



**OPINION 6**  
URBAN VIOLENCE: HUMAN NATURE VS CITY LIFE

**WORLD 8**  
HARRIS URGES NETANYAHU TO END WAR

**MONEY 10**  
GOLD, SILVER PRICES BOUNCE BACK ON GLOBAL CUES

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INDIA LOOK TO MAINTAIN DOMINANCE  
12 SPORTS



## French rail sabotage ahead of Olympics

AP ■ PARIS

France's high-speed rail network was hit on Friday with widespread and "criminal" acts of vandalism, including arson attacks, paralysing travel to Paris from across the rest of France and Europe only hours before the grand opening ceremony of the Olympics.

French officials condemned the attacks as "criminal actions," and prosecutors in Paris opened a national investigation, saying the crimes could carry sentences of 15 to 20 years.

As Paris authorities geared up for a spectacular parade on and along the Seine River, three fires were reported near the tracks on the high-speed lines of Atlantique, Nord and Est, causing disruptions that affected hundreds of thousands of travellers.



Stranded passengers wait inside Gare du Nord station in Paris, France, on Friday. France's high speed rail network TGV was severely disrupted following a 'massive attack', according to train operator SNCF, just hours before the opening ceremony of the Paris 2024 Olympic games. Around 800,000 passengers are expected to be affected over the weekend AP/PTI

Among them were two German athletes in showjumping who were on a train to Paris to take part in the opening ceremony but had to turn back in Belgium because of the closures, and will now miss the ceremony, German news agency DPA reported. "There was no longer a chance of making it on time," rider Philipp Weishaupt, who was travelling with teammate Christian Kukuk, told DPA. French Prime Minister Gabriel Attal wrote on the social media platform X that France's intelligence services have been mobilised to find the perpetrators.

Attal characterised them as "acts of sabotage," which were "prepared and coordinated." There were no known reports of injuries. Transport Minister Patrice Vergriete described people fleeing from the scene of fires and the discovery of incendiary devices. "Everything indicates that these are criminal fires," he said. The incidents paralysed several high-speed lines linking Paris to the rest of France and to neighbouring countries, Vergriete said, speaking on BFM television.

The French national rail company SNCF said areas affecting rail track intersections were targeted to double the impact. "For one fire, two destinations were hit," the company's CEO, Jean-Pierre Farandou. It was "a premeditated, calculated, coordinated attack" that indicates "a desire to seriously harm" the French people, Farandou said. The attack occurred against a backdrop of global tensions and heightened security measures as the city prepared for the 2024 Olympic Games. Many travellers were planning to converge on the capital for the opening ceremony, and many vacationers were also in transit.

The disruptions particularly affected Paris' major Montparnasse station, where the station's hall was full of travellers. The Paris police prefecture "concentrated its personnel in Parisian train stations" after the "massive attack" that paralysed the TGV high-speed network, Laurent Nuñez, the Paris police chief, told France Info television. Many passengers at the Gare du Nord, one of Europe's busiest train stations, were looking for answers and solutions on Friday morning. All eyes were on the central message boards as most services to northern France, Belgium and the United Kingdom were delayed. "It's a hell of a way to start the Olympics," said Sarah Moseley, 42, as she learned that her train to London was an hour late.

"They should have more information for tourists, especially if it's a malicious attack," said Corey Grainger, a 37-year-old Australian sales manager on his way to London, as he rested on his two suitcases in the middle of the station. Government officials denounced the acts, though they said there was no immediate sign of a direct link to the Olympics. National police said authorities were investigating the incidents. French media reported a major fire on a busy western route.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi pays homage at the Kargil War Memorial on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the 'Kargil Vijay Diwas', in Dras, on Friday PTI

## Modi warns Pak on terrorism

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Sending out a terse message to the neighbouring country on the occasion of the 25th Kargil Vijay Diwas celebrations, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday warned Pakistan by asserting that the Indian soldiers will crush terrorism with full force and the enemy will be given a befitting reply. In his maiden visit to Ladakh after taking the oath of office for the third time, Modi also reminded Pakistan that it has not learned anything from the past. Without mincing any words the Prime Minister said, "In Kargil, we not only won the

war, we presented an incredible example of 'truth, restraint and strength'. The Prime Minister threw light on Pakistan's deceit at a time when India was making all efforts to maintain peace. "Falsehood and terror were brought down to their knees by truth", he added. Condemning terrorism, the Prime Minister said Pakistan has always faced defeat in the past. "Pakistan has not learned anything from its past and has continued to wage war in the garb of terrorism and proxy wars to stay relevant". Addressing the Shradhanjali Samroh after paying

homage to the bravehearts who made the supreme sacrifice in the line of duty the Prime Minister said, "Today I am speaking from a place where the masters of terror can hear my voice directly. I want to tell these patrons of terrorism that their nefarious intentions will never succeed. Our soldiers will crush terrorism with full force and the enemy will be given a befitting reply," he added. "India will overcome all challenges that come in the way of development, be it Ladakh or Jammu & Kashmir," the Prime Minister reiterated.



Kanwariyas walk past the shops on which banners with shopkeepers' name were put up on Kanwar Marg after an order issued by Uttar Pradesh Government, in Muzaffarnagar PTI

## SC extends Kanwar Yatra nameplate ruling

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday extended its interim stay on the directives issued by certain States to display the names of shop/ restaurant owners and hawkers outside their premises during the Kanwar Yatra season. A Bench of Justices Hrishikesh Roy and SVN Bhatti said the interim order passed by it on July 22 will continue. "The interim order shall continue," the Bench said while giving time to the States of Uttar Pradesh (UP), Uttarakhand and Madhya Pradesh to file their responses. The Bench said it won't issue any clarification on the July 22 order as "We

have said what needed to be said in our July 22 order. Can't force anyone to disclose names." A large number of devotees travel from various places with 'kanwars' carrying holy water from the Ganga to perform 'jalabhishek' of Shivlings during the Hindu calendar month of 'Shravan'. Many believers shun consuming meat during the month they consider holy. Many don't even consume meals containing onions and garlic. The Bench also made it clear that there is no restriction on shops/ eateries voluntarily displaying names of its owners and employees outside their premises.

## Top court to hear Kerala, WB pleas on Bill assent denial

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a significant development, the Supreme Court on Friday agreed to consider the separate pleas of Opposition-ruled Kerala and West Bengal, alleging the denial of assent to Bills passed by the respective legislative Assemblies. Kerala also alleged that Governor Arif Mohammed Khan referred certain Bills to President Droupadi Murmu and those were yet to be cleared. Taking note of the pleas, the top court issued notices to the Union Ministry of Home Affairs and the secretaries of Kerala Governor Khan and his West Bengal counterpart CV Ananda Bose and sought their replies within three weeks. The bench of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud, Justice JB Pardiwala and Justice Manoj Misra also directed the Trinamool Congress-led West Bengal Government to make the Home Ministry a party to the petition. The CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front Government of Kerala moved the SC in March, alleging that certain Bills cleared by the Assembly were referred to the President by the Governor and these were still pending assent.

## Opp CMs to skip NITI Aayog meet, Didi to attend

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

The first meeting of NITI Aayog in the third tenure of Narendra Modi as Prime Minister is to see a "boycott call" by several non-BJP ruled Chief Ministers on Saturday. The meeting, to be chaired by Modi will, however, be attended by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee who albeit has called for scrapping of the NITI Aayog and replace it by Planning Commission. Apart from Congress and its alliance-ruled States like Jharkhand, which are part of the INDIA Bloc, declining to attend the crucial meet in the national Capital, Delhi, Punjab, and Kerala have also announced they will not be part of the meeting. Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah, Himachal Pradesh CM Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu and Telangana's Revanth Reddy have announced they will not attend the meeting over alleged bias against their States in the Union Budget. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK leader MK Stalin, Kerala's CM and CPI(M) leader Pinarayi Vijayan as well as Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)-led Delhi and Punjab Governments too called to boycott the meeting. "NITI Aayog should be scrapped and Planning Commission should be brought back. Thought it's my duty to raise our voice on common platform even though I know NITI Aayog has no financial power," Mamata said and confirmed to take part in the meeting. She said she will use the opportunity to register her protest against a "discriminatory Budget" and the



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee arrives at Banga Bhawan, in New Delhi, on Friday PTI

"conspiracy to divide Bengal and other Opposition-ruled States." The Chief Minister said she was asked to send her written speech seven days ahead of the meeting which she has done and it was before the Union Budget was tabled. "I will stay at the meeting for a while. If I get an opportunity to deliver my speech at the meeting and record my protest against the discrimination and political bias against the Opposition-ruled States in the Budget besides the conspiracy that is being hatched to divide Bengal and its neighbouring States, I will do so. Else, I will walk out of the meeting," the Trinamool Congress supremo said. An official statement said Modi will chair NITI Aayog's 9th Governing Council meeting which

will focus on making India a developed nation by 2047. The council, the apex body of NITI Aayog, includes all State Chief Ministers, Lieutenant Governors of Union Territories, and several Union Ministers. Modi is the chairman of NITI Aayog. According to the statement, the meeting aims to foster participative governance and collaboration between the Centre and State Governments, enhancing the quality of life for both rural and urban populations by strengthening the delivery mechanisms of Government interventions. The meeting will also focus on recommendations of the 3rd National Conference of Chief Secretaries held in December last year.

## NEET-UG final results declared

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Testing Agency (NTA) on Friday announced the final results of the controversy-ridden medical entrance exam NEET-UG. The results were declared following directive from the Supreme Court after taking into account marks of a physics question, which the NTA had said has two correct answers. "The re-revised score cards are live now," a senior NTA official said. Forty-four out of the 67 candidates who were earlier declared toppers had scored full marks because of the marks awarded for that particular physics question. The number of toppers was later reduced to 61 with the agency withdrawing grace marks awarded to six candidates to make up for loss of time at few exam centres. In a major setback to unsuccessful aspirants of NEET-UG 2024, the Supreme Court on Tuesday dismissed the pleas seeking cancellation and re-test of the controversy-ridden exam, holding that there was no evidence on record to conclude that it was "vitiated" on account of "systemic breach" of its sanctity. The verdict came as a shot in the arm for the embattled NDA Government and the NTA, which were facing strong criticism and protests, on streets and in Parliament, over alleged large-scale malpractices like question paper leak, fraud and impersonation in the prestigious test held on May 5. The CBI is probing alleged irregularities in NEET-UG 2024 and has lodged six FIRs. The NEET-UG is conducted by the National Testing Agency for admissions to MBBS, BDS, AYUSH and other related courses in Government and private institutions.

## Food safety officials raid hotels in BBSR Slap fines for selling stale food

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) food safety officials carried out raids at several hotels and eateries in the city following complaints of eateries selling stale food in unhygienic conditions. The BMC teams conducted the special drive to ensure that food hygiene and cleanliness is maintained in the hotels and eateries.

as part of the crackdown. During the operation, a fine of Rs 40,000 was imposed on a hotel for selling stale food. Besides, Rs 25,000 was imposed on a hotel in the Nayapalli area while another hotel was fined Rs 20,000. Another hotel in the Patia area was made to pay a fine of Rs 55,000 for failure to maintain food hygiene. During the raids, it was found that most of these hotels are not following proper procedure for discharge of wastes. These hotels were issued show-cause notices and asked to reply within three days.

## Low pressure SRC alerts Collectors of 13 districts

After IMD issues heavy rains warning

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) on Friday asked the Collectors of 13 districts to take appropriate action as there is a possibility of heavy rainfall and floods in north Odisha under the impact of a low-pressure area. The low-pressure area was formed on the day over the

North Bay of Bengal and adjoining coastal areas of Bangladesh and Gangetic West Bengal under the influence of a cyclonic circulation. It is likely to move west-north-west wards across Gangetic West Bengal and Jharkhand during the next two days. "Under its impact, there may be heavy rains and a flood-like situation in the north Odisha. Therefore, it is requested to review the preparedness at the district level, take appropriate action and intimate the situa-

tion of the district from time to time," the SRC's letter stated. On Saturday, heavy to very heavy rainfall (7 to 20 cm) is very likely to occur in the districts of Kendrapada, Jagatsinghpur, Cuttack, Dhenkanal, Bhadrak, Angul, Sambalpur, Bargarh, Deogarh and Keonjhar. Heavy rainfall (7 to 11cm) is very likely to occur in the districts of Mayurbhanj, Puri, Khordha, Sundargarh, Nayagarh, Boudh,

Subarnapur, Balangir, Nuapada, Malkangiri, Koraput, Nabarangpur, Baleswar, Jajpur and Jharsuguda, said the Regional Office of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) here. On Sunday, heavy rainfall (7 to 11cm) is very likely to occur in the districts of Kandhamal, Cuttack, Subarnapur, Bargarh, Balangir, Kalahandi, Nuapada, Nabarangpur, Koraput and Nayagarh, said the IMD.

## In State 10% quota for Aginveers in uniformed services

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

All the soldiers of the Indian Army are pride of the nation. The Agniveers who have got training in the Army have the capability to play an important role in providing security to the nation, said Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Friday. Agniveer is one of the Prime Minister's visionary schemes. The scheme has helped in mak-

ing the youth of the country skilled, courageous and capable. That is why the Odisha Government has decided to induct them into uniformed services in the State, said Majhi. "I announce that all those Agiveers who have not been inducted into the Army would get 10% reservation in all uniformed services in the State. Besides, they would get five years' age relaxation," said the CM.





# Min warns of action against potato hoarders 512 MoUs signed, only 30 executed in last 5 yrs

**Asks not to sell at more than Rs 22/kg**

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
With potato price skyrocketing in Odisha, the State Government on Friday warned that stringent action would be taken against the traders who indulge in hoarding and black marketing. Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister

Krushna Chandra Patra took stock of the situation and visited a potato godown at Aiginia in Bhubaneswar. Stating that there is adequate stock of potatoes in the State which can cater to the needs for seven to eight days, Patra said strong action would be taken against some traders who are responsible for creating an 'artificial scarcity' that led to price rise. The government would im-

port potato from Uttar Pradesh if necessary, Patra said. Blaming the previous BJD government for the present situation, he said potato and onion missions failed in the State as it failed to boost infrastructure like cold storages and raise potato and onion production in the State. Notably, the retail price of potato has touched Rs 45-50 per kg in the market while it was around Rs 30 on July 20.

The Minister asked the vendors not to sell potato at more than Rs 22/kg. While supply of potatoes from West Bengal has come to a halt, traders in Odisha should not try to take advantage of the situation, he said. The Minister further said an important meeting has been convened to address the situation and necessary action would be taken to keep the price under control.

## Industries Minister tells Assembly

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
The Odisha Government signed 512 MoUs with various industries in the last five years to pump in investment in the State, but only 30 of them have been executed so far, informed Industries Minister Sampad Swain in the Assembly on Friday. While replying to a ques-

tion from Congress MLA Tara Prasad Bahinipati about the progress of industries in the State, Swain said, "From 2020 to March 2024, Odisha has signed 512 MoUs with a proposed investment of Rs 11,85,281.40 crore for several mega projects through the State-Level Single Window Clearance Authority. Execution of these projects could have created 5,31,000 job opportunities." "However, so far, only 30 of them are partially or fully

executed pumping only Rs 19,528-crore investments in the State. If these mega projects become fully operational, it can generate 20,251 more job opportunities," he informed. Following Swain's reply, Bahinipati slammed the Minister and expressed displeasure for allegedly furnishing incomplete facts in the House. "The present BJP government's focus is a 'Viksit Odisha'. Several com-

panies with the help of the then BJD government procured land from the tribal communities in Koraput to establish factories in 2004-2005. Even after two decades, there is no sign of a factory in the district. Both BJP and BJD are misleading the people," Bahinipati alleged. Notably, during the period, the government provided 8,652 acres of land to 235 industries to set up their factories in the State.

## Opp attacks govt for Rath Yatra 'mismanagement'

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
Opposition Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and Congress on Friday criticised the State's BJP government for what they alleged as severe mismanagement of the Rath Yatra of Lord Jagannath held in Puri earlier this month.

Law Minister and the chief administrator of the temple. Ray further claimed that a devotee died and several others were injured due to the mismanagement. Responding to the debate, Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan defended the government, noting that this year's Rath Yatra was unique as it featured three major rituals, Nabajouban Darshan, Netra Utsav and the Rath Yatra itself on a single day, July 7.

Initiating a debate on an Adjournment Motion in the State Assembly, Congress Legislature Party (CLP) Leader Rama Chandra Kadam accused the BJP, which came to power in the name of Lord Jagannath, of attempting to cover up an incident during the 'pahandi' (ceremonial procession) of Lord Balabhadra. Kadam highlighted that the idol of Lord Balabhadra fell while being escorted from the chariot to the Adapa Mandap of the Gundicha Temple on July 9. BJD MLA Byomakesh Ray also criticised the government that it treated the Rath Yatra as a party event. He pointed out the fall of Lord Balabhadra during the 'pahandi' ritual and noted the absence of both the

Harichandan refuted claims about a devotee's death being due to a stampede, clarifying that it was caused by a cardiac arrest. He also criticised the previous BJD government for disrupting daily rituals of Lord Jagannath for the visits of influential figures. Both BJD and Congress were dissatisfied with the Minister's response and staged a walkout from the House.

## Raids on Suktel CCE

# Rs 2.26-cr deposits, 2 more plots in UP detected

**Rout arrested, forwarded to court**

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
The Vigilance police on Friday continued searches at several places in connection with the alleged possession of disproportionate asset by Chief Construction Engineer (CCE), Lower Suktel, Balangir, Sunil Kumar Rout, and unearthed two more plots in Uttar Pradesh. Official sources said the two more plots allegedly acquired by Rout outside Odisha at Mathura in Uttar Pradesh were unearthed. The plots are located near Vrindaban Chandrodayo Mandir, Chhatikara Road in Mathura. This apart, investment and savings made by Rout were computed and it was found that he has paid premium of Rs 1.86 crore to various insur-



ance companies. Further, bank deposits of Rs.40.39 lakhs have been ascertained so far. Total deposits assessed so far are over Rs 2.26 crore. Further details of investments made in shares and other financial instruments were being verified, Vigilance said. Enumeration of assets within the farmhouse at Saptasajya in Dhenkanal was carried out. The farmhouse is over eight acres of land. A two-storied residential building was found in the farmhouse. A

poultry farm was also found inside the farmhouse having about 1,000 country chickens and ducks. Further, there is a cow shed in the farmhouse, wherein 45 cows and 25 calves were detected. On Thursday, the Vigilance had unearthed two multi-storey buildings in Bhubaneswar, two flats in Puri and 34 plots. Vigilance had stated that 176 grams of gold, Rs 2.3 lakh in cash, two trucks, two Benami four-wheelers and four

two-wheelers have been detected during the raids at nine places in Bhubaneswar, Puri, Angul, Cuttack and Balangir. Inventory of lockers was taken up on Friday. Later on Friday, Rout was arrested by the Vigilance and forwarded to the Court of Special Judge, Vigilance, Bhubaneswar, for possession of disproportionate assets to the tune of 257% of his known sources of income, which he could not account for satisfactorily.

## ICAI holds seminar on Income Tax Act



**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
The Institute of Cost Accountants of India (ICAI) Bhubaneswar Chapter conducted a seminar on "Six Decades of Income Tax Act, 1961 - A Look Back and Way Forward" and a "Panel Discussion on Union Budget 2024-25" on Thursday at the CMA Bhawan here in commemoration of the Income Tax Day celebration week. Principal Commissioner, Income Tax-1, Bhubaneswar Saroj Kumar Mohapatra inaugurated the seminar as chief guest and Member-CLC (Ministry of Corporate Affairs) & Principal partner, SRB & Associates Rajib Sekhar Sahoo, was special guest. Former CMD, Heavy Engi-

neering Corp Ltd Ramaballava Misra was guest of honour. Dr Amarendra Das, Associate Professor, School of Humanities & Social Sciences, NISER, Bhubaneswar, spoke as resource person. Chairman PD Committee of the Chapter Soumya Ranjan Jena delivered the welcome address. Chairman of the Chapter Ramesh Chandra Patra delivered the keynote address and Treasurer Avinash Kotni extended a vote of thanks. More than 150 CMA Members of the Chapter actively participated and interacted. With the collective effort of all, the programme ended with a grand success. (CMA Ramesh Chandra Patra), Chairman M-9438906256

## Kargil Vijay Diwas held in city



**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
Commemorating the Kargil Vijay Diwas, city-based social organisation Sahajya paid rich tributes to the martyrs of the Kargil war here on Friday by planting saplings in their memory. Presiding over the programme, Dr Lingaraj Sahoo said the Kargil Vijay Diwas is celebrated by every Indian like any other national festival. People across the country remember this day to pay hom-

age to the brave jawans who sacrificed their lives to defend the country. "It is our duty to remember the martyrs and raise awareness for water conservation and environmental protection, which is the need of the hour" he said. On the occasion, Ayurvedic saplings were planted in memory of the martyrs. Among others, Brahmananda Patnaik, Pramod Kumar Das, Shramista Panigrahi, Sarojini Mohanty, Sunita Sahani, Akshay Jena, Subash Barik and Vishal Kar were present.

# Pleas in HC challenge election of 9 MLAs, 1 MP

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
On July 18, petitions contesting the elections of seven MLAs, including Jajpur Lok Sabha MP Rabi Narayan Behera and Deputy Chief Minister Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo, were submitted to the Orissa High Court. On June 4, the results of the Odisha general elections of 2024 were announced. Nine of these pleas have been submitted at the HC overall, since two election petitions were filed earlier. Saroj Kumar Meher, a BJD candidate, filed a petition on Thursday contesting the election of Deputy CM Singh Deo, a BJP MLA. Meher who lost by a margin of 1,357 votes has questioned the entire counting pro-

cess and sought declaration of election of Singh Deo as void. Election petitions must be filed within 45 days of a candidate's election date, according to the Representation of Peoples' Act, 1951. On a similar note, Jagannath Pradhan of the BJP has challenged the election of BJD MLA Ananta Narayan Jena from Bhubaneswar-Central, alleging concerns about the ballot counting procedure, with regard to postal ballots and is calling for new elections. Jena defeated Pradhan by a slim margin of just 37 votes. Former Bargarh MLA Debesh Acharya also moved the High Court against election of BJP MLA Ashwini Sarangi. He alleged that

Sarangi provided false information on his criminal cases and assets in the affidavit submitted with his nomination for the Assembly polls. Former BJD Minister Ashok Chandra Panda contested the election of BJP MLA Babu Singh from the Bhubaneswar-Ekmar constituency in a different petition. Bishnubrata Routray of the BJD also submitted a petition contesting Ashok Kumar Das' election as Congress MLA for the Basudevpur constituency. Two petitions were filed by Giriraj Singh Majhi and Manoj Kumar Panda claiming to be voters of Kantabanji and Brahmapur Assembly constituencies respectively. While Majhi challenged the election of BJP's Laxman Bag

from Kantabanji, Panda challenged the election of BJP MLA Anil Kumar Panda from Brahmapur. Former CM and BJD supreme Naveen Patnaik and former MLA Ramesh Chandra Chau Pattanayak lost to Bag and Panda from Kantabanji and Brahmapur respectively. Former MP Sarmistha Sethi of BJD has also filed a petition challenging the election of BJP's Rabi Narayan Behera from Jajpur Parliamentary constituency. Sethi lost to Behera by a margin of 1,587 votes. Earlier, two petitions were filed by former Minister Dilip Ray of BJP and BJD's former MLA Dipali Das who had lost from the Rourkela and Jharsuguda constituencies respectively.

## Japan univ confers Doctorate on Samanta



**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
Japan's Koyasan University conferred an Honorary Doctorate on KIIT & KSS founder Dr Achyuta Samanta during his visit to the campus on July 24. Dr Samanta is the second Indian to get this prestigious doctorate from the more-than 100-year-old Koyasan University after Devendra Fadnavis, the then Chief Minister of Maharashtra. Koyasan University President Soeda Ryusho awarded the

degree in the presence of Consul General of India Nikhilesh Giri. This is Dr Samanta's 58th Honorary Doctorate. Soeda Ryusho said that in recognition for Dr. Samanta's selfless contribution to the humanity, the Koyasan University unanimously resolved to confer the Honorary Doctorate upon him. In his acceptance speech, Dr Samanta said, "This is such a prestigious university whose history goes more than 100 years back."

# After BJP's CM pick, now Cong plays tribal card in Odisha

## Appoints 2 tribal leaders in two top posts in State Assly

Recently, the Congress high command has appointed two tribal MLAs, Rama Chandra Kadam and CS Raazen Ekka, as the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader and party Chief Whip, respectively, in the State Assembly. Kadam is a three-time MLA from the Pottangi Assembly seat in Koraput district and Ekka is a two-time MLA from Rajgangpur in Sundergarh. Ekka is the only Congress MLA from Sundargarh Lok Sabha Constituency whereas Kadam is one among six Congress MLAs from Koraput Lok Sabha Constituency. Out of these six Congress MLAs, five are from ST-reserved seats and one from general seat. In addition, one ST-reserved Assembly seat, Chittrakonda, under adjacent Nabarangpur Lok Sabha Constituency has been bagged by the Congress in 2024 poll.



**LALIT MOHAN MISHRA**  
While Sundergarh Lok Sabha (ST) seat had gone out of the Congress's bag long ago, Koraput Lok Sabha (ST) seat has been won by Congress leader Saptagiri Ulaka for the second consecutive term in 2024 poll. Giving leadership to the two tribal leaders in Odisha Assembly would enable the Congress party to strengthen and expand its base among the tribals mainly in south, central and west Odisha regions. In the last election, Congress won 14 Assembly seats out of which 9

are tribal, one SC and four are general seats. From the point of view of numbers, the tribal leaders deserve leadership roles in Assembly. For the first time the AICC has given recognition to its roots and cradle in leadership position in Odisha after it lost power in the State in 2000 poll. Traditionally the STs and the SCs which constitute 40 per cent of the State's population were the support base of the Congress in Odisha along with the OBC and coastal general castes. After the emergence of the BJD in the State, it kept on taking away the Congress base and the Congress leaders. The re-emergence of the BJP during 2014-2024, further weakened the vote-bank and leadership resource of the Congress. The Congress had no strategy to counter the poaching activity of the BJD and the BJP. Now the Congress has been pushed to Koraput and Nabarangpur Lok Sabha seats. While the Congress base was gradually pushed to the tribal communities and to the south and the

western regions, the Congress went on blindly and feudalistically searching for coastal or high caste or old western Odisha leaders for PCC president, CLP leadership and other posts. The PCC president incumbency chart shows the following leaders since 2000 such as JB Patnaik (2000 and 2004), Sarat Pattanaik (2001), Jayadev Jena ( June 2004), KP Singhdeo ( January 2009), Niranjan Patnaik ( June 2011), Jayadev Jena ( May 2013), Prasad Harichandan ( December 2014), Niranjan Patnaik (April 2018), Sarat Pattanaik ( May 2022). This shows a mismatch between party's electoral catchment area and support groups vis-a-vis leadership selection. The Congress party which had installed tribal Chief Ministers two times between 1995 and 2000, was afraid of giving PCC or CLP leadership to the tribals in the last two decades. Perhaps the Congress party was awakened after the BJP put a tribal Chief Minister in Odisha, giving a message of social justice. The party has also satisfied the

coastal voters by making the new Basudevpur MLA Ashok Das Deputy leader of the CLP in Assembly. As AICC has dissolved all the State and district committees of Odisha Congress, it is likely to declare the next PCC president and AICC-in-Charge for Odisha soon. **Who will be the next PCC president?** Since 2000, the PCC presidents have failed to bring back Congress to power in the State. The performance of the party in Lok Sabha polls has been repeatedly miserable since 2009. In 2024 poll, the BJP came to power in the State replacing the BJD and took away 20 Lok Sabha seats but the Congress has remained in the same opposition bench even after 23 years, bagging just one Lok Sabha seat. The Congress must seriously review the reason for its continuous downfall in Odisha, especially party's poor performance in the State in 2024 poll when Congress rose nationally. Now people are talking

about Congress as the next alternative in Odisha, though it is a tough task for the Congress. People seem to be influenced by Rahul Gandhi's political activities. Congress might need a right PCC president who would build the organizations mainly in Nabarangpur, Koraput, Kalahandi, Bolangir, Kandhamal, Bargarh, Sambalpur, Sundergarh, Baleswar, Bhadrak, Jagatsinghpur and Kendrapada Lok Sabha Constituencies. **What are the tasks of a PCC president?** During Assembly sessions, he has to coordinate with the CLP members to play the role of the Opposition with a clear strategy so that the Congress does not appear compromising with the ruling BJP. It should not appear as the B-team of the main opposition BJD. There is a talk by certain senior Congress leaders to form an opposition alliance with the BJD in Assembly, taking along the one CPM MLA. Though the proposal looks theoretically attractive for Assembly and even Rajya Sabha,

but it will weaken the image of Congress in the State. Many times it is said by the Congress leaders of Odisha that organisational activities need money and therefore a rich leader has to be made the PCC president. It was experimented and failed. On the other hand, appointing a business man as the PCC chief involves the risk of compromise of party interest for business gains. The PCC president should be task-based instead of personality-based. Now the names of Bhakta Das, Saptagiri Ulaka, Ramesh Jena, Tara Bahinipati, Muhammad Moqim, Prasad Harichandan, Srikanta Jena and Jayadev Jena are making rounds along with talk of the OBC priority. Whoever takes charge should be given a term of one year first to prove his capacity. The wings and DCC presidents should have one year term too. The PCC should carry out national protest programmes along with its own protest activities at district and block level. The AICC State-in-charge should be a person of political integrity.

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# No clearance 200 potato-laden trucks return from WB-Odisha border

Even as imported potatoes could have eased prices in State

SIBDAS KUNDU ■ BALESWAR

At a time when the price of common vegetables, especially potato, soaring to the chagrin of the common people, in a major setback to the consumers of Odisha, hundreds of trucks loaded with potatoes waiting to enter the State border from the West Bengal end returned to Bengal for un-

known reasons following the intervention of the Bengal administration.

According to reports, the West Bengal administration took back the loaded trucks which were stranded at the Sonakonia check post close to Laxmannath toll gate of the district since Thursday. The Medinipur police, headed by an Additional Superintendent of Police after reaching near the gate, asked the trucks to return to West Bengal, reports added.

When the traders of Odisha especially of Baleswar were ea-

gerly waiting for the arrival of potato from Bengal more than 200 potato laden lorries were stuck since Thursday for clearance of Bengal for entry into Odisha.

The potato is being sold in the retail market at over Rs 40 per kg. The traders said had the potato been imported from West Bengal, it could have brought a relief to the consumers. Notably, Gadabetta and its neighbouring patches in Bengal produce huge quantity of potato

In the meanwhile, Civil Supplies Minister

Krushnachandra Patra has reviewed the situation in Aiginia potato godown in Bhubaneswar. He said that some unscrupulous traders are behind the spurt of potato prices and the Government will take strict action against them. A meeting will be held with the West Bengal Government this afternoon and the focus is how to import potatoes from West Bengal. If the situation does not improve, potatoes are planned to be brought from Uttar Pradesh, he added.

# MCL GM beaten with sandal in J'suguda 4 including BJD woman leader held

PNS ■ JHARSUGUDA

Four persons, including BJD leader Parbati Behera, have been arrested for allegedly assaulting a senior official of the Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL) in Jharsuguda district on Thursday.

As per the allegations, Behera along with her three supporters barged into the MCL office at Bandabahal under Lakhampur block in the district and thrashed MCL General Manager Sanjay Kumar Jha with a sandal.

A video of the incident has also gone viral on social me-



dia platforms. In the video, Behera could be seen having a conversation with the MCL official before thrashing the latter with sandal while telling her aides to shoot the entire incident. She is also heard boasting that she is not afraid of police action.

The motive behind the incident was yet to be ascertained.

Police swung into action after Jha filed a complaint against Behera and her associates at the Banharpali police station.

# 'Resume bridge works over Deo river'

Activist Muktikanta launches stir

PNS ■ ROURKELA

Activist Muktikant Biswal has started a dharna in front of the Rourkela Sub-Collector office demanding early completion of a bridge over the Deo here.

It may be noted here that the bridge of length 153.15 mtrs and width of 7.5 mtrs over the river Deo at Mitkunda, Rourkela was proposed by Rual Development Department at a cost of 792.95 lakh. Its construction period was June 30 2018 to June 29, 2020. But still the construction is not completed. On the contrary, the works have been put on hold.

In demand of early completion of the bridge construction work as 20,000 villagers of Kuarmunda and Nuagaon



blocks will be directly benefited from it, Biswal last year had sat on dharna for 21 days followed by 9 days hunger strike and one-day road block by the villagers.

At that time the district administration had assured to resolve the land acquisition issue and start the work within 90 days. But in between 9 months have passed but no sign of development is noticed. Among others, Gopal Jena, Ranjan Lenka, Chakrant Jena, Ratikant Swain, Smrutiranjana Bhoi and Pabal Kalsa were present.

# Murder case cracked; 3 held in B'pur

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

The Brahmapur Sadar Police cracked a murder case which occurred on July 2 near Ratanpur- Krupasindhupur Canal.

The body covered under straw near the canal was seized and the police registered a murder case based on the evidence gathered at the spot. The deceased was identified as Hari Behera of Gosaninuagam.

During investigation, the police finally got clues of the murder and arrested three per-

sons in the case including a woman. They were identified as Tofan Das, Jeetendra Nayak and Laxmi. Laxmi is a resident of Kamapalli, Brahmapur.

ASP Ramesh Chandra Sethi informed that Tofan was the main culprit behind the murder. Tofan and Hari, both had illegal love relations with Laxmi. On that particular day, both friends were near the canal and quarrelled over the same issue. Since Tofan wanted to get rid of Hari, he along with Jeetendra killed Tofan. The murder case cracked in 23 days.

# In Rourkela

## 2 held for raping woman in captivity

PNS ■ ROURKELA

Two labourers were arrested by the Plant Site police for allegedly raping a young woman for several days by holding her hostage in Rourkela.

According to sources, the two daily wagers were arrested by police based on the statement of the victim.

The accused reportedly brought the woman, also a daily labourer, from Bonai and lodged her in a hotel in the steel city, where they allegedly committed the crime, sources

said. The woman was held captive for several days and repeatedly gang-raped by the two. The accused later abandoned the victim and disappeared, police said.

The woman was roaming near the Rourkela railway station when police personnel rescued her. The victim narrated her ordeal to the police, following which she was sent for medical examination. She was later sent to a Sakhi Centre. Both the accused were arrested following an investigation.

# Kidney disease-hit wagger's son writes to CM for help

Seeks money for father's treatment

RAJESH BEHERA ■ KENDRAPADA

The son of an impoverished ailing Dalit, studying in 9th class, has written a letter with moist eyes to CM Mohan Charan Majhi for providing free treatment to his sick father, whose kidneys have been damaged.

According to sources, Sunil Kumar Sethy, who is studying at Bhagabati High School at Belarpur, a resident of Nolasahi village under Derabish block, on Tuesday made the fervent plea to CM Majhi to come to their rescue as being financially weak they are unable to meet treatment



cost of his father.

Bhagyadhar Sethy, who is reeling under kidney disease for the last one year, even does not have the money to buy medicines. So he has stopped taking medicines for the last 15 days. Bhagyadhar is a daily wagger and has five members in family.

"A year back, my father

became sick. We took him to the SCB Medical College and Hospital for treatment. The doctor informed us that the kidneys of my father have been damaged. We have two cows. But my mother sold away a cow to provide treatment to my sick father. We don't have any wealth except the lone cow left," said

Sunil. "What should we do? From where will we get money to provide treatment to my ailing husband?" Sasmita, wife of Bhagyadhar, said with tears rolling out from her eyes.

"Most of the time, we fail to collect two square of meals a day and remain hungry. So I have requested the CM to provide us help at this critical juncture," said Sunil. Meanwhile, Sunil have also requested the kindhearted persons to help them.

If any kindhearted person wants to help the family then he/she can send money on the SBI Account of Sasmita Sathy, bearing SBI A/C No - 35571866650 (IFSC -SBIN 0000112), Kendrapada Branch, mobile -9178231893.

# Stray cattle menace in J'suguda railway station

GRP mute spectator

RAJKUMAR SHARMA ■ JHARSUGUDA

The increasing presence of stray animals, particularly cattle, at Jharsuguda Railway Station has raised serious safety concerns among passengers.

The problem is most pronounced on platform number 1, where incidents of animals injuring passengers have been reported, especially during night time.

Jharsuguda railway junction on the Howrah-Mumbai main route serves Vande Bharat, Mail, and Superfast Express trains, which run 24



hours a day.

Despite the presence of the Government Railway Police (GRP) and Railway Protection Force (RPF) personnel, there has been little action to address the issue. Passengers have frequently had to chase the stray cattle away themselves, highlighting the lack of intervention from the authorities. "If the cattle continue to roam on the platform, a serious acci-

dent could occur," warned

Rajendra Sahu, a concerned passenger. The issue was recently brought to the attention of the Divisional Rail Manager (DRM) of South Eastern Railway's Chakradharpur Division, during a train stoppage programme visit. However, no significant measures have been taken since then to miti-

gate the problem.

This menace is not confined to the railway station. Stray animals have become a common sight throughout Jharsuguda town, causing disruptions and posing dangers to the residents. Efforts by the Jharsuguda municipality to address the stray animal issue were initiated but have since lost momentum.

Residents continue to face daily risks of injury due to stray animal fights in their streets and localities. Immediate and effective measures are urgently needed to ensure the safety of both passengers at the railway station and the town's residents, demanded many locals.

# Money laundering through online gaming

ED conducts raid in Sundargarh

PNS ■ SUNDARGARH

Enforcement Directorate (ED) officials conducted raids at several houses in the Bonai area of Sundargarh district on Friday in connection with alleged money laundering through an online gaming app.

As per preliminary information, the ED officials raided at least six houses at Badgogua in the Bonai area amid reports that some people have received huge amounts of money after participating in

online gaming activities.

A team of around 40 officials of the Central investigating agency from Kolkata and Bhubaneswar have been engaged in the special operation to ascertain the alleged flow of huge money.

Sources said the ED sleuths are thoroughly examining a number of documents, including bank account details, of several people during the raids. Declining to share details of the searches, the ED officials said the operation was still in progress and a clear picture would emerge after a thorough investigation.

# Baleswar man loses Rs 5L in cyber fraud

PNS ■ BALESWAR

A man of Baleswar fell into a trap of cyber fraudsters and lost Rs 5 lakh being lured by a fake advertisement. The incident came to light after the man, who didn't want to reveal his identity to the media, lodged an FIR with the Cyber police.

The victim, a resident of Kuanrpur under the Sadar police station, said that as he had a desire to undertake a business, he applied for distributorship of a milk product manufacturing company seeing an advertisement in

which a mobile phone was mentioned.

The victim after calling the number had conversations with an unknown person. And as per the instruction of the fraudster, he sent Rs 5 lakh in different phases. While he was expecting that he would be awarded with the dealership, he never received any communication from the other side and he subsequently found the phone switched off.

After ascertaining that that he was deceived, he lodged a complaint with the Cyber police.

# 3-day conf at SOA

## Focus on region-specific climate smart farming

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

An international conference on 'Sustainable Agricultural Development with Climate Smart Systems', which was held recently at Siksha 'O' Anusandhan Deemed to be University (SOA), focused on preparation of an action plan on region-specific climate smart agriculture to counter the impact of climate change.

The three-day conference, which concluded on Saturday, was attended by a host of experts drawn from academia, industry, research organisations and other stake-

holders from across the world who deliberated on the effect of climate variability on agriculture and methods to overcome the obstacles.

The conference was organised by SOA-run Centre for Climate Smart Agriculture (CCSA) in collaboration with the Institute of Agricultural Sciences (IAS), SOA's faculty of agricultural sciences.

Used as a platform for the scientific community on developing region-specific climate smart cropping systems, the conference recommended use of technological interventions including Artificial In-



telligence, drones and automated disease detection to minimise uncertainty, maximise production and reduce Green House Gas (GHG) emission.

The conference also emphasized strategic measures such as improving feed quality, op-

timizing manure management and transformative impact of blending traditional waste management practice with modern agricultural technology.

Deputy Chief Minister and Minister in charge of Agriculture, Farmers' Empowerment

and Energy, KV Singh Deo inaugurated it.

Popatrao Baguji Pawar, a social reformer who spearheaded a movement for water conservation in drought prone Hiware Bazar panchayat of Maharashtra, asked the people to take up

water and soil conservation measures.

Addressing the valedictory session, SOA Prof Pradipta Kumar Nanda stressed the need for synergy in such endeavours. The session was also addressed by Prof UC Mohanty, Distinguished Professor at CCSA. Prof Santosh Kumar Rout said the university would adopt few climate smart villages and look into the problems faced by the farmers. Prof Rabindra Kumar Panda, Director of CCSA and Chairman of the conference, presented the recommendations of the conference.

# INBRIEF

## TWO NEW ESI HOSPITALS TO COME UP IN ODISHA

Bhubaneswar: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Friday approved a proposal to set up two new ESI Hospitals in Odisha. The hospitals will come up in Keonjhar and Sonepur towns. "It will largely benefit the workers and their family members," the CM said.

## LACMI BUS SERVICES SUSPENDED ON 28 ROUTES

Bhubaneswar: Services of LACMI bus have been suspended on 28 routes in 12 districts for an indefinite period. The exact reason behind the move was yet to be stated. The districts in which the services have been suspended are Angul, Cuttack, Gajapati, Jagatsinghpur, Kalahandi, Koraput, Kandhamal, Kendrapada, Keonjhar, Nayagarh, Puri and Sambalpur.

## GOODS TRAIN DERAILS NEAR BBSR STATION

Bhubaneswar: A goods train derailed near the Bhubaneswar railway station on Friday morning as two wagons went off the track. According to East Coast Railway (ECOR), no injury



to anyone was caused due to the accident. Stating that the middle and up lines were unaffected, the ECOR said coaching train movement would not be affected because of the mishap.

## 40-YR-OLD DROWNS IN LUNA RIVER

Kendrapada: Niranjan Rout (40) of Badakula village under Marshghai police station drowned while he was bathing in Luna river on Thursday. Though the ODRAF team and scuba divers carried out a search and rescue operation, but they failed to rescue the ill-fated person. Tehsildar Manas Ranjan Tripathy, who was present at the spot, informed that the rescue operation would commence on Friday morning as it's difficult to carry out the search and rescue operation in darkness and under high river current.

## INTUC HOLDS MEETING WITH JAPANESE METAL WORKERS' FEDN

New Delhi: The INTUC held a meeting with a delegation of 27 Japanese Metal Workers' Federation at the INTUC national headquarters at Delhi on Thursday regarding the na-



tional situation, collective bargaining, labour laws, health and safety, working of a joint bipartite committee and trade union joint programme. On behalf of the INTUC, general secretary Sanjay Singh, senior vice-president RC Khuntia, secretary K Raju, Sahanaz Rafic and Nirmal Samal were present.

## GIRL FOUND HANGING IN GAJAPATI

Paralakhemundi: A body of a girl, who was found hanging in the Jagruti Women's Assistance Centre in Mohana of Gajapati district, was recovered by police on Friday. The deceased was identified as Sunali Gamang (19) of Paribeta village under the R Udaygiri police station in the district. The police sent the body for postmortem and began an investigation. Earlier, the victim had been found moving around in the Paralakhemundi bus-stand, following which she was rescued by police and later lodged in the Jagruti Women's Assistance Centre.

## SEMILIGUDA: 2 SCHOOL BUSES WITHOUT FITNESS SEIZED

Sunabeda: Two buses of the Deomali Public School under the Semiliguda police station in Koraput district were seized by RTO officials for operating without having fitness certificates. The parents of the school children have expressed shock over the incident and said they are concerned about the safety of their wards.

## SOA, CENTRAL AGRICULTURAL UNIV SIGN MOU

Bhubaneswar: The Siksha 'O' Anusandhan University (SOA) on Thursday signed an MoU with the Central Agricultural University (CAU), Imphal, for undertaking academic, research and outreach collaborations including in the area of climate-resilient farming. The SOA and the CAU will promote cooperation in exchange of students, researchers and faculty members, exchange of methodology and technology of mutual interest, exchange of scientific literature and information and share laboratory facilities as available and required in common interest.



## RATH YATRA DEVOTEES GET AASHIRVAAD'S 'IODINE KA CHHEENTA'

Bhubaneswar: During the Puri Rath Yatra, Aashirvaad Salt made an impact with its 'Aashirvaad Iodine Ka Chheenta' initiative, reaching more than 1 lakh devotees. Highlighting



the crucial role of iodine in normal growth and brain function, Aashirvaad Salt provided 1.02lakh doses of iodine through an 'Iodine Tilak'.



# Prez, Ministers pay tributes to armed forces on Vijay Diwas

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Home Minister Amit Shah and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday paid tributes to armed forces on the occasion of the Kargil Diwas.

In her salutations, President Murmu said the Kargil Vijay Diwas is an occasion to pay tributes to the courage and extraordinary valour of the country's armed forces.

Kargil Vijay Diwas is observed on July 26 every year to mark India's victory over Pakistan in the 1999 war.

The Indian Army had launched a fierce counter-assault to push back Pakistani forces that had stealthily occupied important heights in Ladakh.

"Kargil Vijay Diwas is an occasion for a grateful nation to pay tribute to the courage and extraordinary valour of our armed forces," Murmu said in a social media post in Hindi.

"I pay tribute to each soldier who made the supreme sacrifice while protecting Mother India on the peaks of Kargil in 1999 and bow in reverence to their sacred memory. I am sure that all countrymen will draw inspiration from their sacrifice and valour. Jai Hind Jai Bharat!" she said.

Rajnath said "Today, on the 25th anniversary of Kargil Vijay Diwas, we remember the indomitable spirit and courage of the brave soldiers who fought valiantly in the 1999 war," in a social media post. "Their unwavering commitment, valour and patriotism



ensured that our country remained safe and secure. Their service and sacrifice will continue to inspire every Indian and our coming generations," he said.

Home Minister Shah said Indian soldiers displayed the ultimate valour in the inaccessible hills of the Himalayas during the Kargil War and forced the enemy army to kneel. Kargil Vijay Diwas is a symbol of the unwavering resolve of the valour of the brave soldiers of the Army, he said.

"During the Kargil War, the brave soldiers displayed the ultimate valour in the inaccessible hills of the Himalayas and forced the enemy army to kneel and made the country proud by hoisting the Tricolour again in Kargil," Shah said in a social media post. The Home Minister said the grateful nation would never forget the sacrifice and dedication of the Indian soldiers. "Today, on Kargil Vijay Diwas, I salute the brave soldiers who protected the motherland with their courage in this war," he said in

the post in Hindi. Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan and all ranks of the armed forces also recalled the supreme sacrifice of the "Bravehearts".

"We draw inspiration from the heroes of Kargil, and we will continue to honour their legacy by defending our nation with courage, honour, and sacrifice," the headquarters of the Integrated Defence Staff said. Various events were organised across the country, including at the Kargil War Memorial in Dras, to mark the occasion. More than 500 soldiers made supreme sacrifice in the conflict. Jaishankar also paid tributes to the brave soldiers who defended the Nation's territory during the conflict. "On Kargil Vijay Diwas, salute the valour and dedication of our brave soldiers. The legacy of their courage and patriotism acts as a guiding light for all Indians," he said.

Parliament paid rich tributes and as a mark of respect for the soldiers who laid their lives in the war, both Lok Sabha and

Rajya Sabha members stood in silence for a brief while.

In the Lok Sabha, Speaker Om Birla recalled the bravery shown by the soldiers despite the tough conditions during the war, and paid tributes to their efforts in ensuring unity of the country. Birla also expressed empathy for the relatives of the armed forces personnel who lost their lives in the war.

In the Upper House, Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar said a grateful Nation is celebrating the 25th anniversary of Kargil Vijay Diwas, cherishing the indomitable courage and valour displayed by the Indian armed forces during the Kargil war. "On this occasion, this House salutes the determination and commitment of our armed forces, for their extraordinary bravery leading to the resounding victory over the enemy despite the adverse weather conditions and difficult terrain of Kargil," the Rajya Sabha Chairman said. Over 500 soldiers made the supreme sacrifice in the conflict.

# Noisy scenes in RS over Karnataka corruption issue

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha on Friday witnessed noisy scenes during the Zero Hour after Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar rejected notices by ruling party members to suspend listed business of the House to discuss an issue related to corruption in Karnataka, but allowed a BJP member to raise the matter.

Treasury members were on their feet to protest rejection of the notices under Rule 267 of procedure and conduct of business of Rajya Sabha, while Opposition, mainly Congress MPs objected to Chair's permission to BJP's Irrana Kadadi to raise the issue of corruption in Karnataka Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation (KMVSTDC) as part of his Zero Hour mention. Kadadi, Brij Lal, Naresh Bansal and Sudhanshu Trivedi of BJP had given the notices. Dhankhar had to repeatedly ask the protesting members from both sides to accept his



ruling and bring order in the House.

Soon after the House paid homage to martyrs of Kargil War and laying of listed papers, the Chairman said while there were no notices under Rule 267 during the past two days, he has received four from MPs belonging to the ruling party demanding discussion on the issue of corruption in KMVSTDC by suspending the scheduled business.

"All of them (notices) belonged to the ruling party. These

notices ignore my directives which were explicit. There may be issues of great importance, many have been raised under 267 earlier (by Opposition), I declined all of them. No issue which is otherwise of great urgency and contemporary relevance call for invocation of Rule 267.

This invocation notwithstanding your feelings on the issue does not come up to the requirement of Rule 267," he said while rejecting the notices. However, he said Kadadi has

been permitted to raise the matter as part of his Zero Hour mention.

When Kadadi's turn came to speak on the KMVSTDC issue, Congress members objected saying his name does not appear in the list of speakers for the Zero Hour morning session.

Senior Congress leader P Chidambaram said since Kadadi's name is not in the list circulated, the chair may allow him to speak on the issue some other day.

Dhankhar said while giving his ruling on the notices under Rule 267, he had categorically informed multiple times that Kadadi has been allowed to raise the issue during the ongoing Zero Hour.

Tiruchi Siva (DMK) requested the Chairman that other members too should be given permission as has been given to Kadadi.

To this, Dhankhar said he would allow provided a member seeks such permission.

# No expert committee to extend Ayushman Bharat coverage: Jadhav

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister of State for Health Prataprao Jadhav on Friday said that no expert committee has been set up to extend Ayushman Bharat coverage to citizens aged 70 and above.

In his response to the Lok Sabha, Jadhav stated that the existing Ayushman Bharat - Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) already covers all eligible family members regardless of age, providing up to ₹ 5 lakh per family per year for hospitalisation.

He was responding to a question on whether the Government proposed to cover citizens aged 70 and above by expanding Ayushman Bharat through the launch of National Health Claims Exchange and if an expert panel had been set up to strengthen the format of the scheme for the planned expansion.

Intriguingly, last month on June 27, President Droupadi Murmu had announced that all citizens aged above 70

years will receive free treatment under the Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme.

This declaration was made during her address to the joint sitting of Parliament in the National Capital.

President Murmu had also highlighted the progress of the Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY), which currently provides free health services to 55 crore beneficiaries.

However, Jadhav, in a written reply, said all members of eligible families, irrespective of age, were covered under Ayushman Bharat - Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana.

The scheme provides health insurance cover of Rs 5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation to 55 crore individuals, corresponding to 12.34 crore families, he said.

"No expert committee has been set up for extending the health benefits to cover senior citizens aged 70 and above," he stated. Responding to another question,

Jadhav said. He said 34 insurers and third-party administrators were live and approximately 300 hospitals ramping up to start sending their claims on the National Health Claims Exchange (NHCE), which aims to streamline and fasten health insurance claim processing, as on July 21.

Jadhav said the government built the NHCE gateway under the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission.

It serves as a gateway for exchanging health claim information among insurers, third party audit, healthcare providers, beneficiaries and other relevant entities and ensures interoperability, machine-readability, auditability and verifiability, making the information exchange accurate and trustworthy, the minister said. Supported by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India and the General Insurance Council, the NHCE will enable standardised and faster health insurance claim processing, Jadhav said.

# Instability, violence at Myanmar border worry India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval met his Myanmar counterpart Admiral Moe Aung and is understood to have conveyed New Delhi's concerns over the impact of violence and instability in Myanmar on its border with India.

Doval is in Myanmar to attend a meeting of security chiefs of member nations of BIMSTEC grouping, according to the Indian Embassy in Yangon.

Myanmar has been witnessing wide-spread violent protests demanding restoration of democracy since the military seized power in a coup on February 1, 2021. Several parts of Myanmar have been witnessing intense fighting between the military junta and resistance forces.

The resistance forces have already captured several towns. "NSA Ajit Doval is leading the Indian delegation at the 4th Annual Meeting of #BIMSTEC

Security Chiefs being held in Naypyitaw today.

He met with the Myanmar NSA Admiral Moe Aung yesterday, and BIMSTEC Security Chiefs called on Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing," the Indian embassy said in a post on 'X'. It is learnt that Doval and Aung discussed security related issues and the Indian NSA apprised his Myanmar counterpart on New Delhi's concerns over the impact of violence and instability in Myanmar on its border with India. Myanmar shares a 1,640 km-long border with a number of northeastern states including militancy-hit Nagaland and Manipur.

The resistance forces in that country have already captured many key trading points along the borders with India, China and Bangladesh.

Rakhine state and many other regions have reported severe fighting between armed ethnic groups and the Myanmar military since October last year.

# Dhankhar asks Govt to place Shah panel report in House

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar on Friday asked the Government to explore the possibility of placing an authentic copy of the Shah Commission report on Emergency excesses on the table of the House, as it had investigated the "darkest period of democracy".

The Shah Commission report relates to atrocities committed during the Emergency imposed in 1975. During the Zero Hour, Dhankhar asked the Government to take note of the issue raised by Deepak Prakash, a BJP MP from Jharkhand, regarding the matter relating to the Shah Commission report.

"The Government must examine the possibility of having the authentic report (of Shah Commission) and place it on the table of the House for the benefit of the members and public at large," he said.

The Shah Commission was set up to investigate the 'darkest period of democracy' and the report relates to atrocities committed during the Emergency imposed in 1975, he noted.

Earlier raising the issue, Prakash said, the Shah Commission, which was set up in 1977, conducted 100 sittings and evaluated 48,000 documents. The final report was presented on August 6, 1978. This report was published in three



volumes.

"Indira Gandhi led Government came in 1980. This report was destroyed. But one copy of the Shah Commission report is available in the National Library of Australia. This report will reveal the real facts of the Emergency," he said. He demanded that the Shah Commission report should be made public.

Meanwhile, Sushmita Deb, a Trinamool MP from West Bengal, demanded the release of funds to deal with the situation arising from Assam floods.

Harbhajan Singh, an AAP MP from Punjab, demanded to convert Bhakra Beas Management Board Hospital in Talwara into either a post graduate institute (PGI) or All India Institute of Medical Science.

# Over five crore cases pending in courts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

More than five crore cases are pending in various courts across India, with a maximum of over 1.18 crore in the subordinate courts of Uttar Pradesh, according to the government's written reply in the Lok Sabha.

Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal said while 84,045 cases are pending in the Supreme Court, 60,11,678 were pending in the various High Courts. District and subordinate courts are the biggest contributors, with 4,53,51,913 cases pending with them, according to the minister.

Meghwal said several reasons lead to the pendency of cases, including the availability of physical infrastructure and supporting court staff, the complexity of facts involved, the nature of evidence, and the cooperation of stakeholders, including the bar, investigation agencies, witnesses and litigants. Proper application of rules and procedures also plays a key role, he said.

Other factors that lead to delays in the disposal of cases include lack of prescribed time frame by courts for disposal of various kinds of cases, frequent adjournments and lack



of adequate arrangement to monitor, track and bunch cases for hearing, the Minister added.

He also informed the House that over 200 proposals sent by various High Court collegiums for High Court judgeship are at various stages of processing. In a written reply, Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal also cited an opinion of the Supreme Court Collegium that expression of views by a candidate does not disentitle him or her to hold a constitutional office so long as the person proposed for judgeship is a person of competence, merit and integrity.

There have been instances in the past where the Government had either held back or returned to the collegium for consideration names of persons who had expressed their views on various issues as advocates.

Meghwal told the House that the Government, as an important stakeholder in the process of appointment of Judges in the High Courts and as laid down in the Memorandum of Procedure, provides inputs which mainly contain information on the suitability, competence and integrity of the candidates under consideration for appointment to high constitutional post in the judiciary. The recommendations along with inputs are then submitted to the SC Collegium for advice.

As per the procedure, the High Court collegiums send their recommendations to the Department of Justice in the law ministry which adds inputs on the candidate along with IB reports and sends it to the SC Collegium to take a call. As on date, 205 proposals recommended by the various High Court Collegiums are at various stages of processing, he said.

Appointment of SC and HC judges is a continuous, integrated and collaborative process between the Executive and the Judiciary. It requires consultation and approval from various constitutional authorities both at state and central level, he noted.



# Coast Guard rescues 14 Indian crew of grounded vessel

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) evacuated 14 Indian crew of grounded vessel bulk carrier JSW Raigad off the coast of Alibaug, Maharashtra at about 0930 am on Friday, Defence Ministry said here. Giving details, officials said the ICG Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) Mumbai, received a distress call from the carrier at 1327 hours on Thursday.

The vessel measuring 122 meters with 14 Indian crew on board ran aground on reefs approximately 01 nautical miles from Alibaug. It reported anchor dragging, flooding in the engine room and loss of control. In the backdrop of extreme sea conditions along the Maharashtra coast and presence of reefs in the area, airlift emerged as the only viable rescue option.

# Opp criticises PM Modi over remarks on Agnipath recruitment scheme

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Opposition parties on Friday criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his remarks regarding the Agnipath scheme while paying tribute to martyrs on Kargil Vijay Diwas and demanded a review of the scheme.

Modi said the Agnipath recruitment scheme was an example of necessary reforms undertaken by the Army and accused the Opposition of playing politics over the recruitment process aimed at keeping the average age in the armed forces low.

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge and other party leaders accused the Prime Minister of indulging in "petty politics" over the Agnipath issue and said the Prime Minister's remarks that his Government implemented the scheme at the behest of the Army was a "blatant lie".

"It is very unfortunate and deplorable that Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji is doing petty politics even on occasions like paying tribute to martyrs on Kargil Vijay Diwas. No Prime Minister has ever done this before," Kharge said.



"Modi ji is saying that his Government implemented the Agnipath scheme at the behest of the Army. This is a blatant lie and an unforgivable insult to our valiant armed forces. Modi ji, it is you who is spreading lies!" he said in a social media post.

Asserting that many retired officers had strongly criticised the scheme, the Congress chief said the Agnipath scheme was endangering National Security and the aspirations of the rural youth.

All this is on record, he said and demanded that the scheme be completely scrapped. Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh accused Modi of "lying" even on Kargil Vijay Diwas. "He (Modi) says the Agnipath/Agniveer scheme was introduced by the Army,

General M M Naravane, who was Army chief at that time, has written that the scheme came as a complete surprise to the Army and as a 'bolt from the blue' to the Navy and Air Force. Modi is now trying to evade responsibility for this disastrous scheme," he said in a social media post.

Congress MP Vivek Tankha claimed the scheme was brought with very little consultation. Those consulted did not have to courage to suggest changes, he alleged. "You kept the absorption rate at 25 per cent which is very low. If it was 50 per cent or 75 per cent, people may not have opposed it..." How can you abandon them (Agniveers) after four years," he asked. Congress leader Karti

Chidambaram termed Agnipath an "ill-conceived scheme".

"Modern warfare and modern military campaigns require a professional army which is tremendously technology oriented. Agniveer scheme neither gives training nor does it give Commission. It does not equip a soldier for modern warfare," he said.

"It (Agnipath) is a temporary outsourcing arrangement. The Government is doing this only because it wants to save money by not giving them (Agniveers) the benefits that would come from a full commission. This does not in any manner serve the needs of a modern army," he said.

Congress MP Ranjit Ranjan asserted that when his party comes to power, the scheme will be scrapped. Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) MP Mahua Maji said the scheme needs to be reviewed as it does not provide any social security to the Agniveers.

"I salute the martyrs of Kargil. Whenever foreign nations have attacked us, our brave soldiers have sacrificed their lives," she said.



# Karnataka CM rebuts Opp charge over MUDA scam

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday strongly defended himself in connection with the alleged fraudulent allotment of sites to land losers by Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA), including to his wife Parvathi, and asserted that neither he or his family has any role in it. He accused the opposition BJP and JD(S) of making politically motivated allegations against him out of "hate and revenge", with an intention to "put a black mark on his image", as they are unable to digest that he has become Chief Minister for the second time. Siddaramaiah also said that the Governor Thawar Chand Gehlot has sought a report from the government regarding the alleged irregularities in MUDA and a report will be sent "as everything is totally and absolutely legal". "Is there any role of either mine or my wife or my brother-in-law in this? Our land was taken (by MUDA), sites were made and they were allocated to others. So MUDA gave us (alternate sites) as given to others, after accepting their mistake. What is illegality in this? Siddaramaiah asked while giving a detailed statement to the allegations made against him by BJP-JD(S). Speaking to reporters here, he said: "Absolutely my role is not there. It is totally and absolutely legal. BJP and JD(S) are indulging in false propaganda for the sake of politics and trying to defame me personally, unable to



digest that I have become the Chief Minister for the second time, and as they have lost the 2023 assembly polls and faced a setback in 2024 Lok Sabha polls." It is alleged that compensatory sites were allotted to Siddaramaiah's wife in an upmarket area in Mysuru, which had higher property value as compared to the location of her land which had been "acquired" by the MUDA. The MUDA had allotted plots to Parvathi under a 50:50 ratio scheme in lieu of 3.16 acres of her land, where MUDA developed a residential layout. The controversial scheme envisages allotting 50 per cent of developed land to the land loser in lieu of undeveloped land acquired for forming layouts. Urban Development Minister Byrathi Suresh said several leaders from the opposition parties or their family members or relatives or friends or supporters have also been given alternative sites, and they included Union Minister and JD(S) state chief H D Kumaraswamy, BJP MLC Manje Gowda, JD(S) MLA and former Minister G T Deve Gowda, BJP MLC and former Minister H

Vishwanath, former JD(S) MLA Sa Ra Mahesh. "I'm not saying all of this was done wrongly, it has been done in accordance with law, as given in this case (to CM's wife).... We will give these documents to the judicial commission and they will look into these allotments," he said, adding that Kumaraswamy has even sought for more alternative sites recently stating that his lands were acquired, and it is being looked into. Pointing out that he first became MLA in 1983 and Minister in 1984, Siddaramaiah said: "as legislator, Minister, Deputy Chief Minister and Chief Minister, I have been in politics for more than 40 years, it is 40 years since I became Minister first, so far there is no single black spot on my name (image). My political life is an open book." Responding to charges questioning the legality of 3.16 acres of his wife's land that was acquired by MUDA, he said, BJP and JD(S) say this land attracts provisions of Karnataka Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prohibition of Transfer of Certain Lands) Act, known as the PTCL Act, which is "totally false", as Ninga alias Jawara, the earlier owner of the land, had purchased it through auction in 1935. The 3.16 acres is a "self acquired" property, which later came to Ninga's third son Devaraj and he became the absolute owner of the property with the consent of other family members and siblings, he said. From him, Mallikarjuna Swamy (CM's wife Parvathi's brother) acquired this land.

# World acknowledged valour of Indian soldiers during Kargil war: Yogi

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday said here that the world acknowledged the indomitable valour and courage of Indian soldiers during the Kargil war. "Kargil war was imposed on India. Pakistan imposed this war on India by infiltrating Kashmir in a disguised manner. "But the result (of the war) was decided by our brave soldiers," Adityanath said while addressing the 'Silver Jubilee Celebration' marking the 25th anniversary of Kargil Vijay Diwas at Surya Auditorium of Central Command, Cantt. According to a statement issued here, the chief minister said the state government always stands with the brave soldiers who



protect the country's border. "At that time, our army's brave soldiers were facing adverse circumstances but no enemy could stand in front of them and the world

acknowledged the indomitable valour and courage of Indian soldiers during the Kargil war," he said. Adityanath said that he feels

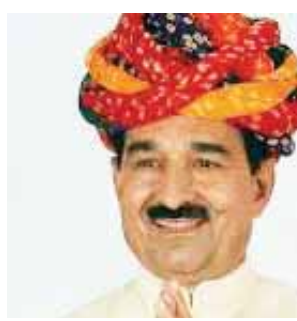
proud to honour the "brave families" who lost their loved ones in Kargil war. "If our soldier is martyred in any war or while protecting the border, then today his family is being given a help of Rs 50 lakh by the state government," he said at the event. Additionally, a job has been ensured for one member of the soldier's family, the chief minister said. Furthermore, since 2017, our government has also ensured to honour the memory of the martyred soldier by naming a grand memorial, institute, or road after him in the village, city, or town of his origin, he added. On this occasion, CM Adityanath honoured the father of Param Vir Chakra recipient Captain Manoj Pandey, mother of Rifleman Sunil Jung, mother of Naik

Abid Khan, wife of Naik Ramkesh Chandra Yadav, wife of Naik Rajendra Yadav, son of Lance Naik Ashok Kumar Yadav, Brigadier Akhil Kumar Sinha, Colonel Prabhakar Ranjan, Colonel Gyanendra Pratap Singh Kaushik, Colonel Kshitij Srivastava, Naik Jitendra Singh and Sepoy Vinod Kumar Dubey. Earlier, the chief minister also attended the 'Silver Jubilee Celebration' organised at Central Command, Cantt. On July 26, 1999, the Indian Army announced the successful culmination of "Operation Vijay", declaring victory after a nearly three-month-long battle on the icy heights of Kargil in Ladakh. The day is observed as 'Kargil Vijay Diwas' to commemorate India's victory over Pakistan in the war.

# Madan Rathore appointed as BJP's Rajasthan chief, replaces CP Joshi

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Ahead of assembly bypolls in Rajasthan, Rajya Sabha MP Madan Rathore has been appointed as the president of the BJP's Rajasthan unit, replacing party leader CP Joshi. Rajya Sabha MP Radha Mohan Das Agarwal has been made the state in-charge in place of party leader Arun Singh, the party said. Rathore's appointment was announced in an notice issued on Thursday by BJP national general secretary Arun Singh. CP Joshi, the MP from Chittorgarh, met the central leadership on Wednesday and offered to resign as state president.



In a post on X, Rathore wrote, "I have full faith that together we will take BJP Rajasthan to new heights and write a new saga of development in the double engine government. "After being appointed as the BJP Rajasthan president, today I had a courtesy meeting with former state

president of Bharatiya Janata Party and Chittorgarh MP Shri CP Joshi ji," he said. The appointment of Rathore, who was elected as a member of Rajya Sabha five months ago, is seen to have been made to further strengthen its support among then OBCs. Rathore was twice elected MLA from Sumerpur assembly seat of Pali district. With years of organisational experience, he has also been the Deputy Chief Whip of the state government from 2013 to 2018. While he was not fielded in last year's assembly elections, within a few months, he was

sent to the Rajya Sabha. Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma also congratulated Rathore on being appointed as the BJP state chief. "Undoubtedly, under your energetic leadership and efficient guidance, BJP will set new standards of success in the state with the basic mantra of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas." I pray to Lord Shri Ram for your excellent tenure," CM Sharma wrote on X. BJP's outgoing state president CP Joshi also congratulated Madan Rathore. "Hearty congratulations and best wishes to senior BJP leader and Rajya Sabha MP Madan Rathore on his appointment as BJP Rajasthan president," Joshi said on X.

# Shinde for separate law for action against milk adulteration

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has stressed the need for a separate law to curb adulteration of milk and dairy products and said the state government will request the Centre to make food adulteration a non-bailable offence. Shinde was speaking at a meeting on Thursday evening to review the quality of primary school education in the state and the adulteration of milk and milk products. He said a separate law more stringent than the Maharashtra Prevention of Dangerous Activities of Slumlords, Bootleggers, Drug Offenders and Dangerous Persons Act (MPDA) is required to be rolled out in the state, according to a government release. He asked the Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) and dairy development departments to start joint operations against adulteration of milk "as it is desperately needed", assuring that the home department will cooperate with them, as per the release. Even the milk-producing farmers also suffer due to adulteration, he said. Shinde called food adulteration a serious offence and said it adversely affects children. The future generation will be at a loss and many people will fall into the clutches of killer diseases like cancer due to food adulteration, he said.

# TN Guv, CM pay tributes to Kargil war heroes

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Governor R N Ravi, Chief Minister M K Stalin and Indian Army veterans on Friday paid rich tributes to the armed forces personnel who fought valiantly and sacrificed their lives for the country during the Kargil war of 1999. The Governor was accompanied by the army veterans in paying homage to the martyrs at the Victory War Memorial, here. He said, "On Kargil Vijay Diwas, we proudly salute our heroes - the brave sons and daughters of Bharat Mata who made their ultimate sacrifices defending Her honour." The event was also a national celebration of our glorious victory over Pakistan when



our brave soldiers chased away the enemy army who had surreptitiously sneaked into our territory, the Governor said in a post on 'X'. "We salute the Veer Naris and family members of our martyrs as their resilience echoes our nation's enduring spirit. Jai Hind!," Ravi said. Recalling the valour and commitment of the Indian army in safeguarding our country, the chief minister

said in a post on 'X': "On the 25th #KargilVictoryDay, we honour the bravery and sacrifice of our soldiers who defended our nation with unparalleled courage." Indian army veteran, Lt Col N Thiagarajan, said, "On this day, we remember the 527 brave soldiers who sacrificed their lives and 1,363 others who were wounded in the Kargil War. Their valor and dedication will forever be etched in our hearts."

From high-altitude combat to strategic success, India's victory in the Kargil War was a testament to our military's strength. Pakistan's attempt to disrupt peace was thwarted, restoring India's territorial integrity, he said on the occasion. "Our flag does not fly because the wind moves it. It flies with the last breath of each soldier who died protecting it," Thiagarajan said in a post on 'X', after paying his tributes to those who laid down their lives in the Kargil War. Later, while interacting with the NCC members at the War Memorial, he shared the inspiring stories of our soldiers who fought in harsh, snow-covered mountains at sub-zero temperatures, their leadership and the profound value of patriotism.

# Sexual assault: Truth will come out in 15 to 20 days: JD(S) MLC Suraj Revanna

PTI ■ BENGALURU

JD(S) Member of the Legislative Council Suraj Revanna, who is facing charges of sexually assaulting some men and is out on bail, said on Friday that in 15 to 20 days all those who were part of the conspiracy against him and his family will be exposed. He said he has not done anything wrong and that the truth will come out soon. "We have not done anything wrong. That's why we all are so confident. All the questions will be answered. Time alone will give the answer," Suraj Revanna, grandson of former prime minister H D Deve Gowda, told reporters after praying to Goddess Chamundeshwari



here in Mysuru. He said, "I would also like to tell you that the truth cannot be hidden for long. All those who have taken part in this conspiracy, they will come out (be exposed). Just wait for 15 to 20 days." About his pilgrimage to Chamundi Hills, the JD(S) MLC said it is a family tradition that every year he along with his parents and other family members pay a

visit to Chamundeshwari temple to worship the goddess. Suraj Revanna was released on bail just two days ago in the sexual assault case. He was arrested based on a complaint by a JD(S) worker who alleged that the MLC sexually assaulted him. Suraj's younger brother Prajwal Revanna, who is also facing allegations of sexual assault on several women, is in jail. Their parents H D Revanna and Bhavani Revanna are also on bail. They face the charge of allegedly abducting a woman who had figured in one of the huge cache of videos that came into the public domain ahead of the Lok Sabha election, and was seen being tied up and raped, allegedly by Prajwal Revanna.

# Over 2,500 people died in five years in human-elephant conflicts: Govt data

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Human-elephant conflicts resulted in 2,853 human deaths during the past five years, with the number of fatalities reaching a five-year high of 628 in 2023, according to government data. Responding to a question in the Rajya Sabha, Union Minister of State for Environment Kirti Vardhan Singh on Thursday said "elephants caused" 587 human deaths in 2019, 471 in 2020, 557 in 2021, 610 in 2022 and 628 in 2023. The data revealed that Odisha recorded 624 such deaths during this period, followed by Jharkhand with 474, West Bengal with 436, Assam with 383, Chhattisgarh with 303, Tamil Nadu with 256, Karnataka with 160 and Kerala with 124. The minister said the management of wildlife habitats was primarily the responsibility of state governments and Union Territory administrations and that the central government provided financial and technical support under the centrally sponsored Project Tiger & Elephant scheme for the protection of animals, their habitats and corridors, addressing human-animal conflict, and for the welfare of



captive elephants. In February 2021, the ministry issued an advisory on dealing with human-wildlife conflict, recommending coordinated inter-departmental action, identification of conflict hotspots, adherence to standard operating procedures, and establishment of rapid response teams. In June the following year, the environment ministry issued guidelines to states and Union Territories on managing human-wildlife conflicts, including damage to crops. The guidelines promote the cultivation of crops in forest fringe areas that are unpalatable to wild animals, and the use of agroforestry models incorporating cash crops such as chilies,

lemongrass, and Khush grass, mixed with tree and shrub species. In coordination with state forest departments, the ministry has also ground validated 150 elephant corridors across 15 elephant range states and asked states and Union Territories to take necessary steps to protect and conserve these corridors. The Union power ministry issued guidelines to all discoms and transmission companies in September 2022 to mitigate the impact of power transmission lines and other infrastructure on elephants and other wildlife. A permanent coordination committee has also been established between the railways and the environment ministries to prevent elephant deaths in train accidents.

# More than 2,500 evacuated amid heavy rain in south Gujarat

PTI ■ NAVSARI

More than 2,500 people were shifted out of their homes as several villages were inundated due to heavy rains in south Gujarat, officials said on Friday. At least 2,200 people were relocated from villages and low-lying areas in Navsari, while 500 persons were evacuated in neighbouring Tapi district following heavy rains in 24 hours, they said. "Purna River passing through Navsari district has been flowing at 28 feet, well above the danger mark of 23 feet, due to heavy rains in the district and its upstream basin in 24 hours," Navsari collector Kshipra Agre told reporters here. As many as 2,200 persons living in Navsari town and other surrounding areas have been shifted to shelter houses, where 15 medical teams were deployed, she said. At least 70 internal roads and four main roads were closed for vehicular traffic due to waterlogging, she said. In Tapi district, 500 persons from villages in Valod taluka were shifted to shelter houses due to flooding, the district



disaster management cell said. Villages in Valod, Vyara, Dolvan and Songadh talukas were waterlogged, and 113 internal roads were closed, it said in a statement. As per data from the State Emergency Operations Centre (SEOC), Dolvan taluka received 173 mm of rainfall in 24 hours, ending at 6 am on Friday. Subir in Dangs district received 164 mm of rain, followed by Navsari taluka with 160 mm, Uchchhal in Tapi with 141 mm, Mahuva in Surat with 133 mm, Jalalpur in Navsari with 130 mm, Gandevi in Navsari with 123 mm and Valod in Tapi with 109 mm, the data stated. In its latest forecast, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) predicted heavy to very heavy rains at some places in south Gujarat on Friday and Saturday.

# RJD MLC Sunil expelled from Bihar Legislative Council

PTI ■ PATNA

Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader Sunil Kumar Singh was expelled from the Bihar Legislative Council on Friday, following an incident of unruly behaviour in the House earlier this year. The motion for Singh's expulsion was passed by voice vote, a day after the Ethics Committee submitted its report to acting chairman Awadhesh Narain Singh. Singh, a close aide of RJD president Lalu Prasad and his family, was charged with raising slogans against Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on February 13, during a heated exchange in the House. In addition to Singh's expulsion, another RJD Member of the Legislative Council (MLC), Mohd Qari Sohaib, who also engaged in disruptive behaviour on the same day, has been suspended for two days. The report revealed that Sohaib had expressed regret for his actions during the inquiry, whereas Singh remained defiant. This decision came on the final day of the monsoon session, and Singh's suspension will take effect when the House reconvenes. Anticipating trouble for Singh, who also heads Bihar State Cooperative Marketing



Union (BISCOMAUN), RJD legislators, including Opposition Leader Rabri Devi, arrived at the House wearing black badges to protest. Talking to reporters outside the House prior to his expulsion, Singh criticised Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, calling him a "vindictive" (pratishodhi) person who hounded out his critics even if they happened to be his allies. "You need to look no further than Samrat Choudhary," said the RJD leader, citing the example of the Deputy CM who has been replaced as state BJP chief by a cabinet colleague Dilip Kumar Jaiswal. However, BJP national media co-convenor Sanjay Mayukh, who is also an MLC, claimed that Choudhary's replacement was "in line with the party's policy of one person being allowed to hold

only one post". Following Singh's expulsion, Rabri Devi, a former CM, denounced the action as "murder of democracy" and a "dark chapter in history." She questioned whether the House would dare take action against Kumar, who had allegedly threatened to "destroy" (barbaad kar denge) Singh during the heated exchange. Ashok Kumar Pandey, an RJD MLC and Ethics Committee member, claimed that although the report stated unanimous recommendations, the proceedings were never shared with the committee despite repeated requests. Chairman Ram Bachan Rai, a JD(U) MLC, was unavailable for comment on this allegation. Replying to a query on the way forward, Rabri Devi said a decision will be taken by the RJD supremo, who is her husband, and son Tejashwi Yadav, who is the leader of the opposition in the assembly. Sunil Singh also claimed the Chief Minister had an axe to grind because "I have been consistently questioning his government, declining offers to switch over to his camp". He also alleged that the Ethics Committee report was "full of falsehoods".





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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Honouring the heroes

Kargil Vijay Diwas marks India's triumph over adversity and the enduring spirit of its armed forces

Twenty-five years ago, India won a war that was thrust upon it. The war with Pakistan was won by some exemplary soldiers who fought valiantly and many laid their lives for the honour of the country. Kargil Vijay Diwas, commemorating the victory in the Kargil War against Pakistan in 1999 is celebrated on July 26. Prime Minister Modi paid rich tributes to the martyrs on the Vijay Diwas at Kargil Memorial. This year is special as the nation celebrates the silver jubilee of the victory. Prime Minister Modi visited the Kargil War Memorial in Drass, Jammu and Kashmir, to pay homage to the brave soldiers. However, the Indian borders are still far from secure. Terrorist activities are on the rise. So the big question is where do we stand today? Have we learnt our lessons? The Kargil War took place in the months of May and July 1999 and was a result of Pakistan's infiltration into the Indian side of the Line of Control (LoC). Pakistani soldiers, disguised as militants, occupied strategic heights in the Kargil sector of Jammu and Kashmir. This unexpected intrusion led to Operation Vijay; a historic military campaign launched by India to reclaim the occupied territories. Despite the adverse circumstances, the Indian Armed Forces displayed unparalleled bravery and strategic acumen. The conflict culminated on July 26, 1999, with India successfully regaining control over the occupied regions. The Kargil expedition of Pakistan was indeed an eye-opener. India came to know of it rather late and that too from the locals who reported suspicious activity in the hills.



This was indeed a glaring intelligence failure that cost more than five hundred lives of soldiers. The war underscored the need for better intelligence and surveillance. India has since fortified its intelligence network and improved border security to prevent such infiltrations. The Kargil War also highlighted the importance of modern weaponry and equipment. In response, India has made significant investments in modernising its military capabilities. But the biggest lesson learnt by the Indian army was to prepare itself for high-altitude warfare. The conflict emphasised the need for specialised training for high-altitude warfare. The Indian Army has since established dedicated training programs and infrastructure to prepare soldiers for such challenging environments. The war also showcased the significance of international diplomacy. India effectively garnered global support against Pakistan's actions, leading to increased diplomatic pressure on Islamabad. The lessons learnt from the conflict have led to significant advancements in military strategy, technology, and international relations. However, we have a long way to go as the strained relations with two neighbours — Pakistan and China — can anytime erupt into a war. Indeed, Prime Minister Modi's visit to the Kargil War Memorial serves as a reminder of the nation's gratitude and respect for its armed forces. It also reinforces the commitment to safeguarding the nation's integrity and sovereignty. Jai Hind!

### PICTALK



A soldier pays homage at the Kargil War Memorial on the 'Kargil Vijay Diwas', in Drass. PFI

# Urban violence: Human nature vs city life



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

Urban violence and crime persist globally, often blamed on policing and socio-economic factors. However, the deeper cause is the conflict between urban life and human nature

Urban violence and crime have been matters of continuing global concern. While the quality and adequacy of policing, and some social and economic factors, have been discussed in this context, the basic, underlying cause has escaped sufficient attention. It is the conflict between the very character of urban life and the orientation of the human ethos as it has evolved. The matter has been dwelt upon comprehensively by Desmond Morris in *The Human Zoo*. His focus has not been on crime but on the wider consequences of the conflict in terms of the future of human beings. His observations, however, have implications which no serious researcher in urban violence and crime can ignore.

The primary cause of conflict between urban life and human ethos, according to Morris, is overcrowding caused by population growth. He describes two vastly different scenarios at the very beginning of the book. In the first, people are members of a tribe, comprising a "compact group" of 60, living in a piece of land 20 miles long and 20 miles wide, which is forested and inhabited by "animals, small and large." In the second, they live in an area of the same dimensions but which is "civilized, inhabited by machines and buildings," and where there are a "compact group of six million human beings," a "hundred thousand individuals for everyone in the first scene." The change has taken place in the course of the past few thousand years, which, says Morris, is "almost instantaneous" in evolutionary terms. Human beings have adapted themselves so brilliantly to their new environment that they have come to believe this to have been a gradual process, and they are biologically fully equipped to deal with it. This is not the case. Biologically, humans remain the simple, rural animals described in scene one above. According to Morris, they "lived like that, not for a few centuries," but "for a million hard years." They "changed biologically" and



"evolved spectacularly" during this period when the pressures of survival, which were great, moulded them. The problem, according to Morris, is that humans had evolved as tribal animals and "the basic characteristic of the tribe is that it operates on a localized, inter-personal basis. To abandon this fundamental social pattern, so typical of the ancient human condition, was going to be against his grain." This, however, is precisely what humans had to do with the emergence of towns. Intercity coordination developed with the growth of agriculture and trade. The human being "became a citizen, a super tribes man, and the key difference was that as a super tribes man he no longer knew personally each member of his community." It was this change from the personal to the impersonal society, "that was going to cause the human animal the greatest agonies in the millennia ahead. As a species we were not biologically equipped to cope with a mass of strangers masquerading as members of our tribe. It was something we had to learn to do, but it was not easy we are still fighting against it in all kinds of hidden and ways—and some that are not so hidden." People have tried to satisfy



EVEN WITHOUT MOBS AND GANGS, TRIVIAL CAUSES SPARK VIOLENCE WHEN OVERCROWDING GRATES ON ONE'S NERVES. INSTANCES OF 'ROAD RAGE' ARE EXAMPLES OF THIS

their desire for cooperative personal relationships by forming tribe-sized "sub-groups or pseudo-tribes within the main body of super-tribes" with social or professional companions. This, however, has also meant viewing other sub-groups as being beyond the pale and enabling their members—even those personally known to one—to be treated as badly as members of an impersonal mob. This writer feels that criminal gangs constitute a form of such sub-groups or pseudo-tribes. These are small groups whose members can be compared to tribal hunters searching for prey, which, instead of animals, are the human victims of their crime. This is particularly so in instances of armed robberies or targeted mob violence. Gang leaders, like leaders of the earlier hunters, guide and protect gang members but also demand unquestioning obedience and treat mercilessly anyone who, they feel, have deserted or betrayed them. Mobs have been a part of urban life since the very beginning, and a proneness to violence and criminal activity is inherent in their dynamics. The anonymity it lends to members, hinders detection in cases of collec-

tive violence. Also, tussles for leadership lead to attempts to garner support by resorting to competitive encouragement of violence. Equally, individual members of mobs can try to stand out in a crowd by perpetrating or calling for singularly violent acts. Even without mobs and gangs, trivial causes spark violence when overcrowding grates on one's nerves. Instances of "road rage" are examples of this. Things are going to get worse as rising temperatures, cloudbursts, flash floods, cyclones, tornados and massive tidal waves, become increasingly frequent as a result of climate change—thereby severely affecting cities and towns. There has to be a serious global discourse on all aspects of urban life including law and order. There can doubtless be no question of reversing the course of history and returning to tribal life. One can, however, think of devising patterns of community existence which consciously addresses this problem, encouraging interpersonal contacts and diminishing the scope for sub-group conflicts. Unfortunately, no such effort is under way. (The author is Consulting Editor, *The Pioneer*. The views expressed are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### SC MUST INTERVENE

Madam — At last, the Supreme Court of India has stepped in to play a crucial role in involving the state governments of Punjab and Haryana to find a positive solution to the ongoing farmer protests at the Sambhu border. The Court has suggested forming a committee of independent individuals to negotiate with the farmers. It is indeed frustrating that the farmers, the "annadata" (food providers) of our country, are back on the streets fighting for a legal guarantee of the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for crops and other demands to reach the NDA government. Currently, the Centre, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, seems to have turned a blind eye to the plight of farmers, particularly in Punjab and Haryana. The prolonged standoff between the Haryana government and protesting farmers, which began on February 13, has led to road blockades, disrupted public life, and traffic movement, compelling the Supreme Court to act. The Centre has yet to address or resolve the farmers' issues, leading to renewed protests with uncertainty. The Congress has only offered hollow assurances and remained a passive observer. It is hoped that the recent meeting between farmer leaders and Rahul Gandhi in Parliament, along with the Apex Court's efforts, will lead to a resolution of the issue without further delay. Janga Bahadur Sunuwar | Jhalpaiguri

### SC stays nameplate diktat



This refers to the news article, "SC Stays Nameplate Diktat on Kanwar Yatra Path" (July 23).

as the Finance Minister has not increased savings interest rates or provided health support through government schemes. Despite Modi 3.0 winning with the support of young and senior citizens, the government seems to have prioritized coalition partners from Andhra Pradesh and Bihar, neglecting these crucial demographics. This budget highlights a troubling trend of prioritising political alliances over national interests. The government could have showed more concern to the marginalised groups and given them more concessions in the budget rather than pleasing its allies. The budget is supposed to be for the entire nation not for the political allies, so it should take care of all. A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

The Honorable Supreme Court has taken a constitutional, legal, and practical stance by issuing an interim stay on the Yogi government's order regarding name plates along the Kanwar route. The order from the Yogi government appears to have been issued to protect the sentiments of Kanwar Yatris. However, there are differing opinions on this issue within society. Creating a false identity or concealing one's caste, religion, or creed can be considered condemnable, anti-social, and illegal. Currently, the matter is under review by the Honorable Supreme Court, and all related aspects will be examined, taking into account social, religious, and legal provisions. Yugal Kishore Sharma | Faridabad

challenges. India is among the few countries that provide schoolchildren with one nutritious meal a day. However, a scheme as extensive as POSHAN (formerly the midday meal scheme) is vulnerable to issues such as lethargy, corruption, and poor implementation. Reports of food adulteration and poisoning have surfaced, including a 2019 incident in Uttar Pradesh where a roti was served with just salt. Recently, a dead snake was found in a "dal-khichdi" packet served at an anganwadi government school in Maharashtra's Sangli district. The godown storing the food packets has been sealed, but more actions are needed, including holding contractors accountable for these lapses. It is crucial to ensure such incidents are prevented to restore trust in the midday meal program and ensure children feel safe consuming these meals. Ganpat Bhat | Akola

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## Exploring our bonds: From castes to communities



SANJAY CHANDRA

Our innate desire for connection spans from school rivalries to the unique structures within organisations revealing the deep-seated need for identity and bonding

Humans, as we are now, evolved around 700,000 years back. It took us millennia to be domesticated, seeking warmth and the safe environs of a family, community, caste, religion, faith, ideology, locality, city, and the country. One only has to travel in a train to understand these bonds. No sooner are you settled, when the friendly co-traveller wants to know the place that you belong to. The ice breaker is enough for complete strangers to explore more intimate details and search for relatives in case of a shared caste, or neighbours or even mutual friends otherwise. I remember a few interesting incidents. I was around 8, when our teacher asked us our castes. I was not aware and was tasked to inquire from my parents. The next day as I excitedly raised my hand to blurt out the response, the teacher stumped me with yet another googly - my sub caste. Almost three and a half decades later, my daughter was also asked the same question in her class. She was also unprepared. This time I



armed her not only with the caste, but the sub caste as well. Though, I am not sure if my ignorance was a reflection on inadequate feelings of belonging, or it was the grand sentiment of patriotism. I lived in a hostel in Japan for three months for a training. There were hundreds of men and women of different nationalities interacting with each other in the mess or during the entertainment programs over weekends. It was interesting to note people bonding with each other in a foreign land based on common language. We from the Indian subcontinent gravitated towards Hindi or Urdu speaking persons, irrespective of the nationalities.

Spanish speaking people from Europe to South America formed their own group. I also remember a train ride in Switzerland in 2005, when an advertisement caught my eye. An Indian movie star stared back at me, exhorting me to buy an expensive item. I did not have the money, but the pride of an Indian face on a Swiss train compensated for the lack of resources. During my professional life in the railways, there was a perennial debate about the utility of having different departments and officer level recruitment based on the same, which many thought led to a departmental bias. The Indian organization has now done away with the practice - it is now a unified management service. Efficacy of the change will be known only in future. I believe railway organisations across the world have department based cadres. It instils a sense of pride in belonging to the department, leading to more efficient working. I also remember our school days. Each of us were divided into Houses, which were usually named after different

colours or celebrity Indians. There was a healthy system of each House scoring points during the academic year, culminating into the grand finale - the annual sports. We would be cheering our House performers till our sore throats would permit. I never witnessed animosity or professional envy on the better performance of rivals. We tend to overlook a reality, probably because it is deeply ingrained in our psyche. Indian army has regiments based on communities. I have yet to come across any community biased incidents in the services. It might have something to do with the organization's resilience and strength of its leaders. Louie Schwartzberg, American director, producer, and cinematographer, aptly remarked, "I think we need to do some deep soul searching about what's important in our lives and renew our spirit and our spiritual thinking, whether it's through faith-based religion or just through loving nature or helping your fellow man." (The writer is an author; views are personal)

### BUDGET: THE GOOD BAD AND THE UGLY

Madam — The Union Budget for 2024-25 can be viewed in three layers. The positive aspect is its focus on boosting economic activity and generating employment opportunities across various sectors, with significant support for MSMEs. However, the budget fails to address the needs of the salaried class, leaving them with unmet expectations. The most concerning aspect is the complete disregard for senior citizens,





## FIRST COLUMN THE GOD IS OMNIPRESENT

The intimate relation with God reflects in true peace; joy stem from a deep connection with the divine



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

God is omnipresent. Therefore, His company is available everywhere all the time. However, if someone is very keen on the company of God, He manifests in a 'murti' (idol). This is mostly true for temples, where God is worshipped routinely in a prescribed manner. But God even manifests in murtis kept in home or a photo of God, if He decides that someone deserves this favour. Many sadhus, genuine ones, carry their worshipable God in some form with them. I had the privilege of seeing a sadhu in a park take out His Lord's photo and he worshipped Him before eating his meal. Lord Krishna has stated, "For the conqueror of self, who is blissfully peaceful in cold and heat, in pleasure and pain as well as in honor and dishonor also, he is accompanied by God." (The Bhagavad-Geeta 6.7)

Before I go any further, let us understand our relationship with God. Lord Krishna states, "An eternal soul is my part only." (15.7) God is our Swami (Master) and we are His 'sevaks' (servants). God is prepared to give a lot to those who serve Him because He has so much to offer. But God is never attached to anyone. Lord Krishna says, "I am similarly inclined towards all beings, no one is hateful for Me; and no one is dear. However, those who worship Me with devotion, they are in Me, and I am also in them." (9.29)

God is not like a parent; we can only make a place in God's heart. Do you realize what this means? This is the only place where there is unmixed joy. What does a company of God feel like? God is watching us all the time. Obviously, His presence can be experienced subtly only, even though He may have manifested in a murti or a photo. Similarly, God communicates mainly in a subtle way except in a rarest or rare case like for a highly advanced devotee such as Sant Tulsidas. We get intuitions. How do we know that these are not our thoughts; the communication could only have come from God? For example, I pray for guidance and help in a medical matter. The answer comes, which could not have been known to me. My Lord has shown His 'kripa' (grace). Then, God uses mediums to communicate. These are people close to His devotees. They come forward and provide the needed information. In rare cases, God speaks



in dreams or when we are not in deep sleep, generally around 4 AM. The timing is a big indicator that it is God, who has spoken, not what we have imagined. Whatever God states will also be corroborated in a scripture like the Bhagavad-Geeta. All this happens because a devotee of God has taken the 'chintan' (meditation) option. What does God communicate or what benefits do we derive from such communications? First of all, we begin to become peaceful. Because without peace no enjoyment is possible. If our minds are disturbed, we cannot enjoy even in the most comfortable circumstances. As God is the only source of real peace, not freedom from noise, we become entitled to it. 'Sukha' or genuine happiness follows even in not-so-opulent surroundings. This feeling leads to unmixed joy as our connection with God is strengthened by sustained practice. Our prayers for guidance and help will be answered.

Progressively, God becomes the guiding light of our lives. Help, as needed, will become available, God finds mediums, who can provide such assistance. For example, a competent doctor will become available to treat us. It all sounds so easy; it is. Not only will we be healthy but the necessary energies of all kinds will be ours too. One will feel secure, comfortable, relaxed, good, etc. The best emotions like hope, satisfaction, patience and tolerance will become parts of our psyche. Our consciousness will become better, i.e. spiritual over some time. In short, life will become highly enjoyable. Worrying, sadness, depression and anxiety will be gradually replaced by superior emotions. It is up to us to choose between chintan about God or 'chinta' (worry) about material objects, goals, etc. God is the owner of whatever there is.

(The writer is a spiritual teacher and guide; views are personal)

# Israel and Palestine seek solutions amid global strife



NILANTHA LANGAMUWA

China's growing role as a mediator in international conflicts hints at a shifting power dynamic, challenging the traditional Western dominance in international diplomacy

He flew to Washington; they went to Beijing. While leaders soar through the skies, ordinary civilians are engulfed in the flames of war. Their children scream not for the luxury of education, but for the sheer will to survive amid the relentless rains of bombs. Famine devastates their lives, and in Gaza and beyond, people are not just yearning for food but for the basic necessity of drinking water. This grim reality highlights the stark polarization in the global order, as non-Western nations struggle with age-old problems made worse by those wielding power. Harvard-educated former combat soldier of Sayeret Matkal in the IDF, Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu, commonly known by his nom-de-guerre Bibi, flew to the United States to address Congress, followed by a meeting with President Joe Biden, who, battling COVID-19 for the third time, was expected to announce his inability to run for a second term officially. Amidst thousands of protesters and a boycott by dozens of Congress members, Netanyahu addressed Congress. Meanwhile, representatives from fourteen Palestinian organisations flew to Beijing to sign a peace agreement. The presence of fourteen organisations for a population of just over 5 million highlights the profound divisions within this land, once a nation-state ravaged by intricate schemes. Following the horrific October 7 attack, where thousands of Israelis were brutally killed and many more kidnapped by Hamas, the region's conflict landscape has been irrevocably altered.

This incident has significantly hampered Israel's efforts to normalise relationships with neighbouring countries. In response, China swiftly intervened, brokering an unprecedented rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran. This diplomatic achievement was monumental during Ebrahim Raisi's presidency, although tragically overshadowed by the helicopter crash that claimed the lives of Raisi and his dynamic Foreign Minister while returning from a joint irrigation project inauguration in Azerbaijan province. In his record-breaking address to Congress, Prime Minister Netanyahu outlined his vision for peace, affirming that he would not cease fire until victory was achieved—a notion that seems illusory given the ground realities.

Ironically, before the speech, his entourage hinted that he would present "a vision" for the future of Gaza and the region. Ultimately, that vision consisted of "a demilitarized and deradicalized" Gaza. Netanyahu, who struggles to convince his ultra-Orthodox partners to teach their children basic math, now claims to plan on educating "a new generation that must be taught not to hate Jews." This plan remains unclear, but he quickly shifted to slogans about an "Abraham Alliance" between Israel and "moderate" Arab nations, conveniently ignoring his coalition's refusal to even utter the words "two-state solution," the very foundation for this alliance. "Following our victory, with the help of regional partners, the demilitarisation and deradicalisation of Gaza can lead to a future of security, prosperity, and peace. That's my vision for Gaza," he proclaimed to Congress.

He continued, "A new generation of Palestinians must no longer be taught to hate Jews but to live in peace with us. Those



PALESTINE'S WILLINGNESS TO ENGAGE WITH CHINA'S DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVES OFFERS A HOPEFUL PATHWAY TOWARDS RECONCILIATION AND PEACE, REMINISCENT OF SUN TZU'S ASSERTION THAT 'THE SUPREME ART OF WAR IS TO SUBDUCE THE ENEMY WITHOUT FIGHTING'

twin concepts, demilitarisation and deradicalisation, were applied to Germany and Japan after World War II, leading to decades of peace, prosperity, and security." Despite his lofty words, Netanyahu's visit was not about peace but about expanding the war towards Iran, a country he mentioned twenty-seven times in his 52-minute, record-breaking fourth address. Tragically, there was not even the slightest hint of how he plans to extricate Israel from the tragic impasse it is trapped in under his watch. Israeli analysts expose these hyperboles, stating, "The goal of Benjamin Netanyahu's trip to Washington, including his appearance before the U.S. Congress, is not and never was to advance a diplomatic agreement to bring home the Israeli hostages safely and to end the fighting and suffering. Rather, it is designed to enlist domestic American support to keep waging the war." Another analyst remarked, "Netanyahu may have won 52 standing ovations from the rapturous, majority-Republican audience, but his rhetoric, which so impressed Washington, offered nothing for Israelis watching back home." Meanwhile, in Beijing, 14 Palestinian groups, including Hamas and Fatah, signed the Beijing Declaration.

This rare display of unity, facilitated by China, marks a significant shift towards reconciliation among Palestinian factions—a unity long deemed unattainable due to numerous internal and external challenges. The persistent disunity has exacerbated the Palestinians' suffering beyond Israeli oppression. Therefore, the recent declaration offers a glimmer of hope for a more cohesive and effective Palestinian political movement, provided the commitments are genuine and actionable. The Beijing Declaration signifies a remarkable step towards Palestinian unity and sovereignty. The declaration's commitment to post-war governance in Gaza and the establishment of a temporary national reconciliation government underscores a unified vision for Palestinian self-governance

and independence. The significance of the Beijing Declaration is profound, echoing ancient and contemporary sentiments on diplomacy and conflict resolution. Chinese scholar Zhu Weilie aptly noted, "The Beijing Declaration represents the mainstream opinions of various Palestinian factions," marking a critical step toward Palestinian statehood. Historical divisions between factions like Fatah and Hamas, ongoing since the late Yasser Arafat's era, have long impeded progress. The success of this meeting, which saw all factions in attendance for the first time, symbolizes a breakthrough in Palestinian unity and reflects the global south's emerging solidarity and cooperation. The strength of a nation derives from the integrity of the home. The impact of the Beijing Declaration extends beyond Palestinian internal politics. It poses significant implications for the protracted Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While Palestine moves towards internal unity, Israel's political trajectory appears increasingly extreme and radical.

The continuous violence and rising death toll highlight the urgent need for a ceasefire and renewed peace efforts. Yet, Israel's alignment with U.S. interests and electoral politics hinders progress. In contrast, Palestine's willingness to engage with China's diplomatic initiatives offers a hopeful pathway towards reconciliation and peace, reminiscent of Sun Tzu's assertion that "the supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting." China's role as a mediator and leader in global conflicts is likely to expand. The successful reconciliation between Saudi Arabia and Iran under China's mediation last year, followed by the current Palestinian unity efforts, signals a shift in West Asian diplomacy. China's "active actions," characterized by leadership and initiative, have garnered widespread acceptance and support from various countries in the region. Concurrently, Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, during his visit to Beijing this week, informed China's Foreign Minister

that "Ukraine is ready and willing to engage in dialogue and negotiations with Russia" aimed at a permanent settlement. Kuleba is in China to secure their assistance in future negotiations with Russia. He emphasised that the negotiations should be rational and lead to lasting peace. There is no mention of NATO, the US, or the UK being involved, but they cannot be pleased with the prospect of peace in Europe being facilitated by China.

This could drive President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to rethink his approach to destructive promises he was given by his "masters" behind the screen. These developments indicate that Beijing is emerging as a new pivotal key player in global conflicts, advocating its strategic ambitions. As regional powerhouses in Asia, both India and China have the potential to elevate the Global South to new heights. Not only Beijing but also Delhi, with Prime Minister Modi's first foreign visit to Russia after his third election, shares this strategic vision. In this context, it is important to consider the words of Sergey Lavrov, Russia's Minister of Foreign Affairs: "It is also obvious that the United States is trying to drag India into its anti-China project. Both China and India are much more deeply involved in the Western system of globalisation in terms of the volume of financial, investment, and trade agreements and many other things. But the fact is that just like us (Russia), China and India are fully aware of the discriminatory nature of what the West is doing." Transcending political affiliations and beliefs, the most noble and imperative pursuit, as Albert Camus profoundly stated, is the fight for peace. Humanity prevails when, at such critical moments, we forge a united front against the relentless forces of conflict and injustice. Humanity triumphs when, at pivotal moments, we unite resolutely against manufactured conflicts and unyielding forces of injustice, setting aside political differences to stand together.

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

# Empowering India's youth: Skills as a compass for their future

Bridging the skills gap through targeted initiatives can not only enhance employability but also drive economic growth and social stability

Few would believe that 26-year-old Kevin Dahima - a young, successful entrepreneur from coastal Gujarat - was once unemployed. Today he himself employs his thriving niche. Kickstarting his business in 2021 and providing a 24-hour service, Kelvin brings home over Rs. 55,000 per month. Having trained as a Hospital Assistant.



PEARL TIWARI

he is helping people in their hour of need, whilst building something for the future. And his journey to success all began when he signed up for skill training. One doesn't have to look too far to see the social impact of high levels of youth unemployment. In South Africa, where youth unemployment has hit a high of 59.7%, unemployment is considered to be the root cause of many problems the country faces today -

including crime, poverty and suicide. Closer to home, the epidemic of drug use in Punjab has been fuelled by social and economic factors including high unemployment, and underemployment; and pressing national issues like youth suicide are compounded by youth unemployment. Never has it been more important for our young people to have opportunities for bright and productive futures. Around the world, youth unemployment and underemployment are significant problems in many societies, which can lead to feelings of hopelessness and frustration - which can often fuel social unrest. Over the next decade, the World Bank estimates one billion young people will try to

enter the job market, but less than half of them will find formal jobs. This will leave the majority of young people, many in minority and marginalized groups, unemployed or experiencing working poverty. With the largest youth population in the world (with 66% of the total population under the age of 35), and the latest data from CMIE (a think tank) claiming youth unemployment could be as high as 45.5% - among the highest in the world - it is important that India takes note here. There is a lot we can do to ensure we take a preventive approach to these issues to secure productive futures for our many young people. In a country with a gaping skills gap, this presents a major



opportunity - to invest in skills collaboratively to meet the needs of both youth and industry. According to recent studies, India's employable population is far too low to meet the demands of the skilled labour market.

Two-thirds of the country's workforce aren't qualified for current job openings. With such a shortage of qualified workers, businesses are struggling to fill positions creating a significant challenge. It's not just the quantity of skilled

labour that's lacking. The quality of available talent is also wanting. Recent research shows that only 33% of workers in India possess the skills employers seek most. The need of the hour to tackle issues at both ends of the spectrum lies in skill training. Whilst the India Skills Mission abandoned its goal of training 500 million youth by 2022, there is still a clear need for corporates, skill training providers and civil society to step into the breach. Rural youth, in particular, need greater access to quality skill training providers who also support placement, whilst also requiring help to convince families that skills are indeed the way to go - a route often in conflict with the white-collar aspirations of both youth

and their families. Sadly, half of all graduates in India are unemployable due to a lack of industry-relevant skills. The world faces a multitude of challenges today, many of which affect our youth. Conflicts that disrupt education and stability, a polarized online environment that fosters negativity, and economic inequality that limits opportunities. These issues threaten not only individual futures but the overall stability of communities. It is therefore crucial to equip youth with the necessary skills to become productive citizens and create a more sustainable future for all.

(The writer is CEO, of Ambuja Foundation; views are personal)



# Venezuelan voters face crucial choice: Reelect Maduro or give Opp a chance

AP ■ CARACAS

The future of Venezuela is on the line. Voters will decide Sunday whether to reelect President Nicolas Maduro, whose 11 years in office have been beset by crisis, or allow the opposition a chance to deliver on a promise to undo the ruling party's policies that caused economic collapse and forced millions to emigrate. Historically fractured opposition parties have coalesced behind a single candidate, giving the United Socialist Party of Venezuela its most serious electoral challenge in a presidential election in decades. Maduro is being challenged by former diplomat Edmundo González Urrutia, who represents the resurgent opposition, and eight other candidates. Supporters of Maduro and Gonzalez marked the end of the official campaign season Thursday with massive demonstrations in the capital, Caracas. Maduro and his allies have traditionally fended off challenges by barring rivals from elections and painting them as out-of-touch elitists in league

with foreign powers. But this time, the ruling party is allowing the Unitary Platform, the coalition of the main opposition parties, to participate in the election.

A deal that allowed the opposition coalition to participate in the election won Maduro some relief from crippling economic sanctions imposed by the United States. But that respite was short-lived. President Joe Biden's administration reimposed the sanctions, citing mounting government repression of real and perceived adversaries, including blocking the candidacy of opposition powerhouse María Corina Machado. Here's what to know about Venezuela's upcoming presidential election.

## Who is the opposition candidate?

The most talked-about name in the race is not on the ballot: María Corina Machado. The former lawmaker emerged as an opposition star in 2023, filling the void left when a previous generation of opposition leaders fled into exile. Her principled attacks on government corruption and misman-



agement rallied millions of Venezuelans to vote for her in the opposition's October primary.

But Maduro's government declared the primary illegal and opened criminal investigations against some of its organizers. Since then, it has issued warrants for several of Machado's supporters and arrested some members of her staff, and the country's top court affirmed a decision to keep her off the ballot.

Yet, she kept on campaigning, holding rallies nationwide and turning the ban on her candidacy into a symbol of the loss of rights and humiliations that many voters have felt for over a decade.

She has thrown her support behind Edmundo González Urrutia, a former ambassador who has never held public office, helping a fractious opposition unify. They are campaigning together on the promise of econom-

ic reform that will lure back the millions of Venezuelans who have migrated since Maduro became president in 2013. González began his diplomatic career as an aide to Venezuela's ambassador in the US. In the late 1970s. He was posted to Belgium and El Salvador, and served as Caracas' ambassador to Algeria. His last post was as ambassador to Argentina during Hugo Chávez's presidency, which began in 1999. More recently, González worked as an international relations consultant and wrote a historical work on Venezuela during World War II.

## Why is the current president having trouble?

Maduro's popularity has dwindled due to an economic crisis caused by a drop in oil prices, corruption and government mismanagement.

Maduro can still bank on a cadre of die-hard believers, known as Chavistas, including millions of public employees and others whose businesses or employment depend on the state. But the ability of his party to use access to social pro-

grams to make people vote has diminished as the economy has frayed.

He is the heir to Hugo Chávez, a popular socialist who expanded Venezuela's welfare state while locking horns with the United States.

Sick with cancer, Chávez hand-picked Maduro to act as interim president upon his death. He took on the role in March 2013, and the following month, he narrowly won the presidential election triggered by his mentor's death.

Maduro was reelected in 2018, in a contest that was widely considered a sham. His government banned Venezuela's most popular opposition parties and politicians from participating and, lacking a level playing field, the opposition urged voters to boycott the election.

That authoritarian tilt was part of the rationale the U.S. used to impose economic sanctions that crippled the country's crucial oil industry.

## Who will vote?

More than 21 million Venezuelans are registered to vote, but the exodus of over 7.7 million people due to the pro-

longed crisis — including about 4 million voters — is expected to reduce the number of potential voters to about 17 million. Voting is not mandatory and is done on electronic machines. Venezuelan law allows people to vote abroad, but only about 69,000 voters met the criteria to cast ballots at embassies or consulates during this election. Costly and time-consuming government prerequisites to register, lack of information and a mandatory proof of legal residency in a host country kept many migrants from registering to vote.

Venezuelans in the US. Face an insurmountable obstacle: Consulates, where citizens abroad would typically cast their ballots, are closed because Caracas and Washington severed diplomatic relations after Maduro's 2018 reelection.

## Under what conditions is the election taking place?

A more free and fair presidential election seemed like a possibility last year, when Maduro's government agreed to work with the US-backed Unitary Platform coalition to improve electoral conditions in October

2023. An accord on election conditions earned Maduro's government broad relief from US. Economic sanctions on its state-run oil, gas and mining sectors.

But days later, authorities said the opposition's primary was against the law and began issuing warrants and arresting human rights defenders, journalists and opposition members.

A UN-backed panel investigating human rights violations in Venezuela has reported that the government has increased repression of critics and opponents ahead of the election, subjecting targets to detention, surveillance, threats, defamatory campaigns and arbitrary criminal proceedings.

The government has also used its control of media outlets, the country's fuel supply, electric network and other infrastructure to limit the reach of the Machado-González campaign. The mounting actions taken against the opposition prompted the Biden administration earlier this year to end the sanctions relief it granted in October.

# Harris urges Netanyahu to end war

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US Vice President Kamala Harris has urged Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to quickly conclude a ceasefire deal with Hamas and reach a "durable end" to the devastating war in Gaza, amidst mounting civilian casualties and the humanitarian crisis in the Palestinian enclave. "Israel has a right to defend itself and how it does so matters. What has happened in Gaza over the past nine months is devastating," Harris, the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee, told reporters after her meeting with Netanyahu at the White House on Thursday. "The images of dead children and desperate hungry people fleeing for safety, sometimes displaced for the second, third or fourth time. We cannot look away in the face of these tragedies. We cannot allow ourselves to become numb to the suffering and I will not be silent," she said. Harris also stressed the need for a path to a two-state solu-

tion, while calling on Americans to be aware of the "nuance" on the conflict.

Earlier on Thursday, Netanyahu met President Joe Biden, who stepped down from his re-election campaign on Sunday.

Netanyahu's meetings at the White House came a day after he gave a fiery speech to Congress, vowing "total victory" against Hamas, as thousands of pro-Palestinian protesters demonstrated outside. The Israeli prime minister faces pressure both at home and abroad to bring an end to the Israel-Gaza war, now in its ninth month.

"I've said it many times, but it bears repeating. Israel has a right to defend itself, and how it does so matters. Hamas is a brutal terrorist organisation. On October 7, Hamas triggered this war when it massacred 1,200 innocent people, including 44 Americans, Harris said. Hamas has committed horrific acts of sexual violence and took 250 hostages. There are American citizens who remain captive in Gaza," Harris said.

During her meeting with Netanyahu, Harris said that she voiced her serious concern to Netanyahu about the scale of human suffering in Gaza, including the death of far too many innocent civilians. "I made clear my serious concern about the dire humanitarian situation there. With over two million people facing high levels of food insecurity, and half a million people facing catastrophic levels of acute food insecurity. What has happened in Gaza over the past nine months is devastating," she said.

Harris said there is a US-proposed deal on the table for a ceasefire and a hostage deal. The first phase of the deal would bring about a full ceasefire, including a withdrawal of the Israeli military from population centers in Gaza. In the second phase, the Israeli military would withdraw from Gaza entirely and it would lead to a permanent end to the hostilities.

"It is time for this war to end, and end in a way where Israel is secure, all the hostages are

released, the suffering of Palestinians in Gaza ends, and the Palestinian people can exercise their right to freedom, dignity, and self-determination. There has been hopeful movement in the talks to secure an agreement on this deal," she said.

"I just told Prime Minister Netanyahu, it is time to get this deal done. So to everyone who has been calling for a ceasefire and to everyone who yearns for peace, I see you and I hear you. Let's get the deal done so we can get a ceasefire to end the war. Let's bring the hostages home and let's provide much-needed relief to the Palestinian people," Harris said. Harris also told reporters that "it is important for the American people to remember, the war in Gaza is not a binary issue."

"Let us all condemn terrorism and violence. Let us all do what we can to prevent the suffering of innocent civilians. And let us condemn antisemitism, islamophobia and hate of any kind. And let us work to unite our country," she said.

# West Bank Hamas leader dies in Israeli custody

Ramallah (West Bank): A Hamas leader in the occupied West Bank died in Israeli custody Thursday evening after a deterioration in his health, according to a Palestinian prisoners rights group. Sheikh Mustafa Abu Arra, 63, was arrested in October and was recently transferred from Ramon Prison to Soroka hospital where he died, the Palestinian Prisoners Club said.

The rights group said Abu Arra was subjected to "torture and starvation" during his detention, and did not receive adequate medical treatment. The group did not elaborate further. Israel's prison authorities have not commented on the circumstances of Abu Arra's death, and could not immediately be reached. Abu Arra was arrested shortly after the start of the latest Israel-Hamas war under a process known as administrative detention, the group said, whereby detainees can be held indefinitely for security reasons without trial and charge. AP

# Obama vows to do everything to make Kamala Harris win

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Kamala Harris will be a "fantastic President of the United States," former president Barack Obama said on Friday, as he and his wife Michelle endorsed her and vowed to do "everything we can" to enable her to win the high-stakes elections against Donald Trump in November.

Harris, 59, launched her presidential campaign hours after President Joe Biden said he would be forgoing his bid for a second term.

The decision came after Biden faced weeks of mounting pressure to step aside following his startling debate performance against rival and former president Trump last month, which raised concerns about his fitness for a second term and ability to defeat his Republican opponent in November. Obama, who didn't immediately endorse Harris following President Biden's announce-

ment on Sunday, released a video to support the Vice President. "Earlier this week, Michelle and I called our friend @KamalaHarris. We told her we think she'll make a fantastic President of the United States, and that she has our full support. At this critical moment for our country, we're going to do everything we can to make sure she wins in November. We hope you'll join us," Obama said in a post on X. "Michelle and I couldn't be prouder to endorse you and to do everything we can to get you through this election and into the Oval Office," the 62-year-old former president told Harris on a phone call joined by his wife. Harris thanked the Obamas for their support and expressed gratitude for their decades-long friendship. "I'm looking forward to doing this with the two of you, Doug (Douglas Emhoff) and I both. And getting out there, being on the road," Harris, 59, said. "But most of all, I just want to

tell you the words you have spoken and the friendship that you have given over all these years mean more than I can express, so thank you both. It means so much. And we're gonna have some fun with this too, aren't we?" she added. Michelle, the former first lady, said she is proud of Harris and expects the upcoming election to be historic.

"I can't have this phone call without saying to my girl, Kamala, I am proud of you. This is going to be historic," she told Harris in the approximately one-minute video. In a joint statement announcing the endorsement, the Obamas praised Harris.

"But Kamala has more than a resume. She has the vision, the character, and the strength that this critical moment demands. There is no doubt in our mind that Kamala Harris has exactly what it takes to win this election and deliver for the American people," the statement said.

# Canada, Australia, New Zealand, call for truce in Gaza

Canberra (AP):

Canada, Australia and New Zealand issued a joint statement Friday on the need for an urgent ceasefire in Gaza and the risk of expanded conflict between Hezbollah and Israel. "The situation in Gaza is catastrophic. The human suffering is unacceptable. It cannot continue," the statement from the three prime ministers said.

"Israel must listen to the concerns of the international community. The protection of civilians is paramount and a requirement under international humanitarian law. Palestinian civilians cannot be made to pay the price of defeating Hamas. It must end," the statement said. The PMs said they were "gravely concerned" about the prospect of further escalation across the region and condemned Iran's mid-April attack on Israel. They also called on Iran to refrain from further destabilizing actions in the Middle East and demanded that Iran and its affiliated groups, including Hezbollah, cease their attacks.

# Netanyahu to meet Trump at Mar-a-Lago

AP ■ WASHINGTON

As president, Donald Trump went well beyond his predecessors in fulfilling Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's top wishes from the United States. Yet by the time Trump left the White House, relations between the two had broken down after Netanyahu rapidly congratulated Joe Biden on his 2020 presidential victory.

On Friday, the two men will meet face-to-face for the first time in nearly four years in a test of whether the relationship can be mended. Both have an interest in getting past their differences.

For Trump, now the Republican presidential nominee, the meeting could cast him as an ally and statesman, as well as sharpen efforts by Republicans to portray themselves as the party most loyal to Israel.

That's as divisions among Americans over US support for Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza open cracks in what has been decades of strong bipar-

tisan backing for Israel, the biggest recipient of US aid. For Netanyahu, who was in the United States to address Congress and meet with Biden, repairing relations with Trump is imperative given the prospect that he may once again become president of the United States, Israel's main arms supplier and protector.

For both men, Friday's meeting at Mar-a-Lago will highlight for their home audiences their depiction of themselves as strong leaders who have gotten big things done on the world stage, and can again.

One political gamble for Netanyahu is whether he could get more of the terms he wants in any deal on a Gaza cease-fire and hostage release, and in his much hoped-for closing of a normalisation deal with Saudi Arabia, if he waits out the Biden administration in hopes that Trump wins.

"Benjamin Netanyahu has spent much of his career in the last two decades in tethering himself to the Republican Party," said Aaron David Miller, a former US diplomat for Arab-



Israeli negotiations, now a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

For the next six months, that means "mending ties with an irascible, angry president," Miller said, meaning Trump. Trump broke off with Netanyahu in early 2021. That was after the Israeli prime minister became one of the first world leaders to congratulate Biden for his presidential election victory, disregarding Trump's false claim he had

won. "Bibi could have stayed quiet," Trump said in an interview with an Israeli newspaper back then. "He made a terrible mistake." Netanyahu and Trump last met at a September 2020 White House signing ceremony for the signature diplomatic achievement of both men's political careers. It was an accord brokered by the Trump administration in which the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain agreed to establish normal diplomatic relations with Israel.

For Israel, it amounted to the two countries formally recognizing it for the first time. It was a major step in what Israel hopes will be an easing of tensions and a broadening of economic ties with its Arab neighbours.

In public postings and statements after his break with Netanyahu, Trump portrayed himself as having stuck his neck out for Israel as president, and Netanyahu paying him back with disloyalty.

He also has criticised Netanyahu on other points, faulting him as "not prepared" for the October 7 Hamas attacks that started the war in Gaza, for example. In his high-profile speech to Congress on Wednesday, Netanyahu gave recognition to Biden, who has kept up military and diplomatic support for Israel's offensive in Gaza despite opposition from within his Democratic Party. But Netanyahu poured praise on Trump, calling the regional accords Trump helped broker historic and thanking him "for all the things he did for Israel".

# China shows influence with Palestinian deal, Ukrainian FM visit

AP ■ BEIJING

In consecutive days this week, China brokered a deal between rival Palestinian factions and hosted Ukraine's foreign minister at a moment when pressure is mounting on the country to negotiate an end to the grinding war there. While it's unclear if the agreement between Hamas and Fatah will succeed where others have failed and there is little concrete progress towards peace in Ukraine, China emerged a winner, further cementing its role as a diplomatic force on the global stage, not just an economic powerhouse.

As Beijing and Washington vie for influence around the world, China is increasingly playing a role that had previously been the domain of world powers like the US and Russia. Earlier this month, Western countries called some of China's activities worrying and labelled Beijing a troublemaker. But the events of this week — and the China-brokered deal last year to reestablish relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia — show that international players are seeking Beijing's help, an acknowledgment that it is a diplomatic force to reckon with.

"China is now offering itself as a broker on the global stage, and countries are responding," said Carla Freeman, a senior expert for China at the United States Institute of Peace. "It's a recognition — one much sought after by Beijing — that China has international influence and could play a role in improving the outcomes of a diplomatic process." On Tuesday, Palestinian factions Hamas and Fatah agreed in principle to form a government, the latest attempt at resolving a longstanding rivalry that looms over Gaza's future after the war with Israel. Previous similar declarations

have failed, but even just getting the parties together in a room was an achievement, said Jon Alterman, senior vice president and director of the Middle East programme at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies.

"They say, we did what nobody else could do, nobody saw was possible, and that, by itself, represents a victory," he said. While Beijing did not publicly offer any concrete steps such as timeline for implementation or money for rebuilding, the deal was another sign that China has influence in the Middle East — and even perhaps room to maneuver that the US might not have, said Danny Russel, vice president for international security and diplomacy at the Asia Society Policy Institute.

Hamas officials have said that they see China as a potential counterweight to the US, which is a staunch ally of their foe, Israel.

"US influence with key Middle East players remains substantial, but there is a new player in the game who is entirely comfortable dealing with Iran and Hamas," Russel said, referring to the 2023 rapprochement between archrivals Iran and Saudi Arabia, widely seen as a breakthrough.

Washington, meanwhile, is grappling with discontent at home over its position on the war in Gaza and its hosting of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu this week, and even its allies have doubts about US foreign policy commitments as a presidential race draws closer. Beijing, on the other hand, celebrated. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi exuded confidence in a photo with top representatives of Hamas and Fatah on Tuesday. The Chinese state media tabloid Global Times hailed the Palestinian deal as having "transcendent significance".

# Vietnam Communist Party chief funeral draws thousands

AP ■ HANOI

Thousands of mourners gathered in Hanoi on Friday for the second day of the funeral of the man who dominated Vietnamese politics for over a decade, Communist Party general secretary Nguyen Phu Trong.

His death, at 80, last week in Hanoi marked the start of a succession struggle within the party that will likely to continue until the all-important National Party Congress of Vietnam's Communist Party in 2026.

Trong's coffin, draped in the red and yellow of Vietnam's flag, was laid beneath his smiling portrait and dozens of medals at the National Funeral House in Hanoi on Thursday. All flags in the southeast Asian nation flew at half mast during

the two-day period of national mourning, while all sports and entertainment were suspended. He will be buried at Mai Dich cemetery, the final resting place for military heroes and senior party officials, later on Friday. Top Communist Party officials paid tribute, including President To Lam, who took over as caretaker general secretary a day before Trong's death was announced. Thousands of people, many of whom who had travelled from far-flung provinces, queued up in Hanoi late into Thursday to light incense and pay their respects.

Politburo member Luong Cuong said Thursday that his death was "an extremely huge, irreparable loss to the Party, the state, the people and his family." South Korean Prime



Minister Han Duck-soo; Wang Huning, the fourth-ranked leader in the Chinese Communist Party; former Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga; Cuban National Assembly President Esteban Lazo Hernandez; and Indian National Security Advisor Ajit Doval were among those in attendance on

Thursday. US president Joe Biden had said earlier that Trong was a "champion of the deep ties" between Americans and the Vietnamese. Russian President Vladimir Putin said in a statement on Telegram that Trong would be remembered as a "true friend" of Russia who made a "great

personal contribution" to the improvement of ties between the two nations.

Trong, who studied in the Soviet Union from 1981 to 1983, was the first Vietnamese Communist Party chief to visit the White House. He advocated a pragmatic foreign policy of "bamboo diplomacy," a phrase he coined that refers to the plant's flexibility, bending but not breaking in the shifting headwinds of geopolitics.

Vietnam is unlikely to abandon that approach, under which it has pursued pragmatic cooperation with its much larger and more powerful neighbour China while maintaining good ties with other countries like the US, Japan and India, said Gregory B. Poling, who heads the Southeast Asia Program at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies.

Trong, a Marxist-Leninist ideologue, viewed corruption as the single gravest threat to the party's legitimacy. He launched a sweeping anti-corruption campaign known as "blazing furnace," which has singled both business and political elites.

Since 2016, thousands of party officials have been disciplined. They included former presidents Nguyen Xuan Phuc and Vo Van Thuan and the former head of parliament, Vuong Dinh Hue. In all, eight members of the powerful Politburo were ousted on corruption allegations, compared to none between 1986 and 2016.

The anti-graft campaign was led by then-top security official To Lam until he was made president in May after his predecessor resigned amid corruption allegations.



# 'Agreement with Russia is deal with devil'

AP ■ KYIV

Signing an agreement with Russia to stop the war with Ukraine would amount to signing a deal with the devil, a top adviser to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said, as pressure mounts on the country to seek an end to more than two years of fighting. A deal would only buy time for Russian President Vladimir Putin to strengthen his army and usher in another, potentially more violent chapter in the war, Mykhailo Podolyak told The Associated Press in an interview Thursday. "If you want to sign a deal with the devil, who will then drag you to hell, well, go for it. This is what Russia is," Podolyak said when asked about the prospects for a peace deal for Kyiv, whose forces are locked in a bloody war of attrition with Moscow's troops in eastern Ukraine. "If you sign anything today with Russia, that will not lose the war and will not be legally responsible for mass crimes, this will mean that you have

signed yourself a ticket to continue the war on a different scale, with other protagonists, with a different number of killed and tortured people," he said. It is a view held across Zelenskyy's camp and reflected broadly among Ukrainians. But it also increasingly comes up against the current of Western pressure, as Kyiv continues to face difficult front-line conditions against Moscow's larger, better equipped army, as well as uncertainty over the level of future political support from Ukraine's closest ally, the US. War fatigue also appears to be eroding the morale of Ukrainians, who have struggled with constant bombardment, electricity outages and the loss of loved ones. A poll by the Kyiv International Institute for Sociology found that the number of Ukrainians opposed to territorial concessions to Russia in exchange for peace has continued to fall. It was 55% in July, compared with 74% in December. Even Zelenskyy hinted at a willingness to negotiate with Russia for the first time since the 2022

## EU sends first \$1.6 billion from frozen Russia assets to Ukraine

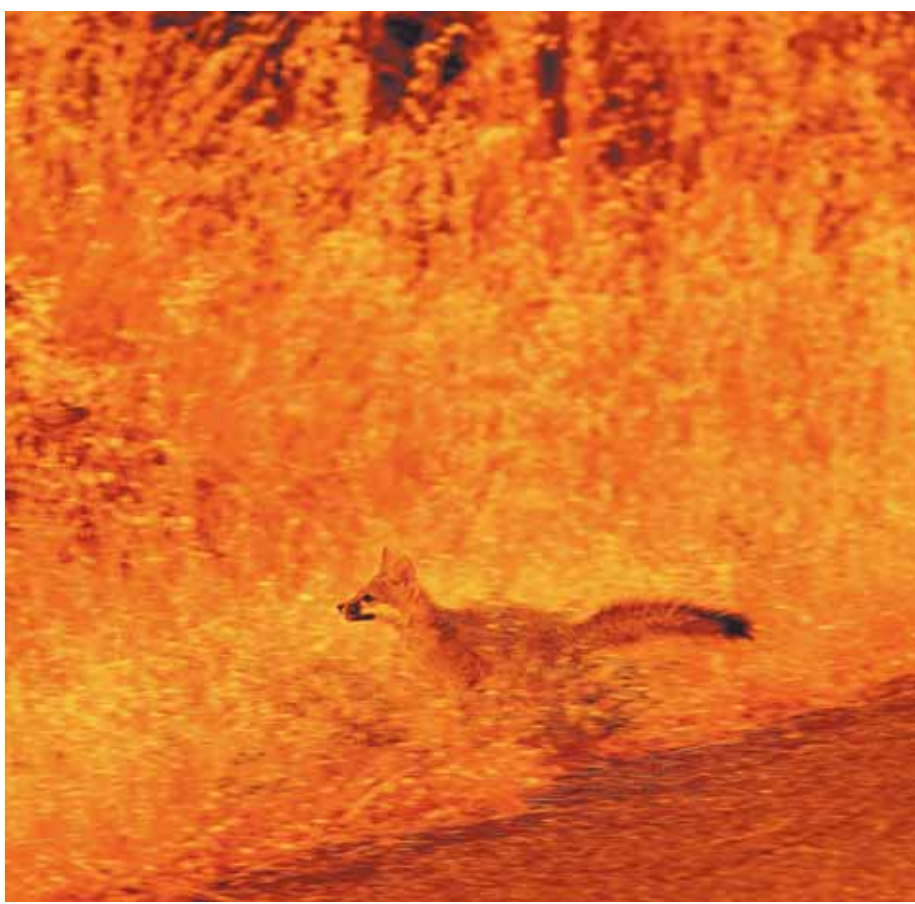
The Hague (AP): The European Union announced on Friday it had made 1.5 billion euros (USD 1.6 billion) available to support Ukraine, the first tranche of money generated from profits on frozen Russian assets. In May, the EU's 27 member states reached an agreement to use the interest earned on some 210 billion euros (USD 225 billion) in Russian central bank assets for military support for Ukraine and rebuilding efforts in the war torn country. The money, most of which is held in Belgium, was frozen as part of sanctions packages in retaliation for Moscow's full-

scale invasion. Brussels estimates that the interest on those assets could provide around 3 billion euros each year. "The EU stands with Ukraine. Today we transfer 1.5 billion euros in proceeds from immobilised Russian assets to the defence and reconstruction of Ukraine. There is no better symbol or use for the Kremlin's money than to make Ukraine and all of Europe a safer place to live," European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen said in a statement. The move comes days after Moscow announced it had recaptured two villages in Eastern Ukraine.

full-scale invasion, suggesting Moscow should send a delegation to the next global peace summit, which is expected in November. But Podolyak insisted that an

agreement now would only delay greater violence. "Yes, it can be a freeze of the conflict for a certain time. But this means that the Russian Federation will work on its mis-

takes and update its own army," he said. "An aggressor country did not come to the territory of Ukraine to sign a peace agreement. That's nonsense!" A lasting peace that works for Ukraine would ensure a steady erosion of Russian military might encompassed by the "three tools" often reiterated by Zelenskyy: increased military support, effective economic sanctions and diplomatic pressure to isolate Russia. As he spoke, Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba was in China, one of Russia's closest allies, on a mission to forge closer ties. Podolyak said the goal was to provide explanations for Ukraine's positions and for why China should play a more "active intensive function in ending the war on the terms of international law." Few countries are watching the twists and turns of the US presidential election more intently than Ukraine. But Zelenskyy is confident that his government has established good relations with both sides in the US, election, Podolyak said.



An animal runs through a field of grass while fleeing the Park Fire in the Cohasset community in Butte County, California, on July 25, 2024. AP/PTI

# SL prez poll on Sept 21

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka will hold the presidential poll on September 21, the election commission announced on Friday, ending the months-long speculation over the key contest which is likely to determine the future of economic reforms in the cash-strapped country. This will be the first election to be held in Sri Lanka after it plunged into economic bankruptcy in 2022. The government gazette issued on Friday said in terms of Article 31 (3) of the Constitution the election would take place on September 21 while the nominations would be accepted on August 15. The announcement of the much-awaited election ended months-long speculation that the election would be postponed to extend the term of the incumbent Ranil Wickremesinghe. Opposition parties had expressed concern that the election might not be held at all. The government, however, repeatedly insisted that the

election would be held on time. The election announcement set to end the balance term of former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who was ousted in mid-2022 in a popular public uprising. Rajapaksa had been elected with a record near 7 million votes in November 2019 when the last presidential election was held. Tens of thousands, who took to the streets, in early 2022 demanded Rajapaksa step down for his failure to tackle the island's gravest economic crisis since 1948. Rajapaksa was forced to flee the country on July 9, 2022, and incumbent Wickremesinghe, who was the crisis prime minister at that time, was elected through parliament to succeed Rajapaksa. Wickremesinghe, 75, undertook the difficult task of reviving the bankrupt economy by tapping a bail-out facility from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). India provided Sri Lanka with a lifeline of USD 4 billion in the first quarter of 2022 which paid for food and essential imports in the balance of payment cri-

sis. By mid-April, Sri Lanka had declared its first sovereign default. A year later came the IMF's first tranche of the nearly USD 3 billion facility to be extended over four years. However, the stringent reforms attached to the programme made the government unpopular. Wickremesinghe stood firm in his commitment to implement reforms and has vowed to steer the country out of bankruptcy. He is expected to vie for his return as the president. Wickremesinghe has yet to officially announce his candidature. Field Marshal Sarath Fonseka, Sri Lanka's former Army chief and the architect of the military offensive that led to the annihilation of the LTTE, on Thursday formally declared his candidacy for the election. The main opposition Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) leader Sajith Premadasa, the Marxist JVP leader Anura Kumara Dissanayake and Justice Minister Wijeyadasa Rajapakshe are also vying for the post.

# Imran to run for Oxford University chancellor position

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD/LONDON

Oxford-educated former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan is likely to run for the position of the chancellor of his alma mater in the UK from his prison cell through an online ballot, according to his close aide and media reports. Since August 2023, Khan, 71, has been incarcerated after he was arrested under several cases and convicted for some of them, the longest sentence among them being nine years as of date. Founder of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, Khan was the prime minister of Pakistan from August 2018 to April 2022. Khan studied Economics and Politics at Keble College, Oxford in 1972. He made a Test debut for Pakistan in 1971 and also captained the cricket team of Oxford University. In 2005, Khan became the chancellor of Bradford University and served in the post till 2014. "Imran Khan will run for chancellor of Oxford University from his prison cell in Pakistan. The former Pakistani prime minister and cricket star will

## PTI announces nationwide protest for release of all arrested leaders

Islamabad (PTI): Pakistan authorities on Friday braced for a possible showdown with supporters of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf after the party announced a nationwide protest for the release of all arrested party leaders. Apart from the PTI, the rightwing Jamaat-e-Islami also announced a demonstration in Islamabad against the rising high cost of electricity and other commodities. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party will hold nationwide protests for the release of 71-year-old founder Khan and other arrested party leaders and

workers. Khan was arrested on August 5 last year after his conviction in the first Toshakhana corruption case filed by the Election Commission of Pakistan. Since then, he has been kept in jail in various cases. Through the former-cricketer-turned-politician had secured bail or his conviction was set aside, he has not been released. According to the PTI, it will hold a protest in front of the National Press Club in the capital, while the Jamaat-e-Islami plans to stage a sit-in at the famous F-Chowk facing the parliament building. Meanwhile, police in Islamabad imposed section 144, banning

all kinds of gatherings, including protests in the federal capital, and sealing the Red Zone for all entries. The zone houses key government offices and embassies. Police also partially closed the Islamabad Highway at the Faizabad Interchange, which sits at the main entry point from Rawalpindi to Islamabad. Separately, the Punjab Home Department imposed section 144 in the province to ban all protests and gatherings. The PTI has claimed its party leaders are being arrested ahead of nationwide protests, saying that the Punjab Police raided PTI leader Raja Basha's house in Rawalpindi.

earlier on his official X handle and said: "No decision has been made about Imran Khan running for Chancellor of Oxford University; however, we have a series of consultations regarding it today and will be decided in the next 24-48 hrs." However, later speaking with Pakistan's Geo News, Bukhari confirmed: "Imran will be running for the post. Former prime ministers Sir Tony Blair and Boris Johnson are also among the candidates to become the university's chancellor." However, there is no official word from either Khan himself or his PTI. The seat at Oxford University has become vacant following the resignation of 80-year-old Lord Patten, who stepped down after 21 years in the role, The Telegraph said. Oxford University describes the chancellor's role as a ceremonial head, typically an eminent public figure elected for life, presiding over all major ceremonies. The election process for the new chancellor will be conducted online for the first time, allowing the university's 350,000-strong convocation to participate, Geo News said.

# US arrests two leaders of Mexico's Sinaloa cartel

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada, a longtime leader of Mexico's Sinaloa cartel, and Joaquin Guzman López, a son of another infamous cartel leader, were arrested by US authorities in Texas on Thursday, the US Justice Department said. A leader of the powerful Sinaloa cartel for decades alongside Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzmán, Zambada is one of the most notorious drug traffickers in the world and known for running the cartel's smuggling operations while keeping a lower profile. A Mexican federal official told The Associated Press that Zambada and Guzmán López arrived in the United States on a private plane and turned themselves in to authorities. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to discuss the matter. The US government had offered a reward of up to USD

15 million for information leading to the capture of Zambada, who eluded authorities for decades. Zambada and Guzmán López oversaw the trafficking of "tens of thousands of pounds of drugs into the United States, along with related violence", FBI Director Christopher Wray said, adding that now they will "face justice in the United States". "Fentanyl is the deadliest drug threat our country has ever faced, and the Justice Department will not rest until every single cartel leader, member, and associate responsible for poisoning our communities is held accountable," Attorney General Merrick Garland said in a statement. Mexican authorities didn't immediately comment on the arrests. US officials have been seeking Zambada's capture for years, and he has been charged in a number of US cases. He was charged in February in the Eastern District of New York

with conspiring to manufacture and distribute the synthetic opioid. Prosecutors said he was continuing to lead the Sinaloa cartel, "one of the most violent and powerful drug trafficking organizations in the world". Zambada, one of the longest-surviving capos in Mexico, was considered the cartel's strategist, more involved in day-to-day operations than his flashier and better-known boss, "El Chapo" Guzmán, who was sentenced to life in prison in the US in 2019 and is the father of Guzmán López. Zambada is an old-fashioned capo in an era of younger kingpins known for their flamboyant lifestyles of club-hopping and brutal tactics of beheading, dismembering and even skinning their rivals. While Zambada has fought those who challenged him, he is known for concentrating on the business side of trafficking and avoiding gruesome cartel violence that would draw attention.

# China's plan to raise retirement age sparks public resentment

PTI ■ BEIJING

The ruling Chinese Communist Party's plan to raise the retirement age of the working population to cope with the rapidly ageing population has created ripples of resentment among the public. According to the present structure, the retirement age for male workers in urban areas is 60 years while that for female workers is 50 or 55 depending on their occupation. The recently concluded third plenum of the Communist Party of China (CPC) has unveiled comprehensive reforms to advance the modernisation of the economy — plagued by a deepening demographic crisis, sluggish growth and mounting local government debt. The powerful body also discussed plans to raise the country's retirement age in a "voluntary and flexible" manner. The World Population Prospects 2024 report released on July 11 said that China's population, currently 1.41 billion in 2024, will fall to 1.21 billion in 2054 and further decline to 633 million by 2100. "It is anticipated that China, the country currently with the world's second-largest population, will likely experience the largest absolute population loss between 2024 and 2054 (204 million)," the report said, adding, "Longer-range

population projections are more uncertain for China." The population and its composition by the end of year 2023, according to the National Bureau of Statistics of China, states that the population aged 60 and above was 21.1 per cent (296.97 million) of the total and of which, aged 65 and above was 15.4 per cent (216.76 million). The population in the working age bracket, i.e. between 16 and up to 60 years is 61.3 per cent (864.81 million). The official document approved by the plenum, held here last week, listed over 300 policy measures as part of the wide-ranging reforms to be completed by 2029. However, the CPC has not officially announced any schedule to implement the plan to increase the retirement age. According to the document, the government would move to increase the retirement age in an "orderly" and "gradual" way and seek to develop the "silver economy" to create diverse jobs for older people. But the plan, which has been in the works for several years, has generated a backlash in Chinese social media with people expressing their dissatisfaction over the prospect of delayed access to their pensions while younger employees averring that the rise of the retirement age will leave them with fewer jobs if the older workers stay.

Tokyo (AP): Heavy rain hit northern Japan on Thursday, triggering floods and landslides, disrupting transportation systems and forcing hundreds of residents to take shelter at safer grounds.

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**Tender Enquiry No. 1689/MAMC/O&M/PC-2535 Dated: 25-07-2024**  
Chief Engineer/ O&M (P&P Cell-II), GHTP, Lehra Mohabbat, invites E-tender for the Procurement of various Type of L.P. Valves, Quantity as per NIT. For detailed NIT & tender specification please refer to <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from 25-07-2024 from 17:00 hrs. onwards.  
**Note:** Corrigendum and addendum, if any will be published online at <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>

**GHTP-62/24**

**76155/12/3176/2023/36071 Dated CHD :- 7/26/2024**

**Baba Farid University of Health Sciences**  
Sadiq Road, Faridkot-151203

**Admission Notice to MDS Courses under NEET PG-2024**  
Fresh online Registration/ Applications are invited alongwith requisite fee through University website from eligible candidates on the basis of NEET MDS-2024 for vacant seats as per Punjab Govt. Notification/Prospectus/DCI for admission to MDS courses in Govt./Private Colleges, Private Universities and Minority Institutions in the State of Punjab w.e.f 27-07-2024 to 29-07-2024 upto 5.00 PM. Last date for submitting willingness by fresh registered and already registered candidates alongwith security deposit to participate in 2nd Round is 29-07-2024 upto 5.00 PM. Counseling will be conducted as per schedule published on the University website. Any update issued by MCC/Govt. of India/Govt. of Punjab regarding MDS admission session 2024 shall be applicable. For Prospectus/Schedule/Fee/Details and updates visit at [www.bfuhhs.ac.in](http://www.bfuhhs.ac.in)

**REGISTRAR**

**nll/12/205/2023/36052 Dated CHD :- 7/26/2024**

**Baba Farid University of Health Sciences**  
Sadiq Road, Faridkot -151203 Ph. 01639-256232, 256236

**E-TENDER NOTICE**  
E-tenders are invited for the procurement of following items upto 12.08.2024  
1) Supply of Computer and UPS 2) Purchase of Projector and IT equipments 3) Supply of Classroom Furniture Items 4) Providing of Housekeeping services 5) Providing 04 nos. 4 Tr. Tower Indoor Unit with 2 numbers 10 HP VRV Cold/Hot AC units in Senate Hall of BFUHS, Faridkot 6) Extension of Committee Hall of Senate Block at both floors of BFUHS, Faridkot 7) Repair & Painting of House No.71-A, 75 and 82. Painting & laying kota stone flooring in Multipurpose Hall of UCON and providing MS Gate. Missing etc. in washroom of NELS Building in GGS Medical College & Hospital, Faridkot 8) Installation of Fully automated chemistry Analyzer on reagent rental basis 9) Fully automated chemistry Chemiluminescence on reagent rental basis 10) Purchase of LAN networking.  
E-tenders are invited for the procurement of following items upto 19.08.2024  
1. SSMA Services of various photocopier machines. 2. Disposal of E waste 3. Printing and supply of various printed material. 4. Subscription of Journals and other e resources for HSLIBNET (Health Sciences Library Network) 5. Repair of Medical Superintendent Office at GSSMH, Faridkot  
E-tenders are invited for the procurement of following items with pre bid meeting upto 09.09.2024  
1. Procurement of OCT Machine 2. Procurement of Co2 skin Resurfacing Laser 3. Procurement of Binocular Microscope 4. Procurement of Single Channel Variable Volume Micropipette 5. Procurement of BOD Incubator.  
**Note:** Pre-bid meeting shall be held. Please refer tender document for Date, time and venue for pre-bid meeting  
Terms and conditions can be downloaded from <http://eproc.punjab.gov.in>. The tenders will be accepted in E-Tender mode only. Bidder can also download tender notification and document from the University website i.e. [www.bfuhhs.ac.in](http://www.bfuhhs.ac.in)

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# UN calls for efforts as 'extreme heat epidemic' breaks records

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

After three of Earth's hottest days ever measured, the United Nations called for a flurry of efforts to try to reduce the human toll from soaring and searing temperatures, calling it "an extreme heat epidemic." "If there is one thing that unites our divided world, it's that we're all increasingly feeling the heat," United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said Thursday at a news conference where he highlighted that Monday was the hottest day on record, surpassing the mark set just a day earlier. "Earth is becoming hotter and more dangerous for everyone, everywhere." Nearly half a million people a year die worldwide from heat related deaths, far more than

other weather extremes such as hurricanes, and this is likely an underestimate, a new report by 10 UN agencies said. "Billions of people are facing an extreme heat epidemic — wilding under increasingly deadly heat waves, with temperatures topping 50 degrees Celsius around the world," Guterres said. "That's 122 degrees Fahrenheit and halfway to boiling." The dire warnings came after a barely noticeable respite in back-to-back record global heat. The European climate service Copernicus calculated that Tuesday's global average temperature was 0.01 Celsius (0.01 Fahrenheit) lower than Monday's all-time high of 17.16 degrees Celsius (62.8 degrees Fahrenheit) which was .06 degrees Celsius hotter (0.1 degrees Fahrenheit) than

Sunday. All three days were hotter than Earth's previous hottest day in 2023. "We are not prepared," the UN report said. Guterres urged countries of the world to adopt several proposals aimed at reducing heat deaths, starting with help to cool and care for the most vulnerable people — the poor, elderly, young and sick. The UN also called for better heat wave warnings, expanding "passive cooling," improved urban design, stronger protections for outside workers, as well as greater efforts to tackle human-caused climate change that's worsening weather extremes. But officials said most work will have to be done by countries, with the UN offering aid and coordination, especially when it comes to beefing up

weather warning systems. If countries adopt the United Nations heat-fighting recommendations, "these measures could protect 3.5 billion people by 2050, while slashing emissions and saving consumers \$1 trillion a year," Guterres said, citing a UN Environment Programme estimate. Better heat-health warning systems in 57 countries could save 98,314 lives per year, the report said, based on World Health Organization and World Meteorological Organization estimates. "Crippling heat is everywhere, but it doesn't affect everyone equally," Guterres said. "Extreme heat amplifies inequality, inflames food insecurity and pushes people further into poverty." More than 1,300 people died during this year's annual Haj

pilgrimage after walking in scorching heat. Earlier this year, India's prolonged heat-waves resulted in the deaths of at least 100 people. However, health experts say heat deaths are likely undercounted in India and potentially other countries. Last year, the United States had its most recorded heat deaths in more than 80 years, according to an Associated Press analysis of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data. The death certificates of more than 2,300 people mentioned excessive heat, including 874 deaths in Arizona. Deadly heat is not new, but scientists say it has been amplified in scale, frequency and duration with climate change. Extreme heat, wildfires, floods, droughts and ever more fierce hurricanes are symptoms and

"we need to fight the disease," Guterres said. "The disease is the madness of incinerating our only home. The disease is the addiction to fossil fuels. The disease is climate inaction." "Many things are being done, but too little, too late," he said. "The problem is that climate change is running faster than all the measures that are now being put in place to fight it." Before July 3, 2023, the hottest day measured by Copernicus was 16.8 degrees Celsius (62.2 degrees Fahrenheit) on August 13, 2016. In the last 13 months that mark has now been beaten 59 times, according to Copernicus. Humanity is now "operating in a world that is already much warmer than it was before," Copernicus Director Carlo Buontempo said.



# India to get 12 new industrial cities to boost manufacturing

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The country will have 12 new industrial cities in different states like the ones developed in Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh and Dholera in Gujarat to further boost domestic manufacturing, a top government official said. Out of this, two are coming up in Andhra Pradesh and one in Bihar. The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh said that eight such cities are already under different stages of implementation. Trunk infrastructure has been created in four cities - Dholera (Gujarat), Auric (Maharashtra), Vikram Udyogpuri (Madhya Pradesh) and Krishnapatnam (Andhra Pradesh) and allotment of land plots is underway for the industry. Similarly in the other four, the government's special purpose vehicle is in the



process of construction of the basic infrastructure like road connectivity, water and power supply. With eight already under the development stage and the announcement of 12 new in the Budget, the total count of these cities in the country to 20, Singh told PTI. "These are industrial smart cities. These 12 new cities will make the count to 20. We built the trunk infrastructure and then gave

the plots. We take environmental clearance for the entire city, so the company gets the 'plug and play' kind of things," he said, adding the department will approach the Union cabinet for the new ones. The plans are ready and the land is with the state governments and "We just have to approve the equity to the SPV (Special Purpose Vehicle)," he added. The move will help in

increasing the share of manufacturing in the country's GDP and creating jobs. Commenting on these smart cities announcements, Ashoo Gupta, Partner, Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co, said that this innovative reform, in collaboration with states and the private sector, can significantly boost industrial growth and city planning. "These projects will become dynamic economic centres that drive development and innovation, creating a lasting impact. Usually, the government constructs essential infrastructure and provides land to industries, attracting investments by offering high-quality, dependable, eco-friendly, and robust infrastructure," Gupta added. In the Budget 2024-25, the government has also announced other measures such as customs duty rationalisation to promote manufacturing and boost exports.

# Gold, silver prices bounce back on global cues

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices rebounded on Friday after falling for three past sessions, rising Rs 50 to Rs 70,700 per 10 grams in the local market due to strong trend in the global markets. The precious metal had closed at Rs 70,650 per 10 grams in the previous session on Thursday. According to All India Sarafa Association, gold of 99.9 per cent and 99.5 per cent purity edged up Rs 50 each to Rs 70,700 and Rs 70,350 per 10 grams, respectively. Silver also jumped Rs 400 to Rs 84,400 per kg. It had settled at Rs 84,000 per kg in the previous close. Traders attributed the rise in gold prices to a pick-up in demand by jewellers in the domestic market and a strong trend in the overseas markets. On Thursday, the yellow metal rates fell sharply by Rs 1,000 to finish at Rs 70,650 per 10 grams while silver tumbled Rs 3,500 to settle at Rs 84,000 per kg. The government on Tuesday



announced that it has slashed basic customs duties on a range of products, including gold and silver from 15 per cent to 6 per cent. Following the announcement, gold prices crashed Rs 3,350 to Rs 72,300 per 10 grams and silver declined Rs 3,500 to close at Rs 87,500 per kg in the national capital. Meanwhile, on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold futures jumped Rs 294, or 0.44 per cent, to trade at Rs 67,756 per 10 grams. The most-traded August contract hit an intraday high of Rs 528 to Rs 67,990 per 10 grams.

Further, silver contracts for September delivery were quoted higher by Rs 59, or 0.07 per cent, to Rs 81,390 per kg on the exchange. In the overseas markets, comex gold was trading higher at USD 2,416.40 per ounce. "Gold prices opened higher, with Comex Gold finding support around USD 2,350. Prices have taken a hit recently due to the yen rising with safe-haven buying seen in the currency. "However, with the Fed policy meeting next week, all eyes are set on any updates regarding a potential interest

rate cut in September," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst - Commodity and Currency at LKP Securities, said. However, silver was marginally down at USD 27.89 per ounce in New York. "Traders are awaiting for the US Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) price inflation data to be released later on Friday that is likely to reveal easing pricing pressures, prompt traders to increase their bets on rate cuts, and potentially provide support for gold," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. According to Pranav Mer, Vice President, EBG - Commodity & Currency Research, JM Financial Services, gold is seen consolidating in a range after falling sharply earlier in the week. Besides, prices are holding above crucial support levels at USD 2,348-2,350 in the international market and facing upside resistance at USD 2,405/2,433 per ounce, he said.

# Govt to buy all masur, urad and tur dal produced by farmers: Agriculture Minister

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

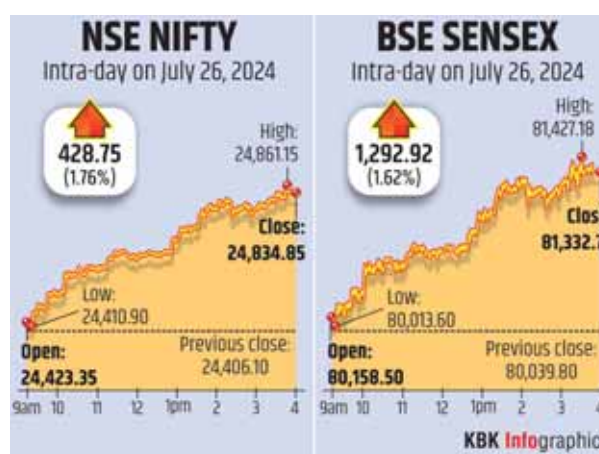
The government will procure the entire production of tur, urad, and masur dal from farmers, Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said in Rajya Sabha on Friday. Through e-Samridhi platform, on which farmers have to get themselves registered, the government will make the procurement, he said. "The government will procure all tur, urad and masur dal produced by farmers," Chauhan said, while replying to a supplementary question in the Rajya Sabha. The minister further said under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the government had the highest purchase under MSP from farmers. Referring to data of the previous UPA government, Chauhan said between 2003-2004 and 2013-14, only 45 crore metric tonnes were purchased under the Minimum Support Price (MSP). While the present NDA government has procured a total of 69.18 crore metric tonnes between 2014-15 and 2023-24. He alleged that the opposition was doing politics and said the Swaminathan committee

recommended 50 per cent profit to farmers on their cost, but it was the UPA government that ignored it. Placing a cabinet note of previous Manmohan Singh's government, Chauhan said it refused to accept suggestions of the Swaminathan Commission saying that mechanical linkage between MSP and cost of production would distort the market. M Shannugam of the DMK demanded that tea and coffee growers be brought under the MSP as they, too, are facing difficulties. "It is a long-pending demand that tea and coffee should be added in the essential commodity because there is no MSP for them. The planters are demanding this," he said. On this, Chouhan said MSP is granted on 23 crops and tea and coffee are handled by the commerce & industry minister, which is handled by his colleague Piyush Goyal. Appreciating the issue raised by the DMK member, Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar said after the allocation of portfolios, he had called Goyal and said his ministry has some boards and enterprises that are directly related to the farmers.

# Markets' sharp rebound makes investors richer by ₹7.10 lakh cr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Investors' wealth soared Rs 7.10 lakh crore on Friday following a sharp rally in the equity market where the BSE Sensex jumped 1,292.92 points. The 30-share BSE Sensex rallied 1,292.92 points or 1.62 per cent to 81,332.72. During the day, it soared 1,387.38 points or 1.73 per cent to 81,427.18. Thanks to the optimistic trend, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms rallied by Rs 7,10,235.45 crore to hit an all-time high of Rs 4,56,92,671.33 crore (USD 5.46 trillion). "Indian markets outperformed its global peers on the back of a strong across-the-board buying support after languishing in negative territory for the past five trading sessions. "The sharp rebound signifies that India remains a good long-term bet and the economy continues to show strong resilience in spite of global uncertainty and geopolitical tensions," Prashant Tapse, Senior VP (Research) at Mehta Equities Ltd, said. Bharti Airtel emerged as the biggest gainer in the Sensex pack, climbing 4.51 per cent. Adani Ports, Tata Steel, JSW Steel, Infosys, Sun Pharma,



HCL Technologies and Mahindra & Mahindra were other big gainers. Nestle was the only laggard from the pack. "The domestic market experienced a substantial rebound on the start of the next month's expiry, recovering from the recent losses incurred following the Union Budget. This upturn was driven by positive reactions to the better-than-expected US GDP, which augurs well for global demand. Investors are adopting buy-on-dip strategy, refocusing on quarterly earnings and stock-specific trends," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial

Services, said. Benchmark indices were on the back foot for the past five straight sessions. In five days, the BSE benchmark Sensex tumbled 1,303.66 points or 1.60 per cent. In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge soared 2.12 per cent and smallcap index rallied 1 per cent. All the indices ended higher, with telecommunication jumping 3.36 per cent, metal (3.19 per cent), teck (2.76 per cent), auto (2.35 per cent), commodities (2.26 per cent) and healthcare (2.10 per cent). As many as 2,652 stocks advanced while 1,286 declined and 102 remained unchanged on the BSE.

# RBI issues prompt corrective action framework for UCBs

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The RBI on Friday issued a prompt corrective action framework for urban cooperative banks with an aim to enable supervisory intervention at an appropriate time. The provisions of the Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) Framework for Primary (Urban) Co-operative Banks (UCBs) will be effective from April 1, 2025. The objective of the PCA Framework is to enable supervisory intervention at an appropriate time and require the UCBs to initiate and implement remedial measures in a timely manner, to restore their financial health. The Reserve Bank had issued a Supervisory Action Framework (SAF) as an early intervention tool for bringing about desired improvements in weak UCBs and UCBs which are experiencing financial stress. The SAF was last revised in January 2020. "This PCA framework shall replace the SAF," the RBI said in a statement. The revised framework seeks to provide flexibility to design entity specific supervisory action plans based on the assessment of risks on a case-by-case basis.

# Rising Chinese imports affecting domestic steel makers' margins, says Sajjan Jindal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Increased Chinese steel imports are having an adverse impact on the margins of the domestic players, JSW Steel Chairman Sajjan Jindal said Friday. Addressing the company's Annual General Meeting (AGM) Jindal said several countries have already raised barriers against steel imports. The Indian steel industry is also engaged with the government to ensure a level playing field. The domestic steel demand increased 13.6 per cent in FY24, outpacing economic growth. This was driven by infrastructure development and robust demand from all major steel-consuming sectors, he said. "However, global steel demand remains weak, leading to rising imports into India and affecting domestic steelmakers' margins. This is mainly because of elevated Chinese production and exports, pressuring global steel markets," he said addressing the shareholders of JSW Steel. Moreover, healthy demand for steel in the country also makes the domestic market vulnerable to imports amid weak global demand. Sharing business updates for JSW Steel in FY24, Jindal said the company achieved its highest-ever crude steel



production with a capacity utilization of 92 per cent during the year. JSW Steel met 100 per cent of its production and sales guidance for FY24. Its revenue from operations reached Rs 1,75,006 crore, with an earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA) of Rs 28,236 crore and a profit after tax of Rs 8,973 crore. The Board has recommended a dividend of Rs 7.30 per share for FY24, subject to shareholders approval. Further, the company plans to expand its capacity to 50 million tonnes per annum in India by FY31. The Board recently approved a 5 million tonnes expansion at Dolvi, in Maharashtra increasing the company's domestic capacity to 42 million tonnes and total capacity to 43.5 million tonnes by September 2027. "We also plan to establish a green steel manufacturing facility, initially at 2 million tonnes per annum and expandable to 4 million tonnes," Jindal added.

# FY25 Budget confirms new Govt's commitment to reducing fiscal deficit: Fitch

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Fitch Ratings on Friday said India's post-election budget confirms that the new administration remains committed to reducing the fiscal deficit for FY25 and FY26, despite demands of the coalition government. In the FY25 budget, the government has lowered the Centre's fiscal deficit target for the year ending March 2025 to 4.9 per cent of GDP, from 5.1 per cent in February's interim budget. The government's fiscal deficit target for FY25 is significantly below the 5.4 per cent that the ratings agency anticipated when it affirmed India's 'BBB-' rating, with a stable outlook, in January 2024. "India's post-election budget confirms that the new administration remains committed to reducing the fiscal deficit this and next year, despite the demands of the coalition government," Fitch Ratings said in a statement. The sustained focus on supporting economic growth through high public capex also points to continuity in key areas, it added. "We believe that it should be achievable as the government's assumption of 10.5 per cent nominal GDP growth in FY25 is modestly



below our current forecast. We think the government should also be able to achieve its goal of reducing the deficit below 4.5 per cent of GDP in FY26," Fitch said. The government's record in recent years of achieving or outperforming its budget deficit targets has improved its fiscal credibility - the deficit in FY24, at 5.6 per cent of GDP, was well below the original target of 5.9 per cent. Furthermore, the government's use of the RBI dividend reinforces our perception of a preference for fiscal consolidation over additional spending. The budget did not provide much clarity on medium-term targets but did highlight a desire to manage deficits to keep debt on a declining path. The long-term deficit target of 3 per cent of GDP under the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act,

2003 no longer appears to be a guiding objective, Fitch Ratings said. Generally, public finance metrics remain a weakness in India's credit profile; its fiscal deficit, interest-to-revenue and debt ratios are still high compared with 'BBB' category peers, it said. Sustained fiscal consolidation that supports a downward trajectory in the government debt ratio over the medium term would support India's credit profile and could ultimately contribute to upgrade potential for the rating, particularly when combined with the current positive momentum on macroeconomic performance and external finances. The budget highlighted a number of other priority areas for the government, notably around agricultural development, job creation, improving labour skills and

strengthening manufacturing. "We believe the proposals hold some potential to address India's skills gap, particularly in manufacturing, but their effect will ultimately depend on implementation," Fitch said. In addition to support for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, the budget included measures to review customs duties over the next six months and reduce foreign firms' corporation tax rate to 35 per cent from 40 per cent. "We believe these measures should be positive for manufacturing investment, as should public capex-led improvements to transportation infrastructure," Fitch added. However, land and labour regulations remain significant constraints. The budget highlighted that these will stay largely under the state government's purview, though the central government will incentivise reforms. "This is broadly in line with our earlier expectations, as advancing such reforms is usually difficult, especially at the national level, and has likely become more politically challenging following the return to coalition government," Fitch said.

# Standard Glass Lining Technology files papers with Sebi to raise funds through an IPO

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Standard Glass Lining Technology Ltd, which manufactures specialised engineering equipment for pharmaceutical and chemical sectors, has filed preliminary papers with capital markets regulator Sebi to raise funds through an Initial Public Offering (IPO). The Telangana-based company's IPO is a combination of fresh issuance of shares worth Rs 250 crore and an Offer For Sale (OFS) of up to 1.84 crore equity shares by promoters and other selling shareholders, according to the Draft Red Herring Prospectus (DRHP). Those selling shares in the OFS include -- S2 Engineering Services, Standard Holdings, Kandula Ramakrishna, Kandula Krishna Veni, Nageswara Rao Kandula, Katragadda Venkata Ramani and Venkata Siva Prasad Katragadda. The company may consider raising up to Rs 50 crore in the pre-IPO placement. If such placement is completed, the fresh issue size will be reduced. Proceeds from the fresh to the extent of Rs 130 crore will be used for payment of a debt, Rs 30 crore for investment in a wholly-owned subsidiary, S2 Engineering Industry, Rs 20 crore for funding inorganic growth through strategic



investments or acquisitions Rs 10 crore for purchase of machinery and equipment and a portion will also be used for general corporate purpose. Standard Glass Lining Technology offers comprehensive solutions that encompass design, engineering, manufacturing, assembly, installation, and commissioning, as well as establishing standard operating procedures for pharmaceutical and chemical manufacturers on a turnkey basis. The company's product portfolio includes essential equipment used in the production of pharmaceutical and chemical products. It has 443 customers, including end-users in the pharmaceutical, chemical, paint, biotechnology, and food and beverage sectors. Some of its pharma clients

include the likes of Aurobindo Pharma Ltd, Cadila Pharmaceutical Ltd, Deccan Fine Chemicals (India) Private Limited, Laurus Labs Ltd, Granules India Ltd, Macleods Pharmaceuticals Ltd, Natco Pharma Ltd, Piramal Pharma Ltd, Suvon Pharmaceuticals Ltd, and Tagros Chemicals India. In terms of financial, Standard Glass Lining Technology's revenue from operations increased by 9.26 per cent to Rs 543.67 crore in fiscal 2024 from Rs 497.59 crore in fiscal 2023. Further, profit after tax rose by 12.33 per cent to Rs 60 crore in fiscal 2024 from Rs 53.42 crore in fiscal 2023. IIFL Securities and Motilal Oswal Investment Advisors are the book-running lead managers to the proposed public issue. The equity shares are proposed to be listed on BSE and NSE.

# ITC to invest ₹20,000 crore in medium term: Chairman Puri

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

ITC Chairman Sanjiv Puri on Friday said the multi-conglomerate will invest Rs 20,000 crore in the medium term to enhance structural competitiveness and build an enterprise for the future. "Our confidence in India is unwavering and is reflected in your company's investment outlay of about Rs 20,000 crore in the medium term," Puri said while addressing the shareholders during the annual general meeting. Despite the headwinds, ITC has invested across all businesses to enhance structural competitiveness and build an enterprise for the future, he added. India has a "standout performance" as the world's fastest-growing major economy, which has not only evoked global respect but also points to its future promise, Puri said. Over the past 4 years, overall revenues grew at a CAGR of 10.8 per cent to about Rs 79,000 crore. ITC's non-cigarette revenues grew at a CAGR of 11.6 per cent and now account for about 65 per cent of net revenue.



# RECORD SHOOTING CONTINGENT OUT TO END INDIA'S 12-YEAR MEDAL DROUGHT

**PTI ■ CHATEAURoux (FRANCE)**  
A squad full of debutants free from past baggage will aim to ace the ultimate test of their lives when the shooting competition of the Paris Olympics begins in the sleepy French town of Chateauroux on Saturday. India has won four Olympic medals in shooting out of its overall tally of 35 but none in the last two editions of the Summer Games, putting the additional pressure of expectations on the record 21-member Indian contingent based in central France. The national shooting federation NRAI chose current form over pedigree to pick the squad for the mega event and it will be hoping they hit the bullseye at the National Shooting Centre here. Even the quota winners were made to battle out in the trials with the inexperienced Sandeep Singh pipping 2022 world champion Rudranksh Patil, who had secured India's quota in the 10m air rifle. Patil wrote to NRAI proposing his selection in the team despite finishing behind Sandeep in the trials but the federation stuck to its guns. The athletes have been training away from the hustle and bustle of Paris and that could work in their favour come competition day. Barring Manu Bhaker, Aishwary

Pratap Singh Tomar, Anjum Moudgil and Elavenil Valarivan, all will experience the biggest sporting stage for the first time. India will have representation in all 15 shooting events. It is not just peak performance on the day that matters in the Olympics, luck too plays a major part. The 22-year-old Bhaker, who has won a bagful of medals in world events, had a stroke of bad luck at the Tokyo Games where her weapon malfunctioned in 10m air pistol qualification and she could not recover from that setback. She will be taking part in three disciplines - 10m air pistol, 25m pistol and 10m pistol mixed team. India's main challenge will come from China who are also fielding 21 shooters across disciplines. Another women shooter to watch out for will be Sift Kaur Samra, who won the 50m rifle three positions gold at the Asian Games. Moudgil, one of the seasoned pros in the squad, is making a comeback and will lineup alongside Sift in the women's 50m rifle three positions. Twenty-year-old Rhythm Sangwan will be participating in two events, women's 10m air pistol alongside Bhaker and the 10m air pistol mixed team. "The preparation has been going good. The range is beautiful. I was a little upset staying away from



main village in Paris. It is not as I expected but I am here for the competition and win and not pass any comments on the Games Village. Olympics is the biggest stage out here," said Sangwan. Among the male participants, only

Tomar has been part of the Olympics before. Tomar, member of the gold winning team at the 2023 World Championships, will be seen in the men's 50m rifle three positions alongside Swapnil Kusale.

The male debutants who have a decent international experience include Anish Bhanwala, Sarabjot Singh, Arjun Babuta, Arjun Singh Cheema and Vijayveer Singh. Gagan Narang, the 2012 Olympic bronze medallist who is here as

India's chef de mission, is backing the shooters to end the medal drought in this edition. "My first Olympic experience was in 2004 and I remember at that time, we were not as confident as we are today. There is genuine

belief that we are at par with the best in the world," said Narang. The biggest test of the shooters' lives awaits.

**FULL SQUAD**  
**RIFLE: Men's 10m air rifle:** Sandeep Singh, Arjun Babuta  
**Women's 10m air rifle:** Elavenil Valarivan, Ramita Jindal  
**Women's 50m rifle 3 positions:** Sift Kaur Samra, Anjum Moudgil  
**Men's 50m rifle 3 positions:** Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar, Swapnil Kusale  
**10m air rifle mixed team:** Sandeep Singh/Elavenil Valarivan, Arjun Babuta/Ramita Jindal  
**PISTOL: Men's 10m air pistol:** Sarabjot Singh, Arjun Cheema  
**Women's 10m air pistol:** Manu Bhaker, Rhythm Sangwan  
**Men's 25m rapid fire pistol:** Anish Bhanwala, Vijayveer Sidhu  
**Women's 25m pistol:** Manu Bhaker, Esha Singh  
**10m air pistol mixed team:** Sarabjot Singh/Manu Bhaker, Arjun Singh Cheema/Rhythm Sangwan  
**SHOTGUN: Men's trap:** Prithviraj Tondaiman  
**Women's trap:** Rajeshwari Kumari, Shreyasi Singh  
**Men's skeet:** Anantjeet Singh Naruka  
**Women's skeet:** Maheshwari Chauhan, Raiza Dhillon  
**Skeet mixed team:** Anantjeet Singh Naruka/Maheshwari Chauhan.

## We need to create more heroes to make India a sports superpower: Vijender

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Boxer-turned-politician Vijender Singh feels India needs more heroes beyond cricket to inspire the future generations if the country wants to become a sports superpower by 2047. These heroes, he believes, will also drive a cultural change, encouraging more young Indians to pursue sports as a profession. "We have to create heroes to change the culture," the former Olympic and world championships bronze medal-winning boxer, who is now a BJP leader, told PTI editors at his headquarters in an interaction here. His comments were in response to a query on whether the government's stated goal of making India a sports superpower by 2047 was realistic. "Over the years, the hunger to do well has kept increasing among our youth, especially those from the rural belt. So, when they see a Neeraj Chopra, they want to be like him. They want to have all that he has, and that drives them to excel," Vijender pointed out referring to the javelin throw gold-medallist from the Tokyo Olympics. "When kids see his picture on a peanut butter container, it makes an impact. When I started out, I merely wanted a government job, that's all but today, athletes want more," he added. The Bhiwani-man also said that improvement in the country's sports infrastructure is crucial to ensure the overall progress. "We don't have good infrastructure or good stadiums. If we are serious, we need to improve that. You can't just make one cricket stadium and leave it at that. You need to have training centres for other sports as well. Otherwise someone (in Delhi) who wants to learn boxing has no option but to go to Sonapat and train there," he said. Vijender said the change has to start at the basic level, in schools, where kids are allowed just one devoted sports or physical education period. "We aren't taught sports in school. There is only one PT period but eight periods for academics. For us, sports



is time pass, not a career." Drawing a parallel with cricket, Vijender, the first boxer from the country to stand on the Olympic podium, said that even the legendary Kapil Dev was relatively unknown to the masses before he brought home the 1983 World Cup. "...How many people knew about Kapil Dev? Not many knew him before he won that World Cup." "Now, (we are at a point) where if a cricketer's finger gets hurt, you will read about it but you won't hear the same noise when a boxer's jaw is broken, that doesn't make news. Vijender said Olympic medallists should also receive a welcome at par

with the victory parade that was arranged for the T20 World Cup winning Indian cricket team earlier this month. "We (other athletes) do feel bad because we also win medals for the country. We also have the right to a reception similar to the one in Mumbai," he said. "An Olympic medallist should get a similar welcome but that won't happen. The medallist will be welcomed at the airport with garlands, shown on TV for one day and then they are back to competition." **IF I COULD, I'D GIVE MORE POWER TO SAI:** Vijender, who joined BJP from Congress before the

Lok Sabha elections this year, would like to use his experience as an athlete in making effective changes if he is entrusted with the Sports Ministry in future. "(If I become sports minister) I will make Sports Authority of India (SAI) stronger," he said, while talking about the nodal body of sports management in the country, entrusted with the job of handling logistics of national camps, appointment of coaches and financing the international exposure of athletes. "I have got a lot of support from SAI, so I want to make it really strong. I want to reduce the power of the federations and give them to SAI. The SAI should directly handle the sports person," he added. **HOSTING OLYMPICS IN 2036 WILL INSPIRE YOUNGSTERS:** India are planning to bid for the hosting rights of the 2036 Olympic Games and Vijender feels it is a step in the right direction which will inspire the youth to take up sports. "We should host the Olympics as people will get an opportunity to watch the Olympics (for free). Youngsters will get inspired. When they look at the podium and people standing on the first, second and third step...That's the moment they feel inspired." Vijender, who was also the first boxer from the country to become world number one in his weight category, is confident that the country will be ready to host the biggest sporting event when the time comes. "We will be ready by then. Even in 2010, it was difficult (to host) the Commonwealth Games but it was one of the best CWGs," he recalled. The 38-year-old drew comparison between the 2010 CWG held in New Delhi and the 2014 Glasgow edition. "There was a lot of controversy but those Games were really good," he asserted. "After that we went to Scotland and there we had to pay for our food sometimes, as there was a limit on how much you could take. And when I compared the two, 2010 was great," he added.

## Apart from tennis, it is about making Balaji comfortable in his skin

**PTI ■ PARIS**  
The soft-spoken N Sriram Balaji always wants to behave perfectly. He does not want to hurt anyone by his words or deeds and he is determined not to disappoint his senior tennis partner, Rohan Bopanna at the Olympics. After all, the 44-year-old Coorgi has shown immense faith in Balaji's ability and picked him as his partner for the Paris Olympics ahead of others. It's important for Balaji to give his best and not feel the pressure of the big stage. He needs to be comfortable in his skin and play his natural game. Not playing at the Umag ATP event, one of the two tournaments they were scheduled to play in tune-up, Balaji has also helped Bopanna and Balaji know each other's game, and strengths better as the duo utilised that time to practice at Roland Garros, the venue for the tennis events at the Paris Games. "The last few days have been about learning about each other," the Indian tennis team's travelling coach Balachandran told PTI, summing up what has been happening in the run-up to the Games. "Balaji is a shy person. At this level, Bopanna does not need coaching from me. But we need to ensure that Balaji remains comfortable and confident. If he freezes at the big moment, then what?" Balachandran, who has worked with Balaji in the last two years, said. "He wants to do everything perfectly, and Rohan is a great mentor. Even if Balaji makes a mistake, or if he does not do well in practice sets, Rohan would not say much to Balaji.



Even if he is annoyed, he won't show. "He would keep encouraging and guiding Balaji. That's a great sign of a leader." Balaji has toiled for years on the brutal ATP tour and had to wait until the age of 34 for his chance to represent India in the Davis Cup earlier this year. He did compete at the South Asian Games back in 2019 but never made the Asian Games squad. Playing for India at a big stage could have remained a dream, if Bopanna had not picked him. Now that the biggest opportunity is before him and it matters a lot to the Coimbatore player. "More than a player, I would like to be the best person on the court and off the court as well. I never thought about (playing) the Olympics," Balaji said. "As soon as I got a chance to be part of the team, my dad was the happiest person. He immediately applied for the visa. He wants to watch me play the Olympics for the first time." "My father has been telling everyone, we are not coming back without a medal. But, no pressure. I'm going to focus on my game." It's going to be a big challenge to negotiate a star studded field that features the Spanish combine of Rafael Nadal and Carlos Alcaraz and several other top singles players entering as pairs. Balachandran says how the Indian team, which has combined age of 78, handles the opening match will be crucial. "For me, the first match is the key. After that, every team is beatable. I will keep my fingers crossed for them to get through the first match, then I will put my money on them." They open their campaign against the French duo of Fabien Reboul and Edouard Roger-Vasselin. The coach also hoped that the prevailing hot conditions would work in their favour. "Compared to the usual clay court tournament, here right now the conditions with the ball and the weather are a little faster. The ball is also travelling faster, which for our boys is the best condition. "We wouldn't want very wet (conditions), I think it's more difficult."

## Indian hockey team has all qualities to finish on podium again: Harendra

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Former coach Harendra Singh believes the Indian men's hockey team, led by the inspirational Harmanpreet Singh, has all the ingredients to win consecutive Olympic medals when it starts its campaign at the Paris Games against New Zealand here on Saturday. But Harendra, who is now the head coach of the Indian women's team, has just one piece of advice for the men's side, "just play your normal game." "My advice to them would be just play your normal game. India has all the qualities to finish on the podium. I am not predicting the colour of the medal but they can win a medal for sure. This team has everything," Harendra told PTI Bhasha. "The team has a good forward line, great midfielders and of course the wall of Indian hockey PR Sreejesh, a cool captain like Harmanpreet Singh.



in October 2015 before junior team's departure for Johor Cup. I told him (Harmanpreet) in front of the entire team that if you keep your head down and

keep improving, not going too hard, one day you will lead the Indian team," said Harendra, who was the coach of 2017 Asia Cup-winning Indian

women's team. "The best thing about him is he remains cool in every situation. He never lets pressure affect him in any

situation. This is his strength and being a defender he is leading the team the way it should be. He can make good decisions because of his calmness and that is why he is one of the best dragflickers in the world at this moment. "I think he is one of the best captains Indian hockey has

produced in recent years. He has the capability to execute plans," he said. "He is also one of the main goal scorers for India and inspires others by his own performance. Harmanpreet can single handedly turn a match in India's favour," said the 55-year-old, a member of India's 1990 Asian Games silver medal-winning side. Harendra said a medal will be fitting farewell gift for long-serving goalkeeper PR Sreejesh, who will quit the sport after the Paris Games. "Wo mera Jangoo (Sreejesh is affectionately called) hai and a medal will be a good salute to him. We started our journey almost together and today he is going to play his fourth Olympics," he said. "Modern day hockey is very demanding. Since his (Sreejesh's) debut India has played more than 1000 matches and to keep himself fit physically and mentally and perform at optimum level is truly incredible. A big salute to him."



# World champions India look to maintain dominance in new era of SKY, Gambhir

PTI ■ PALLEKELE

India's newly-forged coach-captain combination of Gautam Gambhir and Suryakumar Yadav will look to make instant impact against a Sri Lankan team in disarray when the familiar South Asian rivals face off in a limited-overs series, starting with three T20Is, here on Saturday.

Two-time World Cup winner Gambhir is now at the helm of the ship as India's head coach while the T20I reigns have been handed over to one of the best batters in the format, Suryakumar.

Gambhir, who has built his coaching reputation in the corridors of IPL with three title wins for Kolkata Knight Riders - twice as captain and once as mentor - succeeds the immensely popular Rahul Dravid.

The new coach has his task cut out given that the team under his predecessor reached the final in each of the ICC events in their respective last editions. Gambhir's tenacity as well as his intense approach will make him a different coach to work along for the players, who will also have to learn the ways of the new T20I skipper Suryakumar.

Suryakumar's elevation came as a slight surprise given he leapfrogged Hardik Pandya for the job. The selectors also ignored his comparative lack of experience as captain. Ajit Agarkar and Co. Made it clear that they wanted a captain who was on the park "more often than not" and



went by "dressing room feedback" while hitting the reset button on the T20I side. The next T20 World Cup, to be co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka in 2026, gives the selectors plenty of time to rebuild the side which has also suffered a severe talent drain.

The overhaul follows the World Cup triumph last month and T20I retirements of seasoned campaigners

and Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli and Ravindra Jadeja. With the side in transition, young batting gun and vice-captain in the white-ball formats, Shubman Gill sees this as an opportunity to cement his place and others like Yashasvi Jaiswal, Rinku Singh and even Riyan Parag will look to do the same. While the like-for-like replacement Axar Patel fits in perfectly for Jadeja in the

eleven, India also have riches in the all-round department given Pandya, Shivam Dube and an in-form Washington Sundar are also available. Jasprit Bumrah has been deservingly rested from this tour which gives the pair of Arshdeep Singh and Mohammed Siraj to make the most of favourable conditions at the Pallekele International Stadium, where the surface tends to assist pace and

exit from the last edition. Skipper Wanindu Hasaranga, coach Chris Silverwood and consultant coach Mahela Jayawardene tendered their resignations after the debacle in the Americas.

Sri Lanka have appointed 'Mataru Marauder' Sanath Jayasuriya as interim coach and he has urged his side to make the most of India's lack of experienced stars, but knows well that his team is desperately short on solid performances.

The Sri Lankan team of the current does not inspire confidence given their frailties across departments despite Jayasuriya's assessment that this group will turn around the fortunes in the next two years.

Wanindu Hasaranga, Enterprising batter Charith Asalanka has been handed over the captaincy as Sri Lanka, like India, foray in uncharted waters looking to brighten their fortunes. Playing at home, Sri Lanka should feel confident about

turning the tide given the richness of talent in the ranks, which includes a combative former skipper Dasun Shanaka, Kusal Perera, Kusal Mendis and the experienced Dinesh Chandimal.

**TEAMS (FROM):**  
**India:** Suryakumar Yadav (c), Shubman Gill, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Rinku Singh, Riyan Parag, Rishabh Pant (wk), Sanju Samson (wk), Hardik Pandya, Shivam Dube, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Ravi Bishnoi, Arshdeep Singh, Khaleel Ahmed, Mohammed Siraj.  
**Sri Lanka:** Dinesh Chandimal, Avishka Fernando, Kusal Mendis (wk), Pathum Nissanka, Kusal Perera, Charith Asalanka (c), Wanindu Hasaranga, Kamindu Mendis, Dasun Shanaka, Chamindu Wickramasinghe, Binura Fernando, Asitha Fernando, Dilshan Madushanka, Matheesha Pathirana, Maheesh Theekshana, Duniith Welelage.

## Chinese-Chilean table tennis player makes Olympics debut at age 58 in Paris Games

AP ■ SANTIAGO (CHILE)

Table tennis player Zeng Zhiying left China in 1989, the same year of the Tiananmen Square massacre, to teach the sport in northern Chile. Fast-forward 35 years, she will debut in the Olympic Games at age 58 under the name she adopted in the South American nation: Tania.

Tania Zeng, who became famous in Chile after winning a bronze medal at the Pan American Games in Santiago last year, retired from table tennis long ago. Though the sport brought her to Chile, she stopped playing to have more time to dedicate to a business she opened and eventually start a family. Her dream of becoming a professional athlete returned during the pandemic. Her pinnacle will be reached in Paris. "I never imagined (making it to the Olympic Games) because I took it up for entertainment, to do some sport," Zeng said in an interview with The Associated Press at the country's Olympic training centre.

"I gained confidence by playing a lot. Since I always won, I liked playing more and more. "Qualifying for an Olympics is a big, gigantic dream, and being able to fulfill it at that age is a huge happiness," said Zeng, the oldest athlete in her country's delegation.

Born in Foshan, in southern China, Zeng is the daughter of a local table tennis coach. As a child, she used to follow her mother to professional table tennis training sessions. For a decade, the Chinese-Chilean athlete was a high-performance player.

But her life took a turn in 1989, when she accepted an invitation to teach the sport to young athletes in Arica, in the far north of Chile. She married soon afterward and moved to Iquique, also in northern Chile, another city



where Chinese presence was unlikely at the time.

Zeng is currently the 151st-ranked table tennis player. She is part of Chile's national team, beating Dominican Eva Peña Brito in her debut in the women's singles table tennis tournament at the Pan American Games. She lost to American Lily Ann Zhang in the following round but still managed to win the bronze in the team competition.

Zeng's life is now split between Iquique and Santiago, fuelled by the appetite for the game and the affection of the fans.

"Everyone knows me, greets me, wants a photo and for me it's just joy," she said. "I am already Chilean in heart and soul, everything. They are going to bury me here."

Zeng will play in Paris with more experience and the same determination to fulfill a lifelong dream. She hopes no injuries affect her performance at the Olympics, which is a concern for any older athlete.

## Canada women's soccer coach removed by Canadian Olympic Committee over drone controversy

AP ■ PARIS



The Canadian Olympic Committee removed women's national soccer head coach Bev Priestman for the remainder of the Paris Games following an alleged drone spying scandal. The COC said in a statement released early on Friday that

attend Thursday's 2-1 victory over New Zealand as FIFA - soccer's world governing body - and the International Olympic Committee investigate.

Canada Soccer CEO and general secretary Kevin Blue said in the COC release "additional information has come to our attention regarding previous drone use against opponents, predating the Paris 2024 Olympic Games." He added Priestman was suspended from her duties until the end of the tournament and the completion of the organization's independent external review.

The COC said on Wednesday that assistant coach Jasmine Mander and analyst Joseph Lombardi were "sent home immediately," and that it had accepted Priestman's decision to remove herself from coaching the opening match. Priestman held a brief media availability on Wednesday after guiding her team through a one-hour practice. "My reaction was you feel like this program has let the country down," the 38-year-old Priestman said.

**OFFICE OF THE PROJECT ADMINISTRATOR, ITDA, PARALAKHEMUNDI, PARALAKHEMUNDI.**  
 Bid Identification No. ITDAPKD/01/ 2024-25

**NOTICE INVITING TENDER UNDER NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement**

1) Name of the Work: Construction of 18 Nos Multipurpose Community Centre at Gosani, Nuagada, Mohana, Chandiput, Antaraba, Jeerango, Gandahati, Raygada, Marloba, Mahendragada, Chellaagada, Serango, Badakalakota, Bhubani, Ashrayagada, Tumula, Baijhal Gumma, and Kastruba Gandhi Balika Bidyalaya at Gumma, Raygada, Kashinagar, Gosani, Mohana, Nuagada, and R Udayagiri Dining Hall at Ullabhadra, Common Service Centre at Paralakhemundi and Upgradation of Antaraba High School under Mohana Block and Construction of Academic Block, 2 Nos Of 120 Seated Hostel Building, Qtr For Teaching And Non Teaching Staff, 1 No Of Principal Qr Including Boundary Wall, Approach Road At Antaraba SSD High School Under Mohana Block of Gajapati District.

2) Value of the Work: Rs. 20.36 Cr. (Approx.)  
 3) Period of completion: 18 (Eighteen) Calendar Months  
 4) Availability of tender online for Bidding:  
 I. Start Date: 18:00 Hours of dt. 30.07.2024  
 II. End date: 15:00 Hours of dt. 30.08.2024  
 III. Opening date: 16:00 Hours of dt. 30.08.2024

Tender details can be seen from the e-procurement portal [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in). Corrigendum or Addendum if any will not be published in newspapers and can be seen in e-procurement portal as well as in ITDA, Paralakhemundi website.

**-sd**  
 Project Administrator,  
 ITDA, Paralakhemundi

OIPR-19397/11/0001/2425

**AFFIDAVIT**

By virtue of an affidavit before Notary public Bargarh, I, Babul Pradhan, S/o-Kamal Kumar Pradhan, resident of At-Goisar, Po-Bhadigan, PS-Bargarh, Dist-Bargarh, Pin-768038 Odisha declare by this affidavit No - 602 Date - 19/02/24 that now onwards I shall be known as SMITH PRADHAN for all future purposes.

Smith Pradhan

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
 DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES  
 OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER,  
 SUBARNAREKHA IRRIGATION DIVISION NO-II,  
 AT/PO: DEULI, DIST: MAYURBHANJ  
 PIN- 757021  
 Mail id: [es2.deuli@gmail.com](mailto:es2.deuli@gmail.com)

**Government of Odisha "e" PROCUREMENT NOTICE**  
 Bid Identification No. 01/ 2024-25 of S.E, S.I DIVISION NO-II, DEULI

1	Name of Work	'Construction of Black Top Road at Badpur Rehabilitation Colony.'
2	Estimated Cost for put to tender	Rs. 60.26 Lakh
3	Bid Security/ E.M.D.	Rs. 61,000/-
4	Period of Completion	04 (Four) Calendar Months
5	Class of Contractor	'B' Class
6	Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal	05.08.2024 at 10:00 AM
7	Last date/time for receipt of bid in the portal	21.08.2024 up to 5:00 PM
8	Opening of Bid	22.08.2024 at 11:00 AM
9	Name & Address of the O.I.T	Superintending Engineer, Subarnarekha Irrigation Division No-II, Deuli.

Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement Portal "<https://tendersodisha.gov.in/>".  
 OIPR-32187/11/0001/2425

Superintending Engineer, S. I Division No. II, Deuli

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
 AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT  
 OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (AGRI),  
 DHENKANAL DIVISION, DHENKANAL  
 No. 560 Date: 25.06.2024  
 INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)  
 e-procurement notice

**Bid Identification number / Tender call notice no-EE (A) D/D-02 of 2024-25**

The Executive Engineer (Agril.), Dhenkanal Division, Dhenkanal who has been authorized as the procuring officer for the projects of Dhenkanal Division, Dhenkanal is directed to invite percentage rate bid on behalf of the Governor of Odisha for the Civil construction works under Dhenkanal Division. The costs of the project approximately from 08.00 lakhs to 10.00 lakh. Bid document consisting of detailed tender call notice, the schedule of quantities and the set of terms and conditions of the contract and other necessary documents can be downloaded from [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in) from 02.08.2024 at 10:00 hours to 13.08.2024 at 05:30 hours. The bid will be opened on 16.08.2024 at 11:30 PM in the O/o Executive Engineer (Agril.), Dhenkanal Division, Dhenkanal. All other details regarding term and conditions, corrigendum from time to time if any, DTCN etc. can be seen and downloaded from [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in).

Email ID: [eeagri.dhenkanal@gmail.com](mailto:eeagri.dhenkanal@gmail.com)  
 Executive Engineer (Agril.)  
 Dhenkanal Division, Dhenkanal

OIPR-01446/11/0002/2425

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**EXTRACT OF THE FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER ENDED 30 JUNE 2024**

S. No.	Particulars	Standalone		Consolidated			
		Quarter ended	Year ended	Quarter ended	Year ended		
		30.06.2024	30.06.2023	31.03.2024	31.03.2023		
1	Total Income from Continuing Operations	10,850.37	10,888.23	45,815.37	11,279.59	11,257.60	46,913.12
2	Net Profit before Tax from Continuing Operations (including Regulatory Deferral Account Balances (net of tax))	4,231.93	4,041.54	18,009.46	4,603.22	4,218.30	18,513.95
3	Net Profit after Tax from Continuing Operations	3,412.15	3,484.58	15,377.48	3,723.92	3,597.16	15,573.16
4	Net Profit after Tax from Discontinued Operations	-	58.07	97.13	-	-	-
5	Net Profit after Tax for the period	3,412.15	3,542.65	15,474.61	3,723.92	3,597.16	15,573.16
6	Total Comprehensive Income comprising Net Profit after Tax and Other Comprehensive Income	3,457.06	3,475.31	15,241.72	3,768.40	3,529.50	15,338.55
7	Paid up Equity Share Capital (Face value of share: ₹10/- each)	9,300.60	6,975.45	9,300.60	9,300.60	6,975.45	9,300.60
8	Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve) as shown in the Balance sheet	81,023.51	79,344.04	77,566.45	81,612.77	79,581.07	77,844.51
9	Securities Premium Account	5,509.28	7,834.43	5,509.28	5,509.28	7,834.43	5,509.28
10	Net worth	90,324.11	86,319.49	86,867.05	90,913.37	86,556.52	87,145.11
11	Total Borrowings	1,23,465.20	1,23,717.15	1,23,448.62	1,23,465.20	1,23,717.15	1,23,448.62
12	Debt Equity Ratio	1.37	1.43	1.42	1.36	1.43	1.42
13	Earnings per equity share from continuing and discontinued operations including movement in Regulatory Deferral Account Balances (Face value of ₹10/- each): Basic and Diluted (in ₹)	3.67	3.81	16.64	4.00	3.87	16.74
14	Earnings per equity share from continuing and discontinued operations excluding movement in Regulatory Deferral Account Balances (Face value of ₹10/- each): Basic and Diluted (in ₹)	3.73	4.18	17.25	4.07	4.24	17.36
15	Bonds Redemption Reserve	2,589.49	3,834.73	2,921.02	2,589.49	3,834.73	2,921.02
16	Debt Service Coverage Ratio	1.57	1.73	1.65	1.67	1.77	1.69
17	Interest Service Coverage Ratio	4.00	4.15	4.10	4.39	4.33	4.27

**Notes:**  
 1. The above is an extract of the detailed consolidated and Standalone Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulations 33 and 52 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Consolidated and Standalone Financial Results is available on the Investors section of our website <https://www.powergrid.in> and under Corporate Section of BSE Limited & National Stock Exchange of India Limited at <https://www.bseindia.com> and <https://www.nseindia.com> respectively.  
 2. Previous periods figures have been rearranged/reclassified wherever considered necessary.

For and on behalf of **POWER GRID CORPORATION OF INDIA LTD.**  
 Sd/-  
**G Ravisankar, Director (Finance)**  
 DIN: 08816101

Place : Gurugram  
 Date : 26 July 2024

**पावरग्रिड**  
**POWERGRID**  
 (A Government of India Enterprise)  
 Registered Office: B-9, Outab Institutional Area, Katwaria Sarai, New Delhi-110 016  
 Corporate Office: "Saudamini", Plot No. 2, Sector-29, Gurugram-122001, (Haryana)  
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