

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



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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

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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

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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

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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

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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.



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 towards 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)

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 deserved."
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

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

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 the fans 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.

