

OPINION 6

THE DECEPTIVE FACADE OF CHINA'S MILITARY

WORLD 8

HEZBOLLAH'S DEPUTY LEADER VOWS TO FIGHT ON

MONEY 10

GOVERNMENT EXTENDS I-T AUDIT REPORT FILING DATE

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BIG WINS FOR RAKSHA IN CROATIA AND BELGIUM 11 SPORTS



KEEP GODS OUT OF POLITICS: SC

SUPREME COURT SLAMS ANDHRA PRADESH CHIEF MINISTER

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Observing that at least Gods should be kept out of politics, the Supreme Court slammed Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu for prematurely going public with the claim that previous regime of YSR Congress Party used substandard ghee containing animal fat to prepare laddus at Sri Venkateswara temple in Tirupati.



File photo: Ranjan Dimri/The Pioneer

A Bench of Justices BR Gavai and KV Viswanathan noted that the Chief Minister made the claim on September 18, even though the FIR in the matter was lodged on September 25, and a Special Investigation Team (SIT) was constituted on September 26.

when SIT was ordered? Prima facie there is nothing at least to show, no concrete proof to show at this stage, that the same ghee was used and procured. Even pending investigation when such statements are made by responsible public functionaries then what effect it will have on the SIT? What was the material? The Court told Senior Advocate Siddharth Luthra, representing TTD, that he was not answering the court's queries on this aspect.



BJP and Congress spat over remarks on PM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and their parties engaged in war of words following the latter's remarks on Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a public meeting in Jammu when he said he won't die before PM Modi is removed from power.

the Congress president Shri Mallikarjun Kharge Ji has outperformed himself, his leaders and his party in being absolutely distasteful and disgraceful in his speech. He said Kharge's remarks showed how much hate and fear the Congress people have for PM Modi and that they are constantly thinking of him.

the Home Minister should focus on serious issues such as the Manipur situation, census and a caste census. "Home Minister Amit Shah should focus on serious issues like Manipur, census and caste census. Your Government's own survey says that 92 percent of the employees clearing urban sewers and septic tanks come from SC, ST, OBC categories," the Congress chief said.

ED books Siddaramaiah

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/BENGALURU

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday booked Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and some others in a money-laundering case linked to the Mysuru Urban Development Authority, taking cognisance of a recent state Lokayukta FIR, official sources said.



Siddaramaiah, his wife BM Parvathi, brother-in-law Mallikarjuna Swamy and Devaraju, from whom Swamy had purchased land and gifted it to Parvathi, and others have been named in the FIR registered by the Mysuru-located Lokayukta police establishment on September 27.

Delhi road rage: One arrested for cop's murder

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police on Monday arrested a person in connection with the death of a constable, who was mowed down in an incident of road rage involving two men inside a car, in Outer Delhi's Nangloi area early on Sunday.

Kosi drowns Bihar in sorrow

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PATNA



NDRF personnel conduct a rescue operation at a flood affected area, in Bihar's Supaul district

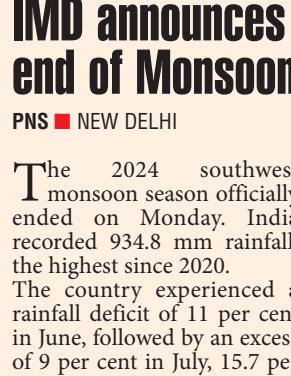
Flood situation in several parts of Bihar worsened on Monday as embankments of Kosi river in Darbhanga district and Bagmati river in Sitamarhi were breached, officials said.

The State water resources and disaster management departments have been working on a war footing, he said. "Altogether six incidents of embankment breach have so far been reported from various parts of the State.

IMD announces end of Monsoon

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The 2024 southwest monsoon season officially ended on Monday. India recorded 934.8 mm rainfall, the highest since 2020. The country experienced a rainfall deficit of 11 per cent in June, followed by an excess of 9 per cent in July, 15.7 per cent in August, and 10.6 per cent in September.



CBI nabs 26 global cyber criminals

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a multi-State crackdown on organised cybercrime, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has arrested 26 alleged cyber criminals involved in fraudulent activities targeting people globally, officials said on Monday.

criminal activities across the four call centers, the officials said. "The cyber criminals targeted in this operation were involved in a range of illicit activities, including impersonating... Tech support services and approaching victims, especially in the USA in the guise that the victim's systems have been hacked," a CBI spokesperson said in a statement.

Gujarat man buys real gold with fake currency

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ AHMEDABAD/NEW DELHI

A Gujarat bullion trader has been duped of 2.1 kg of gold after unidentified common handed over counterfeit currency featuring the face of noted Bollywood actor Anupam Kher. Ahmedabad based bullion trader, Mehul Thakkar has filed a complaint with the Navrangpura police station, detailing how he was

tricked into accepting 26 bundles of counterfeit Rs 500 notes. The fake currency which conveyed to the trader as Rs 1.90 crore, also labelled 'Resole Bank of India,' and was presented to his staff in exchange for 2.1 kgs of gold on September 24.



trader knew. Patel was eager to buy 2.1 kgs of gold, and transaction was pegged at Rs 1.90 crore. Thakkar instructed his staff to meet Patel at an 'angadia

pedhi' (Hawala) office - a traditional money-moving service where they were handed over bundles of what they claimed were Rs 500 notes. The unsuspecting staff was told to count the 'money' using a machine provided by the trio.

Dadasaheb Phalke finally acknowledges Mrigayaa actor

RAHUL DATTA ■ NEW DELHI

Dancing into the hearts of millions of Indian cine goers in the chartbuster "I am a disco dancer" Mithun Chakraborty, 74, has come a long way from the bylanes of Kolkata to reach peak stardom. Recognising Chakraborty's contribution to Indian cinema, the Union government on Monday bestowed the Dadasaheb Phalke award upon him.

Bhushan, the third highest civilian honour. Congratulating Chakraborty, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the actor is a "cultural icon" admired across generations. "Delighted that Shri Mithun Chakraborty Ji has been conferred the prestigious Dadasaheb Phalke Award, recognising his unparalleled contributions to Indian cinema. He is a cultural icon, admired across generations for his versatile performances. Congratulations and best wishes to him," the Prime Minister said in a social media post.

Dadasaheb Phalke Selection Jury has decided to award legendary actor, Sh. Mithun Chakraborty Ji for his iconic contribution to Indian Cinema," the minister said in the post. The award will be presented to Chakraborty at the 70th National Film Awards ceremony on October eight, Vaishnav said.



1970s. Then followed several hits like 'Mujhe Insaaf Chahiye', 'Hum Se Hai Zamana', 'Pasand Apni Apni', 'Char Ek Mandir', 'Kasam Paida Karne Wale Ki' and 'Commando'. Chakraborty was also praised for his role in the 1990 film 'Agneepath', fronted by Amitabh Bachchan. Chakraborty's unique moves, which popularised disco dancing, and fight scenes enthralled the audience all over the country and even in Russia. He earned two more National Awards for 1992's 'Tahader Katha' (best actor) and 1998's 'Swami Vivekananda' (best supporting actor). When he got the news about the award Chakraborty said his life

kept replaying in his mind, including the initial struggle for food and shelter. "I am short of words. It is an occasion which reminded me of the past. I went to Mumbai from Kolkata. In Mumbai, I did not have food and would sometimes sleep in the garden... "This kept replaying. After all this, you get this huge honour. I have no words. I can only say I dedicate this award to my family and to fans all over the world. "You know my life has never been smooth, I did not get anything on platter, I had to fight for everything, but when the result comes like this, you forget all the pain, God has been kind," the actor told

reporters in Kolkata. Chakraborty also praised Prime Minister Modi. "I have great respect for PM Modi, he is a fantastic man. I know him, he is a gem of a person," he added. Union Home Minister Amit Shah also congratulated the veteran actor. "Mithun Ji's illustrious career spanning several decades has not only enriched our films but has also set standards of excellence in acting. All my best wishes to him," Shah said. The three-member jury — comprising former Dadasaheb awardee Asha Parekh, actor-politician Khushbu Sundar and filmmaker Vipul Amrutlal Shah — selected Chakraborty for the prestigious honour.

Strengthening education system is must for foundation

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

School Education Minister Uday Pratap Singh has said that to lay the foundation for Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's developed India of the year 2047, it is crucial to consistently strengthen the education system from now on.

Education secretaries of 17 states including Madhya Pradesh, state project directors and senior education officials and the state's school secretary Dr. Sanjay Goyal were present in the workshop.

laid on setting up ICT labs to make technology accessible to children even in remote schools. He gave detailed information about the state government's dream project 'CM Rise School' in the workshop.

has been rationalized. Budget should be fully utilized. Addressing the workshop, Union Education Secretary Shri Sanjay Kumar said that the Central Government is trying to allot maximum budget amount to the states for education schemes.

the workshop. He told that STARS project is being operated in 6 states Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Kerala, Himachal and Maharashtra.



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav with Union Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development Shivraj Singh Chouhan during a meeting at former residence in Bhopal on Monday.



Farmers under the banner of Kisan Sangharsh Samiti stage a protest demanding to increase the minimum support price of Paddy, Maize and Soybean crops, at Neelam Park in Bhopal on Monday.

Illegal LPG refilling centres raided

Bhopal: The Food and Civil supplies Department team raided 2 illegally operated LPG gas refilling centers located in Ashoka Garden and seized 31 domestic-commercial cylinders, electronic weighing scales and other equipment.

CM to be chief guest at discussion on Rambhau Mhalgi Prabodhini institute

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav will be the chief guest in a national discussion on Rambhau Mhalgi Prabodhini Sanstha going to be held in Pune, Maharashtra on Tuesday.

Cardiology awareness session organised

Jabalpur: Max Super Speciality Hospital, Nagpur, organised an awareness session here on Monday to share information on the rising Cardiology and Gastroenterology health issues.

Chief Minister Dr. Yadav will visit Asia's only historical theme park 'Shiv-Srishti' in Ambegaon (Pune). The 'Shiv-Srishti' theme park, run by the Maharaja Shiv-Chhatrapati Pratishthan Trust, aims to bring alive the life and struggle of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

NHRC issues notices on tribal boys' deaths

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Taking cognizance in the death of two students who died of electrocution in the tribal senior boys hostel in Dhar, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) issued a notice to the Chief Secretary (CS) and Director General of Police (DGP) of Madhya Pradesh and directed them to submit a detailed report within two weeks.

Environmental awareness rally organized at AIIMS Bhopal

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

In line with the nationwide Swachhata Hi Seva initiative, an environmental awareness rally was organized at AIIMS Bhopal on Monday under the guidance of Prof (Dr.) Ajai Singh, Executive Director of the institute.

CM to honour Olympic, Paralympic medalists

Bhopal: Chief Minister Mohan Yadav will honour the medal winners of the Olympic and Paralympic Games-2024 on October 2 in a ceremony to be held at 12 pm in the badminton hall of Taty Topo Sports Stadium.

Director BS Yadav and other officers were present.

Sarang said that the winners and participants in the World Deaf Shooting Championship will also be honoured in the programme. He said that the outstanding players who received the Vikram Award will be given appointment letters for government service.

Jharkhand is a state of infinite possibilities: Chief Minister

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav said, "As soon as I stepped foot on the land of Jharkhand today, I sought blessings from Lord Baba Baidyanath that there should be an end to the dishonest government in Jharkhand."

ple are facing a corrupt and dishonest coalition. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, the central government says what it means and acts accordingly. During Modi's rule, the dishonest and corrupt will surely go to jail.

chest of minerals. However, instead of the people who rightfully own these resources, only deception and betrayal were delivered. The people in power have exploited these mineral resources unethically to fill their own pockets.

परिचय

A large advertisement for the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Bhopal. It includes details about a Notice Inviting Tender (NIT) for various medical equipment and services, such as Optical Coherence Tomography machines and Surgical Navigation Systems. The advertisement lists the institute's address, contact information, and the deadline for tenders.

Advertisement for North Central Railway. It includes details about an advertisement for the appointment of a Halt Contractor. The advertisement specifies the location (Jhansi), the nature of the work, and the terms and conditions for the contractor.

Advertisement for Federal Bank. It includes details about an E-Auction Sale Notice for the sale of immovable assets. The notice describes the assets, the location, and the terms of the auction.

Rule of law key to social development: President Murmu

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu on Monday said economic growth and social development are possible only where the rule of law is upheld. Without maintaining law and order, ensuring justice and protecting citizens' rights, progress becomes a meaningless term, she said addressing a group of Indian Police Service (IPS) probationers, who had called on her at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. "One category of crime I would like to highlight here is crimes against women. While it is a complex phenomenon with its roots deep in a sick mindset as well as sickening social prejudices, it is, first of all, a crime. Therefore, fighting it requires action at many levels, but the first response comes from the police force," President Murmu said. She said police officers working on these cases are expected to have exceptional sensitivity, empathy for the victim besides utmost commitment to the task of ensuring justice. The president said police officers working on cases of crime against women are "expected to have exceptional sensitivity and empathy for the victim and utmost



commitment to the task of ensuring justice". She said law and order is not only the bedrock of governance but also the very basis of the modern state, and asked the officers to be efficient, sympathetic, fearless as well as friendly. President Murmu said police officers' roles become more crucial as India aims to scale new heights in the years to come. "Economic growth and social development are possible only where the rule of law is upheld. Without maintaining law and order, ensuring justice and protecting citizens' rights, progress becomes a meaningless term,"

she said. The President asked the police officers to be tech-savvy and stay a step ahead of the criminals. Maintenance of law and order, crime prevention and detection as well as other aspects of policing have benefited from advances in technology, she said. "The flip side, however, is that criminals and terrorists too have resorted to using technology. When cyber-crimes and cyber warfare are rising around the world, you will be expected to be tech-savvy and stay a step ahead of the criminals," President Murmu said. She expressed happiness over the rise

in the number of women officers in the IPS. "I am told that in this batch there are 54 lady officers out of the total strength of 188. At 28.72 per cent, it is a sharp jump from last year's numbers as well as the average of recent years," the President said. She said the role of lady officers goes much beyond addressing gender-based crimes. "Their increasing numbers can change the overall character of policing for the better, improve the police-community relations, and will prove beneficial to the nation too," the president said, addressing the IPS probationers of the 76 Regular Recruits (2023) batch. President Murmu also advised the officers to make yoga a part of their routine and not ignore their mental well-being. "I have spoken about the great responsibilities placed on your shoulders. These can sometimes be too stressful. I would like to offer you a word of advice in this regard. "Never ignore your mental well-being. Make yoga, 'pranayama' and relaxation techniques part of your routine from now, and they will help you do your job better," she said. "The 'S' in 'IPS' stands for service," President Murmu said, and added that "one watchword above all is to serve the nation and its citizens".

Modi to launch projects worth ₹83,300 crore in Jharkhand



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Jharkhand on October two and lay the foundation stone, launch and inaugurate various projects worth over Rs. 83,300 crore in Hazaribag, Jharkhand, Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said here on Monday. In line with his commitment to ensure comprehensive and holistic development of the tribal communities across the country, Prime Minister will

launch Dharti Aaba Janatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan with a total outlay of over Rs 79,150 crore. The Abhiyan will cover around 63,000 villages benefitting more than 5 crore tribal people in 549 districts and 2,740 blocks across 30 States and UTs. It aims to attain saturation of critical gaps in social infrastructure, health, education, livelihood, through 25 interventions implemented by various 17 Ministries and Department of Government

of India. In order to boost the educational infrastructure for the tribal communities, Prime Minister will inaugurate 40 Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) and lay the foundation stone for 25 EMRS worth over Rs 2,800 crore. Prime Minister will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for multiple projects under Pradhan Mantri Janati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN) worth over Rs 1360 crore. It includes more than 1380 kms of road, 120 Anganwadis, 250 multi purpose centres and 10 school hostels. Further, he will also unveil a series of landmark achievements under PM JANMAN, which include, electrification of more than 75,800 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) households in around 3,000 Villages, operationalization of 275 Mobile medical units, operationalization of 500 Anganwadi centres, establishment of 250 Van Dhan Vikas Kendras and saturation of more than 5,550 PVTG Villages with 'Nal se Jal'.



NHRC seeks report on tribal students electrocution

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Taking "suo motu cognisance of a media report that two students, belonging to a Scheduled Tribe, got electrocuted to death while cleaning a water tank on the instructions of the superintendent of a government-run hostel in Dhar district of Madhya Pradesh on September 25", the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued a notice to the chief secretary and the director general of police, the State government, seeking a detailed report within two weeks. It appears that the hostel authorities have acted in an "insensitive manner" by asking the young boys to execute such a hazardous task resulting in their deaths, the Apex rights body said. It has issued a notice to the Madhya Pradesh government over reports that two tribal students were electrocuted allegedly while cleaning a water tank on the instructions of the superintendent of a government-run hostel in Dhar district. In a statement, the NHRC

said, going by the reports, it appears that the hostel authorities have acted in an "insensitive manner" by asking the young boys to execute such a hazardous task resulting in their deaths. According to the media report, carried on September 26, the students came into contact with a live wire connected to a water pump inside the tank while cleaning it. They were spotted lying in the tank by villagers, who reportedly informed the hostel authorities, it said. The Commission has observed that the contents of the news report, if true, raise a serious concern about human rights violations of the victim students. Accordingly, the Commission has issued a notice to the chief secretary and the director general of police, the government of Madhya Pradesh, seeking a detailed report within two weeks, said a statement by the NHRC here. It is also expected to include the status of the police investigation and compensation, if any, paid to the aggrieved families of both victims, the statement added.

Indo-Pacific regional dialogue set to begin on October 3

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Situation in the strategically important Indo-Pacific region will figure prominently during the three-day conference here starting October three. More than 20 countries will take part in the annual apex-level international Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue (IPRD), organized by the Indian Navy. Giving details, officials said here on Monday, in focusing upon "Resource-Geopolitics and Security in the Indo-Pacific", the 2024 edition of the IPRD would explore and elaborate upon the several dimensions of two vital pillars of the IPOI Web, namely, "Marine Resources" and "Resource Sharing". This year's conference would concentrate upon the manner in which traditional and newly identified marine resources are driving



contemporary geopolitics and are likely to do so in the foreseeable future. These include dwindling fish-stocks - with a concomitant increase in illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, especially in oceanic areas beyond national jurisdiction. Another manifestation of resource-geopolitics is the geopolitical race for cobalt, lithium, nickel, and other hard-to-find minerals, as also rare earth elements (REE) such as tellurium and neodymium that are needed for the millions of batteries, solar panels, wind turbines, and other such renewable-energy devices required to successfully transition from fossil-fuels to renewable sources of energy. In addition, offshore energy

resources such as hydrocarbons, are likely to retain their geopolitical significance, even as more unconventional ones, such gas hydrates and oceanic renewable energy resources - ocean-sourced hydrogen for example, appear likely to drive future geoeconomic strategies across the Indo-Pacific. The IPRD-2024, through the agency of a series of globally renowned subject-matter experts and eminent speakers, will endeavour to identify mega trends of resource-geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific and posit policy-options that could be pursued to advantage. Over a period of three days, it would also explore whether and how cooperation, collaboration, and comity might offer alternative pathways within the paradigm of resource-geopolitics.

Air Chief Marshal AP Singh takes charge as IAF Chief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Air Chief Marshal A P Singh, an accomplished fighter pilot with more than 5,000 hours of flying experience, on Monday assumed charge as new chief of the Indian Air Force, succeeding incumbent Air Chief Marshal V R Chaudhari who superannuated. Air Chief Marshal Singh was serving as Vice Chief of the Air Force in his previous assignment. Born on October 27, 1964, Air Chief Marshal Singh was commissioned into the fighter pilot stream of the Indian Air Force in December 1984. In his long and distinguished service spanning nearly 40 years, he has served in a variety of command, staff, instructional and foreign appointments. An alumnus of the National Defence



Academy, Defence Services Staff College and National Defence College, the air officer is a qualified flying instructor and an experimental test pilot with more

than 5,000 hours of flying experience on a variety of fixed and rotary wing aircraft. Air Chief Marshal Singh has commanded an operational fighter squadron and a frontline air base. As a test pilot, he led the MiG-29 upgrade project management team at Moscow. He was also the project director (flight test) at National Flight Test Centre and was tasked with flight testing of the Light Combat Aircraft, Tejas. The officer has held important staff appointments of Air Defence Commander at South Western Air Command and Senior Air Staff Officer at Eastern Air Command. Prior to assuming the charge of Vice Chief of the Air Staff in February last year, he was the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief of Central Air Command.



India-Kazakhstan Joint Military Exercise begins in Uttarakhand

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The eighth edition of India-Kazakhstan Joint Military Exercise KAZIND-2024 commenced on Monday at Surya Foreign Training Node, Auli, Uttarakhand and will conclude on October 13, defence ministry said here. The joint exercise has been held annually since 2016. Last edition of the Joint Exercise was held at Otar, Kazakhstan from October 30 to November 11 last year. The Indian Armed Forces, comprising 120 personnel, are being represented by a battalion of the Kumaon Regiment along with other arms and services, as well as personnel from Indian Air Force. The Kazakhstan contingent will be represented mainly by personnel from Land Forces and Air Borne Assault Troopers. Aim of the Joint Exercise is to enhance joint military capability of both sides to undertake counter terrorism operations in a sub conventional scenario under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. The Joint Exercise will focus

on operations in the semi-urban and mountainous terrain. Objectives to be achieved from the Joint Exercise are high degree of physical fitness, rehearsing and refining drills for operations at tactical level and sharing of best practices. Tactical drills to be rehearsed during the Joint Exercise include joint response to a terrorist action, establishment of a Joint Command Post, establishment of an Intelligence and Surveillance Centre, securing of helipad / landing site, combat free fall, Special Heliborne Operations, Cordon and Search operations, besides employment of drones and counter drone systems among others. Joint Exercise KAZIND-2024 will enable both sides to share best practices in tactics, techniques and procedures of conducting joint operations. It will facilitate developing inter-operability, bonhomie and camaraderie between the two armies. The Joint Exercise will also enhance defence cooperation, further augmenting bilateral relations between the two friendly nations.

Young travelers shape family vacations, says Hilton report

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

An overwhelming 93 per cent of young travelers specifically Generation Alpha and Generation Z are actively involved in shaping their family's vacation plans, according to a study. Interestingly, these young travelers are eager to explore both local and international destinations, showing a growing interest in cultures beyond Asia. Their preferred travel destinations include India (34%), Singapore (28%), the USA (22%), and Australia and the UK (17%), said the "Small Voices, Big Choices: Hilton 2025 Trends Report". Revealing that these younger generations are emerging as key decision-makers, influencing destinations and activities, the report notes that in India, 76 per cent of parents



base their travel choices on their children's interests, demonstrating the power of youth preferences in shaping family trips. Generation Alpha, those aged 14 and under, comprises a quarter of India's population, while Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, makes up 30

per cent. Although young travelers play a significant role in selecting activities and destinations, parents still handle logistical decisions like transportation (44 per cent), dining (40 per cent), and accommodation (32 per cent). The report notes that young travelers in India

take an average of two to three trips per year, with 94 per cent traveling at least once annually. Looking ahead, 90 per cent of these youths plan to travel in the coming year, highlighting a strong demand for travel among younger generations. In contrast, millennials (Generation Y) tend to favor familiar Asian destinations for comfort and convenience, such as Japan and the Maldives. This generational shift is prompting the travel industry to innovate, creating more immersive and culturally enriching experiences that align with the values of these younger travelers. Alexandra Jaritz, senior vice president of brand management for Asia Pacific at Hilton, said that the preferences of Generation Alpha and Z are reshaping the travel landscape. "The

demand for more meaningful, immersive, and culturally enriching experiences is prompting the travel industry to innovate. This shift reflects a broader trend where younger generations seek not just to visit places but to engage with them in a deeper, more authentic manner." The findings are based on two surveys: a global Ipsos poll and an APAC-focused OnePoll survey, indicating a comprehensive analysis of travel trends among young people in India and beyond. While the Ipsos survey sampled 13,001 adults (18+) across 13 countries, the OnePoll survey included 8,000 Gen Z and Millennial parents (born in or before 1981) with children aged 6 to 19, from Australia, mainland China, India, Japan, and Singapore, said the report.

Congress: Government employment opportunities are half-truths

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Monday dismissed as "half-truths" the government's assertions of creating eight crore employment opportunities between 2021 and 2024 and 6.2 crore net subscribers joining the EPFO database, and said no "spin-doctoring" can take away from the fact that 2014-24 has seen "jobless growth". Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said amidst the "U-turns and scandals" that have marked the last few months of this "tottering" government, "the non-biological PM and his drum beaters have tried to find some solace in their economic record, claiming to have



created eight crore employment opportunities between 2021 and 2024". "This claim initially emerged from the RBI KLEMS data, which we had earlier countered on July 15th, 2024. The Government's spin doctors have now mustered another statistic - that of 6.2 crore net subscribers joining the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) database between September 2017 and March 2024. Both

claims are based on half-truths," he said in a statement. To justify its claim of eight crore new jobs, the government adopts an expansive definition of employment, without registering the quality and circumstances of employment, Ramesh argued. A large part of the claimed "employment growth" is recording unpaid household work done by women as "employment", he said, adding that it is not new job creation. Amidst the poor economic climate, the share of salaried, formal employment in the labour market has decreased, he said and pointed out that workers are moving to low-productivity informal and agricultural jobs, which KLEMS is capturing as jobs created.

Pak refugees, Valmiki, Gorkha community to vote for first time post abrogation of Article 370

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

On the eve of the third and final round of polling in Jammu and Kashmir, the mood was upbeat among the first-time voters who belong to the West Pakistani refugee community, Valmiki Samaj, and Gorkha community. These people got voting rights in assembly, urban local bodies, and panchayat elections only after the Abrogation of Articles 370 and 35-A.

first time in the Assembly polls". "We have already booked a band group to celebrate the festival of democracy. The first-time voters will march in a group to the polling station in RS Pura on Tuesday to cast their vote", he added.

governments in the past. Now we have been empowered by the constitution of India to exercise our voting rights. We are eagerly waiting to participate in the festival of democracy to choose our public representative.



former minister Sajjad Lone and National Panthers Party India president Harsh Dev Singh. While Lone is fighting on two seats from Kupwara, Singh is contesting from Chenani seat of Udhampur.

Ghulam Hassan Mir (Gulmarg), Choudhary Lal Singh (Basohli), Rajiv Jasrotia (Jasrota), Manohar Lal Sharma (Billawar), Sham Lal Sharma and Ajay Kumar Sadhotra (Jammu North), Mula Ram (Marh), Chander Prakash Ganga and Manjit Singh (Vijapur) are other strong contenders in the fray.

in the earlier phases, with 61.38 per cent participation recorded in the first phase on September 18 and 57.31 per cent in the second phase on September 26.

polling booths managed by women, known as Pink Polling Stations, 43 polling stations manned by specially-abled persons and 40 polling stations manned by youths.

26 Indian fishermen died in Pakistan jails in last ten years

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI



As many as 26 Indian fishermen died in Pakistan's jails India during the last ten years, according to information received under the Right to Information Act (RTI).

repatriate his mortal remains without further delay urgently," Desai said. As of today, 210 Indian fishermen have been languishing in Pakistan's jails for crossing the water border inadvertently.

Congress confused, leaders absent in Haryana: CM Saini

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM



Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini attacked Congress fiercely, saying - In the last 15-20 days, no big leader of Congress was ready to come to Haryana.

upcoming Assembly elections. Prominent among those in the fray from Gurgaon constituencies are BJP Mukesh Sharma from Gurgaon seat, Congress Mohit Grover from Gurgaon and Independent Naveen Goyal.



India to launch first Ayush Jan Aushadhi Centre

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India is set to get its first Ayush Jan Aushadhi Centre on October 9, aiming to integrate traditional healthcare practices like Ayurveda with modern medicine.

requiring health insurance companies to offer AYUSH treatments at par with other treatments. So far about 49 life insurance companies are providing about 69 packages.

Muslim League welcomes PV Anvar

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

If I can make it then anyone I can make it." That is how Krishnan Iyer Yamya (MA) ... Nariyal Paani Wala (Invoke Agneepath) explained his 48-year journey to success, hours after the news of him being nominated for the Dadasaheb Phalke Award.



emotional saying he was running short of words. "Neither I can laugh nor cry. It is beyond my imagination," he said dedicating his success "to my family and my fans across the world."

generations! Honoured to announce that the Dadasaheb Phalke Selection Jury has decided to award legendary actor, Shri Mithun Chakrabarty Ji for his iconic contribution to Indian Cinema.

If I can make it, anyone can: Mithun Chakrabarty

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

political circles like Chief Minister Banerjee he answered in the negative saying he was not expecting such praises. "I am thankful to her that she sent me to Rajya Sabha but I came out of my own ... I should not say much on things that would invite controversies."

Bengal doctors threaten to cease work again

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Bengal junior doctors' forum protesting against the R G Kar Medical College and Hospital rape and murder case besides demanding overall secured and safe environment for them to work in Government hospitals once again said that they were contemplating resumption of cease work in the wake of repeated attacks on the on-duty doctors and threats issued by the ruling party leaders.

College — both in Kolkata — yesterday and today at Rampurhat Medical College ... our women colleagues are being manhandled ... boys and other medical staff beaten up ... we are not feeling safe," said Dr Maity another Junior Doctors' Forum leader.

Liquor worth ₹95.43 lakh seized in Gurugram after poll code imposed, 399 arrested

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM



Around 399 people were arrested and Rs 95.43 lakh worth over liquor seized from across in Gurugram district after the imposition of the model code of conduct for the upcoming assembly polls, police said on Monday.

with the counting of votes on October 8, the results will also be announced on the same day Election Commission announced.

etc. Keeping this in mind and with the aim of ensuring the rules of the code of conduct, as per the instructions of the Police Commissioner, Gurugram, police formed various special police teams and directed them to take action against those smuggling illegal liquor, cash, weapons and transferring them illegally.

"The Gurugram police chief has given special instructions to all SHOs, crime branch teams and various police teams to keep an eye on illegal trading. Team have also been formed in plain/civil clothes and deployed at various places, through which every illegal activity is being monitored, police said.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Cauldron boiling

West Asia is once again on the precipice of a larger conflict, as tensions between Israel, Hezbollah and Iran reach a boiling point

The situation in the West Asia is becoming critical and it would not be surprising if the region is embroiled in a full-fledged war. The assassination of Hezbollah's long-standing leader, Hassan Nasrallah, marks a significant escalation in the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Lebanese militant group. This development could pull not only Iran but also the United States into a broader and potentially devastating confrontation. Hezbollah, reeling from the assassination of its leader and the destruction of much of its command structure, finds itself at a critical juncture. With over a dozen of its top commanders eliminated and its communications infrastructure crippled, the group faces significant operational challenges. However, expecting Hezbollah to capitulate is unrealistic. The group, which has thousands of fighters and a sizable arsenal of long-range, precision-guided missiles capable of hitting major Israeli cities, has vowed revenge. With pressure mounting from within its ranks, there is a strong likelihood that Hezbollah



will attempt to launch a major offensive against Israel, potentially overwhelming Israeli air defences. If such an attack takes place and results in significant civilian casualties, Israel's response is expected to be swift and devastating, targeting Lebanon's infrastructure or even expanding the conflict to Iranian territory. Such a scenario could ignite a much wider conflict that drags the entire region into chaos.

For Iran, the loss of Nasrallah is as much of a blow as it is for Hezbollah. Iran, which has yet to respond to the assassination of Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh, is now facing heightened pressure from hardliners to retaliate. Iran's influence extends across the region through a network of militias known as the 'Axis of Resistance,' which includes Hezbollah, the Houthis in Yemen, and various groups in Syria and Iraq. While Tehran will likely use these proxies to increase pressure on Israel, its response is expected to be measured to avoid triggering a full-scale war. Israel's intentions are now clearer than ever. The assassination of Nasrallah signals that Israel has no interest in halting its military campaign, despite international calls for a 21-day ceasefire, including one from its closest ally, the United States. Israel believes it has Hezbollah on the defensive and aims to continue its offensive until the group's missile threat is neutralised. A broader war would have catastrophic consequences, not only for the parties directly involved but for the entire region. Lebanon, already on the brink of economic collapse, could be devastated and any escalation could disrupt global oil supplies, sending shockwaves through the international economy. The coming weeks will be crucial in determining whether this conflict spirals into a wider regional war or if diplomatic efforts can halt the violence before it escalates further. As of now, this volatile region stands on the edge of a conflict with no clear resolution in sight. This is high time for the UN to step in and the West to make efforts for rapprochement else this region is going to burn for sure.

PICTALK



An artist prepares an environment friendly puja pandal ahead of Durga Puja festival, in Kolkata

The deceptive facade of China's military



BHOPINDER SINGH

Despite technological advancements, setbacks like the Zhou-class submarine sinking, reveal a widening gap between China's military claims and actuality

Deception is at the heart of Chinese strategy and operations, especially on matters, the military. Ancient Sinological philosophers like Sun Tzu (The Art of War) had propounded extensively on cheating (likening it to a 'magic weapon') as a vital underpinning of deceptive warfare. The Chinese PLA Navy Submarine Academy has formally distilled four examples of deception in war (under the manual, 'Essentials of Sun Tzu and the Art of War and Submarine Operations'). Firstly 'Show yourself to intimidate the enemy', then 'Show the false to confuse the enemy', thirdly 'Create momentum to harass the enemy' and lastly 'Deceive to obstruct the enemy'. Herein, untruth is a natural necessity as per their established treatise. India would be well versed in how the Chinese would talk about the 1962 Indo-China War but remain conspicuously silent on the reversal of fortunes about the 1967 Nathu La and Cho La border clashes. While an estimated 340 Chinese soldiers had died then (88 on the Indian side) - true to their downplaying style, they only accepted a figure of 32 fatalities. The Chinese are similarly circumspect or lying about the essential outcomes of the China-Vietnam War of 1979. This deliberate fudging of facts was to repeat itself in the 2020 India-China skirmishes on the Line of Actual Control (LAC). While India acknowledged the loss of its Bravehearts in the bloody encounters, the Chinese shied away from acknowledging any of their own - this when the US pegged the Chinese fatalities as 20-35, the Russians estimated Chinese loss of about 45, whereas the Australians insisted at least 41 Chinese killed. Almost a year later, the Chinese sheepishly admitted four fatalities killed in the Galwan clashes, as they gave away gallantry awards. True to their practised instincts, the Chinese always overstated their gains and downplayed their losses to deceive the onlookers (especially their citizenry) to retain 'manufactured' optics of infallibility and invincibility, even when the reality was a lot more



unheroic. This sovereign impulse of fake claims, downplaying failures, and overstating their capabilities has been elevated to a fine art, as is the won't of any authoritarian state reeling from regime insecurities. It routinely manifests in their claims of making advancements in technologies, weaponry and platforms that are ostensibly cutting-edge and even ahead of peers like the United States or Russia. The reality is essentially predicated on reverse-engineering technologies that could be brazenly stolen or surreptitiously acquired - but the claim of 'homegrown' is gleefully posited. A lot of 'fifth generation' fighters, Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles, Hypersonic technologies to Chinese nuclear submarines remain in public news but are essentially untested and unsubstantiated in live combat. While it has a considerable industrial base and budgetary allocation granted to its Defence Industry, like everything else in the Chinese realm, claims remain more impressive than reality. With this murky backdrop, came the recent news of the sinking of the latest Chinese nuclear submarine. The fact that the Zhou-class of attack submarine sank even before going into service, speaks volumes of the gap between purported tech-



AS IF ON THE REBOUND AND TO STITCH A COUNTER-NARRATIVE, CHINA IS BELIEVED TO HAVE FIRED AN INTERCONTINENTAL BALLISTIC MISSILE INTO THE PACIFIC OCEAN, IN A MOVE THAT SEEMS DESIGNED TO DISTRACT AND DEFLECT FROM THE EMBARRASSING NEWS OF ITS SUNK SUBMARINE

nological advancements as opposed to factual efficacy. Incidentally, the US Deputy Secretary of State, Kurt Campbell, had confirmed that the Russians were helping China develop this submarine technology and that it too wasn't necessarily homegrown, as claimed. While this sinking of the submarine is believed to have happened in May earlier, it was never owned up by the Chinese and it took satellite images to unravel the sinking of the first-in-class nuclear-powered Chinese submarine. It is certainly a major setback for China's priority weapons programs that is key to its expansionist and hegemonic aspirations. As if on the rebound and to stitch a counternarrative, China is believed to have fired an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile into the Pacific Ocean, in a move that seems designed to distract and deflect from the embarrassing news of its sunk submarine and to reiterate its prowess and capability. Coming as the testing does after more than four decades over the Pacific Ocean, it is unmistakably a 'signal' move to suggest that the 'Dragon' still retains sharp claws and fangs. Incidentally, the missile is part of the PLA's Rocket Force that was subjected to a sweeping corruption crackdown, purge, and complete overhaul last

year - something that could be inflicted again on the PLA Navy leadership, which was in charge of the sunk submarine. Already the chorus of sub-standard Chinese weaponry has gained decibels from traditional clients like Pakistan or from emerging ones like Bangladesh, who complained about the quality of spares for its navy. Russia's decline on the global stage as a military supplier has not resulted in an automatic transfer of business to the Chinese manufacturers, as earlier thought and the growing perception of 'Made in China' has a lot to do with the reactions. With the US returning to the Pakistani arms market (Islamabad accounts for over 50 per cent of Chinese exports), and the overall pressures of economic slowdown haunting the Chinese economy - Beijing is in a tight spot to invest, innovate, and deliver weaponry that truly delivers what it claims. It is premature to write off China's 'Military-Industrial complex' just yet, but the chinks in its armour are getting routinely exposed. While still a 'value player' for the desperate, authoritarian or 'paradise' countries, its claim to cutting-edge technology is suspect. (The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PERILS OF MUSI PROJECT

Madam - Congress government's extravagant plan to spend a staggering Rs 1.5 lakh crore on the Musi river beautification project. This expenditure raises serious questions about the government's priorities and its commitment to the welfare of the people of Telangana. As KTR has rightly pointed out, the government's focus on this project while neglecting the Palamuru-Rangareddy project, which is nearing completion, is a clear indication of their misplaced priorities. The Palamuru-Rangareddy project has the potential to transform the lives of countless farmers in the region, yet it seems to be overshadowed by the Musi project, which appears to be more about political gain than public welfare. It is also alarming to note that the estimated cost of the Musi project has tripled from Rs 50,000 crore to Rs 1.5 lakh crore, suggesting a significant financial scandal.

The government must provide a transparent explanation for this drastic increase in expenditure and ensure that the funds are used efficiently and for the benefit of the people. Furthermore, the government has failed to provide clear details about the expected benefits of the Musi project, such as the number of acres of farmland that will benefit, the amount of water that will be stored, and the anticipated industrial benefits. Without such information, it is difficult to justify the massive investment being made in this project.

Juloori B Saraswathi | Hyderabad

HEZBOLLAH LEADER ASSASSINATED

Madam - The unstoppable Israel has once again inflicted another severe wound on Iran when Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah was assassinated in airstrikes by the Israeli defence forces at Lebanese capital Beirut. His death gave jolts to his shell shocked sympathisers in Iran, like the death of Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh. But at the same time a cause for celebration for the north-

India's dominance in Asia



The Australian think tank 'Lowy Institute' ranked India as the third strongest Asian power in the Asia Power Index. US and China occupied the first and second position

followed by India in the third place. Considering the economic growth, future potential and the diplomatic influence of India on an improvement, India successfully managed to rank better with passing years than the countries like Japan, Australia and Russia. The improvement from the side of India is particularly welcoming because India strives to make continuous improvement in its performance in all respects and also ensure holistic growth of Asia for a better future together.

The journey of India turning into the Asian giant is particularly strategic and India's efforts for industrialisation, infrastructural development, public policy and administration, good governance and holistic development are much appreciated in this regard.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

western Sunni population in Syria for his atrocities and war crimes during the Assad regime in the Civil War. The back-to-back war between Hezbollah and Israel has spoilt the hope of a ceasefire and wreaked havoc on civilians through constant shelling in various human settlements for more causality.

It proves the hypocrisy of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who pretends to gather international support for isolated Israel in the UN General Assembly but on the contrary continues to provoke Iran for a wide-scale regional war and long-running conflict results in vicious ramifications. Lacking international support for war crime and muscle approach, how long Israel will continue to push for war with the help of the US in Gaza, Lebanon and beyond, only time will tell

Janga B Sunuwar | Jalpaiguri

NEPOTISM IN POLITICS

Madam - It refers to 'Stalin to succeed Stalin' (September 29). The biggest threat to Indian democracy is the appointment of Udhayanidhi as Deputy

CM, which has proven the pervasiveness of dynastic politics and the prioritising of family interests over public welfare. It is easy for a son, daughter, or close relative of a leader to take over the political baton, while others have to spend a significant amount of time in the rough and tumble of politics. Political observers say that there is no harm if a political leader's son or daughter, or close relative, chooses to enter politics, but there is a thin line that separates dynasty politics and a worthy kin's choice to take a plunge. But when we look into the pros and cons of dynastic politics, it highlights the deficiency it could bring to the ideals of democracy, questioning its legitimacy. The trend of dynastic politics will lead to the perpetuation of an elite class that transcends generations and will hamper the smooth inflow of capable, meritorious candidates into politics.

KV Chandra mouli | Mysuru

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

The challenges of parenting in the age of technology



ASHA IYER KUMAR

While the challenges are real, so too are the solutions - adaptation and patience remain the cornerstones of successful parenting in these digital times

Conversations these days are rife with the refrain of how challenging life has become and how surfing the turbulent seas is not as easy as it used to be previously. It amuses me that we endorse this view readily despite the conveniences the modern world has introduced to us.

The all-round improvement in quality of life has done nothing much in terms of bringing us the sense of gratification that material accumulation is perceived to bring. Instead, we have only become crazier and more complaining. Among the things that we whine about there is one that stands out - the difficulty of being a parent in these times.

It is not like how it used to be when we were kids, they assert and are at a loss to keep their children under control, be it about the use of gadgets or their demands for new-age comforts or following well-meaning advice. Children these days have a way of growing up that parents can't seem to get a grip over, and parents are at their wit's end. Has parenting become so tough now, tougher than what



it used to be for our parents or theirs?

Before we delve into why it seems more difficult now than ever before, it is important to recognise that parenting has always been tough. Our grandparents may not have had to deal with social media addiction or the anxiety of being on constant alert, but they had their own set of worries - scarcity, lack of information, and fewer opportunities. Yet, they managed, just as we try to manage today. What, then, has changed so significantly that parents now feel a near-constant sense of overwhelm? For one, the digital age has transformed not only how we live but also how we raise children. Social media, YouTube, video games - all these distractions

are not just forms of entertainment; they shape the way children think, act, and even perceive reality. Parents often feel powerless in the face of this digital onslaught, unsure how to manage screen time without seeming authoritarian or disconnected from their children's world.

This struggle is exacerbated by the speed at which technology evolves. By the time parents get a handle on one app or platform, their children have already moved on to the next one.

Then, there's the issue of peer pressure, not just on children but on parents too. The 'Instagram-perfect' life adds a layer of stress to parenting that previous generations didn't face. Parents today are not just competing with themselves to be the best versions of their upbringing - they are competing with a curated version of perfection they see online. The pressure to enrol children in extracurricular activities, make sure they're developing emotional intelligence, cultivate leadership skills, and create future 'success stories' can be crushing. Our grandparents' idea of raising children to be 'good'

has been replaced with a need to raise 'achievers,' and this shift in focus can leave parents feeling like they're running a race with no finish line. Despite these challenges, parenting isn't a lost cause. It is, and always will be, a journey of trial and error. The key is finding balance and knowing that perfection is neither attainable nor necessary. A good place to start is by building a stronger connection with your children. Parents also need to accept that they cannot fight all battles alone.

They must seek help. Many of the challenges we face today are new and unfamiliar, but that doesn't mean they are insurmountable. Just as previous generations found solutions to their problems, so too can we, but it will require adaptation, learning, and, most importantly, patience. After all, our children are not just products of their environment - they are reflections of the love, support, and wisdom we give them, no matter how fast the world around them changes.

(The author is a Dubai-based columnist, writing coach. Views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN THE SPIRITUAL MEANING OF ZERO

The symbol of zero holds profound meaning, it symbolises eternity



RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJ JI

Zero is the number people often feel, more so than one, isn't it true? Because more zeroes means more prosperity. However from a spiritual perspective, zero is the point from which all other numbers spring forth. Even visually the number zero is symbolic of a seed, womb or egg from which pure potential emerges. Since the zero also visually resembles a circle, it symbolises eternity, evolution, and infinity. Like an atom is to the physical world and a soul to the spiritual world, the zero is symbolic of both worlds.

Pythagoras viewed the sign of the zero as the container for all things and the birthing place of all other values. The discovery of zero changes the way we calculate, compute and communicate. All these tasks affect almost all fields of human activity today. Zero is counted as an even number along with positive and negative integers. It is important in the number-value system because it defines the value and place of a digit in a number as a thousand, hundred, ten or a million. In a way, it is a symbol that defines nothingness.

While zero is valuable in terms of its contributions to the myriad spheres of human life, it has been used to describe mystical concepts in religious and spiritual philosophies. In Hindi zero is called 'shunya' meaning a void, the supreme state of awareness where everything comes to nothingness. Spiritual seekers perceive this state as 'mukti' or nirvana in which the soul is restored to its original state free from all impressions, influences and impurities of the earthly life. Zero looks like an elliptical circle representing infinity the eternal cycle of cre-



ation. Everything returns to zero or nothingness before being created anew. Hence, most spiritual teachers emphasise attaining the zero state i.e. emptying the mind of all worldly thoughts and detaching from the awareness of the physical body to attain liberation and peace. The egg shaped symbol of the Soul or Supreme Almighty as a point of light surrounded by an oval aura also resembles a zero. In its original state, every soul is like a zero & it has no worldly identity or role but like a seed, it has infinite power and qualities merged within, which manifest when the soul enters the field of karma in this world. The Supreme Almighty is the eternal seed who always exists in the zero state of awareness, detached from everything yet filled with infinite divine qualities and powers that support the whole creation. It is from this supreme state of nothingness that HE creates a perfect new world whenever the creation becomes degraded and old. Like zero, the soul essentially has an even or positive character. Just as the negative of 2 is - 2 which means lacking in 2, the lack of awareness of positive qualities manifests as negative or odd traits in the soul. The number zero has very special functions in the calculation. Anything added or subtracted to zero remains unchanged. Any number multiplied by zero gives zero while any number divided by zero gives infinity. Interestingly, when we add zeros after a number, its value grows ten times. These specialities can be ascribed to the Almighty Supreme who remains unchanged in the cycle of eternity. He does not enjoy the fruits of karma and nothing can be added, subtracted, multiplied or divided from his powers. When we multiply our powers by linking ourselves with him, we too become a zero like him filled with all divine virtues. So let us try our best to remain in the Zero state and achieve a higher state of consciousness to live a life that is minus all worries, tension & stress.

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

Revive shallow aquifers for urban water woes in India

Indian cities, plagued by over-extraction of deep groundwater must turn to the ancient underground reservoirs writes **S VISHWANATH** and **ISHLEEN KAUR**



In India, groundwater plays a critical role in meeting urban water demands. These aquifers, found at relatively shallow depths, have served as vital sources of water for centuries. At a time when transporting water across long distances was inconceivable, communities turned to shallow aquifers to meet their water needs.

Found at accessible depths, they offered a cost-effective and reliable water supply for the growing populations. The dug wells and step wells, still standing today, are reminders of a time when water scarcity was addressed by harnessing rainwater to recharge shallow aquifers. However, as modern cities grew, the humble dug wells, once a ubiquitous part of the landscape, began to vanish. These wells have now largely been replaced by deep bore wells tapping into groundwater reserves at alarming depths.

India is the world's largest user of groundwater, consuming more than the United States and China combined. Urban areas, in particular, have increasingly relied on groundwater to supplement their needs, leading to a significant depletion of shallow aquifers, and for too long, groundwater management has been side-lined in urban planning. However recent climate challenges—unpredictable rainfall, flash floods, and urban water crisis—have sparked renewed interest in groundwater management. Increasingly, rainwater harvesting and urban waterbody rejuvenation projects are turning toward these natural underground reservoirs as a solution.

Aquifers are now being studied for their potential to store excess rainwater and mitigate flooding. The launch of AMRUT 2.0 in 2021 marked a paradigm shift in water management, with groundwater finally being prioritized at the 'urban' scale. The mission recognised the need for cities to not only rely on groundwater but to actively manage



URBAN AREAS, IN PARTICULAR, HAVE INCREASINGLY RELIED ON GROUNDWATER TO SUPPLEMENT THEIR NEEDS, LEADING TO A SIGNIFICANT DEPLETION OF SHALLOW AQUIFERS, AND FOR TOO LONG, GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT HAS BEEN SIDE-LINED IN URBAN PLANNING

and protect it. Under the mission, the Shallow Aquifer Management (SAM) pilot project was initiated in 2022 in 10 cities. This initiative aimed to raise awareness among city officials and communities about the importance of shallow aquifers and demonstrate effective recharge structures to tackle critical issues like groundwater depletion, contamination and urban flooding. It sought to create an environment where cities could integrate shallow aquifer management into broader water strategies. By emphasising both simple and scientifically sound recharge methods, it aimed to revive approaches that have been overlooked in the pursuit of modern infrastructure. The project has yielded valuable insights for cities on effective shallow aquifer management.

This initiative has led to the development of 12 unique approaches and designs for recharge structures, tailored to local aquifer conditions. These ranged from the revival of existing wells and step wells in Dhanbad, Hyderabad, and Bangalore to catchment treatment of areas showing high recharge potential in Pune. Cities such as Gwalior and Rajkot have undertaken detailed mapping of aquifer systems, and groundwater depths, and created an inventory of recharge structures at the city scale, facilitating informed groundwater management decisions. The project has also shown promising results in showcasing the sustainable use of these recharge structures to supplement water needs for local communities.

In Kanteerava Nagar, Bangalore, a dug well retrofitted under the

project is now supplying water to around 500 households with up to one lakh litre of water being pumped every day for non-potable use. Similarly, in Thane's Yeoor Village, tribal communities are benefiting from water sourced from desilted and retrofitted wells. In Dhanbad and Rajkot, where peri-urban areas heavily depend on shallow wells, the initiative has begun to expand beyond its pilot phase.

Rajkot Municipal Corporation has initiated work on constructing more than 100 additional recharge structures city-wide based on the SAM mapping, showing the renewed awareness and commitment to scale up shallow aquifer management. The project has been able to draw the attention of larger voices in the climate resilience and water security space.

Bangalore's Climate Action Plan has now incorporated groundwater management as a vital aspect of making Bangalore climate resilient.

Pune has even established a dedicated groundwater cell in the municipal corporation to ensure that shallow aquifer management remains a priority in the city's future water plans. In FY 2024-2025, the Pune Municipal Corporation has allocated a dedicated budget of INR 1 crore for aquifer recharge structures, showing significant action in this direction. Despite the progress made through the SAM project, much work remains.

Cities need to acknowledge that deep aquifers hold vast reserves of water accumulated over centuries and must be typically reserved for emergencies, such as droughts. In contrast, shallow aquifers hold

immense potential as the first line of defence for daily water needs, making them essential for urban areas. However, as cities grow, the natural processes that recharge these aquifers are being disrupted.

In the current situation, where urban development is increasingly characterised by impermeable surfaces, inhibiting rainwater infiltration and preventing natural recharge, cities need to make conscious interventions towards artificial recharge of shallow aquifers including rejuvenation of lakes, wetlands and river floodplains.

India's groundwater crisis is complex, but the solution may lie beneath our feet. By managing shallow aquifers, cities can foster a more resilient and sustainable future. The SAM project provides a blueprint for this approach, but its lessons must be scaled up and implemented nationwide.

As India faces the dual challenges of urban growth and water scarcity, it is time to embrace the wisdom of our ancestors and integrate it with the science of hydrogeology.

By restoring shallow aquifers and making them a part of an integrated urban water management ecosystem, cities can ensure that this invaluable resource remains a dependable source of water for generations to come. In the words of Kabir: The well is one, and the water is the same. Let us remember that the water we draw today must sustain us tomorrow.

(S. Vishwanath is co-founder Biome Environmental Solutions, Bengaluru and Ishleen Kaur is senior environment specialist, National Institute of Urban Affairs, Delhi; views expressed are their own)

Right-wing and challenge for Indian Muslims: The path to reform and reconciliation

Indian Muslims must embrace internal reforms that align with a modern, secular framework, helping to bridge societal divisions

The rise of right-wing politics in India seems to have solidified its presence, and the deepening of Hindu-Muslim fault lines is likely to persist. While liberal and secular parties may win several State elections, an increase in their numbers in Parliament or State legislatures is unlikely to mend the fragile communal ties. The division between communities has now reached a deeper societal level, presenting a grave challenge for Indian Muslims. To minimise this damage and repair the social fabric, it is essential to promote a counter-narrative grounded in secularism. Indian Muslims must focus on internal reforms that promote secularisation within their own societal framework. While some right-



TARIQ ASHRAF

wing claims about Muslim life may be exaggerated or entirely untrue, certain aspects warrant closer introspection by the community itself. Although the issues have intensified since 2014, their roots can be traced back to much earlier times. As Muslims, it is critical to rework the internal narrative and processes within the community to align with secular

values. The painful legacy of India's partition, drawn along communal lines, has left a heavy burden on the Muslim community. In response, Indian Muslims need to go above and beyond to heal the sentiments and emotions of the majority community. Despite constitutional protections and safeguards, the community needs to focus on changing perceptions at both societal and communal levels. One step toward this change is to reform Muslim personal laws and harmonize them with a modern, progressive social order. Instead of framing personal law reforms as a Hindu-Muslim conflict, Muslims should see these reforms as standalone processes that benefit the community. A close examination of

some outdated practices will reveal that reforms have already taken place in many Muslim-majority countries. The All India Muslim Personal Law Board missed a crucial opportunity to declare triple talaq un-Islamic before the government passed legislation against it. Similarly, the Shah Bano case harmed the Muslim community's interests and fueled the resurgence of right-wing mobilisation. The Muslim Personal Law Board has exacerbated the community's challenges by opposing every proposed reform instead of acting as a forward-thinking, responsible institution. Another significant issue facing Indian Muslims is the lack of leadership from within the intelligentsia. With few exceptions, Muslim leadership has



been monopolised by the clergy, leaving the community without enlightened, visionary, and progressive guidance. The void left by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad has remained largely unfilled. Even leaders like Asaduddin Owaisi, despite their education and goodwill, have failed to adopt a liberal and secular approach in addressing legitimate community concerns. An aggrieved community must commu-

nicate in a conciliatory manner, rather than adopting a confrontational stance. The Muslim leadership's approach to the Hijab controversy clearly illustrates this failure. While Muslim women are entitled to wear the Hijab as a matter of choice and religious freedom, elevating the issue to the extent of students quitting their studies was unwise. It is essential for religion to be separated from public life and confined to the private domain. Although this holds true for all communities, Indian Muslims must make this move more emphatically due to historical reasons. The community needs to create a secular platform to address its concerns. The severe political and socio-economic challenges facing Muslims today

cannot be ignored. One positive step in this direction has been the recent initiative by a group of retired civil servants from Delhi who attempted to engage with leaders from the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). However, the initiative failed to gain traction as it was undertaken individually without an organizational framework. To be successful, such efforts must be scaled up to a national-level dialogue with a clear agenda involving eminent citizens from various levels, including state and central governments. It is imperative to address the widespread perception that the Muslim community is resistant to reform, reconciliation, and compromise. Before the Hindu-Muslim fault lines in India reach a danger-

ous level, the country urgently needs a period of cooling off. Many right-wing grievances against Muslims lack substance and truth. In a society governed by constitutional principles and the rule of law, a community cannot be punished for the historical wrongs committed by its ancestors. To address the right-wing narrative effectively, the Muslim community must launch a secular, modern, and progressive narrative based on evidence, rather than countering with equally polarizing rhetoric. It is the only viable option. (The writer has been associated with the Centre for Policy Research, IIM Lucknow, University of Delhi, and Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi; Views are personal)

INDIA PUSH FOR VICTORY WITH T20-STYLE BATTING

PTI ■ KANPUR

Trying to force a result in the limited time available, India played a sensational T20-style cricket to take a 52-run first-innings lead against Bangladesh in the second Test, infusing life into the rain-hit contest here on Monday.

The sun shone bright in the Kanpur sky after two gloomy days and the on-field action finally began after losing eight sessions. India had six sessions to force a win, and the hosts did everything they could on the fourth day of the match.

The pitch hardly offered assistance to India bowlers but the hosts still bundled out Bangladesh for 233 in their first innings, built around Mominul Haque's patient unbeaten 107.

India then unleashed their batting might on the visitors, striking at 8.22 runs per over to reset the records for fastest team 50 (18 balls), 100 (74 balls) and 200 runs (24.2 overs) in Test cricket.

India declared their second innings at 285 for nine to have another go at the visiting batters. At stumps, Bangladesh were 26 for two with Zakir Hasan and Hasan Mahmud becoming off-spinner

Ravichandran Ashwin's victims. They were trailing India by 26 runs.

India are going for the kill as an outright victory will consolidate their top position in the World Test Championship (WTC) table. Considering the tougher assignments ahead, especially the Australia Tour, India need to log as many wins as possible against comparatively easier rivals to get some cushion before the tough overseas rubbers.

Young opener Yashvi Jaiswal (72 off 51 balls) set the tone with three boundaries in the opening over bowled by Hasan Mahmud and skipper Rohit Sharma (23 off 11) bludgeoned Khaled Ahmed for two consecutive sixes - one landing on the roof of the stadium. It was clear that India were showing an urgency to surpass the Bangladesh total quickly after more than two days' play was lost to bad weather.

The onslaught surprised the rival attack but the home fans were rewarded for visiting the stadium. Adopting a see-the-ball and hit-the-ball approach, India completed the fastest team fifty in three overs.

Realising the ineffectiveness of his pacers, Bangladesh skipper



Najmul Hossain Shanto introduced spinner Mehidy Hasan Miraz and he responded to the call by casting Rohit.

Jaiswal completed his fifty with a single off left-arm spinner Taijul Islam and continued in his aggressive fashion. His innings, which contained 12 fours and two sixes, was cut short by Mahmud.

The young opener added 72 runs for the second wicket with Shubhan Gill (39).

Rishabh Pant did not last long but there was no change in approach for the hosts with Virat Kohli and KL Rahul building on the foundation with their swift 87-run stand for the fifth wicket.

In a breathtaking show, Indian batters hit 28 fours and 11 sixes, collecting 158 runs in boundaries. In the process, Kohli became only the fourth player in history to complete 27,000 runs in international cricket across formats.

Ravindra Jadeja also cherished a rare double of 300 Test wickets and 3000 Test runs. He is the second quickest to complete the double behind England great Ian Botham. He also became only the seventh Indian to take 300 Test wickets when he dismissed Khaled Mahmud.



Samit Dravid misses India U19 first four-day game against Aus

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Injured Samit Dravid was ruled out of the opening four-day game between India U-19 and Australia U-19 and is also unlikely to be fit in time for the second match of the series.

The series opener began here on Monday.

Samit is currently at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) recuperating from a knee injury that forced him to sit out of the three-match youth one-dayers against the Aussies recently.

He was expected to make his India U-19 debut at Puducherry but did not feature in any of the three matches. India had won the series 3-0.

"As of now he's at the NCA, recovering from his knee injury. So, I don't know yet. It looks unlikely," head coach Hrishikesh Kanitkar was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo.

In fact, for Samit, son of former India captain and head coach Rahul Dravid, this is the last chance to represent India at the U-19 level.

He is set to turn 19 on October 11 this year, which will also

make him ineligible for playing for India in the ICC 2026 Under-19 World Cup.

"His MRI scan was done during the one-day matches. We thought of giving him a go at the four-day game, but let's see how he progresses at the NCA. We are waiting for their report. We also have a second match," a source close to the development told PTI.

The second four-day match will start from October 7 at Chepauk, hence Samit has another week to recover from the knee injury.

Kanitkar said playing four-day red-ball game at the Under-19 stage will help the development of players.

"It's a great initiative to play Test games because red-ball [cricket] really tests you. There's enough time for the bowlers to plan and make strategies. So, for both batters and bowlers and even for fielders it's the ideal challenge to see where you stand.

"To be able to play against a foreign side is a great thing. I know a lot of people, including myself who played Under-19 cricket against foreign teams and it really helped us a lot," Kanitkar added.

Good to get some overs under the belt at home as we would need to bowl a lot more in Aus: Bumrah

PTI ■ KANPUR

Jasprit Bumrah is gradually increasing his workload at home as the India pace spearhead knows he would be required to bowl a lot more overs during the five Test series in Australia.

"After the two Test series against Bangladesh, India will host New Zealand for three games before departing for Australia.

"You have to be smart (to stay fit for Australia) and it's good to get some overs under the belt here

although the number of overs to be bowled will be a lot more in Australia," Bumrah told host broadcaster ahead of the fourth day's play.

"Day two and three of the Kanpur Test were wiped out due to a wet outfield at the Green Park stadium here.

"Weather is not in your control, it is the way it is. Good to get some time to relax. You've to quickly adjust to the changing conditions here after Chennai, quickly adapt and communicate with others, like



about changing lines and lengths," said Bumrah.

The five-Test Border-Gavaskar Trophy begins in Perth on November 22.

"Bumrah relishes playing Test matches and is determined to give his best in the format.

"My favourite format is the Tests, I've always said that. I'm trying to give my absolute best in this format," said the champion bowler who has featured in 36 Tests since making his debut in 2018.

PTI ■ SHARJAH

Pakistan great Zaheer Abbas feels the comparisons between Virat Kohli and Babar Azam are baseless as the Indian superstar is a lot more consistent than the under-fire Pakistan batter.

Once regarded as part of the 'Fab Five' including Kohli, Steve Smith, Joe Root, and Kane Williamson, Babar is currently enduring an extended slump in form.

"Yeh fizoool ki baatein hai (the comparisons are pointless). Virat Kohli scores in every match the other player (Babar) doesn't score in any match so then how can you compare. The person who scores, he is the bigger player," Abbas told PTI on the sidelines of the Cricket Predicta Conclave here.

Kohli has 80 international hundreds to his name while the much younger Babar has scored 31 centuries across formats.

Abbar also acknowledged the consistency displayed by India across formats and said the Rohit Sharma-led team will be a strong contender for the upcoming Champions Trophy.

"Indian team overall is very good. Their batters are doing well and the bowlers both are good. It is a very balanced team, one that plays such

Comparing Kohli and Babar baseless, the Indian star way ahead: Zaheer Abbas

samajh kar (thoughtfully)," said Abbas.

"They have a very good captain, who understands cricket very well. So, when everything is going in your favour it is smooth sailing. That's the case with India right now.

"There is a very good chance of them doing well (at the Champions Trophy) because they have a balanced team," the 77-year-old said.

Hailed as the 'Asian Bradman' for insatiable appetite for runs, Abbas was one of the most elegant batters of his time. He played 78 Tests and 62 ODIs for Pakistan, accumulating 5062 and 2572 runs respectively.

TEAMS IN T20S CAN WIN BY FLUKE, NOT IN TESTS: The 77-year-old strongly believes that Test cricket truly tests the players' character, resilience, mental strength, technique, and consistency.

"Test cricket is real cricket. That it is the real Test of any player, bowler. At one point India and Pakistan's Test team



used to be good. And now the boards are realising that we can't go on without Test cricket.

"How many T20s can you play? How many white-ball tournaments can the ICC organise? Maybe 2 or 3 but in the end you have to return to ODI or Tests.

"If you continue Test cricket the cricket will last longer. I know people like to get results fast but slowly they will get bored of T20s and we need Tests and ODIs."

An increasing number of

players are turning down central contracts from their boards to focus on careers in T20 franchise leagues, a worrying trend that Abbas believes should be addressed.

"Test cricket is ultimate. Anyone can win in T20. Teams can win by fluke. But that is not the case in Test cricket as it has two innings. You have the scope to do well in one innings. Test cricket teaches you a lot.

"I know a lot of the players don't want to play Test cricket and play T20 instead. That needs to be stopped. They need

We've players who will help India dominate cricket for 10 years: Laxman

PTI ■ BENGALURU

He accepted the job with trepidation but batting great VVS Laxman says he is now a content man as head of BCCI's Centre of Excellence, having played his part in creating a 'supply chain' that will help India dominate world cricket across formats for at least the next decade.

Laxman took over as the head of the erstwhile National Cricket Academy (NCA) in 2021 from his one-time teammate Rahul Dravid, and built on the excellent platform that was already laid out. NCA has been refurbished into a CoE by the Board and was inaugurated on Sunday. Laxman got a one-year extension into the position after his original tenure ended earlier this year.

"I can say with a lot of confidence, barring a couple of skillsets, I think, for the next 10 years, we've got a lot of players who will make our country proud. I'm not only talking about men's, but also women's (cricket) as well. We're blessed to have that kind of talent," Laxman told a select media gathering at the Centre of Excellence.

He said India's dominance in world cricket is a perfect reflection of its steady 'supply chain.'

"We won the (T20) World Cup (2024) in the West Indies which was a great result. But if you see all the three formats, we have dominated. Not only the rankings, we have dominated (other aspects too).

"There is a supply chain as far as cricket is concerned. That means the amount of players we have at our disposal, it is a real blessing."

The 49-year-old said grooming the players without tinkering with their natural game, was essential to maintain that supply chain.

"The whole idea is to monitor them, how to groom them, so that they realise their potential. It's not that we dictate them (players) that you have to do this or you have to change (technique).

"Ultimately the player should feel comfortable, acknowledging and accepting that option. We don't want the player to suddenly feel the burden of whose advice he has to listen to."

The former India batter then explained how monitoring of the "targeted" players was done at the CoE.



"When Rahul was the head coach of the Indian team, he used to take care of the contracted players and we at NCA used to take care of the targeted players, emerging players and the under-19 players," he recalled.

For this purpose, Laxman said he and the other support staff created a wonderful synergy with various state associations to ensure continuity and similarity in coaching.

"...Because ultimately the state association coaches spend a lot more time with a player than what we do. We also have an athlete management system. A profile is created for all the players who come and attend the ZCA and the NCA camps...right from their reports of skills to the fitness to the musculoskeletal screening report.

"Now, we are going to even request the state association to follow that process. So, at least 50 players of each state association — 25 men and 25 women — should be there on the watch list.

"We will know how the player has progressed and it will become very easy for anyone who is taking care of that player to know what the player has gone through every

year," he elaborated on the process.

Along with skill enhancement, Laxman said keeping the players in a good mental state is also important for their growth.

"The players themselves are so professional. They understand what is needed for them to be in the best mindset when they are competing at the highest level. As far as the junior cricketers are concerned, we have got mental conditioners who spend 8 to 10 days with the players," he said.

IMPORTANCE OF 'A' TOURS: Laxman described the significance of 'A' tours in preparing a player to tackle all kind of conditions.

"Every year we make sure that we have at least two A Series. Sometimes it can be challenging because we want to have an A Series whereas the other boards will be busy with their own domestic cricket. Or they may not be ready to accommodate us.

"But at least we try to have two A Series. The A programme allows us to go to different parts of the world and get experience. So that when they graduate to the national team, it is not a surprise to them," added Laxman.