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11 SPORTS



TOMATO PRICES LEAVE BITTER TASTE ON FESTIVE PLATES

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The price of tomato, a crucial kitchen staple, has skyrocketed to ₹100 per kg and in some colonies prices have touched ₹120 a kg. The surge in tomato prices is not the only concern for Delhi and NCR residents, prices of other vegetables including onion and potato have also increased. Onions are being sold at ₹80 per kg while potato prices range between ₹30 to 40 per kg. The retail rate of tomato was ₹50 per kg till the third week of September. This has increased the cost of a home-cooked vegetarian meal by up to 11 per cent in September. The average cost of a vegetarian meal was ₹31.3 in September. While vegetables account for about 37 per

cent of a vegetarian meal cost, pulses, which constitute 9 per cent, also saw a 14 per cent rise in prices last month. There are reports that the retail price of tomatoes, onions and potatoes across the country has almost doubled in a month. The reasons for the increase are said to be adverse weather conditions such as high humidity in producing states such as Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra, and crop loss due to prolonged monsoon. Traders attributed this to a supply shortage from Karnataka and Maharashtra as the second crop cultivation ended. The rates of tomatoes have also gone up in the major wholesale vegetable markets of Delhi, including Azadpur Mandi,

Ghazipur Mandi, and Okhla Sabzi Mandi. According to tomato traders at Azadpur Mandi, presently 30 to 35 trucks arrive daily now, as against 50 to 60 trucks per day. The wholesale market sells the tomatoes at ₹70-80 a kg and traders anticipate that the price might touch 150 a kg in the coming days. The wholesale price of onion was at ₹45 a kg, and Potatoes at ₹30 a kg. It will take at least five to six weeks or more for the supply to normalise. This is the third time since July when retail tomato prices have crossed ₹100 a kg in Delhi and NCR. Similar trends were seen in July and August this year, due to the supply disruption from the producing centres owing to rains.



Notably, the Ministry of Agriculture estimated an increase of tomato production by 4.38 percent to 21.32 million tonnes, driven by last year's price surge. As per Price Monitoring Division of the Department of Consumer Affairs, average price of tomato was at ₹90 a kg in Delhi on Monday. Similarly, onions were being sold at ₹58 a kg and potatoes at ₹40 a kg. In the past three months, the

wholesale price of tomatoes surged by 73.24 per cent. In a bid to address rising tomato prices, the National Cooperative Consumers Federation (NCCF) on Monday initiated a market intervention by directly procuring tomatoes from mandis and selling them at a subsidised rate of ₹65 per kilogram at 50 locations of Delhi-NCR. Consumer Affairs Secretary Nidhi Khare initiated the retail sale of tomatoes through mobile vans and NCCF retail shops at Krishi Bhawan. Other vegetables have also seen price increases. Beans are now selling for ₹120 a kg, Capsicum between ₹80 to ₹100 a kg, Bitter Gourd at ₹60 a kg, Bottle Gourd at ₹50 a kg, Cabbage at ₹80 a kg, Drumstick at ₹70 a kg, Cucumber

at ₹60 a kg, Brinjal at ₹60 a kg and elephant foot yam at ₹80 a kg. Coriander Leaves have prices ranging from ₹100 to ₹120 a kg. Rajeev Parmar, a Saket resident, said, "We have to reduce consumption to manage expenses." According to Ministry of Agriculture's estimates, onion production is likely to drop by 19.76 per cent to 24.24 million tonnes due to lower yields in key regions. Other vegetables such as brinjal, elephant foot yam, and capsicum may also see reduced output. Potato production is also set to decline by 5.13 per cent to 57.05 million tonnes. These drops could pose challenges in controlling prices of two essential items, which play a crucial role in food inflation.

RG Kar case not gangrape: CBI chargesheet suggests



A chart shows medical parameters of some junior doctors protesting against the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital rape and murder incident, in Kolkata. PTI

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The RG Kar Medical College and Hospital rape and murder case does not indicate gang-rape, the preliminary charge-sheet filed on Monday by the Central Bureau of Investigation suggests. Though other possibilities are not ruled out as there are still some missing links, "as of now Sanjoy Roy is the prime accused who perpetrated the crime," sources said. In the 45-page charge-sheet Roy has been quoted as telling his interrogators that he first strangled the victim because she was resisting and then raped without realising that she had died. "If that be so then he had raped the victim when she was dead," lawyers at Sealdah Court said. The charge-sheet was filed on the 58th day of the rape and murder taking place inside the

seminar hall of the chest medicine department of the RGKMCH. Roy was arrested a day after the body of the 31-year-old postgraduate trainee doctor was recovered at the place of crime on August 9. The incident had resulted in nationwide protests by the fraternity that are still continuing. Roy, a civic volunteer working with the Kolkata Police, was also subjected to a polygraph test. He reportedly told the investigating officials that he had gone to the fourth floor on the fateful morning where the lady doctor was sleeping during a break. A Bluetooth device found near the victim's body led to the arrest of Roy who was also captured in CCTV footage while he was going to the third floor of the hospital building. Claims made in the CBI charge-sheet notwithstanding, the general view of the doctors of the RGKMCH is that the way the victim was raped and the number of injuries she

sustained could not be the handiwork of a single person. Suspicion got stronger when the hospital authorities upon the orders of the then college Principal Sandip Ghosh started renovation in the area where the crime had taken place. Ghosh has since been arrested along with the officer in-charge of the local Tala Police Station which has jurisdiction over the area on charges of tampering of evidence. Apart from Roy, four persons have been arrested in the RG Kar rape and murder case, on charges of tampering evidence and carrying out a corruption racket inside the Health Department. Meanwhile, the junior doctor's indefinite fast in demand of justice for the victim entered its second day on Monday with the senior doctors too joining them in a symbolic fast. Apart from demanding justice for the victim, the doctors have placed a ten-point demand before the State government that includes centralised referral system for patients so as to save the harassment of shuttling between hospitals in search of beds, total CCTV coverage, adequate security deployment inside hospitals, restrooms and washrooms for the doctors, end of the "threat syndicate" perpetrated by doctors loyal to the ruling party and not least the removal of Principal Health Secretary NS Nigam from his post. Elsewhere a team of doctors from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences on Monday conducted the postmortem of the 11-year-old girl who was on Saturday evening raped and murdered at Mahishmari village in Joynagar block of South 24 Parganas.



Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Shivraj Singh Chouhan during a meeting with farmers. PTI

Will implement NRC in Jharkhand: Shivraj

PNS ■ RANCHI/NEW DELHI

Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan Centre on Monday said the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will implement the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Jharkhand if voted to power. Chouhan who announced NRC for the State accused the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha-led government of "patronising" Bangladeshi infiltrators. He claimed that 'mati' (land), 'beti' (daughter) and 'roti' (bread) in Jharkhand are in danger. "Infiltrators are coming to Jharkhand, marrying daughters here, purchasing land and increasing their influence in local bodies. This is very dangerous and it is ruining Jharkhand," he said. The BJP on Saturday released five key points of its manifesto for the assembly polls in Jharkhand, promising financial assistance of Rs 2,100 to women every month, five lakh jobs to youths, LPG cylinders at Rs 500 to every household and housing for all if the party came to power. Speaking about a proposed meeting with farmers' bodies in Delhi on Monday, he said, "I meet farmers and their organisations every week. I am meeting them today as well. We decide about their welfare after talking to them." Chouhan on Sunday attended the BJP's election committee meeting in Ranchi where strategies for the upcoming assembly polls were discussed.

"The BJP is not concerned about coming to power only. In Jharkhand 'maati', 'beti', 'roti' are in danger because of infiltration. It is our pledge to protect them." Union Agriculture minister said at Ranchi's Birsamunda Airport while leaving for Delhi. Chouhan, who is also election in-charge for Jharkhand, alleged there has been infiltration from foreign land and the Hemant Soren-led government patronising them by making their Aadhaar and voter identity cards. "Infiltrators are coming to Jharkhand, marrying daughters here, purchasing land and increasing their influence in local bodies. This is very dangerous and it is ruining Jharkhand," he said. The National Register of Citizens (NRC) has been created to contain names of all genuine Indian citizens, and at present, only Assam has such a register. The NRC in Assam is a list of Indian citizens living in the state. The citizens' register sets out to identify foreign nationals in the state that borders Bangladesh. The Centre has been planning to exercise NRC to other states as well. Nagaland is already creating a similar database known as the Register of Indigenous Inhabitants. The Centre is also planning to create a National Population Register (NPR), which will contain demographic and biometric details of citizens.

No China-made decorations for Diwali: Ram Janmabhoomi trust

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra has taken a step toward supporting the "Make in India" initiative by banning the use of Chinese decorative items, including lights, for this year's Diwali celebrations at the Ram Janmabhoomi campus and proposed custom designed outfit for Ram Lalla by fashion designer Manish Malhotra. "The Trust will make all arrangements for the Diwali celebrations, ensuring that no Chinese items, including lights, are used on the campus," announced Champat Rai, general secretary of the Trust. In keeping with this vision, the Diwali festivities at the Ram Mandir will focus on promoting local artisans and traditional crafts. This celebration, the first since the grand opening of the temple on January 22, 2024, will highlight India's rich cultural heritage. The temple will be illuminated with two lakh diyas, handcrafted by local artisans, to honour India's traditional craftsmanship. The Trust has carefully planned the diya placements to preserve the beauty of the temple. A standout feature of this year's celebrations is

the custom-designed outfits for Ram Lalla and his brothers, created by renowned Indian fashion designer Manish Malhotra. Known for his intricate craftsmanship and blend of tradition and modernity, Malhotra's designs will add a special charm to the deity's adornment. "Manish Malhotra is preparing these special outfits for the deities, aligning with the 'Make in India' spirit of the celebrations," said a Trust member. The festivities will also include special offerings and four artists throughout the day. Acharya Satyendra Das, the head priest, will lead the Vedic rituals, while the temple complex will be decorated with locally sourced flowers and traditional decorations, further emphasizing the focus on Indian artisanship. The Uttar Pradesh tourism department is contributing to the celebrations by lighting diyas along the Sarayu River and organising cultural events to recreate the joyous return of Lord Rama to Ayodhya. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has also set an ambitious goal of lighting 25 lakh diyas during the Deepotsav, aiming to set a new Guinness World Record. **Continued on page 2**

HEALING TOUCH



Prime Minister Narendra Modi shakes hands with Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu prior to a meeting at Hyderabad House. Photo: Ranjan Dimri/The Pioneer



BY RAJESH KUMAR

New Rohtak Road, one of the most densely populated areas connecting Mundka and Tikri Border is arguably the worst road in the National Capital. It has huge traffic jams round the clock and is also dangerous for two wheeler commuters due to potholes and broken roads. A major arterial road that links north, northwest, west Delhi to Central and New Delhi, heavy traffic and consequent snarls are common here with stoppage sometimes extending over two to three hours. Addressing a press conference along with Aam Aadmi Party national convener and former chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, Delhi Chief Minister Atishi on Monday admitted that New Rohtak Road is the worst road in the capital city. "One of the most problematic roads identified during the inspection is New Rohtak Road, which passes through Nangloi and Mundka, leading to Tikri Border. This

New Rohtak Road is the worst: Chief Minister Atishi

Traffic jams, potholes, broken patches make it dangerous for two wheeler commuters

road is possibly the worst in Delhi today. The population in its surrounding unauthorised colonies has increased and the drainage system needs upgrading," Atishi said, adding "work on the new drain and road will begin within four weeks." In this traffic jams series, we have been highlighting that poor traffic management, and broken roads lead to traffic jams round the clock in the national capital. Be it Wazirabad road to Vikas Marg, Mehrauli Badarpur road to New Rohtak Road and all ISBT's, 1 and surroundings of metro stations, commuters face traffic jams on a daily basis. Real time data from TomTom showed that it took 25 minutes to cover 10 kilometres at 1 pm. Experts say poor planning, broken roads, high volume of traffic and illegal parking are reasons for worst jams, making Delhi one of the busiest cities when it comes to daily commutes.



The Delhi government's Public Works Department (PWD) manages a road network of 1,400 km, with a total lane length of 7,000 km. The inspection identified 6,671 potholes and over 230 km of road requiring re-carpeting and strengthening. "As many as 2,53,000 sq m of road patches have been identified for repair, and 39,500 sq m of patchwork was completed within the last week," the CM added. The Pioneer has been highlighting in its traffic jams series that poor and broken roads lead to traffic jams round the clock in the national capital. Sharing details of pathetic roads, CM Atishi said the party has identified 89 damaged PWD (Public Works Department) roads for strengthening. She said 74 tenders have already been floated for this. The CM added that AAP leaders identified a total of 6,671 potholes during a series of inspections, and 3,454 of the patches have already been filled. This is an indication that

broken roads cause traffic jams. Meanwhile, residents of New Rohtak Road say they are now used to round-the-clock traffic jams. Traffic bound to Central and New Delhi from areas like Punjabi Bagh, Model Town, Pitampur to Punjabi Bagh, Rohini and Najafgarh use this road during morning peak hours. Following this the 'shopping crowd' descends on Karol Bagh and other major markets. In the evening home bound traffic chokes the stretch. After 9.30 pm, trucks are allowed to pass, so there are hardly any quiet moments along this stretch. Using Zebra crossings, staying behind stop lines at red lights, and usage of pavements seem to be alien concepts here. Pedestrians walk on the traffic carriageway, and two wheelers zoom on the pavements. Many commuters say they avoid the stretch even if it means taking a long detour. Residentals enclaves on both sides of the road also generate substantial pedestrian traffic.

Zomato delivery agent mowed down by speeding vehicle in Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 27-year-old Zomato delivery agent died after he was mowed down by a speeding vehicle while crossing a road on Outer Ring Road in south-west Delhi early Monday. According to the police on Monday, the delivery agent has been identified as Harendra, a resident of RK Puram's Sector-1, who was working with online food delivery app Zomato. DCP (South West) Surendra Choudhary said, "On Monday at about 2:45 am, a PCR call regarding an accident on Outer Ring at an underpass foot bridge near DDA Flats Gate in Munirka was received. The police team reached there and found that a person who was crossing the road was hit by an unknown vehicle and ran away from the spot." Police officials said initial probe suggested that the accident took place when Harendra parked his motorcycle and was crossing the



road on foot. He was hit by a vehicle, whose driver immediately fled the spot. "The officer said an FIR has been lodged in the matter at Kishangarh Police Station and postmortem of the body is being conducted. A case under section 281(1) (Rash driving or riding on a public way) and 106(1) (Causing death by negligence) of BNS at Kishangarh police station has been registered. Post mortem of the deceased is being conducted. The injured man was rushed to Safdarjung Hospital, where he

DPCC highlights faecal contamination hitting all time high in Yamuna this September

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) in its a recent report highlighted faecal contamination in the Yamuna river hit an all-time high for the month of September. Levels of faecal coliform bacteria -- a key indicator of untreated sewage -- surged to 4,900,000 most probable number (MPN) per 100 millilitres, which is 1,960 times the standard of 2,500 units and 9,800 times the desired limit of 500 units, according to a report. This is the highest recorded since February 2022, when faecal coliform levels were 6,300,000 units, as measured by the Agra Canal station, it added. The fecal level in the river was assessed by DPCC for Sept, a report of which was released on Oct 4, with sampled collected on Sept 4. The report comes at a time when certain stretches of the river are already showing heavy frothing, a visible proof of pollution when mixed pollutants like surfactants and phosphates are churned out reveal



their presence. DPCC doesn't test these parameters. Further, pollution indicators for faecal coliform remained "disturbingly" high, despite a significant boost in water flow from monsoon rains, which helped slightly improve dissolved oxygen (DO) and biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) levels, the report said. While DO measures oxygen dissolved in water, BOD refers to oxygen amounts required to break down organic matter. The national capital recorded nearly 1,030 millimetres of rainfall during the 2024 monsoon season, according to the India Meteorological Department. The report also showed that pollution levels intensified as the river flowed through the city. At Palla, where the river enters Delhi, faecal coliform levels remained within safe limits at 1,600 units, while DO and BOD were recorded at eight milligrams per litre and three milligrams per litre, respectively," it said. "However, as the Yamuna moved further downstream to the ISBT bridge (Kashmere Gate), faecal coliform levels shot up to 240,000 units, with BOD at 23 milligrams per litre -- both far beyond permissible levels," the report said.

Rai conducts surprise inspections at construction sites in Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI



Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Monday conducted a surprise inspection of various construction sites under the anti-dust campaign and found irregularities in dust control sites at RML Hospital and Lady Hardinge Road. According to the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) was directed to impose fines of Rs 5 lakh on both sites, with additional daily penalties if satisfactory responses are not provided. Environment Minister Gopal Rai said that an anti-dust campaign is being launched today to control dust at construction sites in Delhi. After the inspection, Rai stated, "Environmental rules are not being properly followed at the construction site. Under the anti-dust campaign, we inspected the construction site of the new block at RML Hospital today and found that Rama Civil Construction Company, responsible for the construction, is not strictly adhering to the 14 dust control rules. The DPCC has been instructed to issue a notice and impose a fine of Rs 5 lakh on the company." He added, "If they do not begin to strictly follow the 14 rules at the construction site, a daily challan will be issued against them." He further informed that during the inspection at Godrej's construction site on Lady Hardinge Road, violations of the 14 dust control rules were found.

Two warring Senas to make most of Dussehra rallies ahead of Maharashtra Assembly polls

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The two warring factions of the Shiv Sena, led by chief minister Eknath Shinde and Uddhav Thackeray respectively, are preparing themselves to make the most of their annual Dussehra rallies to take on each other ahead of the Maharashtra Assembly polls. This is the third consecutive year in the 58-year-long history of Shiv Sena, when the two rival Sena factions are holding independent Dussehra rallies. While Uddhav Thackeray's Dussehra rally will take place on the Vijayadashami day at the historic Shivaji Park at Dadar in north-central Mumbai where the Shiv Sena headed by late Bal Thackeray way back in 1966, Shinde is organising Vijayadashami rally at the MMRDA ground at the Bandra-Kurla Complex (BKC) which is located in the neighbourhood of Thackerays' residence "Matoshri" at Bandra. Billed as massive shows of



strength being put up by the Shinde and Thackeray Senas ahead of the Maharashtra Assembly polls to be held in November end or early December this year, the two rallies are being seen as a major political showdown between the two warring parties ever since the rebel Shinde Sena toppled the MVA government led by Uddhav and formed its government in alliance with the BJP on June 30 2022. It may be recalled that after the

Both the rival factions -- which have been claiming that they are carrying with them the legacy of late Balasagev Thackeray who died of a cardio-respiratory arrest on November 17, 2012 -- have gone to town saying that their rallies will attract large crowds. Since the Shiv Sena was founded at a rally held at Shivaji Park way back in 1966 and till the time he was alive, Balasaheb addressed annual Dussehra rallies at the same ground -- except on two occasions -- in 2006 when because of heavy rains it was not possible and in 2009 because of the State Assembly polls. A day after Balasaheb's death in 2012, his last rites were performed at Shivaji Park. After his father's death, Uddhav had been addressing the annual Dussehra rallies at Shivaji Park. Only in the Covid-affected year of 2020, Uddhav addressed the rally virtually, while in 2021 the rally was held at the Shanmukhananda Hall at King's Circle.

Urban apathy significantly impacted overall voter turnout in Haryana: EC report

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Even as Haryana recorded 67.9 per cent polling across 90 assembly constituencies, the disturbing trend of urban apathy, however, continues to significantly impact overall state voter turnout, Election Commission (EC) said here on Monday. Sharing details, it said many urban constituencies in the state recorded turnout rates 10% below the state average. The EC also said despite awareness campaigns to motivate voters the participation continues to be subpar. As per the Election Commission's data, Gurugram, Faridabad, Panchkula, Ballabhgarh, Sonapat, Karnal and Badshahpur are among those assembly areas which recorded lowest voters turnout. Despite the various steps taken by the local administration to address urban voter apathy, including setting up of special polling booths in high-



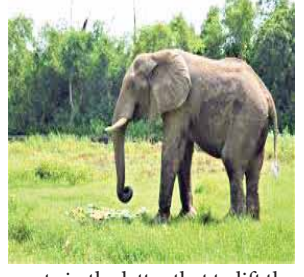
rise societies and deployment of NSS cadets to help senior citizens and PwD electors, Gurugram district, comprising four Assembly constituencies, recorded 51.81 per cent, finishing marginally ahead of neighbouring Faridabad which recorded 53.74 per cent. Haryana recorded 67.90 per cent turnout, which beats the Lok Sabha 2024 voter turnout of 64.8 per cent in the State by over three percentage points. Panchkula 59.37 per cent, Ballabhgarh 53.27 per cent, Sonapat 57.67 per cent, Karnal 56.37 per cent and Badshahpur 54.26 per cent turnout.

visit in Maharashtra, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Rajiv Kumar had again emphasised on all DEOs and MCs to work on improving voter turnout, especially in urban areas. The Commission, while expressing concerns over the discernible lower turnout in urban areas in Haryana and in J&K, has resolved to further strengthen measures and innovative outreach to deal with urban apathy in the upcoming elections in predominantly urban states like Maharashtra. As regards the overall polling percentage in Haryana, the EC said a voter turnout of 67.9% was recorded across the 90 constituencies. It reflected significantly higher voter response compared to last Lok Sabha elections which recorded 64.8% voting in the state. The turnout nearly touches the figures of Assembly Elections in 2019, which stood at 68.3%. Voters across rural areas turned up at polling stations with greater vigour. Recently, during the review

Global alliance suspends membership of Delhi's National Zoological Park

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A global alliance of zoos and aquariums on Monday suspended the membership of Delhi's National Zoological Park due to concerns over the welfare of an African elephant, Shankar, who was reportedly kept in chains. Delhi Zoo Director Sanjeet Kumar said action deemed proper will be taken and a compliance report sent after examining the letter. "Currently Shankar is moving freely in its enclosure without any chains," he said. Zimbabwe had gifted the elephant to the then President of India Shankar Dayal Sharma in 1996. It was brought to India and kept in the Delhi zoo. Shankar has been alone after its companion, another African elephant named Bambai, died in 2005. In a letter to Kumar and the Central Zoo Authority under the Union environment ministry, the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) said it had previously requested information from them regarding the elephant's welfare and received replies on May 24 and July 24. "Following a thorough review of this case, the WAZA Council has voted to immediately suspend the WAZA membership of the National Zoological Park, New Delhi," said the letter which was accessed by PTI. CZA Member Secretary Sanjay Shukla told PTI that Botswana has agreed to provide one African female elephant which will be paired with Shankar. "Shankar and his (new) companion will be kept at the Delhi zoo as per global standards," he said. WAZA President Karen Fifield



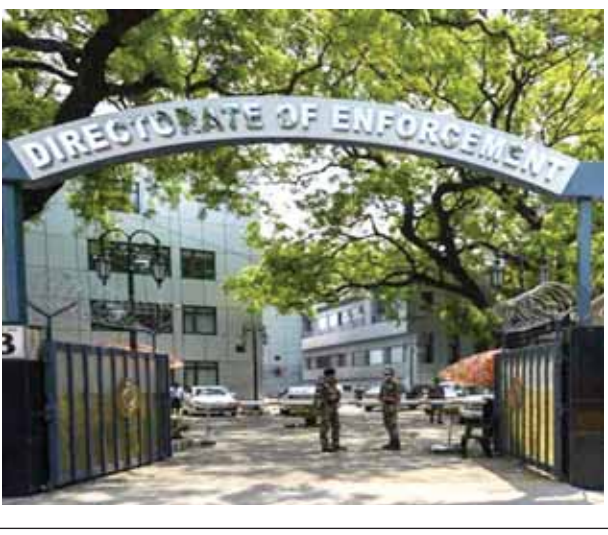
wrote in the letter that to lift the suspension, the zoo must create a plan within six months to either relocate Shankar to a new facility or comprehensively address all concerns regarding his management and care. This plan must be approved by WAZA and show significant improvement in Shankar's welfare, the letter said. If relocation is chosen, Shankar should be trained for the move using positive reinforcement techniques to minimise stress and ensure a smooth transition, WAZA said. The letter warned that the zoo's membership will be permanently terminated if it does not have a WAZA-approved plan in place to relocate Shankar or address the concerns by April 7, 2025. During the suspension, the zoo will lose all WAZA membership rights and benefits, such as attending conferences and participating in committees. The letter said that the zoo has the option to appeal this decision by writing to the WAZA president within 60 days, but the suspension will remain in place during the appeal process. Founded in 1935, WAZA promotes high standards of welfare of animals and their habitats around the world. Nearly 400 leading institutions and organisations are its members.

Land fraud case: ED conducts raids on AAP RS MPs home

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) conducted raids on Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Rajya Sabha MP Sanjeev Arora's home on Monday in connection with a money laundering case linked to a land fraud. The raids were conducted at several locations linked to Arora in Punjab's Jalandhar district under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) and are linked to a land fraud case according to sources. The allegations against Arora include transferring land to his company in a deceitful

manner. Reacting to the news, the AAP leader in a post on X said, "I am a law-abiding citizen, am not sure about the reason for the search operation, will cooperate fully with agencies and make sure all their queries are answered." Addressing a press conference, senior AAP leader and former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia condemned the raid, calling it politically motivated and part of a larger strategy by the BJP to weaken AAP. "This raid is not about investigating corruption. It is happening simply because Sanjeev Arora is an MP from AAP and



member of Arvind Kejriwal's team. Unable to defeat us in elections, they are now trying to trap our leaders using the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)," he stated. He added that the reason to do is simple. "Despite incessant efforts, PM Modi has failed to break Arvind Kejriwal or his team. After arresting Satyendra Jain, me, Vijay Nair, Sanjay Singh, and then even Arvind Kejriwal, he couldn't break AAP. We are out of jail!" He pointed out that the recent raid coincided with the exit polls in Haryana, stating that the BJP's grip on power is slipping. "As soon as the Haryana

exit polls came out, where they can see another state going out of their hands, they are targeting the opposition again," Sisodia alleged. Reacting to the raid on party MP, senior AAP leader Sanjay Singh remarked that his only "crime" is being an AAP MP which is why he is being persecuted politically. "PM Modi has fallen victim to a serious disease. The name of this disease is 'Nafrazi Bimari' (disease of hatred), and it is incurable. PM Modi is so filled with hatred and contempt towards the AAP and Arvind Kejriwal that he has no interest in addressing the real issues of the country," he added.

Delhi Police's Crime Branch dismantles inter-state auto-lifting syndicate, 13 held

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police's Crime Branch claimed to dismantle an inter-state auto-lifting syndicate with the arrest of 13 criminals, involved in selling stolen cars through CARS24 and CarDekho online companies, and recovering 20 luxury vehicles. According to the police on Monday, the gang, which was led by a mastermind identified as 42 year old Anwar Qureshi, used sophisticated tactics to steal, tamper, and sell high-end cars via online portals like CarDekho and CARS24. Special Commissioner of Police (Crime) Devesh Chandra Srivastava said, "Crime Branch busted gang of auto lifters and stolen car receivers involved in selling stolen cars through CARS24 and CarDekho companies, by preparing fake documents, opening bank



accounts in fake names and tampering the engine and chassis numbers." Elaborating on the crime, he said that the syndicate searched online car selling portals for the similar and genuine same model and same colour cars, which were identical to stolen cars. "They obtained the details of the genuine registered owner through an open-source information portal and other sources. Thereafter, they used to prepare fake identification documents in the name of the genuine owner, with a photograph of one of themselves and further open bank accounts in his name (genuine owners). They also used to prepare fake RC and engrave the engine / chassis of genuine cars accordingly," he added. When the stolen vehicles were made ready to be sold, one of

these accused used to approach CARS24/CarDekho to sell the stolen car. "As this fake registration number was the same as the genuine registration number, there will be no record of this vehicle as 'stolen vehicle'," he stated. "Similarly, working on another part of the similar modus operandi, the syndicate 'KING-PIN' accused Puru Singh during interrogation, disclosed that he along with other accused are involved in sale-purchase of stolen vehicles," Srivastava said. His associate Jayant Kumar Jena was also apprehended along with him while attempting to sell a stolen car using falsified paperwork. "Former employees of CARS24, Kundan Giri and Brajesh Kumar, facilitated the inspections and sales of these vehicles, leveraging their industry connections," Special CP said.

No China-made...

From page 1

However, as the city prepares for Diwali, the Ayodhya Ramleela has already made headlines, breaking viewership records with an astounding 41 crore people tuning in online within the first three days. The Ramleela, performed by film actors and broadcast live on Doordarshan and multiple online platforms, is available in 26 languages across 40 countries. This year's online viewership has already surpassed last year's record of 40 crore viewers, and it is anticipated to reach 50 crore by the end of the event. Subhash Malik, chairman of the Ramleela committee, expressed his joy over the massive response. "The numbers speak for themselves. Each year, we see a rise in viewers, and this time the response has been phenomenal," Malik said. So far, 22 crore people have watched the event on Doordarshan, 17 crore on

YouTube, and 2 crore through other platforms. Director Shubham Malik noted that Ramleela is being broadcast live daily from 7 pm to 10 pm on over 5,000 YouTube channels and 70 satellite channels, reaching audiences across countries like the USA, Australia, Sri Lanka, and Russia. Viewers are enjoying the Ramayana in various languages, including Hindi, Tamil, Malayalam, Bengali, and Punjabi. Notable actors such as Bindu Dara Singh, Raza Murad, and Manish Pal are performing key roles, while actresses like Bhagya Shri and Sheeba add depth to the production. Members of Parliament, Manoj Tiwari and Ravi Kishan are also among the star-studded cast, adding excitement to the live event. Padma Shri awardee Malini Awasthi is playing the role of Shabri, bringing another layer of cultural richness to the grand production.



Artists perform during the Ramlila of Nav Dharmik Ramleela



Worker final preparation the eve of Durga Puja festival at Chhitaranjan Park Kaliwada Durga Puja

Kejriwal Government destroyed roads, sewers: Sachdeva Atishi arrives at official CM residence

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva on Monday came down heavily on Chief Minister Atishi saying that she holds no political or administrative authority, and AAP Convenor Arvind Kejriwal is openly showing that it is his remote control government. Earlier AAP supremo accused the BJP for stalling all projects and linked this to his arrest. "After I was arrested, BJP troubled Delhiites, halting all works of AAP government including road repairs," said Kejriwal. He alleged that road repairs have been stopped and old age pensions have been halted. Many other projects have also been paused, and several home guard personnel and others have had their salaries cut, he claimed.

Reacting to Kejriwal and Atishi's press conference, Sachdeva accused the AAP convenor saying he has ruined Delhi's roads and sewer system over the past ten years with no maintenance. When the situation worsened, he resigned to escape responsibility, placing the blame on Ms. Atishi. "Now, Kejriwal is having Atishi claim that the roads were damaged during this monsoon, but the truth is that it is the result of



10 years of neglect," he said. Delhi BJP president alleged that Kejriwal has violated constitutional and administrative norms by having the road inspection report and repair schedule announced from the AAP office instead of the Secretariat.

"By linking the road repair schedule with the elections and announcing it from the party office, Arvind Kejriwal has made it clear that the Atishi government is a remote control government. It would have been better if Kejriwal accepted that his government

destroyed the roads and the Jal Board sewer system, and maybe now Atishi Marlena's government will fix it," Sachdeva claimed.

In a scathing attack, South Delhi MP Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said the Kejriwal government has accepted their failure by promising to repair Delhi roads before the elections. Bidhuri said that Kejriwal was in jail for six months but the problems of Delhi are the result of 10 years of inaction. "They have time to address five to 10 press conferences every day but they do not have time to address the problem of the people of Delhi," Bidhuri added.

Earlier in the morning, addressing a press conference at the party headquarters along with Delhi Chief Minister Atishi, Kejriwal said, "Now I have come out of jail. I want to assure everyone that we are now paying attention to all the pending work and problems of the people in Delhi. It is our duty to solve your problems. I have come to know that there is a problem with medicines in hospitals and Mohalla Clinics." He assured them that in the last nine years, AAP government has not let the people face any kind of trouble. "Be it roads, hospitals or electricity. We tried to provide every kind

of facility to the people of Delhi. The kind of facilities that the people of Delhi have been getting for the last ten years are not available anywhere else in the country," Kejriwal said.

Blaming BJP for allegedly putting their ministers in jail and tried to stall the work in Delhi, they are doing everything that they can, and the government is standing tall. "Now we have started all those works. Whatever work was stopped, I have asked CM Atishi to start it and our government will start all those works. We will try to solve the problems faced by the people," affirmed Kejriwal.

Expressing satisfaction at the speed of the repair work, Kejriwal shared, "I am happy that all the MLAs, leaders and ministers of our party have come out on the roads day and night and inspected them. Which road is how bad and where, what work needs to be done, a report has been prepared of all of them. The work of repairing and re-carpeting has also started."

In a post on X, Atishi said, "All the remaining work will be completed by 31 October. Also, more than half of the 6671 potholes have been filled, the rest will also be repaired soon."

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Atishi on Monday held a meeting with the staff member as she arrived at the official residence at 6, Flagstaff Road bungalow, days after her predecessor Arvind Kejriwal vacated it and moved to a new address in Lutyens' Delhi. Earlier, the AAP shared a video of her belongings being shifted in a tempo to the Flagstaff Road bungalow. The shifting of the chief minister's personal effects and other belongings is underway, they said. The video was shared in response to the BJP leader and Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Vijendra Gupta and Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva, who shared a letter written by the PWD to the Special Secretary of the Chief Minister's Office Pravesh Ranjan Jha, stating that it is surprising that Arvind Kejriwal never vacated the infamous Sheesh Mahal bungalow at 6 Flagstaff Road, which has become a symbol of his corruption.

Atishi was earlier allotted the AB-17 bungalow on Mathura Road after she was appointed a minister in the Kejriwal government last year. The AAP on Friday claimed that Kejriwal had moved to AAP MP Ashok Mittal's bungalow on



Ferozeshah road near Mandi House in the Lutyens' zone. Criticising the Kejriwal, Delhi BJP President challenged him to hand over the custody of the 'Sheesh Mahal' bungalow to the Secretary of Public Works Department (PWD) if he has nothing to hide. In a letter, it is stated, "It is brought to your attention that the keys of the house at 6, Flag Staff Road handed over to PWD were taken back after some time are yet to be handed over to PWD to complete the process of handing over, even after the brief visit at the house on Sunday today afternoon."

"As you are aware, some vigilance cases pertaining to the construction of the residence at 6, Flag Staff Road are underway. It is therefore necessary on the part of PWD to undertake an inspection and a detailed stock of inventories inside the house prior to making fresh allotment of the house," it added.

The Delhi BJP chief said, "Four days ago, we all witnessed the drama of Arvind Kejriwal leaving the bungalow holding his parents' hands, but as per government rules, Arvind Kejriwal still retains possession of the Sheesh Mahal to this day." He claimed that as per protocol, whenever a government bungalow is vacated, an inventory is made, and the condition of the bungalow is documented through videography, but none of this was done here.

While Gupta addressing a press conference, said in reality, Kejriwal did not vacate his bungalow. For show, he sent some belongings in two small trucks to his new residence. Most of his belongings are still in the "Sheesh Mahal," and Kejriwal still retains possession of it, along with the keys.

Will stay put at Ladakh Bhawan, says Wangchuk

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Social activist Sonam Wangchuk on Monday said he and his supporters will stay put at the Ladakh Bhawan till the authorities tell them when they will be able to meet country's top leadership. Wangchuk and his supporters began their indefinite fast at the Ladakh Bhawan on Sunday.

He said the protesters, who are demanding the inclusion of Ladakh in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, are not asking for anything unusual and are here to remind the ruling BJP of its poll promise.

The Sixth Schedule pertains to the administration of tribal areas in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram as 'autonomous districts and autonomous regions'.

"We are going to sit here till we get a reply on when we will be able to meet our leaders. We walked for 30-32 days, we deserve to get a meeting at least," Wangchuk said.

The people of Ladakh had welcomed the government's decision to make it a union territory because they were promised a legislature and



inclusion in the Sixth Schedule, the climate activist said. "We are not asking for anything unusual, we are here to remind the BJP of the promise it made in its manifestos," he said.

Wangchuk and his supporters marched to Delhi from Leh to press their demands and were detained at the capital's Singhu border on September 30. The 'Delhi Chalo Padyatra' is being spearheaded by the Leh Apex Body (LAB).

The protesters were released by Delhi Police on the night of October 2. On Sunday, Wangchuk stepped out of the Ladakh Bhawan around 4 pm and announced that he was

New course for inclusion of disabled launched at GGSIPU

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A new Certificate course titled, "Advancing Disability Inclusion Practices: Communication, Accessibility, and Legislation" was launched on Monday by University Inclusion & Accessibility Cell (UIAC) of Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University (GGSIPU).

This course is designed to equip participants with the necessary tools and knowledge to create and lead disability-inclusive environments. The course was launched at the two-day seminar on "Strengthening disability inclusion and Advancing Accessibility", which was organized by UIAC UTTHAN to sensitize the students on inclusion of persons with disability. Speaking on the occasion, Dr Kamal Pathak, Registrar of GGSIPU emphasized the need for fostering a culture of accessibility and empowerment of students with disability. He said, "We need to advocate for robust policies with a focus on inclusive environment. It is a collective endeavour and social responsibility to maintaining equality in the society. The PWD should be engaged in decision making exercises too".



In her welcome address, Prof Shalini Garg, Program Director and Chairperson of UIAC UTTHAN said accessibility is not a privilege but a right of an individual. Technology, education and policy play a crucial role to achieve inclusion. She stressed on the need for fostering inclusion and accessibility. The distinguished speakers included Vaishnavi Ganesh, Specialist: Disability Inclusion from v-shesh; Fahad Lambate, Associate Accessibility Director from BarrierBreak; Prof (Dr) Yukti Sharma, Joint Director Institute of Lifelong Learning, Department of Education, University of Delhi; and Dr Hemlata, Deputy Director, National Centre for Disability Studies from IGNOU Delhi.

The cover page of a Resource Kit on Advancing Disability Inclusion Practices: Communication, Accessibility, and Legislation was released. This Resource Kit is a Preliminary and Foundational overview designed to sensitize individuals, organizations, and institutions with the knowledge and tools necessary to promote disability inclusion across various sectors.

UIAC Inclusion & Accessibility E-Magazine (Biannual) was also launched on the occasion. This edition continues to share inspiring stories, research, and insights into the lived experiences of persons with disabilities, and hopefully serve as a beacon for change and awareness.

Kailash Gahlot visits Anganwadi centres in city



Delhi's Women and Child Development (WCD) Minister Kailash Gahlot on Monday visited Anganwadi centers in the Kusumpur Pahari area of New Delhi district to review the services provided under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS). Gahlot assessed the quality of Take-Home Ration (THR), Hot Cooked Meals (HCM), and Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) activities under ICDS, formerly known as Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan during his visit.

Speaking about the visit, Gahlot said, "Ensuring the health, nutrition, and early education of children is critical to their overall development. I am happy to see the dedication of the Anganwadi workers in providing quality services to our beneficiaries. We will continue to monitor and improve these services to ensure every child receives proper care, nutrition, and education during their formative years."

In addition to reviewing the services, he inspected the usage of the Poshan Tracker App (PTA) to ensure effective monitoring and tracking of beneficiaries and checked the maintenance of records at the centers.

The senior AAP leader also conducted home visits and directly interacted with families, gaining valuable insights into their experiences with the services provided by the Anganwadi centers.

LG flags city Government's inaction and mismanagement at various localities

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Governor (LG) Vinai Kumar Saxena on Monday flagged Delhi government's inaction and mismanagement of various localities in South Delhi's Rangpuri, Aya Nagar and Jaunpur and said lakhs of people there are deprived of even basic amenities. A statement issued by him in this regard said "Last evening, during an inspection and visit to South Delhi's Rangpuri, Aya Nagar and Jaunpur area at the repeated requests of local residents, the appalling example of the Delhi government's inaction and mismanagement once again came to

the fore. A mesh of dangerously hanging power cables, women with plastic pipes in their hands for getting drinking water, open manholes, piles of garbage and sewage overflowing on the streets narrated the miserable living condition in the area, which is unforgivable." It said "Lakhs of people living in these areas are deprived of even basic amenities. There are encroachments and heaps of garbage in the narrow lanes, potholes are filled with drain and sewer water and the mesh of plastic pipes is haphazardly scattered on the streets. Ironically facilities like sewage, drinking water and roads do not exist in this part of the



National Capital today. Waterlogging in a densely populated area like Rangpuri due to non-drainage of water, has forced



people to live amid stench, foul smell and diseases. The entire area is riddled with illegal pipes, as the Delhi Jal Board is

yet to lay permanent water lines. The roads are in a bad shape and the sewage problem is making life even more difficult for the people," Saxena said.

"The utter mismanagement that was seen here was almost similar to those seen during my earlier visits to North-East Delhi and North-West Delhi. Due to the government's neglect for 10 years, a large population of Delhi is forced to live hellish life. Had the government worked sincerely for even two years, out of these 10 years, there would not have been such misery. Pictures of the area tell a tale of misery. During the inspec-

tion, thousands of people gathered from the respective areas, expressing their stories of anger, compulsion, and helplessness. I also advised the officials to improve the situation at the earliest," the statement said.

"I had also cautioned and advised the former Chief Minister of this government, Arvind Kejriwal, on many occasions to redress the grievances of the AntyodayaSamaj, but he did not even consider it appropriate to take cognizance, let alone act over it. I again draw the attention of the incumbent Hon'ble Chief Minister to this and request her to focus at least now on governance," the LG said.

Amit Shah celebrates PM Modi's 23 years of political journey

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

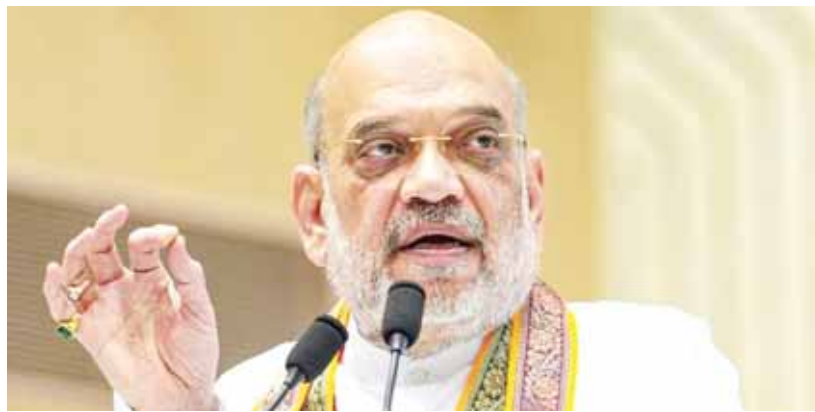
Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Monday that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's long journey of public service is a symbol of 'unique dedication' of how a person can devote his entire life to national interest and welfare of the people.

As Modi completed 23 years in public life, first as chief minister of Gujarat and then as prime minister, Shah said the long journey is a living inspiration for those who are in public life.

Today Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi ji has completed 23 years in his public life as Chief Minister and Prime Minister.

This 23-year long journey of public service is a symbol of the unique dedication of how a person can devote his entire life to the national interest and welfare of people," he said in a post on 'X' in Hindi.

The home minister, who has been a constant companion of Modi in his political journey, said it was a matter of good fortune for him that he has been a



witness to this long public life of Modi. "Modi showed how to carry out the work for the welfare of the poor, country's development, security and strengthen India's global identity at the same time," he said. Instead of looking at the problems in pieces, Modi presented the vision of holistic solution to the country, Shah said.

"I congratulate Modi, the nation

builder, who is dedicated to the service of the nation and its people for 23 years uninterrupted, without getting tired, without caring for himself," he said. Modi took oath as the chief minister of Gujarat for the first time on October 7, 2001 and continued in that post for 13 years before becoming the prime minister in 2014. He has taken charge as prime minister for the third consecutive term in June this year.

India, Maldives strengthen ties

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Strengthening their bilateral ties, India and the Maldives on Monday inked a currency swap agreement to the tune of USD 400 million, a move that would help the archipelago nation overcome foreign exchange reserve issues. Prime Minister Modi described India as the "first responder" for Maldives, in times of crisis - from the pandemic to drinking water shortage. Prime Minister Modi and visiting Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu also launched Rupy card in the Maldives, inaugurated the new runway at the Hanimaadhoo International airport and agreed to further strengthen bilateral relations that had hit a rocky patch last year. Muizzu, who is on a four-day state visit, held talks with Prime Minister Modi at the Hyderabad House here. After the talks, India also handed over 700 social housing units to the Maldives built under the EXIM Bank's buyer's credit facilities.



"Today, we have inaugurated the redeveloped Hanimaadhoo Airport. Now, the Greater Male Connectivity Project will also be expedited. We will also support the development of a new commercial port in Thilafushi," Modi told reporters here with Muizzu by his side. Modi said India and Maldives have decided to initiate discussion on the Free Trade Agreement to further strengthen economic ties. The prime minister described Maldives as a "close friend" which had an important position in India's neighbourhood policy and SAGAR vision. "India has always fulfilled the

responsibilities of a neighbour. Today, we have taken up the vision of a comprehensive economic and maritime security partnership to give our mutual cooperation a strategic direction," Modi said. Earlier, Muizzu was accorded a ceremonial welcome at the Rashtrapati Bhawan by President Droupadi Murmu. Prime Minister Modi was also present on the occasion. Muizzu was given a tri-services guard of honour before he drove down the Rajghat to offer his respects at the memorial to Mahatma Gandhi. The ties between India and the Maldives came under severe strain since Muizzu, known for his pro-China leanings, took charge of the top office in November. Muizzu won the presidential election last year on the 'India out' campaign and asked New Delhi to withdraw its military personnel posted in the archipelago nation by May this year. The bilateral ties also hit a rocky patch when Maldivian

ministers were critical of Modi. However, Muizzu has since toned down his anti-India stance and even sacked ministers who were critical of the Indian prime minister. As the Maldives was grappling with a serious economic downturn, India has decided to extend vital budgetary support to the Maldives government with the rollover of a USD 50 million Treasury Bill for another year. Muizzu said, "The Maldives will remain a friend committed to our shared vision of peace and development in our countries and our region." He also invited Modi to visit Maldives next year to celebrate the 60th anniversary of diplomatic ties. On the economic help for the Maldives, Muizzu said, "I would like to thank Prime Minister Modi, the government and the people of India for generous assistance and cooperation extended to the Maldives over the years, including the recent budgetary support in the form of rollover of the T (treasury bills)."

Very few people know about Dalit kitchens: Rahul Gandhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress will protect that Constitution that gives Bahujans their rights but true inclusion and equality for all in the society will be possible only when every Indian strives with the spirit of brotherhood in their hearts, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi said on Monday.

Rahul Gandhi shared a video on his social media handles of his recent interaction at a Dalit household where he helped out in cooking a meal in their kitchen.

"Even today, very few people know about Dalit kitchens. As Shahu Patole said, 'Nobody knows what Dalits eat.' Intrigued by what they eat, how they cook, and its social and political significance, I spent an afternoon with Ajay Tukaram Sanade and Anjana Tukaram Sanade," Rahul Gandhi said in his post in Hindi along with the



Maharashtra to help out in the kitchen. Together we cooked 'chane ke saag ki sabzi',

'harbharyachi bhaji', and 'tuvar dal' with brinjal," the former Congress president said. "Drawing on Patole and the Sanade family's personal experiences with caste and discrimination, we discussed the lack of awareness about Dalit cuisine and the importance of documenting this culture," he said. The Constitution gives Bahujans a share and rights, and we will protect that Constitution, he asserted. But true inclusion and equality for all in the society will be possible only when every Indian strives with the spirit of brotherhood in their hearts, Gandhi said. In the video, Rahul Gandhi is seen helping out in the kitchen and then having a meal with the family at their home. Shahu Patole informed Rahul Gandhi that he had written a book in Marathi and now translated into English 'Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada', to highlight foods eaten by the Dalits.

Ramraje Naik Nimbalkar dithches Ajit, joins Sharad Pawar's NCP

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

After the entry of former minister and senior BJP leader Harshvardhan Patil, it is now the turn of senior leader from the Ajit Pawar-led NCP Ramraje Naik-Nimbalkar to join the Sharad Pawar-led NCP on October 14. On Monday when Harshvardhan Patil and his daughter Ankita Patil joined his party, NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar himself indicated that Ramraje - who is the 29th descendant of the royal family from Phaltan - would soon join his party. "As I was coming for this function at Indapur, I received a call... I will go to Phaltan on October 14 for a similar function... Hope you understand what I am saying," Sr Pawar said at a function organised at Indapur near Pune to welcome Patil, his daughter Ankita and their supporters into his party. Informed sources in the NCP (SP) said that Ramraje met Sr Pawar and expressed his desire to return the party led by the latter. A political heavy weight from Satara in western Maharashtra, 75-year-old Ramraje was a minister in the erstwhile Democratic Front

government and a former Chairperson of the Maharashtra Legislative Council. Speaking at a rally held on Sunday, Ramraje had himself indicated that he would return to the NCP (SP). "I feel guilty about deserting Pawar Saheb, who made me a minister in 2009, when I was not even a legislator. I joined Ajit Pawar so to ensure the security of my workers. But that doesn't seem to be happening," Ramraje said. "Many of my supporters have told me to join Sharad Pawar's NCP (SP)... they have asked me something for the first time," Ramraje said. Earlier in the day, speaking at a function organised at Indapur to welcome him to the NCP (SP), Harshvardhan Patil said: "This is the wish of the people and the workers of Indapur... All the people of all castes and religions wanted to join the NCP (SP) and we are bowing to their wishes". At the function, Patil, his daughter Ankita and their supporters were welcomed formally to the NCP (SP) party by Sharad Pawar, its national working President Supriya Sule, MPs, MLAs and other party leaders.

Sanjeev Kumar Singla appointed India's ambassador to France



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Senior diplomat Sanjeev Kumar Singla has been appointed as the country's next ambassador to France, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Monday. He is currently India's envoy to Israel. "Sanjeev Kumar Singla (IFS:1997), presently Ambassador of India to Israel, has been appointed as the next Ambassador of India to France," the MEA said in a statement. He is expected to take up the assignment shortly, it said. In another appointment, senior diplomat Ajit Vinayak Gupte has been appointed India's next ambassador to Germany, MEA said. He is currently India's envoy in Egypt. "Ajit Vinayak Gupte (IFS:1991), presently Ambassador of India to Egypt, has been appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Federal Republic of Germany. He is expected to take up the assignment shortly," the MEA said in a statement. The appointment comes ahead of German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's scheduled visit to India later this month.



Modi pens down a garba song for Goddess Durga

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday shared on social media a 'garba' song he wrote as a tribute to Goddess Durga. "It is the auspicious time of Navratri and people are celebrating in different ways, united by their devotion to Maa Durga. In this spirit of reverence and joy, here is

Aavati Kalay, a Garba I wrote as a tribute to Her power and grace. May Her blessings always remain upon us," he said in the social media post. He thanked Purva Mantri, whom he lauded as a talented upcoming singer, for singing the garba song and presenting such a melodious rendition of it. Garba is a traditional Gujarati dance which is especially performed during the Navaratri festival.

Opposition walks out after CM's unexpected statement

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOCHI

"googly" bowled by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Monday morning shocked the Congress-led UDF and they staged a walk out from the House, the reason for which the latter is reluctant to explain. When the House commenced sitting on the first day of the session, the Congress MLA Sunny Joseph submitted an adjournment notice seeking discussion on the statement made by the Chief Minister that Malappuram topped the table in the seizure of smuggled gold and hawala money and his subsequent retraction following the resentment among the Muslim community. The decision of the Speaker A N Shamsier to grant

permission for a discussion on the adjournment notice took the Opposition by surprise as they were hoping that the government would not allow the same. The submission of adjournment notice and its refusal followed by the walk out by Opposition benches is a routine affair in the Kerala legislative assembly. But Monday's decision by the Speaker literally shocked the Opposition and they trooped into the podium of the former with banners and flags. Despite the Speaker's plea to go back to their seats, the Opposition members stayed put in front of the podium and shouted slogans against the LDF Government. Chief Minister Pinarayi had unleashed a verbal attack on Leader of the Opposition V D Satheshan and the latter

turned furious over certain comments made by the former. "Pinarayi Vijayan is trying to become Narendra Modi. God alone would be able to save the people from him," charged Satheshan to which the chief minister retorted that one has to be careful in the words used in the Legislative Assembly. What surprised political Kerala was the action of the Opposition in walking out of the House despite the Chair agreeing to the adjournment notice served by the, "This is the first time in the history of Kerala the movers of adjournment notice running away from the battlefield without furnishing a reason for their action," P Rajeve, minister for industry and a strong contender for the chair of the Chief Minister told reporters.

Lalu and sons granted bail in case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The fast track court on Monday granted bail to former Union Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav and his sons Tejaswi Yadav and Tej Pratap Yadav in the land-for-jobs in Railways case. The Rouse Avenue Court granted bail to all three on a condition that they each furnish a bail bond of Rs One lakh. The matter will be heard next on October 25. Earlier, the Court had directed them to appear before it on October 7. While summoning Yadav and his sons, the Court had prima facie observed that Yadav had been in a position of power to facilitate public employment when he was Union Railway



Minister from 2004 to 2009. The case pertains to alleged appointments made in the Railways in exchange for land transferred to Yadav's family when he was a Minister. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has claimed that the appointments were not in consonance with the hiring standards and guidelines established by the Indian Railways. The Delhi court had granted bail to Lalu Yadav, his wife Rabri Devi and daughter Misa Bharti in the case in March 2023.

DESW launches campaign to streamline Ex-Servicemen services

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Department of Ex-Servicemen Welfare (DESW), Ministry of Defence is undertaking a number of initiatives under the 'Special campaign for Disposal of Pending matters' (SCDPM 4.0) between October two-31, officials said here on Monday. Giving details, they said the department is carrying out the pan Indian campaign, identifying various sites including the remotest offices having the highest public interface such as various Zila Sainik Boards, Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS) Polyclinics and Zonal Resettlement Offices. It has identified more than 250 files to be reviewed for the purpose of weeding out. recognised Ex-Servicemen Associations are also



undertaking cleanliness drives through various activities like swachhata rally, minimising single use plastic, village common area cleaning etc. at various locations. Those making significant contributions are also being honoured during the campaign. Preparatory phase of the campaign started with Secretary, Ex-Servicemen Welfare Niten Chandra administering the 'Swachhata

Pledge' to head of all the attached offices along with the department officials on September 17. He urged them to avoid using single-use plastic and create awareness about segregation of waste at source itself in their offices as well as their communities. The focus areas of Special campaign 4.0 include removing pendency and improving cleanliness, better record management, improvement in work efficiencies, and enhancement in transparency. Steps are being taken for optimal maintenance of documents and files and getting rid of the obsolete documents. The Campaign seeks to institutionalize Swachhata as a matter of habit in the day to day functioning of the department.

Scurvy risk in older adults' health: Study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Older adults experiencing abnormal bleeding and fatigue should be assessed for scurvy, a disease linked to vitamin C deficiency, according to a recent study. Vitamin C is crucial for maintaining overall health, offering significant antioxidant properties that protect cells from free radical damage. Chronic deficiency of this essential nutrient can lead to scurvy, which impairs immune function and collagen production. The condition primarily arises from inadequate consumption of vitamin C-rich fruits and vegetables. Detailing a case study of a 65-year-old woman with mobility issues and social isolation, the study published in CMAJ (Canadian Medical



Association Journal) showed that scurvy, or vitamin C deficiency, is not just an 18th-century seafarers' disease. Researchers from the University of Toronto in Canada implored clinicians to consider scurvy in patients with abnormal bleeding and nonspecific symptoms. The elderly patient visited the emergency department at a downtown Toronto hospital for leg pain and weakness, skin lesions, and discoloration. She also had several chronic health conditions.

Mobility issues restricted her ability to go grocery shopping, cook, and perform other daily activities. She lived largely on canned soup and fish, with no fresh produce. "This case presents a complex example of food insecurity manifesting as an uncommon diagnosis," said Dr. Sarah Engelhart, a general internist at Mount Sinai Hospital and the University of Toronto. The researchers noted that vitamin C deficiency is more common than expected in the 21st century. However, its

diagnosis is often challenging as symptoms are often nonspecific, such as fatigue, weakness, and shortness of breath. The patient also smoked, which further contributes to vitamin C deficiency. Her symptoms improved once she started on vitamin C treatment, and a blood test for vitamin C deficiency eventually confirmed the diagnosis, said the doctors. "Clinicians should be alert to vitamin C deficiency when assessing patients, including children and isolated older adults," the doctors said. The team noted that people who follow restrictive eating patterns (for example, those with autism spectrum disorder or those on a tea and toast diet), who smoke cigarettes, who have a substance use disorder, or who have malabsorption syndrome, can also be at risk of scurvy.

Political parties jittery ahead of Jammu and Kashmir counting day

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Ahead of the counting day, the leaders from different political parties appeared jittery as they anticipated the hung verdict may further delay the process of stable government formation in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

The NC leader was reacting to the statement made by the Awami Ittehad Party (AIP) Chief Abdul Rashid Sheikh who during a press conference during the day had said whoever will get the majority should not form the government until the statehood is restored in Jammu and Kashmir.

"The man goes to Delhi for 24 hours and comes back to play straight into the hands of the BJP," Omar posted on X

(formerly twitter). Rashid during the press conference also revealed that he had been to Delhi for two days.

"The BJP would like nothing more than to extend central rule in J&K if they aren't in a position to form a government," Omar said.

However, the mood in the Bharatiya Janta Party camp was upbeat despite adverse projections by the different exit polls.

J&K BJP Assembly election in-charge Ram Madhav Monday took stock of the ground situation before addressing a meeting of the Election Management committee here at the party headquarters.

In his brief address, Ram Madhav conveyed his gratitude to the party workers who worked hard during the month-long campaign to realize the dream of forming a BJP-led government in Jammu and Kashmir.

Jammu and Kashmir BJP chief Ravinder Raina also asserted his position claiming that the BJP will emerge as the single



largest party in the region by securing 35 seats and will form Government with the help of like-minded and independent candidates.

He also said that the nomination of five MLAs by the Lieutenant Governor is being carried out as per the Reorganisation Act.

"We are confident of winning 35 seats in Jammu and Kashmir, and with the support of independents and like-minded groups, who will secure around 15 seats, we will

nominated by LG are BJP members or associated with the party. Brazen pre result rigging & shameful manipulation," Iltija Mufti posted on X.

She said it seems no lessons were learned from the rigging of 1987 elections in Jammu and Kashmir. Jammu and Kashmir Congress President Tariq Hameed Karra also termed the power to nominate five members in the new Assembly by the Lieutenant Governor as "unconstitutional" and "undemocratic."

Karra said, "If the Centre has implemented and given powers to the Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir to nominate five members for the new Assembly, it is in my view unconstitutional and undemocratic."

"How could it happen where a President of India could not have the arbitrary powers and a Lieutenant Governor would be given such powers," Karra questioned.

In Srinagar, National

Conference president Farooq Abdullah on Monday said his party was open to the idea of taking support of Mehbooba Mufti's PDP to form a government in the Union territory.

He also flayed the move to give powers to the Lieutenant Governor for nominating members to the five reserved seats in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly, and said his party would approach the Supreme Court if the BJP-led Centre went ahead with it.

Abdullah, while ruling himself out of the race for chief minister's post, said statehood should be restored to Jammu and Kashmir so that the new government has powers to address the people's problems.

The NC president said he was not averse to taking support of the independents as well but he would not go begging for it. "I will not go to beg before them. If they feel they can strengthen the state, most welcome. It should be their initiative. They should want to do good for the people," he added.



Yogi warns against derogatory remarks on faith

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

In response to the controversy surrounding priest Yati Narsinghanand's recent remarks against Prophet Muhammad, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath issued a stern warning against any derogatory comments directed at religious figures, saints, or deities of any faith.

Addressing a law and order review meeting on Monday, Adityanath emphasised that while peaceful expression of faith is essential, any disrespectful comments will not be tolerated, and offenders will face legal action.

"Offensive comments against deities, revered figures, or saints-regardless of caste, religion, or community-are unacceptable. Lawlessness under the guise of protest will not be accepted either," the Chief Minister said.

During the meeting, which took place ahead of the upcoming festivals of Sharadiya Navratri and Vijaydashami, Adityanath held discussions with the Chief Secretary, Director General of Police, Additional Chief Secretary (Home), and other senior officials. He urged them to maintain peace and ensure that the faith of all communities is respected, while calling for action against anyone attempting to disrupt harmony.

"Gratitude towards great personalities should come from the heart of every citizen, but no one can be forced to express it,"

Adityanath said, emphasizing that respect for religious figures cannot be imposed.

The Chief Minister's remarks come amid growing tension after Yati Narsinghanand, a priest based in Ghaziabad, made controversial comments against Prophet Muhammad. An FIR has been filed against the priest, and his aides claim he has been detained in Ghaziabad, though police have not confirmed his detention.

Adityanath made it clear that mutual respect among communities is paramount, and that anyone found tampering with faith or making offensive remarks would be dealt with under the law. He further warned that protests involving violence, vandalism, or arson would not be tolerated, and that offenders would face severe consequences.

The Chief Minister also instructed law enforcement to ensure that upcoming festival celebrations remain peaceful. "Each district and police station must ensure that festivals are celebrated in a manner that does not disturb public order. Identify and take strict action against those attempting to disrupt peace," he directed.

In addition, Adityanath highlighted the importance of women's safety, calling for enhanced foot patrols and increased PRV 112 patrolling in crowded areas during the festival season. "The safety and convenience of women and girls must be prioritized. All departments should collaborate to ensure this," he added.



Security forces achieving success against naxals, says Amit Shah

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday said security forces have been carrying out "offensive operations" instead of defensive against Naxals and have achieved big successes in recent times. Addressing Chief Ministers and top officials of the Naxal-affected States, Shah said due to the improved security situation, high voter turnout up to 70 per cent was witnessed in the Maoist-hit region in the last Lok Sabha polls. There was zero polling in the region earlier, he said.

The crucial meeting, which discussed anti-Naxal operations and development initiatives carried out in the affected areas, came days after the security forces killed 31 ultras in the forests of Chhattisgarh in one of the most successful operations against them in recent times. "Security forces are now carrying out offensive operations instead of defensive operations earlier," Shah said.

Describing Naxals as the biggest hurdle to development, Home Minister said they are the biggest

human rights violators who have been depriving over eight crore people of development and basic welfare opportunities. The Naxal-affected states include Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Telangana, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.

The Left Wing Extremism (LWE) violence has come down by 72 per cent while there was an 86 per cent decline in deaths in 2023 as compared to 2010. Naxals are fighting their last battle now, officials said.

More than 230 LWE cadres have been eliminated so far this year, 723 LWE cadres have surrendered and 812 have been arrested. The number of LWE-affected districts is just 38 now.

The Central Government has taken many steps, including giving impetus to road and mobile connectivity, to take development schemes to the remotest areas of the affected States.

A total of 14,400 km of road length has been constructed and nearly 6,000 mobile towers have been installed in LWE-affected areas so far, said Home Ministry in a statement.

AB-PMJAY expansion to benefit 120 million families: JP Nadda

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With the expansion of the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri - Jan Arogya Yojana (ABPM-JAY) bringing all citizens aged 70 years and above under its ambit, around 45 million families, including 60 million elderly population are expected to get the medical benefits, by ensuring them free health insurance coverage.

"This initiative covers over 120 million families, providing an annual hospitalisation benefit of USD 6,000 per family," JP Nadda, Union Health Minister said on Monday during his inaugural address to the 77th session of WHO Southeast Asia Region

(SEARO), here.

"This expansion will benefit around 45 million families, including 60 million elderly population, by providing them free health insurance coverage. It underscores the government's commitment to ensuring universal and inclusive healthcare for India's growing elderly demographic", he said, pointing out the program's potential to alleviate financial burdens associated with healthcare.

Nadda said that India as a lighthouse country in the digital health arena, is poised to share its Digital Public Infrastructure (DPIs) such as Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission, e-Sanjeevani, Integrated Health Information Platform (IHIP), SAKSHAM etc. by providing

technical and financial support through the Global Initiative on Digital Health - a WHO-managed network, launched during India's G20 Presidency.

He also stated that "following the remarkable success of the CoWIN digital platform during the COVID-19 pandemic, India has conceptualised the online digital platform-UWIN, for the Universal Immunisation Programme. The portal will register, track and monitor all vaccination events."

He said that "India's experience in integrating this system with the conventional system of medicine has led to the provision of holistic healthcare, promoting overall well-being and expanding the range of healthcare services".

Highlighting the significant

progress made in global health since 1948, particularly in reducing infant mortality rates, Saima Wazed, Regional Director, WHO SEARO said, however emphasised the emerging challenge of antimicrobial resistance.

"In 1948, when the first Regional Committee for South-East Asia was formed, the infant mortality rate globally was around 147. Today it is 25. Then, the antibiotic age had just begun. Today, we are faced with new ones. It is upon us to confront the perils of today, with the collective wisdom of all who came before us - and with the tools of the 21st century," she added.

Rajnath Singh urges private sector to innovate for defence needs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday exhorted the private sector to move ahead from imitative to innovative technology to cater to futuristic needs of the Armed Forces.

He made this appeal while launching the second edition of Acing Development of Innovative Technologies with iDEX (ADITI 2.0) challenges and the 12th edition of Defence India Start-up Challenges (DISC 12) during DefConnect 4.0.

ADITI 2.0 features 19 challenges from the Armed Forces and allied agencies in the domains of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Quantum Technology, military communication, anti-drone

systems customised for military platforms and adaptive camouflage, etc.

This scheme offers a grant of up to Rs 25 crore to Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) winners, focusing on critical technological areas crucial for strengthening the defence ecosystem of the country.

DISC 12 presents 41 challenges across key technology domains, including Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), AI, Networking and Communication, with grants up to Rs 1.50 crore. Notably, it introduces the Medical Innovations and Research Advancement (MIRA) initiative, featuring nine challenges aimed at fostering the development of medical technologies to meet the



medical demands of the Armed Forces.

To provide momentum to the iDEX initiative, DISC was launched in partnership with Atal Innovation Mission, aimed at supporting Start-Ups/MSMEs/Innovators to create prototypes and/or commercialise products/solutions in the area of national defence and security.

In his address, the defence

minister commended DefConnect for playing a crucial role in developing the culture of innovation in the country. He stated that the platform is bringing a new energy to the defence industrial ecosystem, and making the nation's talent a partner in strengthening the security apparatus.

Rajnath highlighted the vibrant and dynamic

ecosystem of innovators, entrepreneurs, scientists and start-ups in the country, stating that the world is acknowledging the strength and talent of India's youth. He reiterated the Government's commitment to further enhance the role of the private sector in the defence ecosystem. Their involvement is necessary to achieve self-reliance, he said.

He pointed out that as soon as the Government, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, came to power in 2014, it identified 'lack of private sector participation in the defence sector' as a major hurdle in attaining self-reliance, and strived to increase their contribution in nation building.

On the new technologies being incorporated in wars

and conflicts, the defence minister said apart from conventional arms and ammunition, many dual use or purely civilian tech is being weaponised. He called for an in-depth understanding of these technologies, exhorting the innovators to make imaginative use of the advancements for the defence of the nation.

Stressing on the need to move forward from imitative to innovative and distinctive technologies, Rajnath called upon the private sector to think beyond the solutions to challenges being provided through ADITI & DISC. He urged them to bring forth the technology which is far ahead of the requirements of the Armed Forces and would be beneficial to deal with future threats.

Officials responsible for Marina beach stampede: Ex CM

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

Despite the "best" efforts by the Government of Tamil Nadu and its 'friendly' media houses to put the blame on the Indian Air Force for Sunday's stampede at Chennai's Marina Beach which resulted in the death of five persons, intelligence officials blamed the state administration for the mishap and hospitalisation of hundreds of people due to suffocation and poor medical facilities.

The Air Show held in connection with the 92nd anniversary of the IAF had drawn a crowd of more than 1.2 million to Marina Beach and surrounding areas to watch the adventurous pilots of the IAF in action with their state-of-the-art flying machines.

The IAF in its communique issued days before the event had said that nearly 1.5 million people are expected to converge in Marina Beach, the longest sea shore in South Asia, to watch the action.

While the air show featuring the pilots displaying



brehtaking feats was about to conclude, there was chaos as people were moving towards the exit gates in large numbers and many fell down and died due to suffocation.

"Administrative arrangements and crowds were not managed properly and the police force was inadequate. People were stuck in heavy traffic with no drinking

water available, and many were hospitalized due to heatstroke," said former Chief Minister and AIADMK leader Edappadi Palaniswamy.

A senior intelligence officer said that the administration, especially the Police failed in taking effective crowd management measures which resulted in this mishap. It seems someone in

the hierarchy failed in his duty.

I give full credit to the IAF for the steps it had taken to organize such a mammoth show," said the officer.

He also pointed out that Chennai had hosted such an event in 2003 when Jayalalithaa was the chief minister.

"Crowd management at that time was of high quality," said

the officer who did not want his name to be quoted.

Tamil Nadu's Minister for Health, M Subramanian issued a statement on Monday claiming that the government has done a good job.

"We had extended all help to the IAF for Sunday's Air Show. Several rounds of meetings were held with the IAF authorities and we had met all their demands to manage the crowd.

Two health teams, with adequate number of doctors and nurses, had been deployed by the state government at the venue. We had provided all the facilities and arrangements beyond what they had requested," said Subramanian.

Kanimozhi MP, who is the daughter of M Karunanidhi, who is engaged in a fight with chief minister M K Stalin for control of the party, blamed the huge crowd for the disaster.

"We should avoid unmanageable crowds," said Kanimozhi indirectly hinting that people should have stayed at their homes.

Six dead in coal mine blast

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA



At least 6 people died and As many injured when dynamite being unloaded from a truck went off blowing up the vehicle. The accident occurred at Gangaramchak Mining Private Limited colliery, located near Badulia in Birbhum district.

Some sources put the toll to seven or eight as some bodies had been hurriedly transported by the management, villagers said. "Six bodies have been



recovered. One is severely injured, his condition is serious, and two are out of danger," Bengal Chief Secretary Manoj Kumar Pant said.

The truck full of explosives was being unloaded when things exploded tearing the bodies of the labourers unloading truck into smithereens, sources said adding the body of the driver of the truck was found about 500 feet away. The intensity of the blast was such that the bodies of the victims had to be identified by their clothes. Alleging illegal mining in the

area the locals said that they are not allowed to come near the open cast coalmine.

The police rushed to the area upon hearing about the incident and started rescue work, Bolpur ASP Rana Mukherjee said. "We found six bodies, three people were injured who are undergoing treatment in the hospital," the ASP said adding the Government had announced jobs to the next of kin of those killed in the explosion. The company would also give compensation to the family of those killed and those injured, he said.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Strategic balancing act

Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu assures India that he would never jeopardise India's security interests

The first state visit of Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu to India marks a milestone in the evolving diplomatic relationship between the two neighbouring countries. President Muizzu's visit, represents not only a continuation of the historically strong India-Maldives ties but also signals a renewed commitment to fostering regional stability and cooperation. To put it in perspective, China has made inroads into Maldives much to the consternation of India. Chinese presence in its backyard is a clear security threat. But now things are looking better. President Muizzu has emphasised that while the Maldives follows a 'Maldives First' policy, it remains committed to ensuring that its actions would never undermine India's security interests. The Maldives occupies a key strategic position in the Indian Ocean, making its foreign policy decisions crucial to India's security and regional aspirations. India has long viewed the Maldives as an important ally in maintaining stability in the Indo-Pacific region. This visit, following a period of political transition in the Maldives, underscores the importance of maintaining a strong bilateral relationship, especially amid concerns over the growing influence of China in the region.



President Muizzu has reaffirmed that its engagements would never compromise India's security which indeed is music to Indian ears. This statement comes at a time when concerns have arisen regarding the Maldives' expanding ties with China, especially in defence and trade. President Muizzu sought to allay these fears, stressing that the relationship with India, built on 'mutual respect and shared interests,' remains a priority. One of the key aspects of the India-Maldives relationship

has always been defence cooperation. Earlier President Muizzu's decision to expel Indian military personnel was seen as a clear sign of Maldives acting on Chinese advice. Though on his part he explained that this move, though sensitive, was aligned with the will of the Maldivian people and aimed at ensuring the sovereignty of the Maldives. But that is diplomacy for you. Historically, defence and economic cooperation has long been a cornerstone of India-Maldives relations. But things changed after President Muizzu took over last year in November. President Muizzu has expressed satisfaction with the progress of key Indian initiatives, including the Greater Male Connectivity Project, which is expected to significantly boost the country's infrastructure and local economy. India has also restructured a line of credit arrangement to facilitate smoother execution of developmental projects, which President Muizzu acknowledged as a positive step. The visit is expected to further strengthen economic ties between the two countries, with discussions centered on boosting trade, tourism and investment. Perhaps shift in Maldives' stance comes with the realisation of perils of aligning with China as many countries like Sri Lanka have paid a heavy price for their dependence on Chinese investments and grants.

PICTALK



An artisan gives finishing touches to effigies of Ravana and Meghanad ahead of the Dussehra festival, in Nagpur

Mitigating heatwaves and floods in rural India

Only by engaging in comprehensive dialogue can India hope to counter the growing threats of climate change and protect its rural population

India is currently facing the severe consequences of climate change. At the very onset of summer, a severe heatwave gripped vast regions of the country. More recently, heavy rainfall and floods have disrupted numerous lives and livelihoods in many states. Owing to a lack of infrastructure and resources, communities in rural areas are the worst impacted. In the face of this crisis, the power of dialogue emerges not just as a tool but as a necessity to formulate effective policies and mitigate the impact of climate change on vulnerable populations.



Impact on Rural Communities The recent heatwave in India was relentless, with temperatures soaring well above 40 degrees Celsius in many regions. This is now succeeded by an onslaught of floods in various regions, especially in Assam. Rural communities, often more exposed and less equipped to cope with extreme weather events, bear the brunt of these conditions. Agriculture, the backbone of rural livelihoods, suffers as crops wither under scorching tempera-

tures or are submerged during floods, leading to reduced yields and income losses. Many states have implemented State Climate Change Programmes (SCCCs) and Heat Action Plans (HAPs) to deal with the situation. Effective as many of these initiatives are the severity of the problem leaves scope for much more to be done.

Dialogic Approach for Climate Crisis From its various applications across problem-solving, community mobilization, building policy narratives, and engaging with diverse stakeholders, a dialogic approach may be integral to addressing the challenges posed by heat waves, particularly in rural India. First, by engaging stakeholders—from policymakers and scientists to community leaders and affected populations—dialogue facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand and fosters consensus on actionable solutions. It encourages the exchange of knowledge, expertise, and local insights necessary to tailor policies that are responsive to the needs of vulnerable communities. Next, putting dialogic methods into place can also help uncover local solutions and adaptation strategies that can

be built into nationwide policy. Farmers, for instance, possess invaluable traditional knowledge and practices that can complement scientific interventions. Through dialogue, these insights can be integrated into agricultural policies aimed at promoting climate-resilient farming practices, improving water management, and enhancing crop diversity to withstand extreme weather events. Finally, dialogue can enhance community mobilization and self-governance, which can lead to community-driven initiatives to counter the current crisis—from community heat shelters, and water management practices, to creating awareness of related health risks such as heat strokes and increase in vector and water-borne diseases. From Discussion to Collaborative Action Dialogue-driven policies ensure that interventions are inclusive, transparent, and accountable, thereby fostering trust and cooperation among stakeholders. (The writer is CEO of Kshetra Foundation; views are personal)



KRISHNA UDAYASANKAR

policy making and even business and management, involves more than just conversation. Dialogue is essentially an approach that weaves together multiple elements to craft effective and long-lasting solutions.

Dialogic Approach for Climate Crisis From its various applications across problem-solving, community mobilization, building policy narratives, and engaging with diverse stakeholders, a dialogic approach may be integral to addressing the challenges posed by heat waves, particularly in rural India. First, by engaging stakeholders—from policymakers and scientists to community leaders and affected populations—dialogue facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand and fosters consensus on actionable solutions. It encourages the exchange of knowledge, expertise, and local insights necessary to tailor policies that are responsive to the needs of vulnerable communities. Next, putting dialogic methods into place can also help uncover local solutions and adaptation strategies that can

BRICS: Dealing with emerging challenges

As geopolitical tensions escalate and new security challenges emerge, the upcoming 16th BRICS Summit in Kazan promises to be a critical turning point



SUDHIR HINDWAN

The 16th BRICS Summit, set to take place from October 22-24, 2024, in Kazan under Russia's chairmanship, comes at a critical juncture for global affairs. The summit will address pressing issues like the geopolitical tensions caused by escalating regional conflicts worldwide, the need for effective governance in emerging societies, and the evolving challenges of environmental degradation.

With these multifaceted threats becoming more severe, there is a growing urgency for BRICS nations—Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, along with newly inducted members Egypt, Iran, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia—to modernise and diversify their security and economic frameworks. A recent BRICS National Security Advisors' (NSA) conclave in St Petersburg underscored the urgency of these challenges. India's National Security Advisor highlighted the critical role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in tackling modern security concerns, particularly the evolving threat of transnational terrorism.

ICT will likely remain a focal point during the Kazan summit as BRICS nations look to leverage advanced technology to mitigate security risks and ensure more effective regional and global cooperation. Russia has expressed its intention to prioritise five key areas of partnership at the summit: politics, security, the economy, finance and cultural and humanitarian ties. In light of the rising number of security threats confronting the BRICS nations, this broad-ranging focus is timely. The inclusion of the five new BRICS members adds to the group's strategic importance. Their cooperation will be vital in addressing the sudden and unpredictable threats that arise from both state and non-state actors. This includes real-time sharing of geospatial data, which will be instrumental in improving border security and countering transnational terrorism. The Kazan summit will likely focus on enhancing cooperation in areas such as



economic development, public health, border security, and geospatial information sharing. These discussions could lead to tangible outcomes in the form of new initiatives for infrastructure development, increased bilateral trade, and innovative technological solutions.

These developments would further strengthen ties between India and BRICS, especially Russia, while fostering a new era of defense cooperation. Given the rise of security challenges across the BRICS countries, particularly concerning border disputes and terrorism, the summit presents an opportunity to improve international coordination on these matters. Satellite data sharing, military intelligence cooperation, and logistical support are expected to be central components of future BRICS security strategies.

For instance, one significant point of discussion could be China's expansionist policies, which have raised concerns about regional stability. Additionally, the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war is another issue that could dominate the agenda, with hopes for a possible resolution. The summit holds great potential for strengthening global cooperation in fighting transnational terrorism. This cooperation could encompass several key areas, including the financing of terrorist activities, enhancing police cooperation, and



THE SUMMIT MAY EXPLORE STRATEGIES FOR ANTICIPATING AND NEUTRALISING THESE THREATS, FOCUSING ON COOPERATION BETWEEN THE SECURITY AND DEFENCE ESTABLISHMENTS OF BRICS MEMBERS

addressing cyber threats. The summit may also discuss tightening security measures at borders and maritime zones, alongside the development of advanced communication networks and security management systems. One of the key challenges in counter-terrorism will be dealing with groups motivated by religious ideologies. The summit may explore strategies for anticipating and neutralising these threats, focusing on cooperation between the security and defense establishments of BRICS members. As nations adopt a more pragmatic and bilateral approach to foreign policy, there is less concern that enhanced BRICS cooperation would adversely affect relations with other major powers, such as the United States. Another area requiring immediate attention is the threat posed by chemical weapons in the hands of terrorists. These weapons, often difficult to detect and transport, pose a significant risk. International collaboration in formulating stricter regulations and preventing the acquisition of such weapons could be vital in managing this growing concern. Furthermore, the BRICS nations could work together to establish a robust mechanism to limit the accessibility of dangerous materials like RDX, Erythritol Tetranitrate (Penta), and advanced weapons such as AK-47s. Efforts to curb drug traffick-

ing are also expected to feature prominently at the summit, particularly in light of the strong nexus between drug cartels and terrorist groups in regions like Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Southeast Asia. Enhanced policing cooperation among BRICS members could lead to more effective crackdowns on these criminal networks. India's leadership approach, as demonstrated by Prime Minister Modi in recent international forums like the UN Summit on September 23, 2024, emphasises a human-centric focus. At the BRICS summit, India is expected to push for policies that address economic, technological, and social gaps, thereby advancing the interests of the Global South. India's growing influence on the global stage is also reflected in its strong relationships with both the United States, the world's largest democracy, and Russia, one of its closest strategic partners. These ties place India in a unique position to play a leading role at the BRICS summit. The meeting in Kazan is likely to provide a framework for enhanced security-related information sharing and greater confidence-building measures among BRICS nations. (The author is a recipient of the Bharat Gaurav Award and an expert in strategic affairs; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ESCALATING CONFLICT IN WEST ASIA

Madam — After Iran supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's penchant claim that the "Zionist nation would not last long" and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's vow of retaliation, "Whoever attacks, we will attack them," the two countries are closer to a destructive all-out war. West Asia is being pushed into a nuclear firestorm by the challengers in conflict and the proxy groups. Israel is allied with the United States of America and NATO nations, while the Islamic militant groups, Hamas, Hezbollah and Houthis, are proxies of Iran. Hamas' failed missile attack gave Israel an opportunity to bomb Gaza indiscriminately. Since then, Israel Defence Force has killed and injured thousands of innocent Palestinians. The mass annihilation of women and children served as a reminder of the genocide committed against European Jews during World War II. The United States seamlessly provides Israel with strategic support, advanced weaponry and manpower. Their occasional counsel for sanity is for the world to hear and not for Israel to heed. Neither side-Israel, America and other NATO nations, or Iran and the proxy groups is seeking a lasting peace. This war threatens to wreck world peace and economies, with the chance of more countries being sucked into it. India is stuck between two stools.

Haridasan Rajan | Kozhikode

RESERVATION POLICY CRITICISED

Madam— The news report titled 'Removing 50 per cent cap on reservation necessary to protect Constitution: Rahul Gandhi' (October 6) hardly evokes surprise as Rahul Gandhi constantly chants the ridiculous statement "Rights and benefits in proportion to share of population" since several months! What a criminal wastage of time, energy and resource to determine which caste group will receive what quantum of share in job openings, higher education and other rights and benefits in this heterogeneous country—that too through the yardstick of numerical strength only!

IAF celebrates 92nd anniversary



The clear blue skies over Chennai were incandescent with adventurous excitement last Sunday, as the Indian Air Force (IAF) staged a stunning air show at the famous Marina Beach in celebration of its 92nd anniversary. Much to the pride of the city, the event, which was reportedly attended by 15

lakh people, set a new world record, earning a place in the Limca Book of Records for the largest-ever gathering at an air show. Spectators were treated to a breathtaking display of aerial acrobatics. The highlight of the show was the Rafale fighter jets demonstrated their skills in mid-air refuelling, a sight that added an extra layer of wonder to the spectacle. Saddeningly, however, the event saw five people have died and many reportedly suffered from dizziness and fainting due to searing heat. Though the air show displayed its pageantry, and the event was a proud reminder of India's growing self-reliance in defence, it raises an important question over the need for IAF aggressively pushing the occasion to set a new world record by aiming to mobilise a crowd much beyond the manageable level. Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

FINANCIAL AID FOR FARMERS

Madam — The release of the 18th installment of the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme is a significant achievement, benefiting over nine crore farmers across the country. Both the central and state governments deserve recognition for their collaborative efforts in supporting the agricultural sector. The Central government's direct financial aid to farmers, particularly the inclusion of 31,51,700 beneficiaries from Odisha, highlights a continued commitment to rural development. At the state level, the Odisha government's CM Kisan scheme, complementing the PM Kisan Yojana, is another positive step towards ensuring that small and marginal farmers receive much-needed financial assistance. This dual support, reaching farmers through the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system, is a model for efficient governance.

Manoj | Almora

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Kajal chatterjee | Kolkata



FIRST COLUMN

THE GIFT OF ATTENTION

Offering our full attention not only strengthens bonds but also gives us clarity and wellbeing



RACHNA LAKHPATI

It's paradoxical that in a world where distractions never stop and sincere appreciation of attention is as precious as it is a type of most valuable coin. Notifications echo from every direction, screens compete for our attention, and in our quest to be "present," I fear we have lost sight of who we truly are. Amidst the chaos, there exists a profound reality: the act of giving one's attention may indeed be the most precious gift one can bestow. Think about it. When was the last occasion you experienced someone's full focus—no devices, no interruptions, just an authentic, human connection? If that moment is hard to remember, you're not the only one. The fast pace of modern life has taught us to multitask, to balance discussions with brief looks at our devices, and to believe that speed equals efficiency.

Yet in this pursuit, we have sacrificed something invaluable: the capacity to truly engage with the moment. When we focus on someone, we absorb more than just their words. We are expressing, "I acknowledge your presence." Your existence is significant. In this manner, attention serves as a quiet endorsement of an individual's value—it transcends superficial exchanges and paves the way for a more profound comprehension, fostering empathy, compassion, and genuine connection. Engagement serves as the foundation of confidence in connections. By focusing our attention on our partners, friends, or family members, we convey a powerful message regarding the significance of their thoughts, feelings and experiences. It's no surprise that the depth of our connections often reflects the level of attention we invest in them—the stronger



our bond with those who truly listen and comprehend us. And personal connections are the final aspect of it. Focus holds immense power in the professional realm. Think about a manager who listens to his team or a leader who takes the time to interact with employees, rather than rushing through meetings.

These individuals foster loyalty, ignite creativity and guide collaborative environments. What is the reason behind this? People naturally feel invigorated when they believe their actions hold significance and are appreciated. Focus fosters involvement, and involvement leads to achievement. Yet, perhaps the most significant impact attention has lies in how we relate to ourselves. In our rush to achieve and accumulate, we often overlook the importance of self-care. Mindfulness—the practice of immersing ourselves in the present moment—reveals that genuine wellbeing is at the heart of our experiences: pursuing goals, dedicating time to others and even engaging with our feelings.

By taking a moment to observe, we can discover a profound clarity and tranquillity that has the potential to transform our lives. In a realm where time is an actual finite commodity, the gesture of dedicating our complete focus is truly transformative. It requires no expense yet holds immense significance.

As we navigate our daily lives, constantly facing new demands on our time and energy, it's important to remember that the most valuable gift we can offer is not material wealth, but rather our full presence. Next time you're engaged in a conversation, set your phone aside. Pay close attention. Offer your focus willingly and without interruption. It might surprise you that by focussing your attention, you receive something far more valuable in return—a profound and significant bond that enhances the lives of both individuals.

(The writer is a motivator and freelance writer; views are personal)

Will the three farm laws be revived?



UTTAM GUPTA

Were the laws a missed opportunity to address the deep-seated issues faced by millions of India's struggling farmers and consumers?

Recently, a BJP Member of Parliament talked of resurrecting the three national Farm Laws. Faced with criticism from the opposition parties, a spokesperson of the BJP clarified that 'her statement does not represent the party view'. Modi - The government doesn't intend to bring back these laws.

What were those laws?

Enacted in September 2020, the most far-reaching of these laws was the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020. It allowed the Centre to regulate inter-State trade and intra-State trade, providing for freedom of choice to the farmer or trader to conduct trade and commerce while allowing traders to purchase specified farm commodities directly from farmers anywhere in the country, even outside the designated State APMCs (Agricultural Produce Market Committee).

The second law was the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020. It provided a legal framework for farmers to engage with processors, aggregators, large retailers etc in a 'fair' and 'transparent' manner.

The third law was the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020. It took off pulses, cereals, edible oil, oil seeds, onions and potatoes from the purview of this archaic law. The enactment of these laws triggered prolonged protests - mostly confined to Punjab, Haryana and Delhi. In January 2021, the Supreme Court stayed their implementation and set up a committee to undertake a thorough review. The report of the committee submitted within the set deadline of three months was never made public. Meanwhile, the farmers continued with their stir. On November 19, 2021, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced their repeal.

Was there anything wrong with them? But, first, we need to ask as to how the subsisting laws on the marketing of farm produce are treating farmers. The widely reported plight of a farmer from Maharashtra's Solapur says it all. Last year, he got a measly Rs 2.49 from the sale of 512 kg of onions to a trader at Rs 1 per kg on sale at the Solapur market yard, the total sale value was Rs 512; after deducting labour, weighing, transportation and other charges adding to Rs 509.5, the net back was Rs 2.5. Let's be clear, it isn't a profit. To arrive at it, we need to deduct from this the cost of producing 512 kg onions which includes the expenses on seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, irrigation, etc. This would result in a colossal loss. This leads to a mounting debt burden as the farmer is forced to take a loan (often at a high interest rate) to finance the loss. The condition of tens of millions of poor farmers with small land holding sizes of fewer than 2 hectares (they are about 86 per cent of the total number of land-owning farmers) is no different.

Why does the farmer get a low price? This is because she can sell her produce only in the 'designated' mandi under the State APMC Act. In the mandi,



THE APMC MANDIS CAN HANDLE ONLY A FRACTION OF THE QUANTITY FARMERS BRING TO SELL. SO, MOST OF THEM ARE FORCED TO COME TO PRIVATE LOCAL MARKETS, WHERE SALES ARE LEGALLY BARRED

arthritis - the local term for commission agents (they arrange for auction and delivery of the produce) - and the licensed trader/buyer rule the roost. The duo exploit her to the hilt by giving a low price, rejections, weighing less, delaying payment, etc. Levies such as market fees, anthias commission, rural development cess (RDC) etc further erode her net-back.

The APMC mandis can handle only a fraction of the quantity farmers bring to sell. So, most of them are forced to come to private local markets, where sales are legally barred.

At these markets, they end up selling their produce to traders at throwaway prices. The latter have the blessings of corrupt bureaucrats and politicians (in many cases, they or their kin also masquerade as traders) and hence, won't face any action for violating the law.

True, the state agencies such as The Food Corporation of India (FCI), National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd (NAFED) etc purchase in the mandis specified crops needed for running welfare Schemes such as the distribution of free food under the National Food Security Act (NFSA). They make purchases at the minimum support price (MSP) notified by the Centre. But, their purchases are limited. Except for paddy and wheat where the agencies buy only 30 per cent of farmers' produce, for all other crops their purchase is minuscule. Even so only 6 per cent of farmers - mostly rich with larger land holdings - get the ben-

efit of government procurement. In short, under the existing State APMC laws, most poor farmers have no hope of getting a better price. They are forced to live in abject poverty and run high debt leading to even suicides that have become a national phenomenon.

The millions of consumers too are at the receiving end. They pay high prices for the foodstuff they buy from the market. People getting free food under NFSA 820 million, but that leaves out a mammoth number who buy their needs from the market; even NFSA beneficiaries depend on the market for buying their needs other than wheat/rice. The extra money they pay fills the coffers of the commission agents, traders and middlemen. Retail inflation very often gets out of control primarily because food inflation (it has a share of 40 per cent in the retail basket) remains sticky most of the time. It remains so even when there is a normal monsoon enabling surplus production. This, in turn, has a lot to do with the cartelization of the supply chain by a few middlemen working in collaboration with the political brass in states - abetted by the State APMC laws.

High inflation doesn't let the RBI reduce interest rates and that imposes an additional burden on millions of borrowers whose EMIs remain high; small businesses getting crippled due to the high cost of servicing their loans. Even the government's budget comes under stress due to higher interest payments on its debt. The solution lies in liberating all such stakeholders from the stran-

glehold of the big sharks. The way forward is to give more options to the farmers to sell and more options to consumers to buy. This is precisely what the three laws sought to do. The laws legitimized sales on all non-APMC platforms such as private traders, processors, aggregators, exporters etc without disturbing APMC mandis. These opened up unlimited opportunities for farmers to sell their produce, thereby helping them get higher prices, which could even exceed MSP depending on the demand-supply. They don't have to pay any levies for selling at non-APMC platforms. These enabled the farmers to enter into contracts with enterprises (private companies, cooperatives etc) that would not only give them an assured market at pre-set good prices but also the timely supply of quality inputs viz. fertilizers, seeds, pesticides etc and good agronomic practices for securing higher yield and quality foodstuff. In short, the laws gave a fair deal to millions of poor farmers on one hand and millions of consumers on the other. This would have reined in the unjust enrichment of a few and left more money to the farmers and consumers. Resulting lower inflation would prompt RBI to reduce interest rates helping millions of borrowers at one level and improving the Centre's fiscal health. ALAS! Their withdrawal has restored the status quo. Thanks to the political compulsion of the BJP, it is unable to even talk about those laws; forget resurrection.

(The writer is a policy analyst; views expressed are personal)

India and UNICEF: Celebrating 75 years of transformative partnership for child welfare

India and UNICEF have worked hand in hand, advancing the health, safety and rights of millions of children across India

For 75 years, India and UNICEF have worked together, advancing the rights and well-being of millions of children. The long-standing trusted and multi-faceted partnership is deeply rooted in shared values and a commitment to children's wellbeing in India and around the world, encompassing child health, safety, protection, equality, rights and wellbeing. An important, but lesser-known aspect of India's partnership with UNICEF is India's role as a key source of procurement of lifesaving supplies around the world. From 2016 to 2023, India supplied to UNICEF, commodities worth \$3 billion, including vaccines, and health supplies essential for



CYNTHIA MCCAFFREY

UNICEF's humanitarian and development response to children's health and nutrition needs, globally. In 2023 alone, India ranked as the third-largest source of essential supplies for UNICEF, with procurements totalling \$483 million. Of this expenditure, approximately 74 per cent was allocated to vaccines, underscoring India's integral role in supporting

global immunisation efforts. India's collaboration with UNICEF in advancing global health was best exemplified during the COVID-19 pandemic. Demonstrating exceptional leadership, resilience, and innovation, India, as the world's largest vaccine producer, played a key role in providing COVID-19 vaccines globally. During 2021 and 2022 in partnership with UNICEF, India supplied 292 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines under the COVAX initiative to 47 countries, all of which were delivered to low and middle-income countries. Efficiently managed supply chains that allow children, adolescents, and mothers access to quality, safe, equi-

table, and affordable health-care and essential services are critical. UNICEF supports the government in establishing and managing these agile, cost-effective, and sustainable end-to-end supply chains. These have also strengthened UNICEF's ability to respond swiftly to emergencies and ensure the sustained availability of essential supplies. During COVID-19, UNICEF supported the government address critical challenges by installing oxygen plants, providing medical equipment, and distributing PPE equipment, strengthening the country's pandemic response. In fact, over the past decades, UNICEF supported the government's efforts



to strengthen immunisation systems by investing in the capacity building of health workers, upgrading and expanding cold chain capacity, and introducing electronic management information systems to track progress.

These efforts have improved the system's resilience, preparing the country for future public health emergencies. Supplies are essential to fulfil children's rights and innovations with sustainable supply chains are important considerations.

By partnering with the private sector, UNICEF promotes product innovation, digital transformation, and sustainable procurement, aligning with national priorities and SDG-12 on responsible consumption. In India, UNICEF works with suppliers to adopt eco-friendly business practices, ensuring essential supplies are sourced ethically, supporting both environmental goals and child welfare. Both India and UNICEF recognise that the well-being of children is inextricably linked to the prosperity of future generations.

India has made significant progress in reducing child mortality, increasing immunisation coverage, achieving high enrolment in primary

education, and improving access to sanitation and clean water. The 75th anniversary of the collaboration between UNICEF and the Government of India this year is a historic milestone that bears evidence of the legacy of progress. India's collaboration with UNICEF has remained steadfast which has accomplished millions of children having been vaccinated, educated, and lifted out of poverty. UNICEF remains committed to supporting India, for every child in the country to have equal access and opportunities that help them realize their dreams and aspirations.

(The writer is Representative, UNICEF India; views are personal)

Pak suicide attack kills two Chinese nationals, suspected militant

PTI ■ KARACHI
Two Chinese nationals were killed and 17 people injured in a suicide attack by a Baloch insurgent group late at night that targeted a convoy of Chinese workers near Pakistan's busiest airport here, authorities said on Monday.
The explosion near the Jinnah International Airport on Sunday night also killed a suspected suicide bomber. The attack is the latest in a string of violence against Chinese workers in Pakistan. It comes less than two weeks before the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's summit to be held in the national capital.
The banned Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) claimed responsibility for the attack, saying the blast was a suicide attack targeting a convoy of Chinese engineers and investors leaving the Jinnah International Airport.
The attack occurred less than a mile from the airport's main terminal. Authorities briefly suspended all traffic going to the airport.
It targeted a convoy carrying

Chinese staff of an electric power company.
Initial investigations show that a small vehicle was used to carry out the suicide attack when the vehicle carrying the Chinese nationals reached the main signal near the Karachi Airport," Deputy Inspector General of Police Asif Sheikh said.
He said that it appeared the vehicle used by the suicide bomber had explosives and as soon as it hit the target it exploded.
The Chinese embassy confirmed that two of its nationals had died and another was injured, along with "some local casualties".
"Three bodies were brought to the hospital and two of them are Chinese nationals," surgeon Dr Summaiya at the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical College (JPMC) said.
A senior police official at the Counter Terrorism Department said the third body could be that of the suicide bomber.
Another police official said that the explosion was heard far and wide in the city and an oil

tanker which was at the signal had also caught fire and exploded.
"It was the tanker explosion which caused so many injuries and damage to at least a dozen vehicles in the close range," he said.
Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif called the attack a "heinous act" and offered his condolences to the Chinese people. "Pakistan stands committed to safeguarding our Chinese friends," he wrote on X.
Pakistan's Foreign Office (FO) on Monday said last night's terror attack near the Karachi airport would not "go unpunished". "This deplorable act of terrorism is an attack not only on Pakistan but also on the enduring friendship between Pakistan and China. We remain resolute in bringing to justice those responsible for this cowardly attack, including the Majeed Brigade," the FO said in a statement. "Pakistan's security and law enforcement agencies will spare no effort in apprehending the perpetrators and their facilitators. This barbaric act will not go unpunished," the FO said.

It said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was in close contact with the Chinese embassy for coordination and facilitation. "Pakistan and China are close partners and iron brothers, united by a bond of mutual respect and shared destiny. Pakistan reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the safety and security of Chinese nationals, projects, and institutions in Pakistan, and will continue to work hand in hand with our Chinese brothers to defeat the forces of terror," it said.
Thousands of Chinese personnel are working in Pakistan on several projects under the aegis of the USD 60 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).
The Chinese embassy on Monday asked its citizens and Chinese enterprises in Pakistan to be vigilant and to "do their best to take safety precautions". It also asked Pakistan to thoroughly investigate the incident and "severely punish the murderer".
In a statement, the Pakistan Airport Authority (PAA) said that airport buildings and assets remained safe in the

incident. Flight schedules at the airport are continuing as normal.
Balochistan, bordering Iran and Afghanistan, is home to a long-running violent insurgency. Baloch insurgent groups have previously carried out several attacks targeting CPEC projects.
The BLA accuses China and Islamabad of exploitation of the resource-rich province, a charge rejected by the authorities. It has fought a long-running insurgency for a separate homeland.
The group in the last two years carried out similar suicide bomb attacks in Karachi targeting foreign nationals.
The BLA in March this year claimed responsibility for an attack on a Pakistani naval air base near China-run Gwadar port. In April 2022, the group killed three Chinese tutors and a Pakistani driver in a suicide bombing near Karachi University's Confucius Institute.
In November 2018, gunmen killed at least four people in an attack on the Chinese consulate in Karachi.



Security officials examine the site of an explosion that caused injuries and destroyed vehicles outside the Karachi airport, Pakistan, early Monday. AP/PTI

Life returns to normal in Pakistan's capital, Imran Khan's party ends protest

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD
Life was returning to normal in the Pakistani capital on Monday after the violent protest by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf supporters subsided in the wake of high drama involving the mysterious disappearance of the party leader Ali Amin Gandapur. Gandapur, the chief minister of the restive Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province in the northwest, is a mercurial PTI leader and confidante of jailed party founder Imran Khan.
With shoulder-length flowing hair, a thick moustache, a broad chest and considerable height, he boasts a towering personality.
Following Imran Khan's directives, he announced that the party will stage a protest at the famous D-Chowk of Islamabad in the heart of the city on Friday - the same venue where the PTI had organised a sit-in for 126 days in 2014.
Leading a caravan of dozens of vehicles and overcoming road blockades and resistance by police, he finally managed to reach the capital on Saturday afternoon.
After arriving in the national capital, he left his supporters and went to the KP House, the property of his government in Islamabad, for refreshments, but disappeared from there.
After remaining incommunicado for more than 24 hours, he suddenly appeared Sunday evening at the provincial assembly building in Peshawar. He made a fiery speech to the assembly but failed to give exact details about his whereabouts when he was not accessible to his family or party.
As the media frenzy focused on his disappearance, hundreds of protestors whom he had led to Islamabad silently melted away and probably went back to their homes, except those arrested by police.
As the protestors went away, the authorities began to lift the siege of the city, clearing most of the roads and restoring the

suspended mobile services.
By Monday morning, life returned to normal in twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Public transportation resumed its regular routes, although the Islamabad Metro Bus service remains partially suspended.
Roads and thoroughfares in Islamabad had reopened. Containers obstructing major arteries in Islamabad and Rawalpindi have been removed. Government offices, private businesses, and schools have reopened.
Civic bodies were busy at several places in Islamabad repairing and renovating sidewalks, roads and bridges ahead of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit to be held here next week.
Meanwhile, Pakistan authorities registered new cases under terrorism laws against Imran Khan and dozens of his supporters for violence and vandalism in Lahore and Rawalpindi.
The Express Tribune newspaper reported that according to the FIR lodged in Lahore, police accused that Khan has been provided with extraordinary privileges inside prison, which allowed him to communicate with his party leaders and incite them to engage in violent actions.
Additionally, several cases have been registered against PTI workers for violating Section 144 by holding protest in the city. The protest was prohibited under the emergency law, which was in effect at the time. Meanwhile, a case was registered at Naseerabad Police Station in Rawalpindi against Khan and 300 party workers under the Anti-Terrorism Act. So far, 16 protesters have been arrested. On Monday, the Punjab government banned Imran Khan from meeting his family members, lawyers and party leaders till October 18, citing "security concerns". Khan has been lodged in Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail in multiple cases since August 2023.

Pak's Punjab govt bans Imran from meeting wife

Lahore (PTI): Pakistan's Punjab government on Monday banned jailed former premier Imran Khan from meeting his family members, lawyers and party leaders till October 18 due to "security concerns", amidst his party staging anti-government protests in several cities.
The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Khan's Adiala Jail in multiple cases since August 2023.
Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has accused PTI of trying to disrupt the upcoming Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit scheduled to be held on Oct 15 and 16 in Islamabad and emphasised that the government will ensure that these plans do not succeed.
"Incarcerated PTI founder Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi have been banned from meeting their family, lawyers, and party leaders at Adiala Jail, Rawalpindi, till Oct 18," a Punjab government official said. The government has taken the decision in view of "security concerns", he said.
According to sources, the government has taken the decision in anticipation of the upcoming SCO summit.
The coalition government led by PML-N's Shehbaz Sharif has alleged that PTI is staging protests in Islamabad to sabotage the summit. The Pakistan Army has been called in to provide security for the SCO summit. Earlier, security agencies arrested six Adiala jail staff for aiding the PTI founder.
Meanwhile, a PTI spokesperson said its legal team of Khan will file a petition in court, requesting the lifting of a ban on meetings with Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi. "Justice Sardar Jaz of Islamabad High Court had ordered the authorities not too long ago to arrange meetings via video link, if not possible physically, given the number of cases Imran Khan has to deal with, legal consultation is given and, therefore should be provided," he said.

UK PM names new chief of staff in Downing Street shake-up

PTI ■ LONDON
British Prime Minister Keir Starmer on Monday named a new chief of staff after a high-profile resignation amid a wider shake-up of his top team at 10 Downing Street to mark his Labour Party government's first 100 days in office.
Sue Gray, previously a top civil servant appointed by former prime minister Boris Johnson to investigate the partygate scandal of COVID lockdown law breaching parties within the then Tory government, resigned as Starmer's top aide saying the "intense commentary around my position risked becoming a distraction to the government's vital work of change". She was referring to weeks of media revelations and controversies surrounding her role, including her salary package of GBP 170,000 being GBP 3,000 more than the Prime Minister being leaked to the BBC.
"It is for that reason I have chosen to stand aside, and I look forward to continuing to support the prime minister in my new role," said Gray, who has been demoted to a part-time role as Starmer's envoy for nations and regions.



Morgan McSweeney, the Labour Party's former campaign director who masterminded July's general election landslide for the party, will replace Gray as the new chief of staff. His appointment comes alongside political director Vidhya Alakeson and director of government relations Jill Cuthbertson being promoted to deputy chiefs of staff. Nin Pandit, the director of the Downing Street policy unit until now, has been appointed

principal private secretary to Starmer, while former journalist James Lyons will join to head up a new strategic communications team. "I'm really pleased to be able to bring in such talented and experienced individuals into my team. This shows my absolute determination to deliver the change the country voted for," said Starmer in a statement.
He thanked his outgoing chief for "all the support", both in Opposition and government and her work to prepare Labour for government. "Sue has played a vital role in strengthening our relations with the regions and nations. I am delighted that she will continue to support that work," he added.
According to media reports, junior staff at Downing Street were disgruntled and some had resorted to leaks to the media at a time when Starmer and the Cabinet were battling allegations of accepting "freebies" of clothes and hospitality from wealthy party donors.
"In fewer than 100 days Sir Keir Starmer's Labour government has been thrown into chaos - he has lost his chief of staff who has been at the centre of the scandal the Labour Party has been engulfed by," a Conservative Party spokesperson reacted. Meanwhile, in a statement to mark the anniversary of the October 7 Hamas attacks in Israel, Starmer said the UK must "unequivocally stand with the Jewish community and unite as a country".
"As a father, a husband, a son, a brother - meeting the families of those who lost their loved ones last week was unimaginable.
Their grief and pain are ours, and it is shared in homes across the land. A year on, that collective grief has not diminished or waned," he said. He added: "We must never look the other way in the face of hate.
We must also not look the other way as civilians bear the ongoing dire consequences of this conflict in the Middle East. I reiterate my call for immediate ceasefires in Gaza and Lebanon, and for the removal of all restrictions on humanitarian aid into Gaza.
"We will not falter in our pursuit of peace and on this day of pain and sorrow, we honour those we lost, and continue in our determination to return those still held hostage, help those who are suffering, and secure a better future for the Middle East."

World's rivers faced driest year in three decades in 2023: UN weather agency

Geneva (AP): The UN weather agency on Monday said that 2023 was the driest year in more than three decades for the world's rivers, as the record-hot year underpinned a drying up of water flows and contributed to prolonged droughts in some places.
The World Meteorological Organisation in a report also said glaciers that feed rivers in many countries suffered the largest loss of mass in the last five decades, warning that ice melt can threaten long-term water security for millions of people globally.
"Water is the canary in the coalmine of climate change. We receive distress signals in the form of increasingly extreme rainfall, floods and droughts which wreak a heavy toll on lives, ecosystems and economies," said WMO Secretary-General Celeste Saulo, releasing the report on



Monday. She said rising temperatures had in part led the hydrological cycle to become "more erratic and unpredictable" in ways that can produce "either too much or too little water" through both droughts and floods.
The weather agency, citing figures from UN Water, says some 3.6 billion people face inadequate access to water for at least one month a year - and that figure is expected to rise to 5 billion by 2050.
The world faced the hottest year on record in 2023, and the summer of this year was also the hottest summer ever -

raising warning signs for a possible new annual record in 2024. "In the (last) 33 years of data, we had never such a large area around the world which was under such dry conditions," said Stefan Uhlenbrook, director of hydrology, water and cryosphere at WMO. WMO called for improvements in data collection and sharing to help clear up the real picture for water resources and help countries and communities take action in response. The report said the southern United States, Central America and South American countries Argentina, Brazil, Peru and Uruguay faced widespread drought conditions and "the lowest water levels ever observed in Amazon and in Lake Titicaca," on the border between Peru and Bolivia.
WMO said half of the world faced dry-river-flow conditions last year.

Russian court sentences 72-year-old American to nearly seven years in prison

Moscow (AP): A Russian court on Monday sentenced a 72-year-old American in a closed trial to nearly seven years in prison for allegedly fighting as a mercenary in Ukraine. Prosecutors said Stephen Hubbard signed a contract with the Ukrainian military after Russia sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022 and he fought alongside them until being captured two months later. He was sentenced to six years and 10 months in a general-security prison. Prosecutors had called for a sentence of seven years in a maximum-security prison. Hubbard, from the state of Michigan, is the first American known to have been convicted on charges of fighting as a mercenary in the Ukrainian conflict. The charges carried a poten-

tial sentence of 15 years, but prosecutors asked that his age be taken into account along with his admission of guilt, Russian news reports said.
Arrests of Americans have become increasingly common in Russia in recent years.
Concern has risen that Russia could be targeting US nationals for arrest to use later as bargaining chips in talks to bring back Russians convicted of crimes in the US and Europe.
Also on Monday, a court in the city of Voronezh sentenced American Robert Gilman to seven years and 1 month for allegedly assaulting law enforcement officers while serving a sentence for another assault.
According to Russian news reports, Gilman was arrested

in 2022 for causing a disturbance while intoxicated on a passenger train and then assaulted a police officer while in custody. He is serving a 3 1/2-year sentence on that charge.
Last year, he assaulted a prison inspector during a cell check, then hit an official of the Investigative Committee, resulting in the new sentence, state news agency RIA-Novosti said.
The US and Russia in August completed their largest prisoner swap in post-Soviet history, a deal involving 24 people, many months of negotiations and concessions from other European countries, which released Russians in their custody as part of the exchange. Several US citizens remain behind bars in Russia following the swap.

Myanmar's ex-ruling party's member dies while serving prison sentence

Bangkok (AP): Zaw Myint Maung, a senior member of Myanmar's former ruling party arrested during the 2021 military takeover, died Monday while serving a prison sentence that was considered politically motivated. He was 72.
He was a close colleague of ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi and spokesperson of her National League for Democracy party. He had been a second vice president and chief minister of the central Mandalay region before the army seized control of the government in 2021, arresting him, Suu Kyi and many top members of her NLD party and government.
Zaw Myint Maung had been jailed at least twice under previous governments for his political activities.
He had had leukemia since 2019. His death was confirmed by Tun Kyi, a party colleague from Mandalay, and another friend, who insisted on anonymity for fear of being punished by the authorities.
In a statement expressing condolences, the National Unity Government, the main shadow opposition group organizing against army rule, lauded Zaw Myint Maung for being "unwaveringly committed to the democratic cause, fighting alongside the people and other democratic forces to dismantle military dictatorship".
The NLD won a landslide victory in Myanmar's 2020 election, but the army seized power Feb. 1, 2021, the day it was supposed to begin a second five-year term in office. The country now is enmeshed in civil war between the military and pro-democracy forces allied with armed ethnic minority groups. Zaw Myint Maung was serving a prison sentence of 29 years after being convicted in closed court in 2021 and 2022 on charges of violating coronavirus restrictions.

India, Maldives strengthen ties; inaugurate new runway, RuPay card

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The inauguration of a new runway in the Maldives built under an airport redevelopment project assisted by India and the official launch of the RuPay card in the island nation on Monday are aimed at boosting economic ties and tourism cooperation between the two countries.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu jointly virtually inaugurated the runway at the Hanimadhoo International Airport and also witnessed via weblink a live transaction using a RuPay payment service card in the Maldives. The launch took place after the two leaders held extensive talks which Muizzu in his press statement said were to "chart a new path for the future".

The Maldivian president accompanied by First Lady Madam Sajidha Mohamed and a Maldivian delegation arrived in India on Sunday evening. Though the Maldivian president attended PM Modi's swearing-in ceremony in June, it is his first bilateral visit to India. Prior to the launch of different India-assisted projects in the Maldives, a small official video was played in which details about these projects were shared in the presence



of the two leaders at the Hyderabad House. "The bonds between India and Maldives stretch back centuries, woven together through rich trade and cultural exchanges," it was narrated in the video. Over the years, this relationship has evolved, characterised by "mutual respect and unwavering support", underpinned by India's Neighbourhood First policy and SAGAR vision, it said. India has always been the first responder in the Maldives during times of crisis.

"Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Mohamed Muizzu, this relationship is to achieve greater heights," it added. The RuPay card launch today will pave the way for strengthened India-Maldives relations by boosting tourism and economic cooperation, according to the India-Maldives video. "It will allow Indian tourists to make cashless transactions easily, reducing cost and enhancing convenience, especially in the Maldives tourism sector," it said.

The inauguration of the new runway at Hanimadhoo International Airport marks a "significant milestone in the airport's ongoing expansion project". Its redevelopment, under an "Indian Line of Credit of USD 132 million", aims to provide complete new infrastructure including runway, ATC tower, ARFF block, hangar, cargo facilities, and passenger terminal building, it added. Prime Minister Modi in his press statement after the bilateral talks said President Muizzu's visit adds "another chapter to our ties".

DGCA issues advisory on Boeing 737 rudder risks



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Aviation regulator DGCA on Monday issued an advisory to Indian airlines operating Boeing 737 planes regarding the potential risk of a jammed rudder control system. The move follows the recent probe report by the US National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) that highlighted safety concerns involving Boeing 737 aircraft lanes equipped with Collins Aerospace SVO-730 Rudder Rollout Guidance Actuators. Against the backdrop of the potential risk of a jammed or restricted rudder control system, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has issued safety recommendations to the Indian carriers. Currently, Air India Express, Akasa Air and SpiceJet

operate Boeing 737 planes. DGCA said all flight crews are to be informed through a circular/advisory regarding the possibility of a jammed or restricted rudder control system. "Appropriate mitigations must be communicated to help crews identify and handle such a situation," it added. Further, all operators have been asked to conduct a safety risk assessment for aircraft to evaluate and mitigate the risk associated with the rudder control system. The regulator also said that all Category III B approach, landing, and rollout operations, including practice or actual autoland, must be discontinued for these planes until further notice. Category III B pertains to operations in low visibility conditions. Among other measures, airlines have been asked to mandatorily include discussion about potential rudder control system issues as a mandatory topic in recurrent training sessions. It will also be included in the Instrument Rating/Proficiency Checks (IR/PPC) during pre-simulator briefings. "Operators have been instructed to include specific exercises in Recurrent Training and IR/PPC that simulate scenarios involving a jammed or restricted rudder control system, including rollout procedures. "Appropriate flight crew responses and mitigations should be practised during these exercises," the regulator said in a release. DGCA also said the interim measures aim to enhance safety and ensure that flight crews are well-prepared to handle potential rudder control issues effectively, transparency and efficiency in services provided to apple growers," the chief minister said. "HPMC has enhanced its processing capacity, with this year's crushing capacity increasing from 21,000 MT to 39,000 MT compared to the previous year. Additionally, the grading and packaging line capacity has been enhanced from 15,900 MT to 33,900 MT.

Automobile sales in India drop 9 per cent amid sluggish demand: FADA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Automobile retail sales in India declined 9 per cent year-on-year in September amid a massive buildup of passenger vehicle inventory due to sluggish demand, dealer's body FADA said on Monday, urging original equipment manufacturers to take corrective steps. The overall registrations declined to 17,23,330 units last month from 18,99,192 units in September 2023, as most of the categories including passenger vehicles and two-wheelers witnessed a year-on-year (Y-O-Y) drop. "Despite the onset of festivals such as Ganesh Chaturthi and Onam, dealers have reported that the performance has been largely stagnant," Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) President C S Vigneshwar

said in a statement. Given the critical festive season around the corner, FADA urges OEMs (Original Equipment Manufacturers) to take immediate corrective measures to avoid a financial setback, he said. This suggests that overall market sentiment during these festive periods has been underwhelming, with a trend leaning towards flat or negative growth, he added. Passenger vehicle sales declined 19 per cent Y-O-Y to 2,75,681 units last month from 3,39,543 units in the year-ago period. "Seasonal factors such as Shradh and Pitrapaksha, coupled with heavy rainfall and a sluggish economy, have exacerbated the situation, leaving dealers with historically high inventory levels of 80-85 days' equivalent to 7.9 lakh vehicles worth Rs 79,000 crore,"



Vigneshwar said. FADA also calls on the Reserve Bank of India to issue an advisory to banks, mandating stricter channel funding policies based only on dealer consent and on actual collateral, to prevent dealers from facing additional financial pressure due to unsold stock, he

added. This is the final opportunity for PV OEMs to recalibrate and support market recovery before it's too late, he said. Two-wheeler retail sales saw a dip of 8 per cent Y-O-Y to 12,04,259 units due to low consumer sentiment, poor inquiries, and reduced walk-ins, FADA said. Shradh period and heavy rains further impacted demand, resulting in delayed purchases and a subdued market environment, it added. Commercial vehicle registrations declined 10 per cent year on year last month to 74,324 units. While there was positive sentiment and marginal growth in regions supported by infrastructure projects, overall demand remained weak due to low government spending, extended monsoon delays and seasonal challenges, the industry body said. Three-wheeler sales retail sales rose marginally to 1,06,524 units last month as compared with 1,05,827 units in September 2023. Tractor sales rose 15 per cent year on year to 74,324 units last month. For the April-September period, this fiscal, overall

retail sales across segments witnessed a growth of 7 per cent to 1,19,15,963 units against 1,11,83,734 units in the same period of last fiscal. Passenger vehicle registrations rose 1 per cent to 18,70,991 units as compared with 18,51,249 units in the year-ago period. Two-wheeler sales increased 9 per cent year on year to 85,66,531 in the first half of the current fiscal. Commercial vehicle registrations, however, fell marginally to 4,77,381 units in the period under review from 4,80,488 units in H1 of last fiscal. On near-term sales outlook, FADA said that while dealers and OEMs are betting on robust festive sales, especially in rural markets where positive cash flow and better agricultural conditions are expected to spur demand, the outcome remains uncertain.



India's domestic air passenger traffic to touch 300 million by 2030: Naidu

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's domestic air passenger traffic is projected to touch 300 million by 2030 and about USD 11 billion is being spent to develop airports, Civil Aviation Minister K Rammoan Naidu said on Monday. The minister also said India and France can work together to develop a robust global SAF (Sustainable Aviation Fuel) supply chain. He was speaking at the conference organised by the French Aerospace Industries Association (GIFAS) in the national capital.

India is one of the world's fastest-growing civil aviation markets and airlines are expanding their fleets well as networks to meet the rising demand. Naidu said the domestic air passenger traffic is projected to touch 300 million by 2030 while 200 more airports are expected to be developed in the next 20-25 years. Currently, India has 157 airports, heliports and waterterms. The number of operational airports is expected to reach 200 by the end of 2025. The potential for partnership between India and France is immense, the minister added.

India to establish 100 food testing labs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Union Food Processing Minister Chirag Paswan on Monday said the government will build 100 food testing labs and 50 food irradiation centres as part of its efforts to boost processing levels and ensure quality. The minister asked the industry not to compromise on the quality of products as this will affect not only brands but the country's image as well. He said the ministry will set up 100 food testing labs to ensure that products meet standard norms set by regulators. The minister assured the industry that he would try to address any issues and challenges affecting the growth of the food processing



sector. Addressing a Ficci seminar, Paswan emphasised the need to minimise wastage and promote value addition. The minister also exhorted industry players to make India a global food basket. "Indian food products should become popular globally. Indian food standards should be recognised as global standards," Paswan said. To boost processing levels, Paswan said as many as 50 food irradiation units will be established. On the sidelines of the event,

he said the ministry has already invited Expressions of Interest (EoIs) from prospective entrepreneurs to set up multi-product food irradiation units. These units will be set up under Integrated Cold Chain & Value Addition Infrastructure (cold chain scheme), a component of Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPADA Yojana (PMKSY) with support from the ministry. Financial assistance in the form of grants-in-aid/subsidies will be provided to the eligible projects under the demand-driven cold chain scheme. Paswan said the food industry has been demanding reduction in GST on some items and he has taken up the issue at the right forum.

IT department invites public suggestions for I-T Act review

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Income Tax department on Monday invited public inputs for review of the six-decade old I-T Act with regard to simplification of language, litigation reduction, compliance reduction, and obsolete provisions. Pursuant to the Budget announcement by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for a comprehensive review of the Income-tax Act, 1961, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) had set up an internal committee to oversee the review and make the Act

concise, clear, and easy to understand, which will reduce disputes, litigation, and provide greater tax certainty to taxpayers. "The committee invites public inputs and suggestions in four categories: simplification of language, litigation reduction, compliance reduction, and obsolete provisions," the CBDT said. A webpage on the e-filing portal -- <https://eportal.incometax.gov.in/iec/foservices/#/prelogin/ita-comprehensive-review> -- has been launched and the public can access the

page by entering their mobile number and validating it via OTP. Suggestions should specify the relevant provision of the Income-tax Act, 1961 or Income-tax Rules, 1962 (mentioning the specific section, sub-section, clause, rule, sub-rule, or form number), as the case may be, to which the suggestion relates under the aforementioned four categories. The Finance Minister in the 2024-25 Budget presented in July had proposed that the I-T law review will be completed in six months.

Tata Power-DDL wins the prestigious Deming Prize 2024

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tata Power Delhi Distribution Limited wins 'Deming Prize 2024' in recognition of its Total Quality Management (TQM) practices. Although, the award ceremony to felicitate the winners will take place in November 2024. The Deming Grand Prize, is one of the longstanding quality awards presented by the Union of Japanese Scientists and Engineers (JUSE). It is awarded to companies that not only achieve the Deming Prize but also consistently maintain and improve their TQM standards for an extended period. Tata Power-DDL has been on the TQM journey for over six years towards

becoming a global benchmark. With this recognition, the company has set the benchmark of being the First Power Distribution Company in the world to achieve this feat. The TQM practices have enabled the transformation of the processes and elevated the business performance to benchmark levels. Commenting on the win, Mr. Gajanan S. Kale, Chief Executive Officer, Tata Power Delhi Distribution Limited said, "We're deeply honored that Tata Power-DDL has been awarded the Deming Prize. It is a remarkable achievement for us, signifying global recognition of the company's unwavering commitment to excellence in quality management practices."

Zhejiang International Trade Exhibition kicks off in Delhi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The 2024 Zhejiang International Trade Exhibition commenced on October 5 at the Pragati Maidan Convention and Exhibition Center in New Delhi. Running until October 7, the event is headlined by the 39th MEDICALL exhibition, widely regarded as the premier medical trade show in India and South Asia. The exhibition has attracted medical manufacturers and providers from countries such as Germany, the United States, Japan, South Korea, and Italy. A key feature of the three-day event is the dedicated

Zhejiang area, comprising 70 booths representing 41 companies from cities like Hangzhou, Wenzhou, Jinhua, Yiwu, Shaoxing, Taizhou, Jiayang, and Huzhou. Exhibits cover a broad range of products including medical devices, consumables, in vitro diagnostics, disinfectants, protective equipment, rehabilitation care, traditional medicine, home healthcare solutions, and cutting-edge innovations in smart healthcare and medical industry services. Prominent Zhejiang-based companies are showcasing their advanced products and technologies, further cementing the reputation of the "Made in Zhejiang".

UGC-recognized beauty, wellness programs launched

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Medhavi Skills University (MSU), India's largest skills university, has partnered with Orane International, a leading skilling pioneer, to introduce UGC-recognized degree programs in the beauty and wellness sector. The collaboration aims to address the skills gap in the industry by offering specialized B.Voc (Bachelor of Vocation) courses in Cosmetology and Makeup Artistry. This partnership, formalized through an MoU signed on September 24, combines MSU's expertise in industry-

led education with Orane's extensive network of over 120 skill centers across India and abroad. The initiative will provide hands-on training to professionals in the beauty and wellness industry, projected to reach 75 lakh crore by 2030, and which employs a 70% female workforce. Key highlights of the partnership include industry-driven curricula with a 70% practical component, the use of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) framework for experienced professionals, and a focus on empowering women through formal qualifications.

INBRIEF

REC LIMITED DISBURSES LOAN IN H1 FY25
GURGAON: REC Limited, a maharatna CPSE under the Ministry of Power and a leading NBFC, has disbursed loans worth ₹90,955 crore, up 20.10% year-on-year for the half year ended September 30, 2024. The quantum of renewable energy loans grew 92.68% year-on-year to Rs. 11,297 crore.

INDUCTION PROGRAM HELD FOR LL.B CLASSES AT GNDU



AMRITSAR: Department of laws, GNDU, RC JALANDHAR, organised an induction programme for its new batch of students in LL.B TYC 2024-2027 and BALL.B 2024-2029. The event aimed to welcome and familiarise students with academic environment.

EDUCATION COLLEGES ZONAL YOUTH FESTIVAL

AMRITSAR: The Education Colleges Zonal Youth festival of Guru Nanak Dev University will be held on October 9, 2024 in the Dashmesh Auditorium of the University. Students-artists from Education Colleges affiliated to the University are participating in this zone. As many as 00 student-artists are expected to participate in 35 items of Music, Theatre, Dance, Literary & Fine Arts during this festival. Dr. Amandeep Singh, In-charge Youth Welfare said that on the first day ie October 9 the festival begins with the competitions of Costume Parade, Mimicry, Skit, Geet/Gazal & Folk Song will be organized in the Dashmesh Auditorium.

SINDHU, SEN EYE COMEBACK AFTER PARIS SETBACK

ARCTIC OPEN SUPER 500



PTI ■ VANTAA (FINLAND)
Star shuttlers PV Sindhu and Lakshya Sen will lead the Indian contingent at the Arctic Open Super 500 tournament commencing here on Tuesday, as they eagerly look to reclaim their

momentum on the international stage following a medal-less outing at the Paris Olympics. This tournament marks the first outing for Sindhu and Sen since the Olympic Games, and they are keen to reset their goals. The duo has reassessed

their performances and implemented changes to regain their rhythm. Sindhu has roped in Anup Sridhar and Korean legend Lee Syun II as her new coaches, moving on from her previous coach Indonesia's Agus Dwi Santoso.

Sen, who narrowly missed a medal in Paris, spent time at the Red Bull Arena in Austria for physical assessment. In the opening round, Sindhu, who exited in the round of 16 in Paris, will face familiar rival Canada's Michelle Li, while Sen, who lost in the bronze

medal play-off, will compete against Denmark's Rasmus Gemke. Double Olympic medallist Sindhu is favoured to overcome Li and could face 18-year-old Japanese sensation Tomako Miyazaki, the 2022 junior world champion, in the

next round, an opponent against whom she lost at the Swiss Open earlier this year. For Sen, it's a chance for revenge against Gemke, having lost to him at the India Open in 2023. If he overcomes Gemke, he might face seventh-seeded Chou Tien Chen of Chinese Taipei.

Kidambi Srikanth, returning to action at the Macau Open after a four-month injury layoff, will compete in the qualifiers alongside younger compatriots Kiran George and Sathish Kumar Karunakaran. Former world number one Srikanth is set to face George, while Sathish will battle against France's Arnaud Merkle.

In women's singles, besides Sindhu, in-form Malvika Bansod and Aakarshi Kashyap are also in contention. Malvika, who reached the quarterfinals at the China Open Super 1000, will open against World No. 24 Sung Shuo Yun of Chinese Taipei, while Aakarshi will be up against Yvonne Li of Germany in the first round. Another promising player, Unnati Hooda, who won the 2022 Odisha Masters, will take on Heli Neiman of Israel in the qualifiers. While there is no Indian representation in men's doubles, Rituparna Panda and Swetaparna Panda will compete in women's doubles, and Sathish will partner with Aadya Variyath in mixed doubles.



Women's Champions League begins with reinforced Barcelona going for third straight title

AP ■ MADRID

Barcelona will go for its third straight Women's Champions League title with a squad boosted by Poland's star striker Ewa Pajor and with Aitana Bonmati and Alexia Putellas playing on new contracts. The group stage of the European club competition begins Tuesday and the Catalans are trying to become only the second team after Lyon to win three titles in a row or reach five straight titles.

was runner-up last season to Barcelona.

The club hired a new coach in June, with Australian Joseph Montemurro replacing Frenchwoman Sonia Bompastor, who joined Chelsea. The contrast in experience between the sides is noticeable. Galatasaray's team was founded in 2011 and the senior team only started in 2021. As well as European success, Lyon's women's side has won a national record 17 league titles and 10 French Cups. Galatasaray will be making its competition debut after a qualifying run that included triumphs over former quarterfinalist Slavia Praha. It is the first Turkish team to get to the group stage. It won its first national title last season in only its third campaign. Wolfsburg starts against Roma. Two-time champion Wolfsburg begins its Group A campaign on Tuesday at Italian champion Roma, which drew with the German club on its last visit two years ago. Both teams will want to make a good start with Lyon and Galatasaray the other teams in Group A.

Barcelona beat Lyon in last season's final, when Ballon d'Or winners Bonmati and Putellas scored a goal each. Both had their contracts with the club extended ahead of the new season, and now they will have Pajor as a teammate. Pajor, who joined from Wolfsburg, was the competition's top scorer in 2022-23 as the German club reached a final that it lost to Barcelona despite a goal by her. In her nine seasons with Wolfsburg, Pajor won 14 titles and scored 136 goals despite a series of injuries. She was not able to win a Champions League crown even though she played in three finals and was part of a run to another. Barcelona has also added Kika Nazareth from Portuguese club Benfica. The team's first game in the competition this season will be on Wednesday against Group D rival Manchester City in a rematch of the 2020-21 quarterfinals, where the Spaniards triumphed after a 4-2 first-leg win and a 2-1 second-leg defeat in what was Barcelona's only loss that campaign.

Wolfsburg warmed up with a 5-0 rout of Leipzig in the Bundesliga on Friday, when Alexandra Popp set up three goals. The 33-year-old Popp announced her international retirement last week, meaning her focus is fully on leading Wolfsburg to more honors. She is just two games away from becoming the second player to reach 100 Champions League appearances, after Wendie Renard. Wolfsburg is unbeaten in five away meetings against Italian sides, but Roma is unbeaten in 14 home games in all competitions.

Chelsea without HayesLife after Emma Hayes has started well for Chelsea. Hayes left to take over the United States women's team in the offseason and carried on her winning ways by taking gold at the Paris Olympics. After 14 major titles she left big shoes for her replacement Bompastor to fill, but it has been an impressive start for the former Lyon coach. Chelsea opened its Super League campaign with a 1-0 win against Aston Villa and followed that by routing Crystal Palace 7-0. First up for the Blues in Group B is a home game on Tuesday with Real Madrid, which has made a perfect start in the Spanish league, winning five out of five to trail leader Barcelona on goal difference. Bayern's momentumArsenal, the 2007 winner, faces a tough opening Group C match on Wednesday at two-time defending German champion Bayern, which has made a seven-game winning start to the season, including a 1-0 victory over Wolfsburg in the German Supercup. A 1-0 win over Cologne on Saturday stretched Bayern's unbeaten run in the Bundesliga to 44 games.

Alaskan Knights beat SG Pipers to remain unbeaten in GCL



PTI ■ LONDON

Alpine SG Pipers narrowly defeated Alaskan Knights with a 9-7 score to continue their unbeaten run at the Global Chess League here. Alaskan Knights won all their five of encounters after 15 matches, the halfway stage of the tournament. Despite the team's top player, Anish Giri blundering a piece and losing to Magnus Carlsen in just 20 minutes, the Alaskan Knights came out on top garnering 58 game points. Defending champions Triveni Continental Kings climbed to second place after defeating the upGrad Mumba Masters. Continental Kings' icon, Alireza Firouzja, continued his winning streak by defeating France's top-rated player, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave. Though just three game points behind the leaders, Triveni Continental Kings has recorded three wins and two losses, earning nine match points and 55 game points. Meanwhile, the upGrad Mumba Masters sit in the fifth place with only three match points. An epic encounter between Carlsen and Nakamura highlighted the final match of the day between the Alpine SG Pipers and the American Gambits. Both the players traded winning positions in a time scramble, and the duel ultimately ended in a draw. The match came down to the youth board, where Daniel Darda defeated Jonas Bjerre, securing a narrow 9-7 victory for the Alpine SG Pipers, which placed them in third place with nine match points and 43 game points. With one win and one loss in Sunday's matches, the American Gambits hold fourth place with six match points and 33 game points. At the bottom of the standings, the Ganges Grandmasters continue to struggle, having lost their match on Sunday against American Gambits.

Former world champion Vishwanathan Anand lost to World No. 2 Hikaru Nakamura after sacrificing a queen for a drawing fortress, only to lose on time. Fritz and Dimitrov finally advance at rain-soaked Shanghai Masters

Shanghai,(AP) Two days after starting, seventh-ranked Taylor Fritz and 10th-ranked Grigor Dimitrov finally got to complete their second-round matches at the Shanghai Masters on Monday. Fritz, the U.S. Open finalist, had led 4-3 in the opening set against Frenchman Terence Atmane when rain suspended play on Saturday at the Qizhong Forest Sports City Arena, and then washed out all matches on the outside courts until Monday.

The 26-year-old American needed two tiebreakers to see off the No. 161-ranked Atmane 7-6 (4), 7-6 (5), with only one break of serve for each in the 122-minute match. Fritz will play Japanese qualifier Yosuke Watanuki in the third round.

Dimitrov, playing in his 100th Masters event, resumed Monday with a set lead but down a break in the second against Zizou Bergs. The No.73-ranked Bulgarian converted his advantage to take the second set before Dimitrov responded by breaking Bergs three times - for the loss of one of his own service games, to clinch the match 6-3, 3-6, 6-2.

The 33-year-old Bulgarian will play Australian Alexei Popyrin in the third round. Also, U.S. Open semifinalist Frances Tiafoe routed Zhou Yi of China 6-2, 6-4, while Tallon Griekspoor beat the 26th-seeded Jordan Thompson 6-3, 6-2 and Roman Safiullin had a 6-4, 6-2 win over Alexander Bublik of Kazakhstan.

Later Monday, No. 16-ranked Ben Shelton plays Roberto Carballes Baena of Spain in a third-round match, with the winner to meet top-ranked Jannik Sinner in the 4th. Wuhan OpenNo. 12-ranked Beatriz Haddad-Maia beat Madison Keys of the U.S. 7-6 (7), 6-2 in the opening match of the Wuhan Open.

The Brazilian, winner of the Seoul Open last month for her fourth career title, converted five of her eight break point opportunities - to Keys' three from 12 - as she advanced in 128 minutes at the tournament in China. One-time U.S. Open finalist Leylah Fernandez of Canada rallied to beat 12th-seeded Diana Shnaider 6-7 (7), 6-3, 6-3.

Rain in Wuhan meant play on the outside courts was suspended. The top eight seeds, including second-ranked Aryna Sabalenka and China Open champion Coco Gauff, received a first-round bye.



Mohun Bagan considered withdrawn from ACL 2: AFC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Mohun Bagan Super Giant are considered to have withdrawn from the AFC Champions League 2 after the Kolkata side decided against travelling to Iran to face Tractor FC, the continental body AFC said on Monday, pending further decision on the matter. Keeping their players' "safety and security" in mind, Mohun Bagan Super Giant had last month decided against travelling to Iran for the October 2 match owing to the volatile situation that prevailed in the west Asian nation at that time. "In accordance with Article 5.2 of AFC Champions League 2 2024/25 Competition Regulations, the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) confirms that India's Mohun Bagan Super Giant are considered to have withdrawn from the ACL 2 competition

after the club failed to report to Tabriz... Against Tractor FC on October 2, 2024," the AFC said. "Consequently, all matches played by Mohun Bagan SG are cancelled and considered null and void in accordance with Article 5.6 of Competition Regulations. For the avoidance of doubt, no points and goals in the club's matches shall be taken into consideration when determining the final rankings in Group A pursuant to Article 8.3 of the Competition Regulations." Mohun Bagan SG were to play Tractor FC on October 2 in their Group A match of the ACL 2 — the continent's second tier club competition — but their players expressed unwillingness to play in Iran, which had announced a state of mourning following the death of a prominent general of the Revolutionary Guard in an Israeli air strike.

"The matter will now be referred to the relevant AFC Committee(s) as appropriate for their decision(s)," the AFC said in the statement. In their first match of Group A, Mohun Bagan had played out a goalless draw against Tajikistan's FC Ravshan. It was learnt that 35 registered players, including seven foreigners, wrote to the club that they didn't wish to go to Iran at that point in time. "So we tagged their letters and wrote to the AFC, asking them to either reschedule the match or move the game to a neutral venue," a Mohun Bagan source had told PTI. "We have decided to not travel to Iran keeping our players' safety and security in mind, because that is paramount. We have also written to the ministry of external affairs as their advisory states that you can go to Iran or Israel on your own responsibility."

PSG held to 1-1 draw at Nice despite return of Dembélé

AP ■ PARIS

Even with Ousmane Dembélé back in the starting lineup, Paris Saint-Germain had a sleepy first half before being held to a 1-1 draw at Nice to leave Monaco alone at the top of the French league. The defending champion enjoyed much of the possession but was largely unproductive during the first half on Sunday. Luis Enrique's team played better after the interval and PSG finally created chances as Nuno Mendes leveled the scoring following Nice defender Ali Abdi's first-half opener. "We were not really into it during the first half," PSG

forward Bradley Barcola said. "We woke up in the second half, it's a shame we could not take our chances." Lagging three points behind unbeaten Monaco before kickoff, PSG was too timid to draw at Nice for a better result on the Riviera. Marquinhos came close to snatching the three points for PSG soon after Mendes' goal but his header ended its course on the left post. Dembélé started the match after being left out of the squad that lost 2-0 to Arsenal in the Champions League midweek. Luis Enrique, who had blamed Dembélé for a perceived lack of commitment, was criticized after the loss for not selecting

the France star, one of the most creative players in the team following the departure of Kylian Mbappé to Real Madrid. Nice took a deserved lead in the 39th minute when Abdi controlled the ball on the edge of the box and followed up with a left-footed shot that took a slight deflection and went in. Luis Enrique replaced the largely inefficient Randal Kolo Muani with Lee Kang-in, who greatly improved the connection between PSG's midfield and its attack in the second half. Dembélé's effort in the 47th was parried away by Nice goalkeeper Marcin Bulka, who



was however powerless five minutes later when Nuno Mendes equalized with a

deflected shot from outside the box. Monaco has a two-point lead

over PSG, with third-place Marseille five points off the pace. **LYON EXTENDS WINNING RUN:** Seven-time French champion Lyon continued its recovery with a fourth straight win in all competitions by beating Nantes 2-0. The match was marred by fan violence and Lyon said the clashes that broke out at Groupama Stadium were "unworthy" of the seven-time French champion. A goal from Nicolas Tagliafico and an own-goal from Nantes defender Nicolas Pallois earned Lyon its third win in seven league matches, giving the club some room to breathe at five points above the

relegation playoff spot. Tagliafico put the hosts in the lead in the 22nd minute from Said Benrahma's cross for his first goal this season. Nantes wasted several occasions to level and was punished after the interval when Pallois accidentally beat his own goalkeeper as he tried to defend a cross from Corentin Tolisso. **REIMS SINKS MONTPELLIER:** Host Reims moved up to fourth place with a 4-2 win over Montpellier. The Champagne side took the lead in the sixth minute with a header from captain Marshall Munetsi. "We all share the same ambition to win the most

matches, and enjoy ourselves" Munetsi said after his team produced a fourth league win. Keito Nakamura exploited a poor clearance to show his dribbling skills and make it 2-0 with an impressive strike. Oumar Diakité and Teddy Teuma scored Reims' other goals while Arnaud Nordin had a brace for Montpellier. The southern team remained in the relegation zone with the worst defensive record in the league, having already conceded 21 goals. In other matches, Brest followed up its 4-0 midweek win over Salzburg in the Champions League with a 2-0 defeat of Le Havre, and Lens drew 2-2 at Strasbourg.

OUR BATTERS DON'T KNOW HOW TO SCORE 180 RUNS, SKIPPER SHANTO

PTI ■ GWALIOR

Bangladesh captain Najmul Hossain Shanto has candidly admitted that his team doesn't know how to consistently post 180 plus totals in a T20 game. Batting has been Bangladesh's weak link for a while, especially their approach in the powerplay. They struggled to 39 for two in six overs on Sunday night before managing a below par 127. India chased that down in just 11.5 overs to go 1-0 up in the series.

"We have the ability, but we have room for improvement in our skills. We have been batting in this way for the last 10 years. Sometimes we do well. We have to make some changes, perhaps where we practice back home."

Shanto feels that tracks in Bangladesh aren't conducive for big scoring games of T20 and that has affected their collective batting performance.

"We play on 140-150 wickets at home. Our batters don't know how to score 180 runs. I won't blame just the wickets, but we have to consider skills and mentality," Shanto said following the crushing loss.

The batters' shot selection was also questioned with the likes of Litton Das falling to ordinary shots.

"I wouldn't say we played badly. We are a better team than this. We haven't done well in this format for a long time, but I don't believe we are such a bad team," said Shanto.

"I don't want to talk about any individual player. I think the batting unit didn't do well today. There will be aggression in the way we approach our scoring, but sometimes we have to select the

deliveries correctly. We will think about it, but we can't rush in changing our approach."

Shanto went on to say that their powerplay approach needs to be reviewed with the opening stands having contributed only 69 runs in the last eight innings.

"Powerplay is definitely a worry. The approach we talked about (before the game), it will be successful if we make a good start with the bat.

"We have to keep the wickets in the first six overs, and score runs in those. Otherwise those coming in next, it becomes too challenging for them. We have struggled in the powerplay. Those batting in the power play must take more responsibility," said the southpaw.

Rookie Indian pacer Mayank Yadav made a promising debut on Sunday, generating speeds close to 150kmph in his first competitive game in five months.

He hurried the batters but Shanto said they are used to facing such speed in the nets.

"We have some similar fast bowlers in the nets. I don't think we were too worried about (Mayank Yadav). But he is a good bowler," he added.

Surya gives you freedom, he is a calm captain: Debutants Mayank, Nitish Gwalior, (PTI) Mayank Yadav and Nitish Kumar Reddy were expectedly nervous ahead of their India debut in the first T20 International against Bangladesh here but the newcomers said skipper Suryakumar Yadav helped them stay calm with his comforting words.

Mayank, the 22-year-old pace sensation, made his debut here on



Sunday after recovering from a recurring abdominal strain after playing only four matches in this year's IPL. He impressed in the first match returning with figures of 1/21 from his four overs.

Nitish, 21, also made instant

impact by remaining unbeaten on 16 off 15 balls, to help India register a commanding seven-wicket win in the series-opener.

"He (Suryakumar) gives you freedom. When I was taking the run up, he was telling me 'do what

you feel, what you feel best'. So that's very important for any fast bowler, specially when you making your debut," Mayank told BCCI.TV.

Nitish added: "He is very calm and cool. He is doing fabulous

captaincy, not giving any pressure to us. We were debutants, obviously we will have nervousness and pressure. He gave that license to us. Any youngster would like to get it from the captain."

Taking about his debut after the long injury layoff, Mayank became emotional.

"It's a great moment because I am coming from an injury. I was a bit nervous, like I was telling myself don't stress yourself.

"When I got to know I am going to play my first match, making my debut, complete flashback of last four months came in front of my eyes," he said.

The speedster started his international career with a maiden over on Sunday and credited bowling coach Morne Morkel for shaping him.

"It felt good. I was not like thinking that I am going to bowl a maiden over. Just wanted to live in that moment, enjoy that moment," Mayank said.

"It's very comfortable for me, I am with him (Morkel) for the last three years. I know him, he knows me very well. So, it's very easy for me to work with him. He knows which things are better for me."

Nitish too was satisfied with his debut performance, saying it was a dream-come-true moment for him.

"For any cricketer in India it's a big moment. Playing for Indian cricket team is a dream-come-true moment. Obviously, there was nervousness but I enjoyed that. It was a very proud moment for me and my family as well," he said.

"There are senior players and I got a lot of experience as well from the coaching staff. Even in bowling as well getting some keen points. I love this kind of atmosphere in the dressing room."

The second T20 of the three-match series will be played in New Delhi on Wednesday.



Jayasuriya appointed full-time head coach of Sri Lanka till 2026 T20 WC

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Former captain Sanath Jayasuriya was on Monday appointed as full-time head coach of the Sri Lankan cricket team until the end of the 2026 T20 World Cup. The former left-handed opener was Sri Lanka's interim coach since early July, and after he impressed in the role against India and England, Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) has decided to hand him full-time responsibility.

Under Jayasuriya's guidance, Sri Lanka won their first bilateral ODI series against India in 27 years, and then defeated England in an away Test for the first time in 10 years.

Most recently, Sri Lanka

defeated New Zealand 2-0 in a Test series at home.

"The Executive Committee of Sri Lanka Cricket made this decision taking into consideration the team's good performances in the recent tours against India, England, and New Zealand, where Jayasuriya was in charge as the interim head coach," SLC said in a statement.

"The appointment came into effect on October 1, 2024, and will remain until March 31, 2026."

Jayasuriya had been a chief selector in the past and his first assignment as full-time head coach will be the limited overs series against West Indies, starting in Dambulla on October 13.

I have completely shifted to overspin from sidespin: Varun Chakaravathy

PTI ■ GWALIOR

Mystery spinner Varun Chakaravathy says he is reaping the rewards of putting over-spin on the ball instead of side-spin following his successful India comeback.

The 33-year-old, whose India career came to an abrupt halt after an underwhelming debut in the 2021 T20 World Cup, took three wickets against Bangladesh in the series opener.

As the great Nathan Lyon has shown over the years, putting over-spin on the ball generates sharp bounce and turn, which aided Varun on Sunday night. His googly to get rid of Jaker Ali showed the former architect's total control over his craft.

"I used to be a side-spin bowler, but right now, I have completely shifted to being an over-spin bowler," said Varun after playing a part in India's seven-wicket win.

"It's a minute technical aspect of spin bowling, but it took me more than two years. I gradually tested it in TNPL and IPL. While the mental aspect also had to be worked on, the major chunk of effort I put in was on my technical side."

Despite doing well in the IPL and domestic cricket over the past two seasons, Varun did not get a recall to the Indian team and that only made him hungrier. Now that he is back in blues, it feels like a rebirth.

"Whenever there was a squad that was announced, I used to



feel like, 'Why is my name not there?' and I used to keep thinking about that. So that kind of brought the motivation within me that I should not leave this.

"I should go all out and make a comeback, so I started playing a lot of domestic games and giving importance to it. That kind of helped me," said the soft-spoken

cricketer.

A catch was dropped in Varun's first over that eventually went for 15 runs with Bangladesh skipper Najmul Hasan Shanto and Towhid Hridoy going on the offensive against spinner in the powerplay.

However, skipper Suryakumar Yadav trusted Varun to bounce back in the following over and he did that by having Hridoy caught at long-on.

"Yes, in the first over the catch could have gone my way but that's how T20s are played. I felt the reverse-sweep six was a good ball but it still went for a six, so it's all mixed emotions."

He played the series opener of leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi who

too has had done well fairly well in the limited opportunities that he has got after the T20 World Cup, reflecting India's robust bench strength.

Varun acknowledged the fierce competition.

"There is good competition and there is good camaraderie also. And the person who was cheering me was Ravi Bishnoi; he was coming and telling me messages, so I can't ask for more.

"It's actually good to have such competition so that people will keep pushing each other. Someone will be better than others at one point of time and he will definitely get the Cup for India, so that competition is very required," Varun added.

Gulveer Singh finds place in eight member senior squad for Asian Cross Country in Hong Kong

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Asian Games medallist long distance runner Gulveer Singh was on Monday named in the eight-member Indian senior team that will take part in the Asian Cross Country championships to be held on October 20 in Hong Kong.

The 26-year-old Army man had won a bronze medal in the men's 10,000m race in the Hangzhou Asian Games last year. Singh had an excellent run on the track this season. In September, he improved his national 5,000m record to 13:11.82 seconds during a World Athletics Continental Tour event in Japan.

Athletics Federation of India (AFI) selection committee has also named the national senior and junior teams for the South Asian Cross Country Championships to be held on November



24 in Islamabad, Pakistan. The national team that will compete at the Asian Cross Country will also get the

opportunity to compete at the South Asian Cross Country in Pakistan in November.

"The participation of the athletes at the South Asian Cross-Country Championship in Pakistan will be subject to fitness," AFI president Adille Sumariwalla said.

"Any athlete who is unfit will be dropped from the national squad," he added.

TEAM FOR ASIAN CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS:
Senior Men: Gulveer Singh, Karthik Kumar, Abhishek Pal, Arun Rathod.
Senior Women: Ankita, Seema, Sanjivani Jadhav, Sonika.
Junior Men: Amardeep Pal, Kripashankar Yadav, Vinod Singh, Gaurav Bhaskar Bhosale.
Junior Women: Ekta Dey, Sunita Devi, Shilpa Dhiora, Prachi Ankush Devkar.



PCB chief 'confident' that Champions Trophy would be held in Pakistan

PTI ■ LAHORE

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Mohsin Naqvi on Monday expressed confidence that the upcoming ICC Champions Trophy would be held in the country and all teams, including arch-rivals India, would participate in the tournament.

The 2025 edition of the Champions Trophy is scheduled to start on February 19, and the final is on March 9. Lahore, Karachi, and Rawalpindi have been earmarked as the venues.

India hasn't sent its team to Pakistan since July 2008 due to tense political relations between the two countries.

"The Indian team should come. I don't see them cancel or postpone coming here and we are confident we will host all the teams in the Champions Trophy in Pakistan," Naqvi said.

He also said that Pakistan was prepared to host all the teams including India and preparations were on schedule.

"The stadiums will also be ready to host the matches on schedule and any remaining work would be completed after the tournament," he added.

Naqvi said the stadiums would "definitely" be in a much better shape to host the tournament in February-March.

Asked about Babar Azam's resignation from captaincy and who is going to replace him, the PCB chief said he had told the selection committee to take their time and make a long-term decision. "I have told them to take a decision after careful consideration because the captain's position is important."

Naqvi also said he had inquired from the selection committee including the captain and head coach of the teams whether it was the right time to introduce some fresh blood in the national sides.

"They said they are okay with the current set-up of players so I told them 'fine, it is your call'" he added.

India win team gold in men's 50m pistol event

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The troika of Deepak Dalal (545), Kamaljeet (543) and Raj Chandra (528) won the men's 50m pistol team gold medal on the concluding day of the Junior World Shooting Championship at the Peruvian capital of Lima.

Indian shooting team won the yellow metal with a combined tally of 1616 points beating Azerbaijan by a point. Armenia came third.

In all, India's junior shooters finished the championship on top with a rich haul of 24 medals which included 13 gold, three silver and eight bronze.

Italy finished second with five gold and four silver and bronze medals each while Norway was third with four gold and a total of 10 medals.

On Sunday, Mukesh Nelavalli also won an individual bronze in the event, his sixth medal of the competition, shooting a total of 548 over 60-shots. Azerbaijan's Imran Garayev won the gold with a score of 552.

In the junior women's 50m pistol, Parisha



Gupta won an individual silver with a score of 540. She could not get past Hungary's Miriam Jakó's effort of 546, which was a junior world record.

Sejal Kamble (529), Ketan (525) and Kanishka Dagar (513) also combined to win India a team silver in the event, finishing behind Azerbaijan. Divanshi, the fifth Indian in fray, shot 523 to finish eighth. In the other event of the final day, Shardul Vihan and Sabeera Harris combined to give India a bronze in the junior mixed team trap competition, played over 75 targets each.

Shardul (71) and Sabeera's (67) shot a total of 138, which was not enough to get past gold winners Czech Republic (141+8) and silver medallist Italy (141+7).

Zuhair Khan and Bhavya Tripathi, the second Indian pair in the event, shot a total of 134 to finish joint sixth.

The ISSF bandwagon will now move to New Delhi for the final stop of its 2024 calendar, the prestigious season-ending ISSF World Cup Final Rifle/Pistol/Shotgun.