



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

BHUBANESWAR, TUESDAY OCTOBER 1, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹4

Established 1865

the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

Published From DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

Late City Vol. 20 Issue 269 *Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable



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

when a probe had already been ordered by the State into the allegations. Justice Gavai also asked whether there was any material with the CM to conclude definitively that animal fat had been used to prepare laddus at Tirupati Temple.

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 cleaning urban sewers and septic tanks come from SC, ST, OBC categories," the Congress chief said.

Army officer, fiancée torture Judicial commission begins probe

PNS BHUBANESWAR

The judicial commission headed by former Orissa High Court Judge Chittaranjan Das on Monday began its probe into the alleged custodial torture of an Army officer and the sexual assault of his fiancée at the Bharatpur police station in Bhubaneswar on September 15.

3 govt officials get 3-yr RI for embezzling Rs 1.14 cr

PNS BARIPADA

A Special Vigilance Court in Baripada on Monday convicted five persons, including three government officials, for embezzling over Rs 1.14 crore. Four of them were sentenced to rigorous imprisonment (RI) for three years.

Executive Engineer, Pradeep Kumar Panda, former Senior Divisional Accounts Officer, Baikuntha Nath Naik, former Junior Clerk-cum-Auditor of Deo Irrigation Division, Karanjia in Mayurbhanj district and Tushar Mishra, managing director and Sankara Narayan, project director, B Engineers and Builders, Mancheswar in

Bhubaneswar. All of them had been charge-sheeted by the Vigilance for misappropriation of government money in connection with construction of earth dam and truncated spillway work of the Deo Irrigation Project.

Sankara Narayan to undergo RI for a period of three years each and pay a fine of Rs 50,000 each. As Tushar Mishra did not appear before the court for hearing on Monday, an NBW was issued against him.

Majhi addresses BJP rally in Jharkhand

PNS BHUBANESWAR

Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi is on a two-day visit to Jharkhand from Monday. Majhi attended the BJP's 'Parivartan' rally at Jagannathpur of West Singhbhum district on Monday and criticised the Hemanta Soren government of Jharkhand saying that the farmers' income has become



the lowest in the country at 4,400 rupees in the State. Majhi also slammed the Soren government for grossly neglecting Odia language in Jharkhand.

Majhi is scheduled to address a public meeting in Chaibasa on Tuesday before returning to Bhubaneswar. According to reports, Majhi's visit to Jharkhand aims to strengthen the BJP organisation before the forthcoming Assembly elections. Notably, Jharkhand is inhabited by a substantial section Odia-speaking community and Santali tribes.

In Kandhamal Police accused of killing ganja smuggler

Also looting his valuables; probe ordered

PNS PHULBANI

Police have been accused of killing a ganja smuggler and dumping his body in a forest before fleeing with his money, the contraband and motorbike in Kandhamal district. The serious allegations have been levelled by the deceased's family against the Kandhamal police.



on his motorbike when they were chased by police. The cops allegedly moved down their motorbike, leaving them seriously injured. While his friend managed to escape, Jyestha was caught and thrashed by the cops, resulting in his death. Later, the cops dumped his body in the ghat and fled after snatching his money, ganja and liquor that he was smuggling.

liquor," alleged the deceased's brother Kanistha Bandaki. "The cops have seized his money, the contraband and liquor that he was smuggling. They have also seized his bike. So, if the police was present and made the seizure then who killed him? We are sure about the involvement of policemen in the brutal killing and disposing his body in the forest," alleged Salaguda Sarpanch Rohit Kanhar.

Advertisement for Odisha State Health Services (OSHS) featuring a list of services and contact information. Includes text: 'ଜାତୀୟ ସ୍ୱେଚ୍ଛାକୃତ ରକ୍ତଦାନ ଦିବସ ୧ ଅକ୍ଟୋବର ୨୦୨୪' and 'ରାଜ୍ୟ ରକ୍ତ ସଂସ୍ଥାରଣ ପରିଷଦର ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ ଓ ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟ'.

BJD infighting deepens in Bhubaneswar 'State must ensure safe, legal abortion service for all'

Show-cause notices served to 4 leaders

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
The infighting within the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) in Bhubaneswar is showing no sign of dying down. In a fresh development, the party leadership on Monday issued show-cause notices to four leaders for their 'indiscipline' activities.

The notices were served to Amaresh Jena, Biranchi Mahasupakar, Biket Swain and

Rajesh Patra. BJD district president Sushant Rout issued the notices asking the leaders to reply within 15 days on why disciplinary actions should not be taken against them. Commenting on the development, Amaresh Jena said, "We never tried to create cracks within the party; rather, we tried to fix it. We will definitely reply to the show-cause notice."

Earlier in the day, around 25 to 30 BJD Corporators opposing Amaresh Jena and Biranchi Mahasupakar left for the Lokanath temple in Puri

in a bus. They said they have vowed to remain united. Speculations are rife that the Corporators have joined hands demanding action against Jena and Mahasupakar.

There are also reports of infighting within the BJD in Bhadrak district. As per reports, two groups were at loggerheads during a review meeting of the district held at the Sankha Bhawan here on Monday.

Later, party leader Pranab Prakash Das pacified the factions after holding talks with them.

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
Voluntary organisation SAHAYOG held a State-level consultation meeting of different stakeholders to mark the International Safe Abortion Day 2024 here.

Secretary of the organisation Bijayalaxmi Rautaray welcomed the guests, resource persons, office bearers of All Odisha ASHA Unions, ASHAs, journalists, progressive lawyers, and CSO representatives. The Amended MTP-Act 2021 is really a weapon for a person's



choice and decisions on reproductive as well as bodily autonomy, she said, adding that it is the duty of the State to ensure safe and legal abor-

tion service for all who need it. Former Director of Health and Family Welfare Dr Seba Mahapatra discussed the is-

issues in implementation of the MTP Act in past and now. Assistant Director, Capital Hospital, Bhubaneswar, Dr Sanjay Ray spoke about the

abortion services, contraception, pre and post abortion care availability in Government health facilities and new amended guideline of MTP Act-2021.

State convener, Jan Swasthya Aiviyan Gouranga Mahapatra said, "For the first time, an unmarried girl is permitted to terminate her pregnancy and the provision of confidentiality of the person seeking MTP is the most important thing."

The second session started with panel discussion moderated by Gouranga Mahapatra.

In city 2 quintals of ganja seized from car



getting inputs regarding the trafficking of ganja. After identifying the car, a police team started chasing it from the Gangapada area and later managed to intercept it near the Jagasara area.

Though the two occupants of the car managed to escape, police seized the vehicle along with the ganja consignment. The contraband was being smuggled in a brand-new car.

Sources said that the car was damaged after hitting a boundary wall while trying to dodge the police on an isolated road.

"One of the tyres got busted and it caught fire during the chase. The two persons managed to escape after abandoning the vehicle," said a local resident.

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
The special squad of the Commissionerate police on Monday seized over two quintals of ganja while it was being smuggled to Bhubaneswar from Kandhamal.

However, two drug peddlers managed to give the cops a slip after their vehicle was chased and seized by police.

Sources said that the cops intercepted the vehicle after

Naveen reviews Nayagarh BJD organisation



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
As BJD president Naveen Patnaik has been carrying out the party's district-wise organisational review before the party's October Padayatra, party leaders of Nayagarh district met the BJD supremo here on Saturday.

The party's senior leader and

Nayagarh BJD MLA Arun Sahoo along with the district's other MLA and party leaders presented the party's organisational situation. Naveen also took feedback on last polls. While many senior leaders lost the elections, the district headquarters Assembly seat could be retained by the BJD due to popularity of

Sahoo. Notably, the BJD won the Nayagarh and Daspalla Assembly seats but lost Khandapada and Ranpur.

Naveen advised the leaders to undertake a membership drive and successfully carry out the proposed October 'Jana Sampark Padayatra'. He told them to sensitise the pub-

lic about the failures and "false promises" of the BJP government in the State.

Unlike other district reviews that witnessed fireworks, this meeting went on with a positive note due to the leadership of Arun Sahoo, who is a member of the party's newly-formed coordination committee.

'Will provide best, humanitarian policing'

Says new Twin City Police Commissioner

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
A day after the government effected a major reshuffle in the IPS cadre, senior officer Suresh Devdatta Singh on Monday took charge as the new Twin City Commissioner of Police. He took charge from Sanjeeb Panda, who has been transferred as ADG, Training and Director, BPSPA.

Singh sought public cooperation and assured that the Commissionerate Police would provide its best and also humanitarian policing.

"I will soon review the law and order situation with my team and prepare a roadmap. We will take prompt actions for investigation and bring



culprits to justice. Those approaching us for any grievances will be treated properly. People can approach us freely," said Singh.

"Police need to be strict and at the same time ensure that a person can approach him/her freely. An officer needs to bring a balance between these two aspects," he said.

Anganwadi kids to get region-specific food

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida on Monday expressed concerns over the supply of substandard chhatua and said her department is mulling to provide region-specific food to the Anganwadi children.

The department is drawing a lot of criticism over poor-quality chhatua. In the coming days, there would be no more irregularities in the supply of chhatua. The children would be supplied with region-specific food. The department is mulling to replace chhatua with millets in places where it is prevalent, she said.

The department is committed to having a malnutrition-free Odisha. In the coming days, a conclave on the manufacturing of nutritious chhatua would be organised. Experienced persons would make decisions in this regard, she said.

"There are regional differences in nutrition, malnutrition and anaemia. To do away with this, I today directed the district-level officers to act as per the feedback received from the bottom level. In the coming days, children will be provided more nutritious and wholesome food so that Odisha will become a malnutrition-free State," Parida added.

Ghadai refutes 'no dev of Jajpur' slur by CM Majhi

Says Naveen govt gave special focus to tribal hilltop village Nagada

LALIT MOHAN MISHRA ■ BHUBANESWAR
Reacting to the remark of Chief Minister Mohan Majhi at a meeting at Jajpur on Sunday, senior BJD leader and former Finance Minister Prafulla Ghadai on Monday said that many development activities have been undertaken in Jajpur district and the tribal hilltop village Nagada in

particular during the past Naveen Patnaik Government. He said that there are several hilltop tribal habitations in the country including Odisha. The Naveen Patnaik Government had taken special care for the development of the villages.

He added that most of the tribal villages in Sukinda and Danagadi Blocks of Jajpur district were undeveloped in 2000. But all the tribal villages have been developed by 2024. After Nagada situation came to notice, former Chief Minister Patnaik had given special



direction for its fastest development. A fair-weather RD road was built, an Anganwadi Center was established, and families were covered under Antodaya scheme of NFSA. Besides, housing and drinking water infra were created. There

has been substantial development of Nagada today, Ghadai claimed.

He invited Chief Minister Majhi to visit Nagada and requested him not to be guided by someone's wrong information.

He further added that the Chief Minister position is the most respectable political position in the State and Majhi should not diminish his image by giving off the cuff statements.

Defending the BJD supremo and former Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, he

said that Naveen as Chief Minister had inherited an over-draft- Government in 2000 which he converted to a surplus-budget Government by 2024 and this has helped the Mohan Majhi Government to prepare Rs 2.50 lakh crore budget this year. Jajpur has become the top steel-industrial hub in South Asia. Infrastructure, irrigation, bridges, employment have been boosted in Jajpur district and Odisha. So it is not correct to say that nothing has been done in Jajpur in last 24 years. As development is a never-ending

process, the present Government can start working further, he added.

He refrained from giving comment on the family-looting statement of Majhi as the Chief Minister did not name anyone.

Notably, the Chief Minister Mohan Majhi had surprised everybody at a public meeting in Jajpur on Sunday by alleging that no development had taken place in Jajpur and Nagada during the previous Government and three families had looted Jajpur, without naming anyone.

Oct 1 is Int'l Day of Older Persons

Let the elderly lead fulfilling lives with care, respect

Every year on October 1, the world comes together to observe the International Day of Older Persons. This day is dedicated to raising awareness about the unique challenges that elderly individuals face and promoting the development of a society that is inclusive of all age groups. As the global population of older persons rises, the urgency to address their needs has never been greater. While older adults contribute wisdom, experience, and guidance, many suffer from neglect, abuse, and lack of access to essential services. These challenges are further exacerbated by inadequate social protection systems, ageism, and socio-economic inequalities.

Globally, the elderly population is expanding rapidly. According to the United Nations, the number of people aged 60 years and older is projected to reach 2.1 billion by 2050, nearly doubling from 1 billion in 2020. Asia leads the world with around 630 million individuals aged 60 and above, while Europe follows with over 200 million, the highest proportion of elderly relative to the total population.



BRUHASPATI SAMAL
Africa, though traditionally younger, is experiencing its own increase in elderly populations, with projections indicating 74 million older adults by 2050. The Americas, including the United States and Latin America, also face a growing number of elderly individuals, with countries like Brazil and Mexico feeling the strain of inadequate social systems to meet their needs.

India, home to over 140 million elderly people as of 2023, is facing a demographic shift that is adding to the urgency of addressing elder care. The elderly now make up

more than 10% of India's population, a number expected to grow to nearly 20% by 2050. This shift brings numerous challenges, particularly for a country where rapid urbanization and the disintegration of the joint family system are leaving many older persons without traditional support structures.

In India, many elderly people face multiple health-related issues, including chronic illnesses, disabilities, and mental health problems. The National Sample Survey (NSS) reports that 45% of older adults suffer from at least one chronic disease, with cardiovascular conditions, diabetes, arthritis, and cancer being particularly common. Mental health issues such as depression and anxiety are also widespread, yet often go undiagnosed due to societal stigma and lack of resources. Another significant challenge for India's elderly is financial insecurity. The country lacks a robust social security system, with only about 10% of the workforce covered by formal pension schemes. This leaves the vast majority of elderly individuals reliant on their families or meager savings. In rural areas,

where work opportunities are scarce and informal employment is common, older people are especially vulnerable. The absence of a universal pension system compounds the issue, pushing many elderly into financial hardship.

Additionally, the rapid urbanisation in India has led to increasing isolation and loneliness among the elderly. The breakdown of traditional joint families means more older adults are living alone or in under-resourced old-age homes. Studies show that around 35% of elderly individuals in India experience loneliness, which can lead to mental health problems such as depression. Moreover, elder abuse remains a pressing issue. A report by HelpAge India revealed that 1 in 5 elderly individuals in the country faces abuse, which ranges from emotional neglect to physical and financial exploitation. Most of these cases go unreported, as many elderly individuals fear further alienation from their families or suffer from a societal stigma that discourages them from speaking out.

Ageism, or discrimination based on age, is another widespread issue

affecting older persons around the world. In many societies, older adults are seen as a burden, leading to their marginalisation and exclusion from social and economic life. This discrimination manifests in various ways, including reduced employment opportunities, limited access to essential services, and even neglect within families. United Nations data indicates that 50% of the global population holds ageist attitudes, contributing to the marginalisation of older persons.

To address these growing challenges, governments and civil society must implement robust legal protections and policies that safeguard the rights of older persons and ensure their well-being. In India, for example, the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act of 2007 mandates that children and legal heirs are obligated to provide for their elderly parents, ensuring they are not neglected. The act also provides for the establishment of old-age homes and other welfare measures. However, despite these legal frameworks, enforcement remains a challenge, particularly in rural and economi-

cally disadvantaged areas.

The responsibility for ensuring the well-being of older persons does not rest solely with governments; society as a whole must play a role. Strengthening family support systems is crucial, as is fostering a culture of respect and care for older individuals. Younger generations should be educated on the importance of elder care, and communities can develop programmes to support the elderly. Volunteer organisations and local governments can collaborate to create age-friendly environments that promote inclusion and social engagement for older persons.

Investment in social services, particularly healthcare and pension systems, is essential. Governments must prioritise the expansion of universal pension schemes and provide better healthcare access tailored to the needs of older persons. Public health campaigns should also work to reduce the stigma associated with elder care and mental health issues. Technology can also play a pivotal role in addressing the challenges faced by older persons. Telemedicine services, digital lit-

eracy programmes, and assistive devices can enhance access to healthcare and social services, particularly in remote or underserved areas. Governments and private sectors must invest in such technologies to bridge the gap in services available to elderly populations.

The International Day of Older Persons serves as a reminder that the society must value and care for individuals of all ages, especially the elderly who have contributed significantly to our world. The problems they face-ranging from health and financial insecurity to isolation and discrimination-require comprehensive strategies to address them. By fostering a culture of respect, implementing strong legal protections, and ensuring robust social services, we can create a society that uplifts and supports older persons, allowing them to age with dignity and lead fulfilling lives.

(General secretary, Confederation of Central Govt. Employees and Workers Odisha State Coordination Committee, Bhubaneswar (M) 9437022669)

Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any damage or loss to any person, a purchaser of this publication or not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent court and forums in Delhi/New Delhi only. Readers are advised and requested to verify and seek appropriate advice to satisfy themselves about the veracity of any kind of advertisement before responding to any contents published in this newspaper. The printer, publisher, editor and any employee of the Pioneer Group's will not be held responsible for any kind of claim made by the advertisers of the products & services and shall not be made responsible for any kind of loss, consequences and further product-related damages on such advertisements.

In Kalahandi Repeated ragging: Student jumps off hostel building

PNS ■ BHAWANIPATNA Fed up with repeated ragging and bullying, a Plus 2 second-year student allegedly jumped off from the hostel building of a private college under the Town police station here on Sunday.



student reached the college and later lodged a complaint about the incident at the police station.

videos with me. When they threatened me by brandishing a knife, I jumped off the hostel building," said the victim. His mother said that he has sustained injuries in his both knees. "Nine other students were torturing my son since last 15-20 days. I have lodged an FIR against them," said the victim's father.

Human-elephant conflict in Keonjhar Man killed by jumbo

NARESH PATTANAYAK ■ KEONJHAR Keonjhar district has been witnessing an increase in human-elephant conflict. On Sunday morning, one 45-year-old Gour Charan Nayak of Khajuridihi village in the Bamebari forest section under the Champua Forest Range, who had gone to the nearby forest to attend nature's call, was attacked by an elephant and died.

the dead body to be taken for postmortem and later the body was handed over to the family. Compensation was also paid to the family. The villagers alleged that the tusker has killed two persons during last three months. In another incident, forest officials seized a carcass of a five-year-old elephant calf from the Chakratirtha Biodiversity Reserve under Hadagarh elephant sanctuary of the district. It is suspected that the calf might have died due to a fight between elderly elephants or disease. The forest officials conducted an inquiry into the calf's death and buried the carcass in the ground after postmortem. Anandapur DFO Abhaya Dalei said, "The cause of death could be confirmed after receiving the autopsy report."

In Jajpur 1 killed, 24 hurt as bus hits truck

PNS ■ JAJPUR A person was killed on the spot and 24 others sustained critical injuries when a bus by which they were travelling collided with a truck on Monday near Jaraka Chhack on NH-156 under the Dharmasala police station in Jajpur district. The injured were shifted to the Dahrmasala Community Health Centre. Later, five of the injured were shifted to the SCB

Medical College Hospital in Cuttack as their conditions worsened. The private bus 'Raja' was on its way to Bhubaneswar from Baripada. The impact of the collision was so powerful that the front portion of the bus was totally mangled, said Dharmasala police station IIC Tapan Nayak. "We suspect that the driver of the bus dozed off at the wheel, as a result of which the vehicle hit the truck from the rear," he said.

In Nabarangpur 1 dies in cracker blast during idol immersion

PNS ■ NABARANGPUR A person was killed in fire-cracker explosion during Ganesh idol immersion at Sivaji Nagar in Umakote of Nabarangpur district on Sunday. Reports said one Deepak Harijan (27), who was carrying a heap of firecrackers for the immersion procession, was injured in the explosion. He was shifted to the Umakote

Sub-Divisional Hospital, where the doctors declared him brought dead. However, the relatives of Depak alleged that he died due to delay in treatment by the doctor at the hospital. Later, a mob vandalised the hospital. Getting information, police rushed to the spot and brought the tense situation under control. The body was sent for postmortem and further investigations were on.

'Bring S Odisha Dev Council Bill in coming Assly session'

Forum warns of intensifying stir if apathy to region continues RAJEEV RATHAN ■ BRAHMAMPUR The Ganjam District Development Forum issued a strong ultimatum to the State Government, demanding the immediate formation of a South Odisha Development Council. At a Press meet organised on Saturday here, the forum, led by its president Rajendra Kumar Panda, announced that a large-scale protest would be launched if the bill for the council is not passed in the upcoming Assembly session. The demand follows the successful formation of the Western Odisha Development Council in 1998 and a recent move for establishment of the Northern Odisha Development Council by the BJP Government. However, despite repeated proposals and petitions from intellectuals, the

south Odisha region continues to be overlooked. The southern part of Odisha, which is home to nearly 1.50 cr people and rich in natural resources, significantly contributes to the State's revenue. The region, comprising districts such as Ganjam, Gajapati, Rayagada, Nabarangpur, Koraput, Kalahandi, Malkangiri and Kandhamal, is abundant in minerals and natural wealth. Yet, it remains underdeveloped compared to other regions of the State. Critical infrastructure such as advanced healthcare, education, transportation, potable water, irrigation, electricity, and agricultural support are grossly inadequate. As a result, many youths from the region are forced to migrate in search of work, often returning home under tragic circumstances as deceased migrant labourers. During the Press meet, the forum members emphasized that the formation of a South Odisha Development Council would address these challenges

and help curb distress migration. They argued that the council could foster economic growth by ensuring targeted development initiatives and harnessing the region's vast resources for local progress. Forum leaders, including Dr Siba Prasad Mishra, Sushma Panda, Bishwa Deb, senior teacher leader Kamraju Maharana, Teacher's Union secretary Ashok Kumar Dalai and social worker Manas Ranjan Tripathy, also raised concerns about the Government's lack of focus on improving connectivity in the region. Despite the region's significant contributions to the State's revenue, there have been no efforts to improve rail connectivity, establish airports or develop coastal highways in south Odisha. These deficiencies, the forum stated, have not only stunted economic growth but also hindered the development of tourism, a sector with immense potential in the region. By contrast, the Government has already formed a

BeMC Corporators concerned over mosquito, sanitation woes

At high-level meet PNS ■ BRAHMAMPUR At a meeting of the Berhampur Municipal Corporation (BeMC), several corporators raised concerns regarding poor sanitation, mosquito menace and delays in construction projects, on Thursday. Presided over by Mayor Sanghamitra Dalai, the meet-

ing focused on issues related to sewage management, garbage collection, and public health challenges. The Corporators pointed out the irregularity in garbage collection across different wards, resulting in mosquito breeding and unclean surroundings. They also stressed the need to urgently address dangerous 33 KV power lines along the roads, calling for them to be placed underground.

Concerns over delays in road and infrastructure projects were also discussed, with corporators highlighting how it was contributing to worsening mosquito and drainage problems in various parts of the city. Stray dogs and unsanitary drains added to the list of unresolved issues. Deputy Mayor E Vivek Reddy, along with several other Corporation officials, also participated in the meeting, showing support for prompt resolution.

immediate steps would be taken to address these pressing concerns. The Corporation also reviewed financial reports for June, July, and August, with a commitment to improve waste management and public health services for the city's residents.

Haj pilgrimage fraud Odisha EOW nabs main accused from Mumbai

He duped 189 victims of Rs 1.2 crore PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Odisha Police has busted a major Haj pilgrimage racket by arresting one of the main accused from Mumbai. The arrested Nabeel Abdul Mubin Shaikh was produced before the OPID Court in Baleswar on Monday after being brought to Odisha on a transit remand. Nabeel was arrested based on the complaint filed by Mir Khurshid of Kazimahala under the Dhamnagar police station in Bhadrak district against the proprietors of 'Al-Adam Tour and Travels'. The tour and travels agency was allegedly run by Firdos Abdul Mubin Shaikh, her son Nabeel Abdul Mubin Shaikh and daughter



Saima Anjum Shaikh and Md Bismillah Shaikh, the owner of Allzma Tours and Travels of Vikhroli Kurla, West Mumbai. It was alleged that 189 devotees were duped of Rs 1.2 crore during the period from 2019 to 2023 to arrange their pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia on the eve of UMRAH.

Adam Tour and Travel Agency floated advertisements on social media and distributed leaflets containing the lucrative packages and contact details and lured Muslim devotees to avail the opportunity under two of their tour packages of Rs 45,786 and Rs 50,786 per individual pilgrim to go on UMRAH pilgrimage to Arab countries like Mecca-Medina, the EOW said. The accused assured the pilgrims of providing cheap, secure and safe pilgrimage. Prior to the fraud, the agency had taken the devotees on pilgrimage which made the devotees trust and avail the opportunity offered in the tour packages. Devotees from Bhadrak, Baleswar, Baripada and other parts of Odisha had reportedly deposited money in the given accounts in the advertisements through bank transfers apart from paying through

UPI and cash. Preliminary investigations revealed that the arrested accused and his mother are the authorised signatories of the accounts in which the pilgrims' money was deposited. The collection by the owners of 'Al-Adam Tour & Travels' continued till the first half of 2023, after which the proprietors switched off their mobile phones. A very few investors, who had insisted on the refund of their amounts, were given the cheques by the accused proprietors which were subsequently dishonoured by the bank. According to the EOW, the agency has also collected huge amounts in a similar fashion from the prospective pilgrims of Maharashtra and Delhi apart from Odisha. Verification is going on whether any fraud has been committed there by the agency and its proprietor.

CJ completes 2-day Keonjhar visit



Holds talks with lawyers, judges PNS ■ KEONJHAR Orissa High Court Chief Justice Chakradhari Sharan Singh completed his two-day visit to Keonjhar district. The CJ visited Ghatgaon, Maa

Tarini and offered puja at the temple first and reached Keonjhar later. The next day, he visited the local jail premises, near which a new district judge court campus will be constructed. Then, he attended a programme organized by the District Bar Association in

the campus of District Bar Association. High Court Justice Sangam Kumar Sahu attended the meeting as a guest. District Bar Association president Alok Mahanta and secretary Sanjib Das among others gave him a warm welcome. Attending the meeting,

the CJ interacted with the lawyers and listened to their demands. Later he joined a meeting where all the judges were present in the campus of the District Judges Court. Then he went to the Sanaghagara waterfall and returned after seeing the beautiful scenery.

In Khordha School running on land illegally yet to be evicted

Despite petition PNS ■ KHORDHA The district administration of Khordha is yet to take any action against a school that that encroached land in Gandhipada area. Suka Deba Mansingh has filed petitions before various authorities including the Collector, Khordha for eviction of Sri Aurobinda Purnanga Sikhya Kendra from the land it has occupied illegally. The Rural Works Department had allotted land in favour of Sri Aurobindo Purnanga Sikhya Kendra vide alienation case No. 95/98 on September

9, 1998. The condition for allotment was that the organisation would pay the cost of the plot but Sri Aurobinda Purnanga Sikhya Kendra did not pay the cost of the land as on date. The school also got grants under MP and MLA LADs from time to time for construction of hostel, classroom and boundary wall. Even the Khordha district administration sanctioned the funds in favour of Sri Aurobinda Purnanga Sikhya Kendra without proper land documents. Meanwhile, a case has also been initiated vide-No. 95/98 against the school but the latter did not appear for hearing.

SBI launches 'Swachhata Hi Seva' drive



In all 21 regions PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR The State Bank of India Bhubaneswar Circle launched the Swachhata Hi Seva - Shramdaan initiatives across Odisha by cleaning of Khandagiri monument area. Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India launched the campaign from September 17 to October 2 with the theme 'Swabhav Swachhata Sanskar Swachhata.' Under the initiative, all 21 regions of SBI will identify two cleanliness target units and clean the place by

staff participation. In State capital Bhubaneswar, CGM SBI Bhubaneswar Circle Dinesh Pruthi launched the swachhata activities on September 28 by Shramdaan and cleaning of Khandagiri monument area in presence of GM (NW-I) Ponnambalam M and GM (NW-II) Kaushal Kishore Singh along with DGMs and other officials of LHO/AO Bhubaneswar and nearby branches/offices. In the event a walkathon was organised for creating awareness. More than 150 staff members participated in the event from 8 am to 10 am.

Advertisement for 'Swachhata Hi Seva' drive by SBI, featuring a heart icon and text in Odia. It includes details about the initiative and contact information for the Bhubaneswar Circle.

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.

Speaking to the Pioneer Chairman of the West Pakistan Refugee Action Committee Labha Ram Gandhi said, "It is going to be a momentous occasion for members belonging to the West Pakistan Community as they will be exercising their right to vote to elect their public representatives for the

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.

Labha Ram Gandhi also credited the Union government headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi who gave them their citizenship rights, ending their seven-decade-long struggle. The mood in the Valmiki colony in Jammu was equally upbeat. A large number of first-time voters were keen on collecting their voter slips to avoid any chaos and confusion at the last minute.

A first-time voter in the Valmiki colony Eklavya told The Pioneer, "Our parents were deprived of their voting rights by successive

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. According to official sources, over 39.18 lakh voters will be exercising their right to vote across 40 Assembly segments in the final round of polling on October 1.

The Election Commission of India has deployed over 20,000 polling staff across seven districts of Jammu and Kashmir.

The fate of several senior leaders including two former deputy chief ministers Tara Chand and Muzaffar Beig will be decided in the crucial phase.

Prominent among others in the fray include People's Conference chairman and



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.

Former ministers Raman Bhalla (R S Pura), Usman Majid (Bandipora), Nazir Ahmad Khan (Gurez), Taj Mohiuddin (Uri), Basharat Bukhari (Wagoora-Kreeri), Imran Ansari (Pattan),

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. Additional Director General of Police (ADGP), Jammu zone, Anand Jain, said adequate security arrangements have been put in place in the poll-bound areas to ensure "terror-free and peaceful" polling.

Amid tight security arrangements, thousands of election staff along with poll material left their respective district headquarters this morning to take positions at their designated polling stations by this evening. The voter turnout was robust

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.

Chief Electoral Officer, Jammu and Kashmir PK Pole said a total of 5,060 polling stations have been set up across the poll-bound districts.

A total of 39,18,220 lakh voters eligible to exercise their franchise include 20,09,033 male voters, 19,09,130 female voters and 57 third gender voters, the CEO said, adding as many as 1.94 lakh youth between the age 18 and 19 years, along with 35,860 Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) and 32,953 elderly voters above the age of 85 are also eligible to exercise their franchise in this phase.

He said there will be 50

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. Also, there will be 45 green polling stations to spread the message about environmental concerns and 33 unique polling stations, he said, adding 29 polling stations are established near the Line of Control or International Border for border residents.

"The purpose behind these special polling stations is to spread awareness among sections of society like women, specially-abled persons and first-time young voters to come forward and exercise their right to vote," he said.

He said over 1.07 lakh saplings have been planted in the premises of all polling stations.

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).

In a reply to an RTI query sought by Mumbai-based journalist-peace activist Jatin Desai, the High Commission of India in Islamabad said that 24 Indian fishermen died in Pakistan's custody between January 2014 and December 2023. Of the 24 deaths, two deaths were reported during 2024.

Of the two fishermen who died during the current year, Vinod Laxman from Dahanu taluka of Palghar district, Maharashtra, passed away on March 17 and his mortal remains reached his village on 1 May.

Suresh Nathu died on 5 September 5. Nathu's family members and friends are waiting for his mortal remains. "Pakistan must



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'.

"Of them, around 180 Indian fishermen have completed their sentences and their nationality was also verified long ago," Desai said.

The section (V) of the bilateral Agreement on Consular Access, 2008, states: "Both Governments agree to release and repatriate persons

within one month of confirmation of their national status and completion of sentences."

"It means around 180 Indian fishermen should have been released and repatriated by Pakistan long ago.... Of them, 52 Indian fishermen have been in Pakistan's jails for more than over three years now.

Another 130 Indian fishermen have been behind the bars in Pakistan for more than two years. Ten Indian fishermen have not been keeping well," Desai said.

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. Congress is in a state of confusion today.

CM Saini visited Sohna Constituency in support of party candidate Tejpal Tanwar.

The Independent candidate from the Sohna assembly, Subhash Bansal, was also present in support of the BJP candidate Tejpal Tanwar.

Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, Haryana co-in-charge Surender Nagar, and District President Kamal Yadav were also present on this occasion.

Saini, while attacking the Congress party, said in the last few days, it has become clear that the condition of Congress is also going to be like Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh; now Where it used to be strong but has lost its influence over time. Even the Congress leaders have started believing this.



"Now the news has come that Rahul Gandhi, who gave anti-reservation statements on foreign soil, is coming to Haryana on a 2-3 day political tour. In the last 10 years, the BJP government has developed Haryana in all directions, so Rahul Gandhi should come here and roam around and do his tourism activities," Saini said.

The youth of Haryana will ask him why he is silent on the 'kharchi, parchi' system that happened during Hooda's rule. Dalits of Haryana will ask with what face has he come to Haryana after opposing reservation? Rahul Gandhi should answer all these questions," Saini said.

Meanwhile, A total of 47 candidates are in the fray for four Assembly seats in the

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.

Likewise, former minister and BJP candidate Rao Narbir Singh from Badshahpur seat Congress, Vardhan Yadav and Independent Kumudni Jhangu.

Similarly, BJP Bimla Chaudhary from the Pataudi (SC) constituency, Congress Parul Chaudhary, from the Sohna assembly constituency BJP's Tejpal Tawar from the Sohna seat, Congress Rohtas Khatana and others.

Moreover, 7 candidates from the Pataudi Assembly, 13 from the Badshahpur Assembly, 17 from the Gurgaon Assembly and 10 from the Sohna Assembly are now in the poll battle.

Voting for the Assembly elections will be held on October 5, and counting will be held on October 8; the result will be declared along with the counting.



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, Prataprao Jadhav, Union Minister of State, Ministry of Ayush said on Monday. These Centres will be on the lines of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Aushadhi Kendra which are dedicated to making quality generic medicines accessible to all sections of society.

Jadhav stressed that the initiative (Ayush Jan Aushadhi Centre) seeks to enhance access to holistic treatments and promote awareness of traditional remedies, enriching the country's healthcare system.

People are interested in experiencing authentic Ayush services, but many times it is observed that either they are unaware or don't have access to these services. But we are taking several steps to reach out to the general masses.

It is now vital to India's healthcare system, including integration into AIIMS and defence hospitals, he emphasised.

The Minister was speaking at the Ayush Medical Value Travel Summit 2024, themed 'Global Synergy in Ayush: Transforming Health and Wellness through Medical Value Travel', in Mumbai.

He also exhorted the Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde to establish a Ministry of Ayush and an Ayush University in the State. As per the statement issued here, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has issued new guidelines,

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.

Jadhav further said, "Our focus on comprehensive health encompasses physical, mental, and spiritual well-being, making India a global leader in health tourism...With the G-20 presidency, we have positioned Ayush globally, integrating these practices into various healthcare systems and institutions nationwide."

In his keynote presentation, Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha, Union Ayush Secretary delved into the Ayush industry's growing global presence. "The global reach of Ayush has significantly expanded, with exports witnessing substantial growth.

The size of the sector has increased dramatically. According to an analysis, the size of the Ayush sector grew from USD 3 million in 2014 to USD18.1 million in 2020—an increase of sixfold within six years."

Dr. Manoj Nesari, Advisor (Ayu), Union Ayush Ministry said that as the number of foreign travellers seeking Ayush treatments grows, it's vital for all stakeholders—tour operators, insurance providers, and hospitality leaders—to unite and leverage government initiatives to boost this essential sector.

According to a report, India ranks 10th globally in the Medical Tourism Index, and its top wellness tourism destinations underscore the nation's potential to attract international patients seeking integrated and cost-effective healthcare solutions.

Muslim League welcomes PV Anvar

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Muslim League in Kerala is preparing the stage ready for welcoming P V Anvar, the independent MLA from the Left Democratic Front to its fold. The Muslim League leadership is in talks with Congress leaders in the State for declaring Anvar, who has been declared a persona non-grata in the LDF by the CPI(M).

Since Anvar had ridiculed and humiliated Rahul Gandhi during the Lok Sabha polls by demanding a DNA test on the Leader of the Opposition, it may not be easy for the former to get into the Congress fold. What gives him relief is that the Muslim League is the "A" team of the Grand Old Party in the State and a phone call from League supremo Panakkadu Thangal in Malappuram to 10 Janpath in New Delhi would remove all hurdles, if any, in the path of Anvar.

Anvar, who declared additional director general of police M R Ajith Kumar as a criminal and P Sasi, the political secretary to chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan as a forest brigand went one step by describing N P Mohanan, the Malappuram district secretary as a stooge of the RSS.

The independent MLA who got elected from Nilambur with support from the CPI(M) has been behaving as a bull in a China shop by attacking all close confidantes of Vijayan. Though the CPI(M) leadership had suffered all humiliations meted out by Anvar as part of its appeasement politics, the time has come for the party to declare its stance viz-a-viz the independent MLA.

Though the public meetings convened by the dissident MLA drew big crowd in his constituency, only time alone would make it clear what the future holds for Anvar, said Althaf Roshan, a young CPI(M) leader in Malappuram district.

If I can make it, anyone can: Mithun Chakrabarty

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

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.

Providing a few snatches from his hard days — "that was hardly considered hard by me" — Mumbai mega star Mithun Chakrabarty on Monday said, "when a journalist contacted me for an interview after I got my first National Award — for Mrinal Sen's Mrigaya — I remember telling him that I would give him one if he could treat me to good food ... that sums up my struggling days."

A veteran of the famous Scottish Church College, Kolkata — where went the greats like Swami Vivekananda, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose — the Disco Dancer of the eighties got



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."

The super star who too is often referred as Dada in Mumbai expressed his gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for acknowledging his success saying "he is a fantastic human being to be with ... I had occasions to meet him several times and I am

fortunate to be congratulated by him." Earlier the Prime Minister wrote, "delighted that Shri Mithun Chakrabarty Ji has been conferred the prestigious Dadasaheb Phalke Award, recognising his unparalleled contributions to Indian cinema."

Earlier Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said announcing Dadasaheb Phalke award for the North Kolkata boy of the 1970s, "Mithun Da's remarkable cinematic journey inspires

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

An alumnus of Pune's Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), Chakrabarty has worked predominantly in Hindi and Bengali cinema and is perhaps among very few actors who have three National Awards in his kitty for his debut film Mrigayaa, followed by Tahader Katha and Swami Vivekananda. He is also known for his other famous parallel films like Mera Rakshak, Patita etc.

However it is the main stream Mumbai blockbusters that got him the real fame like Disco Dancer with its chartbusters like Jimmy Jimmy and Yaad Aa Raha Hai, Guru, Pyar Jhukta Nahin, Agneepath, Suraksha etc that catapulted him to be the first mega star of Hindi films.

When asked as to whether he expected praises from Bengal

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."

He however acknowledged how late President Pranab Mukherjee had lobbied for him saying, "Yes I must acknowledge that he wrote several letters for me," adding apart from these I don't have any obligations from anyone.

Even as Bengal cine fraternity like actors Prasenjit and Rituparna Sengupta saw him in a "great actor and inspiration for many people because he never stopped and went on," Trinamool Congress leader Kunal Ghosh said, "I must congratulate Mithun da the actor and ... also would request him to for once remember during his hours of success how late Pranab Mukherjee wrote several letters for him for the award."

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.

"We have no other way but to return to our cease work as there is no other way to make this Government and the police administration to listen to our woes ... despite the horrific incident of rape and murder of our postgraduate colleague and despite the orders to this effect by the Supreme Court the Government hardly seems to have done anything to increase our security in the hospitals," Dr Kinjal Nanda one of the agitating doctors said after three successive attacks on the junior doctors in three different medical colleges in the past several days.

Doctors were attacked and injured by the patient parties at Sagar Dutta Medical College a few days ago, then inside the National Medical

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.

"We are thinking in terms of resuming our cease work," another doctors said adding how "leaders and MLAs are threatening us every day with gheraoing us in the hospitals ... one MLA has threatened to take 50,000 men to Behrampore Medical College ... then how can we work ... it seems that another Abhaya is waiting to happen," he said. A lady doctor reminded how in most of the cases "the women doctors and staff are being threatened with 'RG Kar like treatment' adding "how can we work in an atmosphere of fear ... it seems that the entire establishment is conspiring against us ... we want to work but we don't want to die."

The junior doctors' ultimatum came close on the heels of the Supreme Court — hearing suo motu the — on Monday rebuking the Bengal Government for the "tardy" progress in installation of CCTVs and construction of toilets and separate resting rooms at medical facilities."

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.

The model code is a set of guidelines, issued by the Election Commission, for political parties, candidates, government and the party in power during elections concerning speeches, announcements, election manifestos and general conduct.

Assembly elections in Haryana will be held on October 5 in a single phase



with the counting of votes on October 8, the results will also announced on the same day Election Commission announced. With the announcement of the schedule, the Model Code of Conduct for governments, candidates and political parties has come into force.

Giving details of seizure, police said in a statement

26351.805 litres of liquor worth over Rs 95.43 lakh has been seized with the period of 16 September to 29 September and around 359 case were registered after imposition of the poll code, police said.

During elections, there is a possibility of increased activities like smuggling of illegal liquor, cash, weapons

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.



www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

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)

HEZBOLLAH'S DEPUTY LEADER VOWS TO FIGHT ON

AP ■ BEIRUT

Hezbollah's deputy leader vowed to continue fighting Israel and said the militant group was prepared for a long war after much of its top command was wiped out, including its leader, Hassan Nasrallah. In his first speech since Nasrallah was killed, Naim Kassem said in a televised statement Monday that if Israel decides to launch a ground offensive, Hezbollah fighters are ready to fight and defend Lebanon, where the group is based. As deputy secretary-general, Naim Kassem now is the acting leader of Hezbollah until the group's leadership elects a replacement for Nasrallah. Israeli strikes have killed Nasrallah and six of his top commanders in the last 10

days, and have hit what the military says are thousands of militant targets across large parts of Lebanon. Over 1,000 people have been killed in Lebanon, nearly a quarter of them women and children, according to the Health Ministry, and the government says the fighting may have displaced up to a million people. Hezbollah has significantly increased its rocket attacks in the past week to several hundred daily, but most have been intercepted or fallen in open areas. Several people have been wounded in Israel. There have been no fatalities since two soldiers were killed near the border on September 19. Kassem said that despite the killing of Hezbollah's top military commanders over the past months, Hezbollah now is relying on new commanders.

"Israel was not able to affect our (military) capabilities," Kassem said. "There are deputy commanders and there are replacements in case a commander is wounded in any post." Before he spoke, an airstrike levelled an apartment building and killed three Palestinian militants in central Beirut early Monday, as Israel appeared to send a clear message that no part of Lebanon is out of bounds. As recently as two weeks ago, such a strike, outside of the main areas where Hezbollah operates and next to a busy transportation hub, would have been seen as an escalation and likely followed by a long-range Hezbollah strike into Israel. But the unspoken rules of the long-running conflict, and Hezbollah's ability to respond, are no longer clear.

Israel has not claimed Monday's strike but is widely assumed to have carried it out. It's possible that Hezbollah is holding back to avoid an even bigger escalation, including a threatened Israeli ground invasion. But the militant group might also be in disarray after Israeli intelligence apparently penetrated its highest levels. The strike early Monday killed three members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a small, leftist faction that has not been meaningfully involved in months of fighting between Israel and Hezbollah. In the past week, Israel has frequently targeted Beirut's southern suburbs, where Hezbollah has a strong presence — including the massive strike on Friday that killed Nasrallah — but had not hit locations close

er to the city centre. Hezbollah began firing rockets, drones and missiles into northern Israel after Hamas' October 7 attack from Gaza into Israel sparked the war there. Hezbollah and Hamas are allies and both supported by Iran, and Hezbollah said it would continue the attacks in solidarity with the Palestinians until there was a cease-fire in Gaza. Israel has responded to the rockets with airstrikes in Lebanon, where Hezbollah is based, and the fighting has steadily escalated over the past year, displacing tens of thousands of people on both sides of the border. Israel has vowed to keep fighting until the attacks stop and its citizens can return to their homes. The United States and its allies have called for a cease-fire, hoping to avoid further escalation that could draw in Iran

and set off a wider war. But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has shown little interest, as his country racks up military achievements against a long-time foe. Some Israelis broke into spontaneous celebrations after Nasrallah's death was announced. Videos circulated of crowds at bars singing a song in Hebrew mocking him. A news anchor on a pro-Netanyahu station sang and danced as the studio audience joined in with him while a commentator on Israel's largest TV station offered co-panelists celebratory shots. Hezbollah, which boasts tens of thousands of battle-hardened fighters and long-range missiles capable of hitting anywhere inside Israel, has long been seen as the most powerful militant group in the region

and a key partner to Iran in both threatening and deterring Israel. Hezbollah fought Israel to a monthlong stalemate in their 2006 war. But Hezbollah has never faced an onslaught quite like this one, which began with a sophisticated attack on its pagers and walkie-talkies in mid-September that killed dozens of people and wounded around 3,000 — including many fighters but also many civilians. White House national security spokesman John Kirby said Israel's airstrikes in Lebanon had "wiped out" Hezbollah's command structure but warned that the group will work quickly to rebuild it. "We're watching to see what they do to try to fill this leadership vacuum. It's going to be tough," he told CNN's "State of the Union" on Sunday.

Netanyahu adds rival to Cabinet

Jerusalem (AP): Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appointed a former rival, Gideon Saar, as a member of his Cabinet on Sunday, expanding his coalition and strengthening his hold on office. Under their agreement, Netanyahu said Saar would serve as a minister without portfolio and serve in the Security Cabinet, the body that oversees the management of the ongoing war against Israel's enemies across the Middle East. Saar (57) had hoped to replace Defence Minister Yoav Gallant, another rival of Netanyahu's. But a deal to become defence minister fell through several weeks ago after fighting intensified with Hezbollah along Israel's northern border, leaving the popular Gallant in office for the time being. Saar has had a strained relationship with the prime minister. He was once a rising star in Netanyahu's Likud party but angrily left it four years ago after accusing the prime minister of turning it into a "cult of personality" as he battled corruption charges. Since then, however, Saar has struggled as leader of a small conservative party, enjoying little support with the broader public. While he and Netanyahu have little love for one another, they share a hard-line ideology toward Israel's Arab adversaries. In recent months, Saar has said Israel must fight until Hamas is destroyed. He also has called for tougher action against Hezbollah's sponsor, Iran. And like Netanyahu, he strongly opposes the establishment of a Palestinian state. In a joint statement, they said they had put their differences aside for the good of the nation. Netanyahu's decision appears to have been driven in part by domestic politics. He faces a number of key political battles in the coming weeks — including the contentious issue of drafting ultra-Orthodox men into the army, passing a budget and taking the stand in his long-running corruption trial.



A billboard with a huge portrait of slain Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah is installed on a building as minarets of a mosque are seen, in downtown Tehran, Iran, Monday. The billboard reads in Farsi on top left: "The beginning of Nasrallah." AP/PTI

Israeli airstrike hits Beirut for first time

AP ■ JERUSALEM

The first apparent Israeli airstrike on central Beirut in nearly a year of conflict levelled an apartment building early Monday. It came after Israel hit targets across Lebanon and killed dozens of people, as Hezbollah sustained heavy blows to its command structure, including the killing of its leader, Hassan Nasrallah. The airstrike hit a multistorey residential building, according to an Associated Press journalist at the scene. Videos showed ambulances and a crowd gathered near the building in a mainly Sunni district with a busy thoroughfare lined with shops. The airstrike killed at least one person and wounded 16, an official with Lebanese Civil Defence said, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to speak to the media. He said the person killed was a member of the al-Jamaa al-Islamiya, or the Islamic Group, a Sunni political and militant group that is allied with Hezbollah.

A Palestinian leftist faction in Lebanon said three of its members were killed in the airstrike. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine said in a statement early Monday that its military and security commanders in Lebanon, and a third member were killed in the attack. Neither militant group has played a significant role in the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Shiite militant group Hezbollah. Also early Monday, another strike killed a commander with the militant group Hamas, which has a presence in Lebanon's Palestinian refugee camps. Hamas said Fatah Sharif and his family were killed in an airstrike on the Al-Buss refugee camp in the southern port city of Tyre. In the past week, Israel has frequently targeted Beirut's southern suburbs, where Hezbollah has a strong presence — including a major strike on Friday that killed Nasrallah — but had not hit locations near the city centre. Earlier, Hezbollah confirmed that Nabil Kaouk, the deputy

head of its Central Council, was killed Saturday, making him the seventh senior Hezbollah leader killed in Israeli strikes in a little over a week. They include the group's founding members who had evaded death or detention for decades. Hezbollah also confirmed that Ali Karaki, another senior commander, died in the strike that killed Nasrallah. Israel says at least 20 other Hezbollah militants were killed, including one in charge of Nasrallah's security detail. The Lebanese Health Ministry said at least 105 people were killed around the country in airstrikes Sunday. Two strikes near the southern city of Sidon, about 45 kilometres south of Beirut, killed at least 32 people, the ministry said. Separately, Israeli strikes in the northern province of Baalbek Hermel killed 21 people and wounded at least 47. Lebanese media reported dozens of strikes in the central, eastern and western Bekaa and in the south, besides strikes on Beirut. Israel says it targets militants, but the strikes have hit buildings where

civilians were living and the death toll was expected to rise. In a video of a strike in Sidon, verified by the AP, a building swayed before collapsing as neighbors filmed. One TV station called on viewers to pray for a family caught under the rubble, posting their pictures, as rescuers failed to reach them. The Lebanese Health Ministry reported at least 14 medics were killed over two days in the south. President Joe Biden said Sunday that he would speak soon with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and believes that an all-out war in the Middle East must be avoided. "It has to be," Biden told reporters at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware as he boarded Air Force One for Washington. Meanwhile, wreckage from Friday's strike that killed Nasrallah was still smoldering. Smoke rose over the rubble as people flocked to the site, some to check on what was left of their homes and others to pay respects, pray or simply to see the destruction.

Austria's Freedom Party secures first far-right national election win since World War II

AP ■ VIENNA

The Freedom Party secured the first far-right national parliamentary election victory in post-World War II Austria on Sunday, finishing ahead of the governing conservatives after tapping into anxieties about immigration, inflation, Ukraine and other issues. But its chances of governing were unclear. Preliminary official results showed the Freedom Party finishing first with 29.2 per cent of the vote and Chancellor Karl Nehammer's Austrian People's Party was second with 26.5 per cent, according to a near-complete count, national public broadcaster ORF reported. The centre-left Social Democrats were in third place with 21 per cent. The outgoing government — a coalition of Nehammer's party and the environmentalist Greens — lost its majority in the lower house of parliament. Herbert Kickl, a former interior minister and longtime campaign strategist who has led the Freedom Party since 2021,

wants to be chancellor. But to become Austria's new leader, he would need a coalition partner to command a parliamentary majority. Rivals have said they won't work with Kickl in government. The far right has benefited from frustration over high inflation, the war in Ukraine and the COVID-19 pandemic. It has also built on worries about migration. In its election programme, titled "Fortress Austria", the Freedom Party calls for "remigration of uninvited foreigners", for achieving a more "homogeneous" nation by tightly controlling borders and suspending the right to asylum via an emergency law. The Freedom Party also calls for an end to sanctions against Russia, is highly critical of Western military aid to Ukraine and wants to bow out of the European Sky Shield Initiative, a missile defence project launched by Germany. Kickl has criticised "elites" in Brussels and called for some powers to be brought back from the European Union to Austria.

"We don't need to change our position, because we have always said that we're ready to lead a government, we're ready to push forward this change in Austria side by side with the people," Kickl said in an appearance alongside other party leaders on ORF. "The other parties should ask themselves where they stand on democracy," he added, arguing that they should "sleep on the result." Nehammer said it was "bitter" that his party missed out on first place but noted he brought it back from lower poll ratings. He has often said he won't form a coalition with Kickl and said that "what I said before the election, I also say after the election." More than 6.3 million people were eligible to vote for the new parliament in Austria, an EU member that has a policy of military neutrality. Kickl has achieved a turnaround since Austria's last parliamentary election in 2019. In June, the Freedom Party narrowly won a nationwide vote for the first time in the European Parliament election, which also brought gains for other

European far-right parties. Dutch far-right leader Geert Wilders, whose party dominates the Netherlands' new government, congratulated the Freedom Party on social network X. So did Alice Weidel, a co-leader of the Alternative for Germany party. The Freedom Party is a long-established force but Sunday's result was its best yet in a national parliamentary election, beating the 26.9 per cent it scored in 1999. In 2019, its support slumped to 16.2 per cent after a scandal brought down a government in which it was the junior partner. Then vice-chancellor and Freedom Party leader Heinz-Christian Strache resigned following the publication of a secretly recorded video in which he appeared to offer favours to a purported Russian investor. The leader of the Social Democrats, a party that led many of Austria's post-World War II governments, positioned himself as the polar opposite to Kickl. Andreas Babler ruled out governing with the far right and labelled Kickl "a threat to democracy".

Supplies rushed to isolated areas as Helene death toll rises to 100

AP ■ PERRY

North Carolina officials pledged to get more water and other supplies to flood-stricken areas by Monday after Hurricane Helene left a trail of destruction across the US Southeast and the death toll from the storm rose to nearly 100. At least 91 people across several states were killed. A North Carolina county that includes the mountain city of Asheville reported 30 people killed. Gov. Roy Cooper predicted the toll would rise as rescuers and other emergency workers reached areas isolated by collapsed roads, failing infrastructure and widespread flooding. Supplies were being airlifted to the region around the isolated city of Asheville. Buncombe County Manager Avril Pinder pledged that she would have food and water to the city by Monday. "We hear you. We need food and we need water," Pinder said on a Sunday call with reporters. "My staff has been making every request possible to the state for support and we've been working with every single organization that has reached out. What I promise you is that we are very close." Officials warned that rebuilding from the widespread loss of homes and property would be lengthy and difficult. The storm upended life throughout the Southeast. Deaths also were reported in Florida,

Georgia, South Carolina and Virginia. Cooper implored residents in western North Carolina to avoid travel, both for their own safety and to keep roads clear for emergency vehicles. More than 50 search teams spread throughout the region in search of stranded people. One rescue effort involved saving 41 people north of Asheville. Another mission focused on saving a single infant. The teams found people through both 911 calls and social media messages, North Carolina National Guard Adjutant General Todd Hunt said. President Joe Biden described the impact of the storm as "stunning" and said he would visit the area this week as long as it does not disrupt rescues or recovery work. In a brief exchange with reporters, he said the administration is giving states "everything we have" to help with their response to the storm. Hurricane Helene roared ashore late Thursday in Florida's Big Bend region as a Category 4 hurricane with 140 mph (225 kph) winds. A weakened Helene quickly moved through Georgia, then soaked the Carolinas and Tennessee with torrential rains that flooded creeks and rivers and strained dams. There have been hundreds of water rescues, including in rural Unicoi County in East Tennessee, where dozens of patients

and staff were plucked by helicopter from a hospital rooftop on Friday. More than 2 million homeowners and other utility customers were still without power Sunday night. South Carolina had the most outages and Gov. Henry McMaster asked for patience as crews dealt with widespread snapped power poles. "We want people to remain calm. Help is on the way, it is just going to take time," McMaster told reporters outside the airport in Aiken County. Begging for help in North Carolina as that help is slow to arrive. The storm unleashed the worst flooding in a century in North Carolina. One community, Spruce Pine, was doused with over 2 feet (61 centimeters) of rain from Tuesday through Saturday. Jessica Drye Turner in Texas had begged for someone to rescue her family members stranded on their rooftop in Asheville amid rising floodwaters. "They are watching 18-wheelers and cars floating by," Turner wrote in an urgent Facebook post on Friday. But in a follow-up message on Saturday, Turner said help had not arrived in time to save her parents, both in their 70s, and her 6-year-old nephew. The roof collapsed and the three drowned. "I cannot convey in words the sorrow, heartbreak and devastation my sisters and I are going through," she wrote.

S Korean court sentences to prison 3 cops over 2022 Halloween crush

Seoul (AP): A South Korean court gave three police officers prison sentences on Monday over their botched handling of a 2022 Halloween crush in a Seoul nightlife district that killed nearly 160 people. It was the first conviction of officials over the failure by authorities to prevent or adequately respond to the overcrowding that occurred in the popular Itaewon district. No top-level officials have been charged or held accountable, prompting criticism from bereaved families and opposition politicians. The crush, one of the biggest peacetime disasters in South Korea, caused a nationwide outpouring of grief. The victims, who were mostly in their 20s and 30s, had gathered in Itaewon for Halloween celebrations.

The Seoul Western District Court sentenced Lee Im-jae, the former chief of Seoul's Yongsan police station, whose jurisdiction includes Itaewon, to three years in prison. It sentenced another Yongsan police officer to two years in prison and gave a third officer a suspended two-year term. The three officers were convicted of professional negligence resulting in death. The court ruled that the crush wasn't a natural disaster and could have been prevented or the toll reduced if the three officers had prepared properly for the crowd, alerted others of the danger quickly and supervised other police officers appropriately. The police officers and prosecutors can both appeal the ruling. The court also ruled that Park Hee-young, head of

the Yongsan ward office, and three other ward officials were not guilty. It said a ward office was unlikely to have a legal right to control or break up a crowd of people. Bereaved family members criticized the acquittal of Park and the other ward officials. "Does this make sense? We can't really accept this," Lee Jeong-min, a representative of the families, told reporters. In early 2023, a police special investigation concluded that police and municipal officials had failed to formulate effective crowd control measures despite anticipating a huge number of people in Itaewon. Investigators said police also ignored hotline calls by pedestrians who warned of swelling crowds before the surge turned deadly.

Britain's last coal-fired electricity plant closing

London (AP): Britain's last coal-fired power plant is closing on Monday, ending 142 years of coal-generated electricity in the nation that sparked the Industrial Revolution. The Ratcliffe-on-Soar station in central England is finishing its final shift at midnight after more than half a century of turning coal into power. The UK government hailed the closure as a milestone in efforts to generate all of Britain's energy from renewable sources by 2030. Plant manager Peter O'Grady said it was "an emotional day." "When I started my career 36 years ago, none of us imagined a future without coal generation in our lifetimes," he said. The shutdown makes Britain the first country from the Group of Seven major economies to phase out coal — though some other European nations, including Sweden and Belgium, got there sooner

Owner Uniper says many of the 170 remaining employees will stay on during a two-year decommissioning process. Energy Minister Michael Shanks said the plant's closure "marks the end of an era and coal workers can be rightly proud of their work powering our country for over 140 years. We owe generations a debt of gratitude as a country." "The era of coal might be ending, but a new age of good energy jobs for our country is just beginning," he said. The world's first coal-fired electricity plant, Thomas Edison's Edison Electric Light Station, opened in London in 1882. Ratcliffe-on-Soar, which opened in 1967, is a landmark whose eight concrete cooling towers and 199-metre (650-foot) chimney are seen by millions of people a year as they drive past on the M1 highway or speed by on trains. In 1990 coal provided about 80 per cent of Britain's electricity.

By 2012 it had fallen to 39 per cent, and by 2023 it stood at just 1 per cent, according to figures from the National Grid. More than half of Britain's electricity now comes from renewable sources such as wind and solar power, and the rest from natural gas and nuclear energy. "Ten years ago, coal was the leading source of this country's power — generating a third of our electricity," said Dhara Vyas, deputy chief executive of trade body Energy UK. "So, to get to this point just a decade later, with coal's contribution replaced by clean and low carbon sources, is an incredible achievement," Vyas said. "As we aim for further ambitious targets in the energy transition, it's worth remembering that few back then thought such a change at such a pace was possible." Coal has fuelled civil strife as well as powering the country. Tens of thousands of miners

walked out in 1984 over plans by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government to close more than 20 coal pits. The strike lasted a year, divided communities and saw widespread violence as police clashed with pickets. The miners' eventual defeat helped break the power of Britain's trade unions and hastened the end of the mining industry and the communities that relied on it. Coal remains a combustible issue. Plans to open Britain's first new coal mine in 30 years in northwest England divided residents, with some welcoming the promise of well-paid jobs and others opposing the pollution and carbon emissions it would bring. On September 13 the High Court struck down planning permission for the mine that had been granted by the previous Conservative government in 2022. Another chapter in Britain's

carbon-burning industrial heritage ends Monday with the closure of the last blast furnace at one of the world's biggest steelworks, in Port Talbot, Wales. Almost 2,000 jobs are being lost with the shutdown at the plant, owned by India's Tata Steel. Tata plans to replace the blast furnace, which runs on the coal derivative coke, with a cleaner electric furnace that will emit less carbon and require fewer workers. At its 1960s peak, more than 18,000 people were employed at the Port Talbot steelworks, before cheaper offerings from China and other countries hit production. Roy Rickhuss, general secretary of the Community union, said the closure "marks the end of an era, but this is not the end for Port Talbot." "We will never stop fighting for our steel industry and our communities in South Wales," he said.

Le Pen denies wrongdoing in EU fund embezzlement trial

AP ■ PARIS

French far-right leader Marine Le Pen denied violating any rules as she and her National Rally party and two dozen others went on trial on Monday, accused of embezzling European Parliament funds, in a case that has the potential to derail her political ambitions. Arriving at the court in Paris, Le Pen said she remained confident as "we have not violated any political and regulatory rules of the European Parliament" and vowed to present the judges with "extremely serious and extremely solid arguments".

Le Pen and other National Rally members casually greeted each other before sitting down in the first three rows of the packed courtroom. The nine-week trial will be closely watched by Le Pen's political rivals as she is a strong contender in the race to succeed Emmanuel Macron when the next presidential election takes place in 2027.

It comes as a new government dominated by centrists and conservatives just came into office in the wake of June-July legislative elections. Some observers expect the trial could prevent National Rally lawmakers, including Le Pen herself, from fully playing their opposition role in Parliament as they would be busy focusing on the party's defense.

Since stepping down as party leader three years ago, Le Pen has sought to position herself as a mainstream candidate capable of appealing to a broader electorate. Her efforts have paid off, with the party making significant gains in recent elections at both the European and

national levels. But a guilty verdict could seriously undermine her bid to take the Elysee. The National Rally and 27 of its top officials are accused of having used money destined for EU parliamentary aides to pay staff who instead did political work for the party between 2004 and 2016, in violation of the 27-nation bloc's regulations. The National Rally was called National Front at the time. Le Pen, whose party has softened its anti-EU stance in recent years, denies wrongdoing and claims the case is politically driven.

"Parliamentary assistants do not work for the Parliament. They are political assistants to elected officials, political by definition," she previously said. "You ask me if I can define the tasks I assigned to my assistants; it depends on each person's skills. Some wrote speeches for me, and some handled logistics and coordination." If found guilty, Le Pen and her co-defendants could face up to 10 years in prison and fines of up to 1 million euros (USD 1.1 million) each. Additional penalties, such as the loss of civil rights or ineligibility to run for office, could also be imposed, a scenario that could hamper, or even destroy, Le Pen's goal to mount another presidential bid after Macron's term ends. Le Pen was runner-up to Macron in the 2017 and 2022 presidential elections. She served as party president from 2011 to 2021 and now heads the group of RN lawmakers at the French National Assembly.

Despite her denial, her party has already paid back 1 million to the European Parliament, the Parliament's lawyer Patrick Maisonneuve said. Of that

amount, 330,000 euros were directly linked to Marine Le Pen's alleged misuse of funds. The legal proceedings stem from a 2015 alert raised by Martin Schulz, then-president of the European Parliament, to French authorities about possible fraudulent use of European funds by members of the National Front. Schulz also referred the case to the European Anti-Fraud Office, which launched a separate probe into the matter. The European Parliament's suspicions were further heightened when a 2015 organizational chart showed that 16 European lawmakers and 20 parliamentary assistants held official positions within the party — roles unrelated to their supposed duties as EU parliamentary staff.

A subsequent investigation found that some assistants were contractually linked to different MEPs than the ones they were actually working for, suggesting a scheme to divert European funds to pay party employees in France. Investigating judges concluded that Le Pen, as party leader, orchestrated the allocation of parliamentary assistance budgets and instructed MEPs to hire individuals holding party positions. These individuals were presented as EU parliamentary assistants, but in reality, were allegedly working for the National Rally in various capacities.

The European Parliament's legal team is seeking 2.7 million euros in compensation for financial and reputational damages. This figure corresponds to the 3.7 million euros allegedly defrauded through the scheme, minus the 1 million euros already paid back. During the

2014 European elections, the National Front won a record 24 MEP seats, finishing first with 24.8 per cent of the vote, ahead of the centre-right and the Socialists. This surge resulted in a substantial financial windfall for the party, which faced severe financial problems at the time.

An audit of the party's accounts between 2013 and 2016 revealed that it was running a deficit of 9.1 million euros by the end of 2016. Yet, the party still had a cash balance of 1.7 million euros and had lent 1 million euros to Le Pen's 2017 presidential campaign, while also holding 87,000 euros in loans to Cotelec, its funding association.

At the time, the party was also indebted to a Russian bank for 9.4 million euros, a loan taken out in 2014 for 6 million euros. The investigation uncovered many irregularities involving prominent party members. Thierry Legier, the long-time bodyguard of Le Pen's father Jean-Marie, was listed as his parliamentary assistant. But his resume did not reference this role, and he made no mention of it in his 2012 autobiography.

Legier admitted during the investigation that he was not interviewed and signed his employment contract without fully understanding his official role.

Jean-Marie Le Pen, who led the National Front from 1972 to 2011, will not appear in court alongside his former colleagues due to health concerns. Now 96, he was deemed unfit to testify by a court in June. He has 11 prior convictions, including for violence against a public official and hate speech.

Russia targets 11 Ukrainian regions as it steps up drone attacks

Kyiv (AP): Russia fired missiles and drones at 11 regions of Ukraine, the Ukrainian air force said on Monday, in a 33rd consecutive night of aerial attacks behind the front line and set a new monthly record of drone barrages.

In Kyiv, multiple explosions and machine gun fire could be heard throughout the night as the Ukrainian capital's air defences fought off a drone attack for five hours.

No casualties were reported in Kyiv or elsewhere, though a "critical infrastructure object" caught fire in the southern Mykolaiv region, Gov. Vitalii Kim said, without elaborating. Russia has increasingly deployed Shahed drones, rather than more expensive missiles, in its aerial bombardment of Ukrainian cities since its full-scale invasion of its neighbour in February 2022. It launched more than 1,300 Shahed drones at Ukraine in September alone — the highest number of drone attacks in a single month since the war began.

Ukraine, too, has developed a new generation of drones for the battlefield and for long-range strikes deep inside Russia. More than 100 Ukrainian drones were shot down over Russia on Sunday, Russian officials said.

Also Monday, Russian President Vladimir Putin released a video marking the second anniversary of the annexation of four Ukrainian territories and again accused the West of turning Ukraine into "a military base aimed at Russia".

Rescue operations continue as over 200 killed in Nepal floods

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Search and rescue operations continued in Nepal for the third consecutive day on Monday after monsoon-induced floods and landslides killed more than 200 people in one of the worst rain-related disasters in the Himalayan nation in recent years. Incessant rainfall over the weekend triggered floods and landslides, wreaking havoc in Kathmandu and most of the districts of Nepal.

At least 204 people have been killed in the continuous rainfall, floods, landslides and inundation, MyRepublica news portal reported, quoting the Armed Police Force (APF).

It added that 89 others have also been injured nationwide in the disaster, while 33 others remain missing. An all-party meeting convened on Sunday by Officiating Prime Minister Prakash Man Singh at the Prime Minister's Office in Singha Durbar decided to enhance rescue, relief, and re-establishment efforts during the ongoing disaster caused by heavy rains.

The Home Ministry said it would provide grants for temporary housing construction, repair blocked roads to restore transportation and ensure effective free health treatment for citizens injured in disaster incidents.

A task force was also formed to assess the details of the damage caused within a 15-day deadline, the news portal reported. The Disaster Management Executive Committee said it will provide a relief amount to the families of those missing. If the missing person is not found within 10 days, their family will be provided the same amount as that given to the kin of a person killed in the rain-induced



A tin shed lies partially submerged at the edge of the Bagmati River in spate after heavy rains in Kathmandu, Nepal, Saturday. AP/PTI

disaster, the report said. The Home Ministry said all security agencies have been deployed for relief efforts following the floods and landslides, and the Nepal Army, Nepal Police and Armed Police Force personnel have rescued around 4,500 disaster-affected individuals so far. While those injured are receiving free treatment, food and other emergency relief materials have been provided to others affected by the floods. Hundreds of people are facing a shortage of food, safe drinking water and sanitation in Kathmandu following the natural disaster, according to eyewitnesses.

Market prices have also soared as vegetables coming from India and other districts of the country have been temporarily halted due to obstruction in major highways due to landslides. Numerous roads throughout the nation are severely damaged, and all routes leading to the capital city, Kathmandu, are still blocked, leaving thousands of travellers stranded, The Kathmandu Post newspaper reported. Home

Ministry Spokesperson Rishiram Tiwari said efforts are underway to clear the obstructed highways to resume transportation. At least 20 hydropower plants with a combined capacity of 1100 MW suffered damages due to floods and landslides triggered by the incessant rainfall in the past three days, which has led to the disruption in power supply in Kathmandu and other major cities.

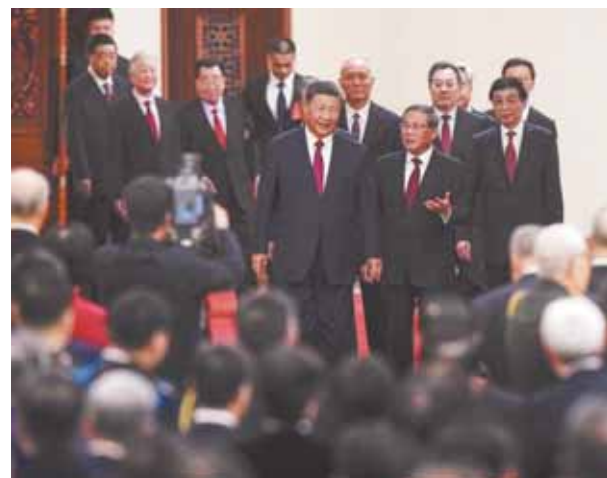
"Heavy rains since Friday have caused widespread flooding across Kathmandu Valley, and across Nepal. This is the worst flooding experienced in recent years," said Jagan Chapagain, the Chief Executive Officer and Secretary General of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, in a post on X. "In response to the crisis, local branches of the @NepalRedCross are working closely with authorities and (the) Emergency Operations Centre of Nepal Red Cross to coordinate rescue and relief operations," he added.

Xi pays tribute to fallen heroes ahead of 75th PRC National Day

PTI ■ BEIJING

Chinese President Xi Jinping and other state and party leaders paid floral tributes on Monday to fallen heroes to mark Martyrs' Day at the sprawling Tiananmen Square in central Beijing.

The Martyrs' Day was observed ahead of the 75th National Day of the People's Republic of China (PRC) on Tuesday. Xi, along with Premier Li Qiang, and other leaders was joined by representatives from all walks of life to pay tributes to the monument built in memory of martyrs of the revolutionary struggle during the 19th and 20th centuries leading to the formation of PRC on October 1, 1949, headed by the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) founder Mao Zedong. China will observe a week shut down from Tuesday to mark the national day holidays. Marking the occasion, Xi, 71, on Sunday awarded the highest state honours to several Chinese veterans.



He also presented China's Friendship Medal to Dilma Rousseff, former Brazilian president and the Chair of the Shanghai-based New Development Bank of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa). Lauding Rousseff as an outstanding representative of China's old and good friends, Xi said the Chinese people will

never forget international friends who have significantly contributed to the country's development and the friendship between the Chinese and foreign people. The Chinese people stand ready to work together with people from various countries to safeguard world peace and promote common development, he said.

Sunak pleads for party unity in final address as Tory leader

London (PTI): Britain's interim Leader of the Opposition Rishi Sunak has used his final address as Conservative Party chief to call on his colleagues to stop squabbling and unite behind his successor.

The 44-year-old British-Indian politician, who resigned as Tory leader following the party's bruising defeat in the July general election, used his address to the annual Conservative Party conference in Birmingham on Sunday evening to express optimism for its future.

He and his wife, Akshata Murty, were given a warm welcome by the Tory membership gathered

for his speech, which reflected a modified agenda as Sunak made way for the four leadership contenders to take centre stage to make their pitches to be elected his successor.

"I'm optimistic about our country's long-term future, I'm optimistic about our party's future too," said Sunak, amid loud cheers. "Whoever wins this contest, give them your backing. We must end the division, the backbiting, the squabbling. We mustn't nurse old grudges but build new friendships. We must always remember what unites us, rather than obsessing about where we might differ, because

when we turn in on ourselves, we lose and the country ends up with a Labour government," he said. Former ministers James Cleverly, Kemi Badenoch, Robert Jenrick and Tom Tugendhat are going head-to-head at this week's party conference to convince fellow Tory members of Parliament and the wider party membership that they are best placed to take Sunak's place following the worst Tory general election defeat in decades.

"In James, Kemi, Robert and Tom, we have a slate of strong leadership candidates. Now, I sat around the Cabinet tables with

all of them, and I can tell you, they are all good Conservatives who would lead this country well and be better Prime Ministers than Keir Starmer," said Sunak, refraining from endorsing any one of the four contenders.

"If we Conservatives are going to get back into office so that we can once more deliver for the British people, then our new leader is going to need your support. So, let's use this conference to look to the future and ensure that one of our four candidates is not just the next leader of our party, but our next prime minister too," he said.

Sunak used the ongoing media uproar around Prime Minister Keir Starmer and his Labour Party colleagues accepting expensive gifts from donors to take digs at the government. "Now you don't need somebody else to buy you a pair of designer glasses to see that the shine is coming off Keir Starmer already; people can see that Labour weren't frank with them at the election... that Labour are making the wrong choices for our country," he said, amid laughter.

NOTICE INVITING BID (TENDER)
No. 550/DSGAH, Bhubaneswar dt. 30.09.2024

TENDER FOR SUPPLY OF RAW MATERIALS AND CONTINGENT ARTICLES TO GOVERNMENT AYURVEDIC HOSPITAL PHARMACY, BHUBANESWAR, GOVERNMENT AYURVEDIC PHARMACY, BOLANGIRAND GOPABANDHU AYURVEDA MAHAVIDYALAYA PHARMACY, PURI ODISHA.

Sealed tenders are invited from reputed manufacturers/authorized dealers including wholesale co-operative organizations and Government/ Semi Govt. agencies for supply of raw materials and contingent articles to Government Ayurvedic Hospital Pharmacy, Bhubaneswar, Government Ayurvedic Pharmacy, Bolangir and Gopabandhu Ayurveda Mahavidyalaya Pharmacy, Puri for preparation of Ayurvedic Medicines for the financial year 2024 - 25.

1.	Value of Tender	Rs. 1,05,00,000/- (One Crore Five Lakhs) Only
2.	Cost of Tender Book	Rs. 1,050.00 (One Thousand and Fifty rupees only including GST)
3.	Availability of tender book	In the office of the Deputy Superintendent, GAH, BBSR only in shape of D.D. /Bankers Cheque in favor of the Deputy Superintendent, Government Ayurvedic Hospital, Old Town, Bhubaneswar
4.	Mode of payment of cost of Tender Book	In shape of Demand Draft / Bankers Cheque in favor of Deputy Superintendent, Government Ayurvedic Hospital, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, payable at Bhubaneswar.
5.	Date of commencement of sale of Tender Book	Dt: 01.10.2024 at 11.00 A.M. to 21.10.2024 at 4.00 P.M.
6.	Last date & time for submission of tender	Dt: 21.10.2024 at 4.00 P.M.
7.	Mode of submission of tender	To be received through a sealed Tender box kept in the office chamber of the Deputy Superintendent, GAH, BBSR, Odisha.
8.	Mode of submission of sealed samples	To be received by the Deputy Superintendent, GAH, BBSR, Odisha, and in his absence A.M.O., Ic-Pharmacy, Govt. Ayurvedic Hospital, Bhubaneswar will receive the samples at the time of submission of tender paper within the scheduled date and time.
9.	Date, Time & Place for opening of tenders	Technical bids will be opened on dt. 23.10.2024 at 11.30 A.M. at Government Ayurvedic Hospital Pharmacy, Bhubaneswar. The date, time & place of opening of the Financial Bids of the technically qualified bidders will be intimated later on.

The tender inviting authority reserves the right to reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason thereof. For details, please log on to www.ayushodisha.nic.in

-Sd-Dr. Banditarani Mishra
Deputy Superintendent
Govt. Ayurvedic Hospital, Bhubaneswar, Odisha

OIPR-10053/11/0003/2425

PUBLIC NOTICE
My client Smt. Rajendri W/o Late Sh. Anil Kumar Fakirwar of built-up property bearing Plot No. C-71, area measuring 24.68 sq. mtrs. out of Khassa No. 13/3, C-Block, situated in unauthorized colony Pali Garden Extn. Najafgarh Road, Karkola More, Delhi through Registered conveyance deed dated 01.10.2021 executed by DDA-PM-UDAY Cell in favour of Smt. Rajendri W/o Late Sh. Anil Kumar Pal vide Reg. No. 173 at SR-40. The above-mentioned property is going to be mortgaged with Fed. Bank Financial Services Limited. If any person / bank / financial institution having any claim / right, lien, any objection whatsoever in regard to the above property should notified to the undersigned Adv. Vishal Mehlan, E-713, Karkadoma Court, Delhi-110092, at least 15 days from the date of publication of this notice failing which any claim, lien or objection shall be deemed to have been waived. Adv. Vishal Mehlan, E-713, Karkadoma Court, Delhi-110092; Mobile No. 9812121318

PUBLIC NOTICE
The General Public is hereby informed that my Clients Mrs. Pushpa Devi wife of Late Purn Singh R/o F/378, Sultan Puri, Delhi-110086 have severed all relations with their son Praveen due to his bad habits and bad conduct and illegal activities. My Above named client have also disowned and debarred their said son from their movable and immovable properties. Anybody dealing with Praveen will do so at their own risk and responsibility and my clients will not be responsible for any act, deed or dealing done by Praveen.

SANJEEV DWIVEDI (ADVOCATE)
48, Gajandani Block, Tis Hazari Courts, N.D-54

COMPREHENSIVE AMC OF GENERATOR SETS
E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work **Tender Notice No.:** EL/29/11/2024/K787; **Dated:** 25-09-2024; **Tender No.:** 11, 2024; **Name of work :** At Katihar Division:- Comprehensive AMC of Kirloskar make 500 KVA D Generator Sets for schedule maintenance of Diesel Engines and its Alternator in Power Cars with enroute escorting and operation of DG sets from originating to destination and back for a period of 03 years. **Approx. value of work:** ₹. 2,46,65,624.17/-; **Earnest Money:** ₹. 27,73,400/-; **Bid End Date:** At 15:00 hrs. and **Bid Opening at 15:30 hrs. on 16-10-2024.** For complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available up to 15:00 hrs. on 16-10-2024 in website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>.

Sr. DEE/Gen & Chg./Katihar
NORTH EAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
Saving Customers With A Smile

PUBLIC NOTICE
It is to bring to the notice of general public that Mr. Shashank Saxena husband of my client Aditi Saxena and his mother Mrs. Brijbala Saxena are the co-owner of the Flat No. A-182, Assotech The Nest, Crossing Republic, Ghaziabad, U.P. 201016 vide sale deed dated 30/03/2012 in Vol. No. 1, Book No. 9761 at page No. 265 to 308 S.N. 2940 dated 30/03/2012 in the Office of Sub-Registrar, Ghaziabad, U.P. The above-mentioned flat is in a joint family property of my client Aditi Saxena wife of Shashank Saxena being legally married wife and by virtue of the same she has share legal right to stay in the property. The property is subject matter of court case bearing Civil Suit No. 929/2024 filed as Brijbala Saxena Vs. Smt. Aditi Saxena & Ors. pending in court of Smt. Neha Banaudhia, CJ (S.D.), Ghaziabad. The person dealing with sale/purchase/transfer of the above property will be doing it at his own risk.

Yogesh Bhardwaj-Advocate
Registration No. DF14312008
Chamber No. 409, Civil Side,
Tis Hazari Court, Delhi
Mobile: 9868849222

PUBLIC NOTICE
To be known to all that I, Shakeel Ahmad S/o Shri Nihal Ahmad R/o B-34, THE CITY CGHS LTD (Known as City Apartments Enclave) Delhi-110096, Original allottee/owner of flat No. B-34, THE CITY CGHS LTD, (Known as City Apartments), Plot No. 21, Vasundhara Enclave Delhi-110096, have applied for conversion of the said flat from leasehold to freehold in DDA. Original document i.e. Share Certificate issued by the City CGHS Ltd. in my name, has been misplaced/lost. An FIR to this effect has been lodged in the Police Station Crime Branch, New Delhi, vide FIR/NCR No. LR 2132028/2024 dated 05/08/2024.

Any person(s) claiming any right, interest, having any objection or found in possession of original documents, may write/contact with above named person at above address/phone No. 9811936757 within seven days from the date of publication of this notice. The person claiming any right, interest, objections with respect to this property can personally inform or write to the Dy. Director, (GH) or Director (RL), Vikas Sadan, INA, New Delhi.

Shakeel Ahmad

PUBLIC NOTICE
Known to all that my client known to all that my client **J.NIRMALA DEVI, Z. RATNA CHAUDHARY, 3, INETI** in favour of **UMA YAGRI, 1, SAHIBGARDH, GURGAON, HARYANA and J.NIRMALA DEVI, Z. RATNA CHAUDHARY, 3, INETI RANI**, have Not Originals. Sale deed in favour of **Bal Kishan Saini, 2 Prabhate of Will** in favour of **J.Nirmala Devi, Z. Ratna Chaudhary, In-Netu Rani, 3, Ineti in favour of J.Nirmala Devi, Z. Ratna Chaudhary, In-Netu Rani, 4, Ineti in favour of Sh. Raghuraj Singh and Bal Kishan Saini** And it is informed that any deal with said documents by any person except my said client and said institution regarding said property shall be deemed as null and void. If any person having any claim, right in said property then he may contact and handover the same and apprise his claim to undersigned within 8 days of this publication.

ADRIAN LEGAL SOLUTION
Ch. No. 760, Dwarka Sector 10, Dwarka, New Delhi-75
Mobile: 9899043918

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

LOST & FOUND
I, Priti Agarwal D/o Sh. Subhash Agarwal, has to inform that, I have misplaced the Original Share Certificate and original possession cum allotment letter of the flat bearing no. H-102, Prince Apartment, I.P. Extension, Patparganj, Delhi-110092 and are not traceable by my best efforts.

PD(814)C

CHANGE OF NAME

ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005

PUBLIC NOTICE-TENDER CUM E-AUCTION FOR SALE OF SECURED ASSET
(See proviso to Rule 8(i))
Notice for sale of immovable asset(s)

E-Auction Sale Notice for the sale of immovable asset(s) under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

This notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/ charged to the Secured Creditor, the physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of ICICI Bank Limited will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" as per the brief particulars given hereunder:

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrowers/ Guarantors/ Loan Account No.	Details of the Secured asset(s) with known encumbrances, if any	Amount Outstanding	Reserve Price/ Earnest Money Deposit	Date and Time of Property Inspection	Date & Time of E-Auction
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)
1.	Trovanodays Holidays Private Limited, (Borrower), Mohd Faisal- (Mortgagor/ Co-Applient & Guarantor), Reena (Guarantor) Mohd Abbas- (Mortgagor/ Co-Applient & Guarantor)/Sheeba Naqvi (Guarantor) 629705015540	Shop Bearing Pvt No G-11, On Ground Floor Upto Ceiling Level Without Roof Rights, A Part Of Property Bearing No A-1/B, Situated In The Abadi Of Acharya Niketan, Out Of Kharsara No 63 In Mayur Vihar Phase 1 In Village Kotla Delhi-110091 area 166.34 sq ft	Rs. 1,22,52,208/- as on September 02, 2024	Rs. 23,70,000/- Rs. 2,37,000/-	October 11, 2024 from 11:00 AM to 01:00 PM	October 23, 2024 from 11:00 AM to 12:00 Noon
		Shop Bearing Pvt No G-12, On Ground Floor Upto Extent Of Ceiling Level Without Roof Rights, A Part Of Property Bearing No A-1/B, Situated In The Abadi Of Acharya Niketan, Out Of Kharsara No 63 In Mayur Vihar Phase 1 In Village Kotla, Ilaqa Shadara Delhi-110091 Area- 147.68 Sq ft		Rs. 21,30,000/-		

The online auction will be conducted on the website (URL Link-<https://disposalhub.com>) of our auction agency M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited. The Mortgagors/ Noticees are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest by October 22, 2024 before 05:00 PM else the secured asset(s) will be sold as per schedule. The prospective bidder(s) must submit the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) Demand Draft (DD) (Refer Column E) at ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005 on or before October 22, 2024 before 05:00 PM. Thereafter, they have to submit their offer through the website mentioned above on or before October 22, 2024 before 05:00 PM along with the scanned image of the Bank acknowledged DD towards proof of payment of EMD. In case the prospective bidder(s) is/ are unable to submit his/ their offer through the website, then the signed copy of tender documents may be submitted at ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005 on or before October 22, 2024 before 05:00 PM. Earnest Money Deposit/DD/PO should be from a Nationalised/ Scheduled Bank in favour of ICICI Bank Limited payable at Delhi. For any further clarifications in terms of inspection, Terms and Conditions of the E-Auction or submission of tenders, contact ICICI Bank Employee Phone No. 8928935040/8584874809

Please note that the Marketing agencies M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited 2, Augeo Asset Management Pvt Ltd 3, Hecta Protech Pvt. Ltd., have also been engaged for facilitating the sale of this property. The Authorised Officer reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without furnishing any further reasons. For detailed Terms and Conditions of the sale, please visit www.icicibank.com/h4p45

Date: October 01, 2024
Place: Delhi/ NCR

Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

India's consumer durables market to become global powerhouse: CII

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's consumer durables market is expected to touch a size of Rs 5 lakh crore by FY30 and will become the fourth largest in the world by 2027, industry body CII said on Monday.

While the country's products are inching towards global reliability, it is imperative to build a robust quality ecosystem and adopt standardisation in the sector and also export Indian standards globally, said B Thiagarajan, Chairman, CII National Committee on Consumer Electronics and Durables.

Speaking at the CII Consumer Electronics & Durables Summit 2024, Thiagarajan, who is also the Chairman and Managing Director, Blue Star Ltd, further said the next decade is expected to create multiple opportunities across the value chain in the sector.

"From finished goods as well as development of an indigenous component ecosystem, with the right focus on domestic scale, India's prospects of becoming a global manufacturing powerhouse holds great promise," he asserted.



Thiagarajan said, "India is already the fastest growing major market for consumer durables in the world and is expected to become the fourth largest by 2027 with a projected market size to reach Rs 5 lakh crore by fiscal year 2030."

He acknowledged the government's support to the sector through various initiatives, including the PLI scheme to boost competitiveness and make India a self-reliant and technologically advanced global player.

"The momentum we are witnessing is a clear sign that India is emerging as a key player of the global manufacturing stage and we

standards also globally as envisioned by the Prime Minister and the government of India," he added.

By adopting and promoting Indian standards on a global scale, Thiagarajan said, "We can enhance our reputation in the international markets and ensure that our products meet the expectations of the consumers worldwide."

However, he said, "While we have made significant strides, there is still more work to be done to drive growth in sector R&D and innovation is of paramount importance."

He said advancement in technology, particularly, artificial intelligence, has revolutionised the sector, presenting it with new market opportunities and innovative applications.

"To harness the potential of these technologies, it is crucial for the industry to proactively invest in R&D aimed at integrating artificial intelligence into consumer electronics and durables to bring innovation to the sector," Thiagarajan asserted.

are well on track to meet the goal of manufacturing to contribute 25 per cent of the GDP to the country. With over USD500 billion in FDI and the creation of over 8.5 lakh jobs, the progress is undeniable. The air conditioning sector, for instance, is expected to become the largest in the world by 2040," Thiagarajan said.

On the quality front, he said Indian products are inching towards global reliability. "As strengthening the quality ecosystem fosters consumer trust in the products offered, it is imperative to build a robust quality ecosystem and adopt standardisation in the sector and export Indian

Government extends I-T audit report filing date



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The income tax department has extended the date for filing audit report for 2023-24 by 7 days till October 7.

In a circular, the I-T department said considering the difficulties faced by taxpayers in electronic filing of various audit reports under the Income Tax Act, the deadline is being extended from September 30 to October 7.

Moore Singhi Executive Director Rajat Mohan said technological issues in electronic filing of tax audit reports have pushed the government to extend timelines by 7 more days.

"Load of filings is quite high on the portal in the last few days, throwing the entire ecosystem in a frenzy. Government should either upgrade the system to handle such rush or stagger the timelines for tax filings," Mohan said.

BharatPe, Ashneer Grover settle dispute, end months of legal battle

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Fintech firm BharatPe has reached a settlement with its former co-founder Ashneer Grover, ending months of acrimonious legal and public dispute, the two sides said on Monday.

As part of the settlement agreement, Grover will not be associated with BharatPe in any capacity nor be a part of the shareholding of the company.

Grover will transfer a part of his shareholding to the BharatPe board and the rest will be managed by a family trust, keeping him off the company's capital table. Also, the two sides will not pursue legal cases, BharatPe and Grover said in separate statements. The settlement comes days after the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Delhi Police arrested Deepak Gupta on charges of misappropriation of fintech Unicorn's funds. Gupta is the husband of Madhuri Jain Grover's sister.

"Certain number of shares held by him will be transferred to the Resilient Growth Trust for the benefit of the company and his remaining shares will be managed by his family trust.

"Both parties have decided not to pursue the cases filed," BharatPe said in a statement. It all started in January 2022 when Grover had to go on



leave following allegations of using abusive language against Kotak Mahindra Bank staff and fraudulent practices, which he denied.

BharatPe had roped in SAM, Alvarez and Marsal (A&M) and PwC for governance review in February 2022 after sending Grover on leave.

In a report by A&M, it was alleged that Madhuri Jain Grover and her family members, brother Shwetank Jain and brother-in-law Deepak Jagdishram Gupta were involved in financial irregularities at the company.

BharatPe sacked its head of controls and Grover's wife Madhuri Jain Grover on February 23, 2022, for alleged financial irregularities ranging from producing fake invoices to billing the company for personal beauty treatment and trips abroad.

These followed allegations of illegitimate payments to bogus human resource consultants linked to Madhuri Jain's brother Shwetank Jain. Also, there were allegations of

inflated transactions, undue payments through pass-through vendors, sham transactions in input-tax credit, illegal payments to travel agencies, forged invoices etc. Grover quit as managing director of the firm on March 1, 2022, after an emergency arbitrator in the Singapore International Arbitration Centre held that there was no ground to stop governance review at the fintech firm. That followed months of bickering by both sides.

Grover in a post on X said, "I have reached a decisive settlement with BharatPe. I repose my faith in the management and board, who are doing great work in taking BharatPe forward in the right direction. I continue to remain aligned with the company's growth and success. I will no longer be associated with BharatPe in any capacity, nor be part of the capital table."

Grover, who had previously accused the BharatPe board of mismanagement, ended the post with "Peace!"

Coal will remain part of India's energy mix for decades: Experts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

As the UK officially shut down its last remaining coal power plant on Monday, policy experts said coal will continue to be a part of India's energy mix for the next few decades, given that it is still a developing country with significant energy needs.

The UK on Monday closed its last coal power plant, becoming the first G7 nation to do so amid calls for a global coal-free energy system by 2040.

The world's first coal power plant opened in London in 1882, and until 2012, coal accounted for 39 per cent of the UK's electricity generation. Global energy think tank Ember said the closure of the UK's last coal plant means that more than a third of OECD countries are now coal-free, with three-quarters expected to eliminate coal power by 2030, in line with global climate goals aimed at limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

The International Energy Agency's (IEA) "Net Zero by 2050" report recommends that developed countries phase out unabated coal by 2030, while developing countries should aim to do so by 2040 to remain on track for global net-zero emissions by 2050.

The term "unabated" in this context refers to electricity production that does not use technologies designed to capture and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

These developments occur as developed countries push their counterparts in the developing world to accelerate the phase-down of unabated coal power.

India, the world's second-largest consumer of coal for



electricity generation after China, saw the share of coal-fired power generation rise to 75 per cent in 2023-24 from 71 per cent in 2019-20.

According to the IEA, while coal consumption fell in Europe and the US in 2023, it rose by 8 per cent in India and 5 per cent in China.

That said, India's coal usage for power generation began several decades later than that of developed nations. While the UK's first coal power plant opened in 1882, India established its first major thermal power plant, the Hussain Sagar Thermal Power Station in Hyderabad, in 1920. Policy experts say India is focusing on a long-term energy transition, where coal will continue to be part of the energy mix for the next few decades.

Sunil Dahiya, an independent analyst, said that while coal will not disappear in the near future, India must reduce harmful emissions from the sector by deploying advanced air pollution control technologies and improving efficiency to curb carbon emissions.

According to climate activist Harjeet Singh, India has made remarkable progress in renewable energy, but the intermittent nature of these sources and the lack of scalable battery storage mean that coal still underpins its power supply and industries like steel and cement.

"Yet, the cost of coal goes far beyond emissions -- it destroys ecosystems, displaces communities, and deepens environmental injustice. India must urgently shift away from coal, and the international community must provide the financial and technological support needed for a just transition -- for both people and the planet," he said.

Montek Singh Ahluwalia, former deputy chairman of the erstwhile Planning Commission, said in a webinar organized by the think tank Centre for Social and Economic Progress last week that India can't cut down coal immediately and it is hypocritical in the West to focus solely on coal while ignoring oil and natural gas.

"However, if we are going to achieve net-zero emissions by 2070, we must recognise that we need to phase out thermal power. We should indicate to the world that India's emissions will increase for a while, then peak, and eventually decline. Right now, there's a lot of misunderstanding in the West about India's willingness to reduce emissions, which is not true," he said.

Sunita Narain, the director general of the Centre for Science and Environment, echoed this sentiment, saying that India is currently dependent on coal, as it remains the cheapest form of energy available.

UP Government to start paddy procurement from October 1

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government will commence paddy procurement across the state starting October 1 and payments to farmers will be processed within 48 hours of the sale.

The process will roll out in phases, beginning in western Uttar Pradesh and extending to the eastern districts later in the month, according to an official statement issued here on Monday.

Procurement will start on October 1 in the districts of Hardoi, Lakhimpur Kheri and Sitapur. It will be followed by procurement in Lucknow, Rae Bareilly and Unnao from November 1, among others, the statement added.

"Paddy procurement will continue until January 31, covering various districts including Meerut, Saharanpur, Moradabad, Bareilly, Agra, Aligarh and Jhansi," it stated.

The minimum support price (MSP) for paddy has been set



at Rs 2,300 per quintal, while the price for grade A paddy stood at Rs 2,320 per quintal. Additionally, farmers will receive a reimbursement of Rs

20 per quintal for unloading, sieving and cleaning their produce, it added.

To facilitate this extensive procurement process, the Food and Civil Supplies Department has established around 4,000 purchase centers statewide.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed that payments to farmers be processed within 48 hours of the sale, ensuring timely financial support, according to the statement.

directed that payments to farmers be processed within 48 hours," it added.

Registration for the paddy purchase scheme commenced on September 1, with approximately 32,000 farmers already registered within the first month. The Agriculture Department estimates that the paddy cultivation area for the Kharif marketing year 2024-25 is 61.24 lakh hectares, with an anticipated production of 265.54 lakh metric tonnes and an average yield projected at 43.36 quintals per hectare.

Centre's fiscal deficit touches 27 per cent of full-year target in first five months



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre's fiscal deficit at the end of the first five months of the current fiscal touched 27 per cent of the full-year target, government data showed on Monday.

In absolute terms, the fiscal deficit gap between expenditure and revenue was at Rs 4,35,176 crore as of August-end, according to data released by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA).

The deficit stood at 36 per cent of the Budget Estimates (BE) in the corresponding period of 2023-24.

In the Union Budget, the government projected to bring down the fiscal deficit to 4.9 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) in the current 2024-25 financial year. The deficit was 5.6 per cent of the GDP in 2023-24.

In absolute terms, the government aims to contain the fiscal deficit at Rs 16,13,312 crore

during the current fiscal.

Unveiling the revenue-expenditure data of the Union government for the first five months of 2024-25, CGA said the net tax revenue was Rs 8.7 lakh crore or 33.8 per cent of the BE for the current fiscal.

The net tax revenue collection was 34.5 per cent at July-end 2023.

The central government's total expenditure in the four months through August stood at Rs 16.5 lakh crore or 34.3 per cent of BE. The expenditure was 37.1 per cent of the BE in the year-ago period.

Of the total expenditure, Rs 13,51,367 crore was in the revenue account and Rs 3,00,987 crore was in the capital account.

Out of the total revenue expenditure, Rs 4,00,160 crore was towards interest payments. Fiscal deficit is the difference between the total expenditure and revenue of the government. It is an indication of the total borrowing that is needed by the government.

Solex Energy announces investment for Vision 2030



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Solex Energy Limited on Monday announced an investment exceeding Rs 8,000 crore as part of its Vision 2030 strategy.

The initiative reflects Solex's commitment to advancing solar technology and scaling operations, positioning the company as a fully integrated solar player. Solex is exploring the development of a new cell manufacturing facility with an initial capacity of 2 GW, designed to scale up to 5 GW.

Its module manufacturing capacity will also be increased from 1.5 GW to 15 GW. Solex aims to expand its workforce to over 25,000 to support this growth. Chetan Shah, Chairman & Managing Director of Solex Energy Limited, said, "Vision 2030 represents a key milestone in our journey to becoming a fully integrated solar

company. With the introduction of N-Type TOPCon Technology featuring Rectangular Cells, Solex Energy is raising the bar for efficiency and reliability."

A major component of Vision 2030 is the launch of the Tapi-R series. This revolutionary solar module incorporates N-Type TOPCon Technology and a rectangular cell design, setting a new standard for solar energy generation in India. The series, named after the Tapi River, a symbol of vitality in the region where Solex is headquartered, and the "R" for its rectangular cell design, significantly enhances power efficiency and reliability. In addition to technological advancements, Solex Energy Limited is committed to supporting India's national goal of achieving 500 GW of non-fossil fuel-based installed electricity capacity by 2030.

CRED reduces losses by 41 per cent

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Credit card bill payments app CRED on Monday reported 66 per cent year-on-year increase in revenue to Rs 2,473 crore in FY24, on the back of growth in monetised members and a drop in user acquisition costs.

Operating losses were reduced by 41 per cent from Rs 1,024 crore in FY23 to Rs 609 crore in FY24, a company statement said.

"This came on the back of some very exciting sort of pieces of execution that we always had as a thesis, but it's always good to see that play out in action. The number of members that we monetised



grew 58 per cent year-on-year. Our CAC (customer acquisition costs) came down significantly by 40 per cent," CRED founder Kunal Shah said during a press briefing.

Total Payment Value (TPV) for the platform surged 55 per cent to Rs 6.87 lakh crore, while monthly transacting users (MTU) rose by 34 per cent.

"Members used CRED for a

wide range of payments beyond credit card bills, with strong adoption of P2P UPI payments. They also expanded adoption of CRED Pay across online merchants, boosting transaction volumes by 254 per cent during the year," the statement said.

Organic growth contributed to a high-quality user base and dropped customer acquisition costs by 40 per cent, Shah said,

adding that 70 per cent of its customer acquisition now comes through organic or referral channels.

The unicorn fintech launched its in-app vehicle management feature—CRED Garage—in September last year.

"We managed to cross close to 4.2 million vehicles in the last financial year and now touching close 6.5 million vehicles on the platform. And it kind of demonstrates the power of the platform coming together where we are squarely focused on an audience segment," Shah said.

In July 2024, it introduced CRED Money, a tool that enables users to track, analyze, and reflect on their financial

behaviour. The entrepreneur also hinted at new products in the pipeline.

"When you think from a capital investment and capital allocation perspective, there's a lot of exciting things coming up on the road map. A significant amount of our capital utilization is towards research and development costs, for example, things on products, investments on products that are in the works, and will come out pretty soon," he said.

Responding to whether CRED plans to go public, Shah said the company's still in its growth phase and doesn't intend to list anytime soon.

Tata Power inks pact with Rajasthan Government for investment in green energy

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Tata Power on Monday said it has inked an initial pact with the Rajasthan government for investment of Rs 1.2 lakh crore, including Rs 75,000 crore in green energy, in the state's power sector.

The 10-year plan aims to support Rajasthan's transformation into a power surplus state, providing 24/7 clean, affordable, and reliable power supply. Investments will be made in renewable energy projects and manufacturing, nuclear power, rooftop

installations, and EV charging, a company statement said.

The MoU was signed during the 'Rising Rajasthan' Investor Meet in New Delhi on Monday. An amount of Rs 20,000 crore will be invested in the state transmission and distribution area to modernize the grid infrastructure, reduce energy losses, and improve power quality across the state.

Besides, Rs 10,000 crore will be invested for transmission systems exploring opportunities to develop nuclear power plant. Nearly Rs 75,000 crore will be for renewable energy projects.

An investment of Rs 1,000 crore has been earmarked for setting up 1 lakh EV charging points across Rajasthan.

Rooftop solar power for 10 lakh households will support the PM Surya Ghar Yojana. The MoU will have a transformative socio-economic impact, creating over 28,000 direct jobs in the state. Tata Power already has a significant footprint in Rajasthan, with a robust portfolio of energy projects. The company has commissioned 1 GW of solar projects and 185 MW of wind projects in the state.

USHA SLAMS EC MEMBERS FOR NOT FELICITATING OLYMPIC MEDALLISTS

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Olympic Association (IOA) President PT Usha on Monday said it is "deeply concerning" that the Executive Committee members failed to honour Olympic medallists and accused the Finance Committee of blocking funds intended to support Indian athletes' preparation for the Paris Games.

India secured six medals, including two historic bronze by young shooter Manu Bhaker, but Usha said the "EC does not want to celebrate their success" and it makes her "very sad."

"These athletes have made the nation proud, and it is the responsibility of the IOA to celebrate their achievements with the respect they deserve. It is deeply concerning that, even after returning home in mid-August, the EC has failed to discuss or take any steps towards organizing a formal felicitation ceremony," she said in a statement.

She revealed that a proposal for a

preparatory grant of Rs 2 lakh for each Olympic-bound athlete and Rs 1 lakh for each coach had been blocked by the Finance Committee, notably by IOA Treasurer Sahdev Yadav.

"I strongly believe that this grant would have given our athletes and their coaches the support they needed in the crucial period leading up to the Olympic Games.

"The refusal to disburse these funds reflects a lack of understanding of the needs of athletes and shows a complete disregard for their preparation and well-being," she stated.

Highlighting the contrast with previous leadership, Usha pointed out that a successful felicitation ceremony was organised for the seven medallists from the Tokyo 2021 Olympics, even amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

"If my predecessors could celebrate the achievements of our athletes during a global pandemic, what is stopping the current EC members from doing the same? These medallists have worked tirelessly to



bring honour to our nation, and they deserve to be acknowledged." Usha questioned the commitment of some EC members, particularly those who are former athletes.

"As someone who has represented India on the world stage, I understand the importance of recognising the hard work, sacrifices, and victories of our athletes. It is disheartening to see that others in positions of power, especially those who have also worn the national colours, are failing to uphold this duty."

The IOA had planned to award each individual medallist between Rs 50 lakh and Rs 1 crore, with coaches receiving Rs 15 lakh to Rs 25 lakh as part of the official felicitation.

"By not following through on these plans, the IOA is letting down the athletes who have made our country proud. I urge the Executive Committee to take immediate action and ensure that our athletes receive the honours and recognition they deserve."

She reaffirmed her commitment to stand by the athletes, saying: "Our

athletes are the heart and soul of Indian sport. I will not rest until they are given the due respect, support, and acknowledgment they have earned."

On Saturday, 12 members of the Executive Council had sent a letter to senior International Olympic Committee (IOC) official Jerome Poivey, accusing Usha of running the organization in an "autocratic" manner after she rejected their demand to remove Raghuram Iyer as IOA CEO during a contentious meeting.

Usha called the accusations "malicious and false," asserting that they aimed to undermine her leadership and the efforts to improve Indian sports. On Sunday, she criticized the dissenting council members for prioritizing personal power and financial gain over the welfare of the sport.

In a press release, Usha on Sunday alleged that several of these EC members have questionable track records, including accusations of sexual harassment against them.

World Cup winner Antoine Griezmann retires from international soccer after 10 years with France



AP ■ PARIS

World Cup winner Antoine Griezmann took the soccer world by surprise on Monday when he announced the end of his international career with France.

The 33-year-old Atletico Madrid player has played 137 matches with Les Bleus, scoring 44 goals during a successful 10-year tenure.

Griezmann started with France in 2014 in a friendly match against the Netherlands then quickly established himself as a

stalwart of the team coached by Didier Deschamps with his versatile talent and influence as both a goalscorer and an assist provider.

Only two players, Hugo Lloris and Lilian Thuram, have played more international games with France than Griezmann.

"It's with a heart full of memories that I close this chapter of my life," Griezmann said in a message posted on Instagram. "Thank you for this wonderful tricolor adventure and see you soon."

Griezmann is fourth on France's list of all-time scorers behind Olivier Giroud,

Thierry Henry and Kylian Mbappe. He won the 2018 World Cup and the Nations League three years later with his France teammates.

"After 10 incredible years, marked by challenges, successes and unforgettable moments, it is time for me to turn a page and make way for the new generation," he said. "I was lucky enough to experience some incredible moments alongside some exceptional teammates. We have shared victories that will remain forever engraved in our memories."

After a disappointing showing at the European Championship earlier this year, where France lost in the semifinals, Griezmann had lost some of his influence in Deschamps' team. His final appearance in the France kit was in September in a 2-0 win over Belgium in a Nations League match when he came on as a late substitute. Although Griezmann has admitted he struggled at the Euros, he was expected to keep on playing with France until the 2026 World Cup.

In his retirement message, Griezmann thanked Deschamps for his support over the last decade despite the coach's decision to make Mbappe France captain ahead of him last year following Lloris' retirement. Griezmann had previously said Deschamps' snub had been difficult to stomach.

Griezmann didn't say how long he'll continue with his club career.



Young Indian shuttler Raksha Kandasamy wins titles in Croatia and Belgium

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Young Indian badminton player Raksha Kandasamy continued her brilliant run as she clinched back-to-back titles in the Croatian International and Belgium Junior tournaments.

The 16-year-old remained unbeaten throughout the two tournaments as she won each of her five games en route to her title wins.

Raksha defeated England's Leona Lee 21-9, 21-5 in the final of the Croatian International played at Samobor on Sunday. She had

earlier defeated Bulgaria's Stefani Stoeva 21-14, 21-23 in the semifinal and Poland's Joanna Rudna 21-11, 21-10 in the quarterfinal.

Earlier, Raksha had crushed the challenge from Tammi van Wouterghem of Belgium 21-5, 21-8 in the quarterfinals of the Belgium Junior event.

Ireland's Siofra Flynn presented a strong fight against Raksha but the Indian prevailed 21-8, 19-21, 25-23 in their last-four clash.

Raksha beat Germany's Gloria Poluektov 21-14, 10-21, 22-20 in the final played in the Belgian city of Herstal.

Delhi Capitals co-owner GMR group takes over Hampshire in county cricket



PTI ■ LONDON

The GMR Group, co-owners of IPL franchise Delhi Capitals, on Monday completed an agreement with Hampshire to buy majority stake in the English county club.

Initially, the GMR Group will hold 53 percent stake in Hampshire, thereby making it the first county team to have an overseas ownership.

In a phased manner through the next 24 months, the Indian conglomerate will acquire 100 percent stake.

"Hampshire Sport & Leisure Holdings Limited, owner of the Utilita Bowl site and Hampshire Cricket, has signed and exchanged definitive agreements with GMR Global Pte Ltd (GGPL), marking the start of a significant strategic partnership," the club said in a statement in its website.

"As part of the agreement, GGPL will initially acquire a majority stake in Hampshire Sport & Leisure Holdings Limited, with the completed acquisition of 100% ownership expected within the next 24 months," the statement added.

Kirankumar Granthi, Corporate Chairman of the GMR Group, said his aim will be to cultivate "value creation" and providing opportunities to budding talents.

"With this acquisition, along with our investments in the US, Dubai, and India, GMR is focused on engaging and connecting with the global youth. We are committed to financial prudence, value creation, and creating opportunities for young talent.

"Our vision is to transform sports into a platform that unites people and cultures, drives global excellence, and nurtures the creation of future

world champions," said Granthi.

Currently, GMR holds a 50 percent stake in the Delhi Capitals (IPL and WPL), the Dubai Capitals (ILT20) and the Pretoria Capitals (SA20). Additionally, the GMR group has invested in the Seattle Orcas in the Major League Cricket, USA.

Under the new ownership structure, Hampshire's existing leadership team will remain in place.

Rod Bransgrove will continue as Group Chairman until at least September 30, 2026, and David Mann will retain his role as the Group CEO.

"This is the fulfilment of a dream for me and, I hope, for all Hampshire Cricket supporters. After a thorough selection process, we chose GGPL (the parent company of GMR) as our partners due to their shared values and commitment to our vision.

"Becoming the first English cricket club to join an international cricket group will open exciting new opportunities as we embrace the globalization of this great sport," said Bransgrove.

Richard Gould, ECB Chief Executive Officer, welcomed the acquisition.

"This is an exciting time for Hampshire Cricket. I am pleased to see GGPL's commitment to continuing to develop Hampshire's cricket teams and pathways and enhance facilities at Utilita Bowl, and their respect for the traditions of the game in this country.

"This announcement also demonstrates the global interest in investing in cricket in England and Wales, and underlines the continuing appeal of county cricket," said Gould.

Arteta talks up Enrique's 'unbelievable power' as Arsenal hosts PSG in Champions League game

AP ■ LONDON

Days after professing his "love" and "respect" for Pep Guardiola, Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta has spoken in an equally effusive manner about another influential Spanish coach he will face in the Champions League on Tuesday.

Luis Enrique takes his Paris Saint-Germain team to Emirates Stadium for the most high-profile fixture in the second round of games in the new-look competition.

Arteta and Enrique go way back, having been together at Barcelona in the late 1990s and early 2000s when Arteta was starting out his professional career and Enrique was coming toward the end of his.

Arteta said he "learned a lot of things" from Enrique as a player and now as a coach, saying Monday his compatriot "brings a smile on my face."

"I am a huge admirer of him," Arteta said. "I remember his personality, huge character, huge energy, very supportive of his young players. What I love about him is that wherever he has been, as a player or as a manager, his fingerprints are all over place. You can see it's



his team. You can see PSG is his team. "He has this unbelievable power ... Then there's his approach to life, his profession - it's something to really look at and I learnt a lot of things from him."

Arteta spent much of last week talking about Guardiola and Manchester City amid the fallout from Arsenal's feisty 2-2 draw at the Premier League champions that appears to have ignited a rivalry between the teams.

He has long been viewed as a protégé of Guardiola, yet it seems that Enrique has been an influence, too.

"I love his honesty - he is very straightforward, he looks you in the eyes and tells you what he thinks," Arteta said. "I think

in the end, players appreciate that."

Arteta described PSG, where he enjoyed a spell on loan in 2000-01 alongside players like Ronaldinho and Nicolas Anelka, as a team "probably at the highest level you can find in European football."

Enrique's side leads the French league with five wins and a draw from the opening six games of its title defense and began the Champions League with a 1-0 win over Girona - albeit courtesy of a 90th-minute own-goal.

Arsenal started with a 0-0 draw at Atlanta.

Arteta said Arsenal will check on the fitness of fullbacks Ben White and Riccardo Calafiori on Monday.

Chennaiyin FC aim for strong show against winless Hyderabad FC

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad FC would look for their first win of the season while Chennaiyin FC seek to move up the standings when the two sides face each other in an Indian Super League match here on Tuesday.

In their previous match, Hyderabad lost 0-2 to Punjab FC, while Chennaiyin succumbed to a 0-1 defeat to debutant Mohammedan Sporting.

Hyderabad have a strong defensive structure that could trouble Chennaiyin. The two teams have clashed against each other on 10 occasions in the ISL and have registered four wins each, while two matches ended in a draw.

Meanwhile, CFC have scored in their previous four away matches. Their previous longest goal-scoring run in away games was 16 contests between January 2020 to February 2023.

Ahead of Tuesday's fixture, Hyderabad head coach Thangboi Singto hoped to draw inspiration from last season when his side triumphed over Chennaiyin.

"I can see that the boys have gelled with each other in the



last few weeks of training. So far, we have played only away games, and our next match will be at home," Singto said on the eve of the game.

"Chennaiyin FC were the only team that we beat last season. Are we going to defeat them again? I wish."

"It won't be easy because of the kind of foreigners that they have brought in, and the Indian players are there; they are much better in terms of physicality and experience. It will be tough, but the only thing we can do is train and keep trying."

Chennaiyin head coach Owen Coyle said while their start has been better than the last

season, there are still some grey areas that need to be worked upon.

"I'd love to be sitting here with six points, for sure. We're obviously on three, which is better than we were this time last year. But six was achievable. So, we have to take that punch to the nose and look to bounce back quickly," he stated.

Chennaiyin's Farukh Choudhary has taken eight shots from inside the box this season. Hyderabad's Abdul Rabeel's 50 touches inside the opposition's box since the beginning of the year is the most by any player from the side so far.

Atletico equalises late against Madrid in derby interrupted after objects thrown on the field

AP ■ MADRID

Angel Correa scored in stoppage time and Atletico Madrid drew 1-1 with Real Madrid in a tense Spanish league derby that was interrupted for more than 15 minutes in the second half after Atletico fans threw objects onto the field.

Correa equalised for Atletico in a breakaway five minutes into added time with a goal that was initially disallowed for offside but was awarded after video review. Eder Militao had given Madrid the lead in the

64th.

The draw left Madrid in second place, three points behind leader Barcelona, which lost 4-2 to Osasuna on Saturday to end its seven-game winning streak. Atletico was third, two points behind Madrid after eight rounds.

"I always think positively," Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said.

"We moved closer to the leader and we have been playing well." The derby was interrupted shortly after Madrid's goal at the Metropolitano, with the referee sending the players to



the locker rooms after Atletico fans kept throwing objects onto the field.

Militao had celebrated near the sideline in front of Atletico fans, and Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois was seen appearing to provoke Atletico fans after Militao scored.

"What he did wasn't right but we are not helping when we provoke them," Atletico coach Diego Simeone said.

"I'm not justifying what the fans did, but we need to help as well."

It was Courtois who alerted the referee about the objects -

including lighters - being thrown onto the field near him.

Atletico defender José María Giménez and midfielder Koke Resurrección went to talk to the fans in the section behind Courtois' goal. That section is where usually the more radical Atletico supporters are located.

Atletico coach Diego Simeone also asked several times for the fans to behave.

A message over the stadium loudspeakers said the match was being interrupted for 15 minutes, and that it would be suspended if the problem

continued.

The interruption came a day after the Spanish league said it would ask police to act against the promoters of a social media campaign which the league said was aimed at promoting racist acts against Madrid star Vinicius Junior at the derby.

The social media campaign was based on a hashtag encouraging Atletico fans to wear face masks, apparently to make it more difficult for authorities to identify individuals who participate in racist chants or insults.

Social media videos showed Atletico fans before the match chanting "Vinicius is different." Vinicius occasionally clashed with Atletico players at the Metropolitano.

Atletico's Marcos Llorente was sent off in stoppage time.

OTHER RESULTS: Fourth-place 10-man Athletic Bilbao conceded a stoppage-time equaliser in a 1-1 draw with Sevilla at home, while Giovanni Lo Celso scored an 85th-minute goal in Real Betis' 1-0 home win over Espanyol.

Iago Aspas got an 81st-minute equaliser for Celta Vigo in a 1-1 draw against visiting Girona.

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 Shubman 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 fizool 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

to come up with something... "Something like you have to play at least 5 or 6 Test matches a year then you can play ODI or T20s. Every year a minimum number of Test matches need to be allotted," he added.

LOSS TO BANGLADESH WAS A HUGE SETBACK: Once a cricketing powerhouse, Pakistan now find themselves in a difficult situation. Their downward spiral began with the Asia Cup last year which was followed by the team's early elimination from the ODI World Cup in 2023 and the T20 World Cup this year.

Earlier this month they suffered their first-ever Test series loss to Bangladesh.

"Bohot bada dhakka tha (It was a huge setback) that Pakistan lost to Bangladesh. We never thought that not only Pakistan will lose but it will lose so bad. "Pakistan cricket abhi daamadol hai (is not doing great). The performance has dropped. I am hopeful that it will get better. The reasons

behind this are many.

"It happens, the West Indies used to be the best in the world, that's not the case now. But I'm hopeful that Pakistan cricket returns to the top, the boys are working hard." Pacer Shaheen Afridi replaced Babar as skipper in T20s after the 2023 ODI World Cup but the former was reappointed as the captain earlier this year. Abbas urged the PCB to take some action before the issue escalates further. "Yes, there have been rivalries in the Pakistan teams in the past but the board should take note of the rivalry between Babar and Shaheen fast. The faster the better because it will keep on escalating. "Rivalry is good, but it should not become serious, if it does, it harms the team," said Abbas. Abbas, former Pakistan player Mudassar Nazar and former Pakistan coach Dav Whatmore spoke at the conclave to celebrate the centenary episode of Cricket Predicta, the largest cricket live stats based show in Asia.

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

PTI ■ BENGALURU

He accepted the job with Htrepidation 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.

NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL, PATNAGARH
Ph. No.-06658-22247 e-mail- nac_ptg@yahoo.co.in
web-site- www.nacpatnagarh.in

C-689 Letter No...1882/ Dated: ...26/09/2024
1st Corrigendum
Financial BID

For providing smooth sanitation services, the Tender committee has decided that each bidder must quote his rate not less than 3.85% and not more than 7% on T & P and Contractor Profit only, unless bid shall be rejected. Also, wrong computation in finance bid will be liable for rejection.

For reference Estimate is enclosed.
Detaestimate for sweeping of streets, collection of garbage, cleaning of drains & lifting of garbage from Ward No.1 to 15 of Patnagarh NAC

Sl No	Details	Required Labour	Rate	No of Days	Cost (In Rs)
1	Sweeping of Road (Lane/by-lane) as per requirement, bush cutting and shifting of dead animals, transportation of solid waste. (Un-Skilled)	80	450.00	1	36,000.00
2	Labour (Semi-Skilled) Supervisor	4	500.00	1	2,000.00
3	Labour (Skilled) Driver	4	550.00	1	2,200.00
3	TOTAL	88			40,200.00
4	EPF (13%)				5226
5	ESI (3.25%)				1306.5
6	Tools & Plants and Contractor profit (5% + 5% = 10%)				4,020
7	Vehicle (Tractor) with driver along with fuel 4 nos. Tractor (Detained hours 8 hrs & working hours 6 hours) @ 352.55 per hours.			1	8581.20
8	GRAND TOTAL (Per Day)				59,333.70
9	Annual cost			365 Days	2,16,56,801.00

Executive Officer
NAC Patnagarh

OIPR-13102/11/0005/2425