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INSIDE

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# Another encounter, high alert winter in Kashmir

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Eight consecutive incidents of terrorist violence in a gap of 20 days in Kashmir valley, after the formation of the Omar Abdullah government, have sent alarm bells ringing in the entire security grid to gear up for the long winter ahead.

The pattern of strikes also shows a disturbing trend as the terrorist handlers picked up dormant and least expected areas to target the security forces. The terrorist handlers have also shifted their focus from the Jammu region back to Kashmir valley to drive a wedge between the newly elected popular government and the security establishment.

Recently, when Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha chaired a meeting of the Unified command headquarters in the aftermath of a dastardly attack on the construction workers in the Gagangir area of Sonamarg newly elected Chief Minister Omar Abdullah remained conspicuous by his absence.

The selection of targets and timing of these attacks suggested the terrorist handlers wanted to demonstrate their capabilities to strike at will despite the huge presence of security forces in the hinterland. Two days after the grenade attack hit the shoppers in the busy 'Sunday market' near the TRC centre in Srinagar, a group of heavily armed terrorists were trapped by the security forces in the Kaitsan forest area of Bandipora on Tuesday.

The security forces launched the operation on receipt of credible inputs about the presence of terrorists in the area. Till the time



FILE-PHOTO

of filing the report, the security forces had established contact with the terrorists and heavy exchange of firing was going on in the area. Srinagar-based Chinar Corps posted on X, "Based on specific intelligence input regarding the presence of terrorists in the general area of Kaitsan forest, a Joint Operation was launched by the Indian Army, Jammu and Kashmir

Police and CRPF in the general area Chuntawadi Kaitsan, Bandipora. Contact was established and a firefight ensued. Operation is in progress." However, unconfirmed reports claimed one terrorist was neutralised in the ongoing operations in the area. Additional troops were also rushed in to plug the gaps to prevent the escape of

terrorists pinned down in the thickly forested area of Kaitsan. Meanwhile, Sinha warned on Tuesday that the houses of those providing shelter to terrorists would be razed to the ground as he asked people to stand up against the perpetrators of terror. He also said if security forces, the Union Territory administration and people come together, then terrorism could be eliminated from the region in a year. I have directed the forces not to harm any innocent but the culprits will not be spared. If anyone provides shelter to terrorists, then his house will be razed to the ground. There will be no compromise on it," the LG said at a function in north Kashmir's Baramulla district.

In a veiled reference to some of the politicians vocal on the issue, Sinha said some people make statements that atrocities are being committed on those providing shelter to terrorists. "However, this is not an atrocity, but a demand for justice and such justice will continue," he added.

Sinha said some people are trying to disrupt the peace in Jammu and Kashmir. "Our neighbour is trying, but it does not worry us. It is the people here who are doing it on its directions (that is a cause of concern). It is not just the job of the security forces and the administration but the people as well to identify such people," he said. He added that if the forces, administration and people come together, then "it (terrorism) will not remain here for more than a year. But if the people give them shelter and then say we are doing injustice to them, then that is not right."

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## We have upheld validity of UP Madrasa Law: SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a big relief to Madrasas in Uttar Pradesh, the Supreme Court on Tuesday upheld the constitutional validity of the 2004 Uttar Pradesh Board of Madrasa Education Law, and set aside an Allahabad High Court verdict quashing it on the ground that it was violative of the principle of secularism. However, the Bench of Chief Justice of India (CJI) DY Chandrachud with Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra set aside provisions of the Act which empowers the Madarsa Board to prescribe course of instructions and text books for higher education - 'kamil' (postgraduate course) and 'fazil' (junior research programme). The SC held that these particular provisions are in violation of the University Grants Commission Act (UGC Act). The Bench said that the High Court erred in holding that the law was violative of the principle of secularism. "We have upheld the validity of the UP madrasa law and moreover a statute can be struck down only if the State lacks the legislative competence," CJI Chandrachud said while pronouncing the verdict. The order came as a big relief

to teachers and students of UP Madrasas as the High Court had ordered closure of the seminaries and relocation of students to other schools in the state. On March 22, the High Court declared the Act as "unconstitutional" and violative of the principle of secularism, and asked the State Government to accommodate madrasa students in the formal schooling system. In a breather for about 17 lakh Madrasa students, the SC stayed the HC order on April 5.

The three Judge Bench of the SC said the legislative scheme of the law was to standardise the level of education being prescribed in Madrasas. The bench heard a battery of lawyers including senior advocates Abhishek Manu Singhvi, P Chidambaram, Mukul Rohatgi, representing petitioners against the HC verdict.

The SC said that a law can be struck down for violation of fundamental rights under part III of the Constitution or on grounds of legislative competence but not for violation of basic structure. "Statute can be struck down only for violation of part III or legislative competence and not for violating basic structure."

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## Who will be the next POTUS?

AP ■ WASHINGTON

A presidential campaign marked by upheaval and rancour approached its finale on Election Day as Americans decided whether to send Donald Trump back to the White House or elevate Kamala Harris to the Oval Office.

Polls opened across the nation on Tuesday morning as voters faced a stark choice between two candidates who have offered drastically different temperaments and visions for the world's largest economy and dominant military power.

Harris, the Democratic vice president, stands to be the first female president if elected. She has promised to work across the aisle to tackle economic worries and other issues without radically departing from the course set by President Joe Biden. Trump, the Republican former president, has vowed to replace thousands of federal workers with loyalists, impose sweeping tariffs on allies and foes alike, and stage the largest deportation operation in US history.

The two candidates spent the waning hours of the campaign overlapping in Pennsylvania, the biggest battleground state. They were trying to energise their bases as well as Americans still on the fence or debating whether to vote at all.

"It's important, it's my civic duty and it's important that I vote for myself and I vote for the democracy and the country which I supported for 22 years of my life," said Ron Kessler, 54, an Air Force veteran from Pennsylvania who said he was voting for just the second time.

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## States cannot takeover all private properties: SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a majority 7:2 ruling, the Supreme Court on Tuesday held that states are not empowered under the Constitution to take over all privately-owned resources for distribution to serve the "common good". A nine-judge bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud, however, said states can stake claim over private properties in certain cases. Justice BV Nagarathna partially disagreed with the majority judgement penned by the CJI, while Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia dissented on all aspects.

The majority verdict pronounced by the CJI Chandrachud overruled Justice Krishna Iyer's five-decade-old ruling that all privately owned resources can be acquired by the State for distribution under Article 39(b) of the Constitution.

"We hold that not every resource owned by an individual can be considered a material resource of a community only because it meets the qualifier of material needs," said the majority of the judges led by CJI, supported by six Judges. The SC held that for a privately-owned property to qualify as a material resource of the community, it must meet certain tests first.

While reading her decision, Justice Nagarathna said she had concurred with the CJI-led majority on certain issues and wrote some opinions in response to Justice Dhulia's judgement. "How does ownership and control of material resources privately owned transform into material resources of the community for distribution as best to sub serve the common good. This is the crux of my judgement," Justice Nagarathna said.

## Speeding DTC bus mows down Delhi Policeman, IT student

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Two days after two traffic policemen on duty were dragged on the bonnet of a car, two persons, including a Delhi Police constable, who was on a night patrolling duty, and a B.Tech student died in a gruesome incident after a Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) bus mowed them down on Monday night, near the Monastery Market in North Delhi due to over speeding.

The horror unfolded around 10.15 pm when a green DTC bus went out of control, climbing a pavement outside the Monastery Market on Ring road, and subsequently hitting a billboard pole. The impact of the collision was such that it knocked the billboard off from its base. The bus then hit a pedestrian and an on duty police constable of Civil Lines police station.

The vehicle finally came to a halt when it crossed the road, and crashed into a road divider. The crime scene revealed the severity of the disturbing accident with the



Photo: Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

fallen pole, blood spilled on the road and the damaged bus that stood stranded in the middle of the road till it was towed in the late afternoon. "The green DTC bus, operating on the route from Sarai Kale Khan to Nand Nagari via ISBT, developed some technical snag. Around 10.38 pm, the Police Control Room (PCR) received multiple calls claiming that the bus had swerved off the road near the Monastery Market, causing extensive damage and leaving two people critically injured," Deputy

Commissioner of Police (North) Raja Banthia stated. However, according to the police sources, the bus was speeding when the incident occurred, and a blood sample of the driver has been sent to test if he was under the influence of alcohol. The accident claimed two lives including that of the young Delhi Police Constable Victor, a resident of Nagaland, and had joined the service in 2019. He was posted at Civil Lines police station from June 2023. He was on his PCR motorcycle when the accident occurred.

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## 'Batenge toh katenge' V/s 'Judenge toh jeetenge'

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

With just days remaining until the November 20 Uttar Pradesh Assembly by-elections, the political sparring over slogans has intensified. Samajwadi Party (SP) President Akhilesh Yadav recently criticised Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's "batenge toh katenge" remark, calling it "the worst slogan in history". In response, Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya accused the SP of supporting "jihadis" to secure votes.

The issue has drawn comments from leaders across the political spectrum, including Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief Mayawati, who weighed in on the escalating rhetoric. Political analysts suggest that while the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is appealing to religious sentiments, the SP aims to shift the focus toward caste-based solidarity through its PDA (backward, Dalit, and minority) framework. Maurya took to social media platform X, alleging that the SP's true agenda was to appease Muslims and "support jihadis" for vote-



bank politics. "SP's politics of dividing society through fronts like 'love jihad', 'land jihad', and 'vote jihad' reveals Akhilesh Yadav's so-called harmony claims," he posted. Maurya questioned if this was the PDA that Yadav promoted, declaring, "SP's true character and face have been exposed." Meanwhile, a poster outside the SP office has reignited the debate. Displayed on Saturday night, it reads, "Mathadhish will divide and cut... PDA will unite and win," implying the SP's commitment to uniting marginalised communities against division. This follows Mayawati's own statement urging voters to align with the

BSP, dismissing the SP-BJP slogan battle as a distraction from real issues. The slogan originated when Adityanath introduced "batenge toh katenge" (if you divide, you will be cut off) during the Haryana elections, later endorsed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the line "Ek hain toh safe hain" (if we are united, we are safe). Some attribute this messaging to the BJP's recent success in Haryana. In response, SP chief Akhilesh Yadav took to social media with the counter-slogan "judenge toh jeetenge" (if we unite, we will win), emphasising positive politics. "In the interest of society, the Chief Minister should rethink

his negative outlook and consider changing his advisors," Yadav wrote, urging Adityanath to adopt a more inclusive approach. He added, "A good leader nurtures positive thoughts and keeps both his sleeves and arms open." Yadav further commented on the role of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in the by-elections, suggesting that its entry has unsettled both the BJP and SP, as both parties attempt to shift public focus with competing posters. Yadav stated, "Instead of divisive slogans, what is truly needed is a commitment to unity - if we join with the BSP, we will progress and remain safe."

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## Bihar Kokila Sharda Sinha passes away

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ PATNA / NEW DELHI

"Chhatti Maiya ne apne paas bula liya Sharda ji ko," said 76-year-old Usha Rani, a resident of Bhagalpur in Bihar who had just observed the first day's rituals of the four-day Chhath Puja on Tuesday, with Sharda Sinha's folk songs for the occasion playing in the background and reverberating the festive ambience of her home, and bylanes of Tilka Majhi Chowk. Sinha's demise on the holy days of Chhath festive season leaves behind a bouquet of signature songs of Mahaparv of the Poorvanchalis. Her songs have often forced many of them to head back home to Bihar from as far as New York, London or Tokyo to pay obeisance to the setting and then the rising Sun Godm from the water bodies of Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, and elsewhere across the length and breadth of India. Popular folk singer Sharda Sinha, who was undergoing treatment at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Delhi, died on Tuesday night. She was 72. "Sharda Sinha expired at 9.20 pm due to



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refractory shock as a result of septicemia," an AIIMS official said. Sinha was known among her fans for folk songs such as "Kartik Maas Jjoriya" and "Koyal Bin" as well as Bollywood numbers

"Taar Bijli" from "Gangs of Wasseypur-II" and "Babul" from "Hum Aapke Hain Koun". Prime Minister Narendra Modi and a host of leaders and music lovers condoled the demise of Sharda Sinha who is a Padma Bhushan recipient for being synonymous with folk songs in Bhojpuri, Maithili, and Magahi languages. Expressing condolences PM posted on social media "I am deeply saddened by the demise of renowned folk singer Sharda Sinha ji. Her Maithili and Bhojpuri folk songs have been very popular for the last several decades." He added, "The echo of her melodious songs associated with the great festival of faith, Chhath, will always remain. Her demise is an irreparable loss for the music world. My condolences are with her family and fans in this hour of grief. Om Shanti!" Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and several leaders and eminent personalities from the State mourned the death of Sharda Sinha when her voice had just reverberated the state's ambience for the most auspicious festive spirit of Bihar.

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## IOA sends 'Letter of Intent' to host 2036 Olympics in India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) has submitted a 'Letter of Intent', expressing the country's desire to host the 2036 Olympic and Paralympic Games, to the International Olympic Committee's Future Host Commission, taking the first concrete step in an ambitious plan. The letter was submitted on October 1, according to a source in the sports ministry. "This monumental opportunity could bring substantial benefits, fostering economic growth, social progress, and youth empowerment across the country," the source added. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had first talked about his government's aspiration to host the 2036 Olympics last year. A decision on the host will not be taken before the IOC



elections next year and India will also have to face competition from several other nations like Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey, who are positioning themselves as strong contenders to host the sporting spectacle. India's plan has been backed by current IOC head Thomas Bach. The last time India hosted an international multi-sport extravaganza was the 2010 Commonwealth Games here. But for the 2036 Olympics, Ahmedabad is being seen as a front-runner to be the host city. India's top sports administrators, including IOA President PT Usha, were at the

Paris Olympics earlier this year to lobby for the country. It is also learnt that India would be pushing for the inclusion of indigenous disciplines like Yoga, Kho Kho and Kabaddi if the bid is successful. The Sports Authority of India's Mission Olympic Cell (MOC) has even presented a detailed report on the measures needed for a successful bid to new sports minister Mansukh Mandaviva. In this document, MOC has identified six disciplines, including Yoga, Kho Kho, Kabaddi, Chess, T20 cricket and Squash for inclusion in the Games if the country gets to host the quadrennial extravaganza. However, the IOA is also mired in controversy owing to a tug of war between Usha and the body's Executive Council, which has steadfastly refused to ratify the appointment of her choice for the CEO's position, Raghuram Iyer.





# Congress accuses PM Modi of lowering discourse, claims BJP losing in Maharashtra and Jharkhand

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress on Tuesday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of lowering the level of discourse during the election campaign and claimed it showed that the BJP was losing assembly elections in Maharashtra and Jharkhand.

After alleging that the INDIA bloc will snatch the "magalsutra" in his Lok Sabha campaign speeches, Modi has stooped to calling the opposition alliance "ghuspaithiya bandhan" (an alliance of infiltrators) and claiming it will "snatch daughters and food" in Maharashtra and Jharkhand, the party said. Congress leader Pawan Khera stated that it is unbecoming of a prime minister to use language similar to that of a "cheap villain from a C-grade Hindi film" and he should uphold the dignity of



his office. Taking a dig, he also asked if Modi was criticising Home Minister Amit Shah's work by claiming that infiltrators had free rein in Jharkhand. "The level of the prime minister's language in electioneering is falling very fast. In Lok Sabha polls, while fearing defeat, he sought to divide society by spewing venom among communities. They did not get enough votes and today they are running a coalition government," he

said. "In the Lok Sabha elections, it started with buffalo, mutton, fish, mangalsutra, Muslim, and by the time it came to Jharkhand elections, it has reached to daughter and bread. "He used to say INDIA people will take away your daughters and mangalsutra and is now running a government in alliance with other partners," Khera said in a post in Hindi on X. In a video message also posted on X, the Congress

leader claimed the BJP's prospects are even worse in Jharkhand and Maharashtra and "they know they are losing". "He is now again talking of 'ghuspaithiya' sarkar, that it will snatch your daughters and food. But, border security is under them as he has been in government for over 10 years. Who is giving this certificate to the BSF, the Home Minister, Rajnath Singh or are you criticising your foreign policy," Khera alleged. The Congress spokesperson wondered if the prime minister is publicly criticising Home Minister Amit Shah with such statements. "Whatever their differences, he should improve his language. Such language and dialogues are not befitting of the prime minister's post," he said. "Such dialogues are spoken by a cheap villain of a C-grade Hindi film and do not

improve upon your language," he said. Accusing the prime minister of having "lost personal respect", Khera said, "At least maintain the respect and reputation of the position you hold". "Please maintain this 'maryada' (decorum) in the leftover time you have, please keep that in mind," the chairman of the media and publicity department of the Congress said. Prime Minister Modi on Monday launched a no-holds-barred attack on the JMM-led coalition in Jharkhand, labelling it a "ghuspaithiya bandhan" (infiltrators' alliance) for "supporting Bangladeshi infiltrators". "Apasement politics has reached its zenith in Jharkhand where the JMM-led coalition is busy supporting Bangladeshi infiltrators. If this continues, the state's tribal population will shrink.

# India to launch European Space Agency's Proba-3 mission in December

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India will launch the European Space Agency's Proba-3 mission early next month from the spaceport at Sriharikota, Science and Technology Minister Jitendra Singh said here on Tuesday. He said the two satellites that are part of the Proba-3 mission to study the Sun were brought to Sriharikota on Tuesday morning for integration with ISRO's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV). "Proba-3 mission of the European Space Agency will be launched by a PSLV rocket from Sriharikota in the first week of December," Singh said at the Indian Space Conclave organised by the Indian Space Association. The mission is likely to be launched on December 4. The two Proba-3 spacecraft will be launched together by the PSLV-XL launcher and placed in the highly elliptical orbit which will ascend to 60,000 km away from Earth



before coming as low as just 600 km. This high orbit is required because the pair of spacecraft will perform their active formation flying for a planned six hours at a time around their maximum altitude, where Earth's gravitational pull will be diminished, as will the amount of propellant needed to fine-tune their positions. Proba-3's two satellites will enable sustained views of the Sun's faint surrounding atmosphere, or corona, that has previously only been

visible for a few brief moments during solar eclipses viewed from the Earth. To achieve this the shadow being cast between the spacecraft must remain in a precise position, which means they must fly autonomously in formation to an accuracy of a single millimetre - about the thickness of an average fingernail. This is the first time that an ESA mission is being launched from India since the original Proba-1 Earth-observing mission in 2001.

# SC junks plea against quashing of LOC issued to ex-house help of Sushant Singh Rajput

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday dismissed the Centre's appeal against an order that quashed a look out circular (LOC) issued to the former house help of late actor Sushant Singh Rajput. A bench of Justices B R Gavai and K V Viswanathan dismissed the appeal noting no one had appeared in the case when the matter came up for hearing. "We do not find any merit in the appeal," held the bench. An LOC is issued by investigating agencies to ensure the accused persons do not flee the country. The Centre had challenged



the April 10 Bombay High Court order quashing the LOC issued by the CBI against one Samuel Miranda. The high court had observed the LOC had been issued on the basis of the registration of the FIR and said there was no apprehension of the

petitioner evading arrest or being unavailable for the trial. "Nothing was brought to our notice in the LOC, reflecting the 'reason' for issuing of the LOC, except registration of an FIR and setting out the gist of the FIR. Neither has anything been brought on record for continuance of the LOC not has the respondent number one, the CBI, placed before us any subsequent request for continuation/renewal of the LOC after the expiry of one year," the high court noted. The CBI was further stated to have neither filed a charge-sheet nor a closure report. "It is not in dispute that the petitioner has joined the investigation and has co-

operated with the same," said the high court. Miranda, before the high court, claimed that the LOC was issued against him in 2020 and the police were yet to file a report. He said the look out circular couldn't be issued indefinitely, particularly when he had co-operated with the investigation and attended the CBI office when summoned. "Keeping the LOC pending for over 3.5 years, has infringed the petitioner's right to travel abroad, and clearly violates his fundamental right under Article 21 of the Constitution India, to travel freely," said Miranda.



President Droupadi Murmu, Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud, Justice Sanjiv Khanna, Union Minister of Law & Justice Arjun Ram Meghwal and Justice BR Gavai release of three publications of the Supreme Court, at Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre (RBCC) PTI

# Centre releases 15th Finance Commission grants for rural local bodies in Haryana, Tripura and Mizoram

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has disbursed the first installment of the 15th Finance Commission grants for 2024-25 to rural local bodies in Haryana, Tripura, and Mizoram, as per the Union Ministry of Panchayati Raj. In particular, Haryana has received untied grants totaling Rs. 194.867 crores. This amount will be allocated to 18 eligible district panchayats, 139 block panchayats, and 5,911 gram panchayats across the state. Untied grants are utilised by RLBs for location-specific needs, except for salaries and other establishment costs. Tied grants are used for basic services such as sanitation, maintaining Open Defecation Free (ODF) status and the supply of drinking water, rainwater harvesting and water recycling. For Tripura, untied grants totalling Rs 31.40 crore and tied grants of Rs 47.10 crore



have been released for all 1,260 rural local bodies (RLBs), including traditional local bodies, 40 block advisory committees and 587 village committees. Mizoram received untied and tied grants of Rs 14.20 crore and Rs 21.30 crore, respectively. These funds have been disbursed to all 834 village councils, including those in Autonomous District Council areas, it said. The Ministry said the Finance Commission grants aim to make the Panchayati Raj Institutions and RLBs more capable, accountable, and self-reliant. "Aligned with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's

vision of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas', this initiative supports inclusive growth and participatory democracy, vital for the development of the country," it added. The Centre, through the Panchayati Raj Ministry and the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti (Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation), recommends the release of 15th Finance Commission grants to states for Rural Local Bodies, which are then released by the Ministry of Finance, the statement said adding that the allocated grants are released in two installments in a financial year.

# Assam CM questions Sonia Gandhi's nationality amid citizenship row

PTI ■ PALONGHA/ASSAM



Hitting out at the Congress for questioning the legitimacy of the citizenship of a BJP by-poll candidate in Assam, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday claimed that questions can also be raised on the nationality of the opposition party's top leader Sonia Gandhi. The Congress in its campaigning for Dholai constituency has cast doubts about the citizenship of BJP candidate Nihar Ranjan Das. Addressing a rally here while campaigning for Das, Sarma said, "If you (Congress) call Nihar Ranjan 'Bangladeshi', I will also call Sonia Gandhi 'Italian'. If you think I am afraid of Sonia Gandhi or Rahul Gandhi, let me tell you I am not." Sarma maintained that Bengali Hindu residents of present Barak Valley of Assam were dwellers of what is now Bangladesh as it was the same country prior to Partition. He blamed the Congress for creating the problems for Bengali-Hindus of Barak Valley, who had to move to present-day Assam following Partition of the country due to atrocities on religious minorities there. Sarma also held the grand old party responsible for the Partition of India in 1947. "Hindus are facing atrocities even now (in Bangladesh). We can see this on television and social media. But you (Congress) cannot raise these issues. Congress was formed to play only negative politics," the CM added. Sarma had addressed another campaign rally under Dholai constituency earlier in the day.

# Union Minister launches 'Tulip' digital platform to empower marginalised artisans

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment, Virendra Kumar, on Tuesday inaugurated a new digital platform 'Tulip' aimed at improving market access for artisans from marginalised communities, including Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Other Backward Classes (OBCs), safai karmacharis, persons with disabilities, and minority groups. The platform was launched under the guidance of the National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation (NBCFDC) and the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, at the 15-days Shilp Samagam Mela at Dilli Haat beginning Tuesday. It offers visitors a vibrant display of traditional

handicrafts, skill demonstrations and an opportunity to support artisan communities directly. Speaking at the launch of Tulip, the Union minister emphasised the government's commitment to fostering financial independence among India's traditional craft workers. It seeks to connect India's skilled artisans with both domestic and global markets, promoting financial independence and empowering traditional craft workers. "Our aim is to bring people from the marginalised communities, including SCs and safai karmacharis, into the mainstream. We are working towards their empowerment, making them atmanirbhar (self-reliant)," he said, adding the ministry's effort is to provide a platform like this to accelerate their progress.

Kumar highlighted the inclusive intent behind Tulip, describing it as "a step in line with 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Prayas, Sabka Vishwas', an inclusive development model. Kumar also announced plans to expand the initiative further, aiming to identify artisans in "every corner" of the country and link them to the digital marketplace. Artisans interested in joining Tulip can register through the platform for more comprehensive access to new markets, while additional support is available through NBCFDC's helpline, he said. "Tulip is designed to address key challenges faced by artisans, particularly the involvement of intermediaries, by facilitating direct sales and ensuring fair compensation for their work, a senior official said.

# NITI Aayog launches 'Jal Utsav' festival to promote water conservation and sustainability

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Government's premier think tank, NITI Aayog will be launching a fortnight long 'Jal Utsav' festival starting Wednesday to create awareness and sensitivity towards water management, conservation and sustainability. Jal Utsav which comes amid an ongoing global and national water crisis will be implemented in 20 Aspirational Districts/Blocks between November 6-24, 2024 in partnership with National Jal Jeevan Mission, Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Union Ministry of Jal Shakti. The Festival is being launched across 20 states, envisages community participation in preservation and protection of water resources. "It seeks to instil a sense of responsibility towards efficient water use among households and water management among utilities



and agencies. In this initiative, school students are being enrolled in water management activities, empowering them to act as catalysts for change within their families and communities," said a Government statement here. The event will be launched with 'Jal Bandhan' - the symbolic tying of sacred thread on water assets by eminent personalities and local leaders. They would also launch 'Fact Sheets on Jal Sampada (water assets)' of

their respective blocks and districts. Besides, discussing the plan for the departmental activities in the fortnight, people would also take the 'Jal Utsav Oath' resolving to maintain and protect the water resources ensuring judicious and sustainable use. Through this pledge, communities are being encouraged to abide by the 5Rs: Respect, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Recharge while using water. The subsequent days of the Jal Utsav fortnight will include cleaning of Jal Sampada assets; celebrating Jal Sanchay Diwas; encouraging teachers to lead through creating water management awareness through stories, experiments and visits to water bodies and also by training the students on water quality testing using field test kits (FTKs). Students will be given exposure visits to water supply and treatment plants

for greater awareness about water management; organizing Jal Utsav Run or marathon; planting of trees under 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' at Jal Sampada premises are also the activities planned for the fortnight. People for skill development under 'Nal Jal Mitra' initiative of Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation will also be enrolled during the Jal Utsav. Self-help Groups (SHGs) and ASHA workers are also being included in this festival for sensitisation and capacity building. The campaign is inspired by the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who proposed the idea of Jal Utsav during the 3rd Chief Secretaries Conference in December 2023. The festival aims to create a collective responsibility toward preserving water resources and ensuring their sustainable management, as per the statement.

# Climate driven changes in Ganga plains: DST Study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Tracing vegetation patterns in the Ganga plain from paleoclimate records with the help of pollen and multiproxy studies, a team of Indian scientists have shown how climate-driven vegetation changes played a crucial role in shaping human history in the Indian subcontinent over the last 2000 years. Besides using pollen extracted from sediment cores taken from Sarsapukhra Lake in Varanasi district, Uttar Pradesh, as well as other multiproxy analyses, the scientists from Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeosciences (BSIP), an autonomous research institute under the Department of Science and Technology (DST), also employed the Earth System Paleoclimate Simulation (ESPS) model to reconstruct monsoon patterns over the past two millennia. The study's findings show that alternating periods of warm and cold temperatures, such as the



Roman Warm Period, Dark Ages Cold Period, Medieval Warm Period, and Little Ice Age, significantly influenced vegetation and climate. These shifts in climate likely played a role in shaping human migrations, as well as the rise and fall of major Indian dynasties like the Guptas, Gurjar Pratiharas, and Cholas. The study holds importance given that there is a notable scarcity of paleoclimate records for the late Holocene (approximately 2,500 years) in the Central Ganga Plain (CGP), highlighting a significant research gap in understanding past climate patterns in this region. In particular, the researchers

explored paleoclimatic clues to better understand historical climate dynamics, particularly in relation to the Indian Summer Monsoon (ISM). The study has been published in the journal Catena. By identifying crops more suited to the changing climate, agricultural practices can be adapted to maintain productivity and ensure the stability of the GDP. This proactive approach could help mitigate the adverse effects of climate change on agriculture, ensuring food security and economic resilience in the future, said the researchers.

# ICG convenes 26th National Oil Spill Disaster Contingency Plan meeting



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) convened the 26th National Oil Spill Disaster Contingency Plan (NOSDCP) meeting here on Tuesday chaired by Director General Paramesh Sivamani, Chairperson NOSDCP. The meeting saw the participation of approximately 80 delegates from various ministries, central and state governments, ports, and oil handling agencies, Coast Guard said. The gathering focused on reviewing the nation's preparedness to respond effectively to oil spill contingencies in Indian waters. As India is on track to become the world's third-largest economy, the volume of oil imports via shipping is also rising. "This increase, alongside the movement of chemicals and other hazardous materials, presents significant risks to India's maritime zones, extensive coastline, coastal populations, marine ecosystems, and tourism industries. Ensuring robust preparedness among the Central Coordinating Agency, coastal states, ports, and other stakeholders is crucial for protecting our marine environment from potential oil spills.





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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Cowardly attack

The temple attack in Canada raises concerns over the safety and rights of the Indian diaspora in Canada

The recent attack on the Hindu Sabha Mandir in Brampton, Canada, has once again brought to light the tense diplomatic situation between India and Canada, with both nations navigating an increasingly complex web of domestic and international issues. The incident, marked by violent clashes involving pro-Khalistani extremists outside the temple, was swiftly condemned by both Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. However, the response from each leader underscores the stark differences in their approach, further straining bilateral ties. Prime Minister Modi's condemnation of the attack was resolute and pointed. Taking to social media, he expressed his disappointment over the attack, calling it a "deliberate" act against Hindu religious sentiments and stressing that "such acts of violence will never weaken India's resolve." PM Modi did not hold back from calling on the Canadian government to ensure justice and uphold the rule of law, sending a clear message that India expects Ottawa to take decisive action to protect its diaspora.



While Trudeau also condemned the temple attack, his statement notably avoided any direct mention of the pro-Khalistani extremists involved. This omission reflects a recurring issue in Trudeau's handling of India-related tensions within Canada, where a vocal pro-Khalistani community has been implicated in acts perceived as hostile by India. Trudeau's hesitance to directly address this faction has been a persistent irritant in India-Canada relations, amplifying concerns in New Delhi about Ottawa's stance on issues impacting Indian diaspora and the wider Hindu community in Canada.

The attack also comes at a time when broader diplomatic relations between the two countries are under significant strain, with recent allegations and counter-allegations creating a sense of mutual mistrust. Last September, Trudeau alleged that India might have been involved in the death of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a known Khalistani activist, who was killed under mysterious circumstances in Canada. Although the Canadian Prime Minister has yet to provide concrete evidence for this claim, the accusation has deepened divisions between the two nations, prompting India to refute any such involvement and criticise the Canadian government's stance. Modi's recent comments have also touched on an additional point of contention: the alleged surveillance of Indian consular staff in Canada. This has not only raised security concerns but has also highlighted the increasing difficulty Indian diplomats face within Canadian borders. The presence of surveillance, paired with incidents like the temple attack, fuels a perception that pro-Khalistani extremists are becoming emboldened, even as Trudeau's administration appears reluctant to fully confront these groups. With each new incident - whether it be a temple attack or allegations of state-backed assassination plots - the divide only seems to grow wider, testing the resilience of both countries' commitments to a constructive relationship.

### PICTALK



A girl collects newly plucked saffron flowers during the harvesting season, in Pulwama

PTI

## A robust EV Infra can support sustainable mobility

As India races toward a sustainable mobility future, electric vehicles have emerged as key drivers in reducing emissions and lowering fossil fuel dependence

Sustainable mobility is the future of transportation, focusing on reducing our reliance on fossil fuels and minimising harmful emissions. In this context, Electric Vehicles (EVs) have emerged as a game-changer, offering lower emissions and a reduced carbon footprint compared to traditional gasoline vehicles. Governments worldwide are encouraging the adoption of EVs to address climate change, and India is no exception.

**India's Push for Electric Mobility:** The Indian government has laid out ambitious targets to boost the adoption of EVs, with policies and incentives underlining its commitment. In July 2023, NITI Aayog set a clear roadmap, aligning with the national goal of achieving net-zero emissions by 2070. The targets are impressive: 30 per cent EV penetration in private cars, 70 per cent in commercial vehicles; 40 per cent in buses and 80 per cent for both two- and three-wheelers. India's EV market has seen tremendous growth, with EV registrations increasing eleven-fold, from 1.3 million in 2018 to



over 15 million in 2023. This momentum is further fueled by the Government's aim to make 100 per cent of EV production local, contributing to both sustainability and economic growth. **Challenges in EV Charging Infrastructure:** While EV adoption is on the rise, India's progress is hindered by gaps in charging infrastructure. Sustainable EV infrastructure, especially charging stations, is critical to supporting the EV ecosystem. However, several challenges remain: **Unequal Distribution of Charging Stations:** Most of India's 1,742 charging stations are located in urban areas, leaving rural regions underserved. **Limited Grid Capacity:** Although EVs will only account for 1.3% to 4.8% of India's overall electricity demand by 2030, managing

peak demand and ensuring grid stability remain key issues. **Technological Constraints:** Current charging methods, including conductive, inductive, and battery swapping, all present unique challenges in cost, efficiency, and scalability. **Regulatory and Policy Barriers:** Compared to global EV leaders like Singapore, India's regulatory framework is still evolving, and better coordination between the government and private sector is essential to build a robust charging infrastructure. To achieve its EV goals, India needs to significantly expand and upgrade its EV charging network. Sustainable EV infrastructure in both urban and rural areas is essential for widespread adoption. Here are key strategies for success: **Expansion to Rural Areas:** Addressing the rural-urban disparity with solar-powered and mobile charging stations can help bring sustainable mobility to remote regions. **Partnerships:** Public-private partnerships will be crucial in scaling up the infrastructure. Stakeholders such as

automakers, technology companies, and the government must work together to establish a reliable and accessible network of charging points. **Technological Innovations:** Standardizing charging systems and investing in advanced technologies like smart grids and energy storage solutions can make EV infrastructure more efficient and user-friendly. **Supportive Policies:** Financial incentives, tax breaks, and clearer regulations on EV infrastructure development can help catalyze faster growth in the sector. As India continues its journey toward sustainable mobility, developing a robust EV charging infrastructure is critical to ensuring the success of its electric mobility mission. With the government's ambitious targets and contributions from key players, India is poised to make substantial progress in transforming its transportation sector. With collective effort, India can achieve its vision of a greener, cleaner future while fostering economic growth. (The author is CTO & Co-Founder, Park+, views are personal)



HITESH GUPTA

Stakeholders such as

# India's tribute to the architect of unity



ANIRBAN GANGULY

In a historic tribute to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the Government has announced sesquicentennial celebration to honour Patel's unyielding legacy in unifying India

Union Home Minister Amit Shah has announced that to honour Sardar Patel's 'monumental contributions', to commemorate, his 'enduring legacy as the visionary behind the establishment of one of the world's most robust democracies and his pivotal role in unifying India from Kashmir to Lakshwadeep' which 'remains indelible', the government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, will celebrate his sesquicentennial from 2024 to 2026.

After the nationwide movement to erect the Statue of Unity, this is another watershed occasion, when the legacy of Sardar Patel would be commemorated and cherished. This honour was long due and is richly deserved. The Sardar's centenary in 1975, was a given a short-shrift. It was deliberate. The Indira-led Congress, busy enforcing an unethical and draconian 'Emergency', had little time to commemorate Sardar Patel.

A commemoration would have certainly raised hard questions. Moreover, could Sardar's democratic legacy be commemorated, with the entire Opposition, minus the crooning communists, behind bars? One of Patel's foremost biographers, Rajmohan Gandhi, writing in 1991, spoke of how acknowledgements in the case of Nehru were 'fulsome' and in the case of Gandhi 'dutiful', but in the case of Patel, were 'niggardly'. Speaking of the Nehru centenary celebrations in 1989, Gandhi writes, that it 'found expression on a thousand billboards, in commemorative TV serials, in festivals and in numerous other platforms'. While Patel's centenary on October 31, 1975, four months after Emergency was clamped, 'was by contrast, wholly neglected by official India and the rest of the Establishment.'

In a long interview with Harry Hodson, British economist and editor, Patel's shadow and trouble-shooter-in-chief, VP Menon, recalled a day when the usually tolerant and absorbing Patel chose to talk back to Nehru. 'You think you made the Congress?', he snapped, 'We are all co-builders in it. You think I want your posi-



tion? If that was the case, I would not have resigned my Presidency and asked Gandhiji that you should take over. I told him that I would stand down.' 'There was rare emotion in the Sardar's voice,' writes Narayani Basu in her biography of Menon citing that particularly acerbic encounter. The post Sardar Patel Congress was made to believe that it was Nehru alone who made it and therefore only he and his political progeny were worthy of commemoration and remembrance. VP was saddened to 'see that under the veil of idealism and greatness Nehru wrapped himself in, there existed a vindictive and petty man.' For someone who saw Patel so closely for many intense years, VP told Hodson, how Sardar 'died as a very, very bitter and sad man', and 'Panditji should never have treated him the way he did.' That propensity of negating Patel and his contribution to our national march never have treated him the way he did.' That propensity of negating Patel and his contribution to our national march percolated through Nehru's dynasty and the Congress that he shepherded post-Patel. In his biographical opus, LK Advani has rightly described the Congress's dégringolade, after Patel, arguing that 'after Sardar Patel passed away, there was no one left in the Congress Party to counterbalance Nehru's negative views on various important issues.' As an



PATEL'S BIOGRAPHER RAJMOHAN GANDHI ARGUES THAT 'IN THE POLITICALLY SIGNIFICANT SELECTION OF AMBEDKAR AND MOOKERJEE, PATEL'S WAS UNDOUBTEDLY THE DECISIVE ROLE'

acolyte of Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee and belonging to his intellectual and political lineage, the occasion of Sardar Patel's sesquicentennial commemoration also brings to my mind the special bond that they shared in free India's first cabinet.

Patel's biographer Rajmohan Gandhi argues that 'in the politically significant selection of Ambedkar and Mookerjee, Patel's was undoubtedly the decisive role.' While Sardar had his eyes on Babasaheb Ambedkar from the 'summer of 1946', Dr Mookerjee, who then represented the Hindu Mahasabha, had earned Sardar's plaudits by calling for and advocating the partition of Bengal in March 1947 and 'by refusing to join an abortive bid for a united and independent sovereign Bengal that Sarat Bose' and the then Muslim League premier of Bengal, mastermind of the bloody 1946 'Direct Action', H S Suhrawardy, had floated. It was a clever ploy by Suhrawardy to try and wean away the whole of Bengal from India and to toss it eventually into his master Jinnah's Pakistan cauldron.

Both, Dr Mookerjee's bold advocacy and Sardar Patel's support to his demand, saved Bengal and ensured that a portion of it remained an integral part of India. It was a moment,

like a few more to follow in the coming years, in which both Sardar Patel and Dr Mookerjee worked closely.

In his voluminous memoirs, 'Living an Era', veteran Congressman DP Mishra, recalls that, when Suhrawardy realised his nefarious plan of snatching away Bengal was falling through, 'he took to making veiled threats about Calcutta being destroyed as a result of communal warfare' and told Mountbatten that he 'feared serious riots and damage' in Calcutta and 'wanted six-months joint control' of the city.

Mishra writes that when Mountbatten sought Patel's reaction to the proposal, Patel replied, 'not even for six hours.' These are all worth remembering, commemorating and revisiting.

The nationwide Statue of Unity movement from 2013 to 2014, the humongous mission of erecting and unveiling the Statue of Unity, and the commemoration of 'Rashtriyta Ekta Diwas', have all been milestones in the last decade. A long and deliberately neglected legacy is being mainstreamed.

(The author is chairman of Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee Research Foundation and National Executive Committee member of the BJP; views are personal)

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### AVOID RELIGIOUS POLITICS

Madam - This refers to the editorial dated 4-11-24. The students' movement that started against 30 per cent reservation announced for the Mukti Bahini martyrs was only a spark and all those who were waiting for an opportunity to throw out the dictatorial regime and the religious fundamentalists joined hands with the agitating students and made the situation worse, ultimately forcing the government head to flee the country. But during the course of the movement, students were pushed behind and the religious fundamentalists took the dominating role and used the agitating students to push forward their tactical goals.

The demands of the students were, after all, ending the reservation, but subsequently it took political and religious turns plunging the country into further social and economic crisis. History is clear with its message. Wherever religion and religious heads are allowed to dominate the agenda it leads to dictatorship and ends up with chaotic scenes on the social and economic front. Religion is an innate affair and politics is a public affair. Mixing these incongruent ingredients will have its inevitable and serious adverse effects. It is the responsibility of every citizen to keep religion and religious fundamentalists at a distance to ensure them not to indulge in politics.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

#### ELECTION DRAMA CONTINUES

Madam - As the 2024 US presidential elections gather momentum, we must be perplexed at the nation's freewheeling ethos in its various forms. Tirades and misinformation are freely used by parties. While it takes the Supreme Court to reveal funds received by our political parties but not the nexus to a specific donor, Elon Musk, the US multimillionaire, openly donates millions to the Trump campaign, and even censors anti-Trump tweets on his X outlet. States in the US have their own laws on elections that cover not only voting procedure but their

#### Violence against Indians in Canada



The deplorable violence at the Hindu Sabha Mandir in Brampton has laid bare Canada's inept handling of a sensitive situation. This is a new low for the Justin Trudeau government, which has been recklessly burning bridges with India following the murder of Khalistani activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar. The allegation that the police targeted Hindu devotees and tried to protect Khalistani supporters has added fuel to the fire. Canadian Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister David Morrison's allegation that Home Minister Amit

Shah ordered a campaign of violence, intimidation and intelligence-gathering targeting Sikh separatists in that country has raised India's hackles. Khalistanis' anti-India protests have put them on a collision course with Indian-origin Canadian citizens who wear the Tricolour on their sleeve. Canada, which proudly regards itself as a peace-loving land of opportunities, needs to deal firmly with those who threaten communal harmony and public order.

It must crack down on troublemakers and rabble-rousers, no matter which community they belong to. Allowing the misuse of Canadian territory to spew venom against India - all in the name of freedom of expression - is undermining the Trudeau government's diplomatic and democratic credentials. Meanwhile, Trudeau owes an explanation for letting anti-India elements have their way with impunity.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Washington

counting too.

They are seldom bound by the Federal Election Commission, whose remit to call the elections has long been usurped by the media. The dominance of the fifth estate in the US seems to be a wart that has come to be its beauty spot. The irony is that Donald Trump, who lost to Biden by 7 million votes in 2020, has not conceded his defeat even today. And despite all these aberrations, the outcome is keenly awaited globally. Transparency is a virtue in US politics, embellished by no-holds-barred campaigns and a media splurge in millions of dollars.

R Narayanan | Mumbai

#### SHINDE'S WINNING STRATEGY

Madam - It is an advantage for Shinde Sena, as they have had a whip hand in providing a clean administration for over 30 months and won the hearts of the people. Moreover, the bow and arrow symbol he inherited as the real Sena is a magic wand for victory. He is carrying our government schemes to reach out to the people in the best way possible and

it is a victory sign for success. Chief Minister Eknath Shinde launched Shiv Sena's campaign for the upcoming Assembly elections with promises of affordable housing for the poor, increasing the monthly installment of the Ladki Bahin Yojana and making Mumbai slum-free.

In the past two years, we have worked to give to people but those who were in power in Mumbai for 25 years did nothing but corruption and scams. They indulged in Rs 3,500 crore corruption in various spheres. The road for victory is well laid with CM also provided updates on the welfare programme, including the increased insurance coverage of Rs 5 lakh under the Mahatma Phule Jan Arogya Yojana, targeted support for youth employment with the 'Ladka Bhau Yojana', and expanded access to free higher education for girls statewide. It is indeed a win-win situation.

Jayanthi Maniam | Vashi

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



## FIRST COLUMN

### LIFE BEYOND THE GRAVE

Rebirth is not only a source of spiritual continuity but also a foundation for the pursuit of higher consciousness



RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJJI

Every time we see death or attend a funeral, we experience something like cemetery-induced reclusion which makes our mind & body numb. This makes us question the very purpose of our life. We start thinking that if death is the be-all and end-all of it-all, and it can kill anyone, anytime, then why should we bother about doing good deeds and fear punishment for our sins? There are mainly two kinds of people who have two different beliefs in this regard.

The first kind of people believe in the rebirth of human beings and strongly feel that the account of our good and bad deeds will be settled on the day of judgment when the dead rise from their graves, and then there are the second kinds of people who not only believe that human souls are reborn, but they also feel that humans transmigrate into 8.4 million species before getting a human birth again. However, there is very little knowledge about the third kind of people who believe that human souls take rebirth and are always in the human body.

Let us suppose that humans are not reborn. In that case what reason would there be to perform good deeds and desist from bad ones? Also, if there were no rebirth there would be no fear of punishment for one's bad deeds either, and little to stop people from doing as they pleased as long as they could evade the law. We should understand that if there is no future after death, people would also not amass wealth right up to their death, or build houses in their old age.

These efforts would be futile, in the absence of rebirth. Thus, our hopes



of eternal prosperity and happiness, desire to earn merit by performing good deeds, fear of punishment in future births and feelings of eternal love and patriotism, would not arise at all if rebirth were not a reality. According to Hindu Mythology, a soul never dies, it is the body that dies & immediately after death, the soul changes body as we change clothes. With modern techniques like Past Life Regression, there are lots of cases around us where we see a child claiming to be experiencing visions of his/her previous births. Many of these cases have been verified by experts and psychologists who have recorded the testimonies of people recalling their previous birth and then cross-checked the facts with official records and the people mentioned by them.

Another simple fact that points to the reality of rebirth is that a soul cannot function without a body. If there were no rebirth, where does the soul go after a person has died? As human beings, nearly all our interactions are with fellow humans. Thus, we create karmic accounts with humans, to which we have to take birth in human form again. The analogy of the seed also illustrates this point. Just as a mango seed brings forth a mango tree, which then produces mangoes, which again provide mango seeds, the human soul possesses human qualities, feelings and experiences, and is the seed of human life. Hence it cannot function in any other living creature's body. Scepticism about the existence of souls and facts like rebirth is widespread because of the lack of an experience of soul consciousness. Such an experience requires spiritual effort for which one has to focus the mind and the intellect inward and then contemplate on it in silence. Slowly one begins to sense the existence of a sentient entity within, which is the soul. Such an experience, repeated over time, brings soul-consciousness, or the belief that one is a soul. It is this experience of reality that removes the shroud of ignorance from all other facts of the subtle world of souls, which we usually dismiss in disbelief for lack of material proof. So let us practice remaining in soul consciousness and enjoy being an enlightened soul without any botheration.

(Writer is a spiritual educator & a popular columnist; views are personal)

# Punjab's MSMEs: Poised to compete on the global stage



A S MITTAL

With tailored state-specific export policies and enhanced trade routes, Punjab's MSMEs are poised to overcome geographical disadvantages and harness lucrative global markets

In a decisive step to enhance industrial growth in Punjab, the NITI Aayog in partnership with the Punjab Government, has sought feedback from stakeholders to explore the potential of MSMEs as a driver of export growth. This initiative is essential for identifying and promptly resolving industry challenges. To meet the objective of boosting Punjab's exports, MSMEs must be equipped with a comprehensive State Export Promotion Policy, linking them to sustainable growth and significant employment generation.

Exports are a fundamental pillar of a state's development, and a strategic geographical location is vital for ensuring global competitiveness and job creation factors for robust economic growth. For instance, Haryana once a barren expanse, has emerged as one of the top five states for export value, thanks to its advantageous proximity to the National Capital Region (NCR). Currently, Haryana outpaces Punjab with five times more exports. Coastal states with access to seaports are a step ahead in engaging in international trade, while landlocked regions like Punjab endure higher trade costs and transit challenges. It is unacceptable that policymakers have not prioritised Punjab's geographical disadvantages as a landlocked border state. The remoteness from seaports, inadequate connectivity, and frequent protests have created significant barriers to investment, resulting in a concerning decline in the industrial sector—a crisis that Punjab can no longer afford to ignore. The non-competitive environment for Punjab's MSMEs, stemming from their distance from seaports, must be addressed head-on.

These challenges are surmountable, and it is crucial to focus on empowering Punjab's vital MSMEs, which have the potential to become an "Export Engine" and deserve a fair platform to compete on equal terms. According to NITI Aayog's latest Export Preparedness Index (EPI), Punjab ranks a disappointing 10th with a score of 58.95, while Haryana leads in 5th place with a score of 63.65. Notably, Gujarat has the highest number of districts among the top 25 in the country for export share (54 per cent), followed by Maharashtra with five districts, Haryana with one, and Punjab with none—only a meagre 2 per cent of the country's exports.

Therefore, it is essential for Punjab to actively engage in export promotion initiatives for every potential MSME to dramatically increase its export figures. Why a State-Specific Policy Needed: The Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) for 2023-2028 has set an ambitious target of achieving \$2 trillion in exports by 2030. However, with 766 districts across the country, it is unacceptable that only 43 cities designated as centres of export excellence receive crucial financial incentives for global market surveys, brand promotions, warehouse establishment, and zero customs duty on capital goods for export-oriented production.

This glaring disparity in the distribution of incentives underscores the urgent need for a more inclusive, state-specific policy. The current focus on a handful of 'Towns of Export Excellence' severely undermines the principles of 'One District, One Product' and 'Sabka Saath,



WHILE INDIA CURRENTLY LAGS BEHIND CHINA IN BICYCLE EXPORTS, WE HAVE A CLEAR AND COMPELLING OPPORTUNITY TO ELEVATE OUR GLOBAL EXPORT TARGETS BY AT LEAST 10 PER CENT OVER THE NEXT TWO TO THREE YEARS, PARTICULARLY IN UNTAPPED MARKETS IN THE US, EUROPE, AND AFRICA

Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas.' Punjab must decisively shift towards 'Industries of Export Excellence' (IEE). This strategy will empower the identification and promotion of key sectors, such as textiles and apparel, bicycles, auto parts, tractors, engineering goods, hand and machine tools, sports goods, footwear, and leather products.

Furthermore, the Foreign Trade Policy is resolutely committed to enhancing decentralised export promotion. The introduction of districts as export hubs is a non-negotiable strategy within the MSMEs Export Promotion Policy. This initiative will systematically identify potential export products and services in every district, establishing institutional mechanisms for their promotion—a critical step toward realising the policy's objectives. Every district in Punjab possesses significant untapped potential.

It is essential to identify additional districts for bolstering export operations, aligning with the imperative 'Vocal for Local' and 'Make in India' initiatives. India's vision of transforming each district into an export hub demands the active engagement of MSMEs from all districts. The time for action is now. MSMEs Export Potential: Punjab boasts an impressive 14.65 lakh MSMEs, which are the backbone of the state's industrial growth and are primed for global expansion.

These MSMEs are powerful hubs, existing in industries such as textiles and apparel, bicycles, hosiery, tractors, automobile components, hand tools, machine tools, sports goods, engineering goods, footwear, and leather goods. They constitute a staggering 99.7 per cent of all MSMEs in the region, employing 65 per cent of the industrial workforce and generating 78 per cent of the state's total industrial output. These industrial clusters possess immense poten-

tial and can be fostered further. Ludhiana stands as a powerhouse, ranking first (Rs 20,140 Crore export business) among the top ten exporting districts with an export business valued at Rs 55,844 Crore for 2023-24. It leads the nation by producing 92 per cent of India's bicycle parts and 75 per cent of all bicycles, commanding an 80 per cent share in bicycle exports from India.

While India currently lags behind China in bicycle exports, we have a clear and compelling opportunity to elevate our global export targets by at least 10 per cent over the next two to three years, particularly in untapped markets in the US, Europe, and Africa. As the foremost producer of blended yarn and hosiery, Ludhiana holds its ground as the second-largest producer of polyester silk, fibre, and cotton yarn. It dominates woollen knitwear (95 per cent) and hosiery (65 per cent) exports, showcasing unparalleled strength in the global market. While China captures a commanding 37 per cent share in textiles apparel and hosiery, India needs to aggressively increase its mere 5% share in the worldwide market. The opportunity for growth is vast, particularly in lucrative export markets such as the USA, UAE, UK, Germany, France, and Australia.

In the farm equipment sector, Punjab is a force to be reckoned with, hosting one-third of the total original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and standing as the leading tractor manufacturer. With a commanding 34.3 per cent share in exports, Sonalika IITL stands as the largest tractor exporter (Rs 3000 Cr) in 2023-24. Despite India's current 2.2 per cent share in the global market, the potential for over 2 lakh tractors to be exported in the next 2-3 years to burgeoning markets such as Brazil, Argentina, Turkey, SAARC, and African nations is undeniable. Jalandhar dominates the sports goods sector,

producing 45 per cent of the nation's total and contributing to 75 per cent of the country's sports goods exports. While China currently leads with a 42.2 per cent share, India's scant 0.56 per cent share of global exports highlights the tremendous untapped potential for growth. The time is ripe for Punjab to seize lucrative opportunities in markets like the USA, UK, Brazil, Germany, Mexico, South Africa, Colombia, and Argentina, and make a formidable mark on the global stage. The Way Forward: To enhance the competitive edge of MSMEs in foreign trade, it's crucial to allow the flow of bilateral trade from Punjab through the Wagah Border of Pakistan to Middle Eastern countries, CIS nations, Europe, and the US. Establishing a Directorate of Exports in the state is vital for aligning the state and central government's export promotion policies.

One of the most pressing issues is the high borrowing cost of 10-12 per cent. It is essential to introduce interest subvention to create a level playing field for MSMEs, especially when compared to leading global players like China (3.1 per cent), Vietnam (4.5 per cent), Malaysia (3 per cent), and Thailand (3 per cent). Competitive and efficient logistics are foundational for export growth. Therefore, policy-backed support for state-owned wagons in landlocked border states like Punjab is essential. This will help alleviate the burden of over-freight and provide a more equitable environment for driving export growth.

The Author is Vice-Chairman of Sonalika IITL Group, Vice-Chairman of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board, Chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council and President of Tractor and Mechanization Association (TMA); Views expressed are personal.

# How mobile video conferencing is bridging the digital divide in Bihar

The Bihar Government has taken a bold step toward real-time governance with the launch of a mobile outdoor video conferencing system

In a time when digital communication is essential for efficient government, resolving infrastructural and geographic obstacles is vital to making decisions in real time. This need is especially acute in large states like Bihar, where there are major connectivity challenges due to the expansive rural environment.

To narrow this gap, a major project was started by Bihar State Electronics Development Corporation (BELTRON) along with Millenium Automation as a system integrator, to establish a mobile outdoor video conferencing system that would improve communication challenges and enhance the state's governance. Because of this initiative, the administra-



VARINDER SINGH JAWANDA

tion can now function smoothly throughout Bihar by introducing an inventive, stronger video conferencing system.

**Improving Governance** With the use of the new outdoor video conferencing technology, authorities in Bihar can now hold virtual meetings and communicate with other officials directly from almost anywhere in the

state. This technology allows government officials to communicate in real-time, independent of their actual location, providing a much-needed degree of flexibility. This solution's robust, continuous connectivity and high-quality video streaming facilitate quicker decision-making, effective governance, and a more open line of contact with rural residents.

**Recognising the Challenge** In places remote from urban networks, ensuring reliable, fast communication was crucial but challenging. To prevent interruptions, a smooth interface between the new mobile video conferencing system and the Bihar State Wide Area Network (BSWAN) was required.

Sustaining steady uptime was essential since government communications are so vital. To maintain system functionality and quickly address any technological problems, comprehensive maintenance assistance was also necessary, guaranteeing dependability and continuity throughout the state.

**A Comprehensive Solution** With portable video conferencing devices that have high-quality audio and video components in cases that are easy to move, a specially designed solution was developed to meet these demands. Even in remote locations, the system's smooth integration with the current Bihar State Wide Area Network (BSWAN) guaranteed reliable service quality.



Advanced networking equipment allowed for seamless data transfer, particularly in areas with limited bandwidth. Disruptions during crucial meetings were minimised by optimising bandwidth in locations far away. Prompt technical assistance, and on-site maintenance guaranteed continuous strong system operation across the state. Key Outcomes of the Project

This initiative empowered Bihar's government to conduct mobile, outdoor video conferences statewide, enabling officials to make real-time decisions from any location, thus streamlining operations and improving emergency response.

As a technological advancement, it highlights how mobile technology can bridge the digital divide, aligning with the "Digital India" vision by enhancing transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement.

With scalability for future needs, the system can expand into public services and disaster management, offering a sustainable, resilient model for evolving governance demands, and setting an inspiring precedent for other

states. Future Prospects and Potential for Growth. This outdoor video conferencing solution has the potential to revolutionise governance in Bihar and other similar states. As Bihar continues to advance, the system can be further expanded to incorporate additional features and applications, including new e-governance initiatives. Emerging technologies like IoT, advanced bandwidth optimisation, and real-time analytics are being explored to enhance communication efficiency even further.

The success of this project opens doors for expansion into other government sectors, allowing more departments to benefit from mobile video conferencing. In conclusion, this outdoor video

conferencing initiative has enabled the Bihar government to communicate and make decisions effectively, regardless of officials' physical locations.

It has solved an immediate challenge while laying the foundation for future technological advancements in government communication. By bridging the digital divide, this solution is enhancing governance in Bihar, helping to build a more inclusive, connected, and prosperous state. The collaboration with BELTRON demonstrates that strategic digital initiatives can empower state governments to deliver on the promise of accessible, efficient governance for all.

(The writer is CEO at MAPL World; views are personal)

# Confident whatever verdict, our relationship with US will only grow: Jaishankar on US election

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The race between Democratic leader Kamala Harris and her Republican rival Donald Trump for the White House has been truly unprecedented as it saw drama, tragedy, political comebacks, fierce rhetoric and a historically razor-tight contest.



may not accept the election outcome in case of a defeat. Overall, it has been a roller-coaster ride for both 60-year-old Harris and 78-year-old Trump. Trump received his party's nomination in March and formally at the Republican National Convention (RNC) in July — in a historic comeback after remaining in political wilderness for months following several court cases.

former president to get the nomination for the top office on the planet after being convicted of a felony. "Trump has made one of the biggest political comebacks since Richard Nixon's in terms of the political struggles that he has had in the last four years," Communication Strategist Anang Mittal said.

Trump raised his fist in defiance, images that drew a lot of emotional support from his die-hard supporters. For Harris too, it has been a dramatic ride after Biden ended his re-election campaign in July, nearly weeks after he came under severe scrutiny following his incoherent performance at a televised debate with Trump.

In the overall campaign, Harris has been projecting the election as the one to protect the country's fundamental freedoms, safeguard constitutional values and ensure women's rights. On his part, Trump has maintained his signature aggressive rhetoric and promising to rebuild the economy and rid the US from illegal immigrants.

# Ukrainian troops engaged with North Korean units for the first time in Russia

AP ■ KYIV

Ukrainian troops have for the first time engaged with North Korean units that were recently deployed to help Russia in the war with its neighbour, Ukraine's defence minister said Tuesday. Another Kyiv official said Ukraine's army fired artillery at North Korean soldiers in Russia's Kursk border region.

mixed with Russian troops and are misidentified on their uniforms, Umerov was quoted as saying by KBS. That makes it hard to say whether there were any North Korean casualties, he said. Umerov reportedly said he expects that five North Korean units, each consisting of about 3,000 soldiers, will be deployed to the Kursk area.

to the war under a pact with Moscow. The Pentagon said Monday that at least 10,000 North Korean soldiers were in Russia near Ukraine's border. More troops from North Korea's 1.3-million-strong army may be slated for deployment in Russia, according to an analysis published Tuesday by the European Council on Foreign Relations, an international think tank.

# Israeli strikes kill 30 in Gaza

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Israeli strikes killed at least 30 people overnight in Gaza, according to Palestinian health officials. Strikes early Tuesday killed 10 people in the Gaza Strip, including four children and two women, and a strike late Monday on the northern Gaza town of Beit Lahiya killed at least 20 people, including eight women and six children.

militant group are expanding beyond Lebanon's border areas. Israel is also fighting a seemingly endless war against Hamas in northern Gaza. Since the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah erupted in 2023, at least 3,000 people have been killed and some 13,500 wounded in Lebanon, the Health Ministry reports.

The Lebanese Red Cross will try again to remove bodies from a strike site: The Lebanese Red Cross will send another convoy Tuesday to Wata al-Khiyam in southern Lebanon to search for and remove the bodies of 15 people killed in an Israeli airstrike, Lebanon's state-run National News Agency said.

weeks over several instances where Israel has struck in or close to areas where they have deployed paramedics to search for wounded people and casualties. The Israeli military said it issued warnings to the residents there in late October to evacuate ahead of strikes on Hezbollah militant targets, and told ambulances to avoid the area.

# Elon Musk's USD 1 million-a-day voter sweepstakes can proceed, says judge

AP ■ PHILADELPHIA

The USD 1 million-a-day voter sweepstakes that Elon Musk's political action committee is hosting in swing states can continue through Tuesday's presidential election, a Pennsylvania judge ruled Monday.

The winners of the sweepstakes did not win by chance but are instead paid spokespeople for the group, Musk's lawyers said in court Monday. Musk lawyer Chris Gober said the final two recipients before Tuesday's presidential election will be in Arizona on Monday and Michigan on Tuesday.

were someone whose values aligned" with the group. The disclosures prompted a lawyer for District Attorney Larry Krasner to call the effort a "scam" that is "designed to actually influence a national election."

violates state election law and contradict what Musk promised when he announced them during an appearance with Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump's campaign in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, on October 19. "We're going to be awarding a million dollars randomly to people who have signed the petition every day from now until the election," Musk vowed.

FORM NO. NCLT 3A  
Advertising Detailing Petition  
BEFORE THE NATIONAL COMPANY LAW TRIBUNAL  
BENCH-VI NEW DELHI

In the matter of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016  
And  
In the Matter of  
Section 7 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016  
read with rule 4 of the insolvency  
and Bankruptcy Rules, 2016  
And  
In the Matter of  
Central Bank of India  
Stressed Assets Management Branch,  
Jeevan Tara Building, 5, Parliament Street, New Delhi-110001  
Vs  
M/s. Ashvinaayak Jeweller Pvt. Ltd.  
CIN - U36912DL2007PTCI18162  
Registered Office:  
2612-13, Bank Street, Gurudwara Road Corner, Karol Bagh, New Delhi-110005  
Company Petition / No.(IB) 517 of 2024

NOTICE OF PETITION

A petition/application/reference (Case Title: Central Bank of India Vs M/s. Ashvinaayak Jeweller Pvt. Ltd.) under section 7 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 read with rule 4 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy (Application to Adjudicating Authority) Rules, 2016 for initiating a insolvency proceedings, was presented by BKM & Associate on the 31st Day of May 2024, and the said petition is fixed for hearing before Bench-VI of National Company Law Tribunal, New Delhi on 22.11.2024. Any person desirous of supporting or opposing the said petition / application/reference should send to the petitioner's advocate, notice of his intention, signed by him or his advocate, with his name and address, so as to reach the petitioner's advocate not later than two days before the date fixed for the hearing of the petition / application / reference. Where he seeks to oppose the petition / application / reference, the grounds of opposition or a copy of his affidavit shall be furnished with such notice. A copy of the petition / application / reference will be furnished by the undersigned to any person requiring the same on payment of the prescribed charges for the same.

(Sd/-) BKM & ASSOCIATES  
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Mobile: 9868113796, E-mail: bkmdelhi@gmail.com

Dated 05/11/2024

FORM NO. NCLT 3A  
Advertising Detailing Petition  
BEFORE THE NATIONAL COMPANY LAW TRIBUNAL  
BENCH-VI NEW DELHI

In the matter of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016  
And  
In the Matter of  
Section 7 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016  
read with rule 4 of the insolvency  
and Bankruptcy Rules, 2016  
And  
In the Matter of  
Central Bank of India  
Stressed Assets Management Branch,  
Jeevan Tara Building, 5, Parliament Street, New Delhi-110001  
Vs  
M/s. J. S. Designer Ltd.  
CIN - U51311DL1997PLC087099  
Registered Office:  
178, F.I.E. Industrial Area Palparanj, East Delhi, Delhi - 110092, India  
Also At: D-222, Sector-63, Noida-201301 U.P. &  
Also At: B-109, Swasthya Vihar, Delhi East, New Delhi-110092  
Company Petition / No.(IB) 510 of 2024

NOTICE OF PETITION

A petition/application/reference (Case Title: Central Bank of India Vs M/s. J. S. Designer) under section 7 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 read with rule 4 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy (Application to Adjudicating Authority) Rules, 2016 for initiating a insolvency proceedings, was presented by BKM & Associate on the 16th Day of May 2024, and the said petition is fixed for hearing before Bench-VI of National Company Law Tribunal, New Delhi on 25.11.2024. Any person desirous of supporting or opposing the said petition / application/reference should send to the petitioner's advocate, notice of his intention, signed by him or his advocate, with his name and address, so as to reach the petitioner's advocate not later than two days before the date fixed for the hearing of the petition / application / reference. Where he seeks to oppose the petition / application / reference, the grounds of opposition or a copy of his affidavit shall be furnished with such notice. A copy of the petition / application / reference will be furnished by the undersigned to any person requiring the same on payment of the prescribed charges for the same.

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Mobile: 9868113796, E-mail: bkmdelhi@gmail.com

Dated 05/11/2024

FORM NO. NCLT 3A  
Advertising Detailing Petition  
BEFORE THE NATIONAL COMPANY LAW TRIBUNAL  
BENCH-V NEW DELHI

In the matter of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016  
And  
In the Matter of  
Section 7 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016  
read with rule 4 of the insolvency  
and Bankruptcy Rules, 2016  
And  
In the Matter of  
Central Bank of India  
Stressed Assets Management Branch,  
Jeevan Tara Building, 5, Parliament Street, New Delhi-110001  
Vs  
M/s. Diamond Hut India (P) Limited  
CIN- U36912DL2002PTCI 16189  
Registered Office:  
2883/17, Hardyan Singh Road, Karol Bagh, New Delhi-110005.  
Company Petition / No.(IB) 527 of 2024

NOTICE OF PETITION

A petition/application/reference (Case Title: Central Bank of India Vs M/s. Diamond Hut India (P) Limited) under section 7 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 read with rule 4 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy (Application to Adjudicating Authority) Rules, 2016 for initiating a insolvency proceedings, was presented by BKM & Associate on the 18 day of May 2024 and the said petition is fixed for hearing before Bench-V of National Company Law Tribunal, New Delhi on 28.11.2024. Any person desirous of supporting or opposing the said petition / application/reference should send to the petitioner's advocate, notice of his intention, signed by him or his advocate, with his name and address, so as to reach the petitioner's advocate not later than two days before the date fixed for the hearing of the petition / application / reference. Where he seeks to oppose the petition / application / reference, the grounds of opposition or a copy of his affidavit shall be furnished with such notice. A copy of the petition / application / reference will be furnished by the undersigned to any person requiring the same on payment of the prescribed charges for the same.

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Mobile: 9868113796, E-mail: bkmdelhi@gmail.com

Dated 05/11/2024

# Canadian cop suspended for attending pro-Khalistan protest outside Hindu temple

PTI ■ OTTAWA

A Canadian police officer has been suspended for participating in a pro-Khalistan protest outside the Hindu Sabha temple in Brampton, according to a media report. On Sunday, protestors carrying Khalistani flags clashed with people at the Hindu temple and disrupted a consular event co-organised by the temple authorities and the Indian Consulate.

the Community Safety and Policing Act," he said. "We are investigating the circumstances in totality depicted in the video and are unable to provide further information until such time that this investigation is complete." Peel police previously said three people have been charged after violence erupted as Indian consular officials visited the Hindu Sabha Mandir temple Sunday. Videos circulating on social media show demonstrators holding banners in support of Khalistan, the CBC report added.

FORM NO. NCLT 3A  
Advertising Detailing Petition  
BEFORE THE NATIONAL COMPANY LAW TRIBUNAL  
BENCH-IV NEW DELHI

In the matter of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016  
And  
In the Matter of  
Section 95 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016  
read with rule 7(2) of the insolvency  
and Bankruptcy Rules, 2016  
And  
In the Matter of  
Central Bank of India  
Stressed Assets Management Branch,  
Jeevan Tara Building, 5, Parliament Street, New Delhi-110001  
Vs  
M/s. Pooja Verma  
Address:  
W/o Mr. Pradeep Kumar WZ 1945-B, Rani Bagh, Delhi-110034.  
Company Petition / No.(IB) 379 of 2024

NOTICE OF PETITION

A petition/application/reference (Case Title: Central Bank of India Vs Mrs. Pooja Verma) under section 95 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 read with rule 7(2) of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy (Application to Adjudicating Authority) Rules, 2016 for initiating a insolvency proceedings, was presented by BKM & Associate on the 18th Day of March 2024, and the said petition is fixed for hearing before Bench-IV of National Company Law Tribunal, New Delhi on 04.12.2024. Any person desirous of supporting or opposing the said petition / application/reference should send to the petitioner's advocate, notice of his intention, signed by him or his advocate, with his name and address, so as to reach the petitioner's advocate not later than two days before the date fixed for the hearing of the petition / application / reference. Where he seeks to oppose the petition / application / reference, the grounds of opposition or a copy of his affidavit shall be furnished with such notice. A copy of the petition / application / reference will be furnished by the undersigned to any person requiring the same on payment of the prescribed charges for the same.

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Mobile: 9868113796, E-mail: bkmdelhi@gmail.com

Dated 05/11/2024

FORM NO. NCLT 3A  
Advertising Detailing Petition  
BEFORE THE NATIONAL COMPANY LAW TRIBUNAL  
BENCH-II NEW DELHI

In the matter of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016  
And  
In the Matter of  
Section 7 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016  
read with rule 4 of the insolvency  
and Bankruptcy Rules, 2016  
And  
In the Matter of  
Central Bank of India  
Stressed Assets Management Branch,  
Jeevan Tara Building, 5, Parliament Street, New Delhi-110001  
Vs  
M/s. Richfield Industries Pvt. Ltd.  
CIN- U15400DL2012PTC232590  
Registered Office:  
F-213, E-1 Lado Sarai, South Delhi, New Delhi, Delhi-110030 India.  
Company Petition / No.(IB) 583 of 2024

NOTICE OF PETITION

A petition/application/reference (Case Title: Central Bank of India Vs M/s. Richfield Industries Pvt. Ltd.) under section 7 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 read with rule 4 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy (Application to Adjudicating Authority) Rules, 2016 for initiating a insolvency proceedings, was presented by BKM & Associate on the 18th Day of May 2024, and the said petition is fixed for hearing before Bench-II of National Company Law Tribunal, New Delhi on 20.12.2024. Any person desirous of supporting or opposing the said petition / application/reference should send to the petitioner's advocate, notice of his intention, signed by him or his advocate, with his name and address, so as to reach the petitioner's advocate not later than two days before the date fixed for the hearing of the petition / application / reference. Where he seeks to oppose the petition / application / reference, the grounds of opposition or a copy of his affidavit shall be furnished with such notice. A copy of the petition / application / reference will be furnished by the undersigned to any person requiring the same on payment of the prescribed charges for the same.

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Mobile: 9868113796, E-mail: bkmdelhi@gmail.com

Dated 05/11/2024

FORM NO. NCLT 3A  
Advertising Detailing Petition  
BEFORE THE NATIONAL COMPANY LAW TRIBUNAL  
BENCH-VI NEW DELHI

In the matter of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016  
And  
In the Matter of  
Section 7 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016  
read with rule 4 of the insolvency  
and Bankruptcy Rules, 2016  
And  
In the Matter of  
Central Bank of India  
Stressed Assets Management Branch,  
Jeevan Tara Building, 5, Parliament Street, New Delhi-110001  
Vs  
M/s. Sankalpa Overseas Pvt. Ltd.  
CIN-U74899DL1988PTC034254  
Registered Office:  
S-384, Panchshila Park, Ground Floor, South Delhi, New Delhi-110017  
Company Petition / No.(IB) 520 of 2024

NOTICE OF PETITION

A petition/application/reference (Case Title: Central Bank of India Vs M/s. Sankalpa Overseas Pvt. Ltd.) under section 7 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 read with rule 4 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy (Application to Adjudicating Authority) Rules, 2016 for initiating a insolvency proceedings, was presented by BKM & Associate on the 13th Day of May 2024, and the said petition is fixed for hearing before Bench-VI of National Company Law Tribunal, New Delhi on 25.11.2024. Any person desirous of supporting or opposing the said petition / application/reference should send to the petitioner's advocate, notice of his intention, signed by him or his advocate, with his name and address, so as to reach the petitioner's advocate not later than two days before the date fixed for the hearing of the petition / application / reference. Where he seeks to oppose the petition / application / reference, the grounds of opposition or a copy of his affidavit shall be furnished with such notice. A copy of the petition / application / reference will be furnished by the undersigned to any person requiring the same on payment of the prescribed charges for the same.

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Mobile: 9868113796, E-mail: bkmdelhi@gmail.com

Dated 05/11/2024

# Two Chinese nationals shot at by Pak guard

PTI ■ KARACHI

Two Chinese nationals were injured on Tuesday when a local security guard opened fire at them following a quarrel in Pakistan's port city of Karachi, police said. The incident reportedly took place at a police station in the Industrial Trading Estate area of Karachi in Sindh province.

The condition of one of the injured is said to be critical. Sindh Home Minister Ziaul Hassan Lanjar instructed authorities to arrest the security guard involved in the incident. According to a statement by the provincial home department, Lanjar sought details from the South deputy inspector general of police. The home minister said that companies providing security to Chinese residents and foreigners should be audited and the audit report must be sent for review. Lanjar asserted that physical and mental fitness tests for the guards, who were assigned to security duties, must be ensured, adding that services should be taken from fully trained and fit security guards.





# Project taken up to restore 4,500 hectares of degraded mangroves in Sundarbans

PTI ■ KOLKATA

A private sector-supported project has been taken up to restore 4,500 hectares of degraded mangroves in West Bengal's Sundarbans, an official said on Tuesday. The programme also seeks to create sustainable economic opportunities for villages in the Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove ecosystem. Senior officials of project partners EcoAct and Meensou India are currently on a visit to the restoration sites and engaging with communities in the South 24 Parganas district of the state.



The project is being implemented under the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) programme which is the world's most widely used greenhouse gas (GHG) crediting scheme. "The Sundari Mangroves Project to restore 4,500 hectares of degraded mangroves in India's Sundarbans and it demonstrates how carbon finance can drive effective climate action when it genuinely empowers local communities. By ensuring benefits flow directly to communities, we are seeing how private sector support can create real opportunities for those who depend on these ecosystems," Stephane Tromilin, Head of Project Development at EcoAct, said. Other companies should also consider investing in this project as part of their sustainability strategies, Tromilin said. "For generations, our families are dependent on these mangroves for our survival - for fishing, for protection from storms, for our daily needs. But we have watched them disappear year after year," said Swapan Maity, member of Dhablat Panchayat and Secretary of Chemaguri

Byasak Samity. He expressed hope that this project would help them restore what they are losing, create jobs and protect their homes. The project is expected to create local employment opportunities over its 20-year duration. While the restoration is guided by scientific protocols, community members are involved in implementation and monitoring, with equal opportunities for men and women in the region. Communities also retain decision-making power over how project benefits are

reinvested in their local development priorities, officials said. "Our role has been limited to support local communities in realizing their vision for mangrove restoration. Their traditional knowledge and daily engagement with these ecosystems make them the most qualified stewards of this project," said Soumya Darshan Pradhan, CEO & MD of Meensou India. Meensou develops carbon offset and credit projects focusing on social capacity building, economic growth, equitable wealth distribution, and environmental protection.

The restoration effort will help revitalise crucial habitats for the iconic Royal Bengal Tiger and protect over 1,400 other species that call the Sundarbans their home. Through the planting of 19 native mangrove species, the project aims to strengthen the ecosystem's natural resilience, protecting thousands of homes from erosion and extreme weather events, officials said.

"The recent cyclone (Dana) in West Bengal is a stark reminder of our region's vulnerability to climate-related disasters," said Rajkumar Jana, a teacher at Chowrahee Jana Kalyan High School. A global assessment by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) found that half of the world's mangrove ecosystems are at risk of collapse. There is nearly 20 per cent classified as "Endangered" or "Critically Endangered."

The India State of Forest Report 2021, revealed that the very dense mangrove cover in the Sundarbans has shrunk to 994 sq km in 2021, down from 1,038 sq km in 2011, a 4.23 per cent decrease over a decade, which the report described as worrying.

# Government launches Phase-II of subsidised wheat flour, rice sale under 'Bharat brand'



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Tuesday launched phase-II retail sales of wheat flour and rice under the Bharat brand at subsidised rates to provide relief to consumers from high prices. Wheat flour (atta) will be sold at Rs 30 per kg and rice at Rs 34 per kg in 5kg and 10kg packets through cooperatives NCCF, Nafed and Kendriya Bhandar and e-commerce platforms. "This is a temporary intervention to provide relief to consumers," Food Minister Pralhad Joshi said after flagging off the mobile vans of these cooperatives. The government has allocated 3.69 lakh tonne of wheat and 2.91 lakh tonne of rice from the Food

Corporation of India (FCI) for the phase-2 retail intervention under the Price Stabilisation Fund. "This intervention will continue till the allocated stock gets exhausted. If more (is) required, we have enough stock and will allocate again," Joshi said. Under the new pricing structure, wheat flour will be available in 5kg and 10kg packs at Rs 30 per kg, while rice will be sold at Rs 34 per kg -- a slight increase from Phase-I rates of Rs 27.5 and Rs 29 per kg, respectively. Addressing concerns over lower rice sales in Phase I, Joshi emphasised that the government's objective wasn't business-oriented. "Our motto is to give relief to consumers and control prices in the market," he said,

adding that the government would consider introducing smaller pack sizes if demanded. The minister also called for a study to understand price firmness despite surplus rice stocks, though maintaining those prices were "largely under control", with only slight fluctuations in normal quality varieties. The previous phase, from October 2023 to June 30, 2024, saw the distribution of 15.20 lakh tonne of wheat flour and 14.58 lakh tonne of rice. On future allocations, Joshi assured adequate stocks for continued intervention if required. Minister of State for Food BL Verma and Food Secretary Sanjeev Chopra were also present at the event.

# Finance ministry initiates 4th phase of consolidation of RRBs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a bid to achieve operational efficiency and cost rationalisation, the Finance Ministry has initiated the fourth round of consolidation for Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) and the number of such banks is likely to come down to 28 from 43 at present. As per the roadmap prepared by the Finance Ministry, 15 RRBs operating in various states would be merged. Among states that will see consolidation of RRBs include Andhra Pradesh, which has the maximum number of RRBs (4), Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal (3 each), and Bihar, Gujarat, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha and Rajasthan (2 each).



In the case of Telangana, the amalgamation of RRBs will be subject to bifurcation of assets and liabilities of Andhra Pradesh Gramena Vikas Bank (APGVB) between APGVB and Telangana Gramena Bank. "Given the rural expansion of RRBs and agro-climatic or geographical ethos and in order to retain the USP of RRBs viz the closeness to communities, it is the felt need to embark on further consolidation of RRBs towards the goal of 'One State-One RRB' so as to derive the benefit of scale efficiency and cost rationalisation," Department of Financial Services said in a communication to head of state-owned banks. A road map has been prepared in consultation with NABARD for further consolidation which will bring down the number of RRBs to 28 from 43, it said. The Department of Financial Services has sought comments from the chiefs of sponsor banks of RRBs by November 20. The Centre had initiated structural consolidation of RRBs in 2004-05 which resulted in reduction of such institutions from 196 to 43 till 2020-21 through 3 phases of amalgamation. These banks were formed under the RRB Act, 1976, with an objective to provide credit and other facilities to small farmers, agricultural labourers and artisans in rural areas. The Act was amended in 2015 whereby such banks were permitted to raise capital from sources other than the Centre, states and

sponsor banks. Currently, the Centre holds 50 per cent in RRBs, while 35 per cent and 15 per cent are with the concerned sponsor banks and state governments, respectively. Even after stake dilution, the shareholding of the Centre and the sponsor public sector banks together cannot fall below 51 per cent, according to the amended Act. Earlier in June, two bank unions -- AIBOC and AIBEA -- had demanded the merger of RRBs with their respective Sponsor Banks to ensure overall efficiency and viability of the banking sector. The merger of RRBs with their sponsor banks will be a seamless technological transition, the All India Bank Officers' Confederation (AIBOC) and All India Bank Employees Association (AIBEA) said in a letter addressed to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

# Swiggy seeks valuation of USD 11.3 Billion; IPO to open on Wednesday

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Food delivery and quick-commerce major Swiggy, which is coming out with its initial public offering (IPO) on Wednesday, is seeking a valuation of about USD 11.3 billion. The Bengaluru-based company is aiming to garner Rs 11,327 crore from the IPO, which will comprise a fresh issue of shares worth Rs 4,499 crore along with an offer for sale (OFS) of Rs 6,828 crore. Swiggy has set a price band of Rs 371 to Rs 390 per share for its maiden public issue. The issue will open for public subscription on November 6 and conclude on November 8. Speaking about the pricing, Swiggy Food Marketplace CEO Rohit Kapoor said, "We feel we have priced it right and we are looking forward to the next few days."



The valuation of Swiggy has been pegged at about USD 11.3 billion (about Rs 95,000 crore) at the upper price band. Rival Zomato, which went public in July 2021, has a market valuation of Rs 2.13 lakh crore. "Our pricing is in the range of Rs 371-390 which corresponds to a value of about USD 11.3 billion roughly. It is not exact because it depends on where the issue actually clears at the end of the day," Kapoor told PTI in an interview. Asked about media reports regarding slashing the valuation of Swiggy, Kapoor

clarified that there has been no lowering of valuation as the real value of the company is determined when the transaction actually happens. "This is all speculation in the media on what the value is. So the fact of the matter is, the value has not gone up or down. The value is exactly where it is supposed to be... I just want to set clearly on record that there has been no lowering of valuation per se. There was a discovery process and at the end of it, this is the price that we collectively feel very good about," he added. The issue comes amid a series of IPOs in the recent past, including South Korean car maker Hyundai's mega Rs 28,000-crore issue. Swiggy, founded in 2014, posted a loss of Rs 611 crore in the quarter ended June 2024, narrowing from Rs 564 crore in the same period last year.

# Tenders floated to buy organic cow dung in Himachal

PTI ■ SHIMLA

Tenders have been floated for buying organic cow dung at Rs 3 per kg, and the successful bidders will also provide bags, transportation and stocking facilities, State Agriculture Minister Chander Kumar said on Tuesday. With a thrust on organic farming, hi-tech techniques will be used in agriculture to increase farmers' income, he said, adding that the monthly income of a farm family should be between Rs 20,000 to Rs 25,000 to sustain agriculture. The Congress party had promised to buy cow dung at Rs 2 per kg before the last assembly polls, but we do not wish to buy raw cow dung and would purchase organic cow dung for Rs 3 per Kg, he told PTI. Organic cow dung is a natural and nutrient-rich fertiliser



that can be used to improve soil health and plant growth. "Tenders have been floated for buying organic cow dung for Rs 3 per kg, and the company entrusted with the task would provide bags, fill and seal them besides providing transportation and stocking facility and would be paid Rs 4-5 per kg," he noted. The stocking of cow dung will also be done in Himachal Pradesh State Co-operative Marketing & Consumers Federation Ltd (HIMFED) godowns, and the deputy directors in all districts have been directed to bring in use the defunct agri farms, the minister said.

# Will discuss impact of delayed paddy procurement with Agriculture Minister: Pralhad Joshi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Food Minister Pralhad Joshi on Tuesday said he will discuss with his agriculture counterpart the likely impact of delayed paddy procurement in Punjab on wheat sowing even as he assured farmers that the government will purchase "every single grain" brought to mandis. As the delay raises concerns about increased stubble burning by farmers rushing to clear fields before mid-November wheat sowing, Joshi said procurement remains the immediate



priority. "Now our priority is procurement. Stubble burning and wheat sowing is looked after by the ministry of agriculture," Joshi told reporters at the launch of Phase-II of wheat flour and rice under Bharat brand at a subsidised rate. "We will look into that aspect also. At present our priority is procurement. My major concern is farmers should not be worried at this moment," the minister said. On whether delayed wheat sowing could affect production, Joshi said: "I don't have details. In next

two-three days, I will meet agriculture minister. It is equally concerned to me as we distribute wheat through PDS." The minister said paddy procurement in Punjab has gathered pace, with single-day lifting reaching 6.29 lakh tonne on November 4 compared to 5.34 lakh tonne in the year-ago period. Total procurement has touched 98.42 lakh tonne so far against 119 lakh tonne last year. The shortfall of 20-28 lakh tonne was due to rains, he explained. The Centre remains committed to procuring the targeted 184 lakh tonne in the

ongoing 2024-25 marketing season, he added. "We will procure every single grain brought to mandis by the farmers," Joshi asserted. The government is purchasing 'A' grade paddy at the minimum support price of Rs 2,320 per quintal. It has already transferred Rs 20,557 crore as MSP payment through DBT to 5.38 lakh farmers. Asked about industry's demand to raise sugar's minimum support price, the minister said: "Their request is with the ministry. We will take a decision at an appropriate time."

# IRFC records its highest-ever quarterly revenue at ₹6,900.20 Crore

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Railway Finance Corporation Limited ("IRFC" or the "Company"), 'Mini-Ratna' Schedule-A Public sector enterprise under the administrative control of the Ministry of Railways, Government of India, holds a prominent position as the dedicated financing arm of the Indian Railways. IRFC registered with RBI as non-deposit taking Non-Banking Finance Company (NBFC), and Infrastructure Financing Company (IFC), has reported its unaudited financial results (standalone) for the 2nd Quarter and Half Year ended 30th September 2024. During the period ending 30th September 2024, Company reported PAT at Rs. 3189.47 crore vis-a-vis Rs.



3095.86 crore reported in corresponding period in the previous year. The company posted profit growth of 4.41% for Q2 FY 2024-25 at Rs. 1612.65 crore vis-a-vis Rs. 1544.58 crore reported in Q2 FY 2023-24. The total income for the six-month ended 30th September 2024 grew by 1.70% and stands at Rs 13666.22 Crore as against Rs. 13437.91 Crore reported in corresponding period of the previous year. The total income for Q2 FY 2024-25 also grew by 2.04% and stands at Rs. 6900.20

September 2024 and your Company is consistently paying dividends and declared Rs 0.80 /share (at dividend rate 8%) Interim dividend for FY 24-25. Manoj Kumar Dubey, Chairman & Managing Director, IRFC, stated that IRFC will not only strengthen the financial ecosystem for Railway Infrastructure projects but is also making all efforts to diversify its lending portfolio as per current mandate into sectors with backward and forward linkage with Indian Railways. Further, IRFC has Sanctioned Rs 700 Crore funding under finance lease model to NTPC Limited (National Thermal Power Corporation) for 20 BOBR Rakes under the General-Purpose Wagon Investment Scheme (GPWIS) of the Ministry of Railways. Crore as against Rs. 6762.18 Crore reported in Q2 FY 2023-24. Net worth at the end of six-month period ended 30th September 2024, stands at Rs. 51464.12 crore up by 9.77%, as against Rs. 46883.22 crore reported in six-month ended 30th September 2023. The Assets Under Management (AUM) to end of six-month ended 30th September 2024, stands at Rs. 462282.62 crore. The Earning Per Share of the company is at Rs. 2.44 for the six-month period ended 30th

# Paras Health recognised among India's top hospitals

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Paras Health has received prominent recognition in the Times Lifestyle Survey 2024. Paras Hospitals in Gurugram ranked 4th nationally in Orthopedics among hospitals across India, a significant endorsement of Paras Health's commitment to delivering specialised, patient-centered care. Within the North Region, the Gurugram facility also earned the 3rd rank in Orthopedics and the top position in Faridabad & Gurugram City—a testament to the trust and reputation it has built in the field of musculoskeletal health. This national survey, conducted by Advance Insights Pvt Ltd, independently evaluated hospitals and clinics across



India in various lifestyle specialties, reaffirming Paras Health's prominent role in delivering exceptional, specialized care across Northern India. In the IVF and Fertility category, Paras Hospitals, Gurugram ranked 2nd in the North Region for multi-specialty hospitals, while securing the 1st position in Faridabad & Gurugram. This recognition reflects

Paras Health's dedication to providing reliable, quality gynaecology care and helping families on their journeys with compassionate medical support. In the category of Plastic Surgery: National Hospitals, Paras Hospitals, Sector-22, Panchkula, proudly secured the 6th rank, positioning it among the country's top healthcare institutions in this specialty.

# IDFC FIRST Bank offer a real-time tracking service

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

IDFC FIRST Bank has become the first Indian bank to offer a real-time tracking service, in association with Swift, for money sent abroad. This is available on the bank's award winning Mobile Application and Internet Banking platforms. This marks a significant milestone in the Indian banking industry, demonstrating the Bank's commitment to delivering seamless and efficient banking solutions, reiterating its "Customer First" approach. Customers in India are used to digital payments through UPI or IMPS with real-time status updates and traceability on digital platforms.

# TOP RANKED ERIGAI SI TO FACE GUJARATHI IN OPENING ROUND

PTI ■ CHENNAI

World No. 4 Indian chess grandmaster and top seed Arjun Erigaisi will open his Chennai Masters campaign against compatriot Vidit Gujarathi, starting here on Tuesday. Erigaisi will play for the first time in India after crossing the historic 2800 ELO ranking mark when he takes the board. The eight-player strong classical event will see Aravindh Chithambaram take on Iranian Amin Tabatabaei, Vachier-Lagrave Maxime will face Maghsoodloo Parham and American Grandmaster Levon Aronian will play Alexey Sarana in the opening round. The second edition of the seven round competition will also feature a Challengers event featuring female players for the first time. Organised by MGD1 with ChessBase India, and sponsored by the Sports Development Authority of Tamil Nadu, the tournament will be held at the 1,100-seat Anna Centenary Library. The event will also feature two Indian women — Harika Dronavalli and Vaishali Rameshbabu. The Challengers participants,

## CHENNAI GRAND MASTERS



will fight for a prize pool of Rs 20 lakh, with the winner taking home Rs six lakh and a direct berth in the Masters next year. In the Challenger category, Vaishali will take on Mendonca Leon Luke while Harika will play Pranav V. In the other two matches, Raunak Sadhwani will face off against Karthikeyan Murali while Pranesh M will play Abhimanyu Puranik. The Challengers event, which is introduced for this year, will give Indian prodigies the chance to compete in top-level tournaments. D Gukesh had won the inaugural edition last year but will miss this year's competition as he is preparing for the world championships title against Ding Liren of China.



# Paris Olympics displaced nearly 20,000 people, local associations say

AP ■ PARIS

Nearly 20,000 people were forcibly displaced in the Paris region, a coalition of more than 100 community groups said Monday. In its report, the group Le Revers de la Médaille, which translates as "the other side of the medal", claimed that 19,526 people were displaced from informal housing between April 2023 and September 2024 as part of what it calls "social cleansing" by authorities. The report notes that some people were evicted multiple times and, as a result, may be counted more than once. As the city prepared to host millions of spectators for the Games, facilities and infrastructure underwent significant renovation, which the report alleges included the eviction of migrants and squatters from visible locations near event venues. Paul Alauzy, spokesperson for Le Revers de la Médaille, claimed that there is direct evidence linking these displacements to Olympic preparations. "There are images, internal government documents, and eviction orders explicitly referencing the Olympics as justification," Alauzy said on Monday. The group's data highlights a surge in eviction operations - 260 between April 2023 and Sept 2024 - up 41% from the same period in 2021-2022. The report also notes that over 4,500 minors were among those displaced. French officials did not immediately respond to the group's estimate. The city imposed exceptionally strict security measures for the Games and notably the unprecedented opening ceremony all along the Seine River, which required a double-checked process and a QR code to attend. In August, Marc Guillaume, the prefect for the Ile-de-France region, which encompasses Paris, stated in a radio interview that eviction rates had not increased due to the Olympics and that every displaced individual was offered alternative housing. French President Emmanuel Macron also addressed the issue in August, claiming that France had successfully created a social legacy linked to the Olympics. "I'm not forgetting that we have succeeded in creating a social legacy for the Olympic Games, with more than 200 marginalised people who used to live on the streets around the venues now having a permanent home," Macron said at a conference on Aug 12, the day following the Olympics closing ceremony. In its report, the coalition is now advocating for a reevaluation of the Olympic hosting model, proposing a permanent site for future editions and more sustainable practices to mitigate the risk of displacements.



# Harry Wilson scores twice in injury time to give Fulham 2-1 win over Brentford

AP ■ LONDON

Substitute Harry Wilson scored twice in added time as Fulham rallied for a 2-1 home win over Brentford in the Premier League. Wilson came on in the 82nd minute and equalized in the second minute of injury time by meeting a cross from Adama Traore and, with his back toward the goal, flicking the ball inside the far post. He then netted the winner four minutes later with a stooping header from another cross from Antonee Robinson as Fulham was finally rewarded for its attacking play. Fulham had only been behind for 113 minutes in the league all season and controlled most of the early action, only for Brentford to take the lead in the 24th against the run of play. Sloppy play in midfield by Fulham gave the visitors possession and German midfielder Vitaly Janelt let fly with a shot from almost 30 meters out that flew inside Bernd Leno's left-hand post. Marco Silva's Fulham side pushed forward but never looked like scoring until Wilson's late double. The win lifts Fulham into ninth place in the league table while Brentford remains in 13th. "It's emotionally very tough right now," said Brentford coach Thomas Frank. "When you're leading in the 92nd minute, it's tough for us to even have a draw - and then we lose it. "On the day, Fulham were better but we showed a lot of resilience and defending. I thought that could give us the win but then there was an unbelievable touch from Wilson where 99 times out of 100 it doesn't go in.

# Neymar picks up another injury in second game back from ACL tear

AP ■ RIYADH

Neymar picked up another injury in just his second game since returning from a 12-month absence as Saudi Arabia's Al-Hilal defeated Esteghlal of Iran 3-0 in the AFC Champions League Elite. The Brazilian has only recently recovered from a torn ACL and came off the bench in Riyadh after 58 minutes. However, the 32 year-old forward had to come off with three minutes remaining, having seemed to pull up after stretching his leg out for the ball in the penalty area. Neymar has time to recover before his next game, however,



as he is not registered for the team's matches in the Saudi Pro League and the next fixture in the AFC competition is on Nov. 25. Aleksandar Mitrovic scored a hat trick for Al-Hilal, the four-time Asian champion which has now won all four games in the group stage. All three goals from the Serbian came from close range.

He opened the scoring after 15 minutes, added a second just after the half-hour mark and then completed his hat trick with 16 minutes remaining. Al-Hilal remains top of the 12-team group, where the top eight will advance to the Round of 16. It is above Saudi Arabian rival Al-Ahli on goal difference after the team from Jeddah thrashed Al-Shorta of Iraq 5-1 with former Liverpool forward Roberto Firmino scoring twice in the first half. Earlier, Al-Wasl of the United Arab Emirates drew 1-1 with Qatar's Al-Sadd and the game between Persepolis of Iran and Al-Gharafa of Qatar ended in the same scoreline.

# ISL: FC Goa look to carry forward new-found confidence against in-form Punjab FC

PTI ■ MARGAO

Back to winning ways, hosts FC Goa will look to carry forward their new-found confidence and scale up the ladder when they take on Punjab FC in an Indian Super League match here on Wednesday. Both the teams are confident following their recent results. While FC Goa defeated Bengaluru FC 3-0 in their previous outing, PFC have won five of their last six matches. The Punjab side is placed third on the points table with 12 points from five fixtures, while FC Goa are ranked seventh, having accumulated nine points from seven games.

The Gaurs have found the back of the net on 12 occasions from inside the 18-yard box this season — most such strikes by any side this season — with Armando Sadiku (6) and Borja Herrera (4) scoring most of the goals. For Punjab FC, they should be wary of their backline, which has not been entirely sturdy this season. Against BFC, FC Goa forced 16 high turnovers (winning the ball back within 40 metres of the opposition's goal) — the most by any side in the ISL this season. Consequently, Punjab FC will have to be a well-oiled machine and fast-paced when it comes to passing, besides also



ensuring that the Goans don't dominate possession. Punjab FC have been on a tremendous run lately, with their only loss so far this season coming last month

against The Blues. While their vibrant forward line has played a prominent role to their success lately, they also need a well-coordinated performance from other departments. Punjab FC have had three big chances per game — the highest by any side in the ISL — with eight of their nine goals this season coming from these opportunities, exhibiting the swiftness of the forward line. The Gaurs have been dominant against Punjab FC in ISL, remaining unbeaten with one win and a draw in their last two face-offs. FC Goa head coach Manolo Marquez affirmed that his players must stay positive regardless of the result. "In my experience as a coach, you cannot be too negative or pessimistic if the team doesn't do well. Obviously, you can be angry, but I don't see much difference between the top teams and the teams below (in the table)," Marquez said. On the other hand, Punjab FC head coach Panagiotis Dilmeris admitted that he is wary of FC Goa's style of play, but was confident of his team's performance. "We will not adapt to them (FC Goa's playing style). We will press them to adapt to us. We don't care how they play other teams. We only care how other teams play against us," Dilmeris said.

# Jhingan returns, Yadwad earns maiden call-up in India probables for Malaysia football friendly



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Seasoned defender Sandesh Jhingan, sidelined with a knee injury since January, is set for a comeback as he was on Tuesday named in a 26-member probables' list for India's friendly match against Malaysia on November 18 in Hyderabad. Jhingan, who missed the Asian Cup and the remainder of the ISL season due to the injury, has been named in a

26-member probables list for India's home friendly against Malaysia, scheduled for November 18 in Hyderabad. The FC Goa center-back sustained an injury to his right knee during the first half of India's game against Syria in the Asian Cup, forcing him out of the tournament. Now fully recovered, his return is expected to strengthen India's defence. Mohun Bagan captain and defender Subhasish Bose was left out while Rahul Bheke, who led the side against Mauritius in the Intercontinental Cup in September, retained his place. India head coach Manolo Marquez, still searching for his first win since taking over from Igor Stimac in July, has also given a maiden national call-up to promising forward Irfan Yadwad of Chennaiyin FC. The 23-year-old Goa-born forward has caught the attention of Marquez with a goal and two assists in seven

appearances for Chennaiyin FC in the ISL. He was roped in by Chennaiyin FC last year after a standout performance for FC Bengaluru United in the 2022-23 I-League 2, where he scored 13 goals from 11 matches. Farukh Choudhary, Yadwad's senior teammate, has also retained his spot in the squad. Additionally, Mohun Bagan's Anirudh Thapa and Lalengmawia Ralte (Apulia) made it to the probables' list after missing out of the 23-member squad that travelled to Vietnam for an international friendly on October 12. In their last match on October 12, India managed a 1-1 draw against Vietnam. **INDIA PROBABLES**  
**Goalkeepers:** Amrinder Singh, Gurpreet Singh Sandhu and Vishal Kaith.  
**Defenders:** Aakash Sangwan, Anwar Ali, Asish Rai, Chinglensana Singh Konsham, Hmingthanmawia Ralte, Mehtab Singh, Rahul Bheke, Roshan Singh Naorem and Sandesh Jhingan.  
**Midfielders:** Anirudh Thapa, Brandon Fernandes, Jeakson Singh Thounaojam, Jithin MS, Lalengmawia Ralte, Liston Colaco, Suresh Singh Wangjam and Vibin Mohanan.  
**Forwards:** Edmund Lalrindika, Irfan Yadwad, Farukh Choudhary, Lallianzuala Chhangte, Manvir Singh and Vikram Partap Singh.



# Delhi, Karnataka, Bengal earn wins in Senior Men's National Hockey Championship

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Delhi, Karnataka, Bengal and Andhra Pradesh registered dominating wins on the second day of the Senior Men's National Hockey Championship here on Tuesday. Delhi hammered Jammu & Kashmir 6-0 in a Pool F match, thanks to goals from Nitesh (34th, 58th), Bharat (3rd), Govind Singh Bisht (14th), Mukul Sharma (21st) and Vikas Upadhyay (23rd). In Pool D, Karnataka ran over Chandigarh 5-1. For Karnataka, Mohammed Raheel Mousen (41st, 48th)

struck a brace while Surya NM (10th), Bharat Mahalingappa Kurtakoti (19th) and Manjeet (59th) scored a goal each. In another Pool D match, Uttarakhand secured a 5-0 win over Tripura following a walkover. In Pool H, Bengal routed Assam 10-0 with Raushan Kumar (10th, 12th, 30th) scoring a hat-trick. Captain Rajendra Oram (4th, 58th), Avoy Ekka (19th), Alsem Lakra (20th), Milan Saha (31st), Sunil Jojo (41st) and Nitish Neupane (48th) are the other goal scorers. Andhra Pradesh decimated Andaman & Nicobar 13-0 in Pool C, with Lekalla Hitesh Rao (13th, 15th, 21st, 41st, 48th, 55th, 56th) scoring seven times. Rayudu Veera (5th), Harsha Kamal Teja (6th), Galla Siva Pramod (30th), Tatiparthi Aron Saroj (33rd), Maddimeni Rajesh (38th) and Venu Gorela Gopal (49th) scored a goal each. Meanwhile, hosts Tamil Nadu managed a 2-2 draw against Madhya Pradesh in their Pool C game. Love Kumar Kanojiya (35th) and Akshay Dubey (42nd) scored for MP, while Selvaraj Kanagaraj (42nd) and Shanmugavel S (53rd) found the net for TN.

# Aussie quick Boland looks to keep KL Rahul under pressure ahead of Border-Gavaskar Trophy

**PTI ■ MELBOURNE**  
Australian pacer Scott Boland wants to extend the barren run of KL Rahul and keep him under pressure ahead of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy when he faces the Indian batter in the four-day A-Team match here from Thursday. Rahul along with wicketkeeper batter Dhruv Jurel flew early to Australia, and will appear for India A in the second four-day game at the MCG. "I was lucky to bowl to him in a Test over in India a couple of years ago but it'll be nice to play against him in our backyard," Boland was quoted saying by ESPNcricinfo. Rahul made a hundred on his



debut tour to Australia in 2015, a 110 at Sydney, but his overall performance Down Under remains scratchy, evidenced by an average of 20.77 across four Tests. Boland wants to heap more misery on the 32-year-old. "He's a world-class player but someone I think we can get on top of pretty early and hopefully stay on top of him for the majority of the summer," said Boland. Rahul was dropped from India's eleven after the first Test against New Zealand at Bengaluru where he made 0 and 12. It was a continuation of his modest run since cracking a hundred against South Africa at Centurion in December 2023. Since then, he made just two fifties across nine innings against SA, England, Bangladesh and New Zealand. But the Bengaluru man could return to the eleven if skipper Rohit Sharma skips the first Test against the Aussies at Perth, starting from November 22, owing to personal reasons. Boland also remained cautious about the impact of India's recent 0-3 whitewash at home by the Kiwis. The 35-year-old said India has enough experience to make a comeback. "There's so much more bounce here, more seam. The way they'll structure their team (in Australia) will be completely different to what you see over in India," he noted.



## Harmanpreet Kaur rises to ninth, Smriti Mandhana remains fourth in women's ODI rankings

**PTI ■ DUBAI**  
India captain Harmanpreet Kaur climbed to the joint ninth spot while opener Smriti Mandhana remained fourth in the latest ICC Women's ODI rankings, released here on Tuesday. Kaur, who played an important part in her team's six-wicket victory over New Zealand in the third ODI of their ICC Women's Championship series in Ahmedabad, had slipped three slots after the first two matches. However, her 59 not out off 63 balls pushed her back into the top 10. Left-hander Mandhana, who won the player of the match award for her knock of 100, added 23 rating points to reach a tally of 728, just five less than Sri Lanka's Chamari Athapaththu in the list led by Natalie Sciver-Brunt of England with 760 rating points. Wicketkeeper Yastika Bhatia moved up from 48th to 45th after chipping in with 35 runs, while for New Zealand, Brooke Halliday's knock of 86 lifted her 12 spots to 24th position and Georgia Plimmer's 39 runs took her from 85th to 74th position. In the bowling chart, seasoned spinner Deepti Sharma gained important rating points after helping India win the series 2-1. Deepti, who had already attained a career-high 687 rating points last week while consolidating her second place among bowlers, added 16 more to reach 703 rating points after her haul of 3/39 to hold on to the second spot. England's left-arm spinner Sophie Ecclestone enjoys a huge lead at the top with 770 rating points. India pacer Renuka Singh was up four places to 32nd while Saima Thakor (up 20 places to joint-77th) and Priya Mishra (up six places to 83rd) also progressed. India are placed in third position in the ICC Women's Championship standings with 25 points while New Zealand are sixth with 20 from 21. Australia and England are at the top with 28 points each, from 18 and 21 matches, respectively.

# Drubbing at the hands of NZ might awaken sleeping giant India, feels Hazlewood

**PTI ■ SYDNEY**  
Australian pacer Josh Hazlewood believes India's confidence would have been shaken by the shocking series loss to New Zealand, but the "sleeping giant" can mount a strong comeback in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy starting later this month. India suffered a humiliating series whitewash after losing the third match by 25 runs to New Zealand in Mumbai on Sunday, the first time in their Test history, which goes back to

1933. "It might awaken a sleeping giant, so to speak. We'll see that when they come out," Hazlewood told 'Sydney Morning Herald'. Not only did the drubbing at home mark one of the darkest moments in India's Test cricket history, it has also significantly impacted the Rohit Sharma-led side's chances of qualifying for next year's World Test Championship (WTC) final. Three back-to-back losses meant that India have lost their top spot to



Australia in the WTC standings. India are now faced with a tough task to win four of their five matches against Australia to qualify for their third consecutive WTC final without relying on external results. "It's obviously better than losing 3-0 than winning 3-0, easily. The confidence might have taken a bit of a hit. A lot of them have been out here, but there are a few batters who haven't, so they'll be a bit unsure of what to expect," Hazlewood said. "I don't think you can read too much into it. The results are obviously good for us in a way." Hazlewood, who is a part of Australia's three-pronged pace attack along with Mitchell Starc and skipper Pat Cummins, lauded his Trans-Tasman rivals for achieving something no other team has been able to do. "Credit to the Kiwi boys. They played outstanding cricket. To win 3-0 in India is unbelievable. It's hard enough to win one game there, let alone every match of the series," Hazlewood said.



## Indian boxer Mandeep Jangra wins WBF's world title

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Indian professional boxer Mandeep Jangra won the World Boxing Federation's super featherweight world title after defeating Britain's Conor McIntosh in the Cayman Islands. The 31-year-old, who trains under former Olympic silver medalist Roy Jones Jr and has faced only one defeat in his professional career so far, had the upper hand in most rounds. He delivered powerful punches from the outset, maintaining his stamina throughout the 10 rounds, while the British boxer struggled to keep pace. Conor did try to make a comeback, but Jangra continued to maintain the upper hand in most rounds. "This is one of the biggest victories of my career. I am thankful to my sponsor Nash Built Construction, Chief Coach Roy Jones, Assistant Coach Asa Beard and Angel,"

Jangra said in a media release "I have worked hard for years to achieve this. It is a matter of pride for me that I could bring glory to the country." The Haryana boxer, who made his professional boxing debut in 2021, hopes the title will inspire more Indian pugilists to turn professional. "I think this title will open the way for other boxers of the country and they will also decide to make a career in professional boxing. "Our boxers are good and there is no dearth of talent in them. If they get good promoters and managers, they can also become world champions," Jangra added. Jangra has won 11 out of his 12 fights in his pro career with seven being knockout victories. He had a decent run in the amateur circuit as well and won a Commonwealth Games silver medal in the 2014 Glasgow edition.

## Delhi SG Pipers to play Gonasika in opening match of men's HIL on December 28

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Delhi SG Pipers will play Visakhapatnam franchise, Gonasika in the opening match of the men's competition of the revamped Hockey India League, starting December 28 in Rourkela. The franchise-based tournament is set to return after a hiatus of seven years in a new look with the event being organised for both men and women co-currently. While the men's competition will feature eight teams, the women's event will be played in Ranchi among four teams. The men's HIL will be conducted in two phases, with the opening phase witnessing all the eight sides playing against each other once

# Delhi SG Pipers to play Gonasika in opening match of men's HIL on December 28

between December 28 and January 18. The second phase starts on January 19, where the eight teams will be clubbed into two groups of four each. While Pool A will feature Delhi SG Pipers, Shrachi Rarh Bengal Tigers, Soorma Hockey Club, and Vedanta Kalinga Lancers; Pool B consists of Gonasika, Hyderabad Toofans, Tamil Nadu Dragons and UP Rudras. Each team in phase 2 will compete against each other in their respective pools, with the



## In conversation with ACC to revive Afro-Asia Cup after nearly two decades: ACA chair Mukuhlani

**PTI ■ BENONI (SOUTH AFRICA)**  
The Africa Cricket Association (ACA) has started dialogue with the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) and other stakeholders to revive the once popular Afro-Asia Cup, a common meeting ground for players from the two continents, after nearly two decades. The Afro-Asia Cup has had only two editions to date -- 2005 in South Africa (draw) and 2007 in India (won by Asia). A third edition of the event was scheduled to be held in Kenya in 2009 but it never happened. "The Afro-Asia Cup, apart from the cricket, brings the much-needed financial input to the organisation, and the appetite is huge from both ends," ACA interim chairman Tavengwa Mukuhlani, who is also Zimbabwe Cricket Chair, was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo. This tournament event gives players from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh a unique chance to be in the same team. "We have had conversations with our counterparts within the Asia Cricket Council, and obviously our African contingents, they want the Afro-Asia Cup to be revived," said Mukuhlani. The ACC is yet to make any response on the matter. The 2005 Asia squad was captained by then Pakistan skipper Inzamam-ul-Haq and featured the likes of Rahul Dravid, Ashish Nehra and Anil Kumble. The 2007 Asia XI included MS Dhoni, Sourav Ganguly, Harbhajan Singh, Zaheer Khan, Yuvraj Singh, Virender Sehwag and Sachin Tendulkar while Mohammed Asif, Mohammed Yousof and Shoaib Akhtar represented Pakistan. ACA PLANNING IPL-STYLE LEAGUE: The ACA is also pondering over conducting the Africa Premier League, a mini version of the Indian Premier League (IPL). While the concept is still in the planning stages, ACA CEO Cassim Suliman said details will emerge once the required approval is received from the respective African cricketing boards. "It's the mini vision of the IPL. So, we're taking that concept of the IPL and driving that concept to ensure that everybody benefits in that aspect," he revealed. "But the board will decide exactly who's hosting and from there, we'll take it to them from there. "It's going to be like the IPL format, but with a lower status and then we'll grow it from there," he added.

## Agni Chopra's dream: Playing Ranji Elite division after big start with Mizoram in Plate League

**PTI ■ MUMBAI**  
Currently, Agni Chopra's First-Class average stands at a box office 99.06 and it has attracted as much, may be even more, attention as some of the biggest Bollywood chartbusters his father has produced. In only nine games since his debut in the Ranji Trophy Plate league for Mizoram earlier this year, Agni, son of Bollywood filmmaker Vidhu Vinod Chopra and film critic Anupama Chopra, has garnered 1585 runs with eight hundreds and four fifties. The beginning of this filmy sequence started in January this year when he debuted with a 166 against Sikkim at Nadiad, and from there on Agni has not stopped scoring runs in tons, literally. This season the 26-year-old left-hander has started from where he left and has already scored 218 and 238 against Arunachal and Manipur.

# Agni Chopra's dream: Playing Ranji Elite division after big start with Mizoram in Plate League

So, what is the secret of his run rush? "It's all about hunger, right?" Agni told PTI in an exclusive interview. "Before this season started, I discussed it with my coach Khushpreet (Singh). The only thing he told me was, 'forget about the runs, you just have to focus on one thing - don't get out.'" "So I've not thought about anything else. My second goal was to score double hundreds because last year I didn't score a single double hundred," said Agni, adding that specific work on his fitness has also helped him pile up big scores. His domination of bowlers, which has seen his average touching Bradmanesque-

## levels, has come in the Plate League so far, and Agni nourishes the dream of getting into Elite League with Mizoram.

"I don't think too far into the future. Of course, in terms of the larger picture, I would love to be picked in the Duleep Trophy, or India A, to play in the IPL, to hopefully, one day, represent India," he said. "For me what works best is (when) I always focus on the next game. I don't even think about the second game. I only think about what's next because in order to play for India, I have to do well in the next game." But for it, Agni knows that, he will have to play in the Elite

## segment of the Ranji Trophy.

"I would love to represent an Elite division team, then maybe play for IPL and India. But to do those things, I have to play well at the level I'm playing right now and to do that, I also have to score runs in the next game. So, I genuinely think about only the next game," he said. Agni realises that he has to shoulder a major share of responsibility of carrying Mizoram into the Elite round. "Our Mizoram team's collective goal is to qualify for the Elite division. The goal is for us to finish on top and qualify... Then I'll be able to play in the Elite division against the top level of bowlers," he said.

## "Even last year, that was our goal but unfortunately, we fell short. We lost in the semifinals; we were one game away. If we had won, we would have qualified and I would have been playing there this year itself," he continued.

"That's what I think my personal and team-wise goal is." For cricketers, on-field success and scrutiny go hand in hand and more so in case of those who have famous parents. Agni has a simple way of tackling the situation. "I just think it is funny. I genuinely don't even take it seriously. There is my circle of people whose opinions I value

## and whose opinions I trust," he said.

"Off the field, (it) is my parents and my sister. Anything related to off the field, I'll defer to them. They don't give me advice about cricket too much. I mean, I don't tell my dad how to make movies and he doesn't tell me how to play cricket," he said. "Khushpreet Singh, my coach, is my number one guy on and off the field. Shubman (Gill) is a close friend and with him, also on the field and off the field, we have discussions," he said. Agni had to endure disappointment during last year's IPL auction, but he hopes for better tidings in the upcoming mega auction. "Everybody wants to be a part of that, play in the IPL. A lot of the work that I have put in is with that in mind as well and that's a big motivating factor is to play in the IPL," said Agni, who idolises Yuvraj Singh and Brian Lara.