar, along with Ashutosh Kumar from the District administration were also present.



# Abid Ali bats for reservation for Momin

PNS : LOHARDAGA

In the workers' conference of Momin Conference in Lohardaga Momin Bhawan, New Road, State Momin Conference President Abid Ali said that today the state is not getting the same share as its population. We became just a vote bank. Today we will have to fight for our rights ourselves. Said that it is very unfortunate that till date neither the Madrasa Board nor the Waqf Board has been formed, we are still waiting for the government to do so. We are disappointed in what-ever welfare schemes the government is running. All the ministers and MLAs of Jharkhand should come together and present their views, if they do not accept our legitimate demands, then we will demand an account from such ministers and MLAs in the coming elections. We need to be aware in the field of education. On the occasion, State General Secretary of Momin Conference Mufti Azhar Qasmi said in his address that today, as much as one's share is, so much is his



participation. Society needs to unite for its rights. We need to invite Mantras, MPs and MLAs to present our views and problems in such programmes. Be it the matter of assistance to the families killed in mob lynching, the issue of Waqf Board, on which no work has yet progressed beyond its formation, the matter of formation of Madrasa Board, or the reinstatement of Urdu teachers, the teachers in Urdu schools the issue of shortage

and proper distribution of Urdu books should be kept in mind. Also, the matter of fielding at least eight candidates in the upcoming assembly elections should be kept in mind. President of MM Momin Conference, Haji Sikandar Ansari honored the guests with bouquets and body clothes. Sakur Ansari, Shamsuddin Ansari, Maulana Jalauddin Ansari, Muzammil Ansari etc. also addressed the gathering on the occasion.

The forum was conducted by Senior Vice President cum Spokesperson Mumtaz Ahmed and the conclusion of the meeting was announced by Qudus Ansari. District Executive President Zahoor Ansari, City President Seraj Ansari, Sawharat Hussain, Yasin Ansari, Sharif Ansari, Qayyum Ansari, Yusuf Ansari, Shaukat Ansari, Aliullah Ansari, all the block presidents were present in the meeting.

# CM Soren to visit Daltonganj on Wednesday

PNS : DALTONGANJ

Chief minister Hemant Soren is due to arrive here in Daltonganj on August 21.

He will have his divisional programme at the Chiyanki air strip where through DBT he will be transferring money to eligible girls and women selected under the Jharkhand Mukhmantri Maiyyan Samman Yojna.

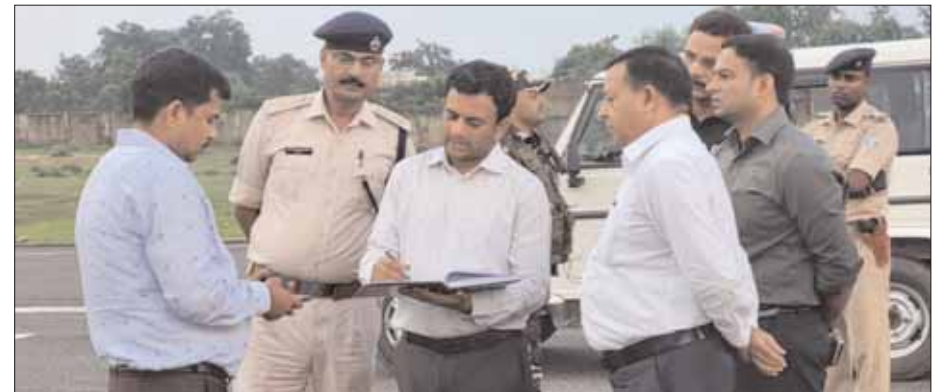
There are 4 lakh plus beneficiaries combine for the three districts Garhwa, Latehar and Palamu. Palamu has the highest receipts of the application 2.50 lakh plus.

Palamu administration is making all out efforts to make this event a big success.

Nearly 1 lakh beneficiaries are expected to be converging here in a combine way from the three districts Garhwa, Latehar and Palamu at the Chiyanki air strip.

Sources said it will be in a fitness of thing if the administration asks the beneficiaries not to bring in children up to 12 years with them.

Huge crowd of young girls



DC Shashi Ranjan at the Chiyanki air strip on Saturday with officials photo by PNS

of the age 21 and plus is another tedious issue with the administrations to deal with it.

Sources said the administration is working out for minimisation to the element of chaos and rush which is inevitable in such a huge gathering.

Refreshment packets with water are to be made available to beneficiaries right at their originating destination where block level officials are to arrange it for them.

Here one is reminded of one of the crowd scenes of the programme of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Chiyanki air strip where some youths quite dangerously perched on the upper surface of the transformer and when Modi saw it, he at once stopped his speech and urged the climbers to first scale down safely. The climbers did as told by the Prime Minister.

Again sources said the administration is to be in

constant touch with the meteorological department to know the forecast for weather on August 21.

If the weather office predicts rains and lightning then there is no way to help it except the crowd must behave sensibly during the rains and lightning.

Chiyanki air strip is a huge open space and most vulnerable to lightning strikes if humans are mindlessly out in the rains in the open here.



# Former CM Champai's visit to Delhi adds fuel to defection from JMM

## Champai removed JMM from his X handle and also JMM flags were removed from his house and Jilijgora village in Seraikela-Kharsawan district

ROSHAN KUMAR : RANCHI

Former Jharkhand chief minister Champai Soren and a close confidant of JMM chief Hemant Soren, took an early morning flight to Delhi on Sunday amid speculation of his possible shift in loyalty and joining BJP. However, he denied the rumours of leaving JMM. Speaking to the media at Delhi Airport, Champai Soren stated that he is in Delhi for personal reasons, specifically to visit his daughter who lives there. He mentioned that he frequently travels to Delhi.

However, Champai a day before spent night at Kolkatta where he met senior BJP leader from Bengal Suvendu Adhikari. When asked about his meeting with Suvendu Adhikari in Kolkatta, he responded that he intends to stay where he is currently. Regarding his removal from the Chief Minister position by the JMM, Champai Soren said that if questions are framed in such a manner, what answer should he provide.

Sources said that Champai who is also known as Kolhan Tiger is allegedly mulling joining



BJP because he is upset with his unceremonious removal from the post of Jharkhand chief minister. In July first week, Champai Soren, an old party loyalist, who had taken over the reins of the state five months back after Hemant was arrested by ED in an alleged money laundering case, stepped down.

Sources said that since then there was simmering tension



between Hemant and Champai and the later was exploring his political options. The timing of Champai Soren's visit to Delhi has fuelled speculation, particularly as he is set to meet with BJP leaders during his stay. This development comes on the heels of his recent meeting with former JMM legislator Lobin Hembrom, who is also reportedly in contact with BJP leaders. However, Soren

downplayed the significance of this meeting, describing it as a routine discussion. Hembrom was recently disqualified as a JMM MLA under the anti-defection law.

Moreover, the rumours of senior Soren joining the saffron camp also add fuels as his bio on the X handle also had JMM missing.

Meanwhile sources claimed that, his party Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM)'s flags were



removed from his house and Jilijgora village in Seraikela-Kharsawan district. JMM flags were also removed from his Mohuldih office and market under his home constituency Seraikela.

The 67-year-old — popularly known as the 'Kolhan Tiger' — is currently the Water Resources and Higher & Technical Education Minister in the Hemant Soren government. Kolhan is one of the five



administrative divisions of Jharkhand and Champai wields considerable influence in the region.

Champai Soren served as the chief minister from February 2 to July 3 after Hemant Soren was forced to resign as CM on January 31 before being arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in an alleged money laundering case.

Sources said that on Saturday before leaving for Kolkata, Champai had a 40-minute meeting in his Ranchi residence with suspended JMM MLA Lobin Hembrom. Lobin is also likely to join BJP in a day or two and said he already had discussions with Champai Soren.

People familiar with the matter said that Union agriculture minister and BJP election co-in-charge Shivraj Singh Chauhan has been in touch with Champai Soren and the latter could join BJP with at least six disgruntled JMM and Congress MLAs soon.

The BJP recently held meetings with district heads in Jharkhand and key leaders, including Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan. However, when asked about the possibility of Soren joining the BJP, Sarma refrained from making any definitive statements. "No one is in touch with us yet. I am also hearing these reports from the channels. Champai Soren is a very senior leader, I do not want to make any informal comment about him," he said.

# Govt chalk out strategy to produce minerals with low carbon emission and green mining

PNS : RANCHI

India's mining sector is on the brink of a transformative journey toward sustainability and technological innovation. As the world increasingly prioritizes sustainable development and environmental stewardship, India's mining industry must embrace these principles to ensure its long-term viability and global competitiveness.

Former Director General of Forests, Government of India, and Chairman Task Force on Green Mining and Mineral Processing constituted by Ministry of Mines, Government of India, Dr Sanjay Kumar presented a comprehensive strategy for transforming the sector into a model for innovation, sustainability and global leadership. The task force visited various mining areas in Jharkhand to study to use low carbon emission and use green energy in mining process.

In his Dr Kumar said that the mining industry is experiencing rapid technological advancements in mining, increasing demand for minerals and a pressing focus on sustainability to compete with its global counterparts. The sector must align with sustainability development goals, necessitating minimized environmental



impacts and equitable benefit distribution. Significant investment are required to support the energy transition and meet global carbon emission targets. This immense financial commitment underscores the importance of sustainable practices and innovative technologies in shaping the future of mining," he added.

The task Force Chairman said that in India, the mining sector is rich in diverse minerals but faces substantial challenges, including stringent environmental regulations and slow technological adoption. The initiative emphasizes reducing import

dependency and promoting indigenous production, which can be pivotal in addressing the sector's challenges, he added.

"Sustainable mining in India is increasingly vital, driven by environmental, social, and economic imperatives. The industry is focusing on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, adopting renewable energy in mining and integrating circular economy principles. Companies are investing in green energy solutions and improved waste management to align with global standards, ensuring the sector's long-term viability and

social license to operate," said Kumar.

The task force Chairman said that companies strive for higher standards of environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and governance. Transparent reporting, ethical business practices, and active community engagement are critical for managing risks, enhancing reputation and ensuring regulatory compliance. These principles not only improve operational efficiency but also build trust and credibility among stakeholders, he added.

Dr Kumar said that mining automation in India is revolutionizing the sector by enhancing operational efficiency, safety and productivity. "The adoption of digital technologies improves safety by reducing human exposure to hazardous conditions. Remote monitoring and control of mining operations minimize the need for personnel to be present in dangerous environments thereby reducing the risk of accidents and improving overall safety standards," he added.

The task force Chairman also said that the demand for new minerals, particularly those critical for renewable energy technologies and electric vehicles, is rising. Strategic investments in minerals like lithium, cobalt and

rare earth elements are crucial for supporting the global energy transition. These minerals are essential components in batteries and other technologies that drive the shift towards a low-carbon economy, he added.

"Zero waste mining aims to minimize waste generation and maximize resource efficiency through innovative practices, creating a circular economy within the sector. By reprocessing and reusing waste materials, the industry can reduce its environmental footprint and enhance sustainability. For example, the extraction of valuable minerals from mining waste not only reduces waste but also generates additional revenue streams," said Dr Kumar.

The task force Chairman said that collaboration, innovation, and eco-friendly mining practices are key to the sector's long-term viability and environmental stewardship. "By embracing these strategies, India's mining sector can achieve sustainable growth, setting new benchmarks for excellence on the global stage. The report emphasizes the need for a collaborative approach involving Government, industry and communities to drive the transition towards sustainable and technologically advanced mining practices," he added.

# CM rolls out first instalment of Maiyaan Samman Yojana

## Chief Minister Hemant Soren inaugurated and laid the foundation ceremony of development schemes



CM Godda 2: Chief Minister Hemant Soren being welcomed by a girl during a programme in Godda district on Sunday. PNS

PNS : RANCHI

Jharkhand government officially launched and roll out the 'Mukhyamantri Maiyaan Samman Yojana', which seeks to provide Rs 1000 per month to over 50 lakh women in the state, on Sunday.

Modelled on the lines of the 'Ladli Behna Yojana' in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra where the scheme was also launched today, Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren has assured that this scheme will not be temporary and will continue indefinitely.

The chief minister Soren also associated the scheme with upcoming Raksha Bandhan festival, guaranteeing to protect the interests of women in the state through the scheme.

Alongside Maharashtra government has also launched an app called Nari Shakti Dhoot, through which women eligible for the scheme can easily apply online.

Chief Minister Hemant Soren was addressing the inauguration-foundation laying ceremony of development schemes and asset distribution among the beneficiaries at Rajabhitha in Boarjor block of Godda district today. The Chief Minister said that despite all the adverse circumstances, the public welfare schemes of the government are coming on the ground, which is benefiting the common people.

The Chief Minister said that women empowerment is the commitment of our government. He said that the women here are very hard-working. They run the household and also work for income. In such a situation, our government is already running many schemes for the women and sisters and daughters of the state. In this sequence, another historical link named Jharkhand Mukhyamantri Maaniyan Samman Yojana is being added from today. Under this scheme, women and sisters and daughters will get an honorarium of Rs 12 thousand every year.

The Chief Minister further said that to ensure that the girls of the state are not

deprived of education due to lack of money, they are being given Rs 40 thousand under the Savitribai Kishori Samridhi Yojana. So far more than 9 lakh girls have been added to this scheme. At the same time, women above 50 years of age are also being given the benefit of pension scheme.

Our government is with you at every step. We are well aware of your feelings. This is the reason why our government is moving forward with full sensitivity with the resolve to strengthen the tribals, Dalits, exploited, deprived, poor and farmers-laborers.

The Chief Minister said that our government has always been committed to public welfare. In the last one and a half years, we have brought many such schemes, by joining which the people here are becoming empowered. Now an action plan is being prepared to start many more such public welfare schemes.

These new schemes will become an important means of changing the condition and direction of this state. We are increasing our resources for the successful implementation of these schemes. The Chief Minister said that our government is working to bring smile on every face. The government has many schemes, by joining which people are becoming self-reliant. Our government is providing financial security cover to all the elderly, single women and disabled by implementing the Sarvajan Pension Scheme. At the same time, loans up to two lakh rupees of farmers are being waived. Under the Chief Minister Employment Creation Scheme, financial assistance of up to Rs 25 lakh is being given to the youth

willing to do self-employment so that they can give employment to others along with themselves. The appointment process for the vacant posts on a large scale is going on at a fast pace. Along with this, many important decisions have been taken in the interest of government employees of all categories. Government employees have been given the old pension scheme as a support for old age. The honorarium has been increased along with improvement in the service conditions of employees working on contract. Other workers like Anganwadi Sevika - Sahayika are being given respectable incentives. An atmosphere of happiness is being seen across the state due to the decisions of the government.

The Chief Minister said that Jharkhand was always kept on the margins even before and after becoming a separate state. The policy makers did not take care of this state and its poor people. This is the reason why Jharkhand remained backward in terms of development. But, since the formation of our government, it has been continuously taking decisive decisions to take the state to the threshold of development and for the upliftment of the people here. The day is not far when Jharkhand will be counted among the leading states.

On this occasion, the Chief Minister gave the gift of 151 schemes worth about Rs 187 crore 15 lakh. This includes the inauguration of 73 schemes worth Rs 58 crore 62 lakh and the foundation stone laying of 78 schemes worth Rs 128 crore 53 lakh. At the same time, assets were distributed among the beneficiaries of various schemes. On this special occasion, the Chief Minister gave the gift of Raksha Bandhan by giving the honorarium of Jharkhand Mainiya Samman Yojana to the sisters and daughters of the state. Minister Shri Satyanand Bhokta, Minister Smt. Baby Devi and Minister Smt. Deepika Pandey Singh, MLA Shri Pradeep Yadav and MLA Smt. Kalpana Soren along with the Deputy Commissioner and Superintendent of Police of the district and other officials were present in the inauguration of schemes, foundation stone laying and asset distribution program among the beneficiaries.

# CM launches Champai Soren Apmaan Yojana: Bauri



PNS : RANCHI

Leader of Opposition Amar Kumar Bauri on Sunday targeted the State government and said that Chief Minister Hemant Soren has launched 'Champai Soren Apmaan Yojana'.

Bauri also stated that Champai Soren's pain is evident on his X post and also how he was stopped by the top leadership of the party from starting schemes and distribution of appointments.

Bauri said, "Chief Minister Hemant Soren Mainiyaan Yojana, but see the irony, the land of 'Hopni Marandi, Dandu Hembrom, Rani Murmu' which was looted by Bangladeshi intruders was not returned. JMM-Congress had promised to give Rs 72,000 annually to the poor to compensate a little for the false promise of Hemant Soren. The cabinet headed by former Chief Minister Champai Soren had approved the 'Mukhyamantri Behan-Beti Mai Swavalamban Protsahan Yojana' but today Champai Soren's name and symbol is missing from the banners and schemes of the Hemant government. This is an insult to Champai Soren."

# DGP will review Dial 112

PNS : RANCHI

DGP Anurag Gupta will review the response time and tracking system of Dial 112 at Jharkhand Police Headquarters on August 20. During this, if negligence of any police officer or policeman is found, action can also be taken against him. It is worth noting that on the initiative of DGP Anurag Gupta, QR code has been developed for Dial 112. Copies of this QR code have been put up at various places in the city including auto, bus and ATM. If you are in trouble, you can scan the QR code and take help from the police. The QR code of Dial 112 has been developed with the efforts of DGP Anurag Gupta. It has been developed by the technical cell of the police. If a person is stuck in trouble anywhere in the city, he can scan the QR code and tell his problem to the police and ask for help.

# Students shine in panel discussion on Road Safety and Mental Health

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

CII Young Indians, Jamshedpur Chapter, organized Future 4.0 - a panel discussion with college students, focusing on Road Safety and Mental Health at the CFE auditorium today.

Students from Arka Jain University, XITE College, and Mrs. KMPM Vocational College participated in the roundtable discussion. The event began with an essay competition, followed by two roundtable discussions on the respective topics. Fifteen students participated in each discussion.

The jury, consisting of Parvinder Bhatia, an eminent journalist; Rumela Ghosh, a seasoned educator and counselor at Loyola School; Priti Singh, a former research assistant on impactful projects focused

on primary education; Ashish Kapoor, ranked among the top 1,000 educators globally by the Global Education Skills Corp.; and Divya Taneja, Regional Chair, Young Indians, selected four best speakers.

Raj Ranjan and Ananya Mishra of Arka Jain University, along with V.S. Kumuda Yamini and N. Varsha of XITE College, Gamarua, were chosen as the best speakers. The evaluation was based on Relevance, Innovation, Confidence, Communication, Acceptance, and Knowledge.

The selected students will now advance to the regional round of Future 4.0, where they will compete against students from colleges across more than six cities in the eastern region. The regional round is scheduled for the first week of September 2024.

# CBI held loan distribution programme

PNS : RANCHI

A loan distribution camp was organized at the local Randive Hotel Ranchi under the aegis of Central Bank of India (CBI) Regional Office Ranchi. The program was chaired by General Manager Dharmpal Khurana who came from Central Office Mumbai.

Earlier, Regional Head Sunil Kumar, while highlighting the importance of interdependence between the customer and the bank, said that CBI, Regional Office Ranchi is always striv-



ing for the convenience, financial security, and financial progress of the customers. He said that 47 branches under the regional office are always

ready to provide excellent service keeping in mind the interests of the customers. In this sequence, loan distribution camps are being organized every month to benefit more and more people and this will continue in future as well.

Dharmpal Khurana said that Central Bank of India continuously implements attractive schemes of deposit and loan products for its customers. At present, various loans at low interest and various products on deposits for children, women, busi-

nessmen, senior citizens have been issued. He appealed that more and more customers should join the bank and avail the benefits of various schemes of the bank.

In the loan distribution camp, loans worth Rs. 102 crores were distributed among about 101 customers and instant loan sanction letters were provided. After the loan distribution camp, a review meeting of branch managers was organized.

The stage was conducted by Amit Kumar.

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# Docs' protest: Provide 2-hourly updates, MHA directs States

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry has asked all State police forces to provide it situation reports every two hours in the wake of protests by doctors, nursing staff and others against the alleged rape and murder of a postgraduate trainee doctor at State-run RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata. In a communication to the State police forces, the Home Ministry said that the law and order situation of all States should be monitored in view of the protests. "Henceforth, a continuous two-hourly law and order situation report in this regard may kindly be sent to the MHA control room (New Delhi) by Fax/Email/WhatsApp from 1600 hours today," the communication sent on Friday said. The Home Ministry also provided the State Police forces the Fax and WhatsApp numbers and the Email ID where the two-hourly situation report



can be sent. On August 9, a postgraduate trainee doctor was allegedly raped and murdered while on duty at the State-run RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata. A civic volunteer of Kolkata Police was arrested in connection with the crime the next day. The Calcutta High Court handed over the case to the CBI on Tuesday. A group of people entered the premises of the hospital shortly after Wednesday midnight

during protests by women against the rape-murder incident and vandalised portions of the medical facility. Doctors and other medical staff have been protesting in different parts of the country affecting the functioning of health facilities. They are pressing for a central law to check violence against healthcare personnel, declaring hospitals safe zones with mandatory security entitlements among other demands.

# 70 Padma Awardee docs seek PM help in stopping violence against caregivers

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Following the tragic rape and murder of a trainee medico at Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College, a group of 70 Padma Awardee doctors has urgently appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for immediate action to tackle escalating violence against healthcare professionals. "We... write to you with deep concern and profound anguish regarding the horrific events that recently occurred at R G Kar Medical College in Kolkata. As the head of our nation, we implore your immediate and personal intervention to address this alarming situation. "Such acts of brutality shake the very foundations of service by medical professionals and highlight the urgent need to address violence, particularly against women, girls, and health care professionals," said the letter. The signatories to the letter include Dr Harsh Mahajan, Dr Anoop Misra, Dr AK Grover, Dr Mohsin Wali, Dr Ambrish Mithal, Dr. Pradeep Chowbey, Dr Anil Kohli, Dr Ashok Seth,

Dr Balram Bhargava, Dr Mahesh Verma, Dr Mahipal Sachdev, Dr PK Julka, Dr Raman Kapur, Dr Randeep Guleria, Dr SK Sarin, Dr Upendra Kaul, Dr Yash Gulati, Dr Arvinder Singh Soin, Dr D S Rana, Dr Jagdish Prasad and Dr Jeewan S Titiyal among others. "As recipients of one of the nation's prestigious civilian honours, we feel a deep responsibility to speak out and demand timely action and appropriate changes," the letter stated as they called for immediate and decisive action to address the growing violence against healthcare professionals, particularly emphasising the need for stronger measures to protect the safety dignity of those working in the medical field. Demanding the harshest possible punishment for violence against healthcare workers and calling for the central and state governments to quickly enact and implement a separate law for the protection of healthcare workers, they also drew the attention of the Prime Minister to the proposed bill,

"The Prevention of Violence Against Doctors, Medical Professionals and Medical Institutions Bill." It has been ready since 2019 but not yet been tabled in Parliament. "We strongly believe that an ordinance to this effect can be brought immediately, and the bill should be passed post-haste so that all those working in healthcare delivery systems in the country can work without fear, in service of suffering patients," the letter stated. Such cases should be resolved swiftly by the judiciary, with offences categorised as non-bailable, the doctors added. "We should not allow such acts to become normal or forgotten. "Let this tragedy serve as a catalyst for real, lasting change. We owe it to the late Nirbhaya, and to all victims of sexual violence, and to future generations to create a society where such horrors are unthinkable. We earnestly appeal to you through this letter to safeguard the medical profession against physical assaults and defacement of the dignity and respect of all healthcare workers.," they said.

# Modi congratulates Thailand's new PM



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday congratulated Paetongtarn Shinawatra on becoming Thailand's Prime Minister and said he looks forward to working with her to further strengthen the ties between the two countries. Paetongtarn Shinawatra, daughter of former Leader Thaksin Shinawatra, became Thailand's Prime Minister after receiving a royal letter of endorsement on Sunday, two days after she was chosen by Parliament following a court

order that removed her predecessor. "Congratulations @ingshin on your election as the Prime Minister of Thailand. Best wishes for a very successful tenure," Modi said in a post on X. "Look forward to working with you to further strengthen the bilateral ties between India and Thailand that are based on the strong foundations of civilisational, cultural and people to people connect," he said. Paetongtarn is the third Shinawatra to hold the job, after her father and her aunt Yingluck Shinawatra.

# Prevent commercialisation of organ donation: Dhankhar



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Vice President Dhankhar on Sunday expressed deep concern over the growing commercialisation of organ donation, advocating that it should be driven by altruism rather than financial gain. Speaking at an event organised by Jain Social Groups (JSG) Central Sansthan, Jaipur, and Dadhichi Deh Dan Samiti, Delhi, Dhankhar emphasised the need to preserve the noble nature of organ donation and prevent it from becoming a commercial enterprise that exploits vulnerable individuals. "We cannot allow organ donation to be an exploitation field of the vulnerable for wily elements," Dhankhar stated. He urged citizens to embrace organ donation as a mission aligned with the tradition of serving humanity, highlighting the theme of World Organ Donation Day, "Be the Reason for Someone's Smile Today." Doctors in the sector pointed out that while India faces a significant challenge in addressing the gap between the demand for organs and their availability, the cadaver organ donation rate has remained critically low at less than one donor per million people per year. The advocated the need for hospitals to promptly identify and certify brain deaths to facilitate timely organ donation. Dr. Praveen Gupta, Principal Director & Chief of Neurology at Fortis Hospital, emphasised the importance of swift iden-

tification and certification of brain death, which is legally recognised as death in India. "Timely identification of brain death is crucial for organ donation, ensuring that organs remain viable for transplantation and increasing the chances of successful transplants," he said. Dr. Ravi Bansal, Senior Consultant in Nephrology at PSRI Hospital, Delhi, too delved on the similar lines, highlighting that the kidney transplants have profound impact on patients with renal failure, noting that kidneys can be donated by family members or from brain death donors. He stressed that kidney donation does not affect the life of the donor. Dr. Ankur Garg, Director & HOD of HPB Surgery and Liver Transplant at SHALBY Sanar International Hospitals, Gurugram, lamented the scarcity of donated organs and the delays in transplants. He pointed out that advanced procedures like ABO-Incompatible organ transplants underscore the importance of organ donation, even when donor-recipient compatibility is a challenge. The Union Health Secretary, Apurva Chandra too had recently underpinned the need to enhance awareness about organ donation and stressed that "to ensure that there is no organ wastage, we must strengthen our system. When we receive any brain-dead person, the time is less and we have to harvest the organs in 12 hours and the transplant has to happen within a short window."

# Nepal FM Deuba to hold talks with EAM in India



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Nepal's Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba will be a five-day visit to India beginning Sunday with an aim to explore ways to further expand bilateral ties, officials said. Deuba is scheduled to hold wide-ranging talks with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Monday, they said. The Nepalese Foreign Minister's visit comes a week after Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri travelled to

Kathmandu. Nepal is an important neighbour for India in the context of its overall strategic interests in the region, and the leaders of the two countries have often noted the age-old "Roti Beti" relationship between the two sides. The country shares a border of over 1,850 km with five Indian states Sikkim, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Land-locked Nepal relies heavily on India for the transportation of goods and services.

# Air India cabin crew assaulted at London hotel

PTI ■ NEW DELHI/MUMBAI

A female cabin crew member of Air India was allegedly assaulted by an intruder at a London hotel earlier this week, according to sources. The airline is pursuing the matter with the local police. In a statement, an Air India spokesperson said it was "deeply anguished by an unlawful incident of intrusion at a hotel, operated by a major international chain, that affected one of our crew members". Sources in the know said a homeless man barged into the room at the hotel where the female cabin crew was staying and assaulted her. As she shouted, others staying nearby came and rescued her and the person was caught, they added. One of the sources said the cabin crew was allegedly sexually assaulted at the hotel while two other sources claimed it was a physical assault. The incident happened at a star hotel near the London Heathrow airport. The cabin crew member has returned to India and is undergoing counselling, the sources added.



After the incident came to light, airline employees took to the airline's internal communication platform to complain about safety issues. One of them claimed hotel staff was unavailable at night and that there is no control over access to the premises, one of the sources said. The airline in the statement said it is pro-

viding all possible support to the colleague and their broader team, including professional counselling. "Air India is also working with the local police to pursue the matter to the fullest extent of the law, and with the hotel management to ensure such incidents are not repeated. We request that the privacy of those involved is respected," it said.

# Lateral entry anti-national step, move to deprive SC, STs, OBCs of quota: Rahul

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Sunday termed as an "anti-national step" the Government's move of recruiting public servants through lateral entry, alleging that the reservation of SCs, STs and OBCs is being "openly snatched away" by such an action. The former Congress President also alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is "attacking the Constitution by recruiting public servants through the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh instead of the Union Public Service Commission". Rahul's attack came after it emerged that 45 specialists would soon join key posts of Joint Secretaries, directors and Deputy Secretaries in different Central Ministries. Usually, such posts are manned by the officers of all-India services the Indian Administrative



Service (IAS), Indian Police Service (IPS) and Indian Forest Service (IFoS) and Group A services, among others. "Reservation of SC, ST and OBC classes is being openly snatched away by recruiting through lateral entry on important posts in various ministries of the Central Government," Rahul said in a post in Hindi on X. "I have always said that the

underprivileged are not represented in all the country's top posts, including the top bureaucracy. Instead of improving it, they are being pushed further away from the top posts through lateral entry," he said. "This is a robbery of the rights of talented youth preparing for UPSC and an attack on the concept of social justice including reservation for the underpriv-

ileged," he alleged. The SEBI is a vivid example of what representatives of a few corporates will do by sitting on decisive government posts, where for the first time a person from the private sector was made the chairperson, Rahul G said in an apparent reference to the conflicts of interest allegations against SEBI chairperson Madhabi Buch. The INDIA bloc will strongly oppose this "anti-national step" that hurts both the administrative structure and social justice, Rahul said. "Privatisation of the IAS is Modi's guarantee for ending reservation," he said. The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) on Saturday advertised 45 posts - 10 of joint secretaries and 35 of directors/deputy secretaries to be filled through the lateral entry mode on a contract basis. It is the biggest tranche of lateral recruitment being undertaken by the Centre, an official said.

# SC to hear Kavitha's bail pleas in excise policy scam case



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Tuesday BRS Leader K Kavitha's pleas seeking bail in corruption and money laundering cases linked to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam. The apex court had on August 12 sought responses from the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Kavitha's pleas challenging the Delhi High Court's July 1 verdict denying her bail in these cases. As per the cause list of August 20 uploaded on the top court website, a bench of Justices BR Gavi and KV Viswanathan is slated to hear her pleas. During the arguments on August 12, Kavitha's counsel had sought bail contending that she has been in custody for around five months and the charge sheet and prosecution complaints have already been filed by the CBI and the ED respectively. A prosecution complaint is the ED's equivalent of a charge sheet. Her lawyer had referred to the apex court's verdicts on the pleas filed by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Aam Aadmi Party Leader Manish Sisodia. The top court had earlier granted interim bail to Kejriwal in the money laundering case linked to the alleged scam. Sisodia was granted bail in both the corruption and money laundering cases linked to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam. The High Court had on July 1 dismissed Kavitha's bail pleas in both the cases, saying she was

prima facie one of the main conspirators in the criminal conspiracy related to the formation and implementation of the now-scrapped Delhi Excise Policy 2021-22. The CBI and the ED have lodged separate cases pertaining to alleged corruption and money laundering in the formulation and implementation of the policy. The ED arrested Kavitha (46) from her Banjara Hills residence in Hyderabad on March 15. The CBI arrested her on April 11 in connection with the corruption case linked to the alleged scam. Kavitha has denied the allegations. While dismissing her bail pleas, the High Court had said no case for grant of regular bail was made for now as the investigation is at a crucial stage. It had rejected her plea for relief on the grounds of being a woman, saying as a well-educated person and a former MP, she cannot be equated to a vulnerable female, and the court cannot lose sight of the "serious allegations" against her. In the High Court, Kavitha had challenged the May 6 order of a trial court which had dismissed her bail applications in the CBI's corruption case as well as the ED's money-laundering case. Before the High Court in the ED case, the Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) Leader, daughter of former Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrababhu Naidu, had said she had "nothing to do" with the excise policy and there was a criminal conspiracy against her "orchestrated by the ruling party at the Centre with the active connivance of the ED".

# Project aims to regulate micro, nano-plastics in food products

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With microplastic pollution becoming a significant concern in food, the country's top food regulator has initiated a groundbreaking project aiming to develop and validate methods for detecting micro and nano-plastics in food products and to evaluate their prevalence and exposure levels across the country. Launched in March, the primary objective of the project "Micro- and Nano-Plastics as Emerging Food Contaminants: Establishing Validated Methodologies and Understanding the Prevalence in Different Food Matrices," include developing standard protocols for micro/nano-plastic analysis, conducting intra- and inter-laboratory comparisons, and generating critical



data on microplastic exposure levels among consumers. Anything smaller than 1 micrometer is a nanoplastic that must be measured in billionths of a meter. An official from the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) said that the study is being implemented in collaboration with leading

research institutions across the country, including the CSIR-Indian Institute of Toxicology Research (Lucknow), ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (Kochi), and the Birla Institute of Technology and Science (Pilani). In a recent report, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) highlighted the pres-

ence of microplastics in common food items such as sugar and salt. While the report underscores the global prevalence of microplastics, it also emphasises the need for more robust data to fully understand the implications for human health and safety, particularly in the Indian context.

Yet another recent study conducted by Toxics Link, an environmental research and advocacy organisation, claims to have found that all Indian salt and sugar brands contain microplastics. The highest concentration of microplastics was found in a branded iodised packaged salt sample. The study report "Microplastics in Salt and Sugar" was released recently. Similarly, according to a study published in the Environmental Pollution journal, microplastics particles which have been found in almost all the body parts of humans have now reached the fats and lungs of two-thirds of marine mammals. Similarly, a February 2024 study has revealed that ninety percent of animal and vegetable protein samples tested positive for microplastics,

teeny polymer fragments that can range from less than 0.2 inch (5 millimeters) down to 1/25,000th of an inch (1 micrometer). An official from the FSSAI said that while global studies have highlighted the presence of microplastics in various foods, it is imperative to generate reliable data specific to India. This project will help understand the extent of microplastic contamination in Indian food and guide the formulation of effective regulations and safety standards to protect public health. The findings from this project will not only inform regulatory actions but also contribute to the global understanding of microplastic contamination, making Indian research an integral part of the global effort to combat this environmental challenge.



# Refugees denied citizenship rights due to appeasement policy of Cong-led Govts: Shah

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said a large number of refugees were denied citizenship rights in the country due to the appeasement policy of past governments led by the Congress and its allies. Addressing a gathering in Ahmedabad after handing over citizenship certificates to 188 Hindu refugees in Gujarat, Shah said the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) is about giving rights and justice to lakhs of refugees. He also assured Muslims that there is no provision in the CAA to take away anyone's citizenship, as it is about granting citizenship. "Because of the policy of appeasement of past governments headed by the Congress and its allies, those who came to the country seeking refuge did not get (citizenship) rights and justice from 1947 to 2014," Shah said. "They (refugees) were not just tortured in neighbouring countries for being Hindu, Jain, Buddhist and Sikh, but also in our country as lakhs



and crores of people longed for justice for three generations," he said. Past governments allowed crores of intruders into the country and made them citizens illegally, but they denied citizenship to those who followed the law and applied for the same by saying there was no legal provision for it, Shah said. "From this forum I would like to ask those who ran past governments as to what was the fault of the people, who came here to save their sisters and daughters and their properties, that they could not become citizens of this country," Shah asked. Asserting that law is for the public and not the other way round, Shah said

the BJP had promised in 2014 that it would bring in CAA after coming to power and it was done in 2019, which gave justice to crores of Hindus, Jains, Buddhists and Sikhs. "After the law was passed, everyone was misled that this would cause injustice to Muslims and they would lose their citizenship. Today, I want to make it clear again to the Muslim community that there is no provision in this law to take away anyone's citizenship. This law works to grant citizenship," the Union minister said. However, even today certain state governments are misleading people, he said. "The absence of such a law granting citizenship ensured people of our country

remained destitute in our own country. What can be a bigger misfortune and irony than this? It could not happen due to the policy of appeasement for so many years. Prime Minister Narendra Modi decided to bring the law in 2019, and I had the privilege of passing the law in Parliament, Shah said. He said Bangladesh had 27 per cent Hindus at the time of partition, but today they are just 9 per cent as they have been subjected to forced religious conversion.

"Where have the rest gone? They were either subjected to forced religious conversion, or ran here seeking refuge. Don't they have the right to live as per their religion? If they can't live with respect in the neighbouring country and seek refuge in our country, what should we do? We cannot sit as silent spectators. This is the Narendra Modi government, you will get justice," he asserted. He told refugees from all over the country to apply for citizenship without hesitation as this will not affect their job or their properties since they will be granted citizenship with retrospective effect.

# Ladki Bahin scheme aid will increase if sisters give us strength: Shinde



PTI ■ SATARA

The financial aid under the Ladki Bahin Yojana will increase if "beloved sisters give us strength", Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said on Sunday. Under the scheme, women with an annual family income of less than Rs 2.5 lakh are given Rs 1,500 as monthly financial aid. "My government will not stop at Rs 1500. If you give us strength, the money will increase," Shinde said at the launch of the scheme in Satara, his statement an apparent call for support in the Maharashtra assembly polls that are likely to be held

in October-November. A sum of Rs 3000 crore has been disbursed to one crore eligible women so far and Rs 35,000 crore has been earmarked for the year, Shinde said. The CM said the Ladki Bahin Yojana and the move to give three free cylinders were attempts to make women

"atmanirbhar" (self-reliant) and not election gimmicks. "However, evil step brothers are maligning these schemes," he said in a swipe at the opposition parties. Those born with silver spoons in their mouths will not understand the importance and value of Rs 1,500, Shinde asserted.

# Scrap registration cutoff date for Ladki Bahin scheme, says Prithviraj

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Senior Congress leader SPrithviraj Chavan has demanded that the cut off time to register for the Maharashtra government's Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana be waived off to enable all eligible women to avail financial assistance. The August 31 cut off date should be scrapped and the scheme should be implemented as a social security right, Chavan said in a letter to Chief Minister Eknath Shinde. Due to technical glitches, the server

of the official portal is non functional most of the time, while in several instances women do not get the registration OTP for nearly six hours, he said. Women are worried they will not be able to register themselves for the scheme in time, Chavan said in the letter. He said the registration limit was July 15 earlier and this was extended to August 31 after he made such a demand during the monsoon session, adding the age limit was increased from 60 to 65 years following his initiative.

# Tripura BJP demands Mamata's resignation over doctor rape-murder

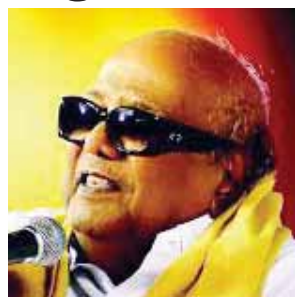
PTI ■ AGARTALA

Tripura BJP unit on Sunday demanded the resignation of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee owning moral responsibility for the rape and murder of a doctor at Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata. The body of the post-graduate trainee doctor was found in a seminar room at Kar Medical College and Hospital on August 9. "We want Mamata di to resign owning moral responsibility for the shocking incident in Kolkata", former union minister and BJP state core committee member Pratima Bhoumik said during a press conference. "Many evidence was wiped out by vandalization at Kar Medical College and Hospital...", she said. Taking a dig at the INDIA bloc, the former union minister said anti-BJP party leaders were observing mysterious silence on the horror incident at the Kolkata medical college.

# Modi terms Karunanidhi as towering figure

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has hailed late DMK President and former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, M Karunanidhi as a "towering figure" in Indian politics, literature and society. The late leader's efforts to promote the Tamil language and culture are still remembered by the people, Modi said in a message to Karunanidhi's son and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin. Stalin shared on his 'X' handle, Modi's message for the release of a commemorative coin on the occasion of Karunanidhi's centenary on Sunday by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. The CM thanked Modi. "I wholeheartedly thank Hon'ble Prime Minister Thiru. @narendramodi avl. For his kind wishes and support for the grand success of the Muthamizh Arignar Kalaignar Centenary Commemorative Coin release ceremony," Stalin said. In his message, the PM said Karunanidhi was a towering figure in Indian politics, literature and society. "He was always passionate about the development of Tamil Nadu, as well as national progress."



"As a political leader, Thiru Kalaignar Karunanidhi ji left an indelible mark on our country's history as a Chief Minister who was elected by the people multiple times over the span of decades, underlining his deep understanding of society, policy and politics," the PM added. The DMK stalwart was a multi-talented personality with a "prolific pen." The release of the coin honours the memory of Karunanidhi, as well as the ideals he stood for and it will serve as a reminder of his legacy and enduring impact of his work, Modi added. "As we march ahead confidently towards building a developed India by 2047, the vision and thoughts of leaders like Thiru Kalaignar Karunanidhi ji will continue to shape the nation's journey," Modi said and wished the coin release ceremony be a "huge success."

# Demand for Puducherry Statehood echoes in House

PTI ■ PUDUCHERRY

Long-pending demand, the plea for statehood to this union territory echoed once again in the state Assembly earlier this week, when the House passed a unanimous resolution expressing its sentiments with the Centre on the matter. The territorial Assembly had in the past adopted resolutions on 15 occasions seeking statehood. The election manifestos of all political parties released during the run up to either Assembly or Lok Sabha polls all along had been insisting they would strive hard for ensuring statehood to Puducherry, a coastal town located about 170 km from Chennai. Puducherry and its outlying regions of Karaikal, Mahe and Yanam located as enclaves either in Tamilnadu, Kerala or Andhra Pradesh had been together as a union territory since their merger with the Indian Union through a referendum in 1954. It has been the contention of the parties coming to power that the lack of full-fledged powers to the elected government at had been a major handicap. They state that even to introduce a Bill in the territorial Assembly, the consent of the Centre is necessary. The House had adopted a resolution on August 14 on the statehood issue, with all parties backing the motion. Chief Minister N Rangasamy,



who heads the AINRC-BJP coalition government here, has been pressing the plea for statehood as he is of the view that in the present constitutional status of Puducherry being a Union Territory, the decisions of the elected government could not be implemented expeditiously as several hurdles have to be overcome. He had recently said that "the only solution for all the difficulties the territorial government is facing is conferment of statehood on Puducherry." Former Puducherry Chief Minister and senior Congress leader V Narayanasamy told PTI that statehood was 'absolutely' necessary and reaffirmed his party's support for the cause. He said there was no room for any apprehension that the UT's financial position would be strained in the event of being granted statehood. "The Centre's share for the budget of Puducherry and the State's contributions would be copiously available. There

should be prudence in planning and spending of money," he said. The State government should ensure firm realization of taxes by Departments of Electricity and Commercial Taxes. These two, besides the Registration Department are the main sources of revenue for the government. The government should exercise utmost caution in realizing the dues from big power consumers and those paying commercial tax, he said. Want of statehood had been standing in the way of government not being able to implement its decisions, members belonging to both the ruling and opposition blocks point out more often than not. The territorial Assembly had in the past adopted resolutions on 15 occasions to seek statehood. It is also the grievance of the territorial government that Puducherry has not been presently accommodated in the Central Finance commission. The devolution

# Kolkata rape-murder: Health services in Goa Hospital remain crippled

PTI ■ PANAJI

Health services at the state-run Goa Medical College and Hospital remained affected for the third consecutive day on Sunday, with resident doctors resolving against withdrawing the indefinite strike, which began Friday, till the Calcutta High Court delivers verdict in the rape-murder case. Earlier in the day, private medical practitioners who observed a 24-hour strike called off their protest at 6 AM, said Indian Medical Association's Goa unit president Sandesh Chodankar. Healthcare services at the Goa Medical College and Hospital, one of the oldest medical colleges, remained crippled for the third consecutive day due to the strike by senior and junior resident doctors under the aegis of the Goa Association of Resident Doctors (GARD). Doctors demonstrated outside GMCH Complex in Bambolim demanding justice for the junior trainee doctor who was allegedly raped and murdered at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata on August 9, triggering nationwide outrage. The GARD stated on Sunday the strike would continue till



the Calcutta High Court delivers its verdict in the rape and murder case. Doctors claimed emergency services in GMCH remain uninterrupted. State Health Minister Vishwajit Rane Sunday stated the government was implementing crucial changes at GMCH, including installing security cameras and revising laws, to ensure foolproof safety of doctors. "I strongly condemn the recent horrific incident in West Bengal involving the heinous crime against an innocent doctor. My heartfelt condolences go to the victim's family. This tragedy highlights the urgent need for enhanced safety measures for healthcare workers," Rane stated in a video statement. He demanded swift and strict action against the perpetrators responsible for the Kolkata incident.

# 3 assault woman doctor at Maha hospital, 2 detained

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Police have booked three persons, including two women, and detained two of them after a female doctor was allegedly assaulted at civic-run Sion hospital here in the early hours of Sunday, an official said. The accused allegedly targeted the doctor when she was cleaning blood from the ear of a man at the casualty ward of the facility, officially known as Lokmanya Tilak Municipal General Hospital and Lokmanya Tilak Municipal Medical College. The man screamed at the female doctor, triggering an argument, said the official from Sion police station. Of those who had come with the patient, two women and a man assaulted the female doctor, prompting the hospital staff to seek police intervention, the official said. Police registered a case against the three alleged attackers under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and Maharashtra Medicares Service Persons and Medicare Institutions



(Prevention of Violence and Damage or Loss to Property) Act. Two of the three accused have been detained, the official said. In a statement concerning the incident, Sion hospital said, "There has been an incidence of violence in Sion hospital that occurred early this morning involving one of the on-call residents in the ward. A group of 5-6 intoxicated patient attendants threatened and attempted to physically assault her. She also sustained

injuries while defending herself." Terming the assault "alarming", the statement said their doctors' safety is "non-negotiable." "This situation requires immediate attention and the implementation of strict security measures in all hospitals," it added. The assault comes amid a nationwide uproar over the safety of doctors in the wake of the rape-murder of a junior trainee doctor at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata.

# 4 people get 7-year in jail for assaulting woman in Thane

PTI ■ THANE

A court in Maharashtra's Athane district has sentenced four persons to seven years simple imprisonment for assaulting a woman in 2018 when she went to a factory to seek repayment of money lent to its owner by her late husband. Additional Sessions Judge G G Bhansali, in the order passed on August 9, discharged the factory owner from the case due to insufficient evidence against him. The four other factory workers were pronounced guilty under Indian Penal Code sections 324 (voluntarily causing hurt by dangerous weapons) and 326 (voluntarily causing grievous hurt by dangerous weapons) and also fined Rs 2,000 each. A copy of the order was made available on Sunday. Additional Public Prosecutor Rakhi W Pande told the court that the victim, Savitri Singh (58), was assaulted by some workers at a factory for making Ganapati idols in Naupada area of Thane allegedly at the behest

of its owner on April 22, 2018, when she went there to ask for the repayment of Rs 2.5 lakh he had borrowed from her late husband. She was kicked and attacked with fibre sticks, causing serious injuries including a fracture to her left leg. A total of eight witnesses were examined during the trial, Pande said. In his order, the judge said, "The prosecution has proved beyond all reasonable doubt that the accused brutally assaulted victim Savitri Singh, who sustained bleeding and fracture injuries classified as grievous. Therefore, it is proven beyond all reasonable doubt that the accused are liable for punishment for these offences." The convicted persons are Yogesh alias Babaji Khimngiri Goswami (51), Manoj Shankaral Punjani (56), Dashrath Narayan Madav (55) and Rameshchandra Sherbahadur Giri (46). The fifth accused was discharged from the case for want of sufficient evidence to prove his involvement in the assault.

# In six months, half BJP leaders in K'taka will be in jail or run for bail: Priyank

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Minister KPriyank Karge on Sunday said half of the BJP leaders in the state will either be in jail or running for bail in the next six months as the Congress government will get to the bottom of the corruption cases of the previous BJP government. Reacting to Governor Thaaawarchand Gehlot granting permission to prosecute Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in the site allotment scam in the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA), he said the Congress did not go for a witch-hunt because its first priority was good governance. "As a government our first priority is to deliver an efficient governance, not witch-hunt. But yes, having said that, there are a lot of discrepancies in the previous government," Karge told reporters here. There are more than 35 cases against BJP leaders and in three to four cases, an interim report has been submitted, the Minister said, adding that



the state government has constituted a Special Investigation Team of the Criminal Investigation Department. "We are looking at these cases closely. We will get to the bottom of those cases. It takes time. There was extreme corruption in the previous government. We are working on it. And let me assure you again that in the next six months half of the BJP leaders will be running for bail or will be in jail," he added. The Minister said there are

umpteen cases where the role of the Governor has been debated, which has been set in stone and will be put forth before the court. To a question, Karge said there is no way BJP leaders can take the case against Siddaramaiah to the logical end because they do not have any evidence. "The only thing they can do is they can keep the case alive by using the Central Bureau of Investigation, Income Tax, Enforcement Directorate, and the Governor himself," he added. Blaming Gehlot for the political turmoil in the state, Karge alleged that the Governor was a puppet and not a constitutional head of Karnataka. "Unfortunately the position (of Governor) has been compromised and he is behaving like a BJP Karyakarta," Karge alleged. Replying to a question, he charged that the BJP never came to power through people's mandate but stole it. That was the only way BJP could come to power in Karnataka or elsewhere.





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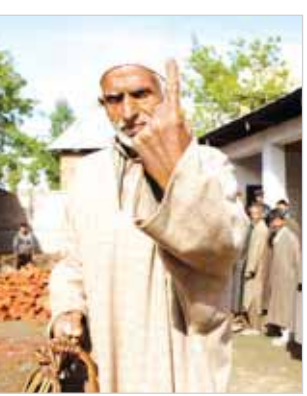
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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Moment of truth

Elections to take place in Jammu and Kashmir after 10 years; first time after abrogation of Article 370

For the first time in a decade, elections are set to be held in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. After a long wait the elections have been announced for Jammu and Kashmir; the first since 2014, will take place in three phases on September 18, September 25, and October 1, with the results set to be declared on October 4. The region has been under President's Rule since 2018. This election marks significant progress in meeting the Supreme Court's directive that democracy be reinstated in Jammu and the Kashmir Valley by September 30. Last month in Srinagar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had confirmed the upcoming election. This is particularly significant as it follows the bifurcation of the erstwhile state into two separate union territories — Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh — in August 2019, when Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, which provided special status to the region, was abrogated by the Indian Government. The last elections in Jammu and Kashmir were held in 2014, before the abrogation of



Article 370 and the dissolution of the state's legislative assembly in 2018. Since the 2019 political reorganization, Jammu and Kashmir has been under central administration. The impending elections will not only address the demand for local governance but will also test the popularity of the government's policies and decision in the region. With new electoral boundaries drawn post-delimitation, the political map of Jammu and Kashmir has changed. This could impact electoral outcomes, shifting the balance of power between regional parties like the National Conference (NC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP), and national parties like the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). These elections could set the stage for fresh political alliances and realignments, potentially altering the political dynamics between the Kashmir and Jammu regions. The region's security situation will play a major role in the lead-up to and during the elections. The success of the elections will depend on maintaining peace and ensuring free and fair polling. Indeed, it would be quite a challenge to have peaceful elections, given the recent terrorist attacks in Jammu. Both domestic and international observers will be watching closely to assess the level of participation, especially in the Kashmir Valley. A high voter turnout could bolster the Indian government's stance that Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India and that democratic processes are functioning. On the other hand, a low turnout, especially in the valley, could suggest a disconnect between the people and the political establishment, complicating efforts to resolve tensions in the region. Elections are likely to impact the region's economy in a positive way. The new government will need to address unemployment, revive the tourism sector, and bring much-needed investments. A successful election could restore a sense of democratic normalcy but the task is daunting. A successful election, no matter who wins, will surely align J&K with the country's mainstream political landscape.

## PICTALK



Women devotees carry holy water in the 'Kalash Yatra' in Jaipur

## Lessons from the Wayanad tragedy

To prevent future catastrophes, we must reassess our approach to urban planning and disaster management, ensuring that development is aligned with sustainable practices



ATUL SEHGAL

The Wayanad tragedy—serious lessons for the future. The incident and news of the very recent Wayanad landslide tragedy seems to be passé. No one is talking about it now when the media headlines are being hogged by the fresh and more serious episode—of rape, mob violence and anarchy in Kolkata, WB. This does not suggest that we begin taking a lighter look at the long-term serious administrative steps required to forestall incidents of landslides occurring more due to misgovernance than climate change. More of such incidents are waiting to happen if we do not take urgent, timely steps. It is with great shock that we heard the tragic death of more than 400 persons in the landslides in Wayanad, Kerala and of another 250-plus persons who were reportedly injured or missing. The two large landslides that hit Mundakkai and Chooralmala in Wayanad in the early hours of July 30, resulted in wide destruction, several fatalities, and serious injuries to hundreds. While incidents of natural disasters are episodes apparently beyond the control of humans, there is much humans can do to prevent them and minimize the damage wrought by them after they occur. It is remarkable that just about a week before this tragedy the state government in Kerala was warned by the Union Home Ministry about the possibility of a catastrophe based on the feedback provided by an NDRF team deputed to assess the susceptible site. This is a sad and sobering reflection on the ham-fisted administrative machinery of the state government in India. The frequent incidents of collapse of buildings and bridges in our country have a direct and crying connection with unauthorised, faulty building construction in violation of prescribed safety norms of the government. This illegal construction takes place right under the nose of regulatory agencies of the government. Corrupt government officials allow unauthorised construction and things appear normal till some major mishap occurs, capturing news head-



lines all over. The sadder part of the story is that state governments are inadequately equipped for disaster management. Invariably, central assistance is sought and the army has to come to the rescue of the hapless, distressed citizens. The case of landslides and the damage caused by them is not much different from that of buildings and bridges collapsing elsewhere. It would be in the fitness of things to systematically list out the reasons and preventive remedies for such catastrophic landslide events in our country.

**Heavy torrential rains:** Heavy torrential rains are not the core causal factors. They are only the triggering factors behind such landslides. Further, to say that the intensity and frequency of rainfall in any region or area is purely subject to uncertainties of nature is not quite correct. Our living paradigms do influence rainfall patterns in various geographical areas. Climate change is the result of faulty living paradigms. There are things we can do to prevent interruption of normal rainfall patterns. Ancient scientific literature of India can provide useful guidance in this regard.

**Wrong building construction practices:** Our building construction and water management practices are not perfect. Our deficient under-



HEAVY TORRENTIAL RAINS ARE NOT THE CORE CAUSAL FACTORS. THEY ARE ONLY THE TRIGGERING FACTORS BEHIND SUCH LANDSLIDES

standing and practices based thereon regarding the earth's geographical interiors puts us in a vulnerable position. Cracking and crumbling mountains are a direct outcome of these practices. In this regard, one has to merely cast a look at medieval time buildings that stand intact after hundreds of years while also maintaining the integrity of their surrounding hilly sites. Ancient and medieval buildings were built with stones. Modern buildings use RCC with heavy foundations that damage the host sites. We need to learn and adopt some of our ancient building techniques which gave stronger, environment friendly and more durable structures.

**Unauthorised mining:** Unauthorised mining activities in contravention of set safety regulations cause tremendous harm to the terrains, making them vulnerable to landslides. Strong deterrent and punitive legal measures are the need of the hour.

**Local violation of established building safety norms:** As stated above, corruption in municipalities and local government bodies accounts for many cases of unauthorised building construction in flagrant violation of safety norms. Violation of safety norms should be strictly penalised.

**Deforestation:** Deforestation

in hilly areas for indiscriminate construction— either of residential buildings or commercial buildings bridges highways or flyovers is a big factor in the wearing of underground natural plates that support hills and mountains. The adverse effects of deforestation may not be evident immediately. But long term, they show themselves in the form of natural disturbances leading to earthquakes and climate change. This phenomenon needs to be studied at the institutional level, and supported by the government. We should not always depend on foreign agency research results. We have the capability and wherewithal to carry out research and devise remedial measures in the form of specific afforestation measures in identified regions.

**Inept state government machinery:** As indicated above, our state government agencies are neglectful, inefficient, callous and corrupt. What is the reason? Proper systems do not exist that will ensure the identification and penalization of the guilty in such matters. Slow and tardy judicial proceedings in an unsound judicial system only serve to encourage the inefficiency and the corrupt.

(The author is a management consultant based in New Delhi; views are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## MAMATA SHOULD STEP DOWN

Madam — Barring the emergency cases, number of State hospitals including private institutions have boycotted their OP (Out Patient) services to show their solidarity for the victim on the brutal rape and murder at RG Kar hospital Calcutta. The CM of West Bengal Mamata Banerjee must be crest fallen and should have taken up the moral responsibility and have resigned by now for this gruesome murder and rape of the intern doctor at RG Kar hospital. Who can understand better the pains of a woman other than a woman who's heading the State? Her party in power by taking out a rally when she herself is the Chief Minister, Home Minister and Health Minister is the height of a mockery when she failed in all the three counts even in maintaining the basic law and order in the state. The Calcutta High Court has lost its faith in the West Bengal government while shocked to observe the vandalism played upon post the incident at the hospital premises. Mamata can't have any defence and the enquiry by CBI is not the end of the case to bring real culprits to books. WB needs a disinfectant to clean the hospital as well as the minds of the team Mamata on the whole to ensure safety of the people is causing a greater concern.

A P Thiruvadij | Chennai

## CM SIDDARAMAIAH IN TROUBLE

Madam— The Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah is poised to face prosecution in connection with the MUDA land scam case. The approval for legal action has been granted by Governor Thawar Chand Gehlot, following a private complaint. The allegations centre around the Mysore Urban Development Authority (MUDA) and claims of malpractices surrounding land allotments. It is alleged that Parvathi Siddaramaiah, the wife of CM benefited from irregularities when MUDA acquired her 3-

## Elections in J&amp;K after 10 years



The Supreme Court's order had been implemented meticulously by the election commission and election had been declared and have been welcomed by all including the radicals which is a momentous moment for citizens of the state and it will pave the way for the return of democracy to the Valley however complex a process it might prove to be.

acre plot in Kesare village, Mysuru, in 2021, seemingly in exchange for allocations of more valuable plots in the upscale Vijayanagar area of Mysuru. Critics assert that the market value of these new plots far exceeds that of the land she originally owned. Siddaramaiah maintains his innocence, vowing to battle the claims both legally and politically. He asserts that the land allocation to his wife was conducted following all legal procedures. The Opposition parties are leaving no stone unturned, undertook even a protest march from Bengaluru to Mysuru demanding CM's resignation. The investigating agencies will now have to start the process of prosecution. Needless to say, one cannot expect the CM to continue in office while agencies reporting to him, are investigating charges against him. But his political career with a clean image spanning over four decades is under clouds - facing toughest challenge in his public life.

N Sadhasiva | Bengaluru

Due to the elections in the state people will get the chance to elect the popular government in the state and people will have direct say in the government which is the representative way and the Indian way of upholding democratic values. It is the right step forward irrespective of what the changed status has meant in the last five years after

The arguments can be endless over the propriety of going back on a historical commitment, but there is no denying that democracy is now slated to return to a more egalitarian region, even if it has been divided into two UTs of J&K and Ladakh. Long-term stability and prosperity of the region can be assured if a popular government is in charge and works for the development of the people.

Yash Pal Ralhan | Jalandhar

## PARIS PARALYMPICS

Madam — In a warm send off ceremony of the athletes for Paris Paralympics 2024. India is sending its largest-ever contingent for the Paris Paralympic Games as 84 athletes will look to leave no stone unturned in their quest for glory in the French capital. Those 84 athletes will be taking part in 12 sports archery, athletics, badminton, canoeing, cycling, blind judo and powerlifting among others. The para-athletes have a remarkable ability to overcome obstacles and turn challenges into opportunities. They have shown remarkable determination and perseverance in their preparation and hopes were made of getting the highest ever medal in the game. We wish them the very best and are sure they will inspire millions back home with their performances and medal tally. Hope this time, each and every athlete will perform well.

Dimple Wadhawan | Kanpur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## Tackling the water management crisis amidst rapid development

India needs to build a resilient water ecosystem that supports our growing urban needs and contributes towards the holistic vision of Viksit Bharat

India's urban landscape has undergone a tremendous transformation since independence, evolving from traditional townships into thriving metropolises that drive the nation's economic and cultural growth. The Government of India's ambition for a Viksit Bharat by 2047 and their efforts have provided the necessary impetus for this sector.

The Union Budget 2024-25 reflects this commitment with an allocation of Rs 11.11 lakh crore in capital expenditure and an emphasis on water supply, sewage treatment, and solid waste management projects in collaboration with state governments, multilateral development banks, and research institutions. Our cities, bustling with life and opportunities, stand as testaments to our collective aspirations and endeavours. Yet, beneath this vibrant facade lies a critical challenge that demands urgent attention and innovative solutions: water and wastewater management.

**The Past & the Present Status of Wastewater Management in India:** India's rapid urbanisation has



brought with it significant challenges in managing water resources. According to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) (data for 2020-21), India's urban centres generate around 72,368 million litres of sewage per day, but the treatment capacity is only 31,841 million litres per day. This gap leads to untreated wastewater being discharged into our rivers and lakes, contributing to pollution and posing severe health risks.

The Government has initiated several programs like the Namami Gange Programme, Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT), and the Smart Cities Mission to address these issues. These initiatives aim to enhance the sewage treatment infrastructure, promote sustainable urban development, and ensure clean

water availability. However, over the years, the path to achieving these goals has encountered numerous challenges, from inadequate infrastructure to the absence of innovation, funding constraints and lack of relevant stakeholder partnership.

The gloom has taken a shift in the recent past with relevant stakeholders like youth from the communities, government, and private players all stepping up, discussing viable solutions, promoting innovation and emphasising the need to present sustainable solutions against water & wastewater challenges.

**Sustainable Management of Water in India:** In India, the future of water hinges on our ability to adopt the circular model, offering a holistic and integrated approach towards water management. Unlike the traditional linear approach, a circular economy emphasises reducing waste, reusing resources, and recycling materials to create a closed-loop system. In the context of water management, this means treating wastewater to high standards and reusing it for various purposes, such as industrial

processes, agricultural irrigation, and landscape maintenance. Thus, significantly reducing the demand for freshwater resources and ensuring treated water gets reintegrated into the supply cycle.

**A Blend of Factors to Achieve Water Management** The nation's urban development cannot be chalked down and implemented by a single entity especially for a country like ours with a huge geographic scale.

**Learnings and the Road Ahead:** Despite the global threat that water presents, every nation adapts to an approach more suited to its people and developmental needs. The urban development has picked up momentum in recent decades. We need to balance development ambitions and ensure the essentials. A practical way to fix that is by building a resilient water ecosystem that supports our growing urban needs and contributes towards the holistic vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047.

(The writer is the CEO of Suez India; views are personal)



RASMI RANJAN RAY





## FIRST COLUMN

## THE ART OF OFFICE FRIENDSHIP

Be clear about where to draw the line, respect others' time, workload and personal space



RACHNA LAKHPATRI

In today's fast-paced corporate climate, the line that traditionally defines coworker and friend is becoming increasingly blurred. With the amount of time spent at work nowadays, professional connections are no longer optional, but rather required. At the same time, these interactions necessitate skill, awareness, and a healthy dosage of emotional intelligence. Imagine this: You're out for coffee with your work BFF, laughing about last night's reality TV drama, when your boss walks in. Do you switch to shop chat or keep the banter going? It's a circumstance that demonstrates the narrow line that must be walked in business friendships. What's the key? Mastering the art of context change.

Professionalism does not need you to transform into a robot from 9 to 5. It's knowing when and how to crack a joke, as well as when to go serious. For lunch breaks, a friendship's dimmer switch is extremely bright and vivid, slightly dim for group projects, and extremely professional during business meetings. Remember the phrase "What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas"? Consider that in your workplace friendships. All those meaningful chats over after-work drinks? Not a water cooler material. Closed-door conversations and revelations made outside of the office should be treated as classified material. That's because your ability to maintain secrets may make or destroy your working relationships, and even your career.

Effective communication is crucial in all relationships, but business connections have a unique twist. As much as you want to keep communication open, you must also respect privacy. It's a difficult balance of being



there for the work friend without intruding into areas they're not ready to discuss. The benefits of working friendships include the ability to accept and provide honest feedback. However, if constructive criticism is not handled correctly, it may quickly turn into a friendship minefield. Wrap that severe love with genuine support. Remember that your goal is for both of you to succeed, not to win a point-scoring contest. Arguments will inevitably occur, even among the best of colleagues. Your adept handling of these hiccups in the path is an undeniable sign of friendship. Address disagreements directly on, but with sensitivity and professionalism; see it as a means to strengthen your partnership, not a friendship-ending disaster.

It's acceptable to get along better with some people than others, but try to avoid forming restricted groups. Instead, be the friend who draws everyone together. Organise inclusive team activities to help break down departmental barriers. Who knows, you might meet your next work bestie in accounting! We all have terrible days, but repeatedly unloading personal problems to your coworkers will put even the strongest relationships under strain. Consider the emotional strain you're putting on others. Sometimes a simple "I'm having a rough day" may suffice—save the deep dives for proper times and locations. The key to a working friendship is setting clear boundaries. Some suggestions include being clear about where to draw the line regarding each other's time, workload, space, or personal difficulties. Consider setting boundaries to be like a guardrail, keeping your friendship on track but not a wall. Finally, be sure to appreciate your victories, big and small. That fast high-five you received for acing that presentation, or the team lunch for sealing a major deal? Those boost office morale. These moments of shared joy are the glue that holds workplace friendships together. Lastly, success in business friendships requires establishing a balance between professionalism and personal connection. Hit the sweet spot, and you may find enthusiasm in your professional life while also developing potential lasting relationships outside of the confines of your current position. Go ahead, take the first step towards making your cubicle neighbour a true friend!

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

## Responsible tourism: Our promise to future generations



DIVYA BHATIA

The future of tourism hinges on responsible travel, where both travelers and industry stakeholders play a crucial role in preserving our heritage for future generations

Visit Agra, and you'll witness a heart-wrenching sight: graffiti marring the walls of its iconic monuments. Lovers etching their names into the Taj Mahal—a monument of love—are tarnishing the legacy of love with their reckless behavior. This is just one example of irresponsible tourism. From defacing historic sites to littering, damaging environments, and polluting water bodies, such behavior is widespread.

To counteract these issues, embracing responsible tourism is now essential. The tourism industry, one of the largest and fastest-growing sectors globally, holds vast potential for economic growth. Yet, this rapid expansion often brings environmental and social challenges. Over-tourism can damage natural habitats, exhaust local resources, and erode cultural traditions. Sustainable tourism aims to address these challenges by promoting responsible travel that supports local communities and preserves the environment.

Tourism's environmental footprint is broad, affecting ecosystems, biodiversity, pollution, and resource use. Popular destinations often see spikes in waste, water shortages, and habitat destruction due to tourist influxes. The Great Barrier Reef in Australia, for instance, is under threat from both climate change and tourism, highlighting the need for immediate conservation efforts. This underscores the significance of sustainable tourism practices that emphasise environmental care.

Governments are key players in driving sustainable tourism, establishing policies and frameworks that encourage eco-friendly practices. Australia, known for its diverse landscapes and rich biodiversity, has long understood this necessity. Nishant Kashikar, Country Manager for India & Gulf at Tourism Australia, explains the country's dedication to sustainable tourism: "Australia's culture, landscape, and wildlife form the heart of our tourism industry. We have a duty to manage them wisely." Through collaborations with tourism operators, Australia focuses on restorative and regenerative travel, especially at renowned sites like the Great Barrier Reef. Despite progress, challenges persist in conveying the importance of sustainable travel to markets prioritizing value and experience.

Kashikar further states the steps taken to protect natural treasures: "Our operators provide eco-friendly accommodations and low-impact activities that complement conservation efforts at the reef. Initiatives such as carbon-neutral menus and zero-waste hotels are raising the bar in hospitality." He acknowledges ongoing challenges, stating, "Effectively communicating the value of sustainable tourism to markets like India, which are driven by value and experience, requires a tailored approach."

Moscow, a city famous for its historical and cultural richness, is also leading the way in sustainable tourism efforts. Evgeny Kozlov, Chairman of the Moscow City Tourism Committee, highlights the city's environmental transformation: "Around 50% of Moscow is made up of green zones. Over the past decade, we have rejuvenated 900 parks and green spaces, as well as revitalized 40 embankments. This transformation not only beautifies the city but also offers unique opportunities for eco-friendly tourism."

Kozlov stresses the importance of building an urban ecosystem accessible to everyone, with incentives for investors in sustainable tourism infrastructure.



THE ECO-FRIENDLY TOURISM IS NOT JUST A TREND BUT A NECESSITY. THEIR INITIATIVES ARE PAVING THE WAY FOR A FUTURE WHERE RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL IS THE NORM, AND TRAVELERS PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE IN PRESERVING THE PLANET

Madhya Pradesh is becoming a leader in responsible tourism by blending community development with environmental preservation. Sheo Shekhar Shukla, Principal Secretary of Tourism and Culture, outlines the state's dual focus: "Madhya Pradesh is dedicated to both its people and its landscapes. Our Responsible Tourism initiative seeks to uplift local communities while preserving the state's natural beauty and cultural history." The promotion of rural homestays and support for local artisans drive economic development with minimal environmental impact.

He adds, "By promoting local craftsmanship and sustainable building practices, we ensure tourism development benefits both communities and the environment. Programs like Safe Tourism Destinations for Women and Responsible Souvenirs further strengthen this mission." Airlines and hotels are at the forefront of sustainable tourism efforts, addressing their significant environmental impact. As air travel continues to grow, the aviation sector's role in global greenhouse gas emissions has come under scrutiny. The hospitality industry is also increasingly adopting eco-friendly practices that aim to balance guest experiences with environmental responsibility.

Akash Garg, CMD of Moksha Himalaya Spa Resort, acknowledges that transitioning to sustainable practices requires an upfront investment. However, he emphasizes that these costs are outweighed by long-term savings. "Initially, there are costs that a property has to bear when implementing sustainable practices. However, these investments often lead to long-term benefits and savings," says Garg. The resort's efforts include reducing single-use plastics and creating an onsite bottling plant, reinforcing its commitment to sustainability. Moreover, the resort engages with the local community, with 80% of its workforce from Himachal Pradesh, and promotes regional cultural experiences for guests. At the Sheraton Kosgoda Turtle Beach Resort, Mano Gunasekera,

General Manager, speaks about the broader impact of sustainability within Marriott International. The company is deeply committed to global best practices. "Marriott International, is focused strongly on best sustainability practices. At times such initiatives come with a cost, however with the proposition of there being a greater impact on the environment," says Gunasekera. The resort supports responsible tourism through projects like turtle conservation and encouraging guests to adopt eco-friendly habits, such as reusing linens and reducing water consumption. These initiatives align with Marriott's Serve360 program, which aims to lower energy usage and promote environmentally conscious products.

Anirban Sarkar, General Manager of Radisson Blu Greater Noida, underscores the importance of sustainability in shaping the hotel's long-term vision. Radisson Blu has set an ambitious target to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, far ahead of many global initiatives. Sarkar believes that promoting sustainability and responsible business practices strengthens the brand's reputation and builds local support. "Focus towards Sustainability and Responsible Business practices actually strengthens the brand and shows the brand in a positive light," he explains.

Vietnam's leading carrier Vietjet is also making strides toward sustainability. The airline's efforts have earned it recognition in categories like "Outstanding Sustainable Transport." By investing in a modern fleet that reduces fuel consumption by up to 20%, Vietjet is helping lower emissions. Additionally, the airline has transitioned to using eco-friendly materials, such as recyclable packaging, and is researching sustainable aviation fuel with a goal of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050.

Sri Lankan Airlines is also taking a more gradual approach, integrating sustainability into its services through eco-friendly amenities in Business Class. The airline has introduced pillow and headrest covers made from recycled PET plastic, reducing its plastic footprint.

These efforts are part of broader initiatives, including the use of sustainable carpets onboard.

In the online travel space, Rikant Pittie, Co-Founder of Ease My Trip, highlights the company's role in promoting sustainability by working with local authorities to improve eco-friendly facilities. Ease My Trip has also launched educational campaigns to encourage travelers to choose green accommodations and reduce waste. "We tackle the lack of sufficient infrastructure by collaborating with local authorities to enhance eco-friendly facilities," says Pittie. For Manoj Kumar Tiwari, General Manager of Regency Holidays, promoting sustainable tourism is less of a challenge and more of an opportunity to educate guests. "Educating the guests to align them with our brand ethos to promote luxury sustainably is the key," Tiwari explains.

Daniel D'Souza, President and Country Head of Holidays at SOTC Travel, notes the increasing demand for sustainable travel, particularly after the pandemic. He observes a shift in travelers' preferences toward authentic, eco-friendly experiences. "Sustainable travel has gained momentum, with MICE groups increasingly emphasizing sustainable practices and unconventional accommodations," he says.

Trishal Rao, Chief Sales Officer at SKIL Travel, sees the challenges of promoting sustainable tourism as opportunities for innovation. SKIL Travel has incorporated electric vehicles into its fleet and is implementing eco-friendly technologies throughout its services. The eco-friendly tourism is not just a trend but a necessity. Their initiatives are paving the way for a future where responsible travel is the norm, and travelers play an active role in preserving the planet. As Evgeny Kozlov succinctly states, "We must build a tourism industry based on sustainable development principles to ensure that future generations can enjoy our world responsibly."

(The author is a travel writer and influences, she works with travel industry as a mentor; views are personal)

## Protecting our healers: Urgent action needed to end violence against healthcare providers

The recent assault on medics underscores the urgent need for legal protections and enhanced security measures to ensure their safety

The recent barbaric act of violence, rape, and murder against a resident lady doctor in Kolkata has sent shockwaves across the nation. This incident, coupled with the growing number of attacks on medical professionals, calls for an urgent need for a safe operating environment for those who dedicate their lives to saving others.

The entire country is deeply saddened by these events, and there is a collective call for the government and law enforcement agencies to ensure the safety and security of healthcare workers. This is not just about protecting individuals; it is about safeguarding the sanctity of a profession that stands at the forefront of human sur-



B K JHA

vival. Healthcare professionals work tirelessly, often under immense pressure, to deliver care and save lives. Yet, reports of doctors being manhandled, threatened, and even killed are, unfortunately, not uncommon. Doctors are taught to prioritize the ABCs—Airway, Breathing, and Circulation—when a patient is in their care. Their primary focus is always on saving lives, regardless of

the circumstances. However, when medical professionals are themselves under threat, their ability to perform these critical tasks is compromised. The environment in which they operate must be one of safety and respect, allowing them to carry out their duties without fear of violence.

The issue of violence against healthcare workers is not unique to India; it is a global problem. However, many countries have implemented robust measures to protect their medical professionals, setting examples that India could follow. For instance, in the United Kingdom, the National Health Service (NHS) has a zero-tolerance policy towards violence against its staff. This policy is supported by a dedicated

security team that works closely with law enforcement to ensure that any incidents are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Additionally, the NHS has implemented a comprehensive reporting system that allows healthcare workers to report any form of abuse or violence, ensuring that these incidents are documented and addressed. In the United States, several states have enacted laws that classify assaults on healthcare workers as felonies, carrying heavier penalties than those for assaults on other individuals.

This legal framework acts as a strong deterrent against violence, sending a clear message that attacks on medical professionals will not be tolerated. In Australia, hospitals



have introduced a range of safety measures, including the use of security personnel, panic buttons in consultation rooms, and mandatory training for staff on how to de-escalate potentially violent situations. India must urgently adopt similar measures to protect its healthcare workers. The government and relevant

authorities need to implement stringent actions that will create a safer environment for doctors and other medical professionals. First and foremost, the government should enact laws that classify any form of violence against healthcare professionals as a serious criminal offence, with severe

penalties for those found guilty. This legal framework should be supported by swift and decisive action from law enforcement agencies to ensure that justice is served promptly. In addition to legal protections, hospitals, especially those in high-risk areas, should be equipped with comprehensive security measures. These could include the deployment of trained security personnel, the installation of panic buttons, surveillance cameras, and secure entry points to prevent unauthorised access. Such measures would go a long way in deterring potential threats and ensuring that medical professionals can work without fear. Moreover, healthcare workers should receive mandatory training on how

to handle violent situations. This training should cover de-escalation techniques, self-defence, and the proper use of security measures available to them. The safety and security of healthcare professionals are non-negotiable. Those who dedicate their lives to saving others deserve to work in an environment free from fear and violence. The government, law enforcement agencies, and society at large must come together to ensure that the medical fraternity is protected and respected. It is time to take decisive action to safeguard those who save lives, ensuring that healthcare professionals can continue their noble work without fear. (The author is a senior journalist. Views expressed are personal)



# Israel strikes Gaza as Blinken arrives for ceasefire talks

AP ■ DEIR-AL-BALAH



Israeli strikes across Gaza killed 24 people overnight and into Sunday, including a woman and her six children, local health officials said, as US Secretary of State Antony Blinken headed to the region to try to seal a cease-fire deal after months of negotiations. The US and fellow mediators Egypt and Qatar said they were closing in on a deal after two days of talks in Doha, with American and Israeli officials expressing cautious optimism. But Hamas has signalled resistance to what it says are new demands by Israel, and the long-running talks have repeatedly stalled.

The mediators hope to end a war that has killed over 40,000 Palestinians, according to local health authorities, displaced the vast majority of the territory's 2.3 million residents and caused a humanitarian catastrophe. Experts have warned of famine and the outbreak of diseases like polio. Hamas-led militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, in the October 7 attack and abducted around

250. Of those, some 110 are still believed to be inside Gaza, with Israeli authorities saying around a third are deceased. More than 100 hostages were released in November during a weeklong cease-fire. Quadruplets among six children killed in Gaza The latest Israeli bombardment included a strike early Sunday on a home in the central town of Deir al-Balah that killed a woman and her six children,

according to Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital. An Associated Press reporter at the hospital counted the bodies. Mohammed Awad Khatab, the children's grandfather, said his daughter, a schoolteacher, was with her husband and their six children when their house was struck. He said the children ranged in age from 18 months to 15 years, and included quadruplets. He said the father was hospitalized after the strike. "The six children have become body parts. They were placed in a single bag," he told reporters outside the hospital. "What did they do? Did they kill any of the Jews? ... Will this provide security to Israel?" A strike in the northern town of Jabalya hit two apartments in a residential building, killing two men, a woman and her daughter, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. Another two strikes in central Gaza killed nine people, according to Al-Awda Hospital. Late Saturday, a strike near the southern city of

Khan Younis killed four people from the same family, including two women, according to Nasser Hospital. Israel says it only targets militants and blames civilian deaths on Hamas because the militant group conceals fighters, weapons, tunnels and rockets in residential areas. But the monthlong Israeli bombardment has wiped out entire extended families and orphaned thousands of children. Israel says 'cautious optimism' about cease-fire talks. The mediators have spent months trying to halt the fighting, efforts that gained new urgency after the targeted killing of two top militants last month, both attributed to Israel, brought vows of revenge from Iran and the Lebanese Hezbollah, raising fears of an all-out war across the Middle East. An American official said Friday that mediators were beginning preparations for implementing the latest cease-fire proposal, and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin

Netanyahu's office expressed "cautious optimism" a deal could be reached. An Israeli delegation is set to travel to Cairo on Sunday for further talks, and Blinken is expected to meet with Netanyahu on Monday. Hamas has cast doubt on whether an agreement is near, saying the latest proposal diverged significantly from a previous iteration they had accepted in principle. Hamas has rejected Israel's demands for a lasting military presence along the Gaza-Egypt border and a line bisecting Gaza where Israeli forces would search Palestinians returning to their homes. Israel says both are needed to prevent militants from rearming and returning to the north. Israel showed flexibility on retreating from the border corridor, and a meeting between Egyptian and Israeli military officials was scheduled for next week to agree on a withdrawal mechanism, according to two Egyptian officials, who spoke on condi-

tion of anonymity because they were not authorised to discuss the private negotiations. Blast wounds peacekeepers in Lebanon. In Lebanon, meanwhile, three UN peacekeepers were lightly wounded when an explosion struck their vehicle near the southern village of Yarin. The peacekeeping mission, known as UNIFIL, said the incident is under investigation and did not provide further details. Hezbollah began launching near-daily drone and rocket attacks along the border after the outbreak of the war in Gaza, drawing Israeli retaliation in a cycle of violence that has steadily escalated. UNIFIL says around a dozen peacekeepers have been wounded since the strikes and counter-strikes began. In the Israeli-occupied West Bank, which has also seen a surge of violence since the start of the war in Gaza, gunmen marched in a funeral procession for two Hamas commanders killed in an Israeli airstrike in Jenin the day before.

## UK orders 'rapid analytical sprint' to clamp down on extremism

London (PTI): The UK government has ordered a so-called "rapid analytical sprint" to map and monitor extremism trends as part of a review to clamp down on radicalisation, hateful beliefs and violence against women and girls. Home Secretary Yvette Cooper told 'The Sunday Telegraph' that she has ordered the review into the government's counter-extremism strategy amid fears that extremist ideologies online and on the streets of the country have been on the rise. It comes in the wake of a series of violent clashes involving far-right extremists across Britain following the fatal stabbing of three young girls in Southport, north-west England. "Action against extremism has been badly hollowed out in recent years, just when it should have been needed most," Cooper is quoted by the newspaper as saying. "That's why I have directed the Home Office to conduct a rapid analytical sprint on extremism, to map and monitor extremist trends, to understand the evidence about what works to disrupt and divert people away from extremist views, and to identify any gaps in existing policy which need to be addressed to crack down on those pushing harmful and hateful beliefs and violence. That work will underpin a new strategic approach to countering extremism from government, working closely with communities to build consensus and impetus for our plans," she said. The review is said to be looking at the rise of both Islamist and far-right extremism in the UK, as well as wider ideological trends, including extreme misogyny or beliefs that fit into broader categories like fixation on violence. Officials will examine emerging ideologies which are gaining momentum and will assess any gaps in the current system which leave the country "exposed" to threats that promote violence or undermine democracy. "For too long, governments have failed to address the rise in extremism, both online and on our streets, and we've seen the number of young people radicalised online grow.

## Shinawatra becomes Thailand's prime minister after royal signoff

AP ■ BANGKOK



Paetongtarn Shinawatra, daughter of the divisive former leader Thaksin Shinawatra, became Thailand's prime minister after receiving a royal letter of endorsement Sunday, two days after she was chosen by Parliament following a court order that removed her predecessor. She replaces another leader from the same Pheu Thai Party, at the head of a coalition that includes military parties associated with the coup that deposed the party's last government. Paetongtarn is the third Shinawatra to hold the job, after her billionaire father and her aunt Yingluck Shinawatra. Both were removed from office and forced into exile in coups, although Thaksin returned to Thailand last year as Pheu Thai formed a government. She received the letter of appointment in a ceremony at the party's headquarters in Bangkok, attended by senior members of parties in the governing coalition and her father, who has no formal role but is

widely seen de facto leader of Pheu Thai. The father and daughter arrived in the same car, holding hands as they walked in together with beaming smiles. Paetongtarn thanked the king, the Thai people and lawmakers, saying she will perform her duties "with an open mind," and will "make every square inch of Thailand a space that allows Thai people to dare to dream, dare to create and dare to dictate their own future. Paetongtarn became Prime Minister days after the Constitutional Court removed Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin, after less than a year in office. The court found him guilty of a serious ethical

breach for appointing a Cabinet minister who had been jailed for contempt of court after an alleged attempt to bribe a judge. Paetongtarn is also Thailand's second female prime minister after her aunt, and the country's youngest leader at 37. Pheu Thai is the latest in a string of populist parties affiliated with Thaksin, who was ousted in a 2006 military coup, which triggered nearly two decades of deep political divisions that pitted a mostly poor, rural majority in the north that supported Thaksin against royalists, the military and their urban backers. Parties linked to Thaksin won the most seats in every national election from 2001 until 2023, when it lost to the more progressive Move Forward Party. Pheu Thai was able to form a government after Move Forward was blocked by the military-appointed Senate, partnering with former rivals in what was widely interpreted as a political bargain with the conservative establishment to stop Move Forward from forming a government.

## Donald Trump claims he's better looking than Kamala Harris

PTI ■ WASHINGTON



Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump has launched fresh personal attacks against his Democratic rival Kamala Harris, disparaging her physical appearance and insisting that he was "much better looking than her." The former president made the comments at a rally in Pennsylvania on Saturday while referencing a recent Time Magazine cover that features Vice President Harris. "I'm much better looking than her," Trump, 78, declared after criticising Time Magazine's illustrator for being "too generous" with a portrait of Harris, 59. This isn't the first time he's brought up the topic, which also came up at previous rallies. "Time Magazine doesn't have a picture of her. They have this unbelievable artist drawing her," he said. "They took a lot of pictures that didn't work out so they hired a sketch artist." Trump spoke for nearly two hours quickly hitting on Vice President Harris' economic

policy rollout before going off script and calling himself "better looking," The Hill reported. The attack line from Trump was one of many against Harris and her Democratic allies at Saturday's rally. Trump last week said he was "entitled" to personally attack Harris because he doesn't "have a lot of respect for her," as he dismissed calls from allies to refocus his campaign on policy issues in his bid to reclaim the White House on November 5. Trump during Saturday's

rally in Pennsylvania also attacked President Joe Biden for dropping out of the presidential race. Pennsylvania is set to play a deciding role in November's election with its 19 Electoral College votes up for grabs. Trump narrowly flipped the state in 2016, but then narrowly lost it to Biden in 2020. "What happened to Biden? I was running against Biden and now I'm running against someone else," Trump said. "I said, who am I running against, Harris? I said, 'Who the hell is Harris?'" Trump also took several jabs at Harris' economic plan that she debated on Friday. "Yesterday, Kamala laid out her so-called economic plan. She says she's going to lower the cost of food and housing starting on day one. But day one for Kamala was three and a half years ago," Trump said. Trump, however, insisted he could bring prices down, without providing additional specifics other than the general push for expanding US oil production. "After causing catastrophic

inflation, Comrade Kamala announced that she wants to institute socialist price controls," Trump said. Ahead of the Democratic National Convention beginning on Monday, Trump questioned why Harris is going, claiming that she never earned any votes as a presidential candidate. Trump continued to claim Harris "stole" President Biden's presidential bid, saying Biden is "angry" and that he "hates" Harris, ABC News reported. "Joe Biden hates her. This was an overthrow of a president. This was an overthrow," Trump said. Trump said he looked forward to debating Harris on September 10, claiming, "She'll be easier." Trump has struggled to deliver a consistent message targeting Harris, even as Republicans argue they have a strong case against her on the economy and immigration. While the former president has at times focused on the issues, has mocked Harris' laugh and her intelligence.

## S'pore grants citizenship to 177 people

Singapore (PTI): Singapore Sunday welcomed 177 new citizens, including Sudhan Vincent from Tamil Nadu, encouraging them to contribute to the city state's common causes and help the nation to function as a "viable society". "We all have different talents and different interests. Find something meaningful to you, purposeful to you and use it for the greater good. Then you contribute to our community," Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan was quoted as saying by The Straits Times newspaper. Sudhan was among 177 new Singapore citizens who received their citizenship certificates at the annual National Citizenship Ceremony held by the People's Association at the Singapore Institute of Management Performing Arts Theatre, a state-supported institution. According to the latest statistics, around 23,500 new citizenships were granted in 2023.

## Experts say famine looming in 4 Yemeni districts as hunger surges among children

AP ■ CAIRO



Famine is looming in four Yemeni districts after instances of hunger have rapidly surged among children in areas controlled by the internationally recognized government, a report by international experts said. All 117 districts in government-controlled areas are expected to suffer from "serious" levels of acute malnutrition. Among them, the four districts — Mawza and Mocha in Taiz province, and Hays and Khawkah in Hodeida province — are projected to slip into famine between July and October this year, according to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, or IPC. The report reflects the worsening food insecurity in the poorest Arab nation that plunged into civil war in 2014, when Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels took control of the capital, Sanaa, and much of the country's north, forcing the government to flee to the south,

then to Saudi Arabia. A Saudi-led coalition entered the war in March 2015, backed at the time by the U.S., in an effort to restore the internationally recognized government to power. The war has killed more than 150,000 people including civilians and combatants, and in recent years deteriorated largely into a stalemate and caused one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

About half of the country's population — or 18.2 million people — are in need of humanitarian aid this year, according to the United Nations. The number of acutely malnourished children has increased by 34% compared to last year, the report said. They include more than 18,500 children under 5 who are projected to be severely malnourished by the end of this year, it said.

Additionally, the report found about 223,000 pregnant and lactating women are expected to be malnourished in 2024. "The report confirms an alarming trend of acute malnutrition for children in southern Yemen," said the UNICEF representative to Yemen, Peter Hawkins. "To protect the most vulnerable women, girls and boys, an investment in and scale-up of prevention and treatment efforts are more critical than ever." The report attributed the sharp rise of malnutrition to the combined effects of cholera and measles outbreaks, high food insecurity, limited access to safe drinking water, economic decline and inadequate humanitarian aid — all are direct and indirect results of the decade-old war. The IPC is a global partnership of 15 U.N. agencies and humanitarian organizations working in Yemen and funded by the European Union, the U.S. and the U.K.

## Harris and Walz to campaign by bus in Pennsylvania

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris and running mate Tim Walz will campaign by bus in southwestern Pennsylvania on Sunday, hoping to ride the wave of enthusiasm her candidacy has brought to the presidential race to their party's nominating convention in Chicago this week. Vice President Harris and Walz, the governor of Minnesota, will be joined by their spouses, Doug Emhoff and Gwen Walz, as they get on and off the bus in the Pittsburgh area to glad-hand with voters. Harris and Emhoff were scheduled to deliver remarks at an event in the borough of Rochester, in Beaver County, which Donald Trump, the Republican presidential nominee, won in 2020, though he lost the general election to Democrat Joe Biden. Southwestern Pennsylvania is a critical part of a key battleground state that has long commanded the attention of presi-

dential candidates. The state voted for the Republican presidential candidate in 2016 and for the Democratic candidate in 2020. Both Harris and Trump are vying to see who can put Pennsylvania in their column on Nov. 5. Most polls, including the New York Times/Siena College poll and Fox News, find Harris and Trump locked in a tight race statewide. Trump held a rally Saturday in Wilkes-Barre in the northeastern part of the state, following his earlier rallies in July in Harrisburg and Butler, where he survived an assassination attempt. The bus tour will be Harris' eighth trip to Pennsylvania this year, and her second this month. The vice president's Aug. 6 announcement that Walz would be her running mate came hours before their first joint appearance as a ticket later that day in Philadelphia. "This is a state that traditionally has been super important but southwestern Pennsylvania has been really kind of the battleground part of the battleground state," said

Kristin Kanthak, associate professor of political science at the University of Pittsburgh. Allegheny County, which includes Pittsburgh, is a diverse county with urban, suburban and rural areas, and a lot of people who haven't decided how they will vote, she said. "It makes sense to come here and ask for votes because there are votes up for grabs here," Kanthak said of Harris. "It's not just about turning out your base. It's about having an opportunity to speak to truly undecided voters." In the 2020 race, Biden won Allegheny County with 60% of the vote, while Trump won neighboring Beaver County, which includes Rochester, with about 58% of the vote. After Trump's surprise win in the state in 2016, Biden flipped Pennsylvania in 2020 — and, in so doing, won the White House — in part by running up his vote totals in heavily Democratic Pittsburgh, the state's second-largest city and the county seat of Allegheny County.

## Earth ends 13-month streak of record heat

AP ■ WASHINGTON

From June 2023 until June 2024, air and ocean surface water temperatures averaged a quarter of a degree Celsius higher than records set only a few years previously. Air temperatures in July 2024 were slightly cooler than the previous July (0.04°C, the narrowest of margins) according to the EU's Copernicus Climate Change Service. July 2023 was in turn 0.28°C warmer than the previous record-hot July in 2019, so the remarkable jump in temperature during the past year has yet to ease off completely. The warmest global air temperature recorded was in December 2023, at 1.78°C

above the pre-industrial average temperature for December — and 0.31°C warmer than the previous record. Global warming has consistently toppled records for warm global average temperatures in recent decades, but breaking them by as much as a quarter of a degree for several months is not common. The end of this streak does not diminish the mounting threat of climate change. So what caused these record temperatures? Several factors came together, but the biggest and most important is climate change, largely caused by burning fossil fuels. Temperatures typical of Earth 150 years ago are used for

comparison to measure modern global warming. The reference period, 1850-1900, was before most greenhouse gases associated with global industrialisation — which increase the heat present in Earth's ocean and atmosphere — had been emitted. July 2024 was 1.48°C warmer than a typical pre-industrial July, of which about 1.3°C is attributable to the general trend of global warming over the intervening decades. This trend will continue to raise temperatures until humanity stabilises the climate by keeping fossil fuels in the ground where they belong. But global warming doesn't happen in a smooth progression. Like UK house prices,

the general trend is up, but there are ups and downs along the way. Behind much of the ups and downs is the El Niño phenomenon. An El Niño event is a reorganisation of the water across the vast reaches of the Pacific Ocean. El Niño is so important to the workings of worldwide weather as it increases the temperature of the air on average across all of Earth's surface, not only over the Pacific. Between El Niño events, conditions may be neutral or in an opposite state called La Niña that tends to cool global temperatures. The oscillation between these extremes is irregular, and El Niño conditions tend to recur after three to seven years.

## Indian-origin couple, daughter killed in US car crash; teenage son sole survivor

PTI ■ HOUSTON

In a tragic incident, an Indian-origin couple and their teenage daughter were killed in a road accident while driving here to college in the US state of Texas, leaving behind their 14-year-old son as the lone survivor. Arvind Mani (45), his wife Pradeepa Arvind (40) and their 17-year-old daughter Andril Arvind, who all were from Leander, were killed in the car crash on Wednesday near Lampasas County in Texas, the Austin American Statesman reported. Their only surviving immediate family member, son Adiryan (14), was not in the vehicle with them. According to the Texas Department of Public Safety, a 2004 Cadillac CTS driven by 31-year-old Jacinto Gudino Duran, of Copperas Cove, was heading southbound on US Route 281

at the same time a 2024 Kia Telluride, operated by Mani, was heading northbound. Evidence at the scene showed the right rear tyre of the Cadillac had a blowout, crash investigators were quoted as saying by FOX10TV.com. Witnesses claimed the vehicle passed them at a high speed before the collision. The Texas Department of Public Safety said the blowout caused the driver of the Cadillac to lose control and cross over to the northbound lane into the Kia's path. The Kia crashed into the passenger side of Cadillac, causing extensive damage to both vehicles, officials said. "It is one of the worst crashes I have seen in 26 years because of the magnitude of the damage and amount of people lost," said Texas Department of Public Safety Trooper Bryan Washko.

Twenty-three-year-old Yosulu Gasman Martinez-Lopez, of Copperas Cove, was identified as a passenger in the Cadillac. There were two passengers in the Kia at the time, named Pradeepa and Andril. All five people in both vehicles were pronounced dead at the scene. Mani and his wife were driving their daughter to college in North Texas and had left their son behind because he started school that day, Washko said. Andril graduated from Rouse High School and was going to attend the University of Dallas, where she planned to study computer science, according to the GoFundMe set up for her brother. "The Rouse High School family is deeply saddened to share the loss of one of our very own Raiders from the Class of 2024, Andril Arvind," said a letter sent to parents from the school's principal.



# Hasina destroyed every institution: Yunus

PTI ■ DHAKA

Bangladesh's interim government chief Muhammad Yunus on Sunday accused deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina of destroying every institution of the country in her efforts to stay in power as he promised to hold a free, fair and participatory election as soon as his government completes the "mandate" of carrying out "vital reforms."

Hasina, 76, resigned and fled to India on August 5 following a massive protest by students against a controversial quota system in government jobs. After Hasina's ouster, 84-year-old Yunus took oath as the Chief Adviser of the interim government on August 8.

"In their efforts to stay in power, Sheikh Hasina's dictatorship destroyed every institution of the country. The judiciary was broken. Democratic rights were suppressed through a brutal decade-and-a-half long crackdown," United News of Bangladesh quoted Yunus as saying through his Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam.

His comments came as he briefed diplomats stationed in Dhaka for the first time since the interim government's

inception. Yunus said he took over a country which was in many ways a complete mess. He emphasises on required reforms in the Election Commission, judiciary, civil administration, security forces and media.

The chief adviser said elections were rigged blatantly and generations of young people grew up without exercising their voting rights.

"Banks were robbed with full political patronisation. And the state coffer was plundered by abusing power," Yunus said, adding that they will also make sincere efforts to promote national reconciliation.

Yunus said they will undertake robust and far-reaching economic reforms to restore macroeconomic stability and sustained growth, with priority attached to good governance and combating corruption and mismanagement.

He said the top priority of the interim government would be to bring the law and order situation under control. "We will be close to normalcy within a short period, with the unwavering support of our people and patriotic armed forces," Yunus said.

The police force has also resumed its operations. The armed forces will continue to serve in aid of civil power as long as the situation warrants. "Our government remains pledge-bound to ensure the safety and security of all religious and ethnic groups," he said.

Bangladesh saw a spike in violence against members of Hindu communities following the fall of the Hasina-led government. Yunus said the interim government will hold a "free, fair participatory" election as soon as it completes the "mandate" to carry out "vital reforms."

He said they have also made it a priority to ensure justice and accountability for all the killings and violence committed during the recent mass uprising. He said they will uphold and promote all their international legal obligations, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law. "Our government will adhere to all international, regional and bilateral instruments it is a party to. Bangladesh shall continue to remain an active proponent of multilateralism, with the UN at the core," Yunus said.

# Sheikh Hasina sued in 'mass murder' case

Dhaka (PTI): An application was filed with a court in Bangladesh on Sunday to register a case against deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina and 33 others, accusing them of carrying out a mass murder by indiscriminately firing on a rally organised in 2013 by Hefazat-e-Islam here.

Babul Sardar Chakhari, chairman of the Bangladesh People's Party (BPP), applied to the court of Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Zaki-Al-Farabi, the Dhaka Tribune newspaper reported.

The application accused them of the "mass murder" during the rally at Shapla Chattar in Motijheel on May 5, 2013. The court recorded the plaintiff's statement and said it would pass an order on the issue later. With this, 76-year-old Hasina, who resigned from the premiership and fled to India on August 5 following a mass uprising, now faces 11 cases, including eight for murder, one for abduction, and two for committing crimes against humanity and genocide, in Bangladesh. Over 230 people were killed in Bangladesh in the incidents of violence that erupted across the country following the fall of the Hasina government, taking the death toll to more than 600.

# Ukrainian troops stike two key bridges in Russia

AP ■ KYIV

Ukraine has destroyed a key bridge in Russia's Kursk region and struck a second one nearby, less than two weeks into its stunning cross-border incursion, disrupting Russian supply routes and possibly signaling that its troops are planning to dig in.

Russia's pro-Kremlin military bloggers have acknowledged that the destruction of the first bridge, which spanned the Seim River near the town of Glushkovo, will impede deliveries of supplies to Russian forces repelling Ukraine's incursion, although Moscow could still use pontoons and smaller bridges in the area. Ukraine's air force chief, Lt. Mykola Oleshchuk, on Friday released a video of a Ukrainian airstrike that split the bridge in two.

Less than two days later, Ukrainian troops hit a second bridge in Russia, according to Oleshchuk and the Russian regional governor, Alexei Smirnov.

As of Sunday morning, there were no official reports on where exactly the second bridge attack took place. Russian Telegram channels claimed that a second bridge over the Seim, in the village of Zvanoe, had been struck.

According to Russia's Mash news site, the attacks left the area with just one intact bridge. The Associated Press could not immediately verify these claims — but if confirmed, the Ukrainian strikes would further complicate Moscow's attempts to replenish its forces in Kursk and evacuate civilians.

Glushkovo lies some 12 kilometers (7.5 miles) north of the Ukrainian border, and approximately 16 kilometers (10 miles) northwest of the main battle zone in Kursk. Zvanoe is located a further 8 kilometers (5 miles) northeast.

Ukraine may try to hold ground seized in Russia's Kursk Kyiv has been tight-lipped about the planned scope and goals of its lightning push into Russia, the largest attack on the



Ukrainian servicemen ride atop on a tank after returning from Russia near the Russian-Ukrainian border in Sumy region, Ukraine, on Saturday, August 17, 2024

country since World War II, sapped by a failed counteroffensive last summer and months of grinding Russian gains in the eastern Donbas region, and proven its ability to seize initiative.

It has resembled Ukraine's lightning operation from September 2022, led by Syrskiy, in which its forces reclaimed control of the northeastern Kharkiv region after taking advantage of Russian manpower shortages and a lack of field fortifications. Zelenskyy seeks permission to strike deeper into Russia.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy late on Saturday urged Kyiv's allies to lift the remaining restrictions on using Western weapons to strike targets deeper in Russia, including in Kursk, saying that his troops could deprive Moscow "of any ability to advance and cause destruction" if granted sufficient long-range capabilities.

"It is crucial that our partners remove barriers that hinder us from weakening Russian positions in the way this war demands. ... The bravery of our soldiers and the resilience of our

combat brigades compensate for the lack of essential decisions from our partners," Zelenskyy said in a post on the social platform X.

Russia's Foreign Ministry and pro-Kremlin bloggers have alleged that U.S.-made HIMARS launchers have been used to destroy bridges on the Seim. These claims could not be independently verified.

Ukraine's leaders have repeatedly sought authorization for long-range strikes on Russian air bases and other infrastructure used to pummel Ukraine's energy facilities and other civilian targets, including with retrofitted Soviet-era "glide bombs" that have laid waste to the country's industrial east in recent months.

Moscow also appears to have dialed up attacks on Kyiv, targeting it with ballistic missiles for a third time this month early on Sunday, according to the head of the municipal military administration. Serhii Popko said in a Telegram post that the "almost identical" August strikes on the capital "most likely used" KN-23 missiles supplied by North Korea.

# Educational institutes in B'desh reopen

PTI ■ DHAKA

Bangladesh on Sunday reopened all educational institutions, including universities, secondary schools and colleges, across the country after more than a month of closure due to violence centring the student-led protests that led to the ouster of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The educational institutions in Bangladesh were closed indefinitely on July 17 to ensure the safety of students in the wake of clashes that erupted during the recent movement demanding reform of the job quota system.

The Ministry of Education on Thursday issued a directive to reopen the institutions under its jurisdiction. All the educational institutions reopened on Sunday, after a month of closure. According to Somy Television, a Bengali news channel based in Dhaka, "All concerned have been asked to take necessary steps to resume academic activities in all the educational institutions from August 18 following the instruction of Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus," a notification signed by deputy secretary Mosammat Rahima Akhtar, said on August 15.

In the morning, school stu-

dents in uniform were seen going to their institutions, many accompanied by guardians, the Daily Star reported.

Many points of Dhaka city are witnessing severe traffic congestion due to the reopening of educational institutions. The working week is from Sunday to Thursday in Bangladesh. Initially, classes were scheduled to resume on August 4 in all government primary schools, except in the 12 city corporations and Narsingdi municipality, but this was also postponed. Meanwhile, the postponed

Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) and equivalent examinations will be resumed from September 11.

According to the revised routine, the exams will be completed on October 23. Classes at public universities have been suspended since July 1 when teachers went on strike in protest of a new pension scheme.

After the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government on August 5, the educational institutions were declared open on August 7, but the academic activities could not be resumed fully due to the low attendance of students.

# Sri Lanka President calls for deepening ties with India

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe has emphasised the importance of strengthening economic cooperation and regional integration with Japan to India, with a special focus on deepening ties with New Delhi, as his country seeks to emerge from bankruptcy.

Wickremesinghe's comments came as he was virtually addressing the Head of State Session of the 3rd Voice of Global South Summit, held under the theme "An Empowered Global South for a Sustainable Future." From the north-central town of Anuradhapura yesterday.

The conference, chaired by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, brought together heads of state from various countries. Reflecting on Indo-Sri Lankan relations, the President emphasised the "vision" statement shared between the two nations, which celebrates their historical cooperation and lays the foundation for future collaboration. He expressed optimism that this vision will lead to stronger integration between Sri Lanka and India across various sectors.

President Wickremesinghe highlighted Sri Lanka's strategic commitment to expanding economic partnerships across Asia, particularly through the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).

The President noted that as the Bay of Bengal region emerges as a hub of economic growth, the significance of BIMSTEC continues to rise.

Sri Lanka, as a member, seeks closer economic integration with India and is exploring economic cooperation agreements extending from Japan to India, his office said in a statement.

President Wickremesinghe also expressed his gratitude to Prime Minister Modi and the people of India for their support during Sri Lanka's recent economic crisis. The President acknowledged that India's assistance played a vital role in helping Sri Lanka

navigate the challenges of the past two years and emerge from bankruptcy.

"Sri Lanka thanks India for hosting the third virtual seminar on Voices of the Global South. This series enables us to engage with each other to understand our different viewpoints while also helping us arrive at a common stance on many issues confronting the South," he said.

"We have reached a point where the West can no longer dominate global leadership and, furthermore, has become part of the problem. Ukraine and Gaza are prime examples, which I will not address as they have already been discussed by previous speakers. In this context, we must appreciate India's efforts to strengthen the Global South".

Deliberating on the economic crisis, Wickremesinghe said Sri Lanka had reached agreements with the Official Creditor Countries, the Export-Import Bank of China, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank to emerge from bankruptcy.

"At this stage, I must acknowledge the generosity of Prime Minister Modi and India, whose contributions made it possible for us to survive the two years of bankruptcy, which imposed a heavy burden on our people. The Vision Statement agreed upon by both our countries outlines the path for closer relations, emphasizing our 2,000-year history of cooperation. This will ultimately lead to deeper integration between our nations across many sectors," Sri Lanka will be finalising the Comprehensive Economic and Technological Agreement with India, he said.

"We will also inaugurate connectivity in power, transport, and land, and we will focus on the development of Trincomalee Harbour, among other projects we have agreed upon. These efforts will help us upgrade our knowledge and technology, enabling us to move towards a digital economy. I must express my gratitude to India for the assistance it has provided."

# Ex-spy chief was part of ploy to spread unrest: Govt

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

The Pakistan government has accused jailed former premier Imran Khan of masterminding a political conspiracy, along with a former ISI chief and others, to sow anarchy and disharmony in the country, according to media reports.

Information Minister Attaullah Tarar claimed that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf founder was spreading unrest across the country and former ISI chief Lt-Gen (retd) Faiz Hameed was part of the conspiracy, the Express Tribune newspaper reported.

Hameed, who served as director general of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) from 2019 to

2021 when Khan was the prime minister, was arrested following action in the complaint of a private property developer over alleged misuse of official authority.

Later, several others, including three retired military officers, were also arrested in connection with the court martial of Hameed.

Speaking at a press conference on Saturday, Tarar hinted that the ambit of the probe against Lt Gen (retd.) Hameed and his other "co-conspirators" would be widened in days to come, Dawn newspaper reported.

Tarar said that in the wake of Hameed's arrest, the army conducted transparent investigations as they have their mech-

anism of internal accountability. Referring to the arrests, the information minister claimed that Khan had conspired with these people to spread anarchy in the country.

"This was a political alliance, led by the PTI founder, which was linked with Gen Faiz and other accomplices," he said, adding that the ambit of the investigation would widen.

"No matter if someone is Saqib or Nisar, things will proceed transparently," he said, referring to former Chief Justice Saqib Nisar, who the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz party accuses of propping up the PTI regime and targeting their political opponents.

Tarar alleged that evidence was

surfacing, which showed that Khan was "in contact" with these conspirators — at the time of the vote of no-confidence, and even after his incarceration — and his messaging continued back and forth with this "unholy political alliance".

He stressed that other institutions should also practice the same self-accountability that the army had demonstrated.

The information minister stressed that other institutions should also practice the same self-accountability that the army had demonstrated.

Meanwhile, just days after distancing himself from the former spymaster, facing court-martial proceedings, Khan seemed to endorse claims that he and the

retired general were close. Khan, hinting that the former spymaster and he were close, said Hameed's transfer to the Peshawar corps was part of the conspiracy hatched against the PTI government, Dawn News reported. Khan claimed that this was done by former army chief Qamar Javed Bajwa at the behest of Nawaz Sharif.

Lt Gen (retd.) Hameed, considered extremely powerful when he headed the spy agency, was appointed to the coveted post when then 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 Khan and it is believed that it was the beginning of the souring of his ties with the powerful military.

Hameed took premature retirement in November 2022, four months before his retirement date after the current army chief took over. He was considered close to then Army chief Gen Qamar Bajwa.

The post of ISI chief is considered one of the most important in the Pakistan Army, which has ruled the country for more than half of its 76-plus years of existence and has hitherto wielded considerable power in matters of security and foreign policy.

# Int'l poll observers arrive in Lanka to monitor president election

Colombo (PTI): A group of election observers from the European Union and the Commonwealth have arrived in Sri Lanka to monitor the September 21 presidential election, Election Commission officials said on Sunday. They are here at the invitation of Sri Lanka's Election Commission.

The EU has previously done election monitoring in Sri Lanka six times with the last being at the presidential election of 2019.

"The deployment of the Election Observation Mission in Sri Lanka this year confirms our long-standing commitment to supporting credible, transparent, inclusive and peaceful elections in the country," the head of the observer group said in a statement on Saturday.

"The forthcoming presidential election will give a new impetus to democracy following the 2022 political and economic crisis. This election is important for Sri Lanka to continue making progress on its path of reforms and lasting recovery, in full respect of democratic values," the head of the observer group was quoted as saying.

# Visit by Vietnam's new leader to China reflects key relationship

AP ■ BEIJING

Vietnam's new leader To Lam is making China the destination for his first overseas visit, signalling the continuing importance the Southeast Asian country places on its giant neighbour even as it strengthens ties with the United States and others. Lam stepped off a Vietnam Airlines plane on an overcast Sunday morning in Guangzhou, a major manufacturing and export hub near Hong Kong, China's state media reported.

He later flew to Beijing, where he will meet Chinese leader Xi Jinping. His three-day visit comes about two weeks after Lam was confirmed as general secretary of Vietnam's Communist Party, the country's top political position. He succeeded Nguyen Phu Trong, who died last month after 13 years as leader.

Lam also has held the largely ceremonial title of the nation's president since May. The new leader is expected to continue his predecessor's strategy of balancing ties with China, the United States, Russia and others, Yu Xiangdong, the director of

the Institute for Vietnam Studies at China's Zhengzhou University, wrote Saturday in the state-run Global Times newspaper.

"The fact that Lam chose China as his first overseas visit destination since taking office is a sign that Vietnam attaches great importance to its relations with China," Yu said in an opinion piece. "But at the same time, judging from experience, the country is not by any means going to give the US the cold shoulder."

Vietnam upgraded its ties with the United States and Japan last year to a comprehensive strategic partnership, the country's highest designation for a diplomatic relationship. Relations with China and India also have been given the same designation. The United States and its ally Japan have been developing closer ties with Vietnam's communist government — America's former foe in the Vietnam War — as they seek partners in a growing economic and strategic rivalry with China.

When Xi visited Vietnam in December, the two countries announced they would build "a shared future that carries

strategic significance". The agreement, which Chinese state media has described as an elevation of ties, was seen as a concession by Vietnam, which had resisted using that wording in the past.

Russian President Vladimir Putin met Lam in Vietnam in June after visiting North Korea on a rare overseas trip for the Russian leader, who has been ostracised by many countries because of the 2022 invasion and still-ongoing war in Ukraine.

Lam's agenda in Guangzhou included visiting sites in the southern China city where Vietnam's former communist leader Ho Chi Minh spent time, Chinese state broadcaster CCTV said. Ho, the founder and first president of communist Vietnam, was in southern China in the 1920s and again in the 1930s as part of the Soviet Union's efforts to expand communism globally. Though they have long ties as one-party communist states, Vietnam and China have sparred repeatedly over territory that both claim in the South China Sea. China also briefly invaded parts of northern Vietnam in 1979.

# Fire erupts on former Soviet aircraft carrier



Beijing (PTI): A fire broke out on a retired aircraft carrier during the dismantling and refitting of the vessel along the Yangtze River in east China's Jiangsu Province. The incident took place on Friday afternoon along the river in an industrial zone south of the Nantong city. No casualties have been reported and flames have been largely extinguished on Saturday.

An investigation into the cause of the fire is underway, local authorities were quoted as saying by the state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

The aircraft carrier, named Minsk, was in 2016 moved to Nantong, where it is expected to form part of a planned aircraft carrier theme park. 'Minsk' had previously been moored in the city of Shenzhen

in south China's Guangdong Province for several years. After its retirement in 1995, the aircraft carrier was sold to a company in the Republic of Korea before being resold to a Chinese company, which transformed it into part of a military theme park in Shenzhen.

Earlier the Nantong industrial zone said it would start renovations on the vessel in March with the goal of opening a national defence centre based on the carrier by October 1. China currently has two aircraft carriers, Liaoning, which was a refit of the Soviet-era ship, and Shandong, which is an indigenous built 2nd aircraft carrier commissioned in 2019. China's third aircraft carrier Fujian is currently undergoing trials.



# Stock markets to take cues from global trends, FII trading activity: Analysts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

With the earnings season drawing to a close, stock markets will take cues from global trends and foreign investors' trading activity this week, analysts said. The US FOMC (Federal Open Market Committee) minutes will be the major highlight this week, experts said. "This week, there are fewer cues on the macro and micro fronts, as the Q1 earnings season has concluded. However, important global economic data, such as Japan's inflation numbers and the minutes from the US FOMC meeting, will be closely watched. The uncertain geopolitical situation remains the primary near-term risk for the market," said Santosh Meena, Head of Research, Swastika Investmart Ltd. Traders will also closely monitor institutional flows



and crude oil price movement, he added. Easing fears of a recession in the US triggered a global market rally on Friday. "Positive US economic data like cooling inflation and robust retail sales numbers

shrugged off recession fears while talks of a rate cut by the US Fed as early as next month fuelled a mega rally across global equities, including India," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

The 30-share BSE benchmark jumped 1,330.96 points or 1.68 per cent to settle at 80,436.84 on Friday, marking its best single-day gain in more than two months. The NSE Nifty surged 397.40 points or 1.65 per cent to close at a two-week high of 24,541.15. "The outlook for the market will be guided by the FOMC meeting minutes, US existing home sales and new home sales data," Palka Arora Chopra, Director, Master Capital Services Ltd, said. Last week, the BSE benchmark jumped 730.93 points or 0.91 per cent, the Nifty climbed 173.65 points or 0.71 per cent. Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said, all eyes this week will be on US Fed meeting minutes. "Overall we expect the market to consolidate in a broader range and take cues from global factors," Khemka added.

# India's holding of American securities hits high of USD 241.9 bn in June

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's holding of US Government securities touched a high of USD 241.9 billion in June as the country continued to increase its exposure for the third straight month. Japan was the top holder with securities worth over USD 1.11 trillion followed by China at the second spot with a holding valued at USD 780.2 billion in June, according to the latest data released by the US Treasury Department. At the third place was the United Kingdom with an exposure of USD 741.5 billion ahead of Luxembourg at the fourth position with a holding to the tune of USD 384.2 billion. Among the countries and jurisdictions, India was at the 12th place owning American government securities worth USD 241.9 billion in June, higher than USD 237.8 billion value recorded in May. As per the data, India's holding is the highest in the last one year and it was at USD 237.8 billion in May



2024. In April this year, it touched USD 233.5 billion declining from USD 240.6 billion in March. In June last year, the exposure was at USD 235.4 billion. Other countries/jurisdictions among the top 10 holders were Canada at the fifth spot with a holding of USD 374.8 billion, followed by Cayman Islands (USD 319.4 billion), Belgium (USD 318 billion), Ireland (USD 308 billion), France (USD 307.2 billion) and Switzerland (USD 287.1 billion). At the 11th position was Taiwan with an exposure of USD 265.9 billion.

The global economy is witnessing uncertain times amid high inflation, geopolitical tensions and other challenges. There is an uneven growth pattern and in the June quarter, the real GDP in the United States expanded at an annual rate of 2.8 per cent, higher than 1.4 per cent seen in the first three months of 2024. In its World Economic Outlook Update issued in July, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said the global economy is in a sticky spot and projected a growth of 3.2 per cent for this year.

# Next round of India-Aus FTA talks from today



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Chief negotiators of India and Australia will begin the next round of talks for the comprehensive free trade agreement from tomorrow in Sydney, where both sides are likely to close negotiations on several chapters of the pact, an official said. Both countries have already implemented an interim pact and are in discussions to expand its scope under the CECA (Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement). The interim pact - Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) - came into force in December 2022. The tenth round of negotiations is scheduled from August 19-22 in Sydney. "Out of the total 19 areas of the agreement, we have completed our discussions on four chapters, and we are in very advanced stages in a few others. We hope that in this round, we should be able to close altogether, maybe more than 10 chapters," the commerce ministry official said. In this round, the official said that both countries are likely to get into market access discussions in goods and services. The ECTA provides duty-free access to Indian exporters of over 6,000 broad sectors, including textiles, leather, furniture, jewellery and machinery in the Australian market. Under the pact, Australia has offered zero-duty access to India for about 96.4 per cent of exports. On the other hand, the CECA envisages deeper and comprehensive engagement on the five issues - goods, services, digital trade, government procurement and rules of origin - that were agreed under ECTA. Collaboration in space, mining and sports are among 15 new areas mutually identified by India and Australia for negotiations under the comprehensive free trade agreement. For the first time, these new segments would become part of a trade pact being negotiated by India.

# India will need around 1 lakh company secretaries by 2030: ICSI

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India will need around 1 lakh company secretaries by 2030 amid rising economic growth and increasing focus on good governance, according to the company secretaries' apex body ICSI. Currently, there are more than 73,000 company secretaries and out of the total, around 12,000 are practising company secretaries. Company secretaries play a key role in the corporate governance framework in ensuring compliance of companies with various statutory requirements. Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI) President B Narasimhan said there has been a paradigm shift in the way the country's economy is perceived today and company secretaries have essentially become a significant linchpin in making India one of the most preferred investment destinations of the world.



India will need around 1 lakh company secretaries by 2030, he told PTI during a recent interaction. On an average, the ICSI gives membership to over 2,500 people every year. Going by projections, India is expected to become a USD 7 trillion economy by 2030. "It is eminently possible for the Indian economy to grow in the coming years at a rate above 7 per cent on the strength of the financial sector and other recent and future structural reforms... Under a reasonable set of assumptions with respect to the inflation differentials and

the exchange rate, India can aspire to become a USD 7 trillion economy in the next six to seven years (by 2030)," a finance ministry report said in January this year. Meanwhile, to attract more young talent into the profession, the institute has also started direct registration of graduates and post graduates in the company secretary executive programme. Among other initiatives, ICSI has introduced secretarial standards to bring uniformity in the secretarial practices followed across corporate boards.

# FPIs turn net sellers; pull out ₹21,201 crore from equities in August so far

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign investors continued their relentless selling in the Indian equity markets in August, offloading shares worth Rs 21,201 crore due to the unwinding of the yen carry trade, recession fears in the US and ongoing geopolitical conflicts. This came after an inflow of Rs 32,365 crore in July and Rs 26,565 crore in June, data with the depositories showed. Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) infused funds in these two months on the expectation of sustained economic growth, continued reform measures, better-than-expected earnings season and political stability. Before that, FPIs withdrew Rs 25,586 crore in May on poll jitters and over Rs 8,700 crore in April on concerns over a tweak in India's tax treaty with Mauritius and a sustained rise in US bond yields. According to the data, FPIs



withdrew a net amount of Rs 21,201 crore in equities so far this month (August 1-17). So far this year, FPIs invested Rs 14,364 crore in equities, data with the depositories showed. FPI outflows witnessed in August were mainly driven by a combination of global and domestic factors. "Globally, concerns about the unwinding of the Yen carry trade, potential global recession, slowing economic growth, and ongoing geopolitical conflicts led to market volatility and risk

aversion," Vipul Bhowar, Director of Listed Investments, Waterfield Advisors, said. The outflow was triggered due to the unwinding of the Yen carry trade after the Bank of Japan raised interest rates to 0.25 per cent. Domestically, after being net buyers in June and July, some FPIs might have chosen to book profits following a strong rally in previous quarters. Additionally, mixed quarterly earnings and relatively higher valuations have made Indian

equities less attractive, Bhowar added. Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director, Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Research India, said the post-budget announcement of an increase in capital gains tax on equity investments has largely fuelled this selling spree. In addition, FPIs have been cautious due to the high valuations of Indian stocks, coupled with global economic concerns like rising recession fears in the US amid weak jobs data, uncertainty over the timing of interest rate cuts, and the unwinding of yen carry trade, he added. A significant trend in FPI flows recently, which became pronounced in August, is the sustained selling by them through the exchange while continuing to invest through the 'primary market and others' category. This difference in FPI behaviour is due to the differences in valuations.

# Cognizant says entry-level annual pay for engineers at ₹4-12 lakh; best in industry

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Facing social media backlash over the Rs 2.52 lakh annual salary offer for freshers, IT giant Cognizant on Sunday said it offers Rs 4-12 lakh salary to fresh engineering graduates, and the salary being quoted on social media is for non-engineering undergraduate degree holders. The firm also faced social media ridicule for doling out annual salary hikes of as low as 1 per cent, but what is being quoted is the lower band of the 1-5 per cent annual increments that the firm has dished out based on individual performance. Cognizant annually hires fresh engineers and non-engineering/IT graduates for varied roles. With the two recruitments



running almost parallel, hiring for three-year non-engineering/information technology undergraduate degree holders picked up and was widely shared as Cognizant's salary package for freshers. "Our recent job posting for talent from non-engineering backgrounds, with a 3-year undergraduate degree has been grossly misrepresented. This job posting, with compensation of Rs 2.52 lakhs annually, was only for

candidates with a 3-year undergraduate degree and not for engineering graduates. "Our annual compensation for fresh engineering graduates ranges from Rs 4 lakhs to Rs 12 lakhs annually, depending on the category of hiring, skill set, and advanced industry accredited certifications," said Surya Gummadi, EVP and President, Cognizant Americas. Cognizant hires non-engineering undergraduate degree holders for administrative and other roles and invests substantial time and money in upgrading their skills and IT training, after which they get absorbed in various roles. "The compensation we offer for engineering graduates is highly competitive within the IT services peer group," he

said. Cognizant's salary package for engineering graduates matches the best in the industry, and at some levels, it is even higher than peers. "We have been recruiting and upskilling freshers from engineering institutions as well as colleges offering degrees in science, arts, and commerce. Today, as AI increasingly powers modern businesses, we are creating new pathways for talent to thrive in India's technology industry," Gummadi said. Gummadi — who joined Cognizant as a fresher two-and-a-half-decades back and rose through ranks to now head geography, which forms three-fourths of Cognizant's revenues — said the firm has a robust training programme that has benefited freshers across the board.

# Foxconn working on plans to set up battery energy storage system unit

PTI ■ SRIPERUMBUDUR

Taiwanese electronics manufacturing giant Foxconn is working on plans to set up a battery energy storage system unit in India, its Chairman Young Liu said here. With an eye on the electric vehicle segment, Foxconn has been expanding its battery manufacturing business, with the first plant already set up in Taiwan. Liu told PTI that Foxconn's information and communication technology segment has just started in India. "We are also waiting to put our 3+3 future industry in India. I have been talking to



the minister for industries here about how can we collaborate on BESS (Battery Energy Storage System) in Tamil Nadu..." Liu said. As part of the "3+3 strategy", Foxconn has prioritised the three key industries -- electric vehicles, digital health, and robotics — each has a

significant growth potential with current scale at USD 1.4 trillion and over 20 per cent compound annual growth rate. Foxconn's battery storage business is more focused on electric vehicles. Battery energy storage systems (BESS) enable energy

storage from renewable sources like solar and wind. Foxconn has set up its first BESS unit in Taiwan for e-BESS. The unit is expected to start mass production this year. The company is also in discussion to set up a BESS factory in Indonesia. The proposed BESS factory in India will complement Foxconn's electric vehicle manufacturing business in India, which is under works. When asked about the status of EV production, Liu said it will start "very soon". Foxconn has invested over USD 1.4 billion in India to date, and its business has grown to USD 10 billion. At present, the company employs over 48,000 people in India.

# FMCG players expect volume trends to sustain amid rising demand in rural markets

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) companies expect to sustain volume growth in the coming quarters, buoyed by recovery of demand in rural markets and good monsoon, despite concerns over growing food inflation. FMCG majors, including HUL, ITC, Dabur, Britannia, Nestle and Emami, in their June quarter earnings have reported 'green shoots' from the rural markets and strong growth from e-commerce channels, particularly from quick-commerce platforms. The industry had around 6.6 per cent volume growth in the

April-June period of this fiscal. However, companies are worried about elevated food inflation as coffee and cocoa prices have gone up unprecedentedly. Amid expectations of an increase in cereals and grains prices, some of the players have even indicated price hikes. Dabur CEO Mohit Malhotra said, "Going forward, the volume will increase on the back of rural inching up for us. So I expect the subsequent quarters to be better than our existing quarters, but definitely not worse." He expressed optimism, saying that with a good monsoon, improving macroeconomic indicators

and rural-centric government spending, FMCG demand will see a gradual uptick. Malhotra also mentioned inflation in food is very high today and "we might have to take some price increases in food, but it depends upon how the situation is." Marico MD & CEO Saugata Gupta said the FMCG sector continued to witness gradual improvement in demand trends in the June quarter, with better rural growth. "We expect volume trends to sustain the trajectory, aided by stable retail inflation, a healthily progressing monsoon season, and the Govt's budgetary allocation towards boosting the rural economy," he said.

# Hero MotoCorp gets over ₹17 cr tax notice from Delhi GST authorities

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Hero MotoCorp on Sunday said it has received a demand notice of over Rs 17 crore from Delhi GST authorities. The company has received an order dated August 17, 2024, for disallowance of input tax credit for FY 2019-20 from the Office of the GST Officer, Government of NCT of Delhi, the two-wheeler major said in a regulatory filing. The company said the tax demand is for Rs

9,38,66,513, interest Rs 7,32,15,880 and penalty Rs 93,86,651 as per the notice. Based on the company's assessment, the tax demand is not maintainable in law, it added. The input tax credit disallowed by the office of the GST Officer, New Delhi, was rightfully claimed by the company as per the provisions of the GST law but disallowed on account of the supplier's non-compliance, which is not attributable to the company, Hero MotoCorp said.

# Indian businesses need to align cyber security budgets with growth objectives, says Kaspersky

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian businesses need to align cyber security budgets with their growth objectives to ensure sustainable expansion in the face of increasing digitalisation and associated risks, a top official of Kaspersky has said. The emergence of new-age technologies, including artificial intelligence and GenAI, is critical for companies to boost their businesses. "In order to grow businesses, you need to digitise. If you don't digitise, you are not going to have that business growth value," Adrian Hia, Managing Director for the APAC region at Kaspersky,

told PTI. At the same time, the digitalisation of businesses increases the attack surface area, opening avenues for risks like sophisticated cyberattacks. If Indian businesses aim to grow by 20 per cent, they also need to boost their cyber security budget by 20 per cent in the course of preparedness against these attacks, Hia noted. Further, he said that organisations need to upkeep their systems and data while moving towards digital transformation. In India, malware attacks climbed 11 per cent to 13,44,566 in 2024 against 12,13,528 a year ago, a report

by SonicWall said earlier this month. The number of brute force or targeted attacks is escalating in India, with every third cyber incident reported due to ransomware in 2023, cyber security firm Kaspersky has noted. According to Hia, the cause for such attacks is the amount of data exposed on the internet, which has grown to nearly 10-fold, either through applications or web server data. "The proliferation of smartphones, where everyone has two smartphones... has led to data from 3 billion smartphones in India. So, the attack surface has increased," he added.





# GOITRE TREATMENT KEY INDICATIONS AND OPTIONS



DR SUNIL CHUMBER  
Professor and Head

In this concluding part of the series on Multinodular Goitre (MNG), ARCHANA JYOTI speaks with DR SUNIL CHUMBER and his team from the Department of Surgical Discipline at AIIMS, Delhi about critical factors for intervention and available management strategies

## TREATMENT INDICATIONS AND OPTIONS

MNG is essentially a non-cancerous enlargement of the thyroid. Not all people with this condition will need treatment and your doctor will advise you with a treatment plan based on certain indications which are described below.

### INDICATIONS

**Patients with hyperthyroidism:** All MNG patients who also have hyperthyroidism (increased thyroid hormones) on blood tests will need some form of treatment.  
**Patients without hyperthyroidism:** Goitre causing compressive symptoms such as difficulty in breathing, difficulty in swallowing, cough, difficulty sleeping, etc. needs to be treated. Also, if your doctor suspects thyroid cancer based on size/rate of growth/ scans or needle test, he will advise urgent treatment. Lastly, patients may choose to receive treatment for MNG due to cosmetic reasons.

### TREATMENT OPTIONS

**Surgical treatment:** The surgeon removes the whole or a part of the thyroid gland. This is the treatment of choice in patients with compressive symptoms, suspicion of thyroid cancer, and large goitre. A lifelong hormone



DR REVA SHANKAR SAHU  
(Senior Resident)

supplementation is needed when the entire thyroid gland is removed.

**Medical treatment:** All patients with hyperthyroidism are started on "antithyroid medications" like carbimazole, and methimazole till hormone levels become normal, after which surgery can be done. However, if patients who do not want surgery or are not fit to undergo surgery, they can be kept on these medicines for a long time as an alternative but is not very effective in decreasing the size of the goitre.

**Radioiodine treatment:** "Radioactive iodine" is a solution containing I131 which is given to patients either as an oral liquid to drink or as a capsule. It gets taken up by the thyroid alone and destroys it from within in a few weeks. It is recommended by doctors as an alternative to surgery in



DR AMOL SOOD  
(Junior Resident)

patients who are unfit or unwilling to undergo surgery. Pregnant ladies and lactating mothers have to be very careful and inform your doctor immediately as this method is not safe for them.  
**Ablative procedures:** These are ultrasound-guided procedures that involve injection of medical alcohol or the use of radiofrequency (RFA) or laser to destroy diseased thyroid tissue. These procedures are relatively new and not readily available.

**Annual surveillance:** For people with goitre but no other symptoms, not having hyperthyroidism, and not being suspicious of cancer, annual surveillance is an option. For this, the doctor conducts a yearly checkup, checks thyroid function test, and neck ultrasound. If an indication for treatment arises or the patient desires, appropriate treatment is provided.

Indications for surgery in LMNG are local compressive symptoms (difficulty in swallowing and shortness of breath), suspicious malignancy features on imaging, large substernal development, drug-resistant hyperthyroidism, and cosmetic concerns.

If MNG is limited to one lobe of the thyroid, the standard surgical procedure is a hemithyroidectomy where only the lobe with nodule(s) is removed and the other half thyroid is left intact. In these cases, it is crucial to assess the other lobe not being removed, for any involvement through an ultrasound scan before surgery, and feeling with hands during the surgery that it does not have any nodules.

Two main categories of surgeries can be performed for MNG cases involving both lobes. First category is more limited and includes "bilateral subtotal thyroidectomy" where both lobes of the thyroid are removed but small pieces of normal thyroid from both are left behind. This method will be performed by your surgeon

## OPERATIONS IN MNG



DR YASHWANT RATHORE  
(Associate Professor)

to decrease the risks associated with the other procedures, such as injury to nerve and parathyroid gland. The second type includes total and near-total thyroidectomy, which tends to be a more aggressive approach. In these again both the lobes of thyroid are removed, but minimal-to-no thyroid is left behind. This group of surgery is recommended to reduce the need for repeat operation which might be required to remove the left-behind thyroid if the disease appears again or if carcinoma is found in the removed thyroid. As these procedures are known to have higher risks of injury, only



DR NEELAM  
(Senior Resident)

specialized doctors in these procedures perform them at adequately equipped centers. All surgeries on the thyroid have some degree of risk of damage to important structures in the neck like the nerve that controls our voice, the parathyroid gland which controls calcium levels in the body, or even the food pipe and the airway especially if the thyroid has become very large and both side surgeries have to be done. Also if both thyroid lobes are removed you will require taking thyroxine hormone supplements lifelong and based on Thyroid Function Tests reports doses will be adjusted by your doctor.

## CONCLUSION

MNG is a widely occurring disease of thyroid gland where small nodules form inside the thyroid causing it to become bigger and produce problems of cosmesis, difficulty in

breathing, eating, and sleeping. Not having enough Iodine in food is an important cause of this problem, but due to government efforts of iodisation of salt, the large

goitres seen before the 90s have largely come down. The nodules are mostly non-cancerous but anytime such enlargement is seen in front of your neck, you should contact a nearby doctor.

Mediterranean diet and nature's healing power are key to lower stress and better mental health. THE PIONEER reports on two insightful studies

## Mediterranean Diet Linked to Lower Stress Levels

Feeling stressed? Adopting a Mediterranean diet could be beneficial, according to recent research. A study by Binghamton University, State University of New York, compared the Mediterranean diet to the traditional Western diet to explore their effects on stress levels.

The Mediterranean diet, known for its emphasis on fruits, vegetables, nuts, legumes, and healthy fats like extra virgin olive oil, may help reduce stress and mental distress. Lina Begdache, Associate Professor of Health and Wellness Studies, noted that the study, published in Nutrition and Health, found that this diet lowers mental distress and improves perceptions of stress.

1,500 participants, used machine learning to analyze survey data and found that the Mediterranean diet is associated with lower levels of stress and mental distress.

In addition to mental health benefits, the Mediterranean diet has been shown to support overall health. A recent study published in Heart highlighted its benefits in reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease and death, especially among women, by nearly 25%.

The findings suggest that incorporating more Mediterranean diet components could be a simple yet effective way to manage stress and improve overall health.

A recent study, published in the journal Heart, too showed the association between a Mediterranean diet and incident risk of cardiovascular disease CVD and death. Focusing especially on women, the study showed that a Mediterranean diet can boost your heart health and lower the risk of heart disease and death by nearly 25 per cent.



In contrast, the Western diet, which is high in processed foods and low-quality carbohydrates, is linked to increased stress and mental distress. Research has shown it to contribute to the globally rising risk of non-communicable diseases like obesity, diabetes, hypertension and cancers. The research, involving over

## Spending 10 Min in Nature can Boost Mental Health

We recognize that nature plays a crucial role in human health, yet behavioral health and healthcare providers frequently overlook its potential as an intervention. But now a new study published in the peer-reviewed journal Ecopsychology, has revealed that spending time in nature—even as little as 10 minutes—can yield short-term benefits for adults with mental illness.

"We know nature plays an important role in human health, but behavioral health and health care providers often neglect to think about it as an intervention," said Joanna Bettmann, a professor at the University of Utah College of Social Work and lead author of the study. "We set out to distill some evidence-based guidance for those providers."

The amount of time study participants spent in nature varied from study to study; some participants spent as little as 10 minutes in a city park, while others spent multiple days in immersive wilderness experiences. We



found that "ten minutes in urban nature is far less intimidating, expensive, and time-consuming for people who do not have the time, resources, interest, community support or equipment to venture into the wilderness for days or weeks," wrote the authors. The analysis also indicated that water-based outdoor spaces—rivers, lakes, oceans—and camping, farming, and gardening activities had the greatest positive effect. Urban nature, mountains, and forests also offered significant effects. "All of these different types of outdoor spaces delivered positive results, which underscores the importance of preserving green spaces in our natural and built environments," said Bettmann.

# Ayurvedic Medicines Accelerate Bone Fracture Healing

Rich in essential nutrients, many ayurvedic medicines like Hadjod, Aama haldi, and Lakshadhi guggul can significantly speed up bone fracture recovery and improve bone quality, offering an effective complement to conventional treatments, says DR RP PARASHAR

The healing process of bone fractures is crucial for effective treatment and rehabilitation. It is a complex, highly regulated series of events that involves a variety of cellular activities, molecular signals, and mechanical factors.

Fractures may be Simple (closed) when the bone breaks but does not penetrate the skin or Compound (open) when the bone breaks and penetrates through the skin, increasing the risk of infection. Comminuted fractures occur when the bone is shattered into multiple pieces. Greenstick fractures occur mostly in children when the bone bends and cracks. Stress fractures are small cracks in the bone caused by repetitive forces or overuse. Bone healing is a dynamic process that typically occurs in four overlapping stages: hematoma formation, inflammatory phase, reparative phase, and remodeling phase. Hematoma formation starts

immediately after a fracture occurs, blood vessels within the bone and surrounding tissues are damaged, leading to the formation of a hematoma (a localized collection of blood). This hematoma serves as a scaffold for the influx of inflammatory cells and provides a provisional matrix for the next stages of healing. Inflammatory phase begins within hours of the fracture and can last for several days. During this phase, the body's immune response is activated, and various inflammatory cells such as macrophages, neutrophils, and lymphocytes migrate to the fracture site. These cells help remove debris and release cytokines and growth factors that promote healing. The inflammatory phase is essential for initiating the healing process and setting the stage for the formation of new bone tissue.

Reparative phase is characterized by the formation of a soft callus, which eventually transitions



DR RP PARASHAR

into a hard callus. Within a few days to weeks after the fracture, fibroblasts, chondroblasts, and osteoblasts migrate to the fracture site. These cells produce collagen and other extracellular matrix components, forming a soft callus made of fibrous tissue and cartilage. This soft callus bridges the fracture gap and provides initial stability. Over the next few weeks to months, the soft callus is gradually replaced by a hard callus composed of woven bone. Osteoblasts play a key role in this process by laying

down new bone tissue. The hard callus increases the mechanical stability of the fracture site and is a crucial step toward complete bone healing.

The final phase of bone healing is the remodeling phase, which can last for several months to years. During this phase, the hard callus is remodeled into mature lamellar bone, restoring the bone's original structure and mechanical properties. The bone gradually regains its normal shape, strength, and function. Several factors can influence the rate and quality of bone healing. These factors can be broadly categorized into biological, mechanical, and systemic factors. Biological Factors are age, blood supply to the fractured bone delivering oxygen, nutrients, and cells to the fracture site. The intrinsic quality of the bone, influenced by factors such as bone density and microarchitecture, affects



healing. Conditions like osteoporosis can compromise bone healing. Mechanical factors include the mechanical stability of the fracture, proper

alignment and stabilization of the fracture through immobilization or surgical fixation promote callus formation and bone repair. Systemic factors include adequate intake of nutrients, particularly calcium, vitamin D, proteins, etc. Hormones such as parathyroid hormone, growth hormone, and sex hormones play a significant role in bone metabolism and healing. There are a number of Ayurvedic medicines which are quite effective in each and every phase of bone healing.

These medicines escalate the healing process and can be used alone or in combination with other allopathic medicines. Some of the medicines include Hadjod, Aama haldi, Lakshadhi guggul, Shatavari, Ashwagandha, etc Botanical name of Asthishrinkhala or Hadjod is Cissus quadrangularis which reduces swelling, relieves pain, treats allied illnesses associated with fracture and aids in healing fracture.

The herb contains high levels of calcium, phosphorus & vitamin D and is nowadays being used in many combinations of allopathic medicine also. Lakshadi guggul is a combination of lakhsa (Laccifer lacca), Asthishrinkhala (Cissus quadrangularis) Arjun bark (Terminalia arjuna), Ashwagandha (Withania somnifera) Nagbala (Grewia hirsuta) and Guggul, which is a gum resin obtained from a variety of plants including species Commiphora wightii, C. gileadensis, C. mukul,

Boswellia serrata, B. sacra, etc. The combination is a rich source of calcium, vitamins & antioxidants which is known to fasten the healing process in bone fracture, low bone density, and pain in joints. It's quite effective in osteoporosis also. Aama haldi (Curcuma amada) is another herb having antiseptic, anti-inflammatory and rejuvenative properties. Shatavari (Asparagus racemosus) is highly rich in antioxidants and acts as a rejuvenator and strength provider in bone healing. These medicines not only shorten the recovery time but also aid in the quality healing of the bones. With appropriate care and intervention, most fractures can heal effectively, allowing patients to regain full function and return to their normal activities by the use of Ayurvedic medicines.

(The author is Chief Medical Officer (Ayurveda), Municipal Corporation of Delhi)



# Our fight will continue, truth will prevail: Vinesh

PTI ■ BALALI (HARYANA)

Overwhelmed by the grand reception she received on her arrival from the Paris Olympics, wrestler Vinesh Phogat said that her fight against the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) would continue and hoped that "truth will prevail". Hundreds of supporters had gathered outside the IGI airport here on Saturday to give a rousing welcome to Vinesh who was disqualified for being overweight after reaching the 50kg final at the Olympics.

Vinesh's appeal against her disqualification was rejected by the ad-hoc division of the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS).

On her way to Balali from Delhi, Vinesh was felicitated by her supporters and 'khap' panchayats in several villages as it took her almost 13 hours to cover 135 kms.

She reached her native village in Balali around midnight and was accorded a grand welcome by the villagers. Her neighbours and friends met her with tears and smiles and patted her for the courage she had shown.

Exhausted after a tiring journey that began in Paris, Vinesh addressed the gathering before calling it a day.



"Our fight has not ended and the fight will continue and I pray to god that the truth will prevail," said Vinesh while addressing the people.

During their sit-in at Jantar Mantar, Vinesh along with Bajrang Punia and Sakshi Malik had spent nights on the streets.

They had accused the then WFI chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh of sexual harassment of women grapplers. They were evicted when they tried to march towards the new Parliament building.

The case against Brij Bhushan is being heard by a Delhi court. Vinesh said that the welcome she had received on arrival would give her the courage to pick up the threads and get on with life.

"As I got love from my fellow Indians, my village and my family members, it would give me some courage to make this wound heal. Maybe, I could return to wrestling," said the 29-year-old Vinesh.

"Missing the Olympic medal is the biggest wound in my life. I don't know how much time it would take to heal this wound.

I don't know if I would pursue wrestling or not but the kind of courage I got today, I want to use that in the right direction," she added.

Vinesh said she does not know if she deserved the accolades or not.

"But I feel extremely lucky to be born in this village. I would always fight for the honour of the women and of this village." The two-time World Championships medallist wished that someone from Balali would better her wrestling achievements. She is a two-time CWG gold

medallist, Asian Games champion and has won eight Asian Championships medals. "I want it from the bottom of my heart that somebody from the village carries my legacy forward and breaks my records. If I can promote women wrestlers of my village, it would be my biggest achievement," she said.

"It would be disappointing if no wrestler emerged from this village. We have paved the way with your achievements. I request you all to support the women in this village, they need support if they have to replace us.

"They can achieve a lot. All they need is your support. I will always be indebted to this nation, this village. Whatever I have learnt, I will share with my sisters from this village and I wish someone from this village breaks my record."

Vinesh had announced her retirement from the sport after her disqualification.

In an emotional post on social media, Vinesh shared her childhood dream, the hardships she faced after losing her father, and also put on record the contribution made by people in her extraordinary journey.

However, she did not mention her uncle Mahavir Phogat, something that irked her cousin sisters Geeta and Babita.

## BORDER-GAVASKAR TROPHY Lyon seeks English spinner Hartley's inputs to tame Yashasvi

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Ace off-spinner Nathan Lyon has already started his homework on rising batting sensation Yashasvi Jaiswal with England spinner Tom Hartley's inputs on the southpaw safely stored in his memory bank ahead of the five-Test Border-Gavaskar series between India and Australia starting from November 22.

Jaiswal, who scored a century on debut in the West Indies last year, scored an astounding 712 runs in the five Test series against England at home earlier this year.

But the pace and bounce on offer on Australian tracks will pose a different challenge for the Mumbaikar.

"I haven't come across him [Jaiswal] yet, but that will be a massive challenge for all us bowlers," Lyon was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo.

"The way he (Jaiswal) played against England, I watched that quite closely and thought that was quite amazing. "I had some really good chats with Tom Hartley (England left-arm spinner) about different ways he went about it to different guys which I found quite interesting."

Lyon had a stint in English county with Lancashire and had an opportunity to share notes with Hartley, who had 20 wickets in four Tests



against India and he is someone who has first-hand knowledge of Jaiswal's exploits.

The 36-year-old Lyon, who has 530 wickets from 129 Tests, feels that with so much information "floating around", Aussies have the best chance to accomplish the "unfinished business" against India.

"I love talking about cricket, so if I can talk to someone who has played Test cricket, I might be able to pick up something I'm not aware of. There's so much knowledge floating around this game that we can always tap into."

Since winning the 2014-15 Border-Gavaskar 2-0, Australia have lost the next four series against India -- two to Virat Kohli's side (2016-17, 2018-19), Ajinkya Rahane (2021) and Rohit Sharma (2023).

"If the plans we've spoken

about come to true, then I think it will be."

Along with Lyon, Josh Hazlewood is another survivor from the 2014-15 series and conceded Australia's recent results against India present a significant hole in their record.

"It's been ten years of unfinished business, it's been a long time, and I know we're extremely hungry to turn things around, especially here at home," Lyon said.

"Don't get me wrong, India is an absolute superstar side and extremely challenging but I'm extremely hungry to turn things around and make sure we get that trophy back," he said.

Lyon feels that this Australian team under Pat Cummins is slightly different compared to Tim Paine's team that lost back-to-back series against India at home.

## Maharaj helps South Africa secure 40-run win over West Indies in 2nd test

AP ■ PROVIDENCE (GUYANA)

South Africa bowled out West Indies for 222 to secure a 40-run victory on day three of the second test Saturday after Keshav Maharaj wrapped up the win with his fifth wicket of the match.

It was South Africa's tenth consecutive test series win against West Indies and was highlighted by Maharaj becoming South Africa's most successful spinner in tests with 171 wickets after taking his series tally to 13 when he had Jayden Seales out for the final wicket.

That overshadowed a six-wicket haul by Seales in South Africa's second innings as the tourists were dismissed for 246 after resuming on 223-5.

That set the West Indies a winning target of 263 but they were in big trouble on 104-6 before Gudakesh Motie and Joshua Da Silva put together a 77-run stand to give the hosts hope of a victory.

But Maharaj accounted for them both and then surpassed Hugh Tayfield as South Africa's most successful spinner when Seales was caught by David Bedingham at short leg to cue the South African celebrations.

South Africa scored 160 in its first innings after choosing to bat first and West Indies replied with 144.

The teams played to a rain-affected draw in the first test in Trinidad.

## India to open campaign against WI in 2025 Women's U19 T20 WC

PTI ■ DUBAI

Defending champions India will open their campaign against the West Indies in the second edition of the ICC U19 Women's T20 World Cup to be played in Malaysia from January 18 to February 2 next year.

India have been clubbed along side hosts Malaysia, West Indies and Sri Lanka in Group A.

India defeated England to win the inaugural edition of the tournament in South Africa last year.

England, neighbours Ireland, Pakistan and the USA are

placed in Group B. South Africa, along with New Zealand, new entrants Samoa and a qualifier from Africa will form Group C, while Group D comprises Australia, Bangladesh, Scotland, and a qualifier from Asia.

Each team will play the other sides in the round-robin phase, making for three games each in the group stage.

The top three sides from all four groups will then progress to the Super Six stage.

The bottom-ranked sides from Groups A and D, and B and C will contest in last place play-off on January 24.

The 12 sides in the Super Six



stage are further divided into two groups, with the top three teams from Groups A and D making up Group 1, and those of Groups B and C making up Group 2.

In this stage, each side will

carry forward the points, wins and NRRs (Net Run Rate) they secured against fellow Super Six qualifying sides.

Each side will contest two fixtures in the Super Six, against opponents of corresponding groups that finished at different group positions.

The top-two sides from each group will qualify for the semifinals to be held on January 31, with the final slated for February 2.

The semifinals and final will all be played at Bayuemas Oval. If India qualify for the semifinals, they will play semifinal 2, which will take place on January 31.

There are reserve days for both the semifinals and final. While February 1 is a reserve day for the semifinals, February 3 has been kept as a reserve day for the summit clash.



## Abhay wins maiden Formula 1600 National Championship

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Bengaluru's Abhay Mohan clinched his maiden national title by winning the prestigious Formula 1600 National championship with 10 consecutive wins after the end of the fourth and final round of the MRF-MMSC Indian National Car Racing Championship on Sunday.

The 2022 junior national karting champion, who graduated to single seater racing this year, took to the powerful Formula cars like a duck to water, with a phenomenal all-win record till

the penultimate race of the last round. The 16-year-old had an impressive unbeaten run of 10 consecutive races and conceded points only after clinching the championship that featured 12 races.

Two Mumbai drivers -- Zahan Commissariat and Raaj Bakhru -- finished second and third respectively in the championship.

"This is my first year in single seater Formula cars, but it has been a memorable season. It feels really amazing to be the National champion and to have 10 consecutive wins," said Mohan.

## Priya helps India A beat Australia A in final one-dayer

PTI ■ MACKAY (AUSTRALIA)

Rookie leg-spinner Priya RMishra grabbed five wickets while Tejal Hasabnis and Raghvi Bist scored half-centuries as India A thrashed Australia A by 171-run in the third and final one-dayer here on Sunday.

India A finally achieved success in the third and final one-dayer after having lost five successive games -- three T20s in Brisbane and two one-dayers here -- in the six-match white-ball series.

India A scored a modest 243/9, thanks to middle-order batter Tejal's 66-ball 50 and Raghvi's 64-ball 53 before 20-year-old Delhi cricketer Priya took a fiver (5/14) to dismiss the Australia A batting for just 72 runs for a massive win.

Playing in only her first match on the tour, Priya dismissed opener Maddy Darke (22) and top-order batter Tess Flintoff (20) as the home team was left



reeling at 52/4 in the 15th over of the chase.

She then destroyed the middle order taking the wickets of Nicole Faltum (2), Kate Peterson (1) and Nicola Hancock (0) as the hosts were dismissed in 22.1 over, which gave India A a consolation win.

The one-off unofficial Test will be played in Gold Coast from August 22.

Earlier, a 104-run partnership between Tejal and Raghvi helped India A overcome a shaky start, which saw them reeling at 43/3 in the ninth

over. The duo, which has stood out in the series for its batting, then carried the team to 147 before Tejal was dismissed in the 28th over. Raghvi too followed suit before Sajeewan Sajana (40) and captain Minnu Mani (34) took the team beyond the 200-run mark.

Brief scores: India A 243 for 9 in 50 overs (Tejal Hasabnis 50, Raghvi Bist 53, Sajeewan Sajana 40, Minnu Mani 34; Maitlan Brown 3/39, Charli Knott 2/26). Australia A 72 in 22.1 overs (Priya Mishra 5/14, Minnu Mani 2/4).



## Durand Cup: QF fixtures announced; Bagan, EB head for potential derby final

PTI ■ KOLKATA

The quarterfinal fixtures of the 133rd Durand Cup was announced on Sunday with the city hosting Bengaluru FC versus Kerala Blasters match of the tournament at the Salt Lake Stadium on Friday.

Fearing security concerns in the wake of widespread protests for a trainee doctor's alleged rape and murder case on Saturday abandoned the Durand Cup marquee league fixture between Mohun Bagan and East Bengal.

Both the teams were awarded one point each as reigning champions Mohun Bagan qualified as group A toppers to be pitted against Punjab FC in the third quarterfinal which will be held at Jamshepur.

East Bengal made the cut as one of the two best second-placed teams to be drawn against Shillong Lajong FC for the second quarterfinal which will now be held in Shillong instead of the Salt Lake Stadium because of the prevailing unrest in the city.

Salt Lake Stadium, however, will get to host the fourth quarterfinal, the match that

does not involve the two Kolkata heavyweights.

"After the FC Goa versus Shillong Lajong FC Group F game in Shillong concluded on Saturday evening and it became clear who the eight qualified teams were, a video call was arranged where representatives of all qualified teams came on board. A live draw of lots was then conducted in front of them and two teams to play in each venue was finalised," stated a release.

Both Mohun Bagan and East Bengal now find themselves in the opposite end of the draw with a potential derby clash in the Durand Cup final on August 31.

The organisers are however yet to confirm the venue for the semifinals and final which are slated at the Salt Lake Stadium.

QF Lineups

August 21: Northeast United FC vs Indian Army FT (SAI Stadium Kokrajhar; 4pm); Shillong Lajong FC vs East Bengal (Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, Shillong; 7pm).

August 23: Mohun Bagan vs Punjab FC (JRD Tata Sports Complex, Jamshepur; 4pm); Bengaluru FC vs Kerala Blasters FC (Saltlake Stadium; 7pm).

# Top-ranked Iga, Jannik reach semifinals in Cincinnati

AP ■ MASON (OHIO)

Top-ranked Iga Swiatek and Jannik Sinner fended off challenges Saturday to reach the semifinals in the Cincinnati Open.

Swiatek extended her match winning streak to 15 with a 6-4, 3-6, 7-5 victory over 17-year-old Mirra Andreeva.

Swiatek will face third-ranked Aryna Sabalenka, a

6-3, 6-2 winner over 10th-ranked Liudmila Samsonova 6-3, 6-2.

Sinner avenged last week's loss to No. 6 Andrey Rublev in the quarterfinals in Montreal with a 4-6, 7-5, 6-4 victory to become the first Italian man to reach the Cincinnati semis in the Open era.

"It was very windy and I tried to be as consistent as

possible," Sinner said. "First time that I've played a semifinal in this place, so that's very positive."

Swiatek and Sabalenka have met twice already this year, with Swiatek winning finals at Roland Garros and Madrid. Swiatek is 8-3 against the two-time Grand Slam winner.

"We're both players that kind of deserve to be in semifinals

and finals, because we're working very hard," Swiatek said. "I respect Aryna so much. Physically, she's always fighting and has lots of power."

Neither player has reached the final in Cincinnati.

Swiatek lost to eventual champion Coco Gauff last year in her first semifinal appearance. Sabalenka is a three-time semifinalist,



including each of the past two years.

"We've had a lot of great battles in the past," Sabalenka said. "It's always a high-intensity match. I'm really looking forward to another great battle against her."

Sinner will face No. 3 Alexander Zverev. Zverev, the only remaining former champion in the draw, beat Ben Shelton 3-6, 7-6, 7-5.

Zverev has won four straight against Sinner.

Frances Tiafoe advanced to the semifinals for the second consecutive year when Hubert Hurkacz retired in the second set because of a calf injury. Tiafoe will face the winner of the late match between Holger Rune and Jack Draper.

In the other women's quarterfinals, No. 6 Jessica

Pegula outlasted Leylah Fernandez, 6-2, 6-7, 7-6 for her first semifinal berth in Cincinnati. Pegula, coming off a successful title defense Monday in Canada, will face Paula Badosa.

Badosa beat Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova 6-3, 6-2.

"Paula is really playing some good tennis," Pegula said. "She turned her year around and is finding some form."