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अबुआ स्वास्थ्य सुरक्षा योजना

जाति, आय, जन्म, मृत्यु,
दिव्यांगता प्रमाण पत्र

झारखण्ड मुख्यमंत्री मंडियां सम्मान योजना (JMMSY)

गुरुजी स्टूडेंट क्रेडिट कार्ड

मुख्यमंत्री रोजगार सृजन योजना

बिरसा सिंचाई कूप संवर्द्धन योजना

सामुदायिक और व्यक्तिगत वन पट्टा का आवेदन और वितरण

अबुआ आवास योजना

सर्वजन पेंशन योजना

मनरेगा

बिरसा हरित ग्राम योजना

घोती-साड़ी-लुंगी वितरण

राजस्व से जुड़े मामले, जैसे
म्युटेशन, मापी, लगान रसीद, आदि

केसीसी मुख्यमंत्री पशुधन योजना

आयुष्मान कार्ड

सावित्रीबाई फुले किशोरी कंबल वितरण समृद्धि योजना राशन एवं आधार कार्ड में संशोधन



30 अगस्त - 15 सितम्बर

आपकी योजना आपकी सरकार आपके द्वार

पंचायत - 4,351 | नगर निकाय - 50

वर्ष 2021 के आंकड़े		वर्ष 2022 के आंकड़े	
कुल शिविर	कुल प्राप्त आवेदन	कुल शिविर	कुल प्राप्त आवेदन
6,867	35.95 लाख	5,696	55.44 लाख
वर्ष 2023 के आंकड़े			
कुल शिविर	कुल प्राप्त आवेदन		
5,496	58.26 लाख		

तीन वर्षों में प्राप्त 1 करोड़ 49 लाख आवेदनों का निष्पादन किया गया



हेमन्त सोरेन
मुख्यमंत्री, झारखण्ड

देने अधिकार... चौथी बार हेमन्त सरकार आ रही आपके द्वार

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सूचना एवं जनसंपर्क विभाग, झारखण्ड सरकार

2 held in Jamshedpur for smuggling leopard skin from Daltonganj

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

Jamshedpur Forest Department arrested three individuals from Daltonganj on charges of smuggling leopard skin and other wildlife products. The arrested men, identified as Zakir Hussain, Dineshwar Yadav, and Vijay Yadav, are residents of Palamu. This comes after the earlier arrest of Ashok Vishwakarma from Sonari, Sam Kujur from Chaibasa, and Pintu Kujur on similar charges of hunting wild animals and smuggling their skins.

During a press conference on Thursday, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Saba Ahmed revealed that Ashok Vishwakarma was initially arrested on August 15 for

allegedly hunting wild animals. "During the interrogation, Vishwakarma disclosed that the hunting took place in the forests of Daltonganj. Acting on his information, a special team led by Ranger Digvijay Singh conducted a three-day raid in Daltonganj," said DFO Ahmed. The operation culminated in the arrest of Hussain, Yadav, and Yadav, along with the recovery of leopard skin, traps, deer horns, rabbit bones, Seoul teeth, and other forest products.

DFO Ahmed further stated that the arrested Zakir Hussain is believed to be the mastermind behind the illegal activities. During the



interrogation, Hussain confessed to having received specialized training in hunting from Rajasthan. "They were well-organized, with specific roles assigned to each member. After killing the animals, they would carefully skin them and sell the pelts at a high price," DFO Ahmed added. It was also revealed that the leopard skins were smuggled from Daltonganj to Jamshedpur, with plans to ship them overseas.

The forest department's ongoing investigation has exposed a sophisticated smuggling network involving local collaborators who assist the hunters in exchange for financial rewards. DFO Ahmed emphasized that the

department is intensifying efforts to capture additional members of the gang and dismantle the entire network. "We have information that two smugglers managed to escape during the raid, and we are actively pursuing leads to apprehend them," said DFO Ahmed.

This is not the first time the Jamshedpur Forest Department has made arrests related to wildlife smuggling. Earlier this month, Ashok Vishwakarma, Sam Kujur, and Pintu Kujur were arrested on similar charges. Their interrogation led to the discovery of a wider network involved in the illegal hunting and smuggling of wildlife. "The gang has been operat-

ing for several years, targeting the rich biodiversity of the Daltonganj forests," noted DFO Ahmed.

In light of these arrests, the Jamshedpur Forest Department is urging the public to remain vigilant and report any suspicious activities related to wildlife smuggling. "Protecting our wildlife is a collective responsibility, and we will continue to take strict action against those who threaten our natural heritage," concluded DFO Ahmed.

The arrested individuals are currently in police custody, and further investigations are underway to trace the remaining members of the smuggling network.

BSL and NDDB sign MoA for Daily Distribution of 2,300 Gift Milk Packs

PNS : BOKARO

Bokaro Steel Plant (BSL) and the NDDB Foundation for Nutrition (NFN) signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) at Ispat Bhawan on 29th August 2024. Under this agreement, 2,300 Gift Milk packs will be distributed daily, free of charge, to students in CSR-supported and government schools. This initiative is part of NFN's flagship "Gift Milk Program," which aims to provide nutritional support to children and needy individuals through milk and other nutritious products.

Established in 2015, the NDDB Foundation for Nutrition focuses on addressing malnutrition in India. As per the agreement between BSL and NFN, 200 ml packs of flavored milk, fortified with vitamins A and D, will be distributed in six DAV-ISPAT schools, two schools managed by the Bokaro Mahila Samiti, and 13 government schools. The program will run for nine months, covering a total of 150 distribution days.



The MoA signing ceremony was attended by Suresh Rangani, Executive Director (Finance & Accounts), Dr. B.B. Karunamay, Chief Medical Officer (BGH), Manish Jalota, Chief General Manager (HR-L&D), Kundan Kumar, Chief General Manager (Town Administration), Manikant Dhan, Head of Communications, Ardhendu Shekhar Nandi, General Manager (CSR), Shakti Kumar, District CSR Nodal Officer (Government of Jharkhand), and officials from NFN.

ED Suresh Rangani praised the MoA and emphasized the importance of continuous monitoring and effective resource utilization to ensure the success of this initiative. Dr. B.B. Karunamay highlighted that this program is a significant step toward addressing malnutrition among school-going children. Shakti Kumar shed light on the Gift Milk distribution program in Bokaro district and appreciated BSL's leadership in initiating this effort. Officials from NFN provided detailed information about the Gift Milk distribution process.

BSL hosts sports honor ceremony on National Sports Day

PNS : BOKARO

To commemorate National Sports Day and in honor of hockey legend Major Dhyan Chand, the Sports and Civic Amenities Department of Bokaro Steel Limited (BSL) organized a special Sports Honor Ceremony. The event was attended by the Chief General Manager (Town Administration) Kundan Kumar, General Managers A.K. Avinash, T. Salam, and C.R.K. Sudhanshu, along with Assistant General Manager (Sports & Civic Amenities) S. Rajak, other officers, coaches, and athletes from various schools in Bokaro who have excelled in sports.

The ceremony began by welcoming the chief guest and participants, followed by

Kundan Kumar offering floral tributes to the portrait of Major Dhyan Chand. During the event, 74 athletes who had distinguished themselves in various sports were honored. In addition, 24 coaches and former athletes were recognized for their significant contributions to the field of sports.

Addressing the gathering, Kundan Kumar emphasized the importance of sports in life and encouraged the athletes to continue striving for excellence.

Leading up to National Sports Day, the Sports and Civic Amenities Department organized various sports competitions, which saw enthusiastic participation from a large number of athletes.



IIT ISM signs MoU with CIL for setting up IMiN excellence centre

PANKAJ : DHANBAD

Coal India Limited, IIT-ISM and TEXMIN have forged a strategic alliance to establish "IMiN - Innovation on Mining" Center of Excellence for Mining 4.0.

The MoU was signed on behalf of CIL by Dr. B. Veera Reddy, Director (Technical) in presence of PM Prasad, Chairman and TEXMIN IIT(ISM) Dhanbad, Prof Sukumar Mishra, Director, IIT (ISM) Dhanbad & Chairman, HGB & BoD, TEXMiN, signed the MoU. He was joined by Prof. Dheeraj Kumar, Project Director TEXMIN & Deputy Director, IIT(ISM) Dhanbad. Others present were Alok Lalit Kumar, Executive Director (Production), Chaudhary Shivraj Singh, General Manager (Corporate Planning), Dr. Achyut Ghatak, Director (Technical/RD&T), CMPDI Ranchi besides Prof. RM Bhattacharjee, Additional Director, TEXMiN & Dean IRAA, IIT(ISM) Dhanbad and Suraj Prakash, CEO, TEXMiN besides others?

This collaboration will focus on developing innovative technologies and research infrastructure in niche areas of national and international importance. The IMiN Center of Excellence aims to enhance mining productivity, safety, and sustainability by integrating advanced digital solutions and driving digital transformation in mining through CPS-based technologies.

Coal India Limited (CIL) has entered into a landmark collaboration with the Indian Institute of Technology (Indian School of Mines), Dhanbad (IIT(ISM)), and the Technology Innovation in Exploration and Mining Foundation (TEXMiN) through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), aiming to revolutionize the Indian mining sector by leveraging cutting-edge technologies.

As a result of this collaboration, CIL will enable IIT(ISM) Dhanbad and TEXMiN to establish the "IMiN - Innovation on Mining" Center of Excellence for Mining 4.0 at TEXMiN, IIT(ISM) Dhanbad. This state-of-the-art center will serve as a pivotal hub for fostering start-up ecosystems, capacity building, and advancing technology and process development. The primary goal will be to unlock the full potential of digital transformation in the mining and metals sector, steering it towards a more sustainable and efficient future.

The IMiN Center of Excellence will not only pioneer digital solutions but also act as a catalyst in addressing the core challenges faced by CIL. By integrating Cyber Physical System (CPS)-based technologies, IMiN will focus on modernizing mining methods, thereby enhancing productivity, improving safety standards, and advancing the overall sustainability of mining operations.

P M Prasad emphasized the strategic importance of this initiative, stating, "IMiN would be a vital strategic asset to serve as the primary vehicle for managing complex change initiatives for implementing Mining 4.0 in the Indian mineral sector using CPS-based technologies with a vision to Create a best practices hub for mine digitalization of the entire mining value chain and adoption of the latest digital technologies including the department of mines, mine operators, students, research community and start-ups".

IIT ISM professor Mishra director too expressed satisfaction over MoU and stated that it would help open a new era in the mining sector of the country.

Trailblazer Award presented to 9 Executives of SAIL, RSP

PNS : BOKARO

Nine executives up to the level of E-6 of SAIL, Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) received the Trailblazer award from Atanu Bhowmick, Director In-Charge, at a function organized at Rourkela Club on 24th August, 2024.

S R Suryawanshi, ED (Works), Tarun Misra, ED (HR) with Additional Charge of ED (Projects), Alok Verma, ED (Mines), A K Behuria, ED (F&A), along with other senior officers and the spouses of the awardees, attended the occasion. The awardees are Deba Chandra Naik, AGM (Coke Ovens), Rashmi Ranjan Mohanty, AGM (Hot Strip Mill-2), Krushna Chandra Mohanty, AGM (New Plate Mill), Shashi Kiran Kumar, AGM (Design), Gyaneswari Padhy, AGM (Contract Cell (Works)), Priyabrat Barik,



AGM (Traffic & Raw Materials), Robin Kumar, DGM (Human Resource), Ashish Kumar, AGM (Internal Audit), and Dr. Shivalkar, Assistant CMO (Medical).

This motivational award scheme recognizes the contributions of frontline executives in improving production, productivity, techno-economic parameters, safety, quality, maintenance practices, cost reduction/digitalization, and

systems improvement. Speaking on the occasion, Bhowmick inspired the trailblazers to prioritize smart work, strive for self-improvement, and lead by example. He also emphasized the significant impact of family support on personal success.

S Badpanda, GM (HR-OD), proposed a vote of thanks at the end of the program, while Simpi Patel, Deputy Manager (HR-OD), anchored the event.

7 human traffickers held in Lohardaga



VINOD PRASAD : LOHARDAGA

Lohardaga Police, with the help of Railway Security Officer, has not only arrested seven people in the case of

human trafficking, but has also safely recovered 34 people who were being trafficked. These include a girl of 10 years, a boy of 13 years and two women. Superintendent of Police Haris Bin Zaman said

that on the basis of secret information received, under the leadership of DSP (Headquarters), Lohardaga, with the help of Lohardaga Police Station and Railway Security Officers and personnel, on August 28 at around 3.00 to 4.30 pm, for the prevention of human trafficking. A joint raid operation was conducted at Lohardaga railway station. During the raid, seven human traffickers who were taking labourers from Lohardaga railway station to Agartala (Tripura) brick kiln, Jaunpur Uttar Pradesh brick kiln and Sasaram (Bihar) brick kiln have been arrested. A total of 34 (thirty-four) labourers who were being taken for illegal human trafficking have been rescued safely from their custody.

Quiz contest organised at Ninti

PNS : MUZAFFARPUR

On the occasion of National Sports Day, a quiz competition was organized at Niti Cardiac Care. The purpose of this event was to make people aware of the importance of sports in health care. During the competition, the participants answered various questions related to sports and health. The participants in the quiz contest also included the attendants of patients. Sports related questions were being asked in the quiz. For example, which organs are

strengthened by running? Who won the silver medal in the javelin throw competition in the recently held Olympics?

The entire competition was organized by linking health with sports. There were many questions that encouraged people to play for good care of their health. Some questions were difficult and some were easy. Chocolate was given for every correct answer.

The hospital's Business Development Director Raj Sehgal said that the heart is an important part of our body.

Physical activity is necessary to keep it healthy. Sports can be the best exercise for physical health. That is why we are suggesting people to include sports in their daily routine on the occasion of Sports Day. It is worth noting that every year we celebrate 29th August as National Sports Day. Actually, it is celebrated on the occasion of the birthday of Hockey Magician Indian player Major Dhyan Chand. This time the theme of National Sports Day is 'Sports for promoting peaceful and inclusive societies'.

DISCUSSION ON INCOME DERIVED FROM COMMONS

PNS : RANCHI

'National Level Brief on Economic Valuation of Land Commons in India', a brief highlighting the economic value of Commons by estimating the income derived from Commons and its socio-economic impact, was discussed at the Commons Convening on Tuesday (27 August 2024). The brief - compiled by Common Ground, Foundation for Ecological Security (FES), Federation University, and International Food Policy Research Institute - cites data and insights from a paper titled 'Valuing Ecosystem Services provided by Land Commons in India: Implications for Research and Policy'. The brief identifies 66.5 million hectares of total Land Commons Area and values it at an average annual value of INR 6.6 lakh crore (USD 90.5 billion). It further breaks down this total valuation into ecosystem services that

contribute to making human life both possible and worth living. The convening also discussed Our Commons, a comprehensive handbook which elucidates terms like Commons, Commoning and community stewardship, what it means to India, and the ways communities connect to them. The book highlights data points, legal frameworks, case studies and legislative efforts, and chart the way towards restoring Commons in India. On Day 2 of the Commons Convening, Arun Maira, former member of Planning Commission of India moderated a session on 'Samaj, Sarkar, and Bazaar' highlighting the linkages between community, governments, and markets. The panelists in the plenary included Thomas Isaac, former finance minister, Kerala; Jahnvi Andharia, Director and Research Fellow Institute of Social Studies Trust, and Mekhala Krishnamurthy, Professor, Ashoka University.

Bokaro Police crack down on traffic violations, strengthen Road Safety measures

PNS : BOKARO

Under the direction of the Superintendent of Police Bokaro Pujya Prakash and the leadership of Ashish Kumar Mehli, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Traffic, a special drive was conducted by the officers and staff of the traffic police station. The campaign aimed to raise public awareness about road safety and was carried out across long-distance buses, heavy vehicles, four-wheelers, three-wheelers, and two-wheelers. During the drive, a breath analyzer was used to conduct checks for drunk driving. Violations such as wrong-side driving, driving without a license, riding without a helmet, not wearing seat belts, and other document-related infractions were also examined. Vehicles found violating the Motor Vehicles Act were fined, resulting in a total collection of ₹3,01,650.



Notably Bokaro Police efforts are commendable, and such initiatives are essential in promoting a culture of responsible driving, ultimately contributing to safer roads for everyone. The community's positive response to this

drive further underscores the importance of ongoing public awareness campaigns. The Bokaro police deserve recognition and appreciation for their continued vigilance and commitment to protecting lives on the road.

DPS Bokaro Principal receives innovative educator award in Paris

PNS : BOKARO

Dr. A.S. Gangwar, the Principal of DPS Bokaro, has been awarded the prestigious European Excellence and Innovative Educator Award. The award was presented by The Thames International University during the

Indo-European Education and Leadership Summit 2024, held in Paris, France. Organized by the Centre for Educational Development (CED) Foundation in collaboration with NITI Aayog and Global Talk Education Foundation, this summit recognized Dr. Gangwar

for his outstanding contributions to the field of education.

Dr. Priyadarshi Nayak, Founder Chairman of CED, bestowed the award upon Dr. Gangwar, acknowledging his unwavering dedication, extensive experience, and remarkable achievements in education. The summit celebrated his commitment to fostering value-based education within the school community, emphasizing integrity, empathy, and the development of a future-oriented learning ecosystem.

During the summit, Dr. Gangwar was lauded for his efforts in shaping the character and values of the next generation. He received a certificate, plaque, and sash as part of the honor. Additionally, NITI Aayog presented him with a certificate of extraordinary dedication for his commitment to value-based education.

Dr. Gangwar has previously been recognized with several prestigious awards at international educational summits in Norway, Dubai, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Bangladesh.





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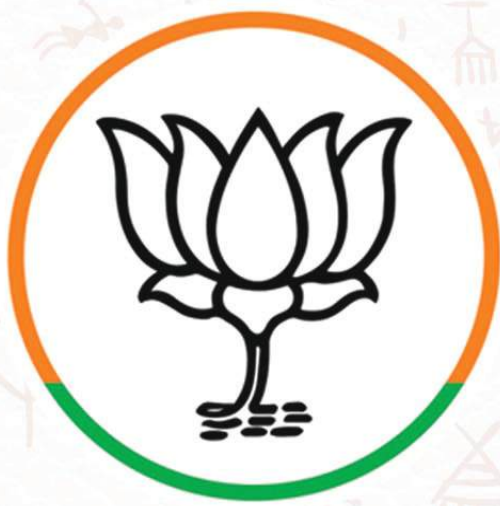
मुक्त कराने का संकल्प लेकर

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कोल्हान टाइगर

श्री चंपाई सोरेन जी

का हार्दिक स्वागत है



Providing better health facilities to people priority of Govt: CM

CM distributes appointment letters to 365 CHO of State

PNS : RANCHI

Chief Minister Hemant Soren today said that the government has made a large number of appointments in various departments in the last 4 years to run the system in a strong and systematic manner. This series of appointments is continuing. Today the state government is posting 365 Community Health Officers (CHOs) in various community health centers of the state. All the newly appointed Community Health Officers will work as an integral part of the state government from today. All the newly appointed CHOs are becoming such a link of the state government, where they will have big responsibilities of the health sector on their shoulders. The system of the state government in the health sector has to be easily delivered to the general public through them only, hence their role will be important in the creation of a healthy Jharkhand.



Chief Minister Hemant Soren distributes appointment letters to selected Community Health Officers (CHO) during a programme at Project building in Ranchi on Thursday. PNS

Even today, many people are engaged in traditional methods of health treatment based on incomplete knowledge of exorcism and herbs. Due to this, sometimes such incidents are heard, which is a matter of concern. Therefore, all of you have to connect with faith towards the health of the people of the state. He said that all the newly appointed CHOs are also in the dual role of doctor and nurse. Overall, all of you will be in the role of all-rounder players of the health department.

The CM said that better work cannot be done unless we have manpower. Today is the age of technology. Now gradually robotic system is making its place in all things. Industries have been completely mechanized. The utility of machines has increased in the field of health as well, but even then people go to different states for good doctors and good health facilities. At the same time, due to good doctors in Jharkhand, patients from other states also come here. Your role should also be such that people are drawn towards you.

The CM said that we are constantly making efforts regarding the health department. The way the state government has made an action plan for the health sector, very soon we will provide a strong health system in this state, so that no one from here needs to go to other states for treatment. He said that the common people will remain healthy only when the health department itself remains healthy. For this, a provision of Rs 5 crore has been made in the annual budget, so that the cleanliness and maintenance of health centers can be done in a better way.

He said that under the Chief Minister Hospital Operation and Maintenance Scheme, the government is providing Rs 75 lakh to the district's Sadar Hospitals, Rs 50 lakh to the sub-divisional hospital, Rs 10 lakh to the Community Health Center / Referral Hospital and Rs 5 lakh to the Primary Health Center, Rs 2 lakh per year to the Health Sub Center / Ayushman Arogya Center.

Himanta's allegations baseless about State Police: JMM

PNS: RANCHI

Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), on Thursday, alleged that Assam Chief Minister (CM) Himanta Biswa Sarma has said undemocratic things about the police administration and he has levelled baseless allegation on Jharkhand Police. The Party said that it is hardly possible to find an example in history that a head of a State or a responsible person accuses the police department of another State.



JMM General Secretary Supriyo Bhattacharya addresses media persons at the party office in Ranchi on Thursday. PNS

Addressing a press meet JMM General Secretary cum Spokesperson Supriyo Bhattacharya said that an incident took place in Assam two years ago, Biswa was the CM at that time too. "At that time, Assam Police had a dispute with Manipur Police. There was even a situation of firing from both sides. Both started arresting each other's personnel. Assam started this kind of confrontation between the two police departments," he added.

first information is given to the Secretary of the Governor of that State. If a Minister travels, the principal secretary of the CM of that State is informed about it first. Along with this, the top officials of the police department are also informed. Special branch police is also included in this. The police personnel provided by the special branch for the security of the Minister are in plain clothes. All this happens under a protocol. This happens all over the Country. Under this protocol, ministers or other related persons are given security," he added.

Yesterday Champai Soren was in his post as a minister. He is also the former Chief Minister of the State. When he went to Delhi, security was provided according to this status and protocol. According to the protocol, information about Champai's program and visit to Delhi was also given to the concerned State and officials in advance. Biswa Sarma must have been aware of this," he added.



Governor Santosh Kumar Gangwar distributes motorized tricycles among divyang beneficiaries during the inaugural ceremony of 'Divya Kala Mela' at Harmu Ground in Ranchi on Thursday. Pix by Vinay Murmu

Two youths arrested in Advocate murder case

PNS : RANCHI

Advocate Gopi Krishna was murdered in Madhukam of Sukhdevnagar police station area on August 2. After that, both the criminals of this case, Roshan Munda and Sandeep Kalindi, were arrested. Based on the secret information received by SSP Chandan Sinha, the police team led by Kotwali Dy SP Prakash Soye took action and caught Khemlal Kalindi from his Brother-in-Law's house in Simdega.

Krishna, while fleeing, they gave a country-made pistol and bullets to Khemlal Kalindi, who is Sandeep Kalindi's brother, to hide and also helped both the criminals in escaping. Since then, the police was searching for Khemlal, he added. On interrogation, Khemlal told that he has hidden the weapon in Mudla hill near his house. After this, the police team recovered the weapon, he added.

Meanwhile, The SSP informed that a big drug racket has been exposed under the leadership of Kotwali Dy SP Prakash Soye in Sukhdev Nagar police station area of Ranchi. In the police raid, 105 packets of brown sugar and three kg of ganja hidden in the basement of the house have been recovered.

Cabinet nod to Govt jobs for kin of martyred Agniveer, hike in DA



Chief Minister Hemant Soren holds a meeting with senior officials at Project building in Ranchi on Thursday. PNS

The State Cabinet today gave its nod to provide financial assistance and jobs to dependents of martyred Agniveer. The decision to this effect was taken at a cabinet meet chaired by Chief Minister Hemant Soren. Many proposals were approved in the cabinet meeting held in Project Bhawan on Thursday under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Hemant Soren. Cabinet Secretary Vandana Dadel said that Jharkhand government will provide financial assistance to the dependents of the martyred Agniveers. Along with this, a dependent will also be given a government job.

in it. Chief Minister Hemant Soren had already announced this. She said that if any Agniveer of Jharkhand is martyred, then his family will be given financial help of Rs 10 lakh by the state government. Along with this, a member of the family will also be given a government job. Agnipath is a new HR Management scheme for Defence Forces. Candidates inducted through this scheme will be called Agniveers. These Agniveers once enrolled into the Armed Forces, will serve for a period of four years. The scheme aims to give young people the opportunity to experience military life without committing to a long-term career, and to help them decide if they want to join the armed forces permanently. Hemant Soren's cabinet approved 44 proposals today. Many important decisions have been taken before the Jharkhand

assembly elections. This also includes the decision to waive the bills of consumers who use up to 200 units of electricity per month. The cabinet has approved the proposal to waive the electricity bills of 39,44,389 consumers. This will put a burden of about Rs 3,584 crore on the government treasury. The cabinet also gave its nod to increase the dearness allowance from 230 per cent to 239 per cent. In the cabinet decision approval of posts in Fingerprint Department under Home Department. DK Tiwari will again become the Election Officer of Jharkhand, his tenure will be for 1 year. Administrative approval of total primary amount of 275 crores for installation of solar power plant in Tenughat Lalpania Power Plant.

National Sports Day at SBPS



To mark the birth anniversary of Major Dhyhan Chand, one of the most iconic figures of Indian sports history, Sarala Birla Public School, Ranchi celebrated National Sports Day highlighting the importance of physical fitness and sportsmanship. The event comprised a cosplay, a song highlighting the importance of sports and speech. Additionally, a student-teacher friendly cricket match was also played in which the students' team emerged victorious. The entire event encouraged students to stay active and engaged in sports. Principal, Paramjit Kaur, necessitated the importance of sports which benefit not just the physique of an individual but also develops the mind. She also encouraged everyone to take up sports actively.

Auto, e-rickshaw drivers' strike ends

The Auto and e-rickshaw drivers have called off their strike on Thursday evening. The strike has been called off after talks with the Transport Secretary and Municipal Commissioner. The auto and e-rickshaw drivers had gone on strike from August 27. The strike of auto drivers started in protest against the change in the rule of running autos within 20 km radius of the capital. The indefinite strike of auto and e-rickshaw drivers continued for three days. Passengers were facing a lot of problems due to the strike of auto drivers. Meanwhile, news was coming that the CM had called the auto drivers for talks on August 30.

SCS celebrates National Sports Day



Surendranath Centenary School celebrated National Sports Day with great fervour, honouring the legacy of Major Dhyhan Chand. The sports club of the school conducted the activities, which began with a special assembly where students took a pledge to prioritize physical fitness and sportsmanship. Students from various classes participated in a range of events. In the senior wing, classes IX to XII participated in Basketball, Volleyball, Shot put, Khokho, 100m race, whereas classes VI to VIII competed in Chess, Carrom, and Tug of war. In addition, students from Pre-Nursery to KG enjoyed fun games, while students from Class I-V engaged in various races, dodge ball, and traditional games like gilli danda and pitto. Class V students visited Birsu Munda Athletics Stadium, interacting with SAI coaches and national players, and participated in a relay race. The school management felicitated two talented Table Tennis players, Alishad Khan and Earth Ghosh of Class VI, who have represented the school at district and state levels and won laurels for the school.

'State Govt scripting stories after being caught spying on Champai'



PNS : RANCHI

State BJP spokesperson Pratul Shahdev today countered the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha's press conference and said that spying was being done on former Chief Minister Champai Soren at the behest of the state government. Pratul said that it seems that the leaders of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha have now started defending the government by making up stories.

hotel, in the next room on the same floor where Champai Soren also stays. After that, these Intelligence Department officers were secretly clicking pictures of the people who came to meet Champai Soren. The biggest question is that when two Intelligence Department officers were deputed for Champai Soren's security, why this information was not given to Champai Soren?" he asked.

officers were released after signing a bond," he said. Pratul said it is clear that Hemant Soren, being disturbed, crossed all political limits and was spying on Champai Soren ji, the former Chief Minister who is of the same age as his father. Pratul said that now Jharkhand Police is issuing a press release in defence. When two AK-47s of Chief Minister Hemant Soren's house guard were recovered during ED raid at the house of power broker Prem Prakash, they had said a very unbelievable and ridiculous thing about keeping the AK-47s by giving the excuse of rain. Today, after being caught in the spying case, they are making an excuse of security. This is their old habit. Pratul said that BJP has already demanded that a sitting judge of the High Court should investigate this entire matter and it should also be investigated that whose political opponents' phones are being tapped illegally by this government and whose phones have been put on surveillance?

Ramdas Soren to replace Champai in State Cabinet

Champai Soren Set to Join BJP in a Grand Ceremony on Friday



PNS : RANCHI

Ramdas Soren, a senior leader of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) from the Kolhan region, is poised to step into the role previously held by former Chief Minister Champai Soren in the Jharkhand cabinet this Friday.



Simultaneously, Champai Soren will make his official switch to the BJP in Ranchi, where he will be welcomed by Union Minister and Jharkhand election-in-charge Shivraj Singh Chauhan, along with co-election in-charge Himanta Biswa Sarma.

refuted these claims. Both Ramdas and Champai Soren, along with Shibu Soren, were instrumental in the Jharkhand movement that led to the formation of the state. Ramdas Soren is also recognized for his strong influence within the tribal communities in the Kolhan region. Champai Soren tendered his resignation from the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha and his ministerial position late on Wednesday evening. In the meantime, the BJP has organized a grand ceremony on August 30 to formally induct Champai Soren into the party. The event will be attended by State in-charge Laxmikant Vajpayee, election in-charge Shivraj Singh Chauhan, and co-in-charge Himanta Biswa Sarma. Champai Soren is expected to join the BJP along with thousands of his supporters, under the leadership of BJP State President and former Chief Minister Babul Marandi. Meanwhile, Marandi said that in the assembly elections, the state BJP will make a resolution that touches all and is inclusive in accordance with the aspirations of the people. Marandi was addressing a press conference at the state office today. He said that the party's manifesto committee is doing this work under the coordination of MLA Anant Ojha. He said that in the coming days, three state level leaders will visit each district on behalf of the manifesto making committee, who will establish dialogue with different groups and sections of the society and collect suggestions.



OPINION 6
HOW MEDIA SHAPES
PUBLIC PERCEPTION

WORLD 8
EU URGED TO RETHINK TIES
WITH ISRAEL OVER GAZA

MONEY 11
INDIA PLANS REPAIRABILITY INDEX FOR
MOBILE, ELECTRONICS TO TACKLE E-WASTE

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12 SPORTS

Jammu or Kashmir, India will not spare Pakistani terrorists



A security personnel keeps vigil during pre-dawn cordon and search operation after reports of suspicious movement, leading to an exchange of fire, in Rajouri district, on Thursday

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

As electioneering gains momentum across different parts of Jammu and Kashmir in the run-up to the first round of polling on September 18, the terrorist handlers sitting across the Line of Control (LoC) in Pakistan are hell-bent on disturbing the peaceful conduct of Assembly polls, being held after a gap of 10 long years. On Thursday, the troops of the Indian army eliminated at least three terrorists while they were attempting to infiltrate inside the Indian territory along the LoC in

the frontier district of Kupwara. These terrorists were gunned down by the alert troops in two separate anti-infiltration operations along the line of control in the Machhal and Tangdhar sectors of Kupwara. This is the second major incident involving terrorists after the announcement of the Assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir on August 16. On August 19, a heavily armed group of Pakistani terrorists targeted an area domination patrol party comprising jawans of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and Special Operations

Group of Jammu Kashmir Police (JKP) in the remote Duddu Basantgarh area of Udhampur in which one Inspector-rank CRPF officer sacrificed his life in the line of duty. Official sources said troops deployed along the LoC in the anti-infiltration grid could pick up the movement of the terrorists and neutralised them before they could breach the Anti-Infiltration Obstacle system (AIOS). Meanwhile, efforts are being made to create a conducive atmosphere for holding of election. The Centre has already rushed additional companies of para-

military forces to be deployed on ground zero to instill confidence among the voters. During the recently held Lok Sabha polls the Union Territory witnessed over 58 per cent voter turnout across five Parliamentary constituencies. The Election Commission of India is aiming to further improve the voter percentage turnout during the Assembly polls. In the Jammu region, security forces had also established initial contact with a group of foreign terrorists in the Kheri Mohra Lathi & Danthal areas under the jurisdiction of Budhal police station, Rajouri, past midnight. After a brief exchange of firing as the security forces rushed additional troops to cordon the area the terrorists, taking advantage of the inclement weather, may have fled the area. Residents in the area also claimed heavy firing in the Lathi area of Khwas around midnight. In Srinagar, Chinara Corps while confirming the killing of two terrorists in the Machhal sector of Kupwara posted on X, "Two terrorists have been eliminated in the ongoing anti-infiltration operation in general area Machhal, Kupwara. Two AK-47 Rifles, one Pistol, four Hand Grenades, and other war-like stores were recovered". The troops were still carrying out the searches in the area to rule out the presence of more infiltrators.



Delhi drowns, yet again

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Incessant rain since Wednesday midnight in Delhi and its neighbouring areas led to a complete collapse of city's drainage infrastructure causing severe waterlogging and traffic congestions in many parts of the national Capital. There were reports of tree falling and power outages in several areas. According to reports from civic agencies, most of the low-lying areas and underpasses were inundated with rainwater. Visuals showed vehicles struggling to negotiate heavily waterlogged roads and pedestrians wading through ankle to knee-deep water on most roads, with underpasses almost completely submerged. There was also the risk of an overflow of sewers in many areas. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) received a total of 34 calls regarding waterlogging and tree falling from different parts of the city in 12 hours till 6 pm. According to the India

Meteorological Department (IMD), the Safdarjung Observatory, the city's primary weather station, recorded 77 mm of rainfall bringing the total rainfall for the monsoon season to 825.5 mm. This figure has already exceeded Delhi's annual average rainfall of 762.3 mm. According to Mahesh Palawat of Skymet Weather Services, Delhi's annual average rainfall is 762.3 mm and the city has already received 825.5 mm so far. August has seen unprecedented rainfall as the number of rainy days shot up to 25 which is the highest number of rainy days reported for the month in the last 13 years, according to IMD record from 2011 to 2024. There were 22 rainy days reported in August 2012, which is the second-highest mark in this period. Moreover, the month received 378.5 mm of rainfall, the city's highest in 12 years, according to the IMD, surpassing the previous high of 321.4 mm recorded in August 2013.

Gujarat flooded with merciless rains

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

The situation in rain-battered Gujarat improved slightly on Thursday as the rainfall activity subsided, but Vadodara and some other parts of the State are still reeling under a flood-like situation due to overflowing rivers while the authorities continue the rescue and relief operations. Rain-related incidents have claimed the lives of 26 people in three days till Wednesday, the authorities said earlier. More than 18,000 people have been relocated and around 1,200 people rescued from flood-affected areas in the state. In some cases, choppers were used by the security forces to take people to safer locations, State Emergency Operation Centre (SEOC) said in its latest update. Vadodara, the worst-hit city due to recent downpour, heaved a sigh of relief as the water level of Vishwamitri river has come down from 37 feet to 32 feet in the morning. However, several low-lying areas are still inundated. The river had crossed the danger mark of 25 feet on Tuesday morning following heavy rains and the release of water from Ajwa dam. In a post on X, Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel said, "Gujarat has been receiving incessant rains for the last three days. Prime Minister Narendra Modi called me up today on the second straight day and inquired about the situation." Modi spoke to Patel for the second consecutive day and took stock of the situation. He also asked the CM to ensure that proper steps are taken to prevent the spread of diseases post floods.

Me Too travels from Kerala to Tamil Nadu

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The MeToo controversy rocking the Malayalam film industry is set to spread over to Tamil Nadu. Vishal Reddy, popularly known as Vishal to fans, said on Thursday that the disclosures would start surfacing in the coming days. "This is not a phenomenon confined to Malayalam films alone. We have many skeletons in the cupboard which will tumble out soon," said Vishal in a brief interaction with media persons at Chennai. Vishal is the president of Tamil Film Producers Council. Meanwhile, Siddique, veteran Malayalam actor who had to quit as general secretary of Association of Malayalam Movie Artists following allegations by some actresses that they were harassed by him, was in for a shock on Thursday as a young actress filed a complaint against him with Thiruvananthapuram Police for rape and physical assault. "The incident took place in 2016 after the preview show of a Malayalam film. After the show was over Siddique asked me to accompany him to Mascot Hotel owned by Kerala State Tourism Development Corporation where he sexually abused and



assaulted me," said the actress in her complaint. The police inspected the hotel and reportedly found that the actress and Siddique had stayed in the hotel on the day she mentioned in the complaint. If proved correct, Siddique would get imprisonment for seven years. Actor and the CPI(M) MLA Mukesh got a reprieve from the Ernakulam District and Sessions Judge who asked the cops not to arrest the actor till September 3. Mukesh had approached the court on Thursday morning claiming that the allegations were baseless and have been made with ulterior motives. But CPI(M)'s Kerala leadership announced that there was no need for Mukesh to resign as the MLA. "This is a mere charge and it is

for the police and court to prove the authenticity of the allegation. There were many serious allegations of rape and assault against Congress party leaders in the past and none of them had resigned. Why you are singling out Mukesh?" asked E P Jayarajan, convener, Left Democratic Front and one of the CPI(M)'s top leaders in Kerala. CPI(M) ideologue MA Baby with interests in Malayalam film industry supported Mukesh on Thursday and other artists involved in the cases. Marxist leadership pointed out that Congress MLA Eldhose Kunnappillil had raped a schoolteacher in the capital city and had gone underground for weeks to evade arrest.

Kolkata horror gets murkier

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The parents of the victim lady doctor of RG Kar Medical College Hospital rejected the claims of the Kolkata Police that the portions of the seminar hall where the body of the said doctor was allegedly found in a semi-nude condition had been cordoned off and that the outsiders were not allowed to go near the place of occurrence. The lady doctor was allegedly raped and murdered in the early hours of August 9. "First of all we deny and reject the claim made by the Kolkata

Police that the place of occurrence had been safely cordoned off because when we reached the place we found no such cordon," said parents of the doctor who was allegedly raped and murdered in the night of August 8, adding, "not only we were kept waiting for more than three hours before we could see the body of our daughter... but also when we reached there we were told by the staff at that hospital that authorities were inspecting the area before which we could not be let in." The mother of the victim said, "They kept us, the parents of the only child who was dead,



Womens participate in a rally to protest against the alleged rape and murder of a postgraduate trainee doctor, in Kolkata, on Thursday

waiting for three hours but they allowed outsiders to vitiate the area leading to destruction of evidence... now

we wonder what is left for the CBI to find on the spot that could shed light on the crime." The parents also referred to the

bed sheet that was used to cover victim's body complaining how "the sheet was changed three." The mother of the victim doctor said, "My daughter had a red chadhaar with her... which was changed to blue and then green... these three kinds of sheets were on her on three occasions... is this not an example of destruction of evidence... if it is now then what is." Meanwhile the audio tape of the telephone call that went to the victim's family for the first time from the hospital on August nine went viral.

Adani outpaces Ambani in race to riches

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Billionaire Gautam Adani with a net worth of ₹11.6 lakh crore is the richest Indian. He has elbowed out Mukesh Ambani to clinch the top spot in 2024, according to the Hurun India Rich list released on Thursday. Moreover, a new billionaire is being added every five days this year as compared to last year. Interestingly, 2024 had the best for those people whose zodiac sign is cancer, followed by Gemini and Leo. The number of billionaire in India has reached 334 this



year, rising by 29 per cent as compared to 2023. Cancer witnessed an astonishing 84 per cent increase in cumulative wealth. Gemini follows closely, with a notable 77 per cent increase

in wealth. In third place is Leo, with a 68 per cent rise in cumulative wealth. Similarly, Sagittarius, with a 64 per cent wealth increase, and Libra with 61 per cent are also among the top five. Capricorn saw a 58 per cent increase in cumulative wealth followed by Pisces with a 46 per cent increase. Aquarius and Virgo share the eighth spot, each with a 39 per cent increase in wealth. Aries, Scorpio, and Taurus occupy the final spots, with wealth increases of 34 per cent, 33 per cent, and 32 per cent, respectively.

Supreme Court reprimands Telangana CM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Trked over Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's comments towards alleged deal between the BJP and the BRS for securing bail for BRS leader K Kavitha in cases linked to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam, the Supreme Court on Thursday reprimanded him, saying such statements might create apprehensions in minds of people. The top court asked "why should they (politicians) drag the court in political rivalry?". The reprimand came as a three-judge bench of Justices

BR Gavai, PK Mishra, and KV Viswanathan was hearing a plea seeking transfer of the 2015 cash-for-votes case against the Chief Minister to Madhya Pradesh. The petitioners argued he could influence witnesses and tamper with evidence. "Have you read in the newspaper what he said? Just read what he has stated. What sort of statement is this by a responsible chief minister. That might rightly create apprehension in the minds of people. Is this a kind of statement which should be made by a chief minister.

Nitish Kumar's dream for Jarasandh moves closer to reality

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Bihar Government's ambitious plan to construct a grand memorial for Jarasandh, a key figure from the Mahabharata and the ancient king of Magadha with his capital at Girivraja (modern-day Rajgir) at lush green Rajgir wildlife sanctuary, has taken a significant step forward. Recently, the Central Wildlife panel, headed by Union Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav, approved the project, bringing it closer to realisation. Situated in the protected area in Nalanda district, this project includes the installation of an 18-foot tall statue of Jarasandha, various murals depicting his life and achievements, as well as tributes to great freedom fighter and socialist Lok Nayak Jayprakash Narayan also known

as JP. Additionally, the project envisions the construction of an art gallery using prefabricated materials and the renovation of existing park facilities. The project is part of the Jay Prakash Udyan Park situated within the sanctuary and officials pin hopes that it is expected to boost tourism given that it is around 100 km from the State capital Patna, and cultural interest by highlighting Bihar's rich historical and mythological heritage. Because of the want of approval, many installed structures are in dilapidated condition. Given that the project falls within the Rajgir Wildlife Sanctuary, it required extensive consideration for wildlife clearance. The Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife, which is the highest decision-



making body of the Central Government for projects in protected sanctuaries and reserves, has now endorsed the proposal. This approval signifies that the project has met the

necessary environmental and regulatory criteria, as confirmed by an official from the Union Environment Ministry. "The State Government had requested the diversion of

approximately 1.8436 hectares of forest land within the Rajgir Wildlife Sanctuary for the installation of the statue and historic murals, alongside the construction of essential facilities such as toilets, a cafeteria, and an art gallery made of prefabricated structures," said the officials. The proposal has already received recommendations from the State Chief Wildlife Warden, the State Board for Wildlife, and the State Government. According to the minutes of the meeting of the NBWL, the Chief Wildlife Warden noted that the sanctuary was officially notified in 1978, with park development commencing prior to that and opening to the public in 1979. "The ongoing renovation and provision of basic amenities are crucial to maintaining and enhancing the park for public

use," said the minutes quoting the Bihar Government officials about the project being overseen by the Divisional Forest Officer of the Nalanda Forest Division. Following deliberations, the Standing Committee recommended the proposal with the stipulation that the region's flora and fauna remain undisturbed. The Rajgir Wildlife Sanctuary is home to various species, including wild boar, cheetal, jungle fowl, porcupine, hare, langur, monkey, and jackal. The central wildlife panel emphasised that the legal status of the land will remain as part of the sanctuary and will be dedicated solely to eco-tourism purposes. The project proponent has assured that no trees will be cut down as the area falls within an Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) for

which the final notification was issued in 2017. The park, established in 1979, has been in use since its opening. However, many of its structures are now in disrepair. The planned upgrades include the installation of essential amenities such as toilets, seating benches, platforms, drinking water facilities, landscaping, and water drainage systems. These improvements are vital to prevent further deterioration of the park. "Upgrading the park is aimed at integrating the ecological, cultural, and historical aspects of Rajgir," said officials. "This initiative will bring the glory of ancient India to the forefront, providing educational opportunities for park visitors and enhancing their understanding of the region's rich heritage," he said.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

A close contest!

The rural-urban divide and the Jat-non-Jat paradigm could be crucial in deciding the Haryana assembly elections

As Haryana gears up for its upcoming elections, the state's political landscape is rife with complexities that reflect broader societal divides. Central to this is the rural-urban divide and the Jat-non-Jat paradigm, both of which are poised to play a crucial role in determining the electoral outcome. The recent request by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to the Election Commission of India (ECI) to change the polling date has added another layer of intrigue to an already charged atmosphere. Haryana's political fabric is deeply influenced by the rural-urban divide, a reflection of the state's socio-economic disparities. The urban areas, particularly key centres like Gurugram, Faridabad, and Rohtak, have traditionally been BJP strongholds. These cities, with their high migrant populations, represent a significant voter base for the BJP. However, the upcoming election is complicated by the timing of the polling date. Scheduled for October 1, the date falls within a period that could easily be extended into a six-day holiday, thanks to overlapping weekends and public holidays. The BJP fears that urban voters, particularly those in the NCR, may choose to use this extended break to travel, thereby potentially lowering voter turnout in areas where the party has a stronghold. Historically, rural turnout in Haryana has been higher than urban turnout, which could tilt the scales against the BJP if urban voters are absent.



Another crucial factor in the upcoming elections is the Jat-non-Jat divide. Jats, who form a dominant social group in Haryana, have traditionally been aligned with the Congress, especially in rural areas. The BJP, on the other hand, has found support among the non-

Jat communities, particularly in urban regions. This division was evident in the 2024 general elections, where the BJP won all five Lok Sabha seats in non-Jat dominated areas. The BJP's support base in rural areas has been eroded, particularly among Jats, who have been disillusioned by the central government's response to their protests. The Congress is working to capitalise on this discontent by consolidating a Jat-Dalit-Muslim alliance in rural areas, which could pose a significant challenge to the BJP. In light of these challenges, the BJP's request to change the polling date has sparked controversy. The party argues that the potential for a long weekend could lead to lower voter turnout, particularly in urban areas where it has a strong base. The Congress has dismissed the BJP's request for date change as a sign of nervousness. The Election Commission's decision on the date change will be crucial, as it could influence the electoral outcome in a state where every vote counts. With ten years of incumbency and a narrowing margin of victory, the BJP is leaving no stone unturned to secure a favourable result. Whether the ECI will accommodate the BJP's request remains to be seen, but the upcoming elections in Haryana are shaping up to be a closely contested battle.

PICTALK



Visitors at India Gate enjoy the rains in New Delhi

RANJAN DIMRI

Emotional intelligence: The secret of outstanding leadership

As the next era of leadership unfolds, the demand for emotionally intelligent leaders has never been clearer—are you ready to rise to the challenge?

Today's corporate climate is fast-paced and continually evolving. Emotional intelligence (EI) is the secret weapon that distinguishes great pioneers from average ones; it is accompanied by a long list of excellent technical qualifications. But what precisely is this elusive talent, and why is it becoming a defining characteristic of outstanding leaders? It is the ability to control our emotions and understand and empathise with others. It forms a link between self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. To speak more specifically to leaders, emotional intelligence is not only desirable but even more crucial for leaders than the desire to influence others and inspire their teams to greatness. This is where EI comes into play, somewhat like the oil that keeps the motor of leadership running. Emotionally intelligent leaders express ideas with clarity and empathy, make judgements based on both logic and emotion and maintain strong team morale and productivity. They prefer to ride out the



storm rather than be tossed by it, and instead look to harness it for growth and innovation. But how do aspiring leaders cultivate this crucial ability? It begins with reflection. Frequent self-analytical practices, such as journaling or meditation, may promote insight. Encouraging feedback—even the difficult kind—and viewing failures as opportunities for improvement are also important components. The most critical aspect is empathy and listening to others rather than simply hearing them. This final trait will propel a good leader to new heights. Take, for example, Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella. Since the beginning of his term in 2014, he has been considered as the driving

force behind the company's cultural shift from fierce competitiveness to collaborative innovation. So, what's the magic? A leadership style relies mostly on emotional intelligence. Empathy-driven continuous learning and development mindset not only rebuilt Microsoft's reputation but also its financial performance to unprecedented heights. Another excellent example is Jacinda Ardern, the former Prime Minister of New Zealand. Ardern's leadership style, which includes speaking with compassion, making clear tough decisions, and uniting the country in the face of tragedy, highlights the importance of emotional intelligence in political leadership. Looking ahead, it is clear that one aspect of good lead-



RACHNA LAKHPATRI

ership will remain central: emotional intelligence. While the next wave of technology will undoubtedly replace occupations in the future, leaders in any area will need to possess increasingly humane qualities such as empathy, self-awareness, and emotional regulation. The message is clear: to be an effective leader in the twenty-first century, we must continue to improve our emotional intelligence alongside our technical proficiency. Whether you aspire to be an established CEO or a team leader, investing in your emotional intelligence can pay you in terms of career success and personal fulfilment. Remember that developing emotional intelligence is a lifetime journey that promises to improve not only your leadership style but also your overall approach to life and relationships. As leaders, we commit to leaving a legacy based on how we make others feel and the relationships we build. The future of leadership is in emotional intelligence: isn't it time you took the initiative? (The author is a freelance writer; views are personal)

How media shapes public perception

In a world where sensationalism often trumps substance, it's time to rethink how we engage with the news and what it says about the society we've built.



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

The last few weeks have seen some major convulsions at the basic level of the Indian society. The listing can be long, depending upon the predisposition and values of the person making a list, or indeed brief if this person wants to strike a judgmental posture on what he considers important. This debate can merit its own resolution but the common-sense approach would make it obvious that the NEET examination and the Kolkata rape and murder episode have touched a very large number of minds and people who are in touch with the media.

This itself raises another basic question. That has to do with the role of the media in attributing to an episode both circulation and importance. The reach and mode of the media become critical in identifying an issue and formulating it. One of the farthest reach of a media is through the radio. By and large, the radio is controlled by governmental agencies. This is followed by television, which is controlled both by the government and by some powerful private media houses. Both clusters claim a popular following, and both are accused of biases. Hence, to a fairly complicated question on what constitutes much of the news, there is a plausible answer: that which the media of the day decides to project and sustain as news. Thus it is that the role of governance/ownership of the mode of the media, in the identification of news, and sustaining it becomes critical. This brings us to a basic question: what constitutes news and how is it maintained at the frontlines? What is projected in so-called news is impossible for a private citizen to verify. That raises the question of the credibility of a channel. The credibility of the channel is itself a matter of popular perception, and it is also nurtured by reputation and conviction. To understand the gravity and implications of the statements and exposures above, one has to realize that news is both essential and dependent



upon the larger intellectual culture of the community where the news circulates. If the community is mature, it has developed safe parameters of credibility and conviction, and therefore one can be reasonably sure that what is being circulated is true. By and large, globally, the media, also, has its methods of checks and balances, standards and credibility, of reach and sustenance. Hence, whereas it may be a worthwhile debate to consider what constitutes news: origin, sustenance, and dissemination of news has certain standards across the globe. These, are like many things in life, having largely acknowledged standards without much vagueness. These are considered givens of a civil society. Hence the conclusion that if the general media projects something, it must be the truth, or at least the truth in good faith. Reference has been made above to the NEET episode and the Kolkata murder and rape case. The jury is out on both cases, and a conclusions are awaited. The civil society is maintained on such pillars. However, two questions emerge: given the attention which both of these cases have received, is this the only news which affected



THE BASIC TRUTH IS ALSO THAT IT IS NOT SOME INTRANSIENT STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS OF THE MEDIA THAT SUSTAINS ITS LIFE BUT THE ECONOMIC FORCES WHICH NURTURE ITS EXISTENCE

the wellbeing of the people, and is there a question of the proportion and inter-se importance of news? To debate the importance of both of the two episodes mentioned above would be a pointless exercise. However, by the same token, it is true that there are other activities effecting every-day living and have been, in a manner of speaking, overlooked. Hence, after resolving the concerns related to credibility arises an issue of the relative importance of the items being reported. It would be a common place to say that sensational news spreads faster and catches more attention than routine news, no matter how important it may be. Good news travels slower and catches less attention. The healthiness of a society needs to be assessed against objective indicators of health, and clearly one of them would be how much mileage does a positive news get as compared to the mileage a negative news gets. The strength of a society comes not only from handling the unhappy episodes which lead to news but also from giving positive news the importance that it deserves. It is here again that the media need continuous help in introspection. The basic truth

is also that it is not some intransient strength and weakness of the media that sustains its life but the economic forces which nurture its existence. As indicated above, if the media disseminates sensational information, it is because that kind of information is read more widely and followed more avidly. The problem therefore originates not just with the media but with the people who use the media. Further, it becomes a question of mass contact and mobilization of mass opinion. The time has come when one needs to revisit what constitutes a civil society and how a civil society exercises its choices and preferences. The economic and financial flows merely run in the channels which have been created with such efforts. Essentially, therefore, a question is: what is the kind of society which one has given to oneself and how do its norms get modified and operated, also, through the media? As indicated above, this is merely the sub-structure to a much larger edifice that the society has built for itself. (The writer is a well-known management consultant of international repute. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A STATUE OF POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY

Madam — The recently collapsed statue of Shivaji in Maharashtra, is a grim reflection of political expediency. That a statue of one of the most revered and respected figures of Maharashtra has collapsed barely nine months after its inauguration, speaks volumes about the malpractices that must have gone into the installation of a statue that was expected to last a good part of a century. Instead of expressing remorse and regret, the political class is doing what it knows best — ducking responsibility and pointing fingers. The pedestal and all that remains of the statue ought to be cordoned off, and preserved as a reminder of the gross failure of the present day dispensation. Near it, a stone plaque should read — This site is an admission of the government's failure to do justice to the memory of Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, whose statue collapsed just nine months after it was dedicated to the people of Maharashtra. We promise that this will never happen again. We hope to be forgiven by the people of the state with whose money the statue project was commissioned. To atone for our grave mistake, another statue is being constructed nearby. We assure you that it will last many many years and be a fitting tribute to a historical figure who is so dear to our hearts. I know too well that the shameful episode will soon be forgotten by our netas as well as the public.

Avinash Godbole | Dewas

IMPLEMENT MISSION SHAKTI

Madam — Many people are prone to depression due to the harsh realities of life like low income, pollution, bad relationships, lack of education, etc. During this post-depression, if a person does not hope to become well, then it is a sign of mental illness. The consequences of inaction are dire. Without effective support systems, women in the country are left vulnerable to violence, harass-

The logic of Changing election date



Haryana BJP's State Election Management Committee has logically put forward the view that there is a weekend holiday before the assembly election date on October

1 and there are some holidays after that. INLD has also agreed to postpone the assembly elections. Opposition parties are hell-bent on condemning every aspect of the ruling party. Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar has expressed concern over low voting percentage where people use long weekend holidays on the day of polling. Shifting the election dates will definitely help in increasing the voting percentage. Earlier also, the dates of elections were changed in Rajasthan, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. Therefore, the change of date is not important but the change of mind of voters will be more meaningful. The election Commission is a statutory independent body and should remain firm on its stand rather than bowing to the political pressure which often times is self serving than for the public good.

Yugal Kishore Sharma | Faridabad

ment and exploitation. Every day, stories emerge of women who have been failed by the very systems that were supposed to protect them. These are not just isolated incidents; they are symptoms of a much larger problem — a systemic failure to prioritise women's safety. It's time that the country wakes up to the harsh realities and takes a hard look at where we stand and acknowledge that we are failing our women. The outrage over the incident in Kolkata should serve as a wake-up call for the nation. We cannot afford to delay any longer. We need immediate action to fully implement Mission Shakti in a broader sense and the narrow minded approach of neglecting women must be a priority. In conclusion, addressing the root causes of depression and systemic failures is crucial to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of women in our country. The recent incident in Kolkata is a stark reminder that we cannot continue to ignore the harsh realities faced by women daily. It's time for collective action to fully implement initiatives like

Mission Shakti and move beyond narrow-minded neglect. Only by prioritizing women's safety and mental health can we hope to create a society where every woman is protected, respected, and empowered. The time for change is now.

K Subramaniam | Mumbai

REVIVAL OF VIVACITY

Madam — As an avid reader of The Pioneer, I am delighted to see that Vivacity is being published regularly for the past few months. I always enjoy reading Vivacity and Agenda, the reviews about art exhibitions, culture and movies being my personal favourites. Your past few features have been great, especially the Rakshbandhan one. Today, I read about the Heritage Walk and I will definitely visit Purana Qila now. The food review section is and has always been great!!!

Atharv Singh | Delhi

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

UKRAINE: INDIA'S DIPLOMATIC TIGHTROPE

PM Modi's historic Ukraine visit signals new foreign policy approach



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Ukraine, last week, comes at an interesting churn of events on the geopolitical landscape. The visit, a first, by any Indian PM since Ukraine was first carved out as an independent sovereign nation, had many layers of interpretations regarding India's new foreign policy approach. The timing was significant as this trip came barely six weeks after PM Modi's state visit to Moscow. The Russia trip was widely criticised by India's strategic ally US, primarily due to the timing.

Even as PM Modi was in Moscow, the NATO leaders were huddled together in Washington, discussing military aid for Ukraine. Meanwhile, Russia bombed a children's hospital in Ukraine leading to the loss of lives for civilians and children. President Zelenskyy had condemned India's PM's first visit to Russia during his third term and the US State Department had also issued stern statements regarding the trip. Indian PM had also avoided participating in the Peace Summit organised in June, to find a political solution to the Russia-Ukraine crisis. The recent visit by PM Modi to Ukraine, even as Defence Minister Rajnath Singh was in Washington DC was a statement regarding India's fine balance diplomacy in times of war. President Biden, called up the Indian PM soon after his visit to Ukraine to apprise him of the prevailing situation.

The readout released from the White House read "President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. spoke today with Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India to discuss the Prime Minister's recent trip to Poland and Ukraine, as well as the United Nations General Assembly meetings in September. The



President commended the Prime Minister for his historic visits to Poland and Ukraine, the first by an Indian Prime Minister in decades, and for his message of peace and ongoing humanitarian support for Ukraine, including its energy sector. The Leaders affirmed their continued support for a peaceful resolution of the conflict by international law, on the basis of the UN Charter." Interestingly, the Indian PM also spoke to President Biden regarding the ongoing crisis in Bangladesh and expressed concern regarding the safety of minorities, especially Hindus, which was highlighted in the Indian statement after the telephone conversation. The Bangladesh situation omission from the White House readout did create some murmurs across Delhi corridors. India is now making efforts to have its own Europe policy, which is not curated with a Russia factor in mind. For several decades post-independence, the Cold War era, the block approach mostly guided India's foreign policy, especially where Russia was involved. Russia has been a long-standing ally of India and is also one of the biggest exporters of defence equipment.

While maintaining silence on sensitive Russia-related topics has been India's long-standing approach, things began to change in the past few years. There is a growing sense of having an independent need-based foreign policy, amongst the top policymakers. PM Modi initiated the concept of "not a time for war" at multilateral platforms such as G20, which started finding global resonance when vocalising concerns regarding Ukraine and Russia. He upped the narrative with his clear message to Russia during his Moscow visit that permanent solutions could not be found on the battlefield. The joint statement issued post PM Modi's meeting with President Zelenskyy read "

The Indian side reiterated its principled position and focus on peaceful resolution through dialogue and diplomacy. Prime Minister Modi reiterated the need for sincere and practical engagement between all stakeholders to develop innovative solutions that will have broad acceptability and contribute towards early restoration of peace." The message to global leaders, particularly the US and Russia that the recent PM Modi visit highlighted was that India is willing to engage with any nation, even if they may be in opposite camps, to find the best possible outcomes for itself.

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

Prospects of privatisation of PSUs are bleak

As the Modi government shifts its strategy towards 'prudent public wealth management' the prospect of privatising PSBs are increasingly unlikely.



UTTAM GUPTA



Announcing Modi - government's policy on disinvestment of central public sector undertakings (CPSUs) in her Budget speech for FY 2021-22 the Union Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman had talked of privatizing two public sector banks (PSBs) and one insurance company.

A CPSU is an undertaking in which the Central government has majority share holding of more than 50 percent. Disinvestment refers to sale of its shares to private investors. When, such sale results in reduction of the government's shareholding in the CPSU to below 50 percent and concomitant transfer of ownership and management control to private entity, this is termed as privatization. The disinvestment plans have met with disappointing results so far.

During 2021-22, against a target of Rs 175,000 crore, the actual proceeds from share sale of CPSUs were a meager Rs 15,440 crore. During 2022-23, against a target of Rs 65,000 crore, the actual was Rs 31,059 crore. For 2023-24, the actual was Rs 14,564 crore against a target of Rs 30,000 crore which itself was watered down from the budget estimate (BE) of Rs 51,000 crore. As for privatization, except for the sale of Air India to the Tata Group during 2021-22, the government has little to show. Apart from offloading 3.5 percent of its shareholding in the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC), it is selling its stake in the IDBI Bank. The process of selling the latter that started in May 2021 is likely to get consummated during the current FY.

However, it can't be termed as privatization as already the bank was operating as a private lender even as the Centre became its passive shareholder consequent to capital infusions to manage former's bad debt losses. Currently, the government and the LIC collectively own 94.72 per cent of IDBI Bank with shareholding of 45.48 percent and 49.24 percent respectively (the remaining 5.28 percent is with Public shareholders). Of this, the Centre plans to sell a 60.7 percent stake, comprising 30.5 per cent of its own and 30.2 percent of LIC's.

Will the Centre take up selling of PSBs and an insurance company - as promised in the 2021-22 budget? It seems unlikely. If, that were to be the case,



AS FOR PRIVATISATION, EXCEPT FOR THE SALE OF AIR INDIA TO THE TATA GROUP DURING 2021-22, THE GOVERNMENT HAS LITTLE TO SHOW. APART FROM OFFLOADING 3.5 PERCENT OF ITS SHAREHOLDING IN THE LIFE INSURANCE CORPORATION (LIC), IT IS SELLING ITS STAKE IN THE IDBI BANK.

the government ought to have set a target for 'receipts from disinvestment' in its budget for 2024-25. But, it hasn't even as the FM has made a provision for Rs 50,000 crore under the head "miscellaneous capital receipts". This has happened for the first time in a decade.

Second, Team Modi is reviewing its strategy to shift its focus from selling CPSUs to what it euphemistically describes as 'prudent public wealth management (PWM)', supporting not-for-profit enterprises, and ensuring strong presence of state-run firms in strategic sectors'. Banking, insurance and financial services (BIFS) were one of the four strategic sectors mentioned by Nirmala Sitharaman in her budget speech for 2021-22.

BIFS also qualifies for not-for-profit enterprises categorization especially when it comes to PSBs which are expected to contribute to realizing social objectives such as reaching out banking services to remote and inaccessible areas; making concessional credit available to small and marginal farmers and other vulnerable/deprived sections of the society; funding infrastructure development particularly in areas (for instance, rural roads, housing for the poor etc) where private banks may not be so keen to come.

Modi - government's commitment to a strong presence of state-run firms in strategic sectors juxtaposed with support for not-for-profit enterprises clearly signals that it has lost interest in privatizing PSBs and insurance companies.

Third, unlike the previous two terms when BJP had an absolute majority in the Lok Sabha on its own, in the third term, it depends on the support from its major allies namely TDP and JD (U) for implementing far reaching decisions such as privatization. Moreover, in the current political environment wherein even a small move such as 'lateral entry' of specialists from the private sector (the sole intent

behind this step was to deliver more effective governance in sync with contemporary challenges) is opposed by the opposition parties forcing the government to retreat, it wouldn't be inclined to make a big move such as privatization of PSBs.

About a decade back, many of PSBs were on the brink. The present dispensation has made a lot of efforts to them pull back. These included amongst others capital infusion, enactment of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) for expeditious resolution of non-performing assets (NPAs), banks consolidation into fewer entities for achieving scale and greater efficiencies, computerization of bank branches and so on. Today, they are robust and healthy even as the performance of some of them is even better than private banks.

But, we shouldn't miss the big picture. Fundamentally, most of the ills associated with the functioning of CPSUs including PSBs have a lot to do with their continued majority ownership (share holding of more than 50 percent) and control by the government. This brings them under a plethora of controls and monitoring/surveillance/vigilance and has the effect of shackling its management.

Armed with it, the political establishment makes all board level appointments viz. CMD/MD etc and deposes bureaucrats on a bank's board to represent its overwhelming ownership. In other words, the entire board is geared to listen to his master's voice (read the political bosses) when it comes to taking policy decisions or even in its day-to-day running. In the past, meddling in the affairs of PSBs took the form of what came to be known as the cult of 'crony capitalism'.

The businessmen patronized by the ruling class managed loans on considerations other than merit and got them ever-greened (taking

a new loan to payback the earlier one). Neither, the banks insisted on repayment, nor the defaulters had any sense of fear as those who were expected to take action, chose not to.

In the past, the political brass also rode piggy back on PSBs for absorbing losses/liabilities created by populist policies such as supplying power to farmers and households at subsidized rates, (or even free in some states). Be it a spate of bail-outs given to power distribution companies (discoms) or loan waivers given to farmers etc, these inflicted heavy loss on PSBs.

The idea of disinvesting PSBs should be seen as a fitting response to the dire need for reducing bureaucratic interference and granting autonomy to their management for speedy decisions and improved functioning. It was first mooted by the NDA - dispensation under the then, prime minister Vajpayee (1999-2004). It had proposed reduction in government's shareholding in PSBs to less than 50 percent initially and eventually to 33 percent.

In 2015, a RBI committee headed by P Nayak recommended setting up of a bank investment company (BIC) where all government shares in PSBs will be vested and divestment of its shareholding in all PSBs to below 50 percent. It also proposed setting up of an autonomous Bank Boards Bureau (BBB) to select their top management.

In 2020, the RBI recommended reduction in the shareholding of the government in six top PSBs to 51 percent. In a follow up meeting, it went a step further to recommend reduction in government's stake to 26 percent. The 2021-22 budget announcement to privatize two PSBs was a good step forward, though belated. To put it on the backburner now doesn't bode well for banks' health in the long-term.

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

Global interference and India's economic sovereignty

As India rises to become a global superpower, it faces challenges not only from within but also from international entities that aim to disrupt its economic and political stability

The prosperity and progress of a nation hinge on the efficiency of its governance, particularly in upholding the rule of law by those in top constitutional, administrative, and judicial positions. This also involves the transparency and accountability of regulatory regimes across various sectors of law and economy. In our modern era, characterized by freedom, equality, and democracy, many developing countries have emerged from the shadows of colonialism. Despite independence, the remnants of colonialism persist in governance and social structures, and former colonial powers often carry a lingering sense of superiority. This is evident in their interventions in other countries, where they create



V K BAHUGUNA

political and economic crises under the guise of promoting cosmopolitan values. These interventions are particularly harmful to independent and dynamic leaders in Third World countries. A recent example is the destabilization of the Hasina Wazed government in Bangladesh, fueled by agitation with foreign backing. In recent years, such external forces have formed an international cartel, often

referred to as the "deep state." This group, supported by a segment of religious extremists and a political elite, acts against their own country's interests for selfish reasons. This insidious influence is spreading to stable democracies like India. Direct military intervention is difficult in modern times, so these forces resort to destabilizing social, political, and economic fabrics with the help of internal collaborators. They present themselves as the arbiters of morality, creating narratives to discredit certain groups, undermine social harmony, and ultimately destabilize economies. Their goal is to generate public unrest and overthrow democratically elected governments by eroding the state's capacity to man-

age public welfare. This is a fallout of globalization and an attempt to reassert hegemonic control. One prominent example is the Hindenburg Research firm, which targeted Adani Enterprises last year, leading to a severe crash in the Indian stock market and a major political storm just before the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. The Congress party seized the opportunity, and the Supreme Court ordered an inquiry, which eventually discredited Hindenburg's report. However, this month, Hindenburg targeted the SEBI Chairperson, accusing her of investing in Adani companies abroad. Both SEBI and Adani Group denied any wrongdoing, explaining that the investments were made before she took on her



role at SEBI. Similar uproar was seen when the Rafale aircraft deal was signed in 2015. When Hindenburg first targeted Adani, it made a profit of \$4 million, while Adani lost \$153 million in market value. However, this time, the public saw through the ruse, dismissing it as the tantrum of a disgruntled entity. It is common for companies to

establish subsidiaries abroad, and such activities are always under regulatory surveillance, operating within the law. Historically, India lacked a robust private sector, with Tata being the only notable corporate entity during the era of the "license raj." However, thanks to economic liberalization under the Narsimha Rao government, the private sector has grown significantly and now contributes around 27% of the country's GDP. The Indian private sector is now a crucial engine for employment, service delivery, capital flow, and industrial growth. The public sector, on the other hand, focuses on activities serving the general public, funded by tax revenues. Gautam Adani's conglomerate plays a central role in India's ambition to

become the third-largest economy, with its involvement in key sectors like electricity, port management, mining, natural gas, and infrastructure. Among the top taxpayers in 2022-2023, only the State Bank of India (SBI) was a public sector entity, with Reliance Industries leading the list, followed by SBI and HDFC. The GDP at constant prices in May 2024 was tentatively estimated by the Indian Statistical Office at Rs173.82 lakh crore, with real Gross Value Added at Rs158.74 lakh crore for 2023-24, marking an 8% increase over the previous year. Various private sector industries played a pivotal role in this growth. Adani Group dominated the list of top value gainers in 2022, adding Rs 8.42 lakh crore to investor wealth.

When any country challenges the supremacy of these foreign powers, they attempt to destroy it by spending vast sums of money. The 'Make in India' initiative is gradually positioning Adani as a global industrial leader, alongside other Indian giants like Ambani, Tata, and Mahindra. India's technological advancements and the societal contributions of companies like Tata are gaining recognition. This is precisely why foreign forces forge alliances with frustrated leaders and international elements, funding them to gain control over governance. The current government must take stronger actions rather than merely offering rhetoric.

(The writer is a former civil servant; views are personal)

Israel kills prominent militant

AP ■ TULKAREM

The Israeli military said it killed five more militants, including a local commander, early Thursday in the West Bank as it pressed ahead with what appeared to be the deadliest military operation in the occupied territory since the start of the war in Gaza.

Israel says the simultaneous raids across the northern West Bank — which have killed a total of 16 people, nearly all militants, since late Tuesday — are aimed at preventing attacks.

The Palestinians see them as a widening of the Israel-Hamas war aimed at perpetuating Israel's decades-long military rule over the territory.

The Islamic Jihad militant group confirmed that Mohammed Jaber, known as Abu Shujaa, was killed during a raid in the city of Tulkarem. He became a hero for many Palestinians earlier in the year when he was reported killed in an Israeli operation, only to make a surprise appearance at the funeral of other militants, where he was hoisted onto the shoulders of a cheering crowd.

The military said he was killed early Thursday along with

four other militants in a shootout with Israeli forces after the five had hidden inside a mosque. It said Abu Shujaa was linked to numerous attacks on Israelis, including a deadly shooting in June, and was planning more. The military said another militant was arrested in the operation in Tulkarem, and that a member of Israel's paramilitary Border Police was lightly wounded.

Israel launched a large-scale operation in the West Bank overnight into Wednesday. Hamas said 10 of its fighters were killed in different locations, and the Palestinian Health Ministry reported an 11th death, without saying whether he was a fighter or a civilian.

The overall toll of 16 killed in less than two days would make it the deadliest Israeli operation in the West Bank since Hamas' October 7 attack out of Gaza ignited the war there. The Palestinian Health Ministry says over 650 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank since the start of the war. Most appear to have been militants killed in gunbattles during Israeli operations like the one this week, but civilian bystanders and rock-throwing protesters have also been

killed, and the territory saw a surge of settler violence. Israel says the operations are required to prevent attacks on its citizens, which have also risen since the start of the war. Israel captured the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast war, and the Palestinians want all three territories for their future state.

The 3 million Palestinians in the West Bank live under seemingly open-ended Israeli military rule, with the Western-backed Palestinian Authority administering towns and cities. Over 500,000 Jewish settlers, who have Israeli citizenship, live in well over 100 settlements across the territory that most of the international community considers illegal.

The raids have focused on refugee camps that date back to the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation, in which around 700,000 Palestinians fled or were driven out of what is now Israel. Many of the camps are militant strongholds.

Hamas repeated its calls for Palestinians in the West Bank to rise up, calling the raids part of a larger plan to expand the war in Gaza. The militant group has called on security forces loyal to

the Western-backed Palestinian Authority, which cooperate with Israel, to "join the sacred battle of our people". Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas has also condemned the Israeli raids, but his forces were not expected to get involved.

The war in Gaza erupted when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel and rampaged through army bases and farming communities, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting around 250. The militants are still holding 108 hostages, around a third of whom are believed to be dead, after most of the rest were released during a November cease-fire.

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

The United States, Qatar and Egypt have spent months trying to mediate a cease-fire that would see the remaining hostages released.

EU urged to rethink ties with Israel over Gaza

AP ■ BRUSSELS

The European Union must rethink its relations with Israel as the death toll mounts in Gaza and the West Bank and impose sanctions on some Israeli government ministers accused of fomenting racial hatred, Ireland and the bloc's top diplomat said on Thursday.

At a meeting of EU foreign ministers in Brussels, Ireland's foreign minister accused Israel of deliberately targeting civilians as well as Hamas militants with the military campaign it launched almost 11 months ago.

"This is a war against Palestinians not just against Hamas. The level of civilian casualties and dead is unconscionable," Micheal Martin told reporters. "It's a war on the population. No point in trying to fudge this."

Israel's offensive in Gaza has killed over 40,000 people, according to local health officials, displaced 90 per cent of the population and destroyed its main cities. Hamas has lost thousands of fighters and much of its militant infrastructure. Violence has also surged in the

West Bank since Hamas' October 7 attack inside southern Israel ignited the war there. Israel launched a large-scale operation in the West Bank this week, in which Hamas said 10 of its fighters were killed in different locations.

Martin said a legal opinion issued by the International Court of Justice that Israel's occupation of Gaza and the West Bank is unlawful obliges the EU to take action. The Palestinians have hailed it as "a watershed moment for Palestine, for justice and for international law."

"It cannot be business as usual," Martin told reporters. "It is very clear to us that international humanitarian law has been broken." Ties between the EU and Israel — which are major trading partners — are governed by a so-called Association Agreement. Ireland and Spain have been pressing their EU partners to examine whether Israel has broken the rules. The EU is the world's top provider of aid to the Palestinians but holds little leverage over Israel, notably because the 27 member countries are deeply divided in their approach.

Austria, Germany and Hungary are staunch backers of Israel, while Ireland and Spain are more vocal in their support for the Palestinians. Nonetheless, the bloc does have credibility as a European project founded on peace.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell, with the backing of Ireland, urged the ministers to consider imposing sanctions on certain members of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing cabinet over their remarks about the war in Gaza. "Some Israeli ministers have been launching hateful messages, unacceptable hateful messages, against the Palestinians and proposing things that go clearly against international law and is an (incitement) to commit more crimes," Borrell said. Borrell did not name the ministers, but earlier this month he criticised Israel's Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich for suggesting that the starvation of Gaza's population of more than 2 million people "might be just and moral" until hostages captured in the October 7 attack are returned home.

HK court convicts two journalists in landmark sedition case

Hong Kong (AP): A Hong Kong court convicted two former editors of a shuttered news outlet on Thursday, in a sedition case widely seen as a barometer for the future of media freedoms in the city once hailed as a bastion of free press in Asia.

Stand News former editor-in-chief Chung Pui-kuen and former acting editor-in-chief Patrick Lam were arrested in December 2021. They pleaded not guilty to the charge of conspiracy to publish and reproduce seditious publications. Their trial was Hong Kong's first involving media since the former British colony returned to Chinese rule in 1997. Stand News was one of the city's last media outlets that openly criticised the government amid a crackdown on dissent that followed massive pro-democracy protests in 2019. It was shut down just months after the pro-democracy Apple Daily newspaper, whose jailed founder Jimmy Lai is fighting collusion charges under a sweeping national security law enacted in 2020.

Chung and Lam were charged under a colonial-era sedition law that has been used increasingly to crush dissidents. They face up to two years in prison and a fine of 5,000 Hong Kong dollars (about USD 640) for a first offense.

Best Pencil (Hong Kong) Ltd., the outlet's holding company, was convicted on the same charge. It had no representatives during the trial, which began in October 2022. Judge Kwok Wai-kin said in his written judgement that Stand News' became a tool for smearing the Beijing and Hong Kong governments during the 2019 protests. He said a conviction is deemed proportional "when speech, in the relevant context, is deemed to have caused potential damage to national security and intends to seriously undermine the authority of the Chinese central government or the Hong Kong government, and that it must be stopped". The case was centred on 17 articles. Prosecutors said some promoted "illegal ideologies", or smeared the security law and law enforcement officers.

Iran gas leak kills 2, hurts 10

AP ■ DUBAI

A gas leak caused the death of two people and injured 10 others at an Iranian Revolutionary Guard centre, Iranian state television reported Thursday. The leak occurred on Wednesday night at a workshop belonging to the Guard in Isfahan province, and the injured people were transferred to a hospital for treatment, it said.

The Isfahan Provincial Guard identified the dead as Capt. Mojtaba Nazari and Lt. Col. Mokhtar Morshedi, the report said.

The Guard's statement did not say if the two senior officers died from being asphyxiated by gas or if the gas leak caused an explosion. It did not say how the people were injured or give other details.

A number of deadly explosions at Revolutionary Guard facilities have in recent years. The most notable came in 2011, when a blast at a missile base near Tehran killed 17 people including Commander Hassan Tehrani Moghaddam, who led

the paramilitary force's missile programme.

Initially, authorities described the blast as an accident, though a former prisoner later said the Guard interrogated him on suspicion that Israel caused the explosion.

Tensions have remained high since Hamas' top political leader, Ismail Haniyeh, was killed on July 31 in the Iranian capital.

Iran accused Israel of killing Haniyeh, but Israel has not taken responsibility. Iranian top officials vowed to retaliate against Israel for the death of Haniyeh.

Israeli officials rarely acknowledge operations carried out by the country's secret military units or its Mossad intelligence agency. However, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has long considered Iran to be the biggest threat his nation faces.

In April, Iranian air defences at a major air base and at a nuclear site near the central city of Isfahan were employed against an assault in retaliation for Tehran's unprecedented drone-

and-missile assault on Israel. In January 2023, bomb-carrying drones struck a defense factory in the central city of Isfahan, while in April 2023, the country's air defence systems shot down a drone strike on an Isfahan defence factory.

Tehran faces challenges as its nuclear programme rapidly enriches uranium closer than ever to weapons-grade levels since the collapse of its atomic accord with world powers.

Iran's central Isfahan province has been of interest to Israel because many of Iran's nuclear facilities are located there. The underground Natanz nuclear facility, located in the province, is the country's main uranium enrichment facility. There, centrifuges rapidly spin uranium hexafluoride gas to enrich uranium.

Iran sees Israel as a prime suspect in launching a series of attacks on Iran, including an April 2021 assault on its underground Natanz nuclear facility that damaged its centrifuges. In 2020, Iran blamed Israel for a sophisticated attack that killed its top military nuclear scientist.

Top Chinese general tells US to stop colluding with Taiwan in meeting with security adviser

AP ■ BEIJING

A top Chinese military officer, in a rare meeting with a visiting American official, demanded Thursday that the United States stop "collusion" with Taiwan, the self-governing island that China says must come under its rule.

Gen. Zhang Youxia, one of two vice chairs of the Central Military Commission, told White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan that promoting what China calls the reunification of Taiwan with the mainland is "the mission and responsibility" of the military, according to a statement from China's Defence Ministry.

Sullivan was wrapping up a three-day trip to China, his first as national security adviser and one aimed at maintaining communication to avoid differences over Taiwan and other issues from

spiralling into conflict. Both governments are eager to keep relations on an even keel ahead of a change in the US presidency in January.

"Your request to meet with me shows the value you attach to military security and the relationship between our militaries," Zhang said in brief opening remarks.

Sullivan said "it is rare that we have the opportunity to have this kind of exchange" and underscored "the need for us to responsibly manage US-China relations."

The meeting came one day after the White House said that both countries would plan for a phone call between Chinese President Xi Jinping and President Joe Biden in the coming weeks. There was no indication whether the two leaders might meet in person before Biden leaves the Oval Office.

The announcement followed Sullivan's main talks on this

trip, a day and a half of meetings with Wang Yi, the foreign minister and the ruling Communist Party's top foreign policy official. The US doesn't recognise Taiwan as an independent country but is its main supplier of arms for its defence. China and Taiwan split in 1949 at the end of a civil war that brought the communists to power in China. The rival Nationalists fled to Taiwan, where they set up a government on the island about 160 kilometres across the Taiwan Strait from the Chinese coast.

"China demands that the United States stop military collusion between the US and Taiwan, stop arming Taiwan and stop spreading false narratives about Taiwan," the Chinese Defence Ministry statement said, without elaborating on what the false narratives are. A White House statement said the two had "recognised the progress in sustained, regular military-military

communications over the past ten months" and noted an agreement announced the previous day to hold a telephone call between commanders at the theatre-level in the near future. On Taiwan, the US statement said only that Sullivan had raised the importance of cross-strait peace and stability. China suspended communication between the two militaries and in a few other fields after a senior US lawmaker, then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, visited Taiwan in August 2022. Talks were only gradually resumed more than a year later, after Xi and Biden met outside San Francisco in November.

A theatre-level call would be between Adm. Samuel Paparo, who heads the US Indo-Pacific Command in Hawaii, and his Chinese counterpart, said Danny Russel, a vice president at the Asia Society Policy Institute in New York.

Harris, Walz will sit down for first major TV interview

AP ■ SAVANNA

Vice President Kamala Harris and her running mate, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, will sit down Thursday for their first major television interview of their presidential campaign as the duo travels in southeast Georgia on a bus tour.

The interview with CNN's Dana Bash will give Harris a chance to quell criticism that she has eschewed uncontrolled environments, while also giving her a fresh platform to define her campaign and test her political mettle ahead of an upcoming debate with former President Donald Trump set for September 10. But it also carries risk as her team tries to build on momentum from the ticket shakeup following Joe Biden's exit and last week's Democratic National Convention. Joint interviews during an election year are a fixture in politics; Biden and



Harris, Trump and Mike Pence, Barack Obama and Biden — all did them at a similar point in the race. The difference is those other candidates had all done solo interviews, too. Harris hasn't yet done an in-depth interview since she became her party's standard bearer five weeks ago, though she did sit for several while she was still Biden's running mate. Harris and Walz remain somewhat unknown to voters, unlike

Trump and Biden of whom voters had near-universal awareness and opinion. The CNN interview, airing at 9 pm EDT Thursday, takes place during her two-day bus tour through southeast Georgia, campaigning for the critical battleground state, a trip that culminates Thursday with a rally in Savannah. Harris campaign officials believe that in order to win the state over Trump in November, they must

make inroads in GOP strongholds across the state.

Harris, during her time as vice president, has done on-camera and print interviews with The Associated Press and many other outlets, a much more frequent pace than the president — except for Biden's late-stage media blitz following his disastrous debate performance that touched off the end of his campaign.

Harris' lack of media access over the past month has become one of Republicans' key attack lines. The Trump campaign has kept a tally of the days she has gone by as a candidate without giving an interview. On Wednesday, Arkansas Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders, Trump's former press secretary, suggested Harris needed a "babysitter" and that's why Walz would be there.

"They know Kamala Harris can't get through an interview all by herself. There is not a lot of confidence in somebody to

become the leader of the free world and ask people to make her president of the United States when she can't even sit down (for) an interview," she said on "Fox & Friends."

Trump, meanwhile, has largely steered toward conservative media outlets when granting interviews, though he has held more open press conferences in recent weeks as he sought to reclaim the spotlight that Harris' elevation had claimed. After the CNN interview, Walz will peel off and Harris will continue the bus tour alone, heading to a rally before going back to Washington. On Wednesday, the duo visited a high school marching band to the delight of students, and stopped by a Savannah barbecue restaurant. Harris campaign communications director Michael Tyler said bus tours offer an "opportunity to get to places we don't usually go (and) make sure we're competing in all communities."

UK's Starmer confirms that his govt mulling crackdown on smoking

AP ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer confirmed on Thursday that his government is looking at introducing tougher anti-smoking measures, which could potentially see a ban on smoking in outdoor spaces, including at pubs and restaurants. His confirmation came after a report in the Sun newspaper that the government was mulling a ban in pub gardens and outdoor restaurants, as well as outside facilities such as hospitals, universities and sports grounds.

Smoking in the UK has been banned inside pubs, restaurants and most workplaces since 2007. Still, smoking-related illnesses remain a drain on the National Health Service, costing it over 2.5 billion pounds a year in England alone, according to figures

from the NHS.

My starting point on this is to remind everybody that over 80,000 people lose their lives every year because of smoking," Starmer said in Paris while visiting French President Emmanuel Macron. "So, yes, we are going to take decisions in this space, more details will be revealed, but this is a preventable series of deaths and we've got to take action to reduce the burden on the NHS and the taxpayer."

Starmer's Labour government, which was elected in July, has already said it will reintroduce the former Conservative administration's legislation to outlaw the sale of tobacco to anyone born on or after January 2009.

Under that plan, which didn't become law because the election was called early, the legal age that people in England can buy cigarettes

will be raised by one year, every year until it is eventually illegal for the whole population. The number of people who smoke in the UK has declined by two-thirds since the 1970s, but some 6.4 million people in the country — or about 13 per cent of the population — still smoke, according to official figures. In 2007, the legal age of sale for tobacco was raised from 16 to 18 alongside the smoking ban indoors. While health professionals broadly welcomed the prospect of a smoking ban outdoors, others argued that it is a further unnecessary intrusion by the state on people's lifestyle choices and another potential burden on businesses still struggling to recoup the losses during the coronavirus pandemic and the subsequent surge in energy costs following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Suspects in foiled plot to attack Taylor Swift shows aimed to kill 'thousands'

AP ■ BERLIN

The suspects in the foiled plot to attack Taylor Swift concerts in Vienna earlier this month sought to kill "tens of thousands" of fans before the CIA discovered intelligence that disrupted the planning and led to arrests, the agency's deputy director said. The CIA notified Austrian authorities of the scheme, which allegedly included links to the Islamic State group. The intelligence and subsequent arrests ultimately led to the cancellation of three sold-out Eras Tour shows, devastating fans who had travelled across the globe to see Swift in concert.

CIA Deputy Director David Cohen addressed the failed plot during the annual Intelligence and National Security Summit, held this



week in Maryland.

"They were plotting to kill a huge number — tens of thousands of people at this concert, including I am sure many Americans — and were quite advanced in this," Cohen said on Wednesday. "The Austrians were able to make those arrests because the agency and our partners in the intelligence

community provided them information about what this ISIS-connected group was planning to do."

Austrian officials said the main suspect, a 19-year-old Austrian man, was inspired by the Islamic State group. He allegedly planned to attack outside the stadium, where upwards of 30,000 fans were expected to gather, with knives or homemade explosives.

Another 65,000 fans were likely to be inside the venue. Investigators discovered chemical substances and technical devices during a raid of the suspect's home.

The 19-year-old's lawyer has said the allegations were "overacting at its best", and contended Austrian authorities were "presenting this exaggeratedly" in order to get new surveillance powers. Swift broke

her silence about the cancellations last week after her London shows had concluded.

"Having our Vienna shows cancelled was devastating," she wrote in a statement posted to Instagram. "The reason for the cancellations filled me with a new sense of fear, and a tremendous amount of guilt because so many people had planned on coming to those shows." She thanked authorities — "thanks to them, we were grieving concerts and not lives", she wrote — and said she waited to speak until the European leg of her Eras Tour concluded to prioritise safety.

"Let me be very clear: I am not going to speak about something publicly if I think doing so might provoke those who would want to harm the fans who come to my shows," she wrote.

Denmark has record 25 govt mins after major reshuffle

AP ■ COPENHAGEN

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen on Thursday appointed six new ministers in a major reshuffle of her three-party centrist government, bringing the number of ministers to 25 — the largest ever in 30 years. One of the ministers will head a new government office of emergency preparedness, climate change and cyber crimes.

"The world has become more troubled," Frederiksen said as she announced that Torsten Schack Pedersen will be in charge of the new ministry, after the reshuffled cabinet was formally presented to King Frederik X. Denmark now joins Sweden to have such a department. Besides the new emergency office, the government

now has two other new ministries, bringing the total to 25, the largest since the 1993-1994 Cabinet of Social Democratic Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen who had 24 ministers.

Marie Bjerre left her job as minister for digitalisation and gender equality, to become in charge of the European Union affairs, ahead of Denmark's rotating EU presidency in the second half of 2025.

Jepp Bruus, the outgoing taxation minister, was brought in to head a brand new ministry, which will be coordinating Denmark's green policy. The Scandinavian country has a goal of 70 per cent emissions reductions by 2030 and achieving net zero by 2050.

Bruus was replaced by Rasmus Stoklund while Bjerre's previous

job was given to Caroline Stage Olsen, who became the digitalisation minister. The gender equality portfolio was handed over to Environment Minister Magnus Heunicke.

In one of the major surprises, Copenhagen mayor Sophie Hæstorp Andersen was appointed as minister in charge of social affairs instead of Pernille Rosenkrantz-Theil, who left the government.

Frederiksen, who is the leader of the Social Democratic Party, announced Wednesday that she was doing a government reshuffle and creating three new ministries.

In 2022, she presented the current majority government, consisting of her centre-left Social Democrats, the centre-right Liberal Party and the newly created centrist Moderates party.

Brazil's top court threatens to suspend X operations

Rio de Janeiro (AP): A Brazilian Supreme Court justice has threatened to shut down the local operations of X, formerly Twitter, unless its billionaire owner Elon Musk names an in-country legal representative within 24 hours.

The order from Justice Alexandre de Moraes on Wednesday is the latest development in an ongoing feud with Musk's platform. The company has clashed with de Moraes earlier this year over free speech, accounts associated with the far-right and misinformation, and it claims to be a victim of censorship.

Earlier this month, X said it was removing all remaining Brazil staff in the country "effective immediately," saying de Moraes had threatened its legal representative with arrest.

Russia continues heavy missile, drone bombardment of Ukraine

AP ■ KYIV

Russia conducted a heavy aerial attack on Ukraine for the third time in four days Thursday, again launching missiles and scores of drones that mostly were intercepted, Ukraine's air force said.

Russian forces fired five missiles and 74 Shahed drones at Ukrainian targets, an air force statement said. Air defences stopped two missiles and 60 drones, and 14 other drones presumably fell before reaching their target, it said.

Authorities in the capital, Kyiv, said debris of destroyed drones fell in three districts of the city, causing minor damage to civilian infrastructure but no injuries. Russia's relentless and unnerving long-range strikes on civilian areas have been a feature of the war since it invaded its neighbour in February 2022.

Ukrainian officials have recently become more vocal in their long-standing insistence that Western countries supporting their war effort should scrap restrictions on what Ukraine is allowed to target inside Russia with long-range weapons they have provided.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy renewed his pleas for Western allies to untie his hands in deciding what to strike on Russian soil.

"All our partners should be more active — much more active — in countering Russian terror," Zelenskyy said late Wednesday. "We continue to insist that their determination now — lifting the restrictions on long-range strikes for Ukraine now — will help us to end the war as soon as possible in a fair way for Ukraine and the world as a whole."

The European Union's top diplomat on Thursday backed Zelenskyy's push for international backers to end their limits. Ukraine has deployed domestically produced drones to strike Russia.

The Russian military said on Thursday it had thwarted an overnight attack on Crimea. The Russian Defence Ministry said its forces destroyed three Ukrainian sea drones aimed at

Former Russian defence official detained suspected of fraud

AP ■ MOSCOW

A former Russian defence official was ordered detained on fraud charges on Thursday in the latest high-profile arrest of a senior military official in what appears a sweeping investigation into abuse of office in the top echelons of the military leadership. Former Deputy Defence Minister Pavel Popov faces up to 10 years in prison if he is charged and convicted after being detained on suspicion of committing fraud, Russian state news agencies reported on Thursday.

The case against Popov relates to business activities at a sprawling park in Moscow sometimes called Russia's "military Disneyland."

Patriot Park, a pet project of former Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu, is designed to inspire patriotism in Russia's younger generations and showcases Soviet and Russian weaponry. It has a firing range, air base, museums and conference center and a massive, khaki-colored Cathedral of the Russian Armed Forces, which features mosaics of Soviet and Russian soldiers.

Russian President Vladimir Putin personally donated money to commission the main icon for the church, according to the Kremlin. Popov is now the eighth top military figure to be arrested on charges of fraud, bribery or abuse of office in recent months, including Deputy Defence Minister Timur Ivanov, who was arrested for bribery in April and later dismissed from his position. The

Black Sea peninsula that Moscow annexed from Ukraine in 2014. The Russia-installed governor of Sevastopol Mikhail Razvozhaev added that four Ukrainian aerial drones and

three sea drones were destroyed "at a significant distance" from the peninsula's shore.

In the meantime, Ukraine's Army General Staff acknowledged Thursday Ukraine's involvement in strikes this week

on oil depots deep inside Russia, where blazes broke out. The attacks in the Rostov and Kirov regions were part of Ukraine's effort to disrupt logistical infrastructure supporting Russia's war machine.



arrests began shortly before Putin replaced long-time defence minister Sergei Shoigu with an economist, Andrei Belousov. Analysts suggest the arrests are a sign that the most egregious corruption in the defence ministry will no longer be tolerated.

Former deputy defence minister Popov was responsible for developing and maintaining Patriot Park and is accused of renovating his own properties in the Moscow region at the park's expense, Tass said. He is accused of fraud alongside director of the park and Maj. Gen Vladimir Shesterov, deputy of the Defence Ministry's innovations department, both of whom have already been detained.

Popov forced companies that had contracts with Patriot Park to do work on his "out-of-town apartments without paying for them," Svetlana Petrenko from Russia's Investigative Committee told state news agency Tass.

In addition to a plot of land with houses outside Moscow, Popov and his family own "numerous properties in prestigious areas of Moscow, the

Moscow Region and the Krasnodar Region," in southern Russia, Petrenko said. The properties are worth a total of 500 million roubles (\$5.5 million) and investigators are establishing whether they were acquired legally, Petrenko told Tass.

Popov was a deputy defence minister from 2013 to June this year when he was dismissed by a presidential decree. His arrest comes shortly after that of Former Deputy Defence Minister Gen. Dmitry Bulgakov who was detained in Moscow in July.

According to Tass, Bulgakov is charged with large-scale embezzlement. He reportedly oversaw the creation of a system to supply low-quality food rations to Russian troops at inflated prices. If found guilty, he faces up to 10 years in prison. Bulgakov was deputy defence minister from 2008 to September 2022, when he was dismissed. He was in charge of logistics at the time, and while the ministry had said that he was taking another job, the move was seen as punishment for flaws in supporting operations in Ukraine.

On oil depots deep inside Russia, where blazes broke out. The attacks in the Rostov and Kirov regions were part of Ukraine's effort to disrupt logistical infrastructure supporting Russia's war machine.

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EU envoy ramps up pressure on Ukraine's backers to permit strikes inside Russia

Brussels (AP)

The European Union's top diplomat on Thursday ramped up pressure on Ukraine's international backers to lift restrictions on the use of weapons they provide the conflict-ravaged country to allow its armed forces to strike targets inside Russia.

The US restricts the use of long-range ballistic missiles it provides to Ukraine and some EU members also limit the use of their weapons. Ukraine is desperate to target airfields and other military installations inside Russia that are used to stage attacks on its armed forces and civilians. "We need to lift restrictions on the use of weaponry against Russian military targets, in accordance with international law," EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said as the bloc's foreign ministers gathered in Brussels to discuss Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"The weaponry that we are providing to Ukraine has to have full use, and the restrictions have to be lifted in order for the Ukrainians to be able to target the places where Russia is bombing them. Otherwise, the weaponry is useless," Borrell told reporters.

Speaking alongside Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, Borrell condemned Russia's attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure. "Russia wants to bomb a European country into full capitulation," he said. Kuleba said that Ukraine's backers would only have themselves to blame if Russia wins.

"The success of Russia depends on one thing: on the preparedness of partners to make bold decisions. If decisions are taken, Ukraine is successful on the ground. If they are not taken, then do not complain on Ukraine, complain on yourself," he said. Kuleba insisted that Ukraine only wants to attack "legitimate military targets" inside Russia.

"If we are supplied a sufficient amount of missiles, if we are allowed to strike, we will significantly decrease the capacity of Russia to inflict damage on our critical infrastructure and we will improve the situation of our forces on the ground," he said.

South Korean firefighters prepare to lift a vehicle that fell into a sinkhole on a street in Seoul on Thursday.

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AP/PTI

'Over 1,000 killed during protests in Bangladesh'

PTI ■ DHAKA

Over 1,000 people have been killed during the protests against the Sheikh Hasina-led government in Bangladesh while more than 400 were blinded by police fire, with some of them losing sight in one or both eyes, a top adviser of the interim government said on Thursday.

Health Adviser Nurjahan Begum disclosed this during a visit to the Central Police Hospital in the capital's Rajarbagh where she interacted with the police personnel injured in clashes and spoke to those at the surgical department to ask about their condition. "So far 1,000 people have been killed and more than 400 students and members of the general public have lost their sight. Many have been blind in one eye, while others are blind in both," Nurjahan was quoted as saying by the bdnews24.com news portal.

An anti-discrimination student movement against the government started in mid-July over a controversial quota system in jobs. The protests turned violent after crackdown by the forces. Several protesters were killed and injured during clashes with the police in different parts of the country. The protest movement then transformed into an anti-government movement, demanding prime minister Sheikh Hasina's resignation.

Hasina resigned and fled to India on August 5 following the mass movement against her government. An interim government replaced her regime and 84-year-old Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus was named its Chief Adviser - a position equivalent to prime minister.

Nurjahan told the media that many police personnel who had sought treatment had injuries on their heads and legs. She said they were speaking to an American-based institution called Sheba regarding the treat-

ment of those who had lost vision in their eyes. A list of those having eye issues had been provided to them. "We have given the Sheba Foundation a list of those who have lost vision in their eyes or are having eye-related issues. They said they would send doctors to our country as soon as possible. They would be treated at the Ispahani Islamia Eye Institute, the National Eye Science Institute and Hospital, the Chattogram Eye Hospital, and in Dinajpur," she said.

She said the government has taken responsibility for the families of those who have died and to provide free treatment for the injured. "Some have had severe leg injuries and even had to have their legs amputated. We are in discussions with various donor organizations and the World Bank to bring in a team of doctors from abroad for proper treatment. We are making efforts in this regard," she said.

Adviser, declare that the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, having considered the above-mentioned Convention, accedes to the same and undertakes faithfully to perform and carry out the stipulations therein contained," the instrument reads.

Yunus, 84, who comes from the development sector, took over as the Chief Adviser of the interim government in the country on August 8 after Sheikh Hasina resigned and fled to India on August 5 after protracted violent demonstrations. Later, Yunus posted on X from his official account of the Chief Adviser of the Government of Bangladesh: "Bangladesh on Thursday signed the instrument of accession to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, demonstrated its commitment to investigate each and every case of enforced disappearances."

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SCS aggression: US forces ready with 'range of options'

AP ■ BAGUIO

American forces are ready with a "range of options" to deal with increasing acts of aggression in the disputed South China Sea if ordered to carry them out jointly and after consultations with treaty ally the Philippines, a US admiral said on Thursday.

US Indo-Pacific Command chief Adm Samuel Paparo, who heads the biggest number of combat forces outside the US mainland, refused to provide details of the contingency options.

Paparo's comments came when asked at a news conference what the long-time treaty allies could do to deal with China's so-called gray-zone tactics in the disputed waters.

The "gray-zone tactics" refer to types of assault, like water cannon fire and the blocking and ramming of rival ships in the disputed waters, that are under the threshold of an actual armed attack and wouldn't allow the Philippines to invoke its 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty with the US. The treaty obligates either

country to help the other in case of an armed external attack. "We certainly have prepared a range of options and USIN-DOPACOM stands ready, if so called, after consultations in accordance with the treaty to execute those shoulder to shoulder with our ally," Paparo said. Detailing those US military options would allow "the potential adversary" to "build a countermeasure to those," he said.

Paparo held a joint news conference with Armed Forces of the Philippines chief Gen Romero Brawner Jr, after both led an annual meeting in the northern Philippine mountain city of Baguio to discuss security challenges and military plans. They include the Balikatan — Tagalog for shoulder to shoulder — the treaty allies' largest combat exercises, which in April involved more than 16,000 American and Filipino forces and were partly staged in the South China Sea.

In response to a question, Paparo repeated that the US military is open, after treaty consultations with the Philippines, to escorting Philippine ships in the South

China Sea amid a spike in hostilities between Beijing and Manila in the disputed waters. Such a prospect would risk putting US Navy ships in direct collisions with those of China. Washington and Beijing have been on a collision course over China's increasingly assertive actions to defend its territorial claims in the South China Sea, and Beijing's stated goal of annexing Taiwan, by force if necessary.

Brawner said the Philippines could still fend for itself in the disputed waters, where hostilities with the Chinese coast guard, navy and suspected militia ships have alarmingly spiked since last year.

"If we exhaust all the options and nothing works, then that's the time we can ask for help," Brawner told reporters. When Filipino forces in the disputed waters "are at the verge of dying," because food supplies were being blocked by Chinese forces, "then that's the time that we are going to seek the help of the United States," Brawner said, but added that "we still have a lot of options."

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Typhoon lashes Japan with torrential rain and strong winds

Tokyo (AP) A typhoon lashed southern Japan with torrential rain and strong winds Thursday, causing at least three deaths as it started a crawl up the length of the archipelago and raised concerns of flooding, landslides and extensive damage.

Typhoon Shanshan made landfall in the morning on the southern island of Kyushu and about 60 centimetres of rainfall had fallen in parts of Miyazaki prefecture, the Japan Meteorological Agency said. That 24-hour total was more than the August rainfall average and swollen rivers were threatening floods, it said.

The typhoon was forecast to bring strong winds, high waves and significant rainfall to most of the country, particularly the southern prefectures of Kyushu. Around midday, Shanshan was moving north at 15 kph and its winds had weakened to 126 kph, JMA said. More than a dozen people were injured in Miyazaki, many of them thrown to the ground. One each was also injured nearby Kumamoto and Kagoshima

prefectures on their way to shelters, the Fire and Disaster Management Agency said. Nearly a quarter million households were without power across Kyushu, most of them in the Kagoshima prefecture, the Kyushu Electric Power Co. said. Ahead of the typhoon's arrival, heavy rain caused a landslide that buried a house in the central city of Gamagori, killing three residents and injuring two others, according to the city's disaster management department. On the southern island of Amami, where the typhoon passed, one person was injured by being knocked down by a wind gust while riding a motorcycle, the FDMA said. Weather and government officials are concerned about extensive damage as the typhoon slowly sweeps up the Japanese archipelago over the next few days, threatening floods and landslides. The typhoon's impact was yet to be felt in the Tokyo region, where business was as usual and heavy rain was predicted later this week.

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Thai court hands YouTube chef life sentence for murder

AP ■ BANGKOK

A court in Thailand on Thursday found Daniel Sancho Bronchalo, a member of a famous Spanish acting family, guilty of premeditated murder and sentenced him to life in prison, in a lurid case that involved the victim being dismembered.

The Koh Samui Provincial Court issued an initial sentence of death for Sancho, but in its ruling commuted it to life imprisonment due to his cooperation during the trial, Police Col Paisan Sangthep, deputy commander of the Surat Thani Provincial Police, who attended the hearing, told The Associated Press.

Sancho, a 30-year-old chef with a YouTube channel, had been charged with the murder of Edwin Arrieta Artega, a 44-year-old plastic surgeon from Colombia, when both were vacationing on the Thai holiday island of Koh Pha-ngan in August last year.

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SL Prez offers continuity for eco recovery in election manifesto

Colombo (PTI): Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe on Thursday offered the continuation of his economic recovery path with the cash-strapped island nation's international partners as the cornerstone of his election manifesto for the presidential election scheduled for next month. The 75-year-old incumbent president is in the fray for reelection in the September 21 polls to continue the recovery programme with his legacy of ending miles-long queues for essentials and guaranteeing livelihoods in a painful reform process. "We must operate within the framework of these agreements," Wickremesinghe, also the finance minister, said, referring to the economic bail-out agreement with the International Monetary Fund, the official

creditor committee comprising 17 countries, China, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. Sri Lanka's bankrupt economy has recorded positive growth under Wickremesinghe's leadership after the island nation reported six quarters of negative growth following the unprecedented economic crisis caused by massive forex shortages in 2022. The public protests due to shortages of essentials, power and cooking gas led to the ouster of Wickremesinghe's predecessor Gotabaya Rajapaksa who resigned following mass protests in 2022. The IMF-led reform programme has made the president unpopular, resulting in the lead of other front runners - Sajith Premadasa and Anura Kumara Dissanayake — in unofficial polls.

'Pak has no plans for talks with TTP'

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan on Thursday said it has no plans to hold talks with the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan and asked Afghanistan's Taliban government to take "robust action" against these terror groups and prevent their activities.

Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said that the presence of terror groups, including the Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP), in Afghanistan was confirmed by multiple international reports including the United Nations. "We expect the Afghan authorities to take robust action against these terror groups and prevent their activities that endanger Pakistan's security," she said at the weekly press briefing here.

"Pakistan has no plans to engage in any talks with the TTP," she added. She said Islamabad has repeatedly raised concerns about the use of Afghan territory against Pakistan. She added that Pakistan also provided intelligence to Afghanistan on terrorism but refused to disclose the details of the intelligence-sharing arrangements.

Pakistan has repeatedly called on the Afghan government to prevent its soil from being used against it by the TTP and other terrorist groups - a claim denied by Kabul. There has been an uptick in the incidents of terrorism in Pakistan since the Taliban took over the government in Kabul in 2021, dashing hopes in Islamabad that a friendly government in Afghanistan would help to tackle militancy.

Relations between the two

countries have lately become strained, largely because of the TTP but also due to frequent border skirmishes. In March, Pakistani air force jets carried out air strikes against terrorists in the border regions of Khost and Paktika inside the neighbouring country. Baloch said that Pakistan's decision to recognise the Afghan Taliban government would be made in consultation with regional partners.

Separately, in a statement issued on the International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism, the Foreign Office paid tribute to those who lost their lives in counterterrorism efforts and reiterated Pakistan's firm stance against the TTP.

The spokesperson also condemned the recent terrorist activities in Balochistan, reaffirming the government's commitment to ensuring the safety of its citizens.

She also said that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor was a transformational project that had contributed positively and transparently to Pakistan's national development. She said the corridor project enjoys support and popularity in all provinces and across the political divide in Pakistan. She clarified that Pakistan's total public debt relating to the CPEC projects is a small percentage of its total debt.

Moreover, she said that the public debt obtained from China has a longer maturity period with low interest rates. The spokesperson reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to provide full security to all Chinese nationals, projects and institutions.

Advertisement for THE STATE TRADING CORPORATION OF INDIA LIMITED (A GOVT. OF INDIA ENTERPRISE) offering Expression of Interest (EOI) for Employment of Insurance Brokers.

Advertisement for CPEDA (Central Public Enterprise Development Authority) regarding procurement of network strengthening in remaining areas and central verge of IA, Sikandra Site-C Distt. Agra.

Sensex, Nifty scale all-time high levels

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty hit their all-time high levels on Thursday, driven by a rally in index majors Reliance Industries and Tata Motors. The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 349.05 points or 0.43 per cent to settle at an all-time closing high of 82,134.61, extending its winning momentum to the eighth day in a row. During the day, it soared 500.27 points or 0.61 per cent to hit a lifetime intra-day peak of 82,285.83. Rallying for the 11th straight session, the NSE Nifty surged 99.60 points or 0.40 per cent to settle at a new closing high of 25,151.95. During the trade, the benchmark climbed 140.55 points or 0.56 per cent to hit a fresh record intra-day peak of 25,192.90. Among the 30 Sensex firms, Tata Motors jumped over 4 per cent, followed by Bajaj



Finserv, Bajaj Finance, HCL Technologies, ITC, Reliance Industries, Tech Mahindra, Maruti and State Bank of India. Reliance Industries climbed nearly 2 per cent after Mukesh Ambani, chairman and managing director of the firm, said the board of the company will meet on September 5 to consider

issuing bonus shares in the ratio of 1:1. "When Reliance grows, we reward our shareholders handsomely," Ambani said. Mahindra & Mahindra, Sun Pharma, JSW Steel, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Infosys and Tata Steel were among the biggest laggards. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo and Shanghai settled

in the negative territory, while Hong Kong ended higher. European markets were trading in the positive zone. The US markets ended lower on Wednesday. Institutional Investors (IIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 1,347.53 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data. Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.60 per cent to USD 78.27 a barrel. Rising for the tenth straight session on Wednesday, the NSE Nifty went up by 34.60 points or 0.14 per cent to settle at a new closing high of 25,052.35. The benchmark surged 111.85 points or 0.44 per cent to hit a fresh intra-day all-time peak of 25,129.60. Extending its winning run to the seventh day in a row, the BSE benchmark climbed 73.80 points or 0.09 per cent to settle at 81,785.56.

SEBI proposes mandatory UPI block mechanism facility for secondary marketing trading

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Capital markets regulator Sebi has proposed mandating Qualified Stock Brokers (QSBs) to offer the facility of trading in the secondary market using the UPI-based block mechanism to their clients, similar to the ASBA facility. In the UPI block mechanism, clients can trade in the secondary market based on blocked funds in their bank accounts, instead of transferring the funds upfront to the trading member. The facility is currently optional for investors, and not mandatory for Trading Members (TMs) to offer as a service to clients. Application Supported by Blocked Amount (ASBA)-like facility already available for the primary market which ensures that money from an investor gets moved only when an allotment happens. In its consultation paper on Wednesday, Sebi has suggested that QSBs must provide the facility of trading using the UPI block mechanism in the cash



segment for their clients — individuals and HUFs — with an appropriate glide path for implementation. Also, it has been suggested that QSBs can offer a "3-in-1 trading account facility" as an alternative to making the ASBA-like facility mandatory. In the case of 3-in-1 trading accounts, the clients would have their funds in their bank account, earning interest on the cash balances. In addition, the 3-in-1 facility would be available for cash as well as derivatives segment, without any amount restrictions, while

proposals. Trading Members are classified as Qualified Stock Brokers (QSBs) based on factors such as the size and scale of their operations, including the number of active clients, the total assets held by clients with the TM, the end-of-day margin of all clients, and the trading volume of the TM. Being designated as a QSB, brings with it enhanced responsibilities and obligations. Further, QSBs are also subjected to enhanced monitoring by Market Infrastructure Institutions. The regulator had introduced the use of RBI-approved Unified Payments Interface (UPI) with the facility of blocking of funds, as a payment mechanism for retail investor applications submitted through intermediaries for public issues such as IPO from January 2019. The Beta version of trading through block mechanism for secondary markets was launched on January 1, 2024, for individuals and HUFs, and was made applicable only to the cash segment.

India plans reparability index for mobile, electronics to tackle e-waste

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India is planning a reparability index for mobile phones and electronic products to address the growing e-waste problem and encourage manufacturers to produce more easily repairable items, officials said on Thursday. The Consumer Affairs Ministry is spearheading the initiative, which will provide a score on key parameters to inform consumers about the ease with which a product can be repaired, the officials said at a national workshop on the issue. Addressing the workshop, Consumer Affairs Secretary Nidhi Khare said: "As India emerges as the third largest economy in the world, we should have a vibrant and tech-savvy repair system." She also added, "India can become a repair hub for the world." The proposed index will be



similar to initiatives in other countries, such as France's reparability index. It will rate products on criteria including availability of technical documents, ease of disassembly, spare parts availability and pricing. The workshop was aimed at establishing a consensus among industry stakeholders on "key parameters for accessing and evaluating reparability index" besides promoting longevity in product design, and democratizing repair information to enhance consumer experiences in reusing the mobile and

electronics products they own. Additional Secretary Bharat Khara emphasized the need for transparent and affordable repair solutions, increased consumer awareness, and support for local repairers. Joint Secretary Anupam Mishra highlighted concerns about the lack of genuine spare parts in local markets, compatibility issues with product components, and the absence of information for consumers to repair their own devices. He also mentioned that the Reparability Index of France rates products on five criteria, while the EU has additional parameters. HCL Technologies Founder Ajai Chowdhry called for legislation to drive change. "Today, most products are not repairable. We need to design products which can be repaired... Unless we create a law, things will not change," he said.

Infosys, NVIDIA expand partnership to develop GenAI-powered solutions

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Infosys on Thursday said it has expanded its partnership with American chipmaker NVIDIA to develop GenAI-powered solutions for telecom operators. The IT major has developed three generative AI solutions powered by its AI-offering Topaz, which make use of NVIDIA NIM inference microservices, NVIDIA NeMo Retriever embedding models, and NeMo Guardrails to customise and deploy generative AI telco domain-specific large-language models. It has also used NVIDIA Riva to allow real-time transcription and translations for call centre agents, according to a regulatory filing.

"Telcos are increasingly adopting generative AI solutions to improve the productivity of their businesses with smarter networks, more efficient operations, and enhanced customer service. "Leveraging NVIDIA's full-stack accelerated computing and AI platform, Infosys Topaz is delivering a suite of domain-specific solutions that will help telcos accelerate and streamline their adoption of generative AI," Ronnie Vasishtha, Senior Vice President of Telecom at NVIDIA, said. These generative-AI solutions have resulted in up to 61 per cent lower latency and 22 per cent absolute improvement in accuracy, the filing said. Shares of Infosys settled 0.35 per cent lower at Rs 1,932.40 apiece on the BSE.

Rupee rises 10 paise to close at 83.87 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee appreciated 10 paise to close at 83.87 (provisional) against the American currency on Thursday, supported by easing crude oil prices and a firm trend in domestic equities. Forex traders said the market is awaiting cues from the US GDP and the US Personal Consumption Expenditure (PCE) inflation data, as this data point is crucial since it could sway the Federal Reserve's decision on whether to implement a 25 or 50 basis point rate cut at its September meeting. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.92 and touched an intra-day high of 83.84 against the US dollar. The domestic currency finally settled at 83.87 (provisional), 10 paise higher from its previous close. On Wednesday, the rupee



depreciated 4 paise to close at 83.97 against the American currency. According to Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst, Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities, the rupee gained 10 paise, as expectations of interest rate cuts continue to provide support, preventing the rupee from falling below 84.00. "The strong demand around 84.00 keeps the rupee buoyant, with resistance seen at 83.75. The rupee is expected to trade in a positive

range between 84.00 - 83.70," Trivedi said. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.11 per cent higher at 101.20. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, declined 0.34 per cent to USD 78.38 per barrel. On the domestic equity market front, Sensex rose 349.05 points, or 0.43 per cent, to close at 82,134.61 points. The Nifty closed 99.60 points, or 0.4 per cent, up at 25,151.95 points. Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Wednesday, as they offloaded shares worth Rs 1,347.53 crore, according to exchange data.

Final guidelines on project loans likely in 2-3 months: RBI official

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The final project loan guidelines are likely to be announced in the next two to three months, a senior RBI official said on Thursday. The norms regarding the Expected Credit Loss (ECL)-based provisioning are in an advanced stage of discussion, the official told reporters here. The Reserve Bank of India has proposed to set aside 5 per cent of the total exposure to a project till the construction of the project is on. Fearing a hit to profits, banks have been asking for a relook into it, as per reports. The RBI official said up to 60 responses have been received on the project loans draft, and the central bank is going



through all the suggestions. When asked about the timelines by when the final guidelines will come in, the official said it will take "at least 2-3 months", but did not give a specific answer on whether the guidelines will be implemented from April 1 next year onwards. To a question on the ECL framework, the official said the norms are in the "advance stages" of discussion. The official admitted that there is an "overlap" on both the ECL and project finance norms, but seemed non-

committal on whether both the guidelines will come in together. These are two concurrent streams running together, the official said, assuring that the intent of the RBI is to be non-disruptive and take into account all the impact of the guidelines before finalising. Meanwhile, on reports of higher delinquencies in microloans, the official said there is no systemic risk and entry-specific concerns are discussed bilaterally as part of the supervisory framework. If some regulatory interventions are required, they are also initiated, the official said, citing the November 2023 regulations on hiking risk weights on unsecured lending. There is "nothing on the table" right now on the MFI

sector, the official added. If any action is taken, it will be for the entire sector and not entity-specific, the official clarified. Speaking at the annual GFF here, RBI's chief general manager Vaibhav Chaturvedi asked financiers to be more "responsible" while engaging in their core lending activities and the industry to take steps towards this aim. The offerings need to be transparent and the regulated entities' dealings need to be fair, he underlined. At the same conference, Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research professor Ashima Goyal said the credit deposit ratios in India are much lower than in other countries and the government borrows a lot of resources.

Green hydrogen firm Ohmium bags financial aid for 137-MW capacity under SIGHT scheme

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Green hydrogen firm Ohmium on Thursday said it has secured financial assistance for setting up a 137-MW electrolyzer manufacturing capacity under the SIGHT scheme. Electrolyzer is a device that uses electricity to split water into hydrogen and oxygen through a chemical process called electrolysis. Ohmium International (Ohmium) has been selected for the second time as a SIGHT Incentive Program award winner by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), a company statement said. "Our selection for this award demonstrates both Ohmium team's commitment to excellence as well as to decarbonization in India and across the globe," said Arne



Ballantine, Ohmium CEO in the statement. This award is a continuation of Ohmium's success in Tranche 1 of the SIGHT program. The tenders, implemented by the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) are intended to incentivize 1.5 GW of domestic electrolyzer manufacturing capacity in support of India's sustainability goals. "India has ambitious green hydrogen goals, and this program supports India's

evolution as a global Energy hub. These funds will accelerate the expansion of Ohmium's Gigafactory in Bangalore as well as support future local manufacturing facilities", noted Ballantine. Ohmium is the PEM electrolyzer leader in India, with partnerships with industry leaders such as NTPC and Tata Projects. The company has an active green hydrogen project pipeline of over 2 GW across four continents, serving a diverse range of customers across energy, transportation, steel production, and heavy industry. Headquartered in the United States with manufacturing facilities in India and operations worldwide, Ohmium has a global green hydrogen project pipeline exceeding 2 GW across three continents.

Fitch retains India rating at BBB with stable outlook

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Global rating agency Fitch on Thursday affirmed India's sovereign rating at 'BBB-' with a stable outlook. India's rating has remained unchanged at 'BBB-', the lowest investment grade, since August 2006. "Fitch Ratings has affirmed India's Long-Term Foreign-Currency Issuer Default Rating (IDR) at 'BBB-' with a Stable Outlook," the global rating agency said in a statement. India's ratings are underpinned by its strong medium-term growth outlook, which will continue to drive improvement in structural aspects of its credit profile, including India's share of GDP in the global economy, as well as its solid external finance position, it said in a statement. Strengthening fiscal credibility from recent achievement of deficit targets, enhanced transparency and buoyant revenues, have increased the likelihood that government debt can follow a modest downward trend in the medium term, it said. Nevertheless, it said, fiscal metrics remain a credit weakness, with deficits, debt and debt service burden all high compared to 'BBB-' range peers. Lagging structural metrics, including governance indicators and GDP per capita, also weigh on the rating, it added. Observing that India is set to remain among the fastest-growing sovereigns globally, it said, "we forecast GDP growth of 7.2 per cent in the fiscal year ending March 2025 (FY25) and 6.5 per cent in FY26, down slightly from 8.2 per cent in FY24."

Gold slips ₹100; silver plunges ₹600

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices slipped Rs 100 to Rs 74,250 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal had ended at Rs 74,350 per 10 grams in the previous trade. Silver prices also plunged by Rs 600 to Rs 87,200 per kilogram, extending the losses in the second straight session on Thursday from the previous close of Rs 87,800 per kg. Meanwhile, gold of 99.5 per cent purity also declined Rs 100 to Rs 73,900 per 10 grams



on Thursday. It had settled at Rs 74,000 per 10 grams in the previous trade. Traders attributed fall in the gold prices due to reduced demand by jewellers in the local markets. On the global front, comex gold is trading at USD 2,555.10 per ounce, higher by USD 17.30 per ounce or 0.68 per cent.

Tyre exports from India rise 17 per cent in Q1: ATMA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Tyre exports from India grew 17 per cent year-on-year to reach Rs 6,219 crore in the first quarter of the current fiscal with the US emerging as the biggest market, industry body Automotive Tyre Manufacturers Association (ATMA) said on Thursday. Tyre exports from India recouped in the first quarter of FY25, increasing by 17 per cent YoY. Tyre exports had declined by 14 per cent in the corresponding quarter in the previous year, ATMA said citing data just released by the Ministry of Commerce. Sustained focus on R&D and



development of advanced technology products aided by competitive pricing and branding efforts helped Indian tyre manufacturers drive growth in exports despite a challenging environment, ATMA Chairman Arnab Banerjee said in a statement. "Improving demand prospects in key export destinations and expected monetary easing also helped growth," Banerjee

added. The rise in exports is a testament to the Indian tyre industry's enhanced integration with global supply chains, he added. "The globally aligned regulatory environment in the country for manufacturing of tyres also augurs well for increasing the addressable market for Indian manufactured tyres," Banerjee said. During Q1FY25, the US was the largest export destination for Indian manufactured tyres accounting for 17 per cent share. Other large export destinations included Brazil, Germany, France and Italy, the statement said.

LIC hands over ₹3,662 cr dividend cheque to Govt

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) on Thursday handed over a dividend cheque of Rs 3,662.17 crore to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. The cheque was presented by Siddhartha Mohanty, Chief Executive Officer & Managing Director of LIC to the finance minister in the presence of M P Tangirala, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Finance. LIC also paid an interim dividend of Rs 2,441.45 crore on March 1, 2024, thus



totaling Rs 6,103.62 crore dividend paid to the Centre for the year 2023-24. LIC, which completed 68 years since its incorporation, has an asset base of over Rs 52.85 lakh crore.

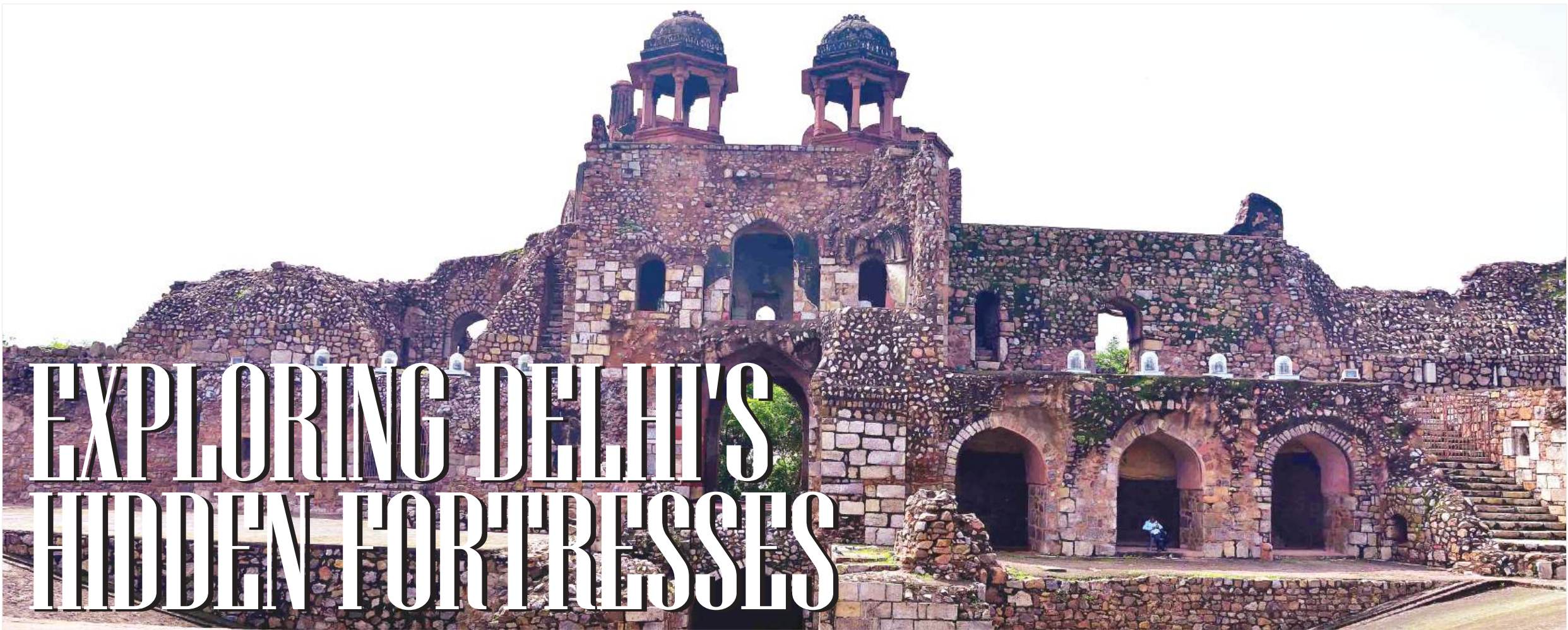


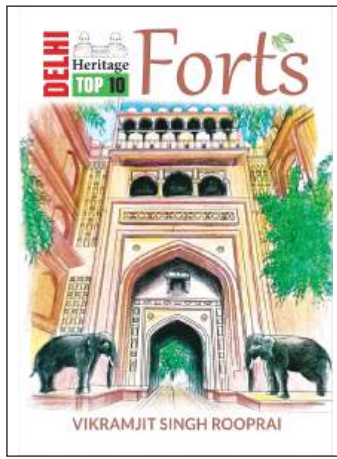
Photo: Pankaj Kumar

Discover the rich history and architecture of Delhi's forts in *Delhi Heritage: Top 10 Forts* by Vikramjit Singh Rooprai, offering an engaging and insightful exploration of the city's past, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

Delhi Heritage: Top 10 Forts by Vikramjit Singh Rooprai is an engaging journey of ten prominent forts in Delhi. As part of the Delhi Heritage series, this book dives deep into the architectural and historical significance of these forts, offering readers a comprehensive view of Delhi's rich past. Rooprai, a dedicated heritage activist and educator has put together a guide that blends historical facts with intriguing stories, making it accessible to both history enthusiasts and casual readers. One of the highlights of the book is how it sheds light on not just the famous forts like the Red Fort and Purana Qila, but also on the lesser-known ones, such as Qila-i-Rai Pithora and Nai ka Kot. Rooprai takes readers on a journey through

the history of these forts, detailing their construction, purpose and the events they have witnessed over centuries. The book stands out because it goes beyond the typical tourist information, offering a more detailed look at how these forts fit into the broader historical and cultural context of Delhi. The book opens with a vivid portrayal of the Red Fort, a symbol of Mughal grandeur. Rooprai captures the momentous day of 18 May 1648, when Emperor Shahjahan inaugurated this architectural marvel. The description of Shahjahan's grand entry, with Prince Dara Shikoh showering him with coins, sets the tone for the book's rich narrative style. The Red Fort's formidable outer walls, crowned with ornate chhatris and punctuated by five

principal gates, are brought to life through Rooprai's evocative prose. Following the Red Fort, Rooprai delves into the history of Purana Qila, a site steeped in both myth and historical significance. The fort is traditionally believed to be built on the grounds of Indraprastha, the legendary capital of the Pandavas. Rooprai skillfully interweaves folklore with historical facts, recounting legends such as Lord Krishna's demand for Khandavprastha. The Bada Darwaza (large gate) of Purana Qila stands as an attestation to its historical importance and Rooprai's detailed descriptions make it clear why it has been a must-visit site since the British era. Tughlaqabad Fort, the largest surviving fort in Delhi, takes centre stage next. Commissioned by Sultan



Ghiasuddin Tughlaq between 1321-1323 CE, the fort's imposing ruins and its strategic significance during the Tughlaq dynasty are examined. Rooprai brings to light the fort's intriguing lore, including the

reputed curse by Sufi mystic Khwaja Nizamuddin Auliya that condemned it to remain abandoned. The fort's role in defending Delhi from Mongol invasions underscores its military importance, a facet Rooprai explores with both depth and clarity. The book also highlights the contributions of Feroz Shah Tughlaq, whose focus on public works and irrigation earned him the title 'Father of the Indian Irrigation System'. Rooprai describes Feroz Shah's efforts to improve the lives of his subjects and his legacy of equality and prosperity. This section provides insight into the ruler's priorities and the architectural innovations that characterised his reign. Salimgarh, another significant fort, is

introduced as a strategic outpost built by Islam Shah Suri, son of Sher Shah Suri. Rooprai's account of Salimgarh's strategic location on a riverine island near the Yamuna and its role in defending Delhi adds a layer of understanding to the city's fortification network. Rooprai's narrative is enriched by his ability to convey the fort's historical and cultural significance. His engaging writing style and meticulous research offer readers a window into the past, highlighting how these structures reflect the evolving history of Delhi. The book is peppered with narrative and detailed descriptions that humanise the history of these fortresses, making their stories accessible and compelling. *Delhi Heritage: Top 10 Forts* by Vikramjit Singh Rooprai is more

than just a guide, it's a celebration of Delhi's rich historical and architectural heritage.. Rooprai's engaging narrative brings these majestic structures to life, making it an invaluable resource for both history enthusiasts and those curious about Delhi's cultural legacy. Through its insightful and meticulously researched content, the book highlights the importance of preserving our historical landmarks and provides a compelling journey into the depths of Delhi's heritage.

BOOK DETAILS:
Book Name & Author: Delhi Heritage: Top 10 Forts by Vikramjit Singh Rooprai
Price: INR 499
Pages: 214
Publisher: Niyogi Books

NEW ARRIVAL
The Battle of Haji Pir: The Indian Army's Cross-Border Surgical Strike

The Battle of Haji Pir by Kulpreet Yadav offers a profound exploration of the 1965 Indo-Pak war, focusing on the pivotal yet often overlooked Haji Pir battle, which was surrendered under the Tashkent Agreement. Yadav's book brings to life the valor and sacrifices of Indian soldiers, making the complexities of military history accessible to all readers. Yadav's detailed account highlights the strategic maneuvers of the Indian Army during Operation Gibraltar and their critical role in defending Kashmir. The book also delves into the behind-the-scenes diplomacy and concessions made for peace, providing an insider's perspective on the conflict. With over 15 books to his name, Kulpreet Yadav combines thorough research with engaging storytelling, making "The Battle of Haji Pir" a compelling read for military enthusiasts and history buffs. Available this September in major bookstores and online platforms.

Human at Work by Richard Lobo

In "Human at Work," Richard Lobo, Chief People Officer at Tech Mahindra, delves into the evolving workplace, emphasising the importance of keeping humans at the center of technological shifts. The book explores themes like agile leadership, ethical decision-making, and human-centric technology, offering practical insights and real-world examples. Lobo underscores that every company today, regardless of industry, is fundamentally a tech company, driven by human expertise and strategy. "Human at Work" highlights the power of micro-transformations to spark significant change, making it a valuable read for HR professionals, managers and anyone navigating today's complex work landscape. Lobo's approach is particularly relevant to the Indian market, with timely discussions on hybrid work models and managing technological disruptions. Available this September in major bookstores and online, this book serves as a roadmap for leading with a human-first mindset in an increasingly digital world.

Genetic Study Refutes Eelam Tamil Origins

A new genetic study reveals that Sri Lanka's Tamil and Sinhala populations are genetically similar, challenging claims of distinct Eelam Tamil origins and questioning the basis for separatist movements

BY KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

An international team of scientists, drawn mainly from Sri Lanka and India, have demolished the concept of Eelam Tamils in the island nation through a comprehensive genetic study. A three-year long molecular biology research spanning across Sri Lanka and India have established that the population in the island nation is homogeneous in nature and there is no scientific basis for the claims by the Tamils that they had their origin in that country. The findings prove that the demand for a separate Eelam(country) for Tamils is bunkum and thousands of Tamils and Sinhalese massacred in the war for Eelam died for a non-existent cause. "The Sri Lankan population, mainly the Sinhala and Tamils, have massive genetic mixing. If the Tamils had their origin in Sri Lanka, their DNA should be visible and discernible. But it is missing," said Prof Gyaneshwer Chaubey, Department of Zoology, Banaras Hindu University who led the team of scientists in this path breaking research. The peer-reviewed research paper "Reconstructing the Population History of the Sinhalese, the major ethnic group of Sri Lanka," was published in iScience, a widely respected scientific portal. While Dr Chaubey led the team of Indian scientists, R Ranasinghe (Institute of Biochemistry, Molecular Biology and Biotechnology, University of Colombo) led the researchers from the island nation. It may be remembered that Dr Chaubey and a team of researchers from Estonia, Harvard and Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (Hyderabad) had demolished the Aryan and Dravidian linguistic theory and proved that both of these groups share the same forefathers. "The analysis based on



Dr Gyaneshwar Chaubey in discussion with a Sri Lankan student of his research team

the frequency of various genetic mutations showed a tight cluster of Sinhalese and Tamil populations, suggesting strong gene flow beyond the boundary of ethnicity and language. A further connection of Sinhalese with the West of India has been established based on the traces of DNA segments. Overall in the South Asian context, Sri Lankan ethnic groups are genetically more homogenous than others", said the team leaders. The study also found that the Sinhala language spoken in the country is a combination of Konkani, Marathi, Sanskrit and Gujarati and reached the island nation through Arabian Sea. According to K M Raghavan, a Sri Lankan historian, the Tamils could have reached Sri Lanka as part of the Kaurava army units hired by the princes of the island nation to fight for them as private army warriors. The Kauravas, who were defeated by the Pandavas in the Mahabharata War took refuge in the East Coast of India and reached Sri Lanka at the invitation of various Kings in the island nation. Following the Portuguese occupation of Sri Lanka, the Kauravas converted to Christianity and their name was

changed to Karavas, writes Raghavan in his book. Ramaswami Wijayabalan, a plantation owner and Tamil scholar based in Colombo, told The Pioneer that the Tamils in north and north east of Sri Lanka are descendants of migrant workers from Malabar province in present day Kerala. "The Tamil they speak, their food habits and social life have their origin in Malabar. The priests in temples in North and East are addressed as Gurukkal as they had come here for teaching martial arts and offering poojas," said Wijayabalan. He asked how puttu, appam etc became the staple food of the Jaffna and Batticaloa Tamils. Interestingly, Ceylon and Colombo find mention in novels and short stories in Malayalam whereas the same is not that common in yesteryear literary works in Tamil, said Josephine Jayashanthi, leading novelist in Tamil Nadu. Dr S Kalyanaraman, Indologist of repute, concurred with the findings of Dr Chaubey and his team. "You may be able to distort history but you cannot distort science. The study by Dr Chaubey is based on pure science and no force can repudiate the same," said Dr Kalyanaraman who has deciphered the Indus script.

Revolutionising India's Dairy Industry: The Inspiring Legacy of Verghese Kurien

MS Meenakshi's "Verghese Kurien: The Man Who Brought Milk to a Million Homes" chronicles the transformative journey of the 'Milkman of India,' whose visionary leadership and innovative approach revolutionised India's dairy industry and empowered rural communities, writes **TEAM VIVA**

Verghese Kurien: The Man Who Brought Milk to a Million Homes by MS Meenakshi is a compelling tribute to the 'Milkman of India,' whose visionary leadership and relentless dedication transformed India's dairy industry and rural economy. This book, part of the Pioneers of India series, meticulously chronicles Kurien's journey from a young, unconventional engineer in Anand, Gujarat to becoming the architect of the White Revolution and a pivotal figure in post-Independence India. MS Meenakshi vividly captures the essence of Kurien's pragmatic leadership and his many accomplishments in the development of cooperative societies, which became a bedrock of India's dairy sector. The book emphasises Kurien's commitment to sustainable development and social entrepreneurship, highlighting how he championed the interests of rural stakeholders. Through initiatives like the creation of AMUL and the Institute of Rural Management in Anand, Kurien not only revolutionised dairy management but also spurred significant changes in rural socio-economic structures, industries, and developmental policies. One of the book's strengths lies in its detailed portrayal of Kurien's partnerships with



entrepreneur whose initiatives under Operation Flood linked the entire country through milk, a staple necessity. Meenakshi's portrayal of Kurien's character is both respectful and intimate, offering a balanced view of a leader who was as astute as he was compassionate. MS Meenakshi's writing is both informative and engaging. Her expertise is evident in the way she presents complex economic and social concepts in a manner that is accessible to readers, making Kurien's achievements all the more inspiring. *Verghese Kurien: The Man Who Brought Milk to a Million Homes* is more than just a biography, it's an inspiring roadmap for future thinkers and leaders in sustainable development. It reminds us of the power of visionary leadership and the impact that one dedicated individual can have on a nation. For anyone interested in the history of India's economic development, social entrepreneurship or the story of a man whose legacy continues to feed millions, this book is a must-read.

BOOK DETAILS:
Price: INR 299
Format: Paperback
Pages: 176
Publisher: Paper Missile Imprint, part of the Pioneers of India series by Niyogi Books.

INDIA'S CHANCES OF WINNING IN AUSTRALIA WILL DEPEND ON BATTERS: JOHN BUCHANAN

PTI ■ MUMBAI
Former Australia coach John Buchanan believes India's chances of completing a hat-trick of Test series wins Down Under will hinge on how the visiting batters, including ageing stars Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, tackle the hosts' battery of pace bowlers. For the first time since 1991-92, India will tour Australia for a five-match Test series for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, with the opening game scheduled to be played at Perth from November 22. Buchanan, who presided over Australia's golden run in all forms in the first decade of this millennium as head coach, said both India and Australia have plenty of ageing players at disposal but that will not be a deterrent to the competition between the sides. "Australia (has), since losing to India in the last series, the pace bowling attack with (off-spinner Nathan) Lyon, backed up now by Cameron Green or Mitch Marsh, is just a really, really powerful bowling lineup," Buchanan told PTI on Thursday after the launch of 'Ready Steady Go Kids' multi-sport program for the CP Goenka International School. "India's top order, (Yashasvi) Jaiswal, (Rohit) Sharma himself, (Virat) Kohli, possibly Iyer... they've got to bat really well to establish totals and then the likes of (Jasprit) Bumrah, (Mohammed) Shami, (Mohammed) Siraj will come



into their own," he said. Buchanan said there won't be much of a psychological impact of India's wins in Australia on the previous two tours given that two of the mainstays then - Cheteshwar Pujara and Ajinkya Rahane - are not likely to be a part of the touring squad for the upcoming series. "The previous series that India won - important from both, Indian perspective and an Australian perspective - a little bit of the mind games will go into the pre-series," he said. "But for all that, those games have passed, those players are gone and the current players we have both in the Australian side and the Indian side, they're at a stage of their careers where they all want to perform." "I looked at the ages and India

has got some aging players in that side notably Rohit who's 37 and Kohli is 35, (Ravichandran) Ashwin, if he tours, he's 37 and you look at the Australian side, there's only one or two players who are under 30. "It'll be very much a battle again between the very good pace bowling attacks of both sides and how well the top order players of both sides can deal with the ball that will bounce, seam and probably swing a little bit more in the day-night game in Adelaide," he said. **BATTING FOR LONGER PERIODS:** Buchanan said it will be key for India to bat for longer periods in Australia and tire out their bowling attack, something that Pujara executed to perfection in 2018-19 facing 1,258 balls. Two years

later, Pujara faced 928 balls as India once again won the series 2-1. "Why Australia plays well at home is they do bat well, they understand their conditions, but that lineup of (Pat) Cummins, (Mitchell) Starc, (Josh) Hazlewood, backed up by Lyon, is just one of the all-time best all-round attacks that world cricket has seen," he said. "Albeit that, Starc is (nearly) 35, Hazlewood is 33, and Cummins is 31 - it's a five-Test series - so if India can not only bat well, but bat for long periods of time, then it will test the physical capacities of that Australian bowling attack and therein potentially lies a little bit of a key to how India can look at winning the series," he said. Buchanan said the lack of preparation among travelling

teams will be a hindrance that India will face as well. India will play a two-day pink-ball match against the Prime Minister's XI on November 30 and December 1 ahead of the day-night Test. "Australia is favourite going into the series right at this stage. When you look around world cricket these days - and it has been (the case) for some time - it's very difficult to tour other countries," he told reporters later. "(The) travelling teams no longer have that preparation in a country. They don't play two or three games prior to playing the first Test match to adjust to a country, because nobody wants to tour for that long. "That makes it very difficult when you go to Perth, when it's fast and bouncy, for a side that's coming from, they will have played Bangladesh (and New Zealand) obviously, but Bangladesh at home isn't it? "The wickets are going to be completely different, albeit it's fantastic lead-in that they're playing some Test cricket, but it's going to be quite difficult to go to Perth to start with," he said. Buchanan added that he was also not in favour of Steve Smith continuing as Australia's opener. "Not personally. He's made his mark at No 4. But I'm not a selector, and I'm not Steve Smith and so those three people will end up making the decision that they think best fits the make-up of that side," he said.



Paralympic Games opening ceremony starts the final chapter on a long summer of sport in Paris

AP ■ PARIS
Just weeks after hosting the Olympics, Paris inaugurated the 2024 Paralympics on Wednesday with a nearly four-hour-long opening ceremony in the heart of the city. Against the backdrop of a setting sun, thousands of athletes paraded down the famed Champs-Élysées avenue to Place de la Concorde in central Paris where French President Emmanuel Macron officially declared the Paralympic Games open. About 50,000 people watched the ceremony in stands built around the iconic square, which is the biggest in Paris and is visible from afar because of its ancient Egyptian Obelisk. Accessibility for athletes in wheelchairs was facilitated with strips of asphalt laid along the avenue and placed over the square. More than 4,000 athletes with physical, visual and intellectual impairments will compete in 22 sports from Thursday until Sept. 8. Organizers say more than 2 million of the 2.8 million tickets have been sold for the various Paralympic events. The opening ceremony was

held outside the confines of a stadium, just like when the Olympics opened in the city on July 26. Fighter planes flew overhead, leaving red-white-and-blue vapors in the colors of the French national flag, before the delegations entered the square in alphabetical order. Some delegations were huge - more than 250 athletes from Brazil - and some were tiny - less than a handful from Barbados and just three from Myanmar. Ukraine's delegation got a loud cheer and some of the crowd stood to applaud them. Flag bearers Steve Serio and Nicky Nieves led the U.S. Team's delegation. The French arrived last and to roars from the crowd, which then sang along to popular French songs, including "Que Je T'aime" by late rocker Johnny Hallyday. Throughout the show, directed by Thomas Jolly who also led the Olympic opening ceremony, singers, dancers and musicians with and without disabilities performed on stage together seamlessly, projecting a theme of inclusion and overcoming physical differences. Lucky Love, a French singer who lost his left

arm at birth, was joined by performers in wheelchairs. Other acts featured dancers with crutches. International Paralympic Committee President Andrew Parsons said he hoped the Paris Paralympics would start an "inclusion revolution" beyond the field of sport. "The Paris 2024 Paralympic Games will show what persons with disabilities can achieve at the highest level when the barriers to succeed are removed," he said in a speech. "The fact these opportunities largely exist only in sport in the year 2024 is shocking. It is proof we can and must do more to advance disability inclusion - whether on the field of play, in the classroom, concert hall or in the boardroom." As the ceremony concluded, the Paralympic torch was carried into the area by former Olympic wheelchair tennis gold medalist Michaël Jérémiasz, who was surrounded on stage by dozens of torchbearers. Five French Paralympians lit the Olympic cauldron, which is designed to look like a hot air balloon and glowed gold-like in the night.



Nitish-Thulasimathi duo makes winning start in Paralympics

PTI ■ PARIS
India's Nitesh Kumar and Thulasimathi Murugesan had little difficulty overcoming country-mates Suhas Yathiraj and Palak Kohli in the opening group stage match of badminton mixed doubles (SL3-SU5) at the Paralympic Games here on Thursday. However, mixed doubles duo of Sivarajan Solaimalai and Nithya Sre, seeded second, lost their SH6 group play stage match in straight games to the American pair of Miles Krajewski and Jayci Simon. The Nitesh-Thulasimathi duo won the Group A contest 21-14, 21-17 in 31 minutes. Nitesh, 29, who hails from Karnal district in Haryana, and young Thulasimathi, a veterinary science student from Tamil Nadu who had won the mixed bronze at the Asian Para Games in Hangzhou, encountered little challenge in the first game and at one stage they were leading by seven points. Unable to counter the pair's net play and deep tosses, Suhas and Palak quickly

found themselves trailing, losing the game in just 14 minutes. The second game too went on similar lines with Palak clearly not able to tackle the prowess of her senior partner on court and giving away points. SL3 players have moderate impairment on one side of the body, affecting either both legs or the absence of limbs, while SU5 players have significant impairments in their upper limbs. In Group B, Sivarajan and Nithya gave a tough challenge to the American pair before going down 21-23, 11-21 in 35 minutes in SH6 category. SH6 is for badminton players with short stature. Sivarajan, who trains at the Pallela Gopichand Academy in Hyderabad, and partner Nithya were equal to the task in the opening game and also took a slender one-point lead but the young American pair, who are both in their late teens, were too agile on court and fought for every point. The second game turned out to be one-sided with the tiring Indians losing in just 14 minutes.

Wimbledon champion Krejckikova out of US Open

AP ■ NEW YORK
Frances Tiafoe is getting the rematch he wants, a second shot at Ben Shelton at the U.S. Open. But there won't be a second straight Grand Slam title for Barbra Krejckikova. The Wimbledon champion was knocked out of the U.S. Open in the second round on Wednesday, defeated by Elena-Gabriela Ruse 6-4, 7-5. The No. 8-seeded Krejckikova won her second Grand Slam singles title this summer, but then she didn't play any matches after the Paris Olympics. She acknowledged last week not knowing where her level of play was. Turns out, it wasn't good enough. "I mean, winning Wimbledon is amazing. It's a great, great result,

I'm very proud about it and how I was able to handle everything there," said Krejckikova, who hadn't played a tournament on hard courts since February. "I think I was playing quite well, definitely better than in the first match. I think my game was improving, but it just wasn't enough." No woman has won Wimbledon and the U.S. Open in the same year since Serena Williams in 2012. Tiafoe had short work on the steamiest day of the tournament thus far, with temperatures in New York surpassing 90 degrees Fahrenheit (32 degrees Celsius). Three men's matches ended when an opponent stopped playing, the last one sending defending champion Novak Djokovic to the third round when Laslo Djere retired early in the third set with what



appeared to be pain near his hip after they played for more than two hours across the first two sets. "You know, in the end, not the kind of finish that we players or crowd want to see, but I think it's probably due to that physical battle that we had in the opening two sets," the No. 2-seeded Djokovic said. Tiafoe, the No. 20 seed, won the first two sets before his opponent, Alexander Shevchenko, retired after the first game of the third set. Shelton, the No. 13 seed, later beat Roberto Bautista Agut 6-3, 6-4, 6-4. He ousted Tiafoe last year in the quarterfinals, stopping Tiafoe from what would have been a second straight trip to the U.S. Open semifinals. "Obviously he's very much like me in the

court," Tiafoe said, "and has such a big game and big shots and serves big and gets the crowd going." Well, maybe not quite as well as Tiafoe does. "I know that the people love him here. Probably more than me. He's electric here, and his crowds are electric here," the 21-year-old Shelton said. "It will be a battle. It will be a war just like the last two times we've played. Yeah, I'm more than excited to be out there with him again." They were two of the four American men to reach the third round in the bottom half of the draw. No. 12 Taylor Fritz got there by beating Matteo Berrettini 6-3, 7-6 (1), 6-1, while Brandon Nakashima beat Arthur Cazaux and will next play No. 18 Lorenzo Musetti, the bronze medalist at the Olympics.

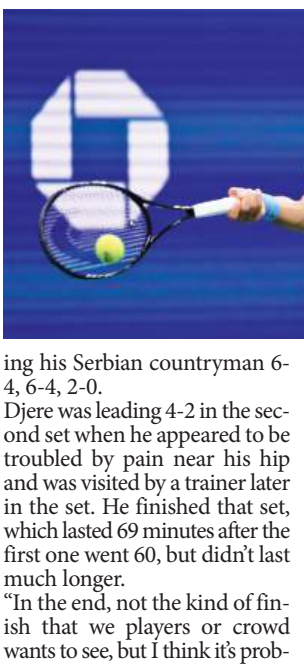
he was excited and energetic he is on the

Novak Djokovic reaches US Open third round

AP ■ NEW YORK
A U.S. Open match that Novak Djokovic already expected to be difficult was threatening to become a toss-up as he struggled with his serve. Missing more than he made, Djokovic couldn't get many quick points Wednesday night. He acknowledged that he should have lost the second set, and if his opponent didn't get injured and have to stop, maybe he wouldn't even have won that match. Once he had, the defending champion was only looking ahead. "The matches are only going to get tougher from here. I know that, but I'm fine," Djokovic said. "I'll find my way, as I have done many times in my career." Djokovic reached the third round when Laslo Djere had to retire with the No. 2 seed lead-

ing his Serbian countryman 6-4, 6-4, 2-0. Djere was leading 4-2 in the second set when he appeared to be troubled by pain near his hip and was visited by a trainer later in the set. He finished that set, which lasted 69 minutes after the first one went 60, but didn't last much longer. "In the end, not the kind of finish that we players or crowd wants to see, but I think it's prob-

ably due to that physical battle that we had in the opening two sets," Djokovic said. It was the 90th win at the U.S. Open for Djokovic, making him the first man to reach that total at all four Grand Slams. The 24-time major champion will play No. 28 seed Alexei Popyrin on Friday. Djere was the only player to win a set against Djokovic at last year's U.S. Open, grabbing the



first two in their third-round encounter before Djokovic rallied. "So I knew coming into the match that if I don't serve well, which was the case, I'm going to have to really grind and work for my points a lot," Djokovic said. "That's what I guess caused the two sets to be played over two hours." Djokovic made only 47% of his first serves and appeared to be

struggling physically himself earlier in the match, which was just his second since winning the gold medal in the Olympics. Djere had two chances to break Djokovic's serve for would have given him a 5-2 lead in the second set. Instead, he wouldn't win another game, with Djokovic breaking to win the set when Djere yanked a forehand out of bounds.

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For and on behalf of Food Corporation of India, General Manager (Region), Jharkhand invites Online tender under Two Bid system through GeM Portal (<https://gem.gov.in>) for appointment of Regular Handling & Transport Contractor for a period of two years for PWS Hazaribagh. For details & complete Tender documents, please log on to <https://gem.gov.in> or <http://www.fcil.gov.in>.
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Messi joins group training with Inter Miami

AP ■ FORT LAUDERDALE (FLORIDA)
Lionel Messi returned to group training with Inter Miami on Wednesday, more than six weeks after the Argentina captain left the Copa America final with a badly sprained right ankle. There is still no official timetable for when Messi, the eight-time Ballon d'Or winner, will play again for Inter Miami - which has the best record in Major League Soccer so far this season. Inter Miami visits Chicago on Saturday, then doesn't return to MLS play until a Sept. 14 match

with Philadelphia. If Messi doesn't play this weekend, that means he'd have two more weeks to continue rehabbing before returning to game action. Messi was not selected by Argentina to play in World Cup qualifiers in early September. "To see him on the field is great," Inter Miami goalkeeper Drake Callender said after the Wednesday workout. "I know he's been getting treatment every single day, training every single day. He's dealt with things before. He's been there, done that and he's still doing it at the highest level. To see him recoup from the kind of injury we saw at



Copa America and be available for us this season, it goes to show the quality of care we have here." Messi has 12 goals and 13 assists in 12 MLS games with Inter Miami this season. He's missed 14 of the club's league matches, including each of the last eight either because he was playing for Argentina or recovering from the ankle injury. Also missed by Messi in that span: all four of Inter Miami's matches in Leagues Cup play, as the team tried to defend the trophy it won a year ago. Messi last played on July 14, leaving in the second half of

Argentina's win over Colombia in the Copa America final. He was dealing with leg issues throughout that tournament, plus left the field briefly in the first half of the final because of a left ankle issue - then got hurt again in the second half and had to leave for good. If Messi doesn't play until the Sept. 14 match, he'll have had exactly two months to recover and rehab plus gear up for the MLS playoffs. Inter Miami is the only team so far to have clinched a playoff berth and is currently four points clear - with a match in hand - over the LA Galaxy for the best overall record in MLS.