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MONEY 10 GOVERNMENT EXTENDS I-T AUDIT REPORT FILING DATE

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BIG WINS FOR RAKSHA IN CROATIA AND BELGIUM 11 SPORTS

KEEP GODS OUT OF POLITICS: SC

SUPREME COURT SLAMS ANDHRA PRADESH CHIEF MINISTER

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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



File photo: Ranjan Dimri/The Pioneer

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

The Bench was hearing the petitions filed by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Subramanian Swamy, and former Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) Chairman YV Subba Reddy and historian Vikaram Sampath demanding court monitored probe on the allegations of presence of animal fat in the ghee used in Tirupati laddus.

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



BJP and Congress spat over remarks on PM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

ED books Siddaramaiah

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/BENGALURU

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



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

Continued on Page 8

Delhi road rage: One arrested for cop's murder

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

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

Kosi drowns Bihar in sorrow

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PATNA

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



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

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

IMD announces end of Monsoon

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

Gujarat man buys real gold with fake currency

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ AHMEDABAD/NEW DELHI

A Gujarat bullion trader has been duped of 2.1 kg of gold after unidentified common handed over counterfeit currency featuring the face of noted Bollywood actor Anupam Kher.

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



2.1 kgs of gold, and transaction was pegged at Rs 1.90 crore.

traditional money-moving service where they were handed over bundles of what they claimed were Rs 500 notes. The unsuspecting staff was told to count the 'money' using a machine provided by the trio. Two of them then went out with the gold biscuits on the pretext of fetching the remaining Rs 30 lakh from a neighbouring office, while a third one stayed on.



CBI nabs 26 global cyber criminals

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

Dadasaheb Phalke finally acknowledges Mrigayaa actor

RAHUL DATTA ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



1970s. Then followed several hits like 'Mujhe Insaaf Chahiye', 'Hum Se Hai Zamaana', 'Pasand Apni Apni', 'Ghar Ek Mandir', 'Kasam Paida Karne Wale Ki' and 'Commando'. Chakraborty was also praised for his role in the 1990 film 'Agnepath', fronted by Amitabh Bachchan.

kept replaying in his mind, including the initial struggle for food and shelter. "I am short of words. It is an occasion which reminded me of the past. I went to Mumbai from Kolkata. In Mumbai, I did not have food and would sometimes sleep in the garden..."

Chakraborty also praised Prime Minister Modi. "I have great respect for PM Modi, he is a fantastic man. I know him, he is a gem of a person," he added. Union Home Minister Amit Shah also congratulated the veteran actor. "Mithun Ji's illustrious career spanning several decades has not only enriched our films but has also set standards of excellence in acting. All my best wishes to him," Shah said.





CMO inspects urban CHC, seeks info about OT, other services

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Health department on Monday made the people aware about heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and other non-communicable diseases (NCDs) to mark the World Heart Day.



CMO Dr Sandeep Chaudhary examining a patient at a screening camp in Varanasi on Monday.

all people above 30 years of age should get blood pressure, sugar etc checked regularly.

and exercise should also be done every morning so that one remains healthy from heart, blood pressure, sugar problems etc", he said.

NKCP: 19 more farmers agree to sell land

Kanpur (PNS): As many as 19 more farmers have given consent to sell their about two hectares of land to the Kanpur Development Authority (KDA) for the New Kanpur City Project (NKCP).

Man stabs wife to death

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A man stabbed his wife to death in Singhpur village under Vidhnu police area late on Sunday night. After killing his wife and establishing physical relations with her, he escaped from there.

home with chicken and liquor. The couple had heated arguments on this. After forcibly getting his children to sleep on the rooftop, he killed Guddan and escaped from there.

Democracy is in ICU, alleges ex-V-C of LU



Ex-LU VC Prof Roop Rekha Verma addressing a seminar in Varanasi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Former Vice-Chancellor (V-C) of Lucknow University (LU) Prof Roop Rekha Verma alleged that democracy is in ICU right now and all institutions and society are sick.

while the Hindus into Brahmins and Thakurs", she said, praising the protest of IIT-BHU students in a rape case.

BHU once again demonstrates excellence

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Banaras Hindu University (BHU) has once again demonstrated its academic and research excellence, with 46 faculty members featured on Stanford University's prestigious list of the top two per cent of scientists worldwide.

research universities of the world. Heartiest congratulations to all the scientists who have made it to the list."

Death of MS student: FIR against 3 doctors

PTI/PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Police have registered an FIR against three doctors of Swaroop Rani Nehru (SRN) Hospital for their alleged involvement in the case of the suspicious death of Dr Kartikeya Srivastava, an MS student of Motilal Nehru Medical College, officials said on Monday.

Bharti said on Monday that the postmortem report of the deceased Kartikeya Srivastava is yet to come, only after which the real cause of death will be known.

Kumar highlights need to combine Ayurvedic principles with cutting-edge scientific techs

Varanasi (PNS): The two-day national conference on Physiological and Clinical Aspects of Tridosha in Health and Disease (NCT-2024) organised by the Department of Kriya Sharir, Faculty of Ayurveda, Institute of Medical Sciences Banaras Hindu University (IMS-BHU) started at KN Udaya Auditorium here on Monday.

nologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Bioinformatics. He advocated for increased collaboration between Ayurveda, modern medicine, and biotechnology to better understand how dosha-specific treatments influence gene expression and disease mechanisms.

The IMS-BHU Director Prof SN Sankhwar emphasised the importance of Ayurveda in integrative medicine. He expressed that this conference will be useful to learners of the fundamental principles of tridosha and its applicability in Ayurvedic diagnosis, therapeutics and lifestyle interventions and also uphold the role of Ayurveda in the contemporary health care system.

Children showcase impressive drawings

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Kanpur Metro organised a special awareness programme in collaboration with the 'Madad Ki Raah Foundation' NGO, as part of the 'Swachhata Hi Seva' (SHS) campaign running from September 17 to October 2.

cased their creativity, producing impressive artwork centred around cleanliness messages. As a token of appreciation, all participants received a book as a prize from Kanpur Metro.

Following the drawing session, the children enjoyed a metro ride, proudly sharing the cleanliness messages they had created.

Workshop on Jain Nyaya ends

Varanasi (PNS): A 10-day national workshop on 'Prameyakalamartanda' written by Acharya Prabhachand, a book based on Jain Nyaya, sponsored by Indian Council of Philosophical Research (ICPR), New Delhi, concluded at Parshwanath Vidyapeeth (PV) here on Sunday.



theorem and it is contemplated upon by Prof. Pt Rajeshwar Vishwas Deshmukh said that there are three types of texts – objective, characteristics and examination. Prof Dharmchand Jain, former head, Sanskrit department, Jayanarayana Vyas University, Jodhpur said that 'Prameyakalamartanda' is a reliable text of Indian knowledge tradition.

# Rule of law key to social development: President Murmu

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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

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

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



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



# Indo-Pacific regional dialogue set to begin on October 3

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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

# NHRC seeks report on tribal students electrocution

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Taking "suo motu cognisance of a media report that two students, belonging to a Scheduled Tribe, got electrocuted to death while cleaning a water tank on the instructions of the superintendent of a government-run hostel in Dhar district of Madhya Pradesh on September 25", the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued a notice to the chief secretary and the director general of police, the State government, seeking a detailed report within two weeks. It appears that the hostel authorities have acted in an "insensitive manner" by asking the young boys to execute such a hazardous task resulting in their deaths. According to the media report, carried on September 26, the students came into contact with a live wire connected to a water pump inside the tank while cleaning it. They were spotted lying in the tank by villagers, who reportedly informed the hostel authorities, it said. The Commission has observed that the contents of the news report, if true, raise a serious concern about human rights violations of the victim students. Accordingly, the Commission has issued a notice to the chief secretary and the director general of police, the government of Madhya Pradesh, seeking a detailed report within two weeks, said a statement by the NHRC here. It is also expected to include the status of the police investigation and compensation, if any, paid to the aggrieved families of both victims, the statement added.

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

# Air Chief Marshal AP Singh takes charge as IAF Chief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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



# India-Kazakhstan Joint Military Exercise begins in Uttarakhand

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

# Young travelers shape family vacations, says Hilton report

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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

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

# Congress: Government employment opportunities are half-truths

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Cauldron boiling

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

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

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

For Iran, the loss of Nasrallah is as much of a blow as it is for Hezbollah. Iran, which has yet to respond to the assassination of Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh, is now facing heightened pressure from hardliners to retaliate. Iran's influence extends across the



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

## The deceptive facade of China's military

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



BHOPIINDER SINGH

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



unheroic. This sovereign impulse of fake claims, downplaying failures, and overstating their capabilities has been elevated to a fine art, as is the won't of any authoritarian state reeling from regime insecurities.

It routinely manifests in their claims of making advancements in technologies, weaponry and platforms that are ostensibly cutting-edge and even ahead of peers like the United States or Russia. The reality is essentially predicated on reverse-engineering technologies that could be brazenly stolen or surreptitiously acquired — but the claim of 'homegrown' is gleefully posited. A lot of 'fifth generation' fighters, Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles, Hypersonic technologies to Chinese nuclear submarines remain in public news but are essentially untested or unsubstantiated in live combat. While it has a considerable industrial base and budgetary allocation granted to its Defence Industry, like everything else in the Chinese realm, claims remain more impressive than reality. With this murky backdrop, came the recent news of the sinking of the latest Chinese nuclear submarine. The fact that the Zhou-class of attack submarine sank even before going into service, speaks volumes of the gap between purported tech-

nological advancements as opposed to factual efficacy. Incidentally, the US Deputy Secretary of State, Kurt Campbell, had confirmed that the Russians were helping China develop this submarine technology and that it too wasn't necessarily homegrown, as claimed. While this sinking of the submarine is believed to have happened in May earlier, it was never owned up by the Chinese and it took satellite images to unravel the sinking of the first-in-class nuclear-powered Chinese submarine. It is certainly a major setback for China's priority weapons programs that is key to its expansionist and hegemonic aspirations.

As if on the rebound and to stitch a counternarrative, China is believed to have fired an intercontinental ballistic missile into the Pacific Ocean, in a move that seems designed to distract and deflect from the embarrassing news of its sunk submarine and to reiterate its prowess and capability. Coming as the testing does after more than four decades over the Pacific Ocean, it is unmistakably a 'signal' move to suggest that the 'Dragon' still retains sharp claws and fangs. Incidentally, the missile is part of the PLA's Rocket Force that was subjected to a sweeping corruption crackdown, purge, and complete overhaul last

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

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## PERILS OF MUSI PROJECT

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

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

Juloori B Saraswathi | Hyderabad

## HEZBOLLAH LEADER ASSASSINATED

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

## India's dominance in Asia



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

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

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

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

CM, which has proven the pervasiveness of dynastic politics and the prioritising of family interests over public welfare. It is easy for a son, daughter, or close relative of a leader to take over the political baton, while others have to spend a significant amount of time in the rough and tumble of politics. Political observers say that there is no harm if a political leader's son or daughter, or close relative, chooses to enter politics, but there is a thin line that separates dynasty politics and a worthy kin's choice to take a plunge.

But when we look into the pros and cons of dynastic politics, it highlights the deficiency it could bring to the ideals of democracy, questioning its legitimacy. The trend of dynastic politics will lead to the perpetuation of an elite class that transcends generations and will hamper the smooth inflow of capable, meritorious candidates into politics.

KV Chandra mouli | Mysuru

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## PICTALK



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

PTI

## The challenges of parenting in the age of technology



ASHA IYER KUMAR

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

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

The all-round improvement in quality of life has done nothing much in terms of bringing us the sense of gratification that material accumulation is perceived to bring. Instead, we have only become crazier and more complaining. Among the things that we whine about there is one that stands out — the difficulty of being a parent in these times. It is not like how it used to be when we were kids, they assert and are at a loss to keep their children under control, be it about the use of gadgets or their demands for new-age comforts or following well-meaning advice. Children these days have a way of growing up that parents can't seem to get a grip over, and parents are at their wit's end. Has parenting become so tough now, tougher than what



are not just forms of entertainment; they shape the way children think, act, and even perceive reality. Parents often feel powerless in the face of this digital onslaught, unsure how to manage screen time without seeming authoritarian or disconnected from their children's world. This struggle is exacerbated by the speed at which technology evolves. By the time parents get a handle on one app or platform, their children have already moved on to the next one. Then, there's the issue of peer pressure, not just on children but on parents too. The 'Instagram-perfect' life adds a layer of stress to parenting that previous generations didn't face. Parents today are not just competing with themselves to be the best versions of their upbringing — they are competing with a curated version of perfection they see online. The pressure to enrol children in extracurricular activities, make sure they're developing emotional intelligence, cultivate leadership skills, and create future 'success stories' can be crushing. Our grandparents' idea of raising children to be 'good'

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

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

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



## FIRST COLUMN

## THE SPIRITUAL MEANING OF ZERO

The symbol of zero holds profound meaning, it symbolises eternity



RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJ JI

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

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

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



ation. Everything returns to zero or nothingness before being created anew. Hence, most spiritual teachers emphasise attaining the zero state i.e. emptying the mind of all worldly thoughts and detaching from the awareness of the physical body to attain liberation and peace. The egg shaped symbol of the Soul or Supreme Almighty as a point of light surrounded by an oval aura also resembles a zero. In its original state, every soul is like a zero & it has no worldly identity or role but like a seed, it has infinite power and qualities merged within, which manifest when the soul enters the field of karma in this world.

The Supreme Almighty is the eternal seed who always exists in the zero state of awareness, detached from everything yet filled with infinite divine qualities and powers that support the whole creation. It is from this supreme state of nothingness that HE creates a perfect new world whenever the creation becomes degraded and old. Like zero, the soul essentially has an even or positive character. Just as the negative of 2 is - 2 which means lacking in 2, the lack of awareness of positive qualities manifests as negative or odd traits in the soul.

The number zero has very special functions in the calculation. Anything added or subtracted to zero remains unchanged. Any number multiplied by zero gives zero while any number divided by zero gives infinity. Interestingly, when we add zeros after a number, its value grows ten times. These specialities can be ascribed to the Almighty Supreme who remains unchanged in the cycle of eternity.

He does not enjoy the fruits of karma and nothing can be added, subtracted, multiplied or divided from his powers. When we multiply our powers by linking ourselves with him, we too become a zero like him filled with all divine virtues. So let us try our best to remain in the zero state and achieve a higher state of consciousness to live a life that is minus all worries, tension & stress.

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

## Revive shallow aquifers for urban water woes in India

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



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

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

India is the world's largest user of groundwater, consuming more than the United States and China combined.

Urban areas, in particular, have increasingly relied on groundwater to supplement their needs, leading to a significant depletion of shallow aquifers, and for too long, groundwater management has been side-lined in urban planning. However recent climate challenges—unpredictable rainfall, flash floods, and urban water crisis—have sparked renewed interest in groundwater management.

Increasingly, rainwater harvesting and urban waterbody rejuvenation projects are turning toward these natural underground reservoirs as a solution. Aquifers are now being studied for their potential to store excess rainwater and mitigate flooding. The launch of AMRUT 2.0 in 2021 marked a paradigm shift in water management, with groundwater finally being prioritized at the 'urban' scale. The mission recognised the need for cities to not only rely on groundwater but to actively manage



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

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

This initiative has led to the development of 12 unique approaches and designs for recharge structures, tailored to local aquifer conditions. These ranged from the revival of existing wells and step wells in Dhanbad, Hyderabad, and Bangalore to catchment treatment of areas showing high recharge potential in Pune.

Cities such as Gwalior and Rajkot have undertaken detailed mapping of aquifer systems, and groundwater depths, and created an inventory of recharge structures at the city scale, facilitating informed groundwater management decisions. The project has also shown promising results in showcasing the sustainable use of these recharge structures to supplement water needs for local communities.

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

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

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

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

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

Despite the progress made through the SAM project, much work remains. Cities need to acknowledge that deep aquifers hold vast reserves of water accumulated over centuries and must be typically reserved for emergencies, such as droughts.

In contrast, shallow aquifers hold

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



TARIQ ASHRAF

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

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

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



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

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

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

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







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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

To further boost the sector's competitiveness on the global stage, he said, "We must harness economies of scale and build a strong domestic ecosystem."

## Government extends I-T audit report filing date

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

The world's first coal power plant opened in London in 1882, and until 2012, coal accounted for 39 per cent of the UK's electricity generation.

Global energy think tank Ember said the closure of the UK's last coal plant means that more than a third of OECD countries are now coal-free, with three-quarters expected to eliminate coal power by 2030, in line with global climate goals aimed at limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

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

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

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

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



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

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

That said, India's coal usage for power generation began several decades later than that of developed nations. While the UK's first coal power plant opened in 1882, India established its first major thermal power plant, the Hussain Sagar Thermal Power Station in Hyderabad, in 1920.

Policy experts say India is focusing on a long-term energy transition, where coal will continue to be part of the energy mix for the next few decades.

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

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

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

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

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

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

## UP Government to start paddy procurement from October 1

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

"The Yogi government has

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

during the current fiscal.

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

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

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

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

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

## Solex Energy announces investment for Vision 2030

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Solex Energy Limited on Monday announced an investment exceeding Rs 8,000 crore as part of its Vision 2030 strategy. The initiative reflects Solex's commitment to advancing solar technology and scaling operations, positioning the company as a fully integrated solar player.

Solex is exploring the development of a new cell manufacturing facility with an initial capacity of 2 GW, designed to scale up to 5 GW. Its module manufacturing capacity will also be increased from 1.5 GW to 15 GW.

Solex aims to expand its workforce to over 25,000 to support this growth. Chetan Shah, Chairman & Managing Director of Solex Energy Limited, said, "Vision 2030 represents a key milestone in our journey to becoming a fully integrated solar

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

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

## CRED reduces losses by 41 per cent

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



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

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

"Members used CRED for a

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

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

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

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

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

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

behaviour.

The entrepreneur also hinted at new products in the pipeline.

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

installations, and EV charging, a company statement said.

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

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

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

# USHA SLAMS EC MEMBERS FOR NOT FELICITATING OLYMPIC MEDALLISTS

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

She revealed that a proposal for a

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

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

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

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

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



bring honour to our nation, and they deserve to be acknowledged."

Usha questioned the commitment of some EC members, particularly those who are former athletes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



AP ■ PARIS

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

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

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

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

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

"It's with a heart full of memories that I close this chapter of my life," Griezmann said in a message posted on Instagram.

"Thank you for this wonderful tricolor adventure and see you soon."

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

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

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

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

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

Griezmann had previously said Deschamps' snub had been difficult to stomach.

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

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

AP ■ LONDON



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Chennaiyin FC aim for strong show against winless Hyderabad FC

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



PTI ■ LONDON

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

world champions," said Granthi.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AP ■ MADRID

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

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

64th.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It was Courtois who alerted the referee about the objects -



including lighters - being thrown onto the field near him.

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

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

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

continued.

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

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

Social media videos showed

Atletico fans before the match chanting "Vinicius is different." Vinicius occasionally clashed with Atletico players at the Metropolitan.

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

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

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

# INDIA PUSH FOR VICTORY WITH T20-STYLE BATTING

PTI ■ KANPUR

Trying to force a result in the limited time available, India played a sensational T20-style cricket to take a 52-run first-innings lead against Bangladesh in the second Test, infusing life into the rain-hit contest here on Monday. The sun shone bright in the Kanpur sky after two gloomy days and the on-field action finally began after losing eight sessions. India had six sessions to force a win, and the hosts did everything they could on the fourth day of the match. The pitch hardly offered assistance to India bowlers but the hosts still bundled out Bangladesh for 233 in their first innings, built around Mominul Haque's patient unbeaten 107. India then unleashed their batting might on the visitors, striking at 8.22 runs per over to reset the records for fastest team 50 (18 balls), 100 (74 balls) and 200 runs (24.2 overs) in Test cricket. India declared their second innings at 285 for nine to have another go at the visiting batters. At stumps, Bangladesh were 26 for two with Zakir Hasan and Hasan Mahmud becoming off-spinner

Ravichandran Ashwin's victims. They were trailing India by 26 runs. India are going for the kill as an outright victory will consolidate their top position in the World Test Championship (WTC) table. Considering the tougher assignments ahead, especially the Australia Tour, India need to log as many wins as possible against comparatively easier rivals to get some cushion before the tough overseas rubbers. Young opener Yashvi Jaiswal (72 off 51 balls) set the tone with three boundaries in the opening over bowled by Hasan Mahmud and skipper Rohit Sharma (23 off 11) bludgeoned Khaled Ahmed for two consecutive sixes - one landing on the roof of the stadium. It was clear that India were showing an urgency to surpass the Bangladesh total quickly after more than two days' play was lost to bad weather. The onslaught surprised the rival attack but the home fans were rewarded for visiting the stadium. Adopting a see-the-ball and hit-the-ball approach, India completed the fastest team fifty in three overs. Realising the ineffectiveness of his pacers, Bangladesh skipper



Najmul Hossain Shanto introduced spinner Mehidy Hasan Miraz and he responded to the call by casting Rohit. Jaiswal completed his fifty with a single off left-arm spinner Taijul Islam and continued in his aggressive fashion. His innings, which contained 12 fours and two sixes, was cut short by Mahmud. The young opener added 72 runs for the second wicket with Shubman Gill (39). Rishabh Pant did not last long but there was no change in approach for the hosts with Virat Kohli and KL Rahul building on the foundation with their swift 87-run stand for the fifth wicket. In a breathtaking show, Indian batters hit 28 fours and 11 sixes, collecting 158 runs in boundaries. In the process, Kohli became only the fourth player in history to complete 27,000 runs in international cricket across formats. Ravindra Jadeja also cherished a rare double of 300 Test wickets and 3000 Test runs. He is the second quickest to complete the double behind England great Ian Botham. He also became only the seventh Indian to take 300 Test wickets when he dismissed Khaled Mahmud.



## Samit Dravid misses India U19 first game against Australia

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Injured Samit Dravid was ruled out of the opening four-day game between India U-19 and Australia U-19 and is also unlikely to be fit in time for the second match of the series. The series opener began here on Monday. Samit is currently at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) recuperating from a knee injury that forced him to sit out of the three-match youth one-dayers against the Aussies recently. He was expected to make his India U-19 debut at Puducherry but did not feature in any of the three matches. India had won the series 3-0. "As of now he's at the NCA, recovering from his knee injury. So, I don't know yet. It looks unlikely," head coach Hrishikesh Kanitkar was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo. In fact, for Samit, son of former India captain and head coach Rahul Dravid, this is the last chance to represent India at the U-19 level. He is set to turn 19 on October 11 this year, which will also

make him ineligible for playing for India in the ICC 2026 Under-19 World Cup. "His MRI scan was done during the one-day matches. We thought of giving him a go at the four-day game, but let's see how he progresses at the NCA. We are waiting for their report. We also have a second match," a source close to the development told PTI. The second four-day match will start from October 7 at Chapatuk, hence Samit has another week to recover from the knee injury. Kanitkar said playing four-day red-ball game at the Under-19 stage will help the development of players. "It's a great initiative to play Test games because red-ball [cricket] really tests you. There's enough time for the bowlers to plan and make strategies. So, for both batters and bowlers and even for fielders it's the ideal challenge to see where you stand. "To be able to play against a foreign side is a great thing. I know a lot of people, including myself who played Under-19 cricket against foreign teams and it really helped us a lot," Kanitkar added.

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

PTI ■ KANPUR

Jasprit Bumrah is gradually increasing his workload at home as the India pace spearhead knows he would be required to bowl a lot more overs during the five Test series in Australia. "Day two and three of the Kanpur Test were wiped out due to a wet outfield at the Green Park stadium here. "Weather is not in your control, it is the way it is. Good to get some time to relax. You've to quickly adjust to the changing conditions here after Chennai, quickly adapt and communicate with others, like

although the number of overs to be bowled will be a lot more in Australia," Bumrah told host broadcaster ahead of the fourth day's play. "There is a very good chance of them doing well (at the Champions Trophy) because they have a balanced team," the 77-year-old said. Hailed as the 'Asian Bradman' for insatiable appetite for runs, Abbas was one of the most elegant batters of his time. He played 78 Tests and 62 ODIs for Pakistan, accumulating 5062 and 2572 runs respectively. Abbas also acknowledged the consistency displayed by India across formats and said the Rohit Sharma-led team will be a strong contender for the upcoming Champions Trophy. "Indian team overall is very good. Their batters are doing well and the bowlers both are good. It is a very balanced team, one that plays soch



about changing lines and lengths," said Bumrah. "The five-Test Border-Gavaskar Trophy begins in Perth on November 22. "Bumrah relishes playing Test matches and is determined to give his best in the format. "My favourite format is the Tests, I've always said that. I'm trying to give my absolute best in this format," said the champion bowler who has featured in 36 Tests since making his debut in 2018.

PTI ■ SHARJAH

Pakistan great Zaheer Abbas feels the comparisons between Virat Kohli and Babar Azam are baseless as the Indian superstar is a lot more consistent than the under-fire Pakistan batter. Once regarded as part of the 'Fab Five' including Kohli, Steve Smith, Joe Root, and Kane Williamson, Babar is currently enduring an extended slump in form. "Yeh fizoool ki baatein hai (the comparisons are pointless). Virat Kohli scores in every match the other player (Babar) doesn't score in any match so then how can you compare. The person who scores, he is the bigger player," Abbas told PTI on the sidelines of the Cricket Predicta Conclave here. Kohli has 80 international hundreds to his name while the much younger Babar has scored 31 centuries across formats. Abbas also acknowledged the consistency displayed by India across formats and said the Rohit Sharma-led team will be a strong contender for the upcoming Champions Trophy. "Indian team overall is very good. Their batters are doing well and the bowlers both are good. It is a very balanced team, one that plays soch

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

samajh kar (thoughtfully)," said Abbas. "They have a very good captain, who understands cricket very well. So, when everything is going in your favour it is smooth sailing. That's the case with India right now. "There is a very good chance of them doing well (at the Champions Trophy) because they have a balanced team," the 77-year-old said. Hailed as the 'Asian Bradman' for insatiable appetite for runs, Abbas was one of the most elegant batters of his time. He played 78 Tests and 62 ODIs for Pakistan, accumulating 5062 and 2572 runs respectively. Abbas also acknowledged the consistency displayed by India across formats and said the Rohit Sharma-led team will be a strong contender for the upcoming Champions Trophy. "Indian team overall is very good. Their batters are doing well and the bowlers both are good. It is a very balanced team, one that plays soch



used to be good. And now the boards are realising that we can't go on without Test cricket. "How many T20s can you play? How many white-ball tournaments can the ICC organise? Maybe 2 or 3 but in the end you have to return to ODI or Tests. "If you continue Test cricket the cricket will last longer. I know people like to get results fast but slowly they will get bored of T20s and we need Tests and ODIs." An increasing number of

players are turning down central contracts from their boards to focus on careers in T20 franchise leagues, a worrying trend that Abbas believes should be addressed. "Test cricket is ultimate. Anyone can win in T20. Teams can win by fluke. But that is not the case in Test cricket as it has two innings. You have the scope to do well in one innings. Test cricket teaches you a lot. "I know a lot of the players don't want to play Test cricket and play T20 instead. That needs to be stopped. They need

to come up with something... "Something like you have to play at least 5 or 6 Test matches a year then you can play ODI or T20s. Every year a minimum number of Test matches need to be allotted," he added. "LOSS TO BANGLADESH WAS A HUGE SETBACK: Once a cricketing powerhouse, Pakistan now find themselves in a difficult situation. Their downward spiral began with the Asia Cup last year which was followed by the team's early elimination from the ODI World Cup in 2023 and the T20 World Cup this year. Earlier this month they suffered their first-ever Test series loss to Bangladesh. "Bohot bada dhakka tha (It was a huge setback) that Pakistan lost to Bangladesh. We never thought that not only Pakistan will lose but it will lose so bad. "Pakistan cricket abhi daamadol hai (is not doing great). The performance has dropped. I am hopeful that it will get better. The reasons behind this are many. "It happens, the West Indies used to be the best in the world, that's not the case now. But I'm hopeful that Pakistan cricket returns to the top, the boys are working hard." Pacer Shaheen Afridi replaced Babar as skipper in T20Is after the 2023 ODI World Cup but the former was reappointed as the captain earlier this year. Abbas urged the PCB to take some action before the issue escalates further. "Yes, there have been rivalries in the Pakistan teams in the past but the board should take note of the rivalry between Babar and Shaheen fast. The faster the better because it will keep on escalating. "Rivalry is good, but it should not become serious, if it does, it harms the team," said Abbas. Abbas, former Pakistan player Mudassar Nazar and former Pakistan coach Dav Whatmore spoke at the conclave to celebrate the centenary episode of Cricket Predicta, the largest cricket live stats based show in Asia.

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

PTI ■ BENGALURU

He accepted the job with trepidation but batting great VVS Laxman says he is now a content man as head of BCCI's Centre of Excellence, having played his part in creating a 'supply chain' that will help India dominate world cricket across formats for at least the next decade. Laxman took over as the head of the erstwhile National Cricket Academy (NCA) in 2021 from his one-time teammate Rahul Dravid, and built on the excellent platform that was already laid out. NCA has been refurbished into a CoE by the Board and was inaugurated on Sunday. Laxman got a one-year extension into the position after his original tenure ended earlier this year. "I can say with a lot of confidence, barring a couple of skillsets, I think, for the next 10 years, we've got a lot of players who will make

our country proud. I'm not only talking about men's, but also women's (cricket) as well. We're blessed to have that kind of talent," Laxman told a select media gathering at the Centre of Excellence. He said India's dominance in world cricket is a perfect reflection of its steady 'supply chain.' "We won the (T20) World Cup (2024) in the West Indies which was a great result. But if you see all the three formats, we have dominated. Not only the rankings, we have dominated (other aspects too). "There is a supply chain as far as cricket is concerned. That means the amount of players we have at our disposal, it is a real blessing." The 49-year-old said grooming the players without tinkering with their natural game, was essential to maintain that supply chain. "The whole idea is to monitor them, how to groom them, so that



they realise their potential. It's not that we dictate them (players) that you have to do this or you have to change (technique). "Ultimately the player should feel comfortable, acknowledging and accepting that option. We don't want the player to suddenly feel the burden of whose advice he has to listen to." The former India batter then explained how monitoring of the "targeted" players was done at the CoE. "When Rahul was the head coach of the Indian team, he used to take care of the contracted players and we at NCA used to take care of the targeted players, emerging players and the under-19 players," he recalled. For this purpose, Laxman said he and the other support staff created a wonderful synergy with various state associations to ensure continuity and similarity in coaching.

"...Because ultimately the state association coaches spend a lot more time with a player than what we do. We also have an athlete management system. A profile is created for all the players who come and attend the ZCA and the NCA camps...right from their reports of skills to the fitness to the musculoskeletal screening report. "Now, we are going to even request the state association to follow that process. So, at least 50 players of each state association — 25 men and 25 women — should be there on the watch list. "We will know how the player has progressed and it will become very easy for anyone who is taking care of that player to know what the player has gone through every year," he elaborated on the process. Along with skill enhancement, Laxman said keeping the players in a good mental state is also important for their growth. "The players themselves are so

professional. They understand what is needed for them to be in the best mindset when they are competing at the highest level. As far as the junior cricketers are concerned, we have got mental conditioners who spend 8 to 10 days with the players," he said. "IMPORTANCE OF 'A' TOURS: Laxman described the significance of 'A' tours in preparing a player to tackle all kind of conditions. "Every year we make sure that we have at least two A Series. Sometimes it can be challenging because we want to have an A Series whereas the other boards will be busy with their own domestic cricket. Or they may not be ready to accommodate us. "But at least we try to have two A Series. The A programme allows us to go to different parts of the world and get experience. So that when they graduate to the national team, it is not a surprise to them," added Laxman.

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