



the pioneer

Established 1865

RANCHI, TUESDAY OCTOBER 22, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹3

www.dailypioneer.com

PUBLISHED FROM: DELHI | LUCKNOW | BHOPAL | BHUBANESWAR | RANCHI | RAIPUR | CHANDIGARH | DEHRADUN | HYDERABAD | VIJAYWADA

INSIDE

SPORTS 11
CARLSEN STAR ATTRACTION
AT NEXT MONTH'S TATA
STEEL CHESS INDIA



INDIA AND CHINA TO THAW FROST ALONG LAC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Signalling a thaw in strained ties between the two countries for the last four years, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri on Monday announced that India and China have reached an agreement on patrolling arrangements along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh. This leads to eventual disengagement of troops from both sides, Misri said.



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar later said, "...We can say that the disengagement process with China has been completed... We will be able to do the patrolling which we were doing in 2020. I think it's a good development..." This significant development came a day ahead of the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) summit in Kazan, Russia. The two-day summit starts on Tuesday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi may have a bilateral meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the meet, though there is, so far, no official word on it.

contact with each other in a variety of forums. As a result of these discussions, agreement has been arrived at patrolling arrangements along the line of actual control in the India China border areas, leading to disengagement and a resolution of the issues that had arisen in these areas in 2020. We will be taking the next steps on this," he said. The foreign secretary said the Indian and Chinese negotiators were in touch over the last few weeks to resolve the remaining issues. It is understood that the agreement pertains to patrolling in Depsang and Demchok areas. It is not immediately clear whether the agreement facilitates the restoration of patrolling rights that were in place prior to the standoff. Tensions flared up at the LAC in Eastern Ladakh in May 2020 when China unilaterally tried to change the status quo on the border. It led to a major clash between the troops of the two armies on June 15 that

year in Galwan. Twenty Indian army personnel including the commanding officer died in the clash while more than 40 Chinese troops were also killed. Both the sides then amassed troops and weaponry on their respective sides of the LAC. In fact, India, not willing to take any chances, also deployed its troops even during the winter months at the LAC. Earlier, the troops used to withdraw to their bases during the winters. At one point of time, more than 50,000 troops from each side were facing each other on friction points at the LAC. Given the situation, India and China, since 2020, held several rounds of talks at the military and diplomatic levels. While Corps Commanders of the two sides held military level talks, the diplomatic level talks were held under the aegis of Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC) on India-China Border Affairs.



NIA and Delhi Police officials investigate at the site where a blast occurred on Sunday, near a CRPF school at Prashant Vihar, in Rohini area of New Delhi
Ranjana Dimri/The Pioneer

Delhi bomb investigation exploring multiple angles

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

A suspect wearing a white t-shirt and an Improvised Explosive Device (IED), are the angles that the multi-agency probe is focusing a day after a 'bomb' blast near the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) public school sent shockwaves across the national capital. According to police sources, it is suspected that an IED, wrapped in a plastic bag, was hidden in a one-foot-deep pit near the CRPF school wall. A CRPF team visited the spot on Monday morning while its officials from the Institute of IED Management conducted a ground assessment. The National Security Guard's (NSG) Bomb Disposal Squad (BDS) is preparing to submit its final report to the Delhi Police.

expected to submit its initial report to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). Additionally, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) of the Delhi Police have been assisting in the investigation. Meanwhile, shops remained shut and a usually bustling market of the Prashant Vihar area remained deserted due to fear, with businessmen left in distress who are incurring losses ahead of the festival of Diwali, which is usually a peak time for sales of items including jewellery. More over, the two schools near the spot, including CRPF school and Lancer's Convent, saw a low turnout of students due to the parents who are concerned for their safety. Linking the blast to a possible Khalistan angle, a purported Telegram post was being circulated on social media which claimed that the blast was carried out in retaliation to the "targeting" of pro-Khalistan separatists allegedly by Indian agents.

Hoax threat callers to have a rough landing ahead

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

After unabated bomb threat messages to multiple Indian airlines in the past one week, lead to diversions, cancellations and passenger inconvenience, the Union government is planning to make hoax threat calls to Indian airlines a cognisable offence. The government is also planning to put hoax callers on a 'no fly list'.



Union Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu announced this on Monday, in the National Capital. Currently, this stringent law is invoked against people who make hoax calls and endanger the safety of an aircraft when it is in the air, not on the ground. Meanwhile, two top aviation security officers met Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan and discussed the unabated incidents of bomb threats to Indian airlines, leading to diversions, cancellations and passenger inconvenience. Naidu said amendments are being planned to aviation security rules as well as the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against Safety of Civil Aviation Act, 1982. "We have come to the conclusion that there are two areas that we can explore - 1) Amendment in Aircraft Security Rules...one of the ideas that we want to propagate by changing these rules is that once we catch hold of the perpetrator who is behind this, we want to put them in the no-flying list... 2) Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against Safety of Civil Aviation Act...", he said.

"While it (SUASCA) takes care of the offences when the aircraft is in travel, in flight, if we want to address these kinds of threats that have been happening. We want to take strict action against people who are behind this when there is a fake or hoax threat that they are trying to do, we have to cover the act on the ground and the airport also. So we are trying to make an amendment. Our legal team has worked very thoroughly on this and we are coming up with an amendment," Naidu said. "We want to make it a cognisable offence. Even though these are hoax threats we cannot take it lightly... we have a set protocol," he said. The Union Minister said that the aviation ministry is in consultation with other ministries such as the Home Ministry. "We are trying to use intelligence, IB and all the other important people who are there in this, especially home affairs and all, everyone is cooperating together. We are taking it very seriously and we want to ensure that these kinds of incidents do not happen." The minister said multiple meetings have been held with stakeholders since the spate of

calls began so that the people making such threats can be put on the no-fly list after they are identified. He added that the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government at the Centre would not compromise the safety and security of passengers. The minister added that around 10 per cent security has been enhanced at airports across the country in the wake of bomb threats. In a related development, a key high-level meeting was also held in the Ministry of Home Affairs on Monday in which updates were taken from aviation security body Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) and the Central Industrial Security Force, which is responsible for security at airports. Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) Director General (DG) Zulfiqar Hasan and Director General of Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) Rajwinder Singh Bhatti met Mohan at the latter's office at North Block here. The three officers remained closeted for about half an hour. However, details of the meeting are not known immediately. The CISF guards 68 civilian airports in the country.

GRAP Stage-II invoked, NCR AQI 'very poor'

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As Delhi's air quality continues to remain in the 'very poor' category, with an average Air Quality Index of 310, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM)'s sub-committee has now invoked the 11-point action plan as per Stage-II of Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) from Tuesday, with the forecast indicating that the air quality is likely to deteriorate in the coming days. To discourage private vehicles, the authorities can hike parking fees under the stage II GRAP. The CAQM has appealed to people to use public transport and minimise use of personal vehicles and take less congested routes even if slightly longer. It is also advised to regularly replace air filters at recommended intervals in your automobiles, avoid dust generating construction activities during months of October to January and open burning of solid waste and biomass. Data from CPCB shows that several parts of Delhi are currently grappling with "Unhealthy" levels of pollution. Anand Vihar, for example, registered an Air Quality Index (AQI) of 226, while other monitoring stations including Rohini, Sonia Vihar, Dilshad Garden, Vivek Vihar, Ashok Vihar have reported similarly hazardous levels, categorised as either "Unhealthy" or "Very Unhealthy."

AIR QUALITY INDEX ON OCTOBER 21	
AREA	AQI
Shadipur	366
Punjabi Bagh	359
Anand Vihar	356
Wazirpur	354
Burari Crossing	346
Bawana	348
Ashok Vihar	345
RK Puram	345
Rohini	345
Sonia Vihar	344
Jahangirpuri	344
Mundka	342
Nehru Nagar	335
Vivek Vihar	333
Dwarka Sector-8	325
Aya Nagar	323
North Campus, Delhi University	321
Mandir Marg	317
Okhla Phase-2	317
Patparganj	316
Sirifort	311
Najafgarh	310
Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range	306
Auribondo Marg	305
Pusa	305
ITO	301

agencies concerned in the NCR, in addition to the Stage-I actions already in force, from 8 am of 22.10.2024 in the National Capital Region (NCR)." The decision was taken after the sub-committee took stock of the air quality scenario and air quality forecasts for Delhi made by the India Meteorological Department and the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology. In the stage II of the GRAP, there is an 11-action plan meant to be implemented by various agencies including Pollution Control Boards of NCR States and the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC). These include carrying out mechanical or vacuum sweeping and water sprinkling of the identified roads on a daily basis; Ensuring water sprinkling along with use of dust suppressants (at least every alternate day, during non-peak hours) on roads to arrest road dust especially at hotspots, heavy traffic corridors, vulnerable areas and proper disposal of dust collected in designated sites/landfills; Intensifying inspections for strict enforcement of dust control measures at C&D sites; Focused and targeted action for abatement of air pollution in all identified hotspots in NCR and intensifying remedial measures for the predominant sector(s) contributing to adverse air quality in each of such hotspots; Ensuring uninterrupted power supply to discourage use of alternate power Generating sets/equipment (DG sets etc.) and Strict implementation of the schedule for regulated operations of DG sets across all sectors in the NCR including Industrial, Commercial, Residential and offices etc.

prevent further deterioration of the air quality, the Sub-Committee decided that all actions as envisaged under Stage II of the GRAP - 'Very Poor' Air Quality (DELHI AQI ranging between 301-400) - be implemented by all the



FILE PHOTO

There is enough pollution, no firecrackers to be sold: Delhi HC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court said on Monday that it cannot allow the sale of firecrackers when there is already "enough" pollution in the national capital. The court's oral observation came while dealing with a petition by the Delhi Fireworks Shopkeepers Association, a group of traders with a "permanent" licence to possess and sell crackers. The petitioner's counsel said the grievance of the traders was with respect to the ban on the storage of firecrackers as it was allegedly resulting in harassment. During the hearing, the court said it would ask authorities to seal the traders' premises being used for storage of firecrackers to ensure that there is no pilferage. "The State must be involved in the sealing process so that there is no pilferage," said Justice Sanjeev Narula. "We are not going to allow you to sell. There is enough pollution in this city,"

the judge orally added. The petitioner's counsel said that even though no crackers were being sold by its members, soon after the ban order, the police started visiting the permanent licensees questioning why they were storing the firecrackers. The court observed that in one of the instances cited by the petitioner, there was an allegation of someone selling the crackers and said whoever acted in contravention of the law would be prosecuted. "We can't make an exception for you. If you store them, there is a possibility of (misuse). We will put a seal. It will be videographed," the court said orally. The Delhi government on September 14 imposed an immediate ban on the production, storage, sale, and use of all kinds of firecrackers across the city, effective from January 1. While making the announcement, Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai urged the city residents to support the government's efforts to curb air pollution.

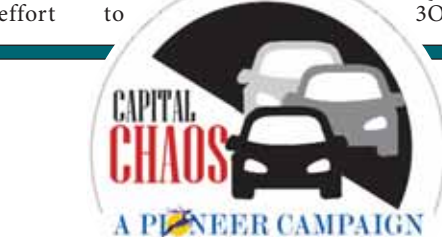
New nuclear reactors coming up in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Science and Technology said on Monday here that at least 10 nuclear reactors are being installed in the country while two reactors in Gujarat's Kakrapar have started generating power commercially. According to sources, the new nuclear reactors coming up in states like Gujarat, Rajasthan and Haryana are of 700 MW capacity and will start operating in the next few years. The details of the new nuclear reactors were provided to the members of the Standing Committee of Parliament on Science and Technology, Environment, Forests and Climate Change during a meeting here. Congress leader Jairam Ramesh, who is a member of the committee as well as its former chairman, said members of the panel were informed during the meeting that the Kakrapar-3 and Kakrapar-4 nuclear reactors in Gujarat have been fully synchronised with the grid and are generating power commercially. "This is a major accomplishment since these are indigenously designed 700 MW reactors that were approved in 2007. Construction had begun in 2010. More such reactors are being installed at different locations," he said in a post on X. "Another example of how much continuity there is in our development — which is never acknowledged by 'El Supremo'," Ramesh said, stressing that it was during the Congress rule when the two nuclear reactors in Kakrapar were approved.



Representational image



Mask up! Traffic congestion jams your lungs with poison

Vehicles spew 18 per cent PM 2.5 in the peak evening hours

BY RAJESH KUMAR

Traffic congestion is the major contributor of air pollution in the National Capital. According to the Decision Support System (DSS) of Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, for Air Quality Management in Delhi, emission from transportation accounts contributed to around 11.2 per cent air pollution on Monday. According to a study by IIT Kanpur, the contribution from the local on-road transport sector to diurnal mean PM 2.5 is largest (18%) during the evening traffic peak. It is dominated by

contributions from two- and three-wheelers (50%) followed by heavy-duty vehicles (30%), which also collectively represent 60-70% of the total on-road transport sector at any hour of the day. Breakdown of vehicles and ongoing construction works by agencies like Delhi Metro, Delhi Jal Board and National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) added woes to the congestion, causing inconvenience to daily office goers in the morning and deteriorating air pollution. Mehrauli-Badarpur Road, Mehrauli-Gurugram Road, Netaji Subhash Marg, Wazirabad Road, Raja Garden Road, Kashmere

Gate ISBT, Sadar Bazar, Chirag Dilli, roads surrounding major markets including Sarojini Nagar, Chandni Chowk, Lajpat Nagar, Kamla Nagar were among those areas witnessed heavy traffic on Monday. These stretches are the busiest roads known for heavy traffic flow during the week. Lakhs of people commute in and from Delhi to Gurugram, Noida, Faridabad and Ghaziabad daily. Neighbouring Noida has been consistently contributing between 10 and 11 per cent to Delhi's pollution, while Ghaziabad's share ranges from 5 to 10 per cent, as per the DSS -



Heavy evening traffic moves amidst a blanket of smog, in Gurugram, Monday

IITM data. Bulandshahr, a district in Uttar Pradesh around 110 km from Delhi, adds a noteworthy six to nine percent. Meanwhile, Gurugram and Faridabad in Haryana contribute somewhere between 1.5 and 3 percent and 3 and 5 percent, respectively. DSS, which identifies and forecasts the sources of pollution for the national capital, now has an updated inventory that would help in improving the efficiency of its forecast. As of March 31, 2023, Delhi had 79.5 lakh vehicles, including 20.7 lakh private cars. As per the Statistical Handbook 2023,

Delhi has 20,71,115 registered cars and jeeps; 52,94,900 motorcycles and scooters; 93,654 auto-rickshaws; and 1,18,506 e-rickshaws that provide last-mile connectivity. Data also shows that the number of taxis came down from 85,079 in 2021-22 to 83,278 in 2022-23. The number of vehicles in Delhi has decreased due to the Delhi government's ban on diesel vehicles older than 10 years and petrol vehicles older than 15 years. The number of vehicles in Delhi has increased by about 21 times in the last three decades, while the road length has only doubled.

Jugsalai heads for a heated contest as JMM's Mangal Kalindi files nomination



PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

The Jugsalai (SC) Assembly seat is heading for a closely watched electoral battle, with sitting JMM MLA Mangal Kalindi officially filing his nomination papers on Monday. Kalindi, a well-known grassroots leader from the SC community, is expected to face a tough fight against the NDA's Ramchandra Sahis, who represents the All Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU). Kalindi, a stalwart in Jugsalai politics, is contesting for a second term backed by his strong control over the local electorate. A member of the Scheduled Caste (SC) community, Kalindi has built his political career advocat-

ing for tribal and backward caste rights. He enjoys close ties with senior Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) leaders, including party patriarch Shibu Soren and current Chief Minister Hemant Soren. His base in Kalindi Basti gives him a foothold in the SC and tribal-dominated regions of Jugsalai, which remain his core support base. However, Kalindi faces challenges in upper-caste dominated localities where JMM has historically struggled. Despite this, he is banking on his grassroots connections and his image as a leader who has worked tirelessly for the marginalized. Ramchandra Sahis, the AJSU candidate, enters the fray with a different appeal.

Born in a small village in East Singhbhum district, Sahis's life has been marked by struggle and perseverance. Having completed his education in Seraikela-Kharswan district, Sahis is known for championing OBC (Other Backward Classes) issues, which have garnered him significant support in rural and OBC-dominated areas. AJSU's focus on regional issues and grassroots development has strengthened his standing, particularly in regions where the party has traditionally performed well. Sahis, however, faces a disadvantage in urban and Muslim-dominated regions, where the JMM and BJP have a stronger presence. With

Muslims making up nearly 10% of the electorate, Sahis will need to extend his appeal beyond AJSU's usual base to secure a victory. The Jugsalai constituency presents a complex and diverse electorate. Leading the community representation are the Mahtos, who make up 14.7% of the electorate with 48,019 voters. Close behind are the Singh community, comprising 12.8% with 41,812 voters, followed by the Muslim population at 9.9% (32,339 voters). Smaller but significant communities such as Sharma, Das, Murmu, Prasad, and Karmakar hold sway in various pockets, while indigenous groups like the Manjhis (Mushars), Gope,

and others like Hambram, Tudu, and Soren also have notable voter bases. As the JMM and AJSU candidates prepare for what promises to be an intense contest, the Jugsalai Assembly seat's outcome will largely depend on how well Kalindi can solidify his existing support base while Sahis tries to expand his reach into urban and minority areas. With caste dynamics playing a key role, both candidates will need to navigate the complex social fabric of Jugsalai to emerge victorious. The next few weeks will see a battle of grassroots leaders with contrasting appeals, making the Jugsalai seat one to watch in the upcoming elections.

T Shirts, wall clocks with Soren and Thakur's photos seized

NITYANAND DUBEY : GARHWA

Police have recovered wall clocks and T-shirts with photos of the Chief Minister and Minister Mithlesh Thakur to lure voters in Ramakanda police station area of Garhwa assembly constituency. Police said that based on secret information, a raid was conducted in Chete and Pundag village I of Ramakanda from 1:30 am to 4 am under the supervision of Circle Officer Anil Ravidas. In the raid 95 T-shirts were recovered from the house of Kamlesh Yadav, a resident of Chete village and JMM leader. 101 wall clocks were recovered from the house of Thuram Yadav, a resident of Pundag village. These have the election symbol of the political party along with the photo of Chief Minister Hemant Soren and Minister Mithlesh Thakur. An FIR has been lodged at Ramakanda police station against Kamlesh Yadav and Thuram Yadav for violating the Model Code of Conduct. Two days ago, wall clocks were being distributed in Udaipur of Ramakanda late in the evening to lure voters. After a complaint on the C Vigil app, Ranka CO Shivpujan Tiwari, who was part of the FST team, reached Udaipur at night and investigated the matter. When the matter was found to be true in the investigation, a case of violation of Model Code of Conduct was registered against JMM leaders Mansoor Mian and Raman Vishwakarma in Ramakanda police station. Earlier, an FIR was also registered against Mukhiya's husband Rajkishore Yadav. In this regard, Circle Officer Anil Ravidas said that FST is working diligently to ensure compliance of Model Code of Conduct in the area. In the raid conducted at night, wall clocks and T-shirts with the names of Chief Minister, Minister and election symbol have been recovered.

HUGE QUANTITY OF FOREIGN LIQUOR RECOVERED IN GARHWA

PNS : GARHWA

Garhwa police on Monday recovered a large quantity of foreign liquor from Bilaspur check post under Banshidhar Nagar police station area on Monday. Police have also seized two Bolero vehicles carrying liquor. Police have taken this action on the basis of a secret information given to Superintendent of Police, Garhwa Deepak Kumar Pandey and recovered a large quantity of liquor. The Superintendent of Police had received secret information that two Bolero vehicles were carrying illegal foreign liquor. In light of the information, the Superintendent of Police formed a police team under the leadership of Banshidhar Nagar SDPO Satyendra Narayan Singh. The formed raiding team



started checking at Bilaspur check post. During the checking, two Bolero vehicles were coming from Windamganj (UP) at a very high speed, but on seeing the checking by the police at Bilaspur check post, the drivers of both the Bolero vehicles whose registration numbers are BR 01 PF 0704 and

BR 29 M 1908 turned their vehicles back and started running away. The raiding team chased the vehicles and caught three persons while two persons managed to escape. On interrogating the three arrested persons, it was revealed that they were taking the illegal foreign liquor

from Renukoot (Uttar Pradesh) to Bihar by modifying the roof of the vehicle and tightening it with nuts and bolts. Thereafter, on closely checking both the Bolero vehicles, it was found that the roofs of the vehicles had been modified by cutting them and tightened with nuts and bolts and on opening the

nuts and bolts, the roof of the vehicle opened up. There is a container on the roof of the vehicle, on which about 2000 pouches of illegal foreign liquor "Officer's choice" 180 ml were found, which were duly seized. Arrested accused have been identified as Nitish Kumar, resident of Patehija village under Hajipur police station area of Vaishali district, Narayan Sahni, at village Sumer Patti under Dariyapur police station of Saran district and Vivek Kumar, hailed from Bishunpur village under Dighwara police station of the Saharanpur district all state of Bihar. Police recovered around 2000 pouches measuring 180ml each of "Officer's choice" foreign liquor. Police also seized two using carrying

Inauguration of E-Learning Center at Bokaro Steel Plant



PNS : BOKARO

Bokaro Steel Plant's Hot Strip Mill inaugurated its E-Learning Center today, October 21st, under the leadership of Rajan Prasad, Executive Director (HR & Additional Charge Operations). Senior officials, including Vijay Kumar, Chief General Manager (C&A), and V.K. Singh, Chief General Manager (Hot Strip Mill), along with department employees, were present at the ceremony. This E-Learning Center is an innovative initiative aimed at promoting the professional development of BSL personnel. It will offer access to a wide range of online courses

and digital learning resources through platforms like e-Abhigyan, Future Skills Prime, and LinkedIn Learning. Rajan Prasad highlighted the importance of having such a facility close to the workplace. He praised the efforts of the Hot Strip Mill and C&A departments in making this project a reality. He remarked, "The Learning Center is a testament to our commitment to the holistic development of our workforce and operational excellence. It will not only help employees upgrade their skills but also contribute to fostering a culture of continuous learning and improvement at Bokaro Steel."

Several booths relocated in Lohardaga

PNS : LOHARDAGA

A meeting with representatives of various political parties was held in the Collectorate Auditorium on Monday under the chairmanship of District Election Officer cum Deputy Commissioner Dr. Waghmare Prasad Krishna. The political parties present in the meeting were given information about three polling stations of 72-Lohardaga assembly constituency and 08 re-located polling stations of 69-Bishunpur (Part) assembly constituency. 72- Among the re-located booths of Lohardaga assembly constituency, information was given that booth number 09 has been re-located to booth number 10, booth number 12 to booth number 21, booth number 13 to booth number 14. 69-In Bishunpur (Part) Assembly Constituency Booth No. 01 to Booth No. 11, Booth No. 03 to Booth No. 02, Booth No. 04 to Booth No. 02, Booth No. 05 to Booth No. 02, Booth



No. 06 to Booth No. 11, information was given about re-locating booth number 07 to booth number 08, booth number 09 to booth number 08 and booth number 11 to booth number 08. The Deputy Commissioner said that voters will be provided all necessary facilities to reach the polling station. In the meeting, the Deputy Election Officer discussed the election expenditure, important points to be kept in mind while printing in the press, provisions of cash, work being done by SST and FST in the district, first randomiza-

tion on October 23, role of booth awareness group, sweep. Information about the programme, voting through postal ballot etc. was given. Deputy Development Commissioner Dilip Pratap Singh Shekhawat, DSP Headquarters, ITDA Project Director Sushma Neelam Soreng, Additional Collector Jitendra Munda, Deputy Election Officer Dheeraj Thakur, District Panchayat Raj Officer Anjana Das, Treasury Officer, Excise Superintendent and representatives of political parties were present in the meeting.

'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' programme held at DAV Sector-4

PNS : BOKARO

Principal Sarbendu Shekhar Kar of DAV Public School, Sector-4, Bokaro, emphasized the true purpose of education during the successful organization of the 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' (EBSB) program. Addressing the students, he stressed the importance of cultivating quick wit and creative thinking. He encouraged active participation in competitions and

offered his best wishes for the students' future. The EBSB program, aimed at promoting cultural exchange between Jharkhand and Telangana, featured a quiz competition and group discussions that provided students a chance to explore the cultural richness of both states. The event highlighted India's unity in diversity and encouraged students to deepen their appreciation for the nation's cultural heritage.



NABARD sanctions Rs 769 Cr for 2 Megalift Irrigation projects in State

PNS : RANCHI

Chief General Manager, NABARD Jharkhand Regional Office, Ranchi, S K Jahagiridar, informed that the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development has sanctioned financial assistance of Rs 769.58 crore for construction of two irrigation projects in Palamu and Giridih Districts of Jharkhand under Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) during FY 2024-25. On completion of the project in Palamu will provide irrigation to 11000 hectare of additional land through pipelines in 08 blocks of the

district. The megalift irrigation project in Giridih will cover 165 out of 197 villages in Pirtand block which will result in development of 10,158 hectare of Cultivable Command Area. Both the projects are expected to give a major boost to agricultural activities in these districts. With this sanction, the support from NABARD to Jharkhand under RIDF during FY 2024-25 has reached Rs 1017 crores. Jahagiridar further informed that support provided to Jharkhand since the inception of Rural Infrastructure Development Fund now stands at around Rs 24,300 Crore.



XISS & XAAH organise Alumni Meet in Hyderabad

The Untold Journey of Leaders, written by XISS alumni released



PNS : RANCHI

Xavier Institute of Social Service (XISS), Ranchi in association with XISS Alumni Association Hyderabad Chapter (XAAH) organised an Alumni Meet at the Novotel Hyderabad Convention Center. A book, The Untold Journey of Leaders, written by XISS alumni who are prominent CEOs, CHROs, PhDs, IPS Officers, Public Servants, Entrepreneurs, and Corporate Trailblazers was unveiled by Dr G. Chinna Reddy, Vice-Chairman, Planning Board, Government of Telangana along with other guests. Dr Reddy in his address

praised XISS for its contributions to leadership and urged the Chief Minister of Hyderabad to establish a second XISS campus in the city, further congratulating the authors for their remarkable achievements. He also felicitated 31 authors of the book, including Lipika Verma, Chinmay Sengupta, Dr Rajorshi Ganguli, Shan Prabhakaran, and Dr Anita Mathew. Earlier, Dr Joseph Marianus Kujur, Director XISS, opened the event, emphasizing the institution's role in creating leaders with strong values, and how the alumni community serves as brand ambassadors for XISS on a global scale. Further, in

Returning officer injured during SVEEP activity in Palamu

PNS : DALTONGANJ

The state chief electoral officer Jharkhand K Ravi Kumar inquired about the health status of the returning officer of Bishrampur assembly constituency who got hurt on Sunday. The CEO wanted to know how and when it all happened. The CEO said he would speak to the DEO in this connection. Meanwhile returning officer of Bishrampur assembly constituency Kundan Kumar who is the additional collector Palamu reached his nomination office located on the second floor of the administrative block in the Palamu collectorate today with the tripod stick. The returning officer had slipped near the Malay Dam on Sunday where the SVEEP outreach programme through boat rafting was held. Kundan Kumar said, "My one leg was resting on a stone. The stone collapsed. I fell down terribly. My one leg gave



he would be given fibre casting. However putting a brave face the returning officer with the help of the tripod stick and support of his office personnel negotiated the staircases right from the ground floor to first floor to second floor and sat in his official chair ready to discharge duties and responsibilities of the returning officer of Bishrampur assembly constituency as goes on the nomination work.

DPS Bokaro students visit Kurra village for experiential learning

PNS : BOKARO

DPS Bokaro students visited Rajkiya Madhyamik Vidyalaya, Kurra, under the 'Chalo Gaon ki Ore' initiative, aimed at bridging the rural-urban divide. The visit helped students understand rural living and emphasized social responsibility. The event began with a sapling plantation by Principal Dr. A. S. Gangwar, followed by a cultural exchange where students from both schools performed. A Rangoli-making session further highlighted collaboration between the students. Dr. Gangwar concluded the program by distributing stationery and sports items to the rural



students, stressing the importance of transforming rural India for national development.

Strict action to curb the menace of paper leak: Chouhan

Marandi counters JMM/Cong allegation of nepotism

PNS : RANCHI

BJP state election in-charge and Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan said today that the injustice done to the students and youths of Jharkhand cannot be seen anywhere in India.

He alleged that under the JMM/Congress alliance government paper was leaked repeatedly which points that is a conspiracy behind it, as the present government wants to play with the future of the children. Chouhan said that the children told that they have been waiting for years, parents sacrifice their lives and educate them in the hope that they will give this exam, get selected and get a job and these students have been cheated repeatedly.

He said that the BJP is committed to giving justice to the children, if any exam has been conducted dishonestly, then why should its results be

declared. Chouhan said that BJP government will carry out investigation in paper leaks and those who have repeatedly leaked the paper will go to jail. It is the resolution of the Bharatiya Janata Party that we will fill 1.5 lakh of the 2 lakh 87 thousand posts in the first year by making a calendar and we will also fill the remaining posts by announcing the calendar as to when the exam will be held, when the result will come and when the appointment letters will be given.

Meanwhile, in other development BJP State President and former Chief Minister Babul Marandi said that familyism means the party's identity is with the family and the party is run by the family. In the country, the Congress party is identified and run by the Gandhi family. In Jharkhand, the JMM is identified and run by Shibu Soren's family. In Bihar, the Rashtriya Janata Dal is iden-



BJP State President Babul Marandi alongwith others during a meeting with party leaders in Dhanbad on Monday. PNS

tified and run by Lalu Prasad Yadav's family. In Uttar Pradesh, the Samajwadi Party is also identified and run by Mulayam Singh Yadav's family. This is called familyism.

He said that when someone contests elections, then somewhere or the other someone has a son, a daughter-in-law, a wife, a brother.

This can happen, but they do not run the party. The party is run by the workers. The Bharatiya Janata Party has a system. The party is run under this system. It is wrong to call it familyism. He said that some people get angry at the time of elections. We are talking to everyone.

Marandi said that Jharkhand Mukti Morcha



BJP's state election in-charge-cum Union Minister Shivraj Singh speaking to media persons in Ranchi on Monday. PNS

knows that they are losing the elections badly. That is why they have started making excuses from now itself. They have started accusing that BJP is in cahoots with the Election Commission. Someone please give proof.

Marandi said that Bunty and Babli are husband and wife. For 5 years these two have cheated the people of

Jharkhand. They had said that they will give 72000 rupees to the people in a year. 5 years have passed, Hemant Soren has not given 72000 rupees to any poor person. He had said that mothers and sisters will be given 2000 rupees every month for cooking expenses. 5 years have passed, no one has been given cooking

expenses.

He had said to his daughters that he will give them a gold coin when they get married. He did not give a gold coin to any girl. He had said that he will give pension of 2500 rupees per month to the elderly and the disabled. He did not give it to anyone. He had said that 5 lakh jobs will be given to the youth. He had sworn on his father. He had said that if 5 lakh jobs are not given, he will retire from politics. Who will trust a person who swears on his father and does not fulfill his promises. He had said in the assembly that he will give 5000 rupees allowance to BA pass and 7000 rupees allowance to MA pass. He did not complete even a single work. When the elections came, he used a new trick and started giving 1000 rupees to women from August. He has given it for 3 months. He has said that he will give 2500

rupees from December. This is the game of Bunty and Babli.

Marandi said that the Prime Minister of the country Narendra Modi is working for the welfare of the poor. He had said that 5 kg of grain will be given free to each person every month to 86 crore people of the country. In Jharkhand also, more than 2 crore people are getting this grain. The Prime Minister said that 6000 rupees will be deposited in the accounts of the farmers of the country every year. He is also sending it. Today, in the states where BJP is in power, schemes are being run for the empowerment of mothers and sisters under different names. Financial assistance is being given. The Bharatiya Janata Party does not copy anyone. The schemes being run by the BJP have been stolen and implemented by other parties.

ECI rejects JMM's allegations as baseless and beyond facts

Voting will be held till 4 pm at only 3% polling stations

PNS : RANCHI

Chief Electoral Officer K Ravi Kumar today said that the allegations made by Jharkhand Mukti Morcha leader Supriyo Bhattacharya regarding the time of voting are baseless and beyond facts. He said that in Jharkhand Assembly 2024, voting will be held till 4 pm at only 3 per cent polling stations. In Jharkhand Assembly 2014, voting was held from 7 am to 3 pm at 89 per cent and in 2019 at 63 per cent polling stations. He was addressing a press conference here on Monday.

He said that the facts regarding the allegation made by Jharkhand Mukti Morcha regarding short time of voting in rural areas are as follows.

1. There are a total of 29,562 polling stations in the state, out of which 24,520 are in rural areas and 5,042 are in urban areas.

2. Except for 981 Naxal-affected rural polling stations, the voting time in 23,539 rural polling stations and all urban polling stations is from 7 am to 5 pm.

3. In the 2014 and 2019 assembly elections, the voting time was kept from 7 am to 3



Chief Electoral Officer K Ravi Kumar during a press conference in Ranchi on Monday. PNS

pm at 89% (22,132) and 63% (18,555) polling stations respectively. This time, the time has been kept from 7 am to 4 pm at only 3% (981) polling stations, which has been possible only due to the special efforts of the Commission.

4. There is adequate publicity of the voting time. Whatever be the time of closing of the polling, all the voters standing in the queue at that time get full opportunity to vote.

The Commission has the legal right to fix the time of voting under Section 56 of the Representation of People Act 1951. This time cannot be

less than 8 hours. Before fixing the time of voting, the Commission during its visit to the state considers the historical and current issues related to security of the area from the political parties, district administration, state administration. Apart from this, the geographical location of the area, road network, time of sunset according to the season are also taken into consideration. The Chief Electoral Officer of the state takes written recommendation in this regard from all the district administrations and sends it to the Commission.

For villages or village groups affected by Naxalism or having Naxal history, it is ensured that the polling party returns safely after completing the polling process before sunset. On an average, the number of voters at these remote polling stations is less than other urban and rural polling stations.

The Chief Electoral Officer said that a total of 21 candidates have filed nomination papers on Monday for the first phase of assembly elections. So far, a total of 25 people have filed their nomination papers for this. He said that so far six FIRs have been registered for violation of the Model Code of Conduct and action is being taken as per rules. He appealed to the common citizens and said that if anyone finds any case of violation of Model Code of Conduct from anywhere, then he should immediately upload it on the Election Commission's app C Vigil. The Election Commission will take cognizance of it within 100 minutes and ensure action. He said that since the implementation of the Model Code of Conduct, illegal material and cash worth Rs 7 crore 72 lakh have been seized so far.

11,000 paramilitary personnel to be deployed during polls

RANCHI : RANCHI

The dates for Jharkhand assembly elections have been announced. Elections will be held in two phases in the state. The first phase will be on November 13 and the second phase on November 20. At the same time, the results of the election will come on November 23.

After the announcement of the dates, Jharkhand Police has also started preparing for the elections, so that voting can be done peacefully in Naxal-affected areas. For this, 11 thousand paramilitary personnel of 119 companies will be deployed in Jharkhand. Out of which 91 paramilitary companies have come to Jharkhand. Jharkhand Police had demanded 590 companies of paramilitary forces from the Election Commission regarding security arrangements.

Three to five companies of paramilitary forces will be available to each district. These forces will be deployed in the tasks of flag march, area domination, checking etc., so that the general public can believe that the security arrangements are tight in view of the elections.

Lok Sabha elections 2024 were conducted peacefully in Jharkhand. Jharkhand Police had foiled all the violent plans of Naxals on the basis of its special strategy and conducted the elections peacefully. Now Jharkhand Police is facing the challenge of conducting the assembly elections peacefully. Jharkhand Police believes that Naxal violence in elections has become a thing of the past. Jharkhand Police will do a better job in the assembly elections too.

Jairam Mahto's JLKM suffers setback ahead of Polls

PNS : RANCHI

The newly formed Jharkhand Loktantrik Krantikari Morcha (JLKM), led by Jairam Mahto, has suffered a significant blow before the upcoming elections. General Secretary Shankar Mahto, along with 12 senior leaders, has resigned from the party in protest against the selection of candidates.

Shankar Mahto spoke to media representatives at Gandhi Seva Sadan, expressing dissatisfaction with the current state of the party: "With the mission, I had joined the JLKM and became part of its movement, but that has changed now."

He said that the party has made a candidate who did anti-party work in the Lok Sabha elections. In such a situation, there is no point in staying in the party now, so we are all resigning. There was resentment over Sindri candidate He mentioned that at least eight senior leaders had hoped to receive tickets for the assembly elections but were overlooked by the party's supreme leader, Jairam Mahto.

Earlier, JLKM central president Jairam Mahto had announced to field Usha Devi from Sindri assembly constituency. Her name was



released in the second list. Central organization general secretary Shankar Mahto had protested only after Jairam's press conference. Jairam Mahto was accused of discrimination in ticket distribution. Now Shankar Mahto has resigned from the party. Other party leaders from Sindri assembly constituency have also resigned.

Jharkhand Loktantrik Kranti Morcha (JLKM) will contest 81 assembly seats in the state. We have received 69 applications. The seven-member team of the parliamentary board has finalized the first list, has agreed on the names of candidates for six assembly constituencies. Jairam Mahto from Dumri, Rohit Kumar Das from Jamua, Motilal Sarkar from Rajmahal, Damyanti Munda from Tamar, Prem Mardi from Saraikeela and Preeti Raj from Chhatrapur will contest.

Jairam said- He himself will contest from two seats. We are getting a lot of support from the public in Baghmara. Our home is in Tundi. We have also made preparations from Bermo and Mandu. However, the organization will decide which will be the second seat. He also told that many senior leaders of Nirsra and Sindri are in touch. They are ready to give ticket to Amit Mahto in Silli. He clarified that his party is not going to form an alliance with anyone. The organization is keeping an eye on every situation.

Jairam said- Infiltration is a big issue in Jharkhand. This has put our identity in danger. The people of Pahadia tribe are troubled, atrocities are being committed on the tribals. Our organization opposes infiltration. Displacement is considered a big problem in Dhanbad. Said that people are not getting employment under the local policy. A concrete policy is necessary. The problem of unemployment is getting bigger. While discussing the Baghmara area of Dhanbad, he said that arbitrariness is happening there. 133 workers working in outsourcing are not getting their rights. We are ready for every fight for the rights of the workers.

Series of events to be organised to create voter awareness

PNS : RANCHI

In order to make voters aware about the upcoming J h a r k h a n d Legislative Assembly Election 2024, a campaign under SVEEP- Systematic Voters Education and Electoral Participation was jointly organised by



District Election Officer cum Deputy Commissioner Ranchi, Varun Ranjan holds a meeting with officials in Ranchi on Monday. PNS

Ranchi District Administration and Ranchi Municipal Corporation for the members of Residents Welfare Association (RWA) on Monday. Chairing the meeting, Deputy Development Commissioner Dinesh Kumar Yadav emphasized that, "For a strong and healthy democracy, it is necessary that maximum number of people exercise their franchise and that every citizen should work to make his family and people around him aware about this."

The DDC also appealed to the members of RWA to organise various SVEEP related activities for the people of their respective apartments and neighbourhoods so that the common man is made aware about voting.

On the occasion, Additional Administrator Sanjay Kumar urged the citizens to discharge their duties as voters on the day of voting and definitely step out to cast their votes.

The attendees were also made aware about the Voter Helpline App and Cvigil App, a quiz was also organised under SVEEP while the oath to vote was also administered. Deputy Development Commissioner Dinesh Kumar Yadav, Assistant Collector Aditya Pandey, Additional Administrator Sanjay Kumar, Deputy Administrator Gautam Prasad Sahu and other along with representatives of RWA were present. A training programme for Voters Awareness Forum is scheduled to take place at the Aryabhata Auditorium on October 22 where representatives from various banks, restaurants, officials from various private and public sector entities will be present.

Nodal officers who were appointed in all the colleges for the General Assembly Elections which concluded earlier in May 2024, will also be part of the workshop.

A marathon called 'Run for Democracy' will also take place in the State capital on October 25 at Morabadi Ground. While mostly first time voters and college students will be participating in the event, citizens above 18 can also participate.



Congress leader Ajay Nath Shadeo alongwith his supporters in Ranchi on Monday. PNS

Stop illegal money movement in Assembly elections: CEO

PNS : RANCHI

The Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), K Ravi Kumar has said that there may be attempts to influence voters through the movement of illegal money in the assembly elections. It is the duty of all enforcement agencies to completely ban illegal money and illegal material, he added.

Kumar also said that it is mandatory to follow the guidelines of the Election Commission of India so that all candidates get a fair chance. He said that in the course of the election, he was holding a review meeting with senior officials of enforcement agencies held at the Election House on



Chief Electoral Officer K Ravi Kumar holds a meeting with officials in Ranchi on Monday. PNS

Monday. The CEO said that the Forest Department should stop the movement of illegal material by conducting intensive checks at all its checkposts. He directed the Income Tax Department to

stop it by conducting intensive raids on the possible hideouts of illegal money and its movement. In the meeting, he directed to completely ban the possible hideouts of narcotics and its means of movement by conducting

raids. On this occasion, Additional Chief Electoral Officer Dr Neha Arora, Assistant Chief Electoral Officer Dev Das Dutta along with senior officers of enforcement agencies were present.

Meanwhile, in another meeting, Kumar has said that the work of SVEEP should be expedited to motivate voters to vote in the Assembly Elections 2024. He said that all means of public relations such as posters, banners, print media, electronic media, social media, street plays, promotional vehicles etc. should be used to spread awareness among voters. He was addressing a meeting held with all the

members of the SVEEP Committee at the Election House on Monday.

He said that the volunteers engaged in the work of voting by the School Education Department should be selected and their training should also be completed with the material prepared by the headquarters for their training. He said that to ensure that certificates and ID cards are provided to the school children working as volunteers on time.

He said that while providing assured minimum facilities at the polling stations, it should also be promoted so that no confusion arises among the common people about the polling sta-

tion. On this occasion, Additional Chief Electoral Officer Dr. Neha Arora, Secretary of Welfare Department Kripananda Jha, State Project Director of Education Department Shashi Ranjan, Special Secretary of Women and Child Development Department Abhay Nandan Ambasth, Special Secretary of Information and Public Relations Department Rajiv Lochan Bakshi, along with representatives of Director Art and Culture, PIB, Press Club, Doodardshan, Akashvani, Nehru Kala Kendra and senior officials associated with the SVEEP of the Chief Electoral Office were present.



The Election Commission had also asked the state government to send a panel of senior IPS officers to be considered for the post by 10 am on Monday. On July 26, the Jharkhand government appointed Anurag Gupta, a 1990 batch IPS officer, as the in-charge DGP of Jharkhand.

ECI appoints Ajay Kumar Singh as new DGP

PNS : RANCHI

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has appointed Ajay Kumar Singh as the new Director General of Police (DGP) of Jharkhand. The Election Commission issued the order related to this on Monday afternoon.

After the instructions of the Election Commission, the charge of Jharkhand DGP post was withdrawn from 1990 batch IPS Anurag Gupta and he was instructed to hand over this charge to Ajay Kumar, posted as MD of Jharkhand Police Housing. Regarding this, a notification was issued by the Home Prison and Disaster Management Department on the evening of October 19.

The Election Commission had directed the Jharkhand government on October 19 to immediately remove DGP Anurag Gupta and hand over the charge to the most senior DGP officer available in the cadre. According to the information, the Election Commission had taken this decision on the basis of the action taken by the Election Commission against Anurag Gupta in the 2019 elections. The Election Commission had also asked the state government to follow its instructions and submit a report by 7 pm on October 19.

SC grants two-week extension to expert panel of NEET-UG reforms

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday extended by two weeks the time granted to the Centre-appointed seven-member expert panel to file its report on exam reforms after reviewing the National Testing Agency's functioning in holding the NEET-UG. The SC on August 2 had passed its formal order and expanded the remit of the seven-member expert panel, headed by former Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) chief K Radhakrishnan, to review the functioning of the National Testing Agency (NTA) and recommend exam reforms to make the controversy-ridden NEET-UG (National Eligibility cum Entrance Test Undergraduate), transparent and free from malpractices.



The NEET-UG is conducted by the NTA for admission in undergraduate medical programs. The top court had also refused to annul the NEET-UG of 2024, saying there was no sufficient material on record at present to indicate a systemic leak or malpractice compromising the integrity of the

examination. On Monday, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, told a bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud that the deadline for filing the report of the expert committee was ending and sought two-week extension. The bench, also comprising

Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, took note of the fact that the report of the panel was almost complete and granted two more weeks for filing the same. While expanding the scope of the expert panel, the top court had flagged multiple lapses on the part of NTA like the security breach at an examination centre in Jharkhand's Hazaribagh where the rear door of the strongroom was opened and unauthorised people were permitted to access question papers, transportation of question papers by e-rickshaws and distribution of wrong set of question papers among the candidates. Besides Radhakrishnan, other members of the expert committee are Randeep Guleria, B J Rao, Ramamurthy K, Pankaj

Bansal, Aditya Mittal and Govind Jaiswal. The bench said the remit of the committee, in addition to the tasks that it has been entrusted with by the union government and the NTA, shall encompass examination security and administration, data security and technological enhancements. Its responsibilities will also include policy and stakeholder engagement, collaboration and international cooperation, and recommendations for providing mental health support to students and training of NTA staff, it had said. Over 23 lakh students took up the NEET-UG in 2024 for admissions to MBBS, BDS, AYUSH and other related courses, which marred series of controversies of question paper leaks.

'I am Congressman till my last breath': Ajay Singh Yadav

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



Congress leader Captain (retired) Ajay Singh Yadav on Monday raised concerns about under-representation of OBCs in the party's Haryana unit and top bodies such as the CWC, while also lashing out at the AICC in-charge of state Deepak Babaria over the poor assembly poll showing. Yadav, who took a U-turn after resigning, stated he would remain a Congressman "till his last breath", said he had an "offer" from the BJP post-assembly polls but he did not take it as he his family has had a 70-years-old relationship with the Congress.

"I am not going to the BJP while many have gone. I had an offer after polls but I did not go. I have spent my entire life here. My son is a secretary (in the AICC). We have 70 years of ties with the party. I have worked with Rajiv ji, Sonia ji and was given respect. She made me CLP minister. So, one has to respect that," he said told a press conference here. Yadav, whose son Chiranjeev Rao lost from Rewari in the recently concluded Haryana Assembly polls, said the party could not effectively micro manage the polls. "I am not going to the BJP while many have gone. I had an offer after polls but I did not go. I have spent my entire life here. My son is a secretary (in the AICC). We have 70 years of ties with the party. I have worked with Rajiv ji, Sonia ji and was given respect. She made me CLP minister. So, one has to respect that," he said told a press conference here.

get the kind of importance that they should have. He said his post of the chairman of the OBC department is an "ornamental" one. "Be it CWC, CEC, there is hardly representation from the OBC department, backward classes, there are just SCs and Jats for representation. I had raised the issue of caste census which was not being properly implemented in the Congress ruled states, there is also the issue of raising of creamy layer limit, proper representation in higher education," he said. "In Haryana, if you see OBCs have more representation in the BJP. Rao Inderjit Singh is an OBC, Bhupinder Yadav is an OBC, Krishan Pal Gurjar is an OBC, they are all Union ministers....They have Punjabi in Manohar Lal Khattar. The social engineering has not been done in the Haryana Congress party where the OBCs are being under-represented," Yadav said. "I have to point out these things, this is my duty. Like in UP, Bihar, Punjab where CLP and chief are not from the OBC community," he said. Presently my resignation has not been accepted, if it is accepted or not is upto the party to decide, he said. Yadav said he has taken back his resignation and will now work accordingly. He also said leaders rejected by the

AAP and the BJP were being encouraged in the Congress by some leaders. On Saturday, Yadav had said he was "prevailed upon" by his son and former MLA Chiranjeev Rao to "forget the past" and work for the party. Yadav quit the party on Thursday alleging shabby treatment after Sonia Gandhi left the post of party president. He also resigned as the chairman of the All India Congress Committee's Other Backward Classes (OBC) Department. In a series of social media posts, the 65-year-old leader said he has served the Congress for 38 years and gave his best to the party. He said his family has had an "association of more than 70 years" with the Nehru-Gandhi clan. "I worked with my leader late Rajiv Gandhi ji and Sonia Gandhi and cannot forget their affection towards me...I am a Congressman since my birth and would remain a Congressman till my last breath," said Yadav. "I was upset that my hard work done for the OBC department was not being appreciated by the high command and some harsh words made me take this drastic step. But with a cool mind I have decided to strengthen the Congress party, especially my mentor and leader Sonia Gandhi ji," he said in another post.

India and Singapore to strengthen defence ties in sixth defence ministers' dialogue

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and Singapore will review the entire gamut of their bilateral defence ties here on Tuesday during the sixth India-Singapore Defence Ministers' Dialogue. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Ng Eng Hen will co-chair the dialogue.



intense collaboration between the two forces, as they engage in advanced air combat simulations, joint mission planning and debriefing sessions. The bilateral phase aims to enhance interoperability, sharpen combat readiness and promote the exchange of knowledge between the two Air Forces.

The meeting aims to carry forward defence cooperation between the two countries. Both sides will also exchange views on regional and global issues of shared interest, defence ministry said here on Monday.

The RSAF is participating with its largest contingent till date, comprising of aircrew and support personnel from F-16, F-15 squadrons alongwith G-550 Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) and C-130 aircraft. The IAF will be participating with Rafale, Mirage 2000 ITI, Su-30 MKI, Tejas, MiG-29 and Jaguar aircraft.

The engagements have diversified to include wide-ranging contacts between the Services, military-to-military exchanges, high-level visits, capacity building and training programmes, cooperation in UN Peacekeeping, ship visits and bilateral exercises. Singapore is a key pillar of India's Act East Policy, and an important partner of the Indo-Pacific vision. Defence and security partnership between the two countries is an important factor of stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

Since its inception, JMT has been conducted under the ambit of a bilateral agreement signed between the two nations. JMT exercise comes right after RSAF's participation in one of the largest multinational aerial exercises, Ex-Tarang Shakti hosted by the IAF, which is reflective of a growing professional association between the two Air Forces.

The Singaporean Defence Minister will be on a visit to India from October 21-23. The fifth edition of the Defence Ministers' Dialogue took place in January 2021 through virtual teleconference.

In addition to air operations, the personnel of the two air forces will exchange best practices, as they interact during a multitude of sports and cultural activities over the next seven weeks. JMT-2024 highlights the strong bilateral defence relationship built over years of collaboration and joint exercises, as well as the mutual respect between India and Singapore.

The bilateral phase of the exercise will be conducted from November 13 to 21 and is expected to generate

SC stays NCPDR directive against madrassas

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday stayed the operation of the communications issued by child rights body NCPDR urging States to shift students of unrecognised Madrassas to Government schools. A bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra took note of the submissions of senior advocate, appearing for Muslim organisation Jamiat Ulema-i-Hind, that the communications of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPDR) and consequential actions of some of States needed to be stayed. The Muslim organisation



has challenged the action of Uttar Pradesh and Tripura governments directing that students of unrecognised madrassas should be shifted to Government schools. The top court ordered the communications of the NCPDR issued on June 7 and June 25 this year should

not be acted upon. The Court also said the consequential orders of the states shall also remain stayed. It also permitted the Muslim body to make states, other than Uttar Pradesh and Tripura as parties to its petition. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPDR) last week wrote to chief secretaries of all States and Union Territories, recommending that Madrasa boards be "closed down", State funding to Madrasas and Madrasa boards be stopped, and children attending Madrasas be enrolled in "formal schools." The Jamiat Ulema-i-Hind approached the Supreme Court against the directive of the NCPDR.

President Murmu to present national water awards 2023

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu will present the National Water Awards 2023 on Tuesday, recognising outstanding contributions to water management and conservation across India.



The awards, organised by the Department of Water Resources, River Development, and Ganga Rejuvenation under the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti, honour efforts in nine categories, ranging from best state to best civil society, according to an official statement.

In the category of Best State, the first prize has been conferred upon Odisha, with Uttar Pradesh securing the second position, and Gujarat and Puducherry jointly securing the third position. Each award winner will be conferred with a citation and a trophy as well as cash prizes in certain categories.

Odisha has been gaining recognition for its extensive water conservation initiatives such as establishment of approximately 53,000 water

conservation and rainwater harvesting structures, along with 10,800 reuse and recharge systems. Additionally, the renovation of 11,000 traditional water bodies, development of 68,700 watersheds, and completion of 21,000 wastewater treatment plants have been achieved. The renovation of around 1,800 km of drainage channels has reclaimed approximately 39,000 hectares of agricultural land previously affected by waterlogging. Also, over 90,900 hectares of irrigated land have transitioned from conventional irrigation methods to micro-irrigation

structures in industries and educational institutions, according to the ministry. Gujarat, sharing the third spot, was acknowledged for achieving 100 per cent tap water connections under the Jal Jeevan Mission, covering 25 lakh households. The state also expanded micro-irrigation coverage, benefitting over 14 lakh farmers.

The Best District awards were presented across various zones, showcasing exceptional efforts in water management and conservation. The winners included Visakhapatnam from Andhra Pradesh in the South zone, Dhalai from Tripura in the North East zone, and Banda from Uttar Pradesh along with Ganderbal from Jammu and Kashmir as joint winners in the North region. The National Water Awards, initiated in 2018, aim to raise awareness about water conservation and management, aligning with the government's vision of a 'Jal Samridh Bharat' (water-sufficient India), the release said.

INS Suvarna anti-piracy moves to Tanzania



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Navy ship INS Suvarna paid a port call at Dar Es Salam, Tanzania, from October 19-21 for operational turnaround, during its ongoing anti-piracy deployment in the Gulf of Aden and conducted drills with Tanzanian navy, navy said here. Commander Lalit Yadav, Commanding Officer, called on Rear Admiral A R Hassan, Commander of Tanzanian People's Defence Force (TPDF) Naval Forces, and Bishwadipey Dey, High Commissioner of India (HCI) to Tanzania. During the visit, operation team of both navies held professional interactions including joint training on

Visit Board Search Seizure, Damage Control and Fire Fighting drills, including sports engagement. The ship also handed over the Infantry Weapon Training Simulator to the TPDF side. INS Suvarna co-hosted a social interaction on board, along with HCI, for TPDF officials. Major General I M Mhona, Chief of Operations and Training, TPDF, was the Chief Guest, along with Rear Admiral A R Hassan. The ship later carried out a joint Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) surveillance with TPDF Navy. The visit aimed to enhance military and diplomatic ties between the two countries in line with Indian government's vision of SAGAR.

Stevia can also have therapeutic potential: Research

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A team of Indian researchers has highlighted the therapeutic properties of Candy Leaf, or Stevia rebaudiana, beyond its natural sweetness.



The team led by Dr. Asis Bala and Prof. Ashis K Mukherjee from the Institute of Advanced Study in Science and Technology (IASST) in Guwahati explored Stevia's effects on cellular signalling mechanisms and found it may offer benefits for various diseases, including endocrine, metabolic, immune, and cardiovascular disorders.

Published in "Food Bioscience," journal, the research identified that the active components in Stevia interact strongly with AMP-activated protein kinase (AMPK), indicating further research is necessary to fully

understand its benefits. The IASST in Guwahati is an autonomous institute of the Department of Science and Technology.

The team did the research on Stevia's medicinal properties and its effects on cellular signalling mechanisms to prove the disease's therapeutic qualities. Currently, Stevia rebaudiana Bertonii is widely grown and distributed across Assam in Northeast India, from where it is exported worldwide. The other researchers were Piyali Devroya and Suraj

Kumar Chatterjee from IASST, Rahul Singh, Satyabrata Mohapatra, and Sagnik Haldar, all from Emami Limited, Kolkata). Their multimodal strategy integrated network pharmacology with in vitro and in vivo techniques, showing that the plant used phosphorylation of Protein Kinase C (PKC) to inhibit a crucial cellular signalling route, said the study.

PKC is connected to inflammatory, autoimmune, endocrine, and cardiovascular illnesses. Stevia suppresses PKC phosphorylation, which alters downstream pathways that cause inflammation, a significant cause of endocrine metabolic and cardiovascular issues, as per the research. The study titled "Candy Leaf - Stevia rebaudiana (Bertonii) Attenuates LPS-Induced Protein Kinase C

Phosphorylation in Mouse Macrophage Cells: Target Search by Network Pharmacology and Validation Using Ex Vivo and In Vivo Assays" shows Stevia's promise in this field for the first time. The research also found that active Stevia molecules strongly interact with AMPK, highlighting the need for further investigation. The study reveals an undiscovered facet of Stevia, underlining the necessity for creative strategies and scientific data to support traditional therapeutic practices, according to the researchers. The North Eastern Council under the Union Government has also highlighted the potential of Stevia cultivation to benefit the northeastern Indian economy due to high demand.

Union Minister of Labour to launch 'eShram - one stop solution'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister of Labour and Employment Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya on Monday launched "eShram - One Stop Solution" here with an aim to provide seamless access of different Social Security Schemes to the unorganised workers registered on the portal launched in 2021. More than 30 crore workers have already registered themselves on eShram in a span of 3 years since its inception.



Speaking at the launch event, Dr. Mandaviya emphasised the growing trust in the eShram portal, noting, "Every day, around 60,000 to 90,000 workers are joining the eShram platform, which demonstrates their confidence in this initiative." Dr. Mandaviya also highlighted that the main aim of the portal is to simplify the registration process for

unorganised workers and facilitate their access to government welfare schemes. "This platform will act as a bridge, connecting the workers to the numerous benefits offered by the government and making the registration process easier and more transparent," he said. "eShram One Stop Solution" entails consolidating and integrating data from various Central Ministries/Departments into a single repository as per the recent budget announcement and 100 days agenda of the

Ministry. Key welfare schemes such as One Nation One Ration Card, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, National Social Assistance Programme, National Career Service, Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maandhan etc. have been integrated with eShram, and onboarding of other welfare schemes is also in progress. Dr. Mandaviya urged all unorganised workers to register on the eShram portal and take advantage of the various welfare schemes

designed for their benefit. He emphasised that onboarding to the platform will enable workers to access a wide range of social security and welfare initiatives launched by the government, aimed at improving their livelihoods and ensuring their well-being. Union Minister of State for Labour and Employment, Shobha Karandlaje emphasised on the integration of State Governments portal with eShram in order to ensure last mile connectivity. "This initiative will also help in ensuring saturation of the schemes through identification of left-out potential beneficiaries, State/District-wise," she added. Sumit Datta, Union Labour and Employment Secretary was of the opinion that 'eShram One Stop Solution' will serve as a facilitator to enable seamless access to various government schemes to the unorganised workers.



www.dailypioneer.com

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

PAPER WITH PASSION

Dastardly strike

As terrorists kill seven people in Central Kashmir, concerns grow over the effectiveness of security measures

A disturbing pattern of targeted violence has resurfaced in Jammu and Kashmir, with seven killed in a cowardly terrorist attack. The people killed were part of the construction team working on the Z-Morh tunnel, which connects Gagangir to Sonamarg in Central Kashmir's Ganderbal district. Yet another bomb blast occurred in the capital though no one was injured, which raises concerns about potential coordination between terrorist groups and the spread of violence beyond the Valley. While there is no direct evidence linking the incidents, the possibility of a broader security threat cannot be ignored. This latest attack is part of a troubling trend of escalating violence against migrant workers in the region, marking the fifth such incident this year. The recent killings underscore a persistent threat to life in Kashmir. This latest tragedy follows a series of deadly incidents in the Valley. The recent wave of terrorist attacks exposes critical vulnerability of security apparatus. While authorities, including J and K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, have condemned these acts and pledged to bring the perpetrators to justice, the recurrent nature of these attacks reveals deeper challenges in counter-terrorism measures and security protocols. The targeted nature of these attacks suggests a deliberate strategy to instill fear among migrant workers and disrupt ongoing development projects. By targeting migrant labourers involved in infrastructure work, terrorists aim to deter economic activities that could stabilise the region. These incidents not only hamper development but also erode the confidence of workers who play a crucial role in key infrastructure projects. Moreover, the attacks signify a broader



attempt to undermine the relative peace that has been maintained in recent years. Despite heightened security measures and the presence of the military in sensitive areas, the perpetrators have managed to carry out attacks on civilians, highlighting significant intelligence gaps and the ability of militants to exploit weaknesses in the security grid to target rather easy groups. A comprehensive review of security measures in Jammu and Kashmir is urgently needed. While military action remains essential, it needs to be complemented by robust intelligence gathering, better coordination between different security agencies and community-based approaches to countering extremist elements. The current situation also points to the need for upgrading the security apparatus around camps housing migrant workers and ensuring that projects with a high number of migrant labourers receive adequate protection. Another pressing issue is the socio-political narrative surrounding such incidents. There is a need for a unified political strategy that addresses not only the immediate security concerns but also the long-term socio-economic challenges that contribute to unrest. Investing in local economic opportunities, countering extremist ideologies through educational initiatives and strengthening intelligence network can make a lot of difference.

PICTALK



A potter arranges freshly-made 'diyas' (earthen lamps) ahead of the Diwali festival, in Hyderabad

Global Hunger Index: Misleading metrics

The accuracy and intent behind GHI rankings are suspect. Does the GHI truly reflect India's reality, or is it a motivated attempt to malign India's image?



SANTHOSH MATHEW

The recent Global Hunger Index (GHI) report, which places India at a dismal 105th position out of 127 countries, has raised eyebrows and sparked considerable debate. While hunger and malnutrition remain pressing global issues, the methodology and conclusions of the GHI, co-authored by two non-governmental organisations—Irish-based Concern Worldwide and German Welthungerhilfe—have drawn criticism, particularly from the Indian government and sections of society.

There is a growing concern that such reports may not just reflect statistics but also carry political and geopolitical undertones aimed at tarnishing India's image on the world stage. The GHI is based on four key indicators: the prevalence of undernourishment, child wasting, child stunting, and child mortality. The scores from these factors are compiled to place countries on a scale from zero (no hunger) to 100 (extreme hunger), with countries scoring closer to zero seen as having little or no hunger issues. India's score of 27.3 puts it in the "serious" hunger category, alongside 42 other countries. Critics of the GHI have raised several concerns about the methodology used in calculating India's score.

Firstly, the reliance on child mortality and child stunting indicators as primary components of the hunger index is problematic. India is a country with a large population, and while child malnutrition is a valid concern, this issue is not unique to India but rather shared by other developing countries. By focusing heavily on this aspect, the report seems to disproportionately penalise India. Additionally, the GHI report uses outdated data from global sources such as the World Health Organisation and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). India, like many countries, has been undergoing significant improvements in food security through government initiatives such as the National Food Security Act, the Midday Meal Scheme, and public distribution system reforms. However, these efforts do not



seem to be adequately represented in the data used for the GHI. Many believe that the Global Hunger Index is not just about numbers but also about shaping narratives. By positioning India in such a negative light, the report seems to overshadow the country's genuine achievements. India's economy is among the fastest-growing in the world, and its agricultural output has been consistently high. The country's food production is more than sufficient to meet the needs of its population. India has become a net exporter of food grains and has successfully launched programs to improve access to food for its vast population. Given this backdrop, how can India be ranked lower than countries facing severe internal strife, economic collapse and war, such as Afghanistan or even smaller nations like Bangladesh and Nepal?

It's essential to question the intentions behind these rankings. Are they an honest reflection of hunger, or do they serve other interests? Reports like the Global Hunger Index can have far-reaching consequences, not just for the countries they assess but also for global perceptions. The fact that the organisations behind the GHI—Concern Worldwide (Irish) and Welthungerhilfe (German)—hail from Western countries has not gone unnoticed. It raises the question of whether the



THE RELIANCE ON CHILD MORTALITY AND CHILD STUNTING INDICATORS AS PRIMARY COMPONENTS OF THE HUNGER INDEX IS PROBLEMATIC. INDIA IS A COUNTRY WITH A LARGE POPULATION, AND WHILE CHILD MALNUTRITION IS A VALID CONCERN, THIS ISSUE IS NOT UNIQUE TO INDIA

index is truly impartial or if it subtly reflects geopolitical biases. India has made significant strides in addressing hunger and malnutrition, but it seems that these efforts are often ignored or underplayed by such indices. For instance, the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, which provided free food grains to over 80 crore people during the COVID-19 pandemic, is one of the world's largest food security initiatives. The fact that India could provide this level of support during a global crisis contradicts the narrative of widespread hunger and undernourishment. To deny that hunger exists in India would be dishonest, but the situation is far more complex than a single ranking can capture. Hunger is not a static issue; it is deeply intertwined with poverty, access to education, healthcare, and infrastructure. The Indian government has been tackling these root causes of hunger through a multi-pronged approach that includes social welfare schemes, employment generation programmes like MGNREGA, and nutrition programmes targeted at women and children. Programmes such as the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) aim to provide supplementary nutrition to millions of pregnant and lactating women, along with children under six years of age.

Meanwhile, the Midday Meal Scheme, which serves nutritious meals to school children, has had a significant impact on reducing malnutrition. Despite these efforts, it is undeniable that India still faces challenges. The legacy of poverty, the vast size and population of the country, and regional disparities make it difficult to eliminate hunger overnight. The concerns raised by the Indian government about the Global Hunger Index are not without merit. The index, while claiming to provide an objective measure of hunger, fails to capture the ground realities of individual nations. India, being the second-most populous country in the world, is bound to face issues that smaller nations with more homogeneous populations do not. By painting India as a country where hunger is rampant, the GHI risks creating a false narrative that undermines the substantial progress made by the country. It also risks discouraging the efforts of those working tirelessly on the ground to ensure that no one goes to bed hungry.

What is needed is not biased rankings or politically motivated reports but genuine collaboration between nations to tackle the global hunger crisis. As we reflect on the GHI, one thing is clear: statistics alone do not tell the whole story.

(The writer is an associate professor; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

OMAR ADVOCATES STATEHOOD

Madam — Apropos of 'We will not give Kashmir' (October 20), the demand of the newly elected government of J and K under Omar Abdullah for full statehood is not at divergence with the vow of the Modi government on the floor of the Parliament for granting the statehood to Jammu and Kashmir. The only difference is the time factor looking at the highly volatile and inflammable borders infested with Pakistan-sponsored terrorists and Pakistan's propaganda against India on all international platforms. Omar Abdullah government should not vie to show down with the Centre under the political pressure of those who lost elections and whom people rejected in Assembly elections. The National Conference, while keeping Congress at bay, has a better opportunity of coordination with the Modi government for betterment and all-round growth of the State as Congress has turned itself into a sworn enemy of PM Modi and is prone to confrontation with him. People have elected the National Conference for development, education, health, industry and job creation, not for confrontation with the Centre. Terrorism is the biggest threat to the State for destabilising it, and it comes from across the border. Since the Indian army and paramilitary forces are well equipped to combat terrorism and neutralise the terrorists, the State government should restrict itself to the state administration.

Vinod Johri | Delhi

INDIA'S HUNGER CHALLENGE

Madam — The 2024 Global Hunger Index report, in which India ranks 105 among 127 countries, must not be ignored. The nutrition indicators for children under 5 years show that 1 out of 3 children (35.5 per cent) is a victim of stunting. Now, how can a country compete with others when the growth of more than one third of its future workforce has been stunted for not getting enough food to eat? A study says that

Mitigate climate Change



Climate change refers to a long-term shift in temperature and weather conditions. These shifts may be natural but since the 1800s, human activities have been the main driver of climate change. Burning coal, oil and gas to generate electricity and heat or to make goods like cement, steel and electronics produces carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that pollute the air to

a large extent. As temperature rises, more moisture evaporates, which exacerbates extreme rainfall and flooding causes more destructive storms. Climate change also changes water availability, making it scarcer in more regions.

According to the Climate Change Act 2017, local bodies must consider climate change when preparing their municipal health and wellbeing plan. Local bodies must raise awareness about climate change and how to adopt and mitigate its effects. They must encourage electric vehicles within city limits. Establishing minimum energy for housing infrastructure and renewable energy by creating ordinances and bylaws to help the community adopt climate change is the urgent work of the urban local bodies.

P Victor Selvaraj | Tirunelveli

many gig workers in India have to work for 10 to 14 hours daily for their employers to earn less than Rs 10,000 per month. While overwork damages their health, the poor wage makes their children and family members compromise on food intake.

This is nothing but exploitation. The Centre should allocate more funds for introducing breakfast in addition to the midday meal for all government and aided schools from the nursery level. It is highly commendable that some states and union territories provide additional items such as milk, eggs, and fruits to students from their own resources. But why should not the centre itself allocate the funds for the same for giving those nutritious food items to students all over the country? Otherwise, students of all the states in India will not get those additional, nutritious food items.

Sujit De | Kolkata

KIWIS STUN INDIA

Madam — It's double the joy of winning overseas and certainly for New Zealand,

this victory is so special since they won a test after 36 years to claim 1-0 up in this series at Bengaluru. When Indians were dismissed for a paltry 46 in the first inning, the hope of skipper Rohit Sharma was diminished, but the ray of hope was enlightened by the scintillating 150 by young Sarfaraz Khan along with the swashbuckling knock of 99 from Rishab Pant in the second inning.

Though the Indian scored 462, the later order failed to capitalise on their complacent batting. A target of 107 for the Kiwis to chase became a customary one and Rachin Ravindra's high-powered 134 in the first and an unbeaten 39 in the second innings brought the Kiwis a comfortable win at the end. The gesture from Ravindra's father came by way of his thanksgiving to CSK Academy, where Ravindra took his week-long practice just before this series is worth observing for this young gun's success.

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

The quiet struggles and shifting realities of ageing

Having left the traditional joint family behind, we now face loneliness and the stark realities of ageing in a world that moves rather fast



SANJAY CHANDRA

Recently, I sat sipping my cup of tea in quiet contemplation as life moved around me. Unbidden, a strange thought struck me. In my younger days, I often felt that the old were more rigid in their approach. I am in my mid-sixties. I still judge those older than me. In the olden days, in my age, I would have been expected to move out of the household to spend time in quiet meditation.

Not any longer. We continue to enjoy the worldly pleasures of life, with the added baggage of rigidity in attitude. We are more self-centred. There are many like me in the age group that we call seniors. I did not have to look far to seek reasons for these changes. I was in the hospital a few months back attending to the admission and discharge formalities for my father. I was told it was essential for an attendant to be present to sign various documents at different stages of the hospitalisation. I do not know if these are mandated rules or if hospitals do this to comply with



medico-legal requirements. These have serious implications for many ailing single seniors with children in distant lands.

We do not contemplate a life of dependence on others when we are young. Having led a life on our terms for decades, it is difficult to adjust to a life with rules not set by us. We belong to the generation that has moved out of the age-old joint family milieu to set up unit families. The interaction with even the immediate family is limited to meeting at festivals. One gets to meet the extended family only during family weddings, busy as they are in the daily grind of their units. It is not surprising that we now find ourselves at a crossroads. The young have their own lives and cannot be expected

to be available for each ache and pain. A few years back I met a younger acquaintance over coffee. The seniors within his community encouraged young professionals to join the governing body of the community welfare association extending unconditional support. As things settled, the young lot no longer needed to consult the old for each decision. The seniors felt rebuffed, and relationships soured. I recently flew with a medical professional who established a thriving chain of pathology clinics. Approaching 60, he has sold his business. He is now working towards establishing old age homes for the seniors.

I was apprehensive because of the stigma attached to these facilities. The old feel a sense of abandonment; the young feel guilty. To face these challenges, he is starting daycare centres for seniors, to spend a few hours engaged in activities of their choice, with adequate medical facilities available. As my medical friend expounded, the

major challenge for the old is loneliness resulting in inadequate communication, which in time may lead to dementia. I would have attributed obsession with self to insecurities over the advancing age, had I not witnessed the same even in the young. A feeling of inadequacy can strike anyone irrespective of age. We are yet to evolve into a society that respects and cares for all. It is the responsibility of each member of the community to help others feel loved and cherished. American author and motivational speaker, Felice Buscaglia, known as 'Dr Love', said, "It is not enough to have lived. We should be determined to live for something. May I suggest that it be creating joy for others, sharing what we have for the betterment of personkind, bringing hope to the lost and love to the lonely."

(The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

THE FEAR OF LOSS AND THE QUEST FOR INNER PEACE

Accepting life's impermanence may be the key to transcending fear



RAVI VALLURI

Humans are intrinsically fearful of loss. Misplacement can assume several dimensions. Say mislaying of property, wealth, recognition, position, power, pelf, health and most importantly, life. John's (name changed) steely voice suddenly trembled and quivered as he answered the pretentious cell phone. Rachel (name changed), his daughter had met with a grievous car crash and was wheeled into the ICU of an estimable hospital. Death is the action or fact of dying or being killed, the end of life of a person or an organism. Several years ago, a Japanese warrior was captured by his adversaries and was confined to a dungeon. That fateful night he tossed and turned restlessly and was unable to sleep, fearing the following day when he would be interrogated, tortured and eventually executed. He was staring death in its face. Then suddenly he remembered the priceless words of his Zen Master: "Tomorrow is not real. It is an illusion. The only reality is now." Heeding these esoteric words, the warrior overcame the exacting condition he was encountering and soon his mind became tranquil and he fell asleep. Suffering and fear arise in our minds when humans confront ailment or impending death. No one wishes to pass from being to non-being.

The credo of the human mind is the desire to remain eternally immortal. Millions of cells in the human body perish and are regenerated. But we are not mindful or wakeful of this reality. Do humans compose dirges or elegies like Catullus or Propertius for the dead cells? Or do we carouse and indulge in delirium on the birth of new cells and recite 'Happy Birthday'



songs? "No one wants to die. Even the people who want to go to heaven do not want to die to get there! And yet death is the destination we all share. No one has ever escaped it." Be it Rachel or the Japanese warrior no one has ever attained perpetuity or everlastingness; however bare-knuckled a person may be, he remains a glass jaw to the reality.

Yet youngsters today cannonaded by gizmos and technology become weary and bored of life at the young ages of twenty, thirty and hotfoot to snuff out their lives. Life is indeed holy and hallowed, too valuable and will remain a mystery that should not be recklessly given up. Yet there is no covenant or magic potion which guarantees deathlessness. Identifying and unravelling this mystery has confronted the minds of spiritualists, religious congregations and those of scientists and technocrats alike. A Zen Master was unwell and desired to cast away his body. His pupils implored him that he ought to live longer and disseminate the profound knowledge. It so happened that one disciple remarked, "Whether it is life or death, let it be." The Master was ecstatic with the response and passed away. "Let it be" is much more than a mere aphorism, it is a state of mind.

Our shastras impress that the human mind is influenced by place, time, food, past impressions and associations and the actions of individuals. The footprints bear both efficacious and antipathetic impacts on the human mind. Humans are enslaved by the above-mentioned factors and habits and, as a result, involuntarily superintendents our perceptions, attitudes and behaviour.

And over a period if we are not aware of these negative emotions they compound into anxiety, anger, aggression, covetousness, low self-esteem, and fear. Knowledge about the impermanence of life and variegated dimensions can be gained only through regular practice of pranayama, Sudarshan Kriya, meditation, or mindful observation of breath. This is the secret and the only truth.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)

Unlocking the full potential of GatiShakti



UTTAM GUPTA

The PM GatiShakti initiative is revolutionising India's infrastructure by integrating digital planning tools to expedite project completion and improve multimodal connectivity

According to the Secretary of the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Amardeep Singh Bhatia, as many as 208 big-ticket infrastructure projects including roads (101), railways (73), urban development (12) and oil and gas (4) worth Rs 1539,000 crore have been recommended for approval under the PM GatiShakti initiative so far. These projects have been recommended by an inter-ministerial group known as the Network Planning Group (NPG) constituted under the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan (NMP). Launched in October 2021, the PM Gati Shakti NMP is a transformative Rs 100 lakh crore initiative aimed at revolutionising the infrastructure in India over the next five years.

Its vision is to create a world-class integrated infrastructure that improves the ease of living, boosts economic growth and makes Indian businesses more competitive. It does so by expediting project completion, reducing timelines, enhancing multimodal connectivity, boosting efficiency across sectors, benefiting logistics (a jargon for handling, storage and transportation) creating jobs and fostering innovation. How does it work? The PM GatiShakti NMP has been developed as a Digital Master Planning tool. It works on a dynamic Geographic Information System (GIS) platform wherein data on specific action plans of all the 16 Ministries/Departments dealing with infrastructure sectors as well as of the States have been incorporated within a comprehensive database.

The NMP portal has over 1,600 layers of geospatial data, showing all physical and social infrastructure of an area viz land, ports, forests, and highways and so on. The NMP revolves around seven primary sectors that are fundamental to economic growth and ensuring seamless connectivity. These sectors are roads, railways, ports, airports, mass transport, waterways and logistics infrastructure.

These are further supported and complemented by sectors like energy (all fuels such as petrol, diesel, ATF, natural gas and power etc) transmission, IT communication, bulk water and sewerage, and social infrastructure. The inter-ministerial NPG has representations from the connectivity infrastructure ministries/departments, involving their heads of network planning division to ensure unified planning and integration of the proposals.

The NPG meets every fortnight and appraises infra projects to ensure multi-modality (a term used to connote several different modes of transportation to get cargo from the factory/port/warehouse to a client's front door), synchronisation of efforts, and comprehensive development in and around the project location. All logistics and connectivity infrastructure projects worth over Rs 500 crore are routed through the NPG. The NPG's approval is required even before making a DPR (Detailed Project Report) at the planning stage. Thereafter, the project follows the normal procedure of approval by the Public Investment Board (PIB) or Department of



AS MANY AS 156 GAPS IN INFRASTRUCTURE TO PORTS AND FOR MOVEMENT OF BULK COMMODITIES LIKE COAL, CEMENT, FERTILIZERS AND FOOD GRAINS, HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED FOR INTERVENTION UNDER THE PM GATI SHAKTI INITIATIVE

Expenditure under the Ministry of Finance (MoF) and the Cabinet.

Put simply, NMP provides on a centralised portal, a 360-degree view of all the existing projects/initiatives, those under implementation as well as projects under planning stage across all ministries and departments and offers visibility into all critical data relevant to efficient planning and execution. It helps in the identification of critical gaps in infrastructure, helping to select the most efficient routes for transportation, reducing costs, and minimising delays.

As many as 156 gaps in infrastructure to ports and for movement of bulk commodities like coal, cement, fertilisers and food grains, have been identified for intervention under the PM GatiShakti initiative.

The plan also helps in prioritising projects more effectively by leveraging cross-sector interactions, ensuring that the ministries work in harmony to align the projects and allocate resources optimally - based on national priorities - avoiding duplication and redundancies.

The upfront approval by the NPG even before the ministry prepares the DPR can help it in making the RIGHT choices, prevent delays and avoid colossal wastage of resources that were germane to the earlier dispensations when the ministries and departments were working in silos - in an uncoordinated manner - unaware of the happenings and work in progress in other departments and bereft of the crucial data on KEY parameters. The PM GatiShakti is a robust system working on real time basis in a dynamic framework to guide project planning and execution (monitoring through satellite imagery ensures that the ministries can track progress and make necessary

adjustments to keep projects on schedule).

The phenomenal increase in the capacity in all crucial areas such as ports, airports, railways, highways, roads and so on is a testament to the success of efforts made under PM GatiShakti.

But, we have a long way to go. The target of Rs 100 lakh crore investment for building the infrastructure over five years was set by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her maiden Budget for 2019-20 (out of this, 39 per cent or Rs 3900,000 crore was to come from the Centre and an equal amount from States and the balance Rs 2200,000 crore from the private sector).

Against this, the investment covered under PM GatiShakti is Rs 1539,000 crore which is just about 15 percent. Even when we take this as a proportion of the investment commitment by the Centre (presumably all projects under PM GatiShakti are centrally sponsored), this works out to 40 per cent. As for the States, they are far behind in meeting their overall investment target of Rs 3900,000 crore.

And, very few of them such as Uttar Pradesh, and Gujarat have boarded the PM GatiShakti platform.

The platform by ensuring visibility, identification of bottlenecks and better coordination can help expedite approvals but it can't be a substitute. The approvals have to be given by the concerned authorities at the central and State levels. Here, projects face long delays especially when it comes to getting environmental and land clearances.

Local protests exacerbate the delays. 'Working in silos' syndrome doesn't go away just because Modi has given a platform to the bureaucrats in various Ministries to sit together and thrash out issues. Sticking to their stance, especial-

ly when it comes to staking their claim to resources (such conflicts are seen more in major projects like roads and railways) often leads to delays. Further, a lack of coordination with the states, as seen in the Sagarmala and Bharatmala projects, has led to slower progress.

Outdated or incomplete data is a major bottleneck. For instance, while land records are digitised in 13 states, the rest lag. This hampers the implementation of projects in states where land records are not digitised as well as roads/highways projects, power transmission lines, and oil and gas pipelines passing through these states.

Even as the PM GatiShakti platform allows for real-time tracking, the authorities don't always make project updates regular, which delays completion. This is particularly true of rural road projects in many districts leading to slow progress.

The investment by the private sector is nowhere near the target of Rs 2200,000 crore set by Sitharaman. In the roads/highways sector, even as the government has asked private players to come under public-private partnerships (PPPs) mode, the latter's response isn't encouraging leaving it to the former to take on the load.

The bottlenecks lead to continuing project delays and cost overruns which cause high tariff/service charges across all sectors highways, railways, ports, airports, power transmission, fuel transportation etc.

These come in the way of making Indian businesses more competitive and ease of living for the common man. All Stakeholders particularly the States should work to surmount the bottlenecks to enable PM GatiShakti to deliver its full potential.

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

How India's workforce can benefit from the world's growing demand

Tapping into this opportunity requires a systematic approach to connect Indian talent with international employers

India's labour force is one of its greatest assets, with millions of skilled workers spread across various industries, including healthcare, construction, information technology and engineering. However, despite this abundance of talent, many of these workers struggle to find suitable employment within the country. The global labour market, on the other hand, is increasingly facing shortages in these same sectors. Bridging this gap has been a significant challenge.

Global Skill Shortage and Demand for Indian Talent over the past decade, countries across Europe, the Middle East, and parts of Asia have been facing critical shortages in skilled labour. Factors like ageing popula-



ADITI BANERJEE

tions, changing work preferences, and evolving technological needs have driven these regions to seek out talent from countries like India. Healthcare, construction, IT, and logistics are some of the industries experiencing the most pressing shortages. We need to recognise this demand early on and respond by connecting skilled Indian professionals with global employers. This will help in aligning the

skill sets of Indian workers with international standards and job requirements, offering thousands secure employment overseas.

A Systematic Approach to Global Mobilisation. The workforce mobilization model should ensure that the process is smooth and transparent for both the workers and the employers. The organisation focuses on several key stages: **Talent and Skill Gaps:** We should conduct thorough assessments of candidates, ensuring they meet international job requirements. By collaborating with top training institutes, they also provide upskilling opportunities to candidates who need it. **Job Matching:** With established relationships with employers in countries such as

Germany, Canada, and the UAE, organisations can ensure that candidates are placed in roles that match their qualifications and aspirations.

Navigating Complexities: Overseas job placement is fraught with regulatory hurdles, but offering complete support with visas, documentation, and legal compliance, ensures candidates can focus on building their careers without administrative delays.

Supporting Worker Welfare: The organisation provides post-placement assistance, offering support with relocation and helping candidates adjust to new cultural environments. This ensures long-term success for workers abroad. Shaping the Industry's Future Beyond individual place-



ments, the organisation's work is in shaping the broader landscape of international labour migration. There has to be a system for fair recruitment practices and the protection of workers' rights. This is critical in an industry that is often plagued by stories of worker exploitation and unethical recruitment agencies. **Women Empowerment:** A particularly noteworthy aspect of such an organisation's work

is its focus on women and young professionals. The global job market offers unique opportunities for these groups, particularly in industries like healthcare and hospitality. Targeted programs need to aim at empowering women to enter these fields and secure high-paying jobs abroad. This is especially significant in a country like India, where barriers to women's employment are still prevalent in many sectors. The organisation's efforts to provide training and certification for nursing professionals, for example, have opened up opportunities for hundreds of women to work in countries where there is a growing demand for healthcare workers. This not only benefits the individual but also creates ripple effects

for their families and communities. **Economic Benefits:** India's skilled labour force is not only contributing to the economies of the countries where they work but also bringing significant benefits to India itself. Remittances sent home by overseas workers are a major source of foreign exchange and play a crucial role in the economic development. By placing workers in global jobs, we can help alleviate some of the domestic unemployment pressures. This is especially important for sectors like construction where there is a surplus of skilled labour in India.

(The writer is CEO & Co-Founder of Magic Billion; views are personal)

Lebanon assesses damage after wave of Israeli strikes on Hezbollah-run financial institution

AP ■ BEIRUT

Lebanese were surveying the damage on Monday after overnight Israeli strikes hit nearly a dozen branches of a Hezbollah-run financial institution that Israel says is used to fund attacks but where many ordinary people keep their savings. The strikes targeted Al-Qard Al-Hassan branches in the southern neighbourhoods of Beirut, across southern Lebanon and in the Bekaa, where Hezbollah has a strong presence. One strike flattened a nine-story building with a branch inside it. Smoke was still rising from several locations on Monday and bulldozers were removing the debris. The Israeli military had issued evacuation warnings ahead of

the strikes, and there were no reports of casualties. Israel invaded Lebanon earlier this month, saying it aims to push Hezbollah back from the border after more than a year of rocket, missile and drone attacks that began after Palestinian Hamas militants launched their surprise October 7, 2023, attack into Israel from the Gaza Strip. Israeli airstrikes have pounded large areas of Lebanon for weeks, forcing over a million people to flee their homes. Avichay Adraee, the Arabic language spokesman for the Israeli military, said warplanes targeted several locations "used to store money for the military arm of Hezbollah", including Al-Qard Al-Hassan, which he said finances arms purchases and is used to pay Hezbollah fighters.

He said Hezbollah stores hundreds of millions of dollars in the branches, without providing evidence, and that the strikes were aimed at preventing the group from rearming. In a series of tweets late Sunday, the Israeli military released maps noting the locations of the branches it planned to target, asking residents nearby to evacuate. Thousands of people fled, jamming streets in the capital. Local Lebanese TV networks sought to reassure the public that areas in central Beirut were not listed as targets after a map issued by the Israeli military indicated it would target an upscale mall that was incorrectly labelled as the location of a branch. The Israeli military did not target the site. The institution, which has more than 30 branches across Lebanon, tried to reassure cus-

tomers, saying it had evacuated all its branches and relocated gold and other deposits to safe areas. The registered non-profit, sanctioned by the United States and Saudi Arabia, has long served as an alternative to Lebanon's banks, which have imposed restrictions in the face of a severe financial crisis that began in 2019. Its name in Arabic means "the benevolent loan", and Hezbollah has used it to entrench its support among the Shiite population in a country where state and financial institutions have failed in recent years. Still, many of its customers are civilians unaffiliated with Hezbollah. The strikes came after US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin called civilian casualties in Lebanon "far too high" in the Israel-Hezbollah war, and

urged Israel to scale back some strikes, especially in and around Beirut. In a separate development, the Israeli military apologised for a strike on Sunday in southern Lebanon that killed three Lebanese army soldiers. It said it targeted a vehicle in an area that Hezbollah had recently used for attacks without realising it belonged to the Lebanese military. The military said it is "not operating against the Lebanese Army and apologises for these unwanted circumstances". Lebanon's army is a respected institution within the country, but it is not powerful enough to impose its will on Hezbollah or defend Lebanon from Israel's invasion. The army has largely kept to the sidelines as Israel and Hezbollah have traded blows over the past year.



Rescue workers use a bulldozer to remove rubble of destroyed buildings at the site of an Israeli airstrike on Sunday night that hit several branches of the Hezbollah-run Qard al-Hassan Association in Beirut's southern suburb, Lebanon, on Monday. AP/PTI

BRICS remains a positive, stable force: China

PTI ■ BEIJING

Ahead of the BRICS summit in Russia, China on Monday said the bloc representing emerging economies has remained a positive and stable force committed to upholding multilateralism. The summit of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS), which now has expanded with five additional members Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, will be held in the Russian city of Kazan from October 22 to 24. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chinese President Xi Jinping along with other leaders are due to attend it. "Let me reaffirm that this year marks the beginning of greater BRICS cooperation," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian told a media briefing here, elaborating on China's view of the BRICS. This summit is the first one after the expansion of BRICS, which draws widespread attention from

the international community, he said. "Since its founding, BRICS has followed the spirit of openness, inclusiveness and win-win cooperation, remained true to its founding purpose of seeking strength through solidarity, stayed committed to upholding multilateralism and become a positive and stable force for good in international affairs," he said. During this summit, President Xi Jinping will have in-depth exchanges of views with other leaders on the international landscape, the BRICS practical cooperation, the development of the BRICS mechanism and important issues of mutual interest, he said. "China stands ready to work with other parties to strive for the steady and sustained development of greater BRICS cooperation, open a new era for the Global South to seek strength through solidarity and jointly promote world peace and development," he said.

Meanwhile, China's Foreign Ministry on Monday parried questions on a possible meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in Russia this week. "We will keep you posted if anything comes up," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said while replying to a question at a media briefing here. Both Modi and Xi are attending the BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia, which begins Tuesday. The ties between India and China nosedived following the fierce clash in the Galwan Valley in June 2020 that marked the most serious military conflict between the two sides in decades. China last Friday announced that Xi will attend the BRICS Summit in Russia, where he will work with other parties to open a new era for the Global South to seek strength through solidarity. BRICS originally consisted of Brazil, Russia, India, China and

South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates have been admitted as new members. The theme of this year's Summit is Strengthening Multilateralism for Just Global Development and Security. The spokesperson of the Ministry, Mao Ning, said that Xi will attend small-group and large-group meetings, BRICS Plus Dialogue and deliver important addresses. Xi will also have in-depth exchanges with other leaders on the international landscape, the BRICS practical cooperation, the development of the BRICS mechanism and important issues of mutual interest, she said. "China stands ready to work with other parties to strive for the steady and sustained development of greater BRICS cooperation, open a new era for the Global South to seek strength through solidarity and jointly promote world peace and development," she said.

Pak limits Chief Justice's term to 3 years

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Following an overnight debate, Pakistan's National Assembly passed the controversial judicial amendment bill early on Monday, capping the chief justice's tenure to three years. The National Assembly passed the 26th Constitution Amendment Bill, which the opposition alleges is aimed at watering down the powers of the independent judiciary, at 5 am with 225 members in the 336-member house supporting the bill. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and the Sunni-Ittehad Council (SIC) opposed the amendment, but six independent members who held their seats with the support of the PTI supported the bill. The government needed 224 votes to pass the amendment. The Senate on Sunday night voted 65-4 to approve the amendment with the required two-thirds majority. The ruling coalition needed the support of 64 members in the upper house of the parliament. Following its passage in both Houses of Parliament, the

Constitution (Twenty-Sixth Amendment) Act, 2024 will now be sent to the president for assent under Article 75 of Pakistan's Constitution and become law after his signatures. The bill, comprising a set of constitutional amendments, including a special commission to appoint a chief justice out of three senior-most judges of the Supreme Court, was approved by the cabinet on Sunday with a consensus among the ruling coalition partners. Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar who presented the bill in the Senate said the 'new-face' commission would consist of the Chief Justice, four senior-most Supreme Court judges, two senators and two national assembly members — one of each from the opposition. He said the changes would help expedite the dispensation of justice by the apex court. The amendment blocked the automatic rise of the senior-most Supreme Court judge to the post of chief justice after the incumbent CJP retired. Speaker Ayaz Sadiq presided over the proceedings in the

National Assembly. According to a statement from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has signed the advice for President Asif Ali Zardari to ratify the 26th constitutional amendment. Following the bill's passage, Shehbaz said in the parliament: "Today's amendment, the 26th, is not just an amendment, but an example of national solidarity and consensus. A new sun will rise, emanating across the nation." The opposition alleged the entire exercise was aimed at blocking Justice Mansoor Ali Shah's appointment from becoming the chief justice on the retirement of current CJP Qazi Faez Isa on October 25. PTI leader Hammad Azhar termed the amendment "a death blow to the independence of the judiciary", and explained how giving the power to appoint judges to the apex court and high courts to the government would politicise the judiciary. Another PTI leader Salman Akram Raja called the moment the "bleakest in our parlia-

ment's history", terming it a handover of the control of the judiciary to the executive. PTI leader Ali Zafar, the first to speak in the Senate on the bill, said his party's lawmakers were being forced to vote in favour. He said his party senators were absent as they feared abduction. "It is against the law and morality that coercion is being applied to get the amendment approved," Zafar said, urging the Senate chairman not to count the vote of any PTI senator. Zafar came to the house to give his party's position despite his party saying in a statement that its political committee decided to boycott the voting process in both houses of Parliament. Pakistan People's Party chief Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, who made elaborate efforts for the passage, said the government would move forward with the amendment whether the PTI voted in favour or not. "We have waited for as long as we could, and today, under any circumstance, this work will be completed," Bilawal told the media.

Seoul wants N Korean troops to leave Russia

AP ■ SEOUL

South Korea on Monday demanded the immediate pullout of North Korean troops allegedly deployed in Russia as it summoned the Russian ambassador to protest deepening military cooperation between Pyongyang and Moscow. South Korea's spy agency said Friday it had confirmed that North Korea sent 1,500 special operation forces to Russia earlier this month to support Moscow's war against Ukraine. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy earlier said his government had intelligence that 10,000 North Korea soldiers were being prepared to join invading Russian forces. During a meeting with Russian Ambassador Georgy Zinoviev, Vice South Korean Foreign Minister Kim Hong Kyun "condemned in the strongest terms" North Korea's troop dispatch that he said poses "a grave secu-

urity threat" to South Korea and the international community, the South Korean Foreign Ministry said in a statement. Kim said that South Korea in collaboration with the international community will mobilise all available means to deal with an act that threatens its vital national security interests. Zinoviev replied he would relay South Korea's position to his home government, according to the South Korean statement. The Russian Embassy quote Zinoviev as saying that the Russian-North Korean cooperation is conducted in accordance with international laws and is not aimed against the security interests of South Korea. The US and NATO haven't confirmed that North Korean troops were sent to Russia. But the reports of their presence have already stoked concerns in South Korea that Russia might provide North Korea with sophisticated technologies that can sharply enhance its nuclear and missile

programs in return for the troops. North Korea's advancing nuclear arsenal is a major security threat to South Korea. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un recently took steps to permanently terminate all relations with South Korea and threatened to use nuclear weapons preemptively. Some observers say South Korea will likely consider supplying weapons to Ukraine if Russian transfers of high-tech nuclear and missile technologies to North Korea are verified. South Korea has joined US-led sanctions against Moscow over its invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. But it hasn't directly provided arms to Kyiv, citing a longstanding policy of not supplying weapons to countries actively engaged in conflicts. Russia has earlier denied using North Korean troops in its war with Ukraine. North Korea's state media hasn't commented on the matter.

Temple being reconstructed after 64 years in Pak's Punjab

PTI ■ LAHORE

A budget of Pakistani Rs 10 million has been allocated to re-construct a Hindu temple in the Punjab province of Pakistan, marking the first phase of restoration 64 years after it was rendered dysfunctional, a media report said on Monday. The Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB), the federal body overseeing minority worship places in Pakistan, has started the construction of the Baoli Sahib temple in Zafarwal town of Narowal, a city on the western bank of river Ravi in Punjab, after the place of worship was rendered dysfunctional in 1960, Dawn News reported. Currently, there is no Hindu temple in Narowal district, forcing the Hindu community to perform their religious rituals at home or travel to temples in Sialkot and Lahore. Ratan Lal Arya, former president of the Pak Dharamsthan Committee, said the ETPB's control over the Baoli Sahib temple rendered it non-functional

and the Hindu community, which numbers over 1,453 in Narowal, lacked a dedicated place for worship. After the establishment of Pakistan, the Narowal district had 45 Hindu temples but all of them have over time fallen into disrepair. For the past 20 years, the Pak Dharamsthan Committee has advocated for the restoration of Baoli Sahib temple, Arya said. The government has taken steps to restore the temple to address Hindu community demands, he said. The ETPB is overseeing the construction at the four kanals of land where the boundary wall is the priority. Once completed, the temple will be handed over to the Pak Dharamsthan Committee. Shoaib Siddal, chairman of the One Man Commission of the Supreme Court, and Manzoor Masih, member of the National Commission of Human Rights, have played pivotal roles in this restoration effort.

President Muizzu introduces UPI payment service to boost economy

PTI ■ MALE

Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu has taken "necessary steps" to introduce India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) in the archipelago nation, slated to benefit the Maldivian economy substantially. Developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), UPI is an instant real-time payment system for facilitating inter-bank transactions through mobile phones. Muizzu on Sunday set up a consortium to introduce UPI in the country and appointed TradeNet Maldives Corporation Limited as its leading agency, according to a press release by the President's Office. The president also suggested the participation of the country's banks, telecom companies and fintech companies in the consortium. He "decided to take the necessary steps" on the recommen-

dation of the Cabinet, the press release said. "This move is expected to bring significant benefits to the Maldivian economy, including increased financial inclusion, improved efficiency in financial transactions, and enhanced digital infrastructure," it said. Muizzu also constituted an inter-agency coordination team comprising the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Homeland Security and Technology and the country's Monetary Authority to lead the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade in overseeing the establishment of the UPI in the Maldives. The agreement to introduce UPI in Maldives was signed during External Affairs Minister Sri Jaishankar's three-day official visit to the country in August. Earlier this month, dollar-starved Maldives floated a new foreign currency regulation,

limiting types of transactions allowed in foreign currency and imposing mandatory foreign currency exchange controls on tourism establishments and banks. The Maldivian economy appears to have taken a hit after calls to Indian tourists to avoid the picturesque island nation as a response to President Muizzu's 'India Out' campaign last year. Muizzu won the presidential election last year on an 'India out' campaign and asked New Delhi to withdraw its military personnel posted in the archipelago nation by May this year. However, Muizzu has since toned down his anti-India stance and visited India on his first state visit to the country earlier this month. Tourism is the main source of economic activity for the Maldives, contributing nearly 30 per cent of the GDP and generating more than 60 per cent of foreign exchange.

Subianto swears in Indonesia's largest Cabinet since 1966, with 109 members

AP ■ JAKARTA

Newly inaugurated President Prabowo Subianto swore in Indonesia's largest Cabinet since 1966 on Monday, with 109 members representing his pledge for a strong government. He announced the lineup late Sunday and named his Cabinet of ministers, vice ministers and head of national agencies the "Red and White Cabinet," referring to the colours of Indonesia's flag. Subianto became the eighth president of Southeast Asia's largest economy on Sunday. The Cabinet of Subianto's predecessor, Joko Widodo, had 34 ministers and head of government agencies. Subianto's Cabinet is the largest since 1966 when Indonesia's first President Sukarno formed a lineup of 132 ministers in an extremely tense political situation after a failed 1965 coup.



Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto, front centre, and Vice President Gibran Rakabuming Raka, front row fourth from right, pose for a group photo with newly-appointed cabinet ministers after their swearing-in ceremony at Merdeka Palace in Jakarta, Indonesia, on Monday. AP/PTI

The so-called Dwikora Cabinet 2 was dismissed a month later. Subianto has said earlier that he needs a strong administration, even though analysts said that his "fat" Cabinet would bloat the bureaucracy. "I want to create a strong government that would unite our multicultural society and diverse political interests," Subianto said before inviting more than 100 people for interviews at his residence last week. "It must be a big coalition, and some will say my Cabinet is fat." The Cabinet features politicians from a coalition of seven parties who supported his victory in the February election, and figures allied with Widodo's Cabinet, who were reappointed to continue their jobs under Subianto's presidency. Analysts said the move was a political reward to Widodo for the latter's tacit support in the election. Subianto was sworn in with his

new vice president, 37-year-old Surakarta ex-Mayor Gibran Rakabuming Raka. He chose Raka, who is Widodo's son, as his running mate, with Widodo favouring Subianto over the candidate of his own former party. The former rivals became tacit allies, even though Indonesian presidents don't typically endorse candidates. Subianto was a longtime rival of the Widodo, who ran against him for the presidency twice and refused to accept his defeat on both occasions, in 2014 and 2019. But Widodo appointed Subianto as defence chief after his reelection, paving the way for an alliance despite their rival political parties. During the campaign, Subianto ran as the popular outgoing president's heir, vowing to continue signature policies like the construction of a multibillion-dollar new capital city and limits on exporting raw materials intended to boost domestic

industry. Backed by Widodo, Subianto swept to a landslide victory in February's direct presidential election on promises of policy continuity. Subianto reappointed nearly half of Widodo's Cabinet members, including Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati, making her the first person to hold the ministry under three different presidents. Indrawati, 62, who has served as the executive director of the International Monetary Fund and managing director of the World Bank, is one of Indonesia's longest-serving finance ministers, having held the post for long stretches under Presidents Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Joko Widodo. She has earned considerable respect in international circles, particularly for her reforms of the chaotic Indonesian taxation system and her role in steering

Indonesia through the global financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. "We regularly consulted with each other to discuss strategies for strengthening the Finance Ministry and the state finances to support his programmes," Indrawati told reporters after meeting with Subianto last week. Other ministers from Widodo's Cabinet include Interior Minister Tito Karnavian, Trade Minister Zulkifli Hasan, Energy Minister Bahli Lahadalia and State-Owned Enterprises Minister Erick Thohir. Subianto has announced an ambitious goal of increasing annual economic growth to 8% by the end of his five-year term, and embarking on an ambitious spending programme, including an increase in defence spending, hikes in civil servants' salaries, and a programme to give 83 million children free meals.

'Gives us what you stole from us,' Australian senator yells at King Charles

AN Indigenous senator told King Charles III that Australia is not his land and Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said the monarch is not needed as the country's head of state as the British royal visited Australia's parliament on Monday.

You destroyed our land. Give us a treaty. We want a treaty. King Charles spoke quietly with Prime Minister Anthony Albanese while security officials stopped Senator Thorpe from approaching.

"Throughout my life, Australia's First Nations peoples have done me the great honour of sharing so generously their stories and cultures. I can only say how much my own experience has been shaped and strengthened by such traditional wisdom," Charles added.

Australian public to decide," the Buckingham Palace letter said. Earlier Monday, Charles and Camilla laid wreaths at the Australian War Memorial then shook hands with well-wishers on the second full day of their visit.

Attack on Trump was preventable, finds House panel report

Members of both the House and Senate have repeatedly questioned why the Secret Service, an agency tasked with protecting the country's top leaders, didn't do a better job of communicating with local authorities during the campaign rally, particularly when it came to securing the building that was widely agreed to be a security threat but that ultimately was left so unprotected that gunman Thomas Matthew Crooks was able to climb up and shoot.

Service for the security breakdown. "Federal, state, and local law enforcement officers could have engaged Thomas Matthew Crooks at several pivotal moments," the report stated. Lawmakers added that throughout the afternoon, "as Crooks' behaviour became increasingly suspicious, fragmented lines of communication allowed Crooks to evade law enforcement" and climb onto the unsecured roof where he would eventually open fire.

Moldovans secure country's path toward EU membership

Moldovans voted by a razor-thin majority in favour of securing the country's path toward European Union membership, electoral data showed Monday, following a ballot that nearly caused a major setback for the pro-Western president, who accused "criminal groups" of trying to undermine the vote.

In Brussels, the European Union's executive branch, the European Commission, said that its services had also noted Russian interference in Moldova, and it underlined its continued support for Moldova on its EU accession path.

Vietnam appoints army general as new president after turmoil

Vietnam elected Luong Cuong, a military general, as its new president on Monday, the fourth official to fill the role in 18 months. Cuong, 67, was elected by the National Assembly to replace Tu Lam, who remained president even after he was formally appointed as the general secretary of the ruling Communist Party in August.

lence, said Nguyen Khac Giang, a visiting fellow in the Vietnam Studies Programme at Singapore's ISEAS—Yusof Ishak Institute. "Luong Cuong's appointment represents a deliberate attempt to restore balance between Vietnam's military and security functions, particularly ahead of the 2026 Party Congress," he said.

Public Notice: Various legal notices regarding property, mortgages, and company matters.

Public Notice: Various legal notices regarding property, mortgages, and company matters. Includes notices from 'The General Public', 'Public Notice' regarding mortgages, and 'Public Notice' regarding company matters.

Public Notice: Notice regarding the liquidation of Shikva Arora, Advocate.

Public Notice: Notice regarding the liquidation of Shikva Arora, Advocate. Includes details about the liquidation process and contact information for the liquidator.

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority. Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida-201301 (U.P.). Website: www.noidaauthorityonline.in. E-TENDER NOTICE. E-Tender are invited from firms/contractors registered with UPLC Lucknow for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned.

Kotak Mahindra Bank. NOTICE. Locker Hired by Mr. Rohini Kapur / Mr. Mannu Kapur having address at A-3e Golfshire Sec-150 Tower No-Ac Flat No 1701 Near-af 15 Uttar Pradesh with Noida Sector 137 Branch of Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd. situated at Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd - Unit No.15,16,17,18, Upper Ground Floor, Paramount Flora Ville Sector 137 Noida -201301 remains un-operated since past 5 years and the rent is also due for the last 4 years.

Tapir Constructions Limited. Extract of Unaudited Financial Results for the quarter and half year ended 30 September 2024. (₹ In Millions). Table with columns: Sl. No., Particulars, Quarter ended 30 Sept. 2024, Corresponding Quarter ended 30 Sept. 2023, Previous year ended 31 March 2024.

PM MITRA, PLI schemes to attract investment

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's textiles sector is expected to attract investments to the tune of Rs 95,000 crore from the seven PM MITRA mega textile parks and the PLI scheme for man-made fabrics and technical textile products in the next 3-5 years, Textiles Secretary Rachna Shah said on Monday.

Apart from the two schemes, the textiles sector will also draw investments from several other channels like FDI (foreign direct investment), she shared, highlighting the government's focus on promoting "sunrise sectors" of man-made fabric, apparel and technical textile.

The textiles secretary informed that "much more substantive outcomes" are being envisaged from the Bharat Tex 2025 mega textiles event to be held in February next year, in terms of not only MoUs but also investments and business generation.

"We are having 7 textile parks so each of them is expected to generate something like Rs 10,000 crore of investment,



that's about Rs 70,000 crore and another Rs 25,000 crore under the PLI scheme for technical textiles and MMF fibre.

"Some of the investment under PLI has already been grounded and in the next 3-5 years or so we should have these large investments coming under the schemes itself. Apart from the schemes, of course a lot of other investment will also be happening, of course there would be FDI and investment

and investments, etc. Happening," Shah said on Bharat Tex.

The government approved the Rs 10,683 crore PLI scheme for the textiles sector in 2021, aiming to promote the production of man-made fabric and technical textile products over five years.

"Bharat Tex 2025 to be held in February is expected to be even bigger than Bharat Tex 2024. We invite you to join Bharat Tex not only as attendees but also as partners and to explore joint ventures for investments and to explore sourcing opportunities. The event represents a chance to experience first-hand energy and creativity of Indian textiles while gaining access to Indian market and export channels world-wide," Special Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs P Kumaran said.

He was addressing an interaction between the government and foreign missions in India to drive engagement on Bharat Tex 2025, slated to be held from February 14-17.

Indian apparel exporters to post 9-11 per cent revenue growth

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian apparel exporters are expected to register a 9-11 per cent revenue expansion in FY25 aided primarily by gradual liquidation of retail inventory in key end markets and a shift in global sourcing to India, ratings agency ICRA on Monday.

The long-term prospects for Indian apparel exports are favourable, aided by enhanced product acceptance in end markets, evolving consumer trends and a boost from the government in the form of the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme, export incentives, the proposed free trade agreement with the UK and the EU, among others, ICRA said in a statement.

The expected growth this fiscal follows a tepid performance in FY24 when exports were affected because of high retail inventory, sluggish demand from the key end markets, supply chain issues, including the Red Sea crisis and heightened competition from neighbouring countries, it added.



With the revival in demand, ICRA said it expects the capex spending to increase in FY2025 and FY2026 and may stay in the range of 5-8 per cent of the turnover.

"After a marginal decline (down 2 per cent) in FY24, Indian apparel exporters are estimated to report a 9-11 per cent revenue growth in FY25, benefitting from de-risking strategy adopted by various customers and replenishment of retail inventory in key end markets, especially the US and the EU regions," ICRA Senior Vice President & Co-

Group Head Corporate Ratings Srikumar Krishnamurthy said.

Nevertheless, he said challenges around demand uncertainty persist in a few key markets amid a subdued macroeconomic environment and geopolitical issues.

"Despite the revenue growth, associated operating leverage benefits and softer raw material prices, the industry's operating margins are expected to contract by 30-50 bps on a YoY basis in FY25 with increasing labour costs, freight costs and rise in

other operating expenses," Krishnamurthy added.

ICRA said the recent geopolitical tensions in Bangladesh could result in capacity additions outside the country, including India. Yet, availability of labour at competitive costs and preferential duty access, given its least developed country status for another two years on exports to the US and the EU help Bangladesh to remain competitive against most other developing countries, it added.

"Apart from the benefits to be derived from the fresh capacity additions under the PLI scheme. PM Mega Integrated Textile Region and Apparel scheme is expected to strengthen India's presence in the global apparel trade by providing scale benefits and strengthening the country's presence in the man-made fibre value chain," Srikumar said.

ICRA anticipates the culmination of these schemes to enable Indian apparel exporters to increase their share of the pie in the global apparel trade, he added.

Data leaks: Irdai insurers to conduct IT systems audit

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Insurance regulator Irdai has directed two insurers to carry out audits of their IT systems following concerns over the recent instances of policyholders' data leaks.

The regulator is also in touch with their management to address the vulnerabilities. Without naming the insurers, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai) said it takes data breaches very seriously and ascertains that it will continue to engage with the companies to ensure that the policyholders' interests are fully protected.

Star Health Insurance had recently admitted data breach. The name of the second insurer could not be immediately ascertained.

"There have been reports of data leaks from two insurers recently," the regulator said. In a release, the Irdai said it is closely monitoring the situation in the case of the concerned insurers and has been in touch with their management.

Regular updates are being obtained to ensure that the policyholders' data and interests are fully protected and the company is taking all steps to arrest the threat posed by this breach, the regulator said.

Irdai said it will continue to engage with the insurance companies to ensure that the policyholders' interests are fully protected.

"The concerned insurers have been instructed to appoint an independent auditor to undertake a comprehensive audit of the company's IT landscape with the aim that there are no vulnerabilities and the IT system are adequate to meet the scale and complexities of their operations," the release said.

As part of the standard operating procedures of the concerned insurers, they reported the cyber incident to the government and Irdai, it added.

It also said the concerned insurers have ring-fenced the impacted IT system by isolating it and at the same time, appointed an external IT security company to undertake root cause analysis.

"The audit firm reported vulnerabilities in the company's IT system and the methodology used by the threat actor to exploit the same, which were acted upon by insurers. The Containment, Eradication and Recoverability plan as suggested by the audit firm is being implemented by the insurers," Irdai said.

Further preventive steps outlined in the report are in the process of implementation to keep the policyholders' data safe and secure. System upgrades over immediate, short and medium periods, will be acted upon by the insurers, Irdai said.

Also, the application programming interface (API)



vulnerabilities, gap assessment, vulnerabilities assessment and penetration testing issues are at an advanced stage of rectification.

"The insurers have filed a criminal complaint with the law enforcement agencies against the threat actors. It served legal notice on the social media platform to prevent the threat actor from selling the policyholders' data," the regulator said.

Further, Irdai has issued an advisory to all insurers to check their IT systems for vulnerabilities and take necessary steps to protect the policyholders' data.

The regulator said it considers data security as very important and takes data breaches, cyber-attacks on IT systems of insurance companies, etc very seriously. Cyber security guidelines for insurance companies are in place, which require insurers to put in place robust IT and cyber security frameworks for carrying out their operations, it added.

NCLAT upholds order to allow govt to takeover Delhi Gymkhana Club's management

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Appellate tribunal NCLAT has upheld an order to allow the central government to take over the management of the prestigious Delhi Gymkhana Club.

The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) set aside the petition filed by the erstwhile management members against the order passed by the Principal Bench of the NCLT.

On April 1, 2024, the NCLT allowed the plea filed by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs for taking over the Delhi Gymkhana Club management citing "violations" of the Company Law and said there was "sufficient material" for holding that, as it is a case of mismanagement.

In its 149-page order, the NCLT had also allowed the ministry to nominate 15 persons as directors on the club's general committee as well as manage the affairs of the club.

The said order was challenged before the appellate tribunal, which has been now upheld on Monday by a two-member bench, comprising Chairperson Ashok Bhushan and Member Arun Baroka.

However, the NCLAT bench also directed the government to carry out all remedial measures as mandated by the NCLT, by March 31, 2025.



The committee has further been directed to conduct an election at the club three months after March 31, 2025. The order was pronounced in the open court on Monday morning and a detailed order is still awaited.

"The NCLAT upheld the NCLT's order holding that Union of India's intervention in the affairs of the Delhi Gymkhana Club was necessitated in view of the mismanagement by the erstwhile general committee. The current committee has been asked to take necessary remedial measures by 31st March and conduct elections thereafter," said Advocate Raunak Dhillon, who appeared for the Central government.

In April 2020, the government through the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) moved the NCLT

Institutional investment in real estate went up 31 per cent



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Institutional investments in the Indian real estate sector increased 31 per cent year-on-year to USD 4.61 billion in January-September 2024 amid strong consumer demand, according to Vestian.

Real estate consultant Vestian on Monday released its report on 'Investment in Indian Real Estate', observing that funds' inflow from institutional investors in the first nine months of 2024 has already surpassed the total for 2023.

"Investors have shown confidence in India's growth story on the back of robust GDP growth. As a result, the real estate sector witnessed increased participation from foreign investors which led to institutional investments touching a billion mark in Q3 2024," Shrinivas Rao, CEO of Vestian said.

He noted that domestic investors are also actively participating, supported by the rapid infrastructure development across the country.

During the latest July-September quarter, institutional investments in real estate rose 41 per cent to USD 960.8 million from USD 679.9 million in the year-ago period.

The inflow however fell sharply from June quarter that saw an investment of USD 3,116.3 million.

"Amid prevailing geopolitical challenges, India's robust economic growth continues to attract both foreign and domestic investors. Rising prominence of work-from-office policies and growing office markets are expected to boost investor confidence, setting a positive tone for coming quarters," Vestian said.

Despite this significant quarterly decline of 69 per cent, the consultant said that the outlook remains positive. Chennai received the highest investments during Q3 2024 with 48 per cent share. Majority of investments in the city were concentrated in industrial & warehousing, commercial, and residential sectors, the report said.

Aadhaar helped people avail government benefits: Nobel laureate Paul Romer

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Nobel laureate Paul Romer on Monday said Aadhaar is the most important technological system in the world right now and it has laid the foundation of a platform to enable people to avail government benefits, including direct benefit transfer.

Speaking at the NDTV World Summit, Romer said that a similar platform could not be set up successfully in the US because they were monopolised by the private sector.

"Aadhaar is the most important technological system in the world right now. Aadhaar solved only one problem. Present a person to me, and I will tell you what that person's number (is). ... But with that foundation, you can then build all of these fantastic services that you now enjoy," he said.

The 2018 Nobel Prize for Economics recipient noted that the government in India



was not afraid to indicate how it would be used in something like Unified Payment Interface (UPI) and Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).

"What people in India saw is that they could build a platform of Aadhaar that was controlled by the government and could be used for the benefit of the people, not to generate wealth for just a...small subset of people," he said.

Romer pointed out that despite many cases in the Supreme Court against the

Aadhaar scheme, the government in India pushed this idea forward and did not let the judges hamstring them, and they achieved this remarkable success.

"In the West, we are too hamstringing by the judiciary," he said.

Romer noted that urban centres are locations where GDP gets produced all over the world and India needs to take advantage of the potential there.

"The challenge with urbanisation is land assembly.

If you can assemble a large enough parcel of land, you can take that land which is worth very little and turn it into land which is phenomenally valuable by creating a modern city there," he suggested.

The former chief economist at the World Bank also said both China and Russia want to function as empires, in a bid to increase influence.

"China and Russia both want to go back to a world of empires...They think of empires as having the ability to meddle and you know influence their whole sphere of influence, and the national border is not important," he said.

According to Romer, India needs to decide.

Does it wants to be on the side of the empire or wants to stand up for the importance of the sovereign state as the organising principle going forward in the world.

"India should be able to say we don't like empires. India's stand could decisively tip the balance," he said.

Emaar India to invest ₹ 2,000 cr in Mumbai region

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

UAE-based realty developer Emaar is planning to invest up to Rs 2,000 crore in Mumbai and its surrounding areas in the next six-seven years, a top official said on Monday.

The group, known for projects like Burj Khalifa, has stayed away from the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) despite being present in India for nearly two decades.

Emaar India's Chief Executive Kalyan Chakrabarti said there is no specific reason to stay away from Mumbai for so long. He added that the group is attracted to the megapolis because it considers it as the deepest and strongest realty market which will be vibrant for decades to come.

The company is aware about the market realities in the space-crunched city, and is open for looking at both societies and slum redevelopments along with any fresh development proposals, he said.

The company plans to invest



USD 1.85 billion (around Rs 15,500 crore) in realty developments across the country in the same time period, he said, adding that capital is not a constraint for it given the backing of a parent company willing to invest.

Therefore, it is not keen to aggressively pursue opportunities on the capital markets, including an initial public offering or sponsoring a Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT).

Elaborating on strengths of Mumbai, Chakrabarti said Mumbai is home to one of the best talent bases in the country, neatly linked to the global trade and offers a great opportunity for realtors when

coupled with the massive infrastructure being created in the megapolis.

The company will continue to serve the mid-market to luxury opportunity in the financial capital as well, wherein an apartment unit will typically cost upwards of over Rs 4 crore, he said.

The Gurugram-headquartered company already has a presence across various other Indian cities including Hyderabad, Indore and Mohali.

Around 85 per cent of its revenues come from the residential segment while the commercial segment accounts for the rest at present, he said, adding that

the company will have over 8 million square feet of space under construction by December, which will have to be delivered in four years.

The company announced its maiden venture into the Mumbai market, with a 84-villa community in nearby Alibag, which is a weekend getaway for Mumbaikars.

Chakrabarti said the company will be investing Rs 400 crore for constructing the villas, which will be spread over 25 acres of land. He, however, did not disclose the cost of buying the land.

Over three-fourths of the land in the Alibag project christened 'Casa Venero' will be free of any structures, he said, adding that costs for a three-bedroom villa will go upwards of Rs 9 crore while a four-bed one will go up to Rs 16 crore.

He said the company chose Alibag for its maiden project in the city due to the connectivity which it offers after the construction of the transharbour link and the new airport.



STRONG INDIAN CONTINGENT FOR WORLD BRIDGE GAMES

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A strong Indian contingent, led by Vinay Desai, will compete in all four categories of the 16th World Bridge Games to be held in Buenos Aires from October 22 till November 3. The contingent comprises several stalwarts, including 2018 Asian Games gold medallist in men's pairs Pranab Bardhan (seniors), Raju Tolani and Jaggy Shivdasani (Open category), among others. A total of 34 countries are in the fray in the 'Open' section, while in the women's section, there are 24 nations. An all-play-all round-robin will take place in Stage 1 with the qualifying teams to play in the round-of-16 knockout round. The competitions will be held in 'Open, seniors, women's and mixed categories.

India will take on Canada in the Group B opener in the 'Open' category, while in the senior section, they will square off against Turkey. The Indian women will play Brazil in the opener, while in the mixed section, they will compete against Germany. The last time South America hosted the competition was in 2009 when it was organised in Sao Paulo. The tournament is held every four years and every country can enter their team, without any pre-qualification. "The WBF (World Bridge Federation) is introducing several new measures to ensure that our motto 'Zero Tolerance for Bad Behavior' is respected, for the enjoyment of all participants," said Jan Kamras, president, WBF in a statement. The qualification round will conclude on October 26, with the round of 16 scheduled on October 28. The finals and playoffs will be held on November 2-3.

INDIAN TEAMS:
Open: Sanjit Dey, Ajay Khare, Binod Kumar Shaw, Jaggy Shivdasani, Sandeep Thakral, Raju Tolani, Vinay Desai (captain).
Seniors: Arun Bapat, Pranab Kumar Bardhan, Badal Chandra Das, Ravi Goenka, Kamal Krishna Mukherjee, Vibhas Todi, Girish Bijoor (captain).
Women: Puja Batra, Devi Muthu Bhatnagar, Bharati Dey, Alka Jain, Alka Kshirsagar, Asha Sharma, Anal Shah (captain).
Mixed: Himani Khandelwal, Rajeev Khandelwal, Bindhya Kohli, Kiran Nadar, Thondiculum Venkatraman Ramani, Bachiraju Satyanarayana, Vinay Desai (captain).

India to host Special Olympics Asia Pacific Bocce & Bowling Competition next month

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Over 250 athletes from 15 countries will be vying for honours when India hosts the Special Olympics Asia Pacific Bocce & Bowling Competition for the first time here from November 18 to 23. In the lead-up to this prestigious event, Shivani, who clinched three gold medals at the Special Olympics World Games in Berlin last year, has been named the athlete ambassador. "I am proud to represent Special Olympics Bharat as the athlete ambassador. My journey in sports has transformed my life; it's truly a blessing," said Shivani. "I hope to inspire others with intellectual disabilities to pursue their passions and never give up. Inclusion in sports can break down barriers and help us all reach our true potential." Athletes from regions including East Asia, Europe Eurasia, and Asia Pacific will participate, with countries like Australia, Bangladesh, Macau, Thailand, Hong Kong, Philippines, Indonesia, Myanmar, Uzbekistan, and Singapore. The competition will focus on older athletes with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), aged 22 and above. While the women's team has been finalised, the men's team selection is still underway. Events will include singles, doubles, mixed, and team



formats. Dr Mallika Nadda, president of Special Olympics Bharat, unveiled the event jersey, emphasising the significance of inclusion in sports.

"Inclusion revolution is our moto and during this competition we will witness stories of courage, determination and triumph as athletes, their families and supporters come together in a powerful display of inclusion and friendship," she said. In the lead-up to the competition, a 'Run for Inclusion' event is scheduled for November 9, alongside a health summit on November 18 which will address issues faced by IDD athletes. A carnival featuring exhibitions will also take place. Last year, 198 Indian athletes participated in the World Summer Games, returning with an impressive 202 medals, including 76 gold, 75 silver, and 51 bronze.

Carlsen star attraction at next month's Tata Steel Chess India

PTI ■ KOLKATA

World No. 1 Norwegian Grandmaster Magnus Carlsen will be the star attraction in the sixth edition of Tata Steel Chess India to be held here from November 13 to 17. It will be Carlsen's second appearance in the tournament. He had earlier participated in 2019 and had gone on to clinch the title. A strong Indian contingent, following its golden performance at the Chess Olympiad in Budapest recently, will see the likes of Arjun Erigaisi, R Praggnanandhaa and Vidit Gujrathi among others competing in the prestigious event. Nihal Sarin and S L Narayanan are the other Indian players who will be in action in the 'Open' category. Like previous editions, the tournament will have the 'Open' and women's categories with same the format — rapid and blitz — and will have equal prize money for both sections. India will be represented by Koneru Humpy, R Vaishali, D. Harika, Divya



Deshmukh and Vantika Agrawal in the women's category. Chess legend Viswanathan Anand will continue his association with the tournament as its ambassador.

"Looking forward to being back at Tata Steel Chess India. It has become the marquee event in India. This year brings the best of the world headed by Magnus Carlsen," said Anand.

"I am particularly excited that the women's event will have the best of Indian chess. This year has been a celebration of Indian chess and this event will be a fitting tribute." Chanakya Chaudhary, vice-president, corporate services, Tata Steel said, "We are excited to host the sixth edition of Tata Steel Chess India, which marks the return of world No. 1 Magnus Carlsen. Members of the Indian men's and women's squads, following their gold medal wins at the Chess Olympiad, will also join the tournament alongside top global players."

The line up for this year's tournament is as below:
Open: Magnus Carlsen, Nodirbek Abdusattorov, Wesley So, Vincent Keymer, Daniil Dubov, Arjun Erigaisi, R Praggnanandhaa, Vidit Gujrathi, Nihal Sarin, S L Narayanan.
Women: Aleksandra Goryachkina, Kateryna Lagno, Alexandra Kosteniuk, Nana Dzagnidze, Valentina Gunina, Koneru Humpy, R. Vaishali, D. Harika, Divya Deshmukh, Vantika Agrawal.

Time running out for Norris to catch Verstappen in F1 title chase as series heads to Mexico City

AP ■ AUSTIN (TEXAS)

Time is running out on Lando Norris' Formula 1 title chase of Max Verstappen. Norris and McLaren leave Texas for the Mexico City Grand Prix further adrift from Verstappen after a disappointing United States Grand Prix weekend. The Red Bull driver won the sprint race, then took the final podium spot in the Sunday main event when Norris was penalized for leaving the track to pass him in the final laps. The penalty will be debated in the garages and paddock until next season. That won't help Norris in the standings now. Verstappen is chasing a fourth consecutive season championship. Norris is trying to win his first, and Texas gave him another taste of just how hard, if not impossible, it can be to take the title from the Dutch driver. Norris had the faster car in the late stages Sunday. He got stuck behind a stubborn Verstappen who refused to yield the place as the drivers battled over every inch of the track. When Norris finally made his move to third with about four laps to go, race stewards determined he improperly left the track to gain the position. He was given a five-second penalty. Norris crossed the finish line in third. Officially, he was fourth and Verstappen took the final podium spot. The penalty and the head-to-head battle with Verstappen, left Norris clearly frustrated. "He defends by going off-track, he overtakes by going off-track. But I'm not going to complain. Max drove well



and he defended well, we had a good race together. But the rules are the rules." Norris said. At least he finished the race this time. When those two tangled in Austria, a late-race collision knocked Norris out of the race and dropped Verstappen from first to fifth. That tussle proved to be a taste of things to come. Norris has been in a months-long charge after Verstappen, who hasn't won a grand prix since June after a dominant start to the season. Norris and Verstappen finished 1-2 in Singapore, but Norris won the race by 21 seconds just before the four-week autumn break. Red Bull and Verstappen appear to have at least closed that gap.

Verstappen won the Texas sprint race for his first victory of any kind since the sprint race in Austria. And even if Sunday's finish had been reversed, Norris would have come out of the weekend just a single point closer in the championship. Yet Verstappen's weekend wasn't as good as he had hoped it would be. Red Bull brought a trove of upgrades to a car that Verstappen has alternately called "undrivable" and "a monster" this season. The car looked good in the sprint and again in qualifying when Verstappen barely missed out on pole position, which Norris won. But the sprint race victory proved a bit of a mirage. The Red Bull had nowhere near the pace of the Ferraris over a

regular race distance, and was passed by Norris at the end. It was still good enough to squeeze the title chase just a bit tighter. And Verstappen had no sympathy for McLaren's complaints Sunday about losing the podium. "They complain about a lot recently," Verstappen said. "The battle with Lando at the end was cool as we were racing hard and it was actually a lot of fun. You cannot overtake outside the white line and I have lost a podium here for overtaking outside the track." And he'll take any result that stretches his lead in the championship. "We are going in the right direction. It is still not enough," Verstappen said. "Ultimately the fact that we have extended the gap is the biggest thing for us.

Inter beats Roma but loses two key players to injuries

AP ■ MILAN

Shortly after Inter Milan president Giuseppe Marotta lamented that the fixture list needed to be cut in order to safeguard the players, the Nerazzurri lost two key members of its team to injury. "We have to live with the constant stress of so many games that the players are struggling to handle ... we need to safeguard their health," Marotta said before Sunday's match. "It is not an easy situation ... but we need to sit around a table and recognize that the fixture list has to be cut back." Less than 12 minutes into the match, Calhanoglu asked to come off after experiencing discomfort in his left thigh and he was followed 15 minutes later by Acerbi who also appeared to have an injury to a muscle in the same place. Both sides hit the woodwork in the first half. A cross from Lorenzo Pellegrini bounced out of the arms of Yann Sommer and onto the post but the Inter goalkeeper managed to catch the rebound. Former Roma midfielder Henrikh Mkhitaryan sent a powerful effort off the crossbar shortly afterward.



Inter broke the deadlock when Davide Frattesi raced down the right flank on the counterattack and his low cross was deflected to Lautaro to thump into the back of the net. **CONTE INSPIRES NAPOLI:** Whatever Antonio Conte told his players at halftime must have worked as Napoli was much improved after the break. Empoli was far the better team in the first period but it was to regret its missed opportunities as it was Napoli that took the lead in the 63rd minute after Tino Anjorin fouled Matteo Politano in the area. Khvicha Kvaratskhelia kept his cool and took a stuttering run-up, waiting for the goalkeeper to make his move before rolling the ball into the middle of the net. That was the first goal the Empoli home fans had seen this season as all three previous league matches at the Stadio Carlo Castellani had ended 0-0. Napoli has won six of its past seven Serie A matches since an opening day loss to Hellas Verona in Conte's debut. The other match was a 0-0 draw at Juventus. It was a second straight loss for Empoli, which had been unbeaten until it lost at Lazio before the international break. **MORE INJURIES:** Albert Gudmundsson and Moise Kean also had to come off injured as Fiorentina romped to a 6-0 win at Lecce. Danilo Cataldi and Andrea Colpani both scored twice before Lucas Beltran and Fabio Parisi completed the rout. It was the first time Fiorentina had scored six goals away from home in Serie A since 1966. Despite an increasingly longer injury list, Atalanta eased to a 2-0 win at bottom club Venezia.

Lewandowski extends scoring streak as Barcelona routs Sevilla

AP ■ MADRID

Robert Lewandowski scored two more goals to extend his league-leading tally to 12 and Barcelona routed Sevilla 5-1 to open a three-point gap on Real Madrid ahead of next weekend's "clasico." Pedri and Pablo Torre also scored Sunday for the Catalan club, which restored its lead of La Liga a day after second-place Madrid won 2-1 at Celta Vigo. Barcelona midfielder Gavi came off the bench to replace Pedri in the 83rd minute, making his return to action nearly a year after a serious knee injury. "I had been dreaming about this moment for several months," Gavi said. "It's tough to watch from the outside. I have to enjoy every moment. I feel very lucky to be here

today." Barcelona will play Madrid on Saturday at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium. Both teams have Champions League matches midweek - Madrid hosts Borussia Dortmund on Tuesday and Barcelona hosts Bayern Munich on Wednesday. "This was an important win considering the matches that we have ahead," Pedri said. "We had to leave with a good feeling and the three points." Lewandowski scored twice in the first half against the visitors, first by converting a 24th-minute penalty kick and then by finding the net from close range in the 39th. The Poland striker was coming off a hat trick at Alaves in the previous league round, and had scored twice in the team's win over Young Boys in the Champions League. He has 14

goals in 11 matches in all competitions this season. Lewandowski, who received a standing ovation when he was substituted in the 65th, nearly got his hat track against Sevilla in a one-on-one situation in the first half. Pedri scored with a curling shot from outside the area in the 28th and Torre added to the lead from inside the area in the 82nd and with a free kick in the 88th. Raphinha had a 49th-minute goal disallowed for offside. Barcelona has outscored its league opponents 33-10 this season. Sevilla, which had no attempts on target in the first half, scored its lone goal in the 87th with 19-year-old substitute Stanis Idumbo. Barcelona also saw Lamine Yamal return from a muscle strain that saw him leave



Spain's squad during the international break. Barcelona defender Eric Garcia hurt a muscle in the team's

warmup and did not play. **ATLETICO'S STADIUM PARTIALLY CLOSED:** Fewer fans than normal watched

Atletico Madrid beat Leganes 3-1 in a match played in a partially closed stadium because of recent fan trouble.

Alexander Sorloth scored twice and Antoine Griezmann once after the visitors took the lead in the first half at the Metropolitan stadium, which had an empty fan section behind one of the goals as punishment after Atletico fans threw objects on the field during a city derby against Real Madrid last month. The section is where the club's more radical supporters usually gather. Atletico had been originally ordered to close the section for three matches but appealed the decision and the punishment was reduced to a single match. The derby was interrupted for more than 15 minutes after fans threw the objects near Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois in a game that ended 1-1. Sunday's victory, which ended Atletico's three match winless

streak in all competitions, moved Diego Simeone's team to third place in the league. It trails Barcelona by seven points. Atletico midfielder Pablo Barrios and defender Clément Lenglet both got injured. Griezmann was sent off late in the game after he slid into an opponent, but the red card was changed to a yellow after video review. **OTHER RESULTS:** Villarreal is in fourth place after conceding an 87th-minute equalizer in a 1-1 draw against Getafe. Santiago Comesaña had put the hosts ahead in the 44th. Mallorca defeated visiting Rayo Vallecano 1-0 with a goal by Vedat Muriqi in the 75th. It was the fourth win in five matches for Mallorca, which moved to sixth place in the standings.

NEW ZEALAND WHITE FERNS SPLIT \$ 2.3 MILLION AFTER WINNING T20 WORLD CUP

AP ■ WELLINGTON
Members of the New Zealand White Ferns cricket team which beat South Africa by 32 runs in the final of the women's Twenty20 World Cup in Dubai on Sunday will split prize money of around USD 2.3 million. That works out at around USD 155,000 or NZD 256,000 per team member, a life-changing windfall for players who for years have struggled for years to achieve financial parity with their male counterparts. New Zealand's first-ever victory in the World Cup of cricket's shortest format was a massive surprise. The White Ferns had lost 10 consecutive T20 matches before beating South Africa in a warm-up match. That pre-tournament success proved a turning point for New Zealand who beat India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan, losing only to Australia on the way to the semifinals. South Africa ousted six-time champion Australia in a massive upset in the semi in which New Zealand beat the West Indies. New Zealand made 158-5, batting first in the final, helped by Suzy Bates who made 32, Amelia Kerr who made 43 and Brooke Halliday who made 38. Kerr then took 3-24 and Rosemary Mair 3-25 as New Zealand restricted



South Africa to 126-9. "Pretty unbelievable to be honest," Mair said. "Coming into the tournament all the odds were against us so for the group to bounce back like they have is unbelievable. "We just care so much about each other. We've been through a lot of lows in the last 18 months, and we've just stuck by each other and kept working hard for each other." Captain Sophie Devine was leading the New Zealand team for the last time. She and Bates have played in all nine T20 World Cups since the first in 2009. New Zealand reached the final of the first two tournaments in 2009 and 2010, losing to Australia on both occasions. "This means everything to us," Bates said. "When you play team sport, you

want to be a world champion. "We've fought our way back to the top. (Devie) has been so outstanding leading this team... So calm and believing in us. We'll probably have a cuddle for even longer later because there's been some dark times that only the people in the (locker room) understand." New Zealand was coached to victory by Australian Ben Sawyer and former Black Caps batters Dean Brownlie and Craig McMillan. The White Ferns' success was praised Monday by New Zealand Sports Minister Chris Bishop. It came at the end of a weekend in which New Zealand also retained sailing's America's Cup and in which the New Zealand men's cricket team beat India in a test in India for the first time in 36 years. "And then to round out a truly amazing sporting weekend, at 3am Monday morning (NZT) the White Ferns, led by Sophie Devine, stepped up to face South Africa in the women's T20 World Cup final in Dubai and absolutely smashed it, bringing home their first World Cup since the One Day International in 2000," Bishop said. "Amelia Kerr's 43 runs off 38 balls and then taking 3 wickets for 24 set our team up for their magnificent performance."



I am pain-free, need to play domestic cricket to make strong case for Australia tour: Mohammed Shami

PTI ■ GURUGRAM
Seasoned India pacer Mohammed Shami on Monday declared himself pain-free but insisted on proving his fitness in domestic cricket by playing at least "one or two" games to make a strong case for selection for the marquee tour of Australia starting next month. Shami, who has not played since the ODI World Cup final last November, bowled full tilt in the nets after India's opening Test against New Zealand in Bengaluru on Sunday. This was a few days after skipper Rohit Sharma revealed that he had swelling in his knees which has affected his rehabilitation from an ankle injury sustained last year. "I am very happy with how I bowled yesterday. I was bowling from half run-up before that because I didn't want to take too much load. But yesterday, I decided to go full tilt, and I bowled at a 100 per cent," the 34-year-old told reporters on the sidelines of an event organised by Eugenix Hair Sciences. "The result was good. I am 100 per cent pain-free. Everyone has been wondering for a long time about whether I will make it for the Australia series but it is still some time away." India are expected to leave for Australia two weeks before the series opener in Perth beginning November 22, leaving Shami just about enough time to feature in two Ranji games for Bengal. Bengal take on Kerala at home from October 26 before travelling to Bengaluru to face Karnataka from November 6. Is he ready for Bengal's next game? "I don't know if I can play the next match. But the day I feel I can bowl 20 to 30 overs, doctors give me the clearance, I will go. I want to spend maximum time on ground before Australia series. "I don't want that I clear fitness here in India and something happens there (in Australia). I want to be totally sure about my fitness before going there," said Shami, who was only part of the Adelaide Test on the previous Australia tour in 2020-21. India would be glad to have Shami's services on the bouncy pitches Down Under though Rohit has already said that he is not in favour of taking an "undercooked" Shami to Australia. Shami, who played a substantial role on the 2018 tour of Australia, realises that he is important to the team's overall plans. "If I get fit, we will need to have the same package that we had on the last two tours. I might not be there but, if you see what happened in 2020, everyone was injured and still we won. "The only thing on my mind is to ensure that I am fit and how strong I can be for the Australia series. I can see what kind of attack we need in Australia." **INJURIES TEACH YOU PATIENCE:** Shami was forced out of action for more than a year after suffering a knee injury during the 2015 ODI World Cup. The 34-year-old is now in a similar phase and he feels injuries only make you stronger. "2015 also I was away for that long. Injury teaches you to fight against yourself, you have to keep frustration at bay, focus on fitness and game. It is difficult to get back on track after an injury. "Injuries teach you patience and add purity to your game. After you comeback the main thing is if you can maintain your fitness. Yes rhythm is important but your skills won't leave you. "You need to fight for regaining fitness," said Shami, who has taken 229 wickets in 64 Tests and 195 wickets in 101 ODIs. While he was recovering from his ankle injury, India were able to end their ICC trophy drought in the Caribbean. Did Shami, who was the standout bowler for India in the ODI World Cup at home last year, miss being part of the triumphant T20 World Cup squad? "It depends on luck as well. I feel one should not be disappointed as you gave your best for the country. You can't fight your luck. If you get injured there is nothing you can do about it," he said. India have already started preparing the next line of pacers through the likes of Shami, Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj still have a lot of cricket left in them. Asked about his thoughts on the transition, Shami had only one advice for the next generation of fast bowlers. "It is a circle and will keep going on. Whether it is Mayank Yadav, Akash Deep Mukesh Kumar, Harshit Rana, I would only advise them to talk at length with the seniors in the nets, that teaches you a lot. "Last 8 to 10 years, we have bowled as a unit. Before that, we never had 140 plus pacers playing at the same time. "From those to the ones on the bench also bowl at 145kmph. So opponents don't get to relax and that creates fear. We all have different skills and that is what we have shown at home and overseas conditions." Can India win their third series in a row in Australia? "The conditions suit us. All our fast bowlers are different type and if we get bounce it only makes us better. Batters need to score a bit, rest we will manage (laughs)," Shami added.

Mumbai cruise to nine-wicket win over Maharashtra to earn full points

PTI ■ MUMBAI
Defending champions Mumbai got their Ranji Trophy campaign back on track with an emphatic nine-wicket win over Maharashtra in their second group A league game here on Monday, offsetting the heavy loss to Baroda in the opening game. Needing 74 to win, Mumbai went into the final day at 13 for no loss. While Ayush Mhatre's (15) dismissal robbed them off a bonus point, Prithvi Shaw (39 not out off 36 balls) and Hardik Tamore (21 not out off 26 balls) earned six points for the team in just 13.3 overs. This was after the 42-time champions lost to Baroda by 84 runs in the opening Ranji Trophy fixture but in the second match at the BKC ground, Mumbai excelled in all departments of the game. The match was won and lost on the first day itself when Mumbai bowled out Maharashtra for 126 in their first innings and then rode on 17-year-old Mhatre's smashing 176 and Shreyas Iyer's belligerent 142 to score 441. While Maharashtra fared much better in the second innings with centuries from Ruturaj Gaikwad and veteran Ankit Banwe, apart from a 98 from former India U-19 batter Sachin Dhas, the damage was already done.

Pressure on Siraj after only 19 wickets from 13 Tests in India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Indian skipper Rohit Sharma believes in consistency when it comes to team selection but he will have to take a leap of faith to retain speedster Mohammed Siraj in the playing eleven for the second Test against New Zealand considering his poor run in home conditions. The match starts in Pune from October 24 and inclusion of spin bowling all-rounder Washington Sundar as the fifth slow bowler is an indication that coach Gautam Gambhir and Rohit might go for the jugular on a spin-friendly track. The 30-year-old Hyderabad has so far taken 80 wickets in 30 Test matches but 61 of those scalps have come in 17 away Test matches in three of the SENA countries (South Africa, England, Australia). Only 19 wickets after bowling 192.2 overs in 13 home Tests are figures that imply that Siraj has struggled in sub-continental conditions unlike



Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami, who have had the ability to throw pitch and conditions out of equation. To be fair to Siraj, in those 13 Tests, he went wicket-less in four with a couple of them against Australia last year played on rank turners in Indore and Delhi where he got to bowl only 10 and six overs respectively. But what has been disappointing is that the last seven home Tests have yielded only 12 wickets for him which is less than two per match. Also, he hasn't been

consistent enough to get initial breakthroughs leaving Bumrah with all the heavy-lifting to do with the new ball. PTI spoke to a coach, who has worked extensively with some of the current national team bowlers, and he thinks that Siraj's length is erroneous for Indian conditions. He explained the technical flaw that has cropped up in his bowling. "If you see Siraj's record, he has five-wicket hauls in Australia and South Africa where there is more bounce. The six to eight metre length away from the batter is considered to be ideal Test match length. But it varies from country to country depending on the bounce," the coach, who was a top domestic performer during his time, told PTI on condition of anonymity. "The ideal length in Australia is eight metres, it is around six metres in England and on low bounce Indian wickets, it is 6.5 metres. If you pitch it around 6.5 metres and get movement, you are in business for both outside edge, bowled and leg before. "Siraj is bowling around eight metre length and in India with that length, you can't hit top of off (stump). He isn't pitching it up enough," he further explained. However, the coach is confident that once Siraj goes Down Under, for the five-match series starting November 22, he will again find his mojo as the length. Which he is hitting here, will work like magic in those conditions. "When you are hitting eight metre length on Indian tracks which are devoid of pace, the batter has more time to gauge the line and it becomes hittable. "I am not sure how effective he will be in Pune or Mumbai although latter was the only venue where he looked menacing against New Zealand in 2021. Problem is when you play white ball, this back of length in Indian conditions can still fetch you wickets," he reasoned.

Reports say hockey set to be axed from 2026 Glasgow CWG; CGF, FIH mum

PTI ■ MELBOURNE
Hockey is set to be axed from the 2026 Commonwealth Games as the host city of Glasgow looks to cut costs, several media reports here stated but both the International Hockey Federation (FIH) and the Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) remained tight-lipped on the matter. Hockey has featured in each CWG since making its debut in 1998, but according to reports here, the Glasgow Games organisers want to drop it from the schedule along with net ball and road racing to ensure a trimmed programme that would be easy on the budget. Scotland stepped in to save the 2026

Games after the Australian state of Victoria pulled out due to rising costs. The schedule is due to be unveiled on Tuesday. When reached out by PTI, the International Hockey Federation (FIH) declined comment till the roster was officially out. "In a couple of days, the situation will be clear - you will get the information accordingly. From our side, until there is any official communication from CGF, we are not in a position to provide you any comment," an official said. The CGF also gave a similar response. "The sports programme for the 2026 Commonwealth Games will be confirmed tomorrow," read a statement from the body when it was approached for a clarification on the media reports.



Hockey's probable omission could also be down to the fact that the Games, to be held from July 23 to August 2, are being organised close to the World Cup that is scheduled two weeks later from August 15 to 30 in Wavre, Belgium and Amstelveen, Netherlands. To cut costs, the Glasgow Games organisers have reduced the number of

sporting disciplines from 19 (in 2022 Birmingham) to 10 with only four proposed venues - Commonwealth Arena and Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome, Scotstoun Stadium, Tollcross International Swimming Centre and Scottish Events Campus. None of these venues have a hockey turf. Hockey's exclusion from the Games would be a major blow for India as their men's team is a three-time silver-winner and two-time bronze-medallist in the sport. The women have won three medals, including a gold in the 2000 edition. The biggest hit would be to Australia, which has won the men's gold for a record seven times and the women's top honours in four editions.

Ronaldo and Al-Nassr's ACL game moved amid Iran security fears

AP ■ WASHINGTON
Cristiano Ronaldo and Al-Nassr's AFC Champions League Elite game with Esteghlal of Tehran on Tuesday will be as closely watched in India as it is in Saudi Arabia and Iran. The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) said in a statement released last Tuesday that Esteghlal had to move its home fixture with Al-Nassr to the United Arab Emirates city of Dubai due to the security situation in Iran. The decision was greeted by surprise in India as, on Oct. 7, the AFC ruled that Mohun Bagan Super Giants of Kolkata

had been "considered to have withdrawn" from the second tier AFC Champions League Two for refusing to travel to Iran to play its Oct. 2 fixture against Tractor SC in the northwestern city of Tabriz. It is not only Al-Nassr's game that has been relocated. Tractor's home game against Ravshan of Tajikistan, scheduled for Wednesday, has been switched to become an away tie. Iran's national team also had to move its Oct. 15 World Cup qualifier against Qatar to Dubai. "... (Mohun Bagan) notes that the AFC has indeed recognised the volatility of the situation in Iran and as such, has

rescheduled or shifted venues for several games," a spokesperson for Mohun Bagan told Associated Press, adding that the confederation had taken the same geopolitical instability into account that the club had. "Failing to apply the same standard to Mohun Bagan would result in unequal treatment by the AFC." According to the spokesperson, Mohun Bagan had made a request to the AFC that the game's date or venue be changed before it decided not to travel. "We consistently communicated concerns about the volatile and unsafe



conditions in and around Iran, particularly regarding the safety of players and staff," the official added. The Indian Super League club said that it had appealed the

decision to the relevant AFC committee and hoped to be reinstated into the tournament. The AFC did not reply to an invitation to comment. Al-Nassr has four points from the first two games and can take a big step towards the second round with a win. The revamped tournament now consists of two groups of 12 - divided into west and east geographic zones - with the top eight from each advancing to the Round of 16. Nassr is going well in the Saudi Pro League with a 97th minute penalty from Ronaldo giving the team a 2-1 win over Al-Shabab on Friday to stay in third place.

"There are a lot of games at the moment and it is not easy," said Stefano Pioli, Al-Nassr's coach. "We will do our best to maintain our performances in the Asian Champions League," Saudi Arabia has three of the four top teams in Group A. Al-Hilal is first and the four-time winner meets defending champion Al Ain of the United Arab Emirates and could welcome Neymar back to action after a year out through injury. Jeddah club Al-Ahli also has maximum points and travels to Qatar to face Al-Rayyan. **FRONT RUNNERS MEET IN EASTERN ZONE:** In the eastern zone the top two meet.

Gwangju FC of South Korea is making its first ever appearance in Asian competition and is the only team with two wins from two. It takes on Johor Darul Ta'zim of Malaysia. Australia's Central Coast Mariners has lost both games so far and head to China to take on Shanghai Port, coached by former Australian international Kevin Muscat, also seeking a first win. Last season's defeated finalist Yokohama F. Marinos also travels to China and meets Shandong Tiashan while three-time winner Pohang Steelers of South Korea faces Thailand's Buriram United.