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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.

French authorities have foiled several plots to disrupt the Olympics, including arresting a Russian man on suspicion of planning to destabilise the games.

Also Friday, the French airport of Basel-Mulhouse on the border with Germany and Switzerland was evacuated in the morning and remained temporarily closed "for safety reasons," the airport said. It wasn't clear whether there was a connection to the rail attacks.

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 Samaroh 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.

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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.

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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.

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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 Sukhvirinder 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.

India a win away from Women's Asia Cup title

PTI ■ DAMBULLA

Pacer Renuka Singh's three-wicket burst followed by Smriti Mandhana's brisk unbeaten fifty underlined India's ruthless performance as the defending champions walloped Bangladesh by 10 wickets and marched into their record-extending ninth women's Asia Cup final, here on Friday.

India will face the winner of the second semifinal between Pakistan and Sri Lanka, in the title clash on Sunday.

Shafali (26 not out, 28b, 2x4) and Mandhana (55 not out, 39b, 9x4, 1x6) were on song from the word go, as India overhauled the target of 81



without breaking a sweat. India ended up at 83 for no loss in 11 overs.

Mandhana and Shafali's knocks were filled with trademark shots around the ground as India motored to 46 for no loss in the Power Play. Shafali, who was dropped on

21 off Rabeya Khan, played those powerful heaves across the line to find the fence. Mandhana, at the other end, unfurled those exquisite drives on the off-side, such as the one the left-hander played through the covers against pacer Marufa Akter. Mandhana also displayed her power while pulling pacer Jahanara Alam for a six over deep square leg as India trotted to a victory that was a long-forgone conclusion once Bangladesh were limited 80 for eight.

Renuka (3/10) upfront and left-arm spinner Radha Yadav in the middle overs (3/14) rattled Bangladesh with excellent spells.

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Assam heritage site gets UNESCO tag

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Assam's historical treasure, the Charaideo Moidam royal burial complex and shrines built by Ahom dynasty that ruled the Northeastern State for around 600 years, has received the prestigious UNESCO tag, marking the first cultural site from the region to receive this honor.

This was announced during the 46th World Heritage Committee session in India. With this addition, India now proudly hosts 43 World Heritage Sites. The 'Moidams' in Assam's Charaideo district with their striking pyramid-like structures captures the State's regal past, and simultaneously offers a fascinating blend of history, architecture, and folklore of the Tai-Ahom dynasty. The UNESCO tag highlights the global appreciation of the Tai-Ahom dynasty's rich cultural



heritage and historical contributions. Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed pride and joy over the inclusion, highlighting the cultural and historical value of the 'Moidams' while Union Culture Minister

Gajendra Singh Shekhawat called the decision a "day etched in golden letters".

'Moidams' was submitted as India's nomination for inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List for the

year 2023-24.

"The Moidams at Charaideo showcase the glorious Ahom culture, which places utmost reverence to ancestors. I hope more people learn about the great Ahom rule and culture. Glad that the Moidams join the #WorldHeritage List," Modi said in a post on X.

The Moidams are a mound burial system that served as a resting place for Ahom kings and queens. They were constructed by providing an earth cover over a hollow vault made of bricks, stone or earth.

The designated site contains 90 moidams of different sizes, which were created over a period of 600 years, and include other cultural features like ceremonial pathways and bodies of water, said a spokesperson from ICOMOS, the advisory body of the World Heritage Committee.

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Delhi Govt mulls concession for new vehicles registration post scrapping

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government is considering providing a concession in the Motor Vehicles Tax for the registration of new transport and non-transport vehicles, provided a certificate of deposit is submitted for an old vehicle handed over for scrapping at a Registered Vehicles Scrapping Facility (RVSF).

Delhi Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot on Friday said that the proposal in this regard has been sent to Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena for his approval. He announced that the Delhi government will provide such concessions in a bid to make it easier for vehicle owners to transition to more environmentally friendly options.

"This policy aims to encourage the scrapping of old, polluting



vehicles and promote the use of newer, cleaner vehicles. By offering tax concessions, we hope to make it easier for vehicle owners to transition to more environmentally friendly options," the AAP leader stated.

Further, for non-transport vehicles, the concession includes a 20 per cent reduction in the tax payable on the registration of new petrol, CNG, or LPG vehicles. It also includes a 15 per cent reduction for new diesel vehicles.

A statement stated that for transport vehicles, the concession includes a 15 per cent reduction in the tax payable on the registration of new petrol, CNG, or LPG vehicles, and a 10 per cent reduction for new diesel vehicles. However, the total tax concessions shall not exceed 50 per cent of the scrap value in both cases. Additionally, the validity of the Certificate of Deposit is three years which can be electronically traded.

In 2018, the Supreme Court had said that the vehicles plying in violation of the order would be impounded. A 2014 order of the National Green Tribunal bars vehicles older than 15 years to be parked in public places. The Delhi government has deregistered 5.5 million overage vehicles.

DJB, PWD, MCD fail to resolve waterlogging in Capital, says BJP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva on Friday accused the Delhi Jal Board (DJB), Public Works Department (PWD) and Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) in failing the residents of the national Capital in resolving the waterlogging crisis while accusing the AAP government of 'drain cleaning scam'. Sachdeva said, "Every year before monsoon an exercise of cleaning of drains be it 18 major drains like Najafgarh Drain, East Delhi Drain, Barapullah Drain and Delhi Gate Drain happens along with other smaller drains which all total upto around 700 drains."

He claimed that while this exercise happens every year, it's shocking to see that this year most of the drains have



not been cleaned. "Delhi is facing worst ever water logging crisis during monsoon this year. Earlier water logging

happened at the start of monsoon and after one or two rains water logging became a limited affair in which water

got accumulated then cleared within hours but today water remained logged for 10 to 12 hours," Sachdeva alleged.

The Delhi BJP chief claimed that the residents faced worst ever water logging at different parts of the city including Kirari, Paharganj, Kalkaji, Munirka, Mehrauli Badar Road, Kotla Mubarkpur, Sangam Vihar, Devli, Saket, Minto Bridge, ITO, Raighat, Jahangirpuri, Laxmi Nagar and Geeta Colony.

"It won't be an exaggeration to say that Arvind Kejriwal led government has defeated its own liquor scam with its 'Drains Non Cleaning Scam'. The Jal Board, PWD and MCD have totally failed Delhiites in resolving the waterlogging crisis," he said, appealing to Anti Corruption Bureau to take suo motto cognizance of the 'Drain Cleaning Scam' of the three departments.

SC raps MCD over 'sorry state' of solid waste management

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Over 3,000 tons of untreated solid waste per day in Delhi may lead to a "public health emergency", the Supreme Court said on Friday while voicing concern over poor implementation of the Solid Waste Management Rules in the national capital. The apex court, which slammed the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) over the "sorry state of affairs", observed that the national capital generates over 11,000 tons of solid waste per day, while the daily capacity of processing plants made available by the corporation was only 8,073 tons.

A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Augustine George Masih noted that as per MCD's affidavit, there is no possibility of creating treatment facilities even till 2027 to deal with 11,000 tons of solid waste generated daily. Senior advocate Aparajita

Singh, assisting the top court as an amicus curiae in the matter related to solid waste management, told the bench that this may lead to public health emergency as there are data, both in Indian and foreign journals, that people are dying because of pollution in the country.

"We are worried about this. In the capital city, this is the state of affairs of the 2016 rules where we are generating untreated solid waste of above 3,000 tons per day, and with every day, it will increase," the bench said. "We don't see light at the end of the tunnel as going by the affidavit (of MCD) and assuming that the timelines mentioned therein are abided by, there is no possibility of creating (additional treatment) facilities in Delhi even till 2027 which will have capacity to deal with 11,000 tons of solid waste every day," it said.

The bench said no guess work was required to say that generation of solid waste will multiply many times by that time.

Top court to hear Kerala...

From Page 1

West Bengal, in its plea, alleged the governor was withholding assent on eight bills. Senior advocate KK Venugopal, appearing for the Kerala government, said, "This is the most unfortunate situation."

The bench said, "We are issuing notices to the secretary to the governors and the Union in both cases." Venugopal further said, "The bills are pending for the last eight months. I am challenging the reference to

the president itself... This is a confusion among the governors. They keep the bills pending. This is against the Constitution."

Senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for West Bengal, said he would make the Centre a party and file a written note to assist the court in deciding the plea.

He referred to instances of other states, including Tamil Nadu, and said the moment the top court fixed the cases for hearing, certain bills were either cleared or referred to the president.

Venugopal said there was a need for the top court to lay down guidelines on when the governors could return or refer the bills.

LG hosts dinner for world heritage committee delegates at Purana Qila

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Thursday hosted a cultural evening cum dinner for the delegates of the 46th World Heritage Committee at the historic Purana Qila.

Union Minister for Culture and Tourism Gajendra Singh Shekhawat also attended the event. Speaking on the occasion, Saxena said that sustained efforts were being made to preserve and restore the heritage sites and monuments in Delhi so as to position it as a true Global Heritage City. Stating that these efforts are aligned with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of 'vikas bhi, viksit bhi', he stated, "The Government is making many



efforts for preserving and maintaining the tangible and intangible heritage of Delhi. This will attract more tourists and open the portals of our heritage, for the knowledge of domestic as well as international audiences." "To preserve our heritage, it is

essential that people - the community at large become a stakeholder in preserving and protecting it," Saxena added. Ambassadors and High Commissioners from several countries, nearly 250 delegates from more than 160 countries,

senior officials from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and senior officials from the Central and Delhi Government also attended the event.

The event included a unique fusion of traditional dance presented by nearly 100 artists from different Indian states which left the audience spellbound. The performance was choreographed by acclaimed artist Maitreyee Pahari.

"The cultural performance in the backdrop of an illuminated structure in the Purana Qila complex, manifested the intangible cultural heritage of India that transcends region, religion and language while also reflecting the rich heritage of Delhi," an official said.

Cancer cases rising by 2.5% every year

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Cancer cases are escalating by 2.5 per cent each year, with over 1.55 million new diagnoses annually, the Government on Friday painted a troubling picture even as it asserted that all efforts are being taken to ensure affordable and accessible treatment for cancer patients.

"There is a list of 131 essential cancer medicines, which are in Schedule 1, (that) are monitored and (their) pricing is decided by the government. These are the commonly used medicines," Nadda said. He said patients cumulatively saved around Rs 294 crore due to this price control. "There are 28 combinations, which are not in this list but the NPPA (National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority) and the govern-

ment have controlled their pricing as well," he said. "We have tried to make cancer drugs affordable," he added. Responding to another question on healthcare infrastructure, Nadda said the government was appraised of the matter and expansion of



medical colleges were happening so that there could be more doctors.

"There should be a balance in quality and quantity of medical education. We are trying to go as fast as we can but, at the same time, (we) do not want to compromise on the quality of medical doctors," he said. Nadda informed the House that the number of medical colleges had gone up from 387 in 2014 to 731 at present while the number of MBBS seats rose from 51,348 seats to 1,12,112 (1.12 lakh) during the same period. The number of postgraduate seats for medical students has gone up from 31,185 in 2014 to 72,627 at present, he added.

Modi warns Pak...

From Page 1

On July 26, 1999, the Indian Army announced the successful culmination of "Operation Vijay", reclaiming the positions occupied by Pakistani infiltrators/army regulars on the Indian side of the LOC in the Kargil region after a nearly three-month-long battle in Ladakh.

Responding to the political muscle flexing over the Agnipath scheme, the Prime Minister responded by clearly saying the purpose of Agnipath is to keep forces young and continuously battle-ready."

Referring to the blatant politicization of this sensitive subject, the Prime Minister said, "The truth is that the Agnipath scheme will increase the strength of the country and the country will also get capable youth. Announcements have been made to give priority to Agniveers in the private sector and paramilitary forces as well," he said. Rejecting the propaganda about the intention of saving pension burden as the main reason behind the Agnipath Scheme, the Prime Minister reminded that the pension burden of the soldiers being recruited today will come up after 30 years,

therefore, this can not be the reason behind the scheme. "We have respected this decision taken by the armed forces because for us the security of the country is more important than politics", he added.

The Prime Minister pointed out that those misleading the youth of the nation today had no regard for the armed forces in the past. Recalling the false promises made by past governments on One Rank One Pension, the Prime Minister underlined that it was the present government that implemented the scheme where ex-servicemen were given more than Rs 1.25 lakh crores. He further pointed out the neglect of past governments and said, "These are the same people who did not build a war memorial for the martyrs even after 7 decades of independence, did not provide enough bulletproof jackets to our soldiers deployed on the border and kept ignoring Kargil Vijay Diwas."

The Prime Minister along with the LG of Ladakh, Brig (Dr) B D Sharma, Union Minister of State for Defence, Sanjay Seth, Chief of Defence Staff, Gen Anil Chauhan and the Chiefs of Army Staff of the three armed forces were present on the occasion.

India...

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In fact, Bangladesh hardly recovered from the deep wounds inflicted by Renuka in the first six overs.

Renuka, who bowled four overs on the trot during her 3/10 spell, received ample support from left-arm spinner Radha Yadav (3/14) after Bangladesh elected to bat first. Renuka struck in the first over itself, dismissing Dilara Akter, whose slog sweep did not have enough power in it to clear Uma Chetry at deep mid-wicket. In her next over, Renuka got the better of Ishma Tanjim with a delivery that stayed close to her body and a mistimed whip across the line was grabbed by Tanuja Kanwar at short third. Renuka bagged her third wicket in as many overs with a slightly short of length delivery that Murshida Khatun slapped straight to Shafali at midwicket. At 25 for three inside the Power Play segment, Bangladesh were falling apart fast and their real hope for a revival was the presence of skipper Nigar Sultana (32, 51b, 2x4), the third highest run-getter in the tournament.

SC extends Kanwar...

From Page 1

The Bench asked the Madhya Pradesh and Uttarakhand Governments to file their response to the pleas challenging their respective directives. It allowed the petitioners to file their responses to the replies of the State Governments and post the matter on August 5. The Bench was hearing a batch of petitions challenging such a directive by the Uttar Pradesh Police in Muzaffarnagar.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for the Uttar Pradesh Government, said they have filed their reply and their stand is that the directive in question is the requirement under law. He urged the court to take up the matter next Monday otherwise the issue will become infructuous. There is huge rush of devotees at Shiva temples on Mondays, especially during the month of Shrawan. "We have suffered ex-parte order and without hearing the order was stayed," he submitted, adding that the interim order passed by the court is not in line with the central law. The Bench said if there is any law governing eateries and shops, then the State should enforce it across areas under its jurisdiction. "Let

the law be enforced all across the state and not only in certain areas. You please file an affidavit showing that the law has been enforced all over," Justice Roy told Rohatgi.

Senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for Trinamool Congress leader Mahua Moitra, said if this law mandating display of names and other details has not been put in force for the past 60 years, the issue can be taken up in due course of time and let the yatra continue without enforcing the direction. Deputy Advocate General for Uttarakhand Jatinder Kumar Sethi said the state has not issued any specific order with respect to Kanwar Yatra and the government was only enforcing law that mandated disclosure of the names of eateries during all festivals.

Backing the directives issued by the State police asking eateries along the Kanwar Yatra route to display the names of the owners and staff, the UP Government told the Supreme Court that the directive issued by the Muzaffarnagar police to all food sellers to disclose nameplate was temporary in nature to ensure public safety, order, and transparency to protect sentiments of 'Kanwariyas'.

Assam heritage site gets UNESCO tag

From Page 1

Reports say that there are actually over 150 moidams, but only 30 are protected by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and the Assam State Archaeology Department.

Ranjan K Baruah, Advisor to the Skill Employment and Entrepreneurship Department of the Bodoland Territorial Council and a Tourist guide trainer, lauded the inclusion of the Charaideo Moidams on UNESCO's World Heritage List as a moment of immense pride for the people of Assam and beyond. "These remarkable sites epitomize the grandeur of the Ahom dynasty's heritage and stand as an architectural marvel akin to the pyramids of Egypt," he remarked. Baruah emphasised that further exploration by the Archaeological Survey of India or similar institutions could unveil additional insights into the rich legacy of the Ahom dynasty, enriching

our understanding of this historical treasure.

The Tai-Ahoms migrated to present-day Assam in the 13th century and selected Charaideo as their first capital and location for the royal necropolis.

They established the first capital at the Patkai hills in eastern India and named it Charaideo, which means "a dazzling city above the mountain" in their language. Even though the clan moved across cities, the burial site they built was seen as the most sacred place for the departed souls of the royals.

According to the UNESCO website, the site has the largest concentration of these vaulted mound burials, and reflects the sculpted landscape of the surrounding hills. Moidams are characterized by vaulted chambers, often double-storied, accessed through arched passages. The chambers housed centrally raised platforms where the deceased were laid to rest along with their royal insignia, weapons, and

personal belongings.

The construction of these mounds involved layers of bricks, earth, and vegetation, transforming the landscape into undulating hillocks reminiscent of celestial mountains.

Several objects used by the deceased during his/her life, like royal insignia, objects made of wood, ivory or iron, gold pendants, ceramic ware, weapons, clothes to the extent of human beings (only from the Luk-kha-khun clan) were buried with their king, according to the website.

Reacting to 'Moidams' receiving the UNESCO tag, Union Culture Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat said it is a day "etched in golden letters" and thanked UNESCO, the World Heritage Committee for understanding the outstanding universal value of 'Moidams'. In the Northeastern State, the Kaziranga National Park and the Manas National Park fall in the natural and mixed heritage categories respectively.

IN BRIEF

MINISTER LAUNCHES FEEDER MONITORING CENTRE AT REC

Gurugram: Manohar Lal, Minister of Power and Housing & Urban Affairs, inaugurated National Feeder Monitoring System (NFMS) Control Centre on REC Limited's 55th Foundation Day, at REC Headquarters, Gurugram in the presence of Shripad Yesso Naik, Minister of State for Power and New & Renewable Energy. NFMS, a flagship initiative of Ministry of Power, entails access to detailed information related to real time hours of power supply, power outages and overall health of Rs 2.5 lakh feeders (11 KV outgoing) across the country. This system will enable stakeholders to make informed and actionable decisions, thereby bringing in transparency, efficiency and accountability to distribution utilities (DISCOMS), ultimately improving the quality and reliability of power supply to the end consumers. The project involves integration of master as well as transactional data with 87 Discoms.

Upset over loneliness, teen kills self

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 16-year-old boy committed suicide by hanging himself in the dormitory of his school in Delhi's Dwarka area.

According to the police on Friday, an information regarding suicide by a student of Class 11 at Kalinga Institute of Social Science School was received on Thursday morning. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Dwarka) Ankit Singh said, "Upon reaching Kalinga Institute of Social Science School, a boy namely Kunal Rai, son of Shiv Chand Rai, aged 16 year was found dead in a dormitory of the school."

He added that the classmates of the deceased reported that Kunal was upset and lonely because his friends had left the school after Class 10th to pursue a different stream not available in his current school.

"His classmates informed that Kunal was upset as his friends had left his school and had taken science stream elsewhere as the stream was not available in this school," the DCP stated. According to a senior police official, the father had pressured him to continue in the School with Arts stream and not go out.

"The child was feeling lonely and upset. On Thursday at about 6:00 am, he committed suicide by hanging himself with Iron bar of ceiling.

Modi condoles death of former MP Prabhat Jha

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra P Modi on Friday expressed deep grief over the demise of former Member of Parliament Prabhat Jha, 67.

The Prime Minister recalled his organizational acumen and also remembered his contribution in the field of journalism.

Former Rajya Sabha member and senior BJP leader Prabhat Jha passed away on Friday in a hospital in Gurugram after a prolonged illness, party leaders said. He is survived by his wife and two sons, they said.

Bihar-born Jha started his career as a journalist from Gwalior. He later joined the BJP and rose to become the party's Madhya Pradesh president in 2010. He was elected as a Rajya Sabha member from Madhya Pradesh in 2008 and remained in the Upper House of Parliament till 2020, serving two terms.

Jha was the BJP's national vice president in 2015. He also edited the BJP's mouth-piece Kamal Sandesh for several years since 2006 and his frank editorials, which were not always partisan, at times made national news.



म्हारा हरियाणा नाँन-स्टॉप हरियाणा

हम हरियाणवी

बिना खर्ची-बिना पर्ची सरकारी नौकरी पाते हैं

अब पारदर्शी ढंग से हो रही हैं भर्तियां, ना भाई-भतीजावाद,
ना सिफारिश, ना जात-पात, ना क्षेत्रवाद

पिछले 10 साल में प्रदेश के 1.32 लाख युवाओं
को योग्यता के आधार पर मिली सरकारी नौकरियां

50,000 और
भर्तियां द्रुत गति से जारी





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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!

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

PICTALK



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

PTI

Exploring our bonds: From castes to communities

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)



SANJAY CHANDRA

Urban violence: Human nature vs city life

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



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

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 every one 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 | Jalpaiguri

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

CONCERNS OVER PM POSHAN SCHEME

Madam — Lakhs of underprivileged schoolchildren struggling with anemia and malnutrition have benefited from the "PM POSHAN scheme," which addresses both hunger and education

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



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.

It all began at a hospital where he saw patients discharged, but still in need of various forms of care - elderly patients who require dressings; ex-ICU patients who need oxygen daily; and cancer and post-surgery patients - what if he could provide nursing care to them, from the comfort of their own homes? Not only is he being productive in life, but



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 a 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 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

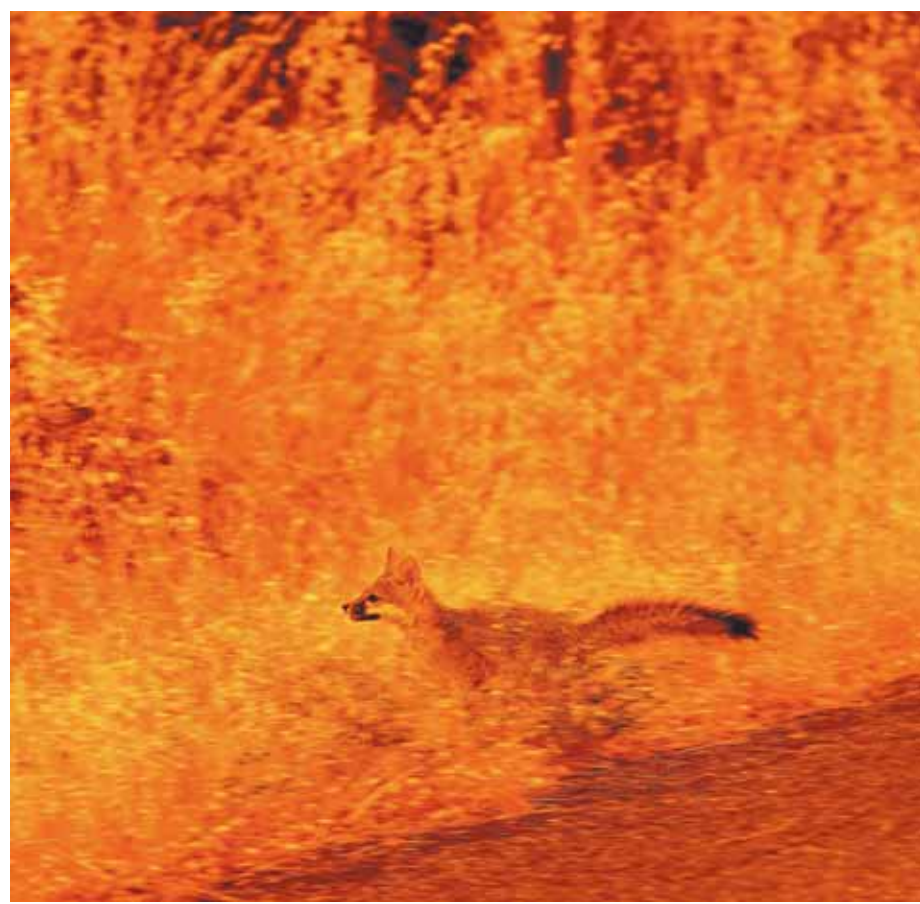
EU sends first \$1.6 billion from frozen Russia assets to Ukraine

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, 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. Though 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.

PUNJAB STATE POWER CORPORATION LTD.
(Regd. Office: PSEB Head Office, The Mall Patiala-147001)
Corporate Identity Number U40109PB2010SGC033813
(Contact no. 96461-17659)

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

REGISTRAR

nil/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

Registrar

nil/12/202/2023/36049 Dated CHD :- 7/26/2024

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. 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

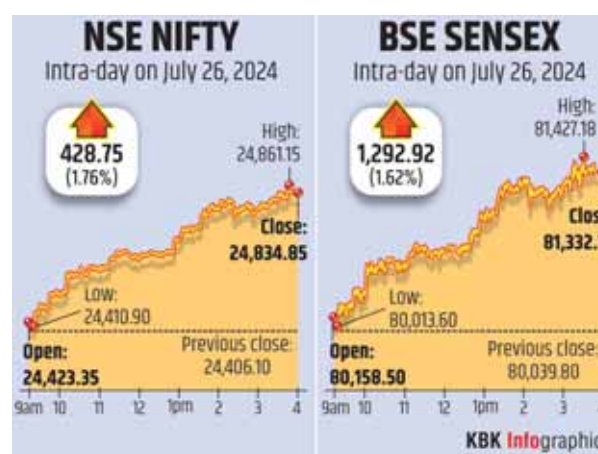
The government will procure the entire production of tur, urad, and masur dal from farmers, Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said in Rajya Sabha on Friday. Through e-Samridhi platform, on which farmers have to get themselves registered, the government will make the procurement, he said. "The 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 ■ CHATEAUXROUX (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 Chateauxroux 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.

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.

"Craig (Fulton) is a great coach. He knows what it needs to be a champion team. He knows how to deal with crunch situations. He has good experience of European and Indian style of hockey," added the former coach of USA men's team.

Harendra has served in various coaching and managerial capacities for senior and junior national teams, across prestigious events like the 2000 Sydney Olympics, 2005 men's Junior World Cup, 2006 men's World Cup, 2006 Asian Games, 2009 men's Asia Cup, and 2010 men's World Cup.

He took over the head coach's position of the national men's junior team in 2014 and then guided India to the junior World Cup title two years later in Lucknow.

Harmanpreet was part of that junior World Cup-winning team and Harendra had predicted back then that the dragflicker will scale greater heights in his career.

"Harmanpreet is a great captain. I want to disclose that



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 T20s, 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 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 deservedly 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 bounce. On the same metric, Sri Lanka will feel depleted since two of their experienced bowlers

Dushmantha Chameera (bronchitis) and respiratory infection) and slinky Nuwan Thushara (broken finger) have been ruled out. The hosts have added Asitha Fernando and Dilshan Madushanka, who took a five-for the last time India and Sri

Lanka played in the ODI World Cup, as replacements. The 2014 T20 World Cup winners, Sri Lanka are wading through turbulent times following their first-round 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 'Matara 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. 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, Duniya Welalage.

Gambhir's key task will be man-management with Indian team, reckons ex-selector Patil

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gautam Gambhir's key task as India head coach will be man-management and not coaching a bunch of talented players in their respective skills, said former player and ex-chief selector Sandeep Patil on Friday. Gambhir is set to start his tenure with a limited-overs tour of Sri Lanka comprising three T20Is and as many ODIs, with the first game in the shortest format set to be played on Saturday. "I don't think his job is to coach the Indian team. His job is to help the Indian team," Patil told PTI Videos in an exclusive interview here. "That's how it works at the top level. You need player management. That will be the challenge for Gambhir." "He has done it and I am sure he will continue to do the same with the Indian cricket team," said Patil on the sidelines of an event organised by Shrachi Rajasthan Tigers. Patil, a member of India's World Cup winning team in 1983, hoped Gambhir will continue to have success at international level after excelling in the IPL. "Gambhir had done an



exceptional job as a coach for Kolkata Knight Riders in IPL. I hope that he continues to help the Indian team in the same way," he added. Patil backed senior India players Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, who retired from the T20 internationals after winning the World Cup last month, to continue featuring in the other formats for a long run. "Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma are still doing extremely well and there is no question of an Indian team without them. I wish the Indian team all the best wherever they are playing and whatever tournament they are playing, they are bound to do exceedingly well," he said. "Surya comes from Mumbai and is a very dear friend of

mine. He has been given the captaincy and he deserved it. I wish him all the best," he said about India's newest T20I captain. Patil said cricket has made significant progress in India since the country's maiden title triumph in 1983. "Like every Indian, I wish the Indian cricket team good luck. I am happy that I am part of 1983 and the progress the Indian team has made over the years has been commendable," he said. Patil said it is important for India to be a contender in all sports. "Cricket has changed over time, so has coaching and the approach to sports. We need to ensure India can become a contender in all sports and all avenues of sports," he added.

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.

Unbeaten Fiji on track for third successive Olympic rugby seven gold by reaching semis

AP ■ PARIS

Fiji stayed on track for a third successive Olympic gold medal in rugby sevens by reaching the semifinals at the Stade de France. The Tokyo Games silver and bronze medalists - New Zealand and Argentina - were knocked out, however. Host side France and Australia reached the semifinals for the first time, while South Africa, the 12th and last team to qualify only a month ago, was back in the semis for the first time since the inaugural Olympic sevens in 2016 in Rio de Janeiro. In the quarterfinals on Thursday, Fiji came from behind against Ireland to win 19-15. New Zealand was stunned by South Africa 14-7, Argentina lost to France 26-14, and Australia shut out the United States 18-0. In the semifinals on Saturday, Fiji plays Australia, and France meets South Africa. South Africa lost to New Zealand 17-5 in pool play on Wednesday, but shot to a 14-0 lead in their quarterfinal. Captain Selwyn Davids scored the opening try and, late in the half, countered from a dropped New Zealand pass in front of the South Africa tryline. Davids hacked and dribbled and popped up for Tristan Leyds to score. Leyds converted both. But deep in added time, New Zealand kept the ball alive and Moses Leo slipped Rosko Specman to cross for a converted try. New Zealand continued to attack in waves in the second half but the South Africa defense was incredible. Davids and Ryan Oosthuizen stood firm on their tryline, Shilton van Wyk made another try-saving tackle on a tearaway Akulia Rokolisoa, and Ronald Brown's last-ditch tackle



ended a gripping match. France enjoyed an almost perfect first half, much to the delight of the 69,000-strong crowd. Andy Timo cut inside his marker and scored, then Aaron Grandidier Nkanang scored twice in three minutes; the first from a ruck turnover, and the second from Jefferson-Lee Joseph's offload. Rayan Rebbadj converted all three for 21-0. Unlike the world series grand final, which France controlled in Madrid, Argentina made a comeback through its two best players, Rodrigo Isgro and Marcos Moneta, to close to 21-14. But with more than two minutes to go, and one of them with a man advantage while Jordan Sepho was in the sin-bin, Argentina couldn't get the ball back. Instead, France ground out the meters, and in the last seconds replacement Antoine Dupont quick-tapped to himself and scooted 25 meters untouched to put the result to bed. Fiji crushed its pool and looked to be doing the same in the quarters when Josefo Baleiwairiki bullrushed from inside his half and scored after just 30 seconds. But Ireland played a patient game, and Chay Mullins barged over for two tries to give them a 10-7 halftime lead.

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 (Unaudited)	31.03.2024 (Audited)	30.06.2024 (Unaudited)	31.03.2024 (Audited)		
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	7,834.43	5,509.28	7,834.43
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 format of 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 Corporates 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

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