



OPINION 6
ORWELL'S VISION REMAINS AS RELEVANT AS EVER

WORLD 8
STRIKE IN ISRAEL OVER HOSTAGE DEATHS REFLECTS POLITICAL DIVISIONS

MONEY 10
SENSEX, NIFTY HIT ALL TIME HIGH

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KATHUNIYA BAGS
PARALYMPIC SILVER IN
MEN'S DISCUS THROW
11 SPORTS

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UTP assault case Prisons ADG, DIG visit Jharpada jail for probe

Statements of inmates, staffs recorded

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A day after notorious criminal Shiekh Hyder's son and his henchmen mercilessly assaulted an under-trial prisoner (UTP) for complaining against various illegal activities in the Jharpada Special Jail here before the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), police swung into action on Monday.

Additional Director General (Prisons) Amitabh Thakur and Deputy Inspector General (Prisons) Anasuya Jena visited the jail and began an investigation.

Jena recorded the statements of several inmates and some officials of the jail. The DIG also recorded the statement of the victim, identified as Soumyakant Mohanty, who accused Hyder's son Muna and his

associates of assaulting him.

"In his statement, Mohanty alleged that he was attacked by a group of about 15 inmates led by Muna. A detailed investigation will be carried out and necessary action will be taken," Jena said.

Thakur said, "Cuttack DIG is recording statements of the inmates along with the jail staffs. We can only reach a conclusion once the statements are recorded. Prima facie, it is evident that there is an assault. Once we get the investigation report, stringent action will be taken against those found guilty."

Asked about the allegations of the jail officials demanding Rs 5,000 to give access to mobile phones, Thakur said, "Mohanty has been lodged in the jail for last five years. Someone must have taken money from him to facilitate phone calls as he has mentioned it in his letter."

"There are around 1,200 inmates at Jharpada jail. As per the rule, the guard and inmate ratio is 1:6. As the ratio is little less here, CCTV cameras have been installed in the jail premises for e-surveillance," Thakur added.

Notably, on Sunday, Mohanty was attacked by Muna and his associates for divulging information about various illegal activities of some jail inmates. He was rushed to the Capital Hospital after sustaining serious injuries in the assault.

Mohanty had recently written a letter to the DLSA alleging various irregular activities including the use of mobile phones by jail inmates.

In his letter, Mohanty alleged that ganja-bidi was being sold at Rs 200 per piece and Rs 50,000 (one time) was charged to provide better accommodation. For accessing mobile phones, Rs 5,000 extra tariff was being charged.

Subhadra Yojana promises not kept: Opp

Assembly adjourned thrice amid ruckus

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Even as the registration process for the ambitious Subhadra Yojana of the BJP government has started, the Opposition members on Monday created a ruckus in the State Assembly, prompting the Speaker to adjourn the proceedings of the House.

The Opposition BJD mem-



bers approached the Speaker's podium alleging that the promises made before the launch of Subhadra Yojana have not been fulfilled.

Speaker Surama Padhy had to adjourn the House three

times amid the Opposition's ruckus. Opposition Chief Whip Pramila Mallik said, "What kind of business could one start with only Rs 5,000 and become self-reliant? The way women have been cheated is unfortu-

nate. They (BJP) had bagged votes by claiming that they would give Rs 50,000 at one go and now they will pay Rs 5,000 in each installment."

Mallik said, "The BJD government had given interest-free loans and other financial assistance to women. The current BJP government has changed them. We demand that the government give a Rs 50,000-voucher to each woman." Opposition Congress members also raised similar demands. Barabati-Cuttack MLA Sofia

Firdous said, "We have placed a demand to include women in the age group of 60 to 80 years. As per the present guidelines, those women who are getting an assistance of Rs 1,500 are not eligible. By this, several categories of women like Pachikas and others, who are getting less pension, would be deprived of Subhadra Yojana."

"We urge the government to keep its promise made in the BJP manifesto and provide Rs 25,000," said Firdous.

Crorepati Talcher DDM in Vig net

2 duplexes, 2 market complexes, Rs 9.84L cash found

PNS ■ CUTTACK / TALCHER

The Vigilance police on Monday conducted raids on the properties of Dharanidhar Nayak, Deputy Director of Mines (DDM), Talcher, on the allegation of possession of disproportionate assets (DA) to his known sources of income.

During the searches, properties worth crores of rupees were detected in the names of Nayak and his family members.

The assets unearthed so far included a 3-BHK flat



(Surekha Orchid at Sisu Vihar), Patia in Bhubaneswar worth Rs 1.30 crore, a duplex with an area of 1,800 sqft at Sundarpada in Bhubaneswar, a double-storied market complex consisting of 15 shops (nine shops on the ground floor and six shops on the 1st floor) of the building located at Badinali Sinkulabahal in Keonjhar, another market complex

building consisting of four shops adjacent to a double-storied market complex at Jagmohanpur in Keonjhar, as many as nine plots including two in prime areas of Bhubaneswar and rest seven plots in Telkoi, in Keonjhar district, Rs 9,83,800 cash (Rs 5,58,800 from Patia flat and Rs 4,25,000 detected during search at Talcher house).

Besides, Nayak also has fixed deposits of Rs 16 lakh and Rs 10 lakh in savings accounts. A huge amount of gold ornaments worth lakhs of rupees has also been recovered from his house.

The raids were ongoing and the assets of Nayak were likely to increase further.

Fresh low pressure to form around Sep 5 Heavy rains to resume in State

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A fresh low-pressure area is likely to form over west-central and adjoining northwest Bay of Bengal around September 5, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Monday.

Under its influence, heavy rains are likely to resume in some parts of Odisha after a brief lull.

On September 5, heavy rainfall (7 to 11 cm) accompanied by thunderstorm with lightning may occur at isolated places in the districts of Malkangiri, Koraput, Nabarangpur, Rayagada and Gajapati. Heavy rains might continue in

Koraput, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur, Rayagada, Ganjam and Gajapati on September 6 also. While there are no further warnings, light to moderate rain or thundershower is likely at many places in south Odisha and at a few places in north Odisha, the weather office said.

According to the IMD's extended weather forecast, overall rainfall activity is likely to be above normal with possibility of isolated heavy to very falls at a few places and isolated extremely heavy falls during first half of the week between September 6 and 12. "There is also moderate probability of formation of a low pressure over north Bay of Bengal during first half of the week," the IMD added.

DSPL-96



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ବିଷୟ

- ଆବେଦନ ଫର୍ମ ସମ୍ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ନିଃଶୁଳ୍କ ଅଟେ
- ମୋ ସେବା / ଜନସେବା କେନ୍ଦ୍ରରେ ଅନଲାଇନ ଫର୍ମ ଆବେଦନ ଏବଂ ତାହା ସହିତ ଆବଶ୍ୟକୀୟ ସମସ୍ତ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟାବଳୀ ସମ୍ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଦେୟମୁକ୍ତ
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In Assembly No justification for HC Bench: CM Majhi

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
There is no justification for having an Orissa High Court bench in any part of Odisha, informed Chief Minister Mohan Majhi in the State Assembly on Monday.
The CM was responding to a question by MLA Kalikesh Narayan Singh Deo, who had wanted to know whether the Odisha Government had any proposal to set up a Circuit Bench of the High Court in Balangir.
The CM said, "As per a Supreme Court verdict, there is no justification in having a Bench of Orissa High Court in any part of the State."
Notably, there were series of protests demanding a permanent Bench of the High Court in west-

ern Odisha. Several social organisations and political parties had also launched agitations over establishment of a High Court Bench owing to the problems faced by the people of their regions.
Kendriya Kriyanusthan Committee convener Ashok Das said, "It seems that the CM has not properly gone through the Supreme Court ruling. The apex court has never ruled out justification regarding a High Court Bench in western Odisha."
According to Das, it was not a conclusive denial and the issue of virtual court is totally different. "The Supreme Court has never denied our demand. We have already kept our demand before the apex court," Das added.

Camp at IIT-BBS Students screened for gastro, oral cancer



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
As part of its healthcare initiative, the Indian Institute of Technology, Bhubaneswar organised a free gastro and oral screening camp for its members.
Bagchi Sri Shankara Cancer Centre and Research Institute, in association with the Sanjeevan Health Centre of IIT Bhubaneswar organised the camp on Saturday.
On this occasion, Dr Debakanta Mishra from Department of Gastroenterology and Dr Mahesh Sultania from Department of Head and Neck Oncology from Bagchi

Sri Shankara Cancer Centre and Research Institute, along with their team conducted the screening for gastro and oral cancer among the students, employees and residents of the institute. As part of the camp, they also created awareness about the disease and suggested the participants about the preventive measures.
Around 40 members of the institute attended the camp and benefited. Senior Medical Officer of the IIT Dr Mansoor Ahmed Khan coordinated the camp. Medical Officer Dr Abhimanyu Raju SR from Sanjeevan Health Centre provided support to the team.

Interview of the week Encroachments will be treated with very stringent measures



SUGYAN CHOUDHURY



SURESH PUJARI

Suresh Pujari is currently the Cabinet Minister, Revenue and Disaster Management of Odisha. He was an indomitable student leader, who made his mark in the annals of western Odisha history as a crusader against social evils and maladministration of the then State Government. Imbued with an unconquerable will and determination, he has worked with utmost sincerity and tenacity for eradicating social malaise. With a view to articulating his people-oriented endeavour, he turned out to be a value-based advocate. After winning a decisive victory from the Brajarajnar constituency in the 2024 elections, he is now a minister with a most important department. He has given a call to demolish the unauthorised structures and buildings with bulldozer whoever may be the owner. He is on a mission mode to provide homestead land to the landless and deprived ones within three years. His deep humanitarian concern for the Hirakud land oustees has recently hit the headlines. A visionary, revolutionary and workaholic leader, he is working day in and day out to lend a new look to the State's revenue administration. In an interview to The Pioneer, Pujari spoke to Sugyan Choudhury on many relevant issues of the Revenue Department.

landless people as well as by rich influential people. So, the encroachments will be examined on a case-to-case basis. Where the encroachments are found to be by landless people, those cases will be considered for issue of patta after verification of the status and leaseable character of the land. But where encroachments are found to be by the influential rich people, those cases will be treated with very stringent measures like imposition of penalty and eviction from government land.

Common men run to Tehsils throughout the State for mutation, conversion, partition on the basis of mutual consent, conferment of land rights on ceiling surplus allottees, for issuance of Miscellaneous Certificates, etc. How can you ensure quality services with prompt action and transparency to mitigate the sufferings of the Aam Admi?

It is a fact that people are coming to Tehsils for mutation, conversion, partition based on mutual consent, various land-related matters and issue of Miscellaneous Certificates, etc. The government is taking all necessary steps with technological intervention for quick disposal of their cases and redressal of their grievances.

What are the plans on your agenda for rehabilitation and resettlement of Hirakud Dam land oustees since 1958 till date?

The Hirakud Dam was established in the 1950s. It is a fact that resettlement and rehabilitation issues are still pending in certain cases of Hirakud land oustees. Some of them have been settled. RoRs have been issued in favour of the settlers of 23 new villages recently. Land oustees who are eligible for A.C. 0.10 decimals of land for homestead pur-

pose have also been taken into consideration and more than 2,800 RoRs have been issued recently in Jharsuguda district. Our government is contemplating to settle homestead land in favour of the other eligible beneficiaries within a period of one to two years from now.

Will your govt take steps to issue Land Passbook in the model of Aadhaar Card, Voter's Card?

Land Passbook is a novel idea, and our government is keen to introduce it. But it requires the support and involvement of public at large. As the land records are available in joint holding and also located at different parts of the State such as districts, tehsils and villages, it will not be possible to club all the land of a particular person with the extant ownership in one place, i.e., Land Passbook without their cooperation and consent.

Current citizens are having only one decimal of land or even less than that. But these people are not entitled for availing homestead land, owing to their not being declared landless as per the existing provisions of law. What is your government doing in this regard?

Our government has already issued instruction for survey of homestead-less persons and a special drive is on in the State from August 16 to September 15, 2024 with a target to issue pattas to those who will be found homestead-less during the survey within this year itself. It is also a fact that there are many landless people having one to two decimals of land and even less. But they are not considered as landless as per existing provision of law and are deprived of the benefit of homestead land. We are examining to provide lands to those people by amending laws.

Some people are allotted land, but they have not as yet taken possession of the land. What are you going to do on this issue?

It is a fact that during my visit to different places in the State during my 40 years of public life and last two months as the Revenue Minister, I came to know that some people though allotted lands are not in actual possession. Our government is taking initiative to resolve the issues pertaining to identification and giving possession of the lands in a time-bound manner. We will show them their land and give possession to them.

2 peculiar thefts caught in camera in S'pur Burglar robs shop nude, face masked

Grocery items stolen from house by miscreant with one-third pant, face masked in red cloth
NIMAI CHARAN SAHU ■
SAMBALPUR

A peculiar case of theft took place in Ranikhinda village under Sasan Police Station limits in the district on Friday, where a naked thief carrying a bag on his back and covering his face with a cloth was

found stealing from a shop at midnight.
The victim shop owner, Arun Agarwal (46), filed a case in Sasan Police station on Saturday. The shop owner in the complaint said that the unidentified miscreant broke into his shop and took two cartons of facewash, one cartoon each of baking powder, amla oil, toothpaste, and three cartons of oil, which cost around Rs 25,000, and took Rs 2,000 from the counter drawer. The incident was captured on CCTV.
In another video recorded in the

CCTV camera of a house, where grocery items were stored, a miscreant is seen breaking into the house and carrying a cartoon of items. In the video, the miscreant is found wearing a one-third pant but has covered his face with a red cloth. It is difficult to establish whether the miscreants in both videos are one and the same person.
Bhupen Sahu, a resident of the city, said, "I saw a man roaming naked around the Government bus stand near Laxmi Talkies around 2 pm on Monday. He was having

food at a hotel there. I told him to wear clothes. Though he had not masked his face, he was trying to hide it from me. It seems he was a lunatic."
Police sources said, on the night of theft it was raining; hence, the thief might have removed his clothes but masked himself so as not to get identified in the CCTV camera.
Sadar SDPO Tophan Bag said, "We have registered two cases of theft in two shops under Sasan Police Station. It's not a gang of miscreants. It seems to be the same person."

In Balangir Couple trampled to death by elephants

PNS ■ BALANGIR
An elderly couple was trampled to death by a herd of elephants in Balangir district in the early hours of Monday. The deceased were identified as Nilambar Bariha and his wife Jashbonti.
According to sources, the elephants entered Chabiripalli village under the Khaprakhol Forest Range when the victims were sleeping in their thatched house.

The animals demolished the mud wall and went on a rampage to devour the paddy and rice stocked inside. The sudden attack took the couple by surprise and the herd of wild animals crushed them to death before they could escape. Villagers later managed to drive away the elephant herd by using fire and beating drums.
Getting information, a team of forest officials reached the village to took stock of the situation.

No liquor ban in Odisha, says Minister

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
Amidst several assumptions and speculations, Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan on Monday revealed that the government has no plans to ban liquor in the State.
"Seeing the condition of Gujarat and Bihar, we do not want Odisha to go through the same problems after liquor ban. Recently, there were reports of several deaths due to (spurious) liquor consumption in Bihar. There have been rampant rise of illegal liquor manufacturing and sale too," the minister said.
"While the government will not get any revenue to serve the people, there will only be a rise in illegal sales of liquor that will only cause deaths of people. So, instead of a complete ban, it is very important to take decisions very carefully," he argued.
The minister also revealed that the State Excise Department has al-

located a fund of Rs 100 crore to educate people about the ill effects of alcohol, drugs and other narcotics items.
"It was the orders of CM Mohan Majhi to spread awareness and do counselling of habitual drunkards. We want to create a proper atmosphere for people drinking so that they can give up their bad habits," he added.
"Alcohol contributes to around 17-18% of the State revenue; so, we are trying to handle everything responsibly. We are trying to stop illegal liquor sale and spread awareness on liquor quitting. We are creating a balance between everything," he stated.
Asked about the ban on dance bars, Harichandan stated, "Girls dancing in front of drunken men is not Odisha's culture. So, we decided to ban dance bars. But we support instrumental music, vocal music in bars."

DMs, SPs directed to identify B'deshi infiltrators

--Says CM in Assembly
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Monday said the State Government has already directed for identification of Bangladeshi infiltrators in Odisha. He informed this in the State Assembly while replying to a question by MLA Bhaskar Madhei.
Madhei pointed out that there are Bangladeshi infiltrators in several parts of the State, including Kendrapada and Puri districts and Bhubaneswar.
The Chief Minister informed that all district Collectors and SPs have been directed to identify Bangladeshi infiltrators in their jurisdictions. The directions have been issued with a focus on

Kendrapada, Bhubaneswar and Puri.
Sources said the identification of Bangladeshi infiltrators would be done through a committee at block, tehsil and police station levels.
Earlier, the previous BJD government had informed that it had identified 3,740 Bangladeshi infiltrators in the State who were mostly staying in Bargarh, Bhadrak, Kendrapada, Jagatsinghpur, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur and Bhubaneswar.
As per CM Majhi's reply on Monday, the total numbers of Bangladeshi infiltrators are two in Bargarh, 199 in Bhadrak, 1,649 in Kendrapada, 17 in Bhubaneswar, 1,112 in Jagatsinghpur, 655 in Malkangiri and 106 in Nabarangpur.

JE arrested for taking bribe

Rs 15L seized from house
PNS ■ CUTTACK
The Vigilance police on August 31 caught Purna Chandra Choudhry, Junior Engineer (JE), Kashiipur block in Rayagada district, while he was accepting a bribe of Rs 25,000.
Choudhry had demanded the bribe from a Gaon Saathi to take measurement of the work executed and for facilitating release of labour

payment under the MGNREG scheme.
After the trap, simultaneous searches were carried out at the residential house of Choudhry at Rayagada, Tikiri and his office room. During the searches, a residential building at Tikiri worth Rs 70 lakh, two plots (one at Rayagada and one at Tikiri), suspected ill-gotten cash of Rs 15,05,900 was seized from his residential house at Rayagada. Choudhry was arrested and forwarded to court on Monday.

Media sensitisation on heritage, tourism

By IITTM, INTACH
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
The Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management (IITTM) and the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) organised a seminar "Media Sensitization on Heritage and Tourism" on August 30 at the IITTM Bhubaneswar campus. The participants were mainly journalists, editors, and media profession-

als working in print, digital, and broadcast media. It presented an opportunity to deepen understanding of heritage and tourism issues and contribute to the development of responsible media practices in these domains.
The inaugural ceremony of the workshop was graced by dignitaries like CEO, OdishaLive, Bhubaneswar, Nilambar Rath, Editor, Sambad and Kanak News Tanaya Patnaik, State convener, INTACH AB Tripathy, convener, INTACH Bhubaneswar Chapter Anil Dhir, Nodal Officer,

IITTM Bhubaneswar Dr Md. Sabir Hussain and Associate Professor and co-convener, INTACH Dr Adyasha Das.
The programme was designed to sensitise media professionals on the importance of heritage conservation and sustainable tourism practices as well as effective reporting skills. Participants gained insights into the complex relationship between heritage, culture, and tourism, and explored strategies for responsible media coverage that promotes the protection of cultural and natural

resources. The seminar featured interactive sessions led by experts from IITTM and INTACH as well as invited experts, covering pertinent topics.
The seminar comprised seven sessions headed by eminent experienced professionals and academicians from different fields like Diana Sahu, Prof Mrinal Chatterjee, Dr Lalit Das, Lokesh Kumar, Md Sabir Hussain, Anil Dhir and Adyasha Das. Assistant Professor Sareeta Pradhan extended the vote of thanks.

BJP membership drive in State from today

Party eyes record enrolment
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
The Odisha unit of BJP would launch its membership drive in the State on Tuesday, informed party State president Manmohan Samal on Monday.
Samal told reporters, "The membership drive will be launched in Odisha following Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP national president JP Nadda, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and other leaders

having taken the membership at the party's headquarters in New Delhi today."
"Though people can take membership of the party starting today, a special programme for the membership drive will be organised at the party's State headquarters in Bhubaneswar at 2 pm on Tuesday marking the official launch. The event will be attended by CM Mohan Majhi, all ministers, party MLAs and other leaders who will again take the membership," Samal said. Besides, a toll-free number (8800002024) for BJP membership

enrolment has been opened. People above 18 years of age can call up this number to be party members, he said.
"In 2014, BJP with over 11 crore members surpassed China's Communist Party to become the world's largest political party. We had added 7 crore new members in the subsequent three years," Samal stated.
He said, "As many as 42 lakh people in Odisha have taken the membership of BJP. We bagged 40% and 45% votes in our favour in the last Assembly and Parliament elections, respectively."

Hinjili saw 100 murders in 24-yr BJD rule

69 murder cases still pending in court
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
BJD president Naveen Patnaik's Hinjili constituency recorded a total of 100 murders during the 24 years of his tenure as Chief Minister of Odisha, the State Assembly was informed on Monday.
The information was shared by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi while answering a question by BJP MLA Pradyumna Kumar

Nayak in the House. The CM revealed statistics showing that Hinjili, the home constituency of the Leader of Opposition (LoP) and former CM Patnaik, witnessed at least 100 murders during the 24 years of BJD rule.
According to the data shared by Majhi, as many as 328 accused have been identified and arrested in connection with the registered murder cases.
Shockingly, out of the 100 cases, the accused have been convicted

only in two cases, while the accused in 22 cases have been acquitted. As many as 69 murder cases are still pending in court.
The Chief Minister also gave information on police encounters in Ganjam district, which witnessed at least 37 cases in which there was an exchange of fire between the police and the criminals.
In these 37 cases, at least 63 police personnel have sustained bullet injuries while 41 criminals were encountered, he added.

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State to fill 3,000 police posts in 100 days

CM also announces recruitment of 2298 Home Guards

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In good news for job aspirants, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi has lifted the ban on recruitment of Home

Guards which was in force from February 2020. He also announced that at least 2,298 Home Guard posts that are lying vacant would be filled up as soon as possible.

The CM was replying to the debate on the demand for grants of the Home Department in the State Assembly on Saturday. Apart from filling up the vacant posts, he also announced an extension of

compassionate appointment to Home Guards killed in the line of duty.

"A member of the family of a Home Guard killed in Naxal violence or in similar incidents will be provided a government job," the CM said.

Apart from Home Guards, Majhi also declared to fill around 3,000 vacant police posts in 100 days and creation of one police outpost each for

10 government medical colleges, one outpost at the Baramunda bus terminal, and 9,000 motorcycles for Inspectors, Sub-Inspectors and Assistant Sub-Inspectors.

The CM also gave the nod to fill up 1,083 posts in the newly-created Special Security Battalion to oversee security at the Anand Bazaar in the Jagannath Temple in Puri and the sale of Mahaprasad.

In Pipili Mystery shrouds youth's death

Kin allege murder

PNS ■ PURI

A body of a youth was recovered under mysterious circumstances from the canal embankment at Kanti village under the Pipili police station in Puri district on Monday morning. The deceased was identified as Nilakantha Paikaray (26), son of Bibekananda Paikaraya of Sana Kanti village.

Getting information, police reached the spot and began investigation after sending the body for postmortem. The family members of the deceased alleged that he was killed by family members of his girlfriend. Acting on the complaint, the police detained three members, including a woman, of the accused family. Police said further investigations were ongoing and they were waiting for the postmortem report to ascertain the cause of death.

Outsourced workers demand permanent jobs

Threaten stir over layoffs, non-implementation of benefits

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

The Odisha Outsourcing Employees' Union in Ganjam has demanded here on Sunday that the Government stop the recent layoffs of over 100 workers in various departments and ensure permanent appointments for all outsourced employees.

The union condemned the current administration's failure to implement wage hikes, annual leave, and maternity benefits that were approved by the previous Government.

At the meeting, union's Ganjam president Bijay Kumar Mallick and employees from various Government sectors



discussed their dissatisfaction with the non-implementation of promised benefits. They demanded immediate reinstatement of the laid-off employees and equal treatment for daily wage workers and outsourced employees. The union also criticised derogatory remarks made by the State secretary of the Nursing Employees Union against outsourced nursing staff. They filed a complaint with the District Health Officer and warned of protest actions if their demands are not met. The union plans to hold a district-wide meeting with employees from southern Odisha and has threatened a complete cease work if their demands remain unaddressed.

Panic in Kendrapada 100 dead chickens found dumped in crematorium

Vet team rushes to spot to take stock of matter

RAJESH BEHERA ■ KENDRAPADA

Panic gripped Narasinghpur Gram panchayat of Derabish block as some locals came across about 100 dead poultry birds wrapped in four gunny bags, dumped at a local crematorium on Sunday morning.

As a result, suspecting the chickens might have died possibly due to bird flu virus, the locals sounded an alarm and informed the Derabish Veterinary staff, stated Narasinghpur Sarpanch Sudhir Kumar Khatua.

Veterinary Officer Derabish Dillip Kumar Sethy and ADVO, Kendrapada, Dr Mrutyunjay Mohanty rushed to the spot and took samples for test to ascertain the reason behind the death of the chickens. Later, the dead chickens were buried at an isolated place in a 5 feet deep hole. Also,



bleaching powder was spread where the dead chickens were buried, informed Veterinary Officer of Derabish block Sethy.

"We are going to collect blood samples, faecal and swabs of the chickens from the local poultry farm for testing to ascertain whether the chickens were affected by avian influenza or not," he added.

Meanwhile, the District Veterinary and Animal Husbandry Department has asked the locals not to be panicky and also advised not to consume chicken for some days. The locals have been asked if chickens and ducks

are found dead, they should bury the dead birds immediately. It has even been asked to the poultry farms to separate the infected ones from the healthy birds.

District Collector, Kendrapada, Smruti Ranjan Pradhan, sounded high alert on bird flu (H5N1) and restricted the entry of chickens and eggs from other States to the district as part of a precautionary measure. It has even been decided to set up check posts at the entry and exit points of the district to ensure the bird flu virus did not reach the dis-

trict through chickens and eggs transported from other States.

It has been directed by the District Collector to set up round-the-clock check posts at Chandol, Indupur bridge and Rajkanika bridge to prevent the transport of chickens and eggs from other districts as well as from other States. The District Veterinary and Animal Husbandry Department has constituted a rapid response team in each block consisting of livestock inspectors, village 'gomitras' and veterinary officers to monitor the situation.

'Preserving Sanskrit could aid dev of Odia'



Dist-level Sanskrit Day observed in Brahmapur

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

The district-level Sanskrit Day celebration was held in Brahmapur on Sunday. The event was inaugurated by former Union Minister and Baleswar MP Pratap Chandra Sarangi.

Dr Sarangi highlighted the significance of Sanskrit in cultural heritage and its potential for providing livelihood opportunities. He also said that preserving Sanskrit could aid in the development of the Odia language.

Minister Bibhuti Bhushan Jena, present as a distinguished guest, stressed the importance of collective responsibility in preserving Sanskrit, while not just leaving it to educators alone. He urged for a concerted effort to keep the language relevant.

Digapahandi MLA Siddhant Mahapatra also attended and spoke on how Sanskrit's ethical teachings contribute to building a moral society. The keynote address was delivered by Bhagirathi Nanda, Pro-VC of the Lal Bahadur Shastri Sanskrit University, who made Sanskrit accessible to students with his engaging talk.

The event was presided over by Pramod Kumar Bajuban. The programme began with Vedic chants by students from the Brahmapur Veda Pathashala and a welcome song by students from Nalanda Shri Madhyamik Uchcha Vidyalaya. Dignitaries were honoured with shawls and mementos, and fourteen retired teachers were felicitated for their contributions.

The celebration drew a large audience, including over 300 students, 400 teachers, and local intellectuals, journalists and parents. The event concluded with a vote of thanks by Aditya Rath.

Odia scholar feted in Melbourne

For promoting Indo-Australia relationship

RAJESH BEHERA ■ KENDRAPADA

Prof Kamala Kanta Dash, an esteemed scholar originally from Kendrapada district, has recently been felicitated at the Victorian State Parliament in Melbourne, Australia, for his outstanding contribution to strengthen the Indo-Australia relationship, particularly among students and the youth masses of both the countries.

His journey from a modest perennially backward village of Odisha to be a prominent figure in international cross-cultural dialogues is nothing short of an inspiring one and a beacon of hope for aspiring scholars and community leaders.

Victorian Member of Parliament, Iwan Walters, also expressed his deep apprecia-



tion for Prof Dash's ongoing work with the Indian community in Melbourne. Walters highlighted Prof Dash's active engagement with the Victorian Parliament, the Multicultural Council, and the Victorian Government, commending his efforts to strengthen multicultural relations and promoting inclusivity across the State.

Indian community leaders, including Deepak Vinayak,

Monash University in Melbourne, one of Australia's leading educational institutions. His time at Monash broadened his horizons and fuelled his passion for fostering deeper understanding between India and Australia, stated Prof Dash's younger brother Deba Prasad.

While he was studying in Melbourne, Prof Dash forged a strong partnership with Deepak Vinayak, a prominent figure in the Indian community in Victoria. Together, they recognized the need for a structured platform to support students and youth from India and Australia, providing them with mentorship and guidance during challenging times. This vision culminated in the launch of the 'AusInd Bridge Foundation' during the COVID-19 pandemic. The foundation quickly gained traction, offering a lifeline to students struggling with the uncertainties brought on by the global crisis.

Cuttack conference Divyang kids need special attention: CJ

PNS ■ CUTTACK

Orissa High Court Chief Justice Chakraborty Sharan Singh participating in the Ninth Annual Partnership Consultation Conference on Protection of Divyang Children held at Cuttack on September 1 on virtual mode put emphasis on greater inclusion of disabled children in the juvenile justice system.

He said, "We have to recognise that Divyang children face certain special problems and vulnerabilities that require special attention and care. A comprehensive approach needs to be taken for effective implementation of the provisions of the relevant laws keeping in mind the specific needs of Divyang children."

Chairman, Juvenile Justice Committee, Justice Debrata Dash said that it is not only the Divyangs who have prob-



lems with them but also the current system lacks certain opportunities in providing equal treatment and facilities to the Divyangs.

Miss Justice Savitri Ratho and Justice Aditya Kumar Mahapatra, members of Juvenile Justice Committee, discussed vividly about the problems and rights of the disabled children (Divyang).

The participants highlighted the steps taken by the State Government to protect children under the Juvenile Justice Act.

UNICEF Chief of field office of Odisha William Hanlon Junior said that excluding dis-

abled children means undermining the global commitment to leave no one behind. "We must reiterate our commitment to create an enabling environment for inclusive, safe and empowered children with disabilities," he said.

Principal Secretary, Department of Social Security and Empowerment of the Disabled, Bishnupad Sethi said that the problems of about 60 to 70 lakh Divyangs in Odisha are now being addressed. "If we want our State to become a developed one and become a \$5 billion economy by 2036 and a \$1.5 trillion economy by

2047, we have to reiterate our commitment to the poor," he said.

Principal Secretary, Department of Women and Child Development, Shubha Sharma highlighted the various initiatives being taken by the State Government and said that the department will conduct a vulnerability survey to identify at-risk and disabled children in collaboration with UNICEF and Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (SSEPD) Department. Based on these data the Govt. will prepare a joint action plan, she added.

OES seminar 'Plant-based foods good for humans and the Planet'

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Lifestyle choices can have powerful impacts on our health and the environment. Paramount among these choices are our food preferences and habits. The food which seems good for us from health perspective is also good for our mother earth. The most befitting answer to our food requirement is the practice of 'Whole Food Plant Based (WFPB)' diet.

Food consumers trying to reduce the carbon footprint of their food choices have to consider for including some better dining practices. We need to lay emphasis on more fruits, vegetables and grains, and less red meat. Some conservationists advocate for avoiding all meat (including fish), dairy and eggs. More greenhouse gases are emitted during pro-



duction of meat-based foods, which trap excess solar heat and accelerate climate change. Further, processed foods use more energy and food-value also declines in such items. Under such circumstances, we need to change our mindset and give greater emphasis on plant-based foods.

Experts presented such views in a seminar titled 'Food choice: Its impact on our health and the planet' organised under the auspices of the Orissa Environmental Society (OES) here on Sunday under the chairmanship of OES president Dr Sundara Narayana Patro. The

Woman killed; accused not arrested in K'jhar

Case suspected to sorcery-related

NARESH PATTANAYAK ■ KEONJHAR

A 45-year-old woman was killed at Nialijharan village under Ghasipura block in Keonjhar district on Sunday, which is suspected to be a case of witch hunting.

The deceased was identified as Salke Hembram, wife of Mohan Hembram. After getting information police went to the village on Monday morning and seized the body lying outside her house in a pool of blood.

Sources said that on Sunday evening there was a mass feast organised in the village. Other members of the house including husband Mohan went to have a feast. But Salke and her mother-in-law Sumi were staying at home. At this time, an unknown person came to the house and asked Salke for 'handia'.

When she refused, the accused dragged her outside the house and brutally attacked

her with a sharp weapon and killed her, said Sumi, her mother in law. Salke sustained severe bleeding injury in her neck, face and head and died on the spot.

According to police, no one informed the police on behalf of the family, not even the deceased's husband. Police went to the village after receiving information from outside sources. After the incident a meeting was organised in the village by the villagers. Later, Ghanshyam, brother of the deceased, came from Khadupada village and reported to Ghasipura police.

A police team led by Anandpur SDPO reached the village and started an investigation. A scientific team also conducted the investigation. Police have yet to seize the weapon and arrest the accused.

"As no one is opening their mouths in the village about the incident, it is under investigation. After the post mortem, the body was handed over to the family members," said Ghasipura police station officer Manas Ranjan informed.

Truck owners' stir called off in K'jhar

After discussion with CM

PNS ■ CHAMPUA

The Truck Owners Association Coordination Committee called off its agitation on Saturday evening. A delegation of the committee met Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Thursday and discussed the issue.

A day after the discussion, Champua Sub Collector, Umakant Parida and SDPO Vijay Kumar Malik went to the protest site and discussed with the agitators. Later, the truck owners withdrew from the protest. The truck owners have

protested for last five days against a decision on loading. They stopped the trucks coming from outside the district on NH-220 at Naradpur. The 15,000 truck owners in eight unions in the mining area who joined the stir depend on transportation business.

The agitators alleged that they are losing their jobs due to transportation of ores in trawlers, pipeline and rail route by the miners. They demanded 50 percent private transport by road, provision of internal loading arrangements to district truck owners, fair transport charges, and road transport from OMC mines.

In Jajpur BJP MP, BJD MLA faceoff heats up politics

PNS ■ JAJPUR

A recent faceoff between BJP MP Rabi Narayan Behera and BJD MLA Sujata Sahoo during Local Self Government Day celebration has heated up the political atmosphere in Jajpur district.

While addressing a gathering, Sahoo launched a scathing attack on the BJP government and said, "The government and the Opposition cannot see who is behind the development of Jajpur. We can only see everything clearly if we wear clean spectacles. If we wear a black one, everything will look black."

"Those who are spreading the bad words are just under the influence of black spectacles. However, they cannot defer from the fact that there is a lot of development in Jajpur if

they ask it to their hearts. The district has been developed by former MLA Bobby Das," Sahoo said.

Reacting to Sahoo's jibe, BJP MP Behera said, "There is technology, there is transparency. Automation technology has also taken over. No one is denying the development in Jajpur. However, the district has also emerged as the hotspot of irregularities in the State." "Neither black glass nor white glass is required to eliminate the irregularities. We need to work collectively towards this following which everything will be crystal clear," Behera added.

Meanwhile, questions are being raised about whether the BJD MLA targeted some of her own party members by saying that the Opposition is wearing black spectacles.

Shambhu border stir: SC forms panel to address farmers' issues

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Observing that farmers' protest should not be politicised, the Supreme Court on Monday constituted a high-powered committee headed by former Punjab and Haryana High Court judge Justice Nawab Singh to amicably resolve the grievances of farmers agitating at the Shambhu border.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan directed the five-member committee to convene its first meeting within a week and reach out to the agitating farmers to persuade them to immediately remove their tractors, trolleys etc. From the Shambhu border between Punjab and Haryana to provide relief to commuters.

Both the Punjab and Haryana Governments will be free to give suggestions to the committee, it added.

The farmers are agitating over a plethora of demands including legal guarantee of minimum support price (MSP) for their produce.

"We hope and trust that one of the major demands of the agi-

tating farmers regarding constitution of a neutral high-powered committee having been accepted with the consent of both the States, they will immediately respond to the request of the high-powered committee and will vacate the Shambhu border or the other roads connecting the two States without any delay. "This gesture will provide huge relief to the general public who are facing extreme hardships due to the blockade of the highways. It will also facilitate the high-powered committee and both the States to consider the farmers' genuine and just demands in a dispassionate and objective manner," the bench said.

The committee also comprises retired IPS officer B S Sandhu, Mohali resident Devinder Sharma, professor Ranjit Singh Ghuman and Dr Sukhpal Singh, agricultural economist from the Punjab Agriculture University. Asking the panel to formulate the issues for consideration, the bench also directed its chairperson to invite professor B R Kamboj, Vice Chancellor of the Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural



University, as special invitee as and when his expert opinion is needed.

"The chairperson may appoint a Member Secretary to the High-powered Committee for the purpose of coordinating amongst the members of the Committee, convening the meetings and maintaining records, etc," it said.

The Member Secretary of the committee shall place on record the proposed issues facing the farmers should not be politicised and be considered by the committee in a phased manner. Noting that both the state Governments have identified alternative sites for peaceful agitations, the apex court said the farmers shall be at liberty to shift the venue of their protest there.

The bench said there is a sizeable population of people in

Punjab and Haryana who are associated with agriculture, belong to the marginalised sections of society and live below the poverty line.

"Most of them are the strength and backbone of agricultural activities in their villages/areas. We acknowledge their contribution towards the agricultural growth and are of the view that their legitimate aspirations, if not enforceable rights, also deserve empathy and due consideration by the committee, while examining the larger issues which are confronting the farming community in the States of Punjab and Haryana," the bench said.

It also directed the chief secretaries and police chiefs of the two States to provide all logistical support to the committee. "The ancillary issues like honorarium to be paid to the chairperson and members of the high-powered committee, keeping in view the volume of the work entrusted to them or the apportionment of the expenditure between the two States, will be considered by us in consultation with the chairperson and members of the committee and both the state Governments," the bench said

while posting the matter for further hearing on October 14. The member secretary of the committee shall, meanwhile, place on record the interim status report, the bench said.

The court was hearing the Haryana Government's plea challenging the high court's order asking it to remove within a week the barricades erected at the Shambhu border near Ambala where protesting farmers have been camping since February 13.

On August 22, the bench had asked the Punjab and Haryana Governments to convey to the agitating farmers that the court as well as the two States are concerned about their issues and a forum is being constituted for redressing their grievances.

The Haryana Government had set up barricades on the Ambala-New Delhi national highway in February after the 'Samyukta Kisan Morcha' (Non-Political) and 'Kisan Mazdoor Morcha' announced that farmers would march to Delhi in support of their demands, including legal guarantee of minimum support price (MSP) for their produce.



PM Modi's Singapore visit after six years to strengthen ties

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Building on "new anchors" of partnership identified under the India-Singapore ministerial roundtable framework, the relations between the two countries is poised for an even bigger take-off, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Monday ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Singapore.

He is slated to visit Singapore on September 4-5 at the invitation of his Singaporean counterpart Lawrence Wong.

Prior to that he is scheduled to visit Brunei on September 3-4 which seeks to further strengthen bilateral cooperation in all existing sectors. Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs, Jaideep Mazumdar, at a media briefing here said India and Brunei are working towards setting up a "joint working group in defence".

He said Prime Minister Modi is visiting Singapore after nearly six years. His last visit to Singapore was in his first term. And an early visit on his third term is something that has been "welcomed by the Singaporean side".

"Also, this comes at a time when a new leader is in Singapore and this is an opportune time to set the stage for the next stage of our vibrant bilateral relations," Mazumdar said. The Secretary (East) said India-Singapore ties have "evolved" and there is a "dynamic strategic partnership" encompassing various areas from shared history and people-to-people ties which form an important link between the two countries.

"Our trade and investment flows have shown a steady growth, we have a robust defence cooperation and growing exchanges in culture and education.

We have identified new anchors of our partnership under the India-Singapore ministerial roundtable framework," he said.

Four Indian ministers had participated in the recently-held second India-Singapore ministerial roundtable. During the roundtable, the ministers from both sides sat down and discussed "new thrust areas that we can identify in futuristic areas of cooperation", he said.

"A number of new, forward-looking futuristic areas of cooperation were identified in digitalisation, sustainability skill, health, advance manufacturing and connectivity, and we are likely to exchange a number of MoUs during the forthcoming visit of the prime minister," Mazumdar added.

Singapore is India's sixth largest trade partner worldwide and it was the largest source of FDI during the last financial year valued at USD 11.77 billion, he said. "We also expect the visit (to Singapore) to give thrust to the cooperation in the field of semiconductor," the top official of the MEA said.

"India-Singapore relations are poised for an even bigger take off, than what it has been in the last 10-15 years or so. That is because, we have gone to the next level of identifying areas of bilateral cooperation whether it be in food security, renewables, green hydrogen, semi-conductors. These are areas where we have great complementarities," said Mazumdar.

He said that he could see the relationship between the two sides taking off to the next stage. For Singapore, India presents tremendous opportunities and for India, Singapore presents with many options, whether it is value chain, digital technology and semiconductor, he added.



Cabinet committee approves ₹18,036 cr Mumbai-Indore rail line

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs on Monday approved a 309 km new line project providing the shortest rail connectivity between the two major commercial hubs of Mumbai and Indore, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said.

The total cost of the project has been pegged at Rs 18,036 crore and it will be completed by 2028-29, the Minister said.

The project will generate direct employment for about 102 lakh man-days, or what Vaishnaw described as "human days", during the construction. An official statement later said the project is a result of the PM-Gati Shakti National Master Plan for multi-modal connectivity which has been possible through integrated planning and will provide seamless connectivity for the movement of people, goods and services.

The project covers six districts in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh and will increase the existing network of Indian Railways by about 309 km. It will promote tourism in the region by providing a shorter route between western/south-western parts of the country and central India. This will increase the tourist footfall to various tourist/religious places in the Ujjain-Indore region, including the Sri Mahakaleswar Jyotirlinga Temple. The project will provide direct

Kangana decries non-clearance of her film 'Emergency'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Actor Kangana Ranaut on Monday said it's "hugely demotivating and unjust" that censorship is only for her film "Emergency", which is yet to receive a certificate from the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), putting its September 6 release in jeopardy. Drawing parallels between "Emergency" and Netflix series "IC 814: The Kandahar Hijack", Ranaut said censorship is only for those who make films based on historical facts while violence and nudity can be shown on streamers.

"Law of the land is that one can show unimaginable amount of violence and nudity on OTT platforms without any consequence or censorship, one can even distort real life events to suit their politically motivated sinister motives, there is all the freedom for communists or leftists across the world for such anti-national expressions..."

...But as a nationalist no OTT platform allows us to make films that revolves around the integrity and unity of Bharat, it seems censorship is only for some of us who don't want tukde of this nation and make films on historic facts. It's hugely demotivating and unjust," she wrote on the microblogging site. Anubhav Sinha's show on the 1999 hijacking has courted controversy for allegedly giving the hijackers names like 'Bhola' and 'Shankar'.

Kangana had also spoken about facing censorship issues to Shubhankar Mishra in a podcast where she said an emergency has been imposed on her film.

"It's a very hopeless state. I'm quite disappointed in our country and whatever the circumstances are... How much will we keep getting scared? I've made this film with a lot of self-respect which is why the CBFC can't point out any contention. They've stalled my certificate, but I'm determined to release an uncut version of the film. I'll fight in court and release an uncut version," she said.

According to a source, "Emergency" isn't releasing on Friday because the makers are yet to receive the certification from the CBFC.

On Monday, the Madhya Pradesh High Court is slated to hear a Sikh body's plea seeking directions to stop the release of "Emergency", which has now been postponed multiple times. Last week, Ranaut — also the director, writer, and co-producer of "Emergency" — said her film is still stuck with the censor board contrary to rumours that it has been cleared for release.

She had also said she is under pressure to not show the assassination of the former prime minister by her security guards. Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) on Friday sent a legal notice to CBFC seeking to prevent the release of Ranaut's film, claiming it may "incite communal tensions" and "spread misinformation".

It alleged the trailer of the film depicted "erroneous historical facts that not only misrepresent the Sikh community but also promote hatred and social discord".



Haryana JJP MLA Devender joins BJP ahead of Assembly elections

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Haryana MLA Devender Singh Babli, who was elected on the ticket of the Jannayak Janata Party, joined the BJP on Monday, as the ruling party looks to bolster its ranks in the State ahead of the upcoming Assembly polls.

The Tohana MLA was a Minister in the Government headed by former Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar and might be fielded by the BJP in the polls.

Babli said the BJP is driven by the mindset of development. He exuded confidence that the party will return to power in Haryana for a third term. Two other leaders, Sunil Sangwan, whose father Satpal Sangwan is a former Haryana Minister, and Sanjay Kablana, also joined the BJP. Sunil Sangwan is in the Government service and has put in his papers, an indication that he will be contesting the polls as well. Kablana, too, was in the JJP.

They joined the BJP in the presence of its general secretary Arun Singh, former Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb and Haryana



Former JJP leader Devender Singh joins BJP at the party's headquarters in New Delhi on Monday. Photo: RANJAN DIMRI / THE PIONEER

BJP slams Cong for expelling Kerala leader after her casting couch remark

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Monday slammed the Congress for expelling a Kerala leader from the party after she alleged a culture of casting couch in the organisation, accusing the Opposition party of paying lip service to women's issues publicly but silencing their voices in reality.

BJP leader Rajeev Chandrasekhar said Kerala Congress leader Simi Rosebell John had alleged a culture of exploitation and casting couch in the party and was summarily dismissed.

In the Press Conference, he also noted that the Information and Broadcasting Ministry is looking into the issues related to silence and remove her from the party, Chandrasekhar said. He noted that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra have often spoken about issues facing women but maintain a studious silence when it comes to the atrocities against women, be it in Kolkata, Kannauj or Kerala. John said after her expulsion that there is no place for upright people in the Congress, he noted.

He also attacked the Left Government in Kerala over the Hema Committee report which spotlighted the harassment of women in the Malayalam film industry, saying it was forced to release the findings several years after it was submitted.

to the OTT series, 'IC 814: The Kandahar Hijack', following its criticism by a section of people. Nobody should have any doubt that the hijackers of the plane were from the ISI, the Pakistani spy agency, he told reporters. Raising the issue of the Congress's treatment of its Kerala leader, he said if a woman raises the issue of harassment in the workplace, it is the organisation's duty to probe and ensure justice. The Congress does not believe in that and has instead chosen



Drug to treat kidney disorders panacea for heart attack survivors, says study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Drug empagliflozin used to treat kidney diseases can be safely administered to patients who are hospitalised for acute myocardial infarction heart attack, an international team of researchers, led by one of Indian origin, has said. The team led by Mount Sinai Fuster Heart Hospital demonstrated that the drug empagliflozin can reliably lower heart failure episodes in individuals who have had a heart attack, regardless of the patient's pre-existing renal function.

By demonstrating the safety and efficacy of empagliflozin in this challenging clinical context, the research opens doors to more effective treatment strategies and offers hope for better long-term recovery and quality of life for heart attack survivors globally.

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death globally, and heart attacks are a major contributor to this. Acute heart attack patients are particularly vulnerable to acute renal injury because of prolonged exposure to kidney stressors, such as diuretics or contrast agents used during cardiac catheterisation. Because of this danger, doctors are hesitant to start empagliflozin soon after a heart attack because there is little data regarding this class of drug's safety in this particular clinical setting. The drug can block the sodium-glucose cotransporter 2 protein that aids in the kidneys' ability to reabsorb glucose from the blood.

The results were presented at the European Society of Cardiology Congress in London. Deepak L Bhatt, Director of the Hospital said the finding will contribute to closing a significant knowledge gap on the clinical application of empagliflozin in heart attack survivors.

The trial randomised 6,522 patients with acute heart attack and increased heart failure risk to empagliflozin or placebo. Empagliflozin reduced hospitalisation and adverse events of heart failure, with consistent risk reductions across baseline kidney function. Adverse event rates were similar in both groups within 30 days after drug intake, regardless of baseline kidney function, systolic blood pressure, or other medical therapies.

The team noted that the study has significant implications for treating a very vulnerable population of patients with cardiovascular disease globally by reassuring doctors of the safety and effectiveness of empagliflozin early after a heart attack.



Indian Navy's P-8I aircraft to participate in Exercise Varuna in France

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

P-8 I aircraft of the Indian Navy has reached France to participate in 'Exercise Varuna' with the French Navy, an official said adding it marked the first-ever deployment of the aircraft in Europe.

The 2024 edition of Indo-French bilateral naval 'Exercise Varuna', scheduled from September two to four in the Mediterranean Sea, will include advanced tactical exercises underscoring the deepening synergy and interoperability between the two navies, a spokesperson of the Indian Navy said in a statement.

The Indian Navy's P8I aircraft touched down at Air Base 125 Istres-Le Tube, France, marking its first-ever deployment in Europe, it said.

This deployment comes 63 years after the Indian Navy's Alize aircraft, operating from the erstwhile INS Vikrant, last flew at Hyeres Airbase, the spokesperson said. INS Tabar, which had earlier arrived in Toulon will also be participating in the exercise.



SC dismisses WB Govt's plea against HC bail to protest organiser

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday dismissed the West Bengal Government's plea challenging the Calcutta High Court's order granting bail to one of the organisers of the August 27 march to the State Secretariat to protest against a trainee woman doctor's rape and murder.

A bench of Justices J B Pardiwala and Justice Manoj Misra said "prima facie" a case for bail was made out in the case.

The Calcutta High Court on Friday granted bail to Paschim Banga Chhtra Samaj leader Sayan Lahiri. Paschim Banga Chhtra Samaj, an unregistered student group, was one of the two organisations that gave the call for the August 27 'Nabanna Abhijan'.

Lahiri was arrested on August 27 evening for playing an active role in leading the rally which, the police said, turned violent, causing destruction of public and private property and attacks on police officers. Acting on a plea by Lahiri's mother Anjali seeking quashing of proceedings against him and grant of bail, the Calcutta High Court had on Friday ordered his release from police custody by 2 pm on Saturday. The Kolkata Police released Lahiri from its custody on Saturday.



16 dead in rain-related incidents in T'gana

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

At least 16 people lost their lives in various rain-related incidents as torrential rains lashed Telangana and the state government on Monday estimated the damage at Rs 5,000 crore and sought an immediate assistance of Rs 2,000 crore from the Centre. The incessant rainfall caused inundation of low-lying areas, damage to agricultural crops and disruption of the state's rail and road links with neighbouring Andhra Pradesh. Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, who announced an ex-gratia of Rs five lakh each to the kin of those who were killed in the rain-related incidents, urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to visit the rain-hit areas and to declare the floods as a national calamity. An official release quoted Revanth Reddy as saying that the damage was to the tune of Rs 5,000 crore as per preliminary estimates. The CM held a meeting with ministers and officials at Suryapet as part of his visit to

rain-hit areas. State IT and Industries Minister D Sridhar Babu told reporters that full details on the loss of life and others would be known after reports on damage are received. The state government will submit a comprehensive report on the flood damage to the Centre, the release said. Meanwhile, the flood-hit areas of Khammam presented a scene of extensive damage as household items were washed away and some items carried away by water were stuck to the gates of houses. Residents of flood-affected areas narrated their woes to state Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy and Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao, who visited them. In view of the forecast of rains in Adilabad, Nizamabad and Nirmal districts on Monday and Tuesday, the Chief Minister, who held a meeting with officials in Hyderabad earlier in the day, directed the Collectors and other officials of these districts to be alert and to shift the people in low-lying



areas to relief camps if necessary. He suggested setting up control rooms in district Collectorates to monitor the situation. Officials informed the CM that crops in over 1.5 lakh

acres suffered damage as per preliminary estimates. Revanth Reddy instructed officials to enumerate the crop damage so that ex-gratia can be announced expeditiously. He also ordered sanctioning

of houses under the 'Indiramma' housing scheme for those whose houses collapsed due to the heavy rains. Officials were directed to address issues related to traffic, supply of power, water

and also sanitation in the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation without any delay. An official of the Secunderabad-headquartered South Central Railway (SCR) said due to heavy rains and waterlogging over the tracks at several locations on the SCR network, as many as 432 trains were cancelled and 13 trains were partially cancelled. He said 139 trains were diverted till Monday afternoon. A portion of gravel under the railway track near Kesamudram was earlier washed away due to floodwaters. Restoration works were underway, he said. SCR General Manager Arun Kumar Jain and other Railway officials reached the site and were monitoring the restoration work. The SCR official said train services are expected to resume on the Kazipet-Vijayawada section by the evening of September 3. However, the restoration work may get delayed if rainfall and flood situation continues, he added.

Due to incessant rains in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, flooding and breaches were reported in Kazipet-Vijayawada section and five trains were stranded. Around 10,000 passengers from these trains were brought to the nearest Railway stations in state-run RTC buses on Sunday evening and special trains were arranged to take them to their respective destinations, he added. Traffic on NH-65 between Hyderabad and Vijayawada is being allowed as usual from Monday late evening, Suryapet district Superintendent of Police Sunpreet Singh said in a release. Water logging and overflowing on the road stopped, it said. In the affected areas in Khammam, household items were washed away. As water levels receded, the victims began cleaning up their homes and removing the slush. Residents said their valuables, including documents and academic certificates, were washed away. Some

complained that they had no drinking water and food and that they did not get any help. The Agriculture Minister told media that workers and also vehicles like tractors in the district are being deployed in Khammam to clean the roads and to restore electricity. The district administration has been directed to distribute essential items to those affected by the floods, he said. The Met Centre here predicted heavy rain at isolated places in Adilabad, Komaram Bheem Asifabad, Nirmal, Nizamabad, Jagtial, Sangareddy, Medak, Kamareddy districts till 8.30 am on September 3. It also said thunderstorms accompanied with lightning and gusty winds (30-40 kmph) are very likely to occur at isolated places in many districts of Telangana during this period. It issued a yellow alert for this forecast. Prime Minister Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah spoke to Revanth Reddy on Sunday and promised to help the state on behalf of the Centre.

1,000 playgrounds across UP to be dedicated to football: Yogi



PTI ■ LUCKNOW

In line with the Indian Football Association's goals, 1,000 playgrounds are being established across Uttar Pradesh to promote the sport, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said on Monday. He made the announcement while addressing the audience as the chief guest at the Mohun Bagan vs East Bengal football match, held at KD Singh Babu Stadium under the Chief Minister's Cup in the state capital, according to an official statement. The chief minister also emphasised the government's commitment to sports, mentioning that over 500 athletes who won medals in the Olympics, Commonwealth Games, Asian Games, and World Championships have been directly recruited to government jobs. "This support will continue in the future," he added. Adityanath also hailed Prime Minister Narendra Modi, crediting his leadership for the "remarkable growth" in sports in the country over the

past decade. The 'Khelo India' initiative, championed by the prime minister, has been a key driver of this progress, he said. "In line with the Indian Football Association's goals, 1,000 football-specific playgrounds are also being established," the statement quoted him as saying. "Inspired by the PM's vision, Uttar Pradesh has aligned itself with this mission, charting a new course by constructing playgrounds in all 57,000 gram panchayats across the state," he added. The chief minister said, "Additionally, the state is developing mini stadiums in its 825 development blocks and full-scale stadiums in all 75 districts, he said, these developments are on priority for the government." Adityanath said the Indian Football Association envisions dedicating one stadium in every district and 18 divisions specifically for football, and the government fully supports this initiative to advance sports activities. "Uttar Pradesh has made significant contributions to

the world of sports. Legendary hockey players like Major Dhyan Chand and KD Singh Babu hailed from the state, with the latter having this stadium named in his honour. Uttar Pradesh has also made notable strides in football," he added. He highlighted that two players from Uttar Pradesh in the Indian hockey team have excelled in the Paris Olympics. Last year, hockey player Lalit Kumar Upadhyay was appointed as Deputy Superintendent (DSP) in Uttar Pradesh Police, and soon, hockey player Raj Kumar Pal will also be recruited as a DSP, Adityanath stated. State minister Girish Yadav, Indian Football Association President Kalyan Chaudhary, Uttar Pradesh Krida Bharati President and Legislative Council Member Avnish Kumar Singh, former Legislative Council Member Mohsin Raza, and state Sports Director RP Singh, among other top dignitaries were present on the occasion, the statement added.

BJP releases 4th list for J&K Assembly polls

PTI ■ JAMMU

The BJP Monday released its fourth list of six candidates for the Jammu and Kashmir assembly polls, fielding its union territory unit president Ravinder Raina from Nowshera in the Jammu region. With the fresh list, the party has so far named 51 candidates, including 14 for the Kashmir Valley, where the BJP is yet to open its account in assembly elections. The 47-year-old Raina, who won from Nowshera in Rajouri district in the 2014 polls too, has been fielded again from his home constituency. Raina, who took over as the party president in Jammu and Kashmir in May 2018, thanked the party for reposing faith in him and expressed confidence of winning a majority of the seats in the Union Territory to form the next government. "The BJP's popularity has grown manifold over the years under the leadership of Prime



Minister Narendra Modi who restored peace and normalcy in J-K besides ensuring development and justice to every section of the society in the past 10 years," he told PTI. "We will win the elections to form our own government with the first chief minister from the saffron party," he said. Raina's main rival from the seat is former MLC Surinder Choudhary who joined the

National Conference in July 2023 after more than a year with the BJP. The other names in the list are: former MLC Vibodh Gupta from Rajouri (ST) in the Jammu region; and Aijaiz Hussain (Lal Chowk), Arif Raja (Eidgah), Ali Mohammad Mir (Khansahib) and Zahid Hussain (Chrar-e-Sharief) from the Kashmir Valley. The list was released on the

approval of the party's central election committee for the second phase of elections. The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, which has a 90-member assembly, is going to polls in three phases on September 18, 25 and October 1. This will be the first assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir since the revocation of Article 370 of the Constitution in August 2019 and the state's division in two union territories. The BJP released the first list of 15 candidates followed by another list of one candidate on August 26 for the first phase of elections. The BJP faced internal rumblings when it released the list. The party trimmed the initial first list of 44 to 16 following protests by some party cadre who alleged that "parachute candidates" were favoured over dedicated workers. A group of disgruntled members protested at the BJP headquarters in Jammu. Despite resentment shown by

some party leaders over selection of candidates from Jammu north, Jammu east, Padder-Nagseni, Ramban, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi, Chhamb and Akhnor segments, the BJP next day released its revised list of 29 nominees - 10 for second phase and 19 for the third phase -- without making any major changes except replacing one contestant. The party named former MLA Baldev Raj Sharma from Shri Mata Vaishno Devi seat in place of Rohit Dubey while all other names remained the same for the same set of constituencies. At least five BJP leaders resigned from the party and two of them already filed their nomination papers from two constituencies -- Ramban and Padder-Nagseni -- which along with 22 other segments are going to polls in the first phase. In a damage control exercise, the party mobilised several top leaders, including union ministers, to reach out to the disgruntled leaders.

Met warns of flash flood risk in parts of Himachal, 109 roads shut amid heavy rain

PTI ■ SHIMLA

The meteorological office there on Monday warned of low to moderate flash flood risk in several parts of Himachal Pradesh, including Chamba, Kangra, Mandi, Shimla, Sirmour and Kinnaur, until Tuesday afternoon. It also issued a 'yellow' alert of heavy rain, thunderstorm and lightning at isolated places in nine out of 12 districts in the state, barring Kinnaur, Chamba and Lahaul and Spiti till Tuesday. Meanwhile, 109 roads, including a national highway, across the state were closed on Monday following heavy rains

in several areas, the state emergency operation centre said. Besides National Highway 707 between Hatkoti in Shimla district and Poanta Sahib in Sirmour district getting blocked, 55 roads were closed in Sirmour, 23 in Shimla, 10 each in Mandi and Kangra, nine in Kullu, one each in Lahaul and Spiti and Una districts, the centre said. As many as 427 power supply schemes were also disrupted across the state, it added. Meanwhile, heavy rains lashed parts of Sirmour, Bilaspur and Mandi district while moderate rainfall was recorded in several places of the state in the past 24

hours until Monday evening. Dadahu in Sirmour district was the wettest in the state recording 160 mm of rainfall, followed by 146.5 mm rains in Nahan, 130 mm in Naina Devi, 83 mm in Pachhad, 74.5 mm in Dhaulakuan, 72.6 mm in Poanta Sahib, the weather data showed. Hamirpur noted 70 mm rainfall, Sundernagar 67 mm, Katalua 55.1 mm, Sundernagar 46.2 mm, Pandoh 34 mm, Chamba 33 mm, Bharmour 32 mm and Palampur 30 mm, it added. Himachal Pradesh's rainfall deficit so far since the onset of monsoon in the state on June 27 stands at 23 per cent with 482.1 mm rainfall.

Wolves maul to death child, injure women in UP's Bahraich

PTI ■ BAHRAICH/SITAPUR (UP)

A two-year-old girl was killed and two women injured in three separate wolf attacks in the Mahsi area of Bahraich district while reports of suspected animal attacks were also received from neighbouring Sitapur district. District Magistrate (Bahraich) Monika Rani said this was the eighth death in wolf attacks since July 17. Seven children were among those killed and about 30 injured.

would hold a review meeting via videoconferencing on Monday. District Magistrate Rani said the administration had already captured four wolves and was working to catch the others. However, the presence over a hundred revenue villages in the district has compounded the problem, with the wolves attacking a new village every four to five days, she said. People are being made aware about the situation and told to sleep inside their homes with the doors closed or on rooftops, Rani said. According to reports, two wolves are attacking but the forest department is collecting information about the exact number, she added. Superintendent of Police Vrinda Shukla and Rani took stock of the situation and met the toddler's family members. They have also directed that the injured get proper treatment. In neighbouring Sitapur, fear gripped residents of Parsehra Sharikpur village after three women were injured in attacks by unidentified animals. While locals claimed that the women were attacked by wolves, forest department officials suspect that a jackal was behind the attacks. A forest department team collected animal samples and footprints and ruled out a wolf or tiger attack.

A Parsehra Sharikpur official said Rosida (30) was asleep with her three children in her home when she was attacked. Rosida suffered claw injuries on her hand. Two more women -- 60-year-old Ramshree and 65-year-old Kailasha -- were attacked, the official added.

JJP holds meet in Sirsa ahead of Haryana Assembly polls

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

A joint meeting of the Political Affairs Committee and the Advisory Committee of the Jannayak Janta Party was held in Sirsa on Monday to firm up the party manifesto and discuss the names of the candidates for the Haryana Assembly polls. According to a party statement, JJP's senior leaders, including former deputy chief minister Dushyant Chautala, discussed important points of the party manifesto. The names of the potential candidates for the elections were also discussed in the meeting. During the meeting, Chautala discussed in detail various points of the manifesto being prepared by the JJP.



The JJP and Chandra Shekhar Azad-led Azad Samaj Party (Kanshi Ram) recently announced their alliance for the Haryana Assembly polls. The JJP will contest 70 of the

90 Assembly seats, while the Azad Samaj Party will contest 20 seats. During the meeting, a consensus was reached on some parts of the manifesto,

including implementing the loan waiver for farmers if alliance come to power. An agreement was reached on waiving the loans taken by farmers from cooperative

banks. If a JJP-led government is formed in the state, a compensation of Rs 25,000 per acre will be given to farmers in case of crop damage and the 'Jannayak Fasal Suraksha Yojana' will be launched, it said. Under this, the premium for the 'Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana' will be borne by the state government, said the party statement. The former deputy CM said 50 per cent seats will be reserved for women in the recruitment of teachers in schools, colleges and universities. He said that so far the names of the potential candidates have been discussed by holding meetings with the party district presidents, constituency heads and other office bearers of 17 districts

and in the remaining five districts, consensus will be reached by discussing with alliance partner ASP. He said that when the final decision is taken, the names will be announced under the joint banner of both the parties. After this meeting, Dushyant also held a meeting of the executive and office bearers of Fatehabad and Sirsa districts and discussed the potential candidates. Later, he said that he will file his nomination papers from the Uchana Assembly constituency on September 5, the very first day of filing of nominations. On the issue of a number of JJP rebel MLAs joining the BJP in recent days, Chautala said the BJP is contesting the elections by "borrowing" candidates from other parties.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

India's special China problem

S Jaishankar has highlighted India's 'Special China problem,' one that is deeply rooted in the unresolved border disputes

India-China relations have long been fraught with challenges, but recent remarks by India's External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar have brought the depth of these issues into sharper focus. Jaishankar has said that India has a "special China problem," which he emphasized is distinct from the more general concerns that the rest of the world, including Europe and the United States, has with China. Jaishankar's comments come at a time when countries globally are grappling with what he termed the "general China problem." This problem, characterised by economic and national security debates, is not unique to India. Across Europe and the United States, policymakers are increasingly preoccupied with China's growing influence and the challenges it poses. From trade imbalances to concerns about Chinese technology in critical infrastructure, these issues have sparked widespread scrutiny of China's global role. However, India's situation is further complicated by its unique geopolitical and economic circumstances. India shares a long and contested border with China, which has been the site of several military standoffs over the years, the most recent and severe of which began in May 2020 in eastern Ladakh.



India's "special China problem" goes beyond the broader concerns of the international community. It is rooted in the unresolved border dispute between the two nations, which has led to a prolonged military standoff along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh. The ongoing border tensions have necessitated the deployment of approximately 50,000-60,000 troops by both sides, creating a volatile situation that has yet to see a lasting resolution. Diplomatic efforts to resolve these issues continue, with the 31st meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation & Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC) taking place on August 29 in Beijing. However what is interesting is that despite tensions and border skirmishes India China trade has flourished and many importer in India make regular rounds to source stuff from China to sell in the Indian market. But Jaishankar's remark could mean a shift in the official policy vis a vis China. If Govt changes its policy, Chinese goods and investments may have to face more barriers dissuading the Chinese investors. Jaishankar also highlighted the economic dimensions of India's relationship with China, pointing out that the trade deficit and the nature of Chinese investments are areas of significant concern. Indeed security is non negotiable and must be implemented in letter and spirit. But at the same time the commerce should not be thought of as an impediment. If one thing that can improve the relations between two countries, it is trade. However, India could restrict Chinese investment in security-sensitive areas such as telecommunications and digital cyber space.

PICTALK



Clouds hover over the Delhi as vehicles pass by the Vikas Minar, in New Delhi

Orwell's vision remains as relevant as ever



SANTHOSH MATHEW

In an era where "post-truth" and "Big Brother" have transcended fiction to become disturbing reality, Orwell's vision stands as relevant as ever

In his seminal work '1984', George Orwell posits that "those who control the present control the past; those who control the past control the future." This powerful assertion underscores the terrifying consequences of manipulating history and truth. In the dystopian world of '1984', the ruling Party wields absolute power by constantly rewriting history to align with its agenda, erasing inconvenient truths, and ensuring that its version of reality is the only one that exists. This manipulation of truth is key to maintaining the Party's unchallenged dominance, as it keeps the population ignorant and compliant.

As we examine contemporary international politics, it is impossible to ignore the striking parallels between Orwell's dystopian vision and our current reality. Concepts such as "Big Brother," "doublethink," and "post-truth" have transcended Orwell's novel and become disturbingly relevant in today's world. The manipulation of truth, pervasive surveillance, and the rise of populist authoritarianism are phenomena that closely mirror the dangers Orwell warned against. The term "post-truth" has become a defining characteristic of modern political discourse, echoing Orwell's portrayal of a world where objective truth is malleable. In '1984', the Ministry of Truth constantly altered historical records to match the Party's shifting narrative, keeping the populace in a state of ignorance and making it impossible for them to challenge the Party's authority. Today, the concept of post-truth is equally relevant. In 2016, the Oxford Dictionary even named "post-truth" the Word of the Year, highlighting its prevalence in contemporary discourse. In this post-truth era, emotional appeals and personal beliefs often overshadow objective facts, making it easier for those in power to manipulate public opinion. Politicians and media outlets selectively present information, distort facts, or even fabricate narratives to support their agendas. This erosion of truth creates a divided society, much like the world Orwell depicted, where



consensus on basic facts becomes increasingly elusive. Orwell's concept of "Big Brother" — the omnipresent surveillance state that monitors every aspect of citizens' lives — is also frighteningly relevant today. In '1984', the Party uses telescreens and hidden microphones to ensure that no dissenting thought or action goes unnoticed, fostering a climate of fear and paranoia that effectively silences opposition. In our contemporary world, mass surveillance has become a reality on a global scale, with governments implementing extensive surveillance programs under the guise of national security. The revelations by Edward Snowden in 2013 exposed the extent to which governments were spying on their citizens, collecting vast amounts of data on phone calls, emails, and internet activity. The boundaries between state and corporate surveillance are increasingly blurred as tech giants like Google, Facebook, and Amazon collect vast amounts of data on users' online behavior, often with minimal transparency. Today's populist leaders have mastered the art of doublethink, often making contradictory promises or statements that their followers accept without question. They may decry the "elite" while simultaneously benefiting from elite



THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN STATE AND CORPORATE SURVEILLANCE ARE INCREASINGLY BLURRED AS TECH GIANTS LIKE GOOGLE, FACEBOOK, AND AMAZON COLLECT VAST AMOUNTS OF DATA ON USERS' ONLINE BEHAVIOR, OFTEN WITH MINIMAL TRANSPARENCY

status themselves or championing "freedom" while implementing policies that curtail personal liberties. This ability to manipulate and distort reality is a hallmark of populist rhetoric, much like it was for Orwell's Party. The rise of populism in the 21st century has also brought a resurgence of authoritarian tendencies. Leaders who once espoused democratic values increasingly resort to autocratic measures to consolidate power. Whether it's the undermining of judicial independence, the suppression of the free press, or the erosion of checks and balances, these actions mirror the totalitarian regime depicted in '1984'. Orwell's 'Animal Farm', while serving as an allegory for the Russian Revolution and the subsequent rise of the Soviet Union, offers themes that are universally applicable. The story of the farm animals' rebellion against their human oppressors, only to find themselves under the tyranny of their fellow animals, is a powerful commentary on the cyclical nature of power and corruption. In contemporary politics, the concept of "Snoogate" — a term used to describe politically motivated surveillance scandals — is reminiscent of the betrayal and manipulation seen in 'Animal Farm'. Orwell's dystopian novels were

products of their time, reflecting the anxieties and political realities of the 20th century. However, their relevance has only grown with time, as the themes they explore have become increasingly pertinent today. The rise of surveillance states, the erosion of truth, the manipulation of language, and the rise of authoritarianism are all issues that transcend national borders. In China, for example, the government's use of technology to monitor its citizens has created a digital dystopia reminiscent of Orwell's vision. The implementation of a social credit system, where citizens are scored based on their behavior and loyalty to the state, is a chilling example of how technology can be used to enforce conformity and suppress dissent. Similarly, in Russia, the government's control over the media and its use of propaganda to shape public opinion is a textbook case of Orwellian doublethink. The global reach of Orwell's ideas is a testament to the universality of his concerns. Whether in the context of a liberal democracy or an authoritarian regime, the themes of '1984' and 'Animal Farm' resonate deeply with those who value freedom and truth. (The writer is an associate professor, views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

STOP THE DEMOLITION DRIVE

Madam — This refers to 'Demolition notices leave the poor along Boin Lake dazed' (Sept 1). The news of HYDRRA demolition drive operations in and around Hyderabad came like a bolt from the blue. Demolition drive operations is creating havoc all over the Telangana. The Telangana state government is hell-bent on demolishing houses, buildings in the name of illegal structures by HYDRRA. Demolition drive operations and the orders issued by the Revenue Department of Medchal-Malkajgiri district to vacate their houses in a couple of days dazed the residents is extreme tyranny and sheer inhumane. People living near Boin Lake in Hasmathpet, are panic-stricken. They are at their wit's end what to do? whom to approach? They are being displaced and being rendered homeless without prior eviction notice is quite unconstitutional, unjustified, undemocratic and unwarranted. Despite possessing and retaining the relevant registered documents their houses are being pulled down and demolished is most distressing and unfortunate. The demolition drive operations are in full swing all over Telangana. The Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy must stop this demolition drive operations on the humanitarian grounds. People have been living and residing for many years as some of their properties belong to ancestors they got their properties registered in their names. Demolition drive operations started all over Telangana. Mahabubnagar demolition drive operations is shocking and heart-rending sparked outrage and widespread condemnation where the houses belonging to the poor, physical challenged and visual impaired individuals pulled down and demolished. The government must ponder over the poignant plight of the physical challenged, visually impaired individuals and the poor and desist and refrain from demolishing their houses near nalas or lakes areas without providing alternative on the humanitarian grounds. Zubair Khan | Hyderabad

Prioritising security over trade



In reference to External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's statement regarding India's unique challenges with China, it is evident that security concerns in regions such as the Northeast,

Ladakh, the Indian Ocean, and neighboring countries like Pakistan and the Maldives far outweigh trade considerations. China's aggressive posturing with the U.S., Japan, Taiwan, and its dominant trade practices with European countries and Australia do little to alleviate our issues with them. The Indian Ocean has become a battleground for global superpowers, largely due to Chinese threats and aspirations for supremacy. It is clear that security and trade issues with China cannot be addressed simultaneously. Reducing our reliance on China for semiconductors, Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients, and the operation and maintenance of Chinese-imported machinery is far more crucial than foreign direct investment from China. While the EAM is undoubtedly well-equipped to handle these multiple concerns, it is imperative to set clear priorities to effectively address them. Vinod Johri | New Delhi

MIND YOUR LANGUAGE

Madam—This is not the first time MP Kangana Ranaut has indulged in controversy. Earlier too, a couple of months ago, after a CISF officer allegedly slapped Ranaut at Chandigarh airport, the officer was reportedly heard saying that her mother participated in the farm agitation and had defamed the women who joined the protests by alleging they were paid to do so. This time again she used the irresponsible and malicious statements like "dead bodies were hanging and rapes were taking place during the 2020-21 farmers' agitation". In a recent interview with a Hindi daily, the actress turned BJP MP described the farmers' movement as an anti-national force engaged in destabilizing India with the help of "external forces". Kangana's remarks are unacceptable as the farmers during their agitation lost more than 700 of their comrades. She needs to tender an unconditional apology from the farmers for her utterances. S.K. Khosla | Chandigarh

A G NOORANI IS NO MORE

Madam — In the passing of Abdul Ghafoor Noorani, the country has lost a towering legal luminary, a scholar, a political analyst, and a public intellect. His passing at the age of 93 marks the end of an era—one defined by a relentless pursuit of justice, profound intellectual rigour, and a commitment to the principles that fortified modern India's democratic framework. The prolific author made indelible contributions to legal scholarship and political discourse in India for over six decades. As a relentless defender of justice and the Constitution, Noorani will always be remembered most by the marginalised and those who seek to challenge the structures of power and exclusion. Unlike many others in his profession who would have sought high positions or rewards in the later years of life, Noorani never did. Ganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

A journey from corporate grind to personal fulfillment

There are countless opportunities for personal growth and creative fulfillment that we often set aside in our pursuit of material success



SANJAY CHANDRA

I was having dinner with a friend on a recent visit to Mumbai. He quit a high-profile corporate job a few years back. As he settled into a new unknown routine, he started experimenting. He wrote articles on the relevance of festivals in the modern world, moderated a talk show, has started learning Sanskrit to read the scriptures in original, participates in marathons, and loves to cook.



Not surprisingly, his life mirrors mine. We got around to discussing another mutual ex-colleague, who was recently in the hospital due to a medical scare which could be attributed to a life spent on a stress-inducing work schedule. He has recently crossed the age of retirement but has accepted an extension. I told him rather bluntly that he should stop working, a sentiment that his wife reciprocated. The response was on expected lines, "What will I do if I take retirement?" I immediately listed the number of things that he could do, the chief among them being to take care of his health, and

many other activities that he had wanted to indulge in but could not, caught up in the daily grind of living life and earning. This incident struck an immediate chord with the Mumbai friend, who had a similar experience with yet another mutual friend. Many do not have the luxury of taking retirement. They must necessarily work till the end for the next meal on their table. There is a smaller population, though not insignificant, which can do something different. These are the people, who like me, were provided the best by their parents within the limited resources that they

could earn. Even those limited means were better than what most had, and which helped us to dream and create a list of things that we wanted to do. We pursued a few of these with a single-minded devotion particularly the ones related to materialistic possessions, ignoring others that were mostly related to our creative side that we tried to suppress. Many of us have now reached a level of comfort that enables us to have a relook at the ones that we missed. A friend has started learning the keyboard. Another friend started taking flying lessons and was looking forward to completing the hours necessary to earn a license. Now in the reverse count of my life, I realise that I wish to travel, I want to write, I have the urge to make friends, and I want to help others to dream. Many like me wish to alleviate the drudgery of the majority so that at least the coming generations can look forward to creating their bucket list. We have seen many initiatives taken by the government over the past few

decades to create an ecosystem to help the less fortunate. Corporations also earmark part of profits in a separate fund as social responsibility. There are individuals from certain communities who donate a percentage of their annual earnings for the purpose. There are faiths actively involved in the betterment of many. I have often wondered about the miracles that we can achieve if all these agencies and individuals come together to ensure that future generations have an option. There is always an answer to the query, "What will I do?" We need to look within and then look around. There is so much to do, and so little time. Mark Twain summed it up well, "Twenty years from now, you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones that you did do." (The writer is an author, speaker, coach, arbitrator and strategy consultant and conducts workshops on creative writing; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN REVITALIZING THE WORKPLACE

Yoga and meditation can light up the dull and often tense atmosphere at workplaces



SAKSHI SETHI

In today's fast-paced, high-stress work environments, organizations are increasingly seeking ways to support the well-being of their employees. Among the most effective and holistic approaches are the practices of yoga and meditation. These ancient techniques, rooted in mindfulness and physical wellness, have transcended their spiritual origins to become powerful tools for enhancing mental and physical health in modern workplaces. Incorporating yoga and meditation into the daily routine of employees not only benefits individual well-being but also significantly impacts organizational productivity and culture.

The modern workplace is often characterized by high levels of stress, tight deadlines, and the pressure to constantly perform. A study published in the Journal of Occupational Health Psychology found that employees who participated in the workplace yoga program experienced significant reductions in perceived stress levels. Participants even reported reductions in musculoskeletal pain, particularly in the lower back, neck and shoulders, areas commonly affected by prolonged sitting. The study found that employees who practised yoga reported higher levels of emotional well-being and lower levels of psychological distress. Another study published in the Journal of Managerial Psychology examined the effects of workplace yoga on organizational culture.

It found that yoga contributed to a more positive and supportive work environment by fostering better communication, teamwork and a sense of community among employees. Many office workers spend long hours sitting at desks, which can lead to a range of physical issues, includ-



ing poor posture, back pain and repetitive strain injuries. Over time, these physical ailments can decrease productivity and increase absenteeism. Yoga addresses these issues by improving flexibility, strength, and posture. The various poses and stretches in yoga help to relieve tension in the neck, shoulders and lower back, common problem areas for office workers. Additionally, the emphasis on breathing exercises improves circulation and oxygenation, leading to increased energy levels and overall vitality. This can strengthen workplace relationships, improve communication, and foster a sense of community and mutual support.

A positive work environment, where employees feel valued and connected, leads to higher morale, reduced turnover and a more cohesive and productive team. The benefits of meditation in the workplace are well-documented. Regular meditation practice has been shown to reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression, lower blood pressure and improve sleep quality. Employees who meditate regularly are more likely to exhibit improved focus, emotional intelligence, and the ability to manage stress. This not only enhances individual performance but also contributes to a more harmonious and collaborative work environment. Mentally, yoga promotes relaxation and reduces stress by regulating the autonomic nervous system, which governs the body's stress response. The mindful breathing techniques and meditative aspects of yoga help calm the mind, reduce anxiety and enhance mental clarity.

For employees, this means better focus, improved decision-making and greater resilience in the face of workplace challenges. The cumulative effect of these benefits is a more productive, engaged, and satisfied workforce. The modern workplace is often characterized by high levels of stress, tight deadlines, and the pressure to constantly perform. Moreover, prolonged stress can have severe consequences on employees' mental and physical health, leading to issues such as anxiety, depression and chronic illnesses. Therefore, investing in employee well-being through practices like yoga and meditation is not just a trend but a strategic move that can yield substantial returns.

(The writer is an educator, views expressed are personal)

E-commerce giants versus mom-and-pop stores



UTTAM GUPTA

Amazon's aggressive pricing strategies could lead to a massive e-commerce expansion, capturing half of India's retail market within the next decade



At the launch of the Pahle India Foundation's report 'Net Impact of E-Commerce on Employment and Consumer Welfare in India' on August 21, 2024, Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal took pot shot at the world's biggest e-tailer Amazon, for selling products directly to consumers and indulging in "predatory pricing" that could lead to massive growth of e-commerce capturing half of Indian retail market ten years from now. This would adversely impact an estimated 100 million small retailers across the country and in turn, lead to "social disruption".

E-commerce, put simply, is the practice of buying and selling goods or services using the Internet. Predatory pricing involves setting prices for a product at an unrealistically low level to undercut the competition and gain market share. Generally practised by a new player in the market, predatory pricing violates antitrust laws even as it seeks to create a monopoly. Goyal opines that Amazon is selling products on its e-commerce platform at unrealistically low prices which results in heavy losses estimated to be about a billion dollars annually. To fund these losses, it brings the money from its parent but camouflages it as foreign direct investment (FDI). Any FDI in the country is normally welcome given its contribution to capital formation, accelerating economic growth and adding to the foreign exchange kitty. But, the dollars brought by Amazon don't serve this purpose.

In 2020 also, he had taunted the Amazon boss for the latter's claim to bring a few billion dollars into India. Then, he had charged that Jeff Bezos was bringing money to make up for the huge loss the company was incurring in its operations in the country. He also voiced concern over the harm it was causing to millions of small retailers. Amazon essentially operates the "market-place" model of e-commerce - a special dispensation carved out by the Narendra Modi Government under which 100 per cent FDI is permitted.

The "market-place" is a platform where vendors sell their products to consumers even as its owner (say, Amazon) merely



E-COMMERCE, PUT SIMPLY, IS THE PRACTICE OF BUYING AND SELLING GOODS OR SERVICES USING THE INTERNET. PREDATORY PRICING INVOLVES SETTING PRICES FOR A PRODUCT AT AN UNREALISTICALLY LOW LEVEL TO UNDERCUT THE COMPETITION AND GAIN MARKET SHARE

acts as a facilitator. The marketplace owner books orders, raises invoices, arranges deliveries, accepts payments, handles rejections, warehousing and so on but can't undertake "direct selling." Considering that the operator is only expected to provide services instead of a fee, there is no question of any loss.

Yet, Amazon is incurring huge losses. The losses incurred by Amazon are due to huge discounts on the products sold on the platform as well as expenses on promoting exclusive brands. But the discount is normally given by the seller; this is also true of money spent on promotion. The service provider can't do it unless he is also masquerading as the seller. Do the rules permit direct selling?

Under the 2016 guidelines (Press Note PN issued by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade or DPIIT in the Ministry of Commerce and Industries), the permission for 100 per cent FDI in the "market-place" is subject to two main riders viz, "The entity cannot permit more than 25 per cent of total sales on its platform from one vendor or its group companies. Further, it can't directly or indirectly influence the sale price." Sans any specification as to "who the vendor is", a firm connected with the "market-place" (either its subsidiary or a joint venture (JV) with an Indian company) is eligible.

In other words, each such entity could control up to 25 per cent of sales on the platform. So, you have companies like Cloudfair - an Amazon venture in partnership with a firm owned by Narayan Murthy - operating as lead sellers on the platform. Thus, contrary to the real intent of the policy which disallowed the e-commerce platform owners from direct selling to individual consumers, the fine print permitted them to do so, albeit through a subsidiary or JV. This is precisely what the e-commerce

merchants have been doing. They were operating as direct sellers, controlling inventory, giving discounts and so on. A clarification issued by the DPIIT on December 26, 2018, said that "the owner of the marketplace or its subsidiary or its joint venture (JV) with an Indian company can't have ownership of the seller."

Further, "a seller on the platform can't source more than 25 per cent of its inventory from a firm connected with the latter." Foreign investors can circumvent the first rider by having less than 50 per cent shareholding in the seller firm and arguing that they have no control (majority) over the latter. The marketplace owner can also sell his 'own' product through its wholesale arm on the platform. All that the wholesale arm needs to ensure is to restrict supplies to the seller within the 25 per cent threshold. Thus, the clarification hasn't helped much in diluting their role as dominant sellers. No wonder, small traders, whom the e-commerce platform was intended to help have suffered heavily.

This is because the business that should have gone to the former was appropriated by the latter i.e. the dominant seller owned by itself. The small retailers haven't got relief from the court. In 2019, Delhi Vyapar Mahasangh (DVM) complained to the Competition Commission of India (CCI) alleging anti-competitive behaviour by Amazon Seller Services (ASS) and Flipkart Internet Private Limited (FIPL).

It argued that ASS and FIPL had entered into exclusive sales agreements with smartphone makers to sell certain phones through a small number of preferred sellers and offering to pay for part of the discount that such sellers would offer during key sales periods such as Flipkart's big bullion day and Amazon's Prime Day. Prima facie, the CCI agreed with DVM's contention and ordered a probe by the

Director General (DG) - Investigation. ASS and FIPL went up to the Supreme Court (SC) to get the order quashed. In August 2021, dismissing their appeal, the SC ordered "the CCI - DG will complete the probe. In its recent findings, the CCI-DG has charged ASS and FIPL with indulging in 'predatory pricing' and violation of antitrust laws. The latter will appeal against this starting a fresh round of never-ending litigation. In the end (if at all the result comes), Amazon et al will get away with paying some penalty. How can the government get out of this mess? It could further tighten the rules to say that platform owners can't hold even one per cent equity in the seller. Further, the former's wholesale arm must not supply even one per cent of stocks of the latter. This is an abhorrent idea. It can't be implemented.

Besides, it will be a retrospective change of policy and send a wrong signal. The way forward is to make obvious and straightforward what the bureaucrats had already done in a 'subtle' way. The government should say that '100 per cent FDI is allowed in retail in all forms, single brand or multi-brand retail (MBR), online or offline (currently, while FDI in MBR online is completely barred, in MBR offline, 51 per cent foreign investment is allowed subject to riders which tantamount to completely barring it. All these distinctions should go). With this, even as Amazon et al can continue with direct selling to consumers alongside running a marketplace model, Indian retailers including the millions of mom-and-pop stores will also have 'unrestrained' access to foreign capital thereby ensuring a level playing field.

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

Envisioning a feminist world: Building a just and inclusive future

The 4th Asia Pacific Feminist Forum seeks to challenge the patriarchal systems that dominate the world today, writes SHOBHA SHUKLA

The 4th Asia Pacific Feminist Forum (APFF) is set to take place next month in Chiang Mai, Thailand, under the theme "Feminist world-building: Creative energies, collective journeys." This theme highlights the importance of uniting people of all genders who are dedicated to defending human rights and promoting gender equality. The forum aims to collectively resist the patriarchal, militarized, and greed-driven world we currently inhabit, envisioning instead a feminist world order.

What is a Feminist World Order?

A feminist world order envisions a different kind of development model, one rooted in sharing and caring rather than power and violence. Unlike the

patriarchal systems that dominate today, where power is concentrated in the hands of a few through violence and exploitation, a feminist system emphasizes care, solidarity, and the equitable redistribution of power. This system aspires to be socially just and ecologically sustainable, ensuring justice and sustainability for everyone, everywhere. At its core, this vision is grounded in the principles of development justice.

Abia Akram, founder and CEO of the National Forum of Women with Disabilities in Pakistan, describes a feminist world as a place where women and all diverse genders can fully realize their strength and contribute meaningfully at the grassroots level. In her view, such a world would bring

about systematic changes through transformative laws and legal practices that are aligned with human rights. Migrant rights activist Eni Lestari, Chairperson of the International Migrants Alliance, shares her perspective on the feminist world order based on her decades of experience in feminist movements. She observes that neoliberal globalization has exacerbated structural exploitation, with each new crisis worsening poverty, displacement, and unemployment. Having migrated from Indonesia during the 1997 Asian financial crisis, Eni highlights that migration has become an integral part of the economic development strategy for many capitalist countries, with nearly 300 million people now liv-

ing as migrants worldwide. Eni envisions a feminist world as one where economic and political environments treat everyone with fairness and equality, eliminating the need for migration or displacement as a means of survival. In such a world, women would lead and ensure that justice and equality are upheld for all members of society.

Feminist World: A Joyous and Inclusive World

Ivy Josiah, a women's rights activist and former President and Executive Director of Malaysia's Women's Aid Organisation, describes a feminist world as a joyous and inclusive one, where no one is left behind-not just as a tagline, but in reality. She believes that if feminists lead the world, it would be a peaceful one, as



war is a choice, and so is peace.

Feminist World: Anti-Capitalism

A feminist world would stand in stark opposition to capitalism, which prioritizes profit maximization for a tiny elite while subjecting the majority of people and the planet to unbridled exploitation. Ivy argues that a feminist world would not serve the interests of the wealthy few but would instead be characterized by equitable resource distribu-

tion.

Shrinking Spaces for Civil Society: Abia Akram raises concerns about the shrinking spaces for civil society organizations under the current political systems. She argues that creating an enabling environment where everyone has equal rights and opportunities is missing from the agendas of many countries. Budgetary allocations often fail to include a gender perspective, resulting in inadequate resources and opportunities for women and girls with disabilities, transgender individuals, and LGBTQI+ communities. Abia asserts that meaningful engagement and equitable representation from feminist movements are essential for ensuring justice for all.

The Present World Order:

The present world order, driven by patriarchy, fundamentalism, militarism, and corporate capitalism, stands as the anti-thesis of a feminist world order. This model has transferred wealth, power, and resources from the working people to the rich, and from developing countries to wealthy ones. The resulting financial, environmental, food, and energy crises have devastated the lives of women, particularly in the Global South.

Transformative Shifts of the Development Justice Model

The current world order urgently needs to be replaced with a development justice model that addresses the inequalities of wealth, power, and resources between countries, between rich and poor, and between men and women

and gender-diverse communities. This model is grounded in five transformative shifts: redistributive justice, economic justice, social and gender justice, environmental justice, and accountability to the people.

The Asia Pacific Feminist Forum (APFF) plays a crucial role in advancing the vision of a feminist world order. Organized by the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD), this tri-annual event brings together feminists and women's rights activists of all genders from across Asia and the Pacific.

(Shobha Shukla is the founding Managing Editor and Executive Director of CNS. Views are personal)

Strike in Israel over hostage deaths reflects political divisions

AP ■ TEL AVIV

A rare call for a general strike in Israel to protest the failure to return hostages held in Gaza led to closures and other disruptions around the country on Monday, including at its main international airport. But it was ignored in some areas, reflecting deep political divisions.

Hundreds of thousands of Israelis poured into the streets late Sunday in grief and anger after six hostages were found dead in Gaza. The families and much of the public blamed Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, saying they could have been returned alive in a deal with Hamas to end the nearly 11-month-old war. But others support Netanyahu's strategy of maintaining military pressure on Hamas, whose October 7 attack into Israel triggered the war. They say it will force the militants to give in to Israeli demands, potentially facilitate rescue operations and ultimately annihilate the group.



A labour court ruled that the strike must end by 2:30 pm local time, accepting a petition from the government saying it was politically motivated. The head of Israel's largest trade union, the Histadrut, said it would abide by the court decision and instructed members to return to work. Arnon Bar-David had

called for the general strike, the first since the start of the war. It aimed to shut down or disrupt major sectors of the economy, including banking and health care. Airlines at Israel's main international airport, Ben-Gurion, halted outgoing flights between 8 am and 10 am. Those flights either departed early or were slightly delayed. Arriving

flights continued as usual, according to the Israel Airports Authority. "There's no need to punish the whole state of Israel because of what is happening, overall, it is a victory for Hamas," said one passenger, Amrani Yigal. But in Jerusalem, resident Avi Lavi said that "I think this is fair, the time has come to

stand and to wake up, to do everything for the hostages to come back alive." The Histadrut said banks, some large malls and government offices had joined the strike, as well as some public transit services, although there did not appear to be major disruptions. Municipalities in Israel's populated central area, including Tel Aviv, participated, leading to shortened school hours. Other municipalities, including Jerusalem, did not participate. The demonstrations on Sunday appeared to be the largest since the start of the war, with organizers estimating that up to 500,000 people joined nationwide events and the main rally in Tel Aviv. Israeli media estimated that 200,000 to 400,000 took part. They are demanding that Netanyahu reach a deal to return the remaining roughly 100 hostages held in Gaza, a third of whom are believed to be dead, even if it means leaving a battered Hamas intact and withdrawing from the territory. Many Israelis support this position, but

others prioritize the destruction of the militant group over freedom for the hostages. Netanyahu has pledged "total victory" over Hamas and blames it for the failure of the negotiations, which have dragged on for much of this year. Israel said the six hostages found dead in Gaza were killed by Hamas shortly before Israeli forces arrived in the tunnel where they were held. Three were reportedly scheduled to be released in the first phase of a cease-fire proposal discussed in July. The Israeli Health Ministry said autopsies had determined the hostages were shot at close range and died on Thursday or Friday. Netanyahu blamed Hamas, saying "whoever murders hostages doesn't want a deal." Hamas blamed their deaths on Israel and the United States, accusing them of dragging out the talks by issuing new demands, including for lasting Israeli control over two strategic corridors in Gaza. Hamas has offered to

release the hostages in return for an end to the war, the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces and the release of a large number of Palestinian prisoners, including high-profile militants. One of the six hostages was Israeli-American Hersh Goldberg-Polin, 23, a native of Berkeley, California, who lost part of his left arm to a grenade in the Oct. 7 attack. In April, Hamas issued a video that showed him alive, sparking protests in Israel. He was one of the best-known hostages, and his parents had led a high-profile campaign for the captives' release, meeting with President Joe Biden, Pope Francis, and addressing the Democratic National Convention last month. Around 400 mourners gathered ahead of Goldberg-Polin's funeral outside the family residence, still draped with posters reading "Bring Hersh Home." Waving Israeli flags, they marched toward the cemetery. "It feels like he could have been my son," said Irit Dolev, whose two sons

went to school with him. "I've buried so many friends this year, but this is the hardest one, because he was alive," said Amit Levy, who was among hundreds of others at the cemetery. Some 250 hostages were taken on Oct. 7. More than 100 were freed during a cease-fire in November in exchange for the release of Palestinians imprisoned by Israel. Eight have been rescued by Israeli forces. Israeli troops mistakenly killed three Israelis who escaped captivity in December. Hamas-led militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, when they stormed into southern Israel on Oct. 7. Israel's retaliatory offensive in Gaza has killed over 40,000 Palestinians, according to local health officials, who do not say how many were militants. The war has displaced the vast majority of Gaza's 2.3 million people, often multiple times, and plunged the besieged territory into a humanitarian catastrophe, including new fears of a polio outbreak.

Keir Starmer faces challenges after unrest-filled summer

AP ■ LONDON

There was no summer honeymoon for Keir Starmer. Britain's new prime minister, elected in a landslide less than two months ago, had to cancel a planned vacation after anti-immigrant unrest erupted across the country. He has spent his first weeks in office dealing with the aftermath, and issuing stark warnings about the state of the nation and the economy. As lawmakers returned to Parliament on Monday after a shortened summer break, Starmer's left-of-centre Labour Party government was preparing for a budget statement next month that's likely to include tax rises or public spending cuts — or both. The mood music is in stark contrast to the campaign song used by former Prime Minister Tony Blair, the last Labour leader to win an election: "Things Can Only Get Better."



"Frankly, things will get worse before they get better," Starmer told voters in a televised speech last week. Starmer is seeking to hammer home the message that the right-leaning Conservative Party, booted out by voters in the July 4 election, presided over "14 years of rot" that's left Britain weakened economically, structurally and even morally. During the election campaign, Starmer vowed to get the country's sluggish economy growing

and restore frayed public services such as the state-funded National Health Service. Since winning power he's said the situation is "worse than we ever imagined," with an unexpected 22 billion pound (USD 29 billion) hole in the public finances. Labour has decided not to increase taxes on "working people," but it has to find money somewhere. It has already scaled back a payment intended to help pensioners heat their homes in winter. Starmer said last week that a budget statement coming on October 30 will be "painful" and involve "short term pain for long term good." Conservative economy spokeswoman Laura Trott accused Starmer and his government of trying to "run from responsibility for the tax rises they always planned but hid from the public during the election." Paul Johnson, who heads economic think-tank the Institute for Fiscal Studies, has said

Labour is being "disingenuous" when it claims to be surprised by the state of the finances, but that the Conservatives had "left Labour a mess to clear up." Rob Ford, professor of political science at the University of Manchester, said Starmer's government was going to "have to grasp the nettle" and confront the fact that two key pledges — improving public services and not raising any of the main taxes — "aren't both achievable." Starmer faced a big test within weeks of taking office when anti-immigrant violence erupted after three children were stabbed to death in the town of Southport. The violence, fueled by online misinformation blaming a migrant and stirred up by far-right groups, spread across England and Northern Ireland over several days. Starmer responded firmly, condemning a "mindless minority of thugs" fueled by the "snake-oil of populism" and pledging swift justice and tough sentences for rioters.

Red sea ship hit by suspected Yemen rebel attack: Officials

AP ■ DUBAI

A suspected attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels targeted a ship in the Red Sea on Monday, authorities said, just north of where crews hope to salvage a tanker loaded with oil and still ablaze after another assault by the group. Monday's attack marks the latest in the Iranian-backed rebels' campaign that has disrupted the USD 1 trillion in goods that pass through the Red Sea each year over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip as well as halted some aid shipments to conflict-ravaged Sudan and Yemen. Meanwhile, the efforts to salvage the still-burning Sounion seek to head off the potential ecological disaster posed by its cargo of 1 million barrels of crude oil. In Monday's assault, two projectiles hit the vessel, and a third explosion occurred near the ship, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations centre said. "Damage control is underway," the UKMTO said. "There are no casualties onboard and the vessel is proceeding to its next port of call." The timing of the attack and coordinates offered by the UKMTO corresponded to

the reported path of the Panama-flagged oil tanker Blue Lagoon I, now travelling south through the Red Sea to an unlisted destination. The Blue Lagoon I was coming from Russia's port of Ust-Luga on the Baltic Sea and had been broadcasting that it had Russian-origin cargo on board. In recent months, the Blue Lagoon I travelled to India, which gets more than 40 per cent of its oil imports from Russia despite Moscow's ongoing war on Ukraine and the international sanctions it faces over it. The Greek-based firm operating the ship could not be immediately reached. The Houthis did not immediately claim responsibility for the attack. However, it can take the rebels hours or even days to acknowledge their assaults. The Houthis have targeted more than 80 vessels with missiles and drones since the war in Gaza started in October. They seized one vessel and sank two in the campaign that also killed four sailors. Other missiles and drones have either been intercepted by a United States-led coalition in the Red Sea or failed to reach their targets. The rebels maintain that they target ships linked to Israel, the US or the UK to force an end to Israel's campaign

against Hamas in Gaza. However, many of the ships attacked have little or no connection to the conflict, including some bound for Iran. Meanwhile Monday, a salvage effort appeared to be underway to tow away the Sounion oil tanker, which was earlier hit by the Houthis and abandoned by its crew. Jamel Amer, an official with the Houthis, wrote online Saturday that tug boats assigned to pull the Sounion away should arrive Sunday. However, NASA fire satellites showed a blaze at the site of where the Sounion had been abandoned on Monday morning. The Sounion was carrying some 1 million barrels of oil when the Houthis initially attacked it on August 21 with small arms fire, projectiles and a drone boat. A French destroyer operating as part of the European Union's Operation Aspidos rescued the Sounion's crew of 25 Filipinos and Russians, as well as four private security personnel, after they abandoned the vessel and took them to nearby Djibouti. Last week, the Houthis released footage showing they planted explosives on board the Sounion and blew them up in a propaganda video, something the rebels have done before in their campaign.

Harris seeks Biden's boost in Pennsylvania at Labour Day parade

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Vice President Kamala Harris and President Joe Biden are co-headlining a campaign event Monday in the marquee battleground state of Pennsylvania as Harris balances presenting herself as "a new way forward" while remaining intensely loyal to Biden and the policies he has pushed. The pair will attend Pittsburgh's Labor Day parade and offer some remarks, the first time the two have shared a speaking slot on the political stage together since the surprising election shakeup that provided a fresh jolt of Democratic enthusiasm to the 2024 election. Harris' campaign has said Pennsylvania voters are newly energized since Harris moved to the top of the ticket six weeks ago, with tens of thousands of new volunteers signed up to canvass for her and Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, the Democratic vice presidential nominee. Harris' and Biden's appearance at the parade, one of the largest such gatherings in the country, is part of a battleground state blitz with just over two months until Election Day. Harris, 59, has sought to appeal to voters by positioning herself as a break from poisonous politics, rejecting the acerbic rhetoric of her Republican opponent, former President Donald Trump, while looking to move beyond the Biden era as well. Yet while her delivery may be very different from Biden's, Harris' agenda is chock-full of the same issues he has championed: capping the cost of prescription drugs, the Affordable Care Act, the economy and helping families afford child care. "We fight for a future where we build what I call an opportunity economy, so that every American has the

opportunity to own a home, start a business and to build wealth and intergenerational wealth. And a future where we lower the cost of living for America," she said at a recent rally, echoing Biden's calls to grow the economy "from the bottom out and the middle up." Harris briefly appeared on stage with Biden after the president delivered his remarks on the opening night of last month's Democratic National Convention, but the two haven't shared a microphone at a political event since Biden himself was running for office. At that time, the campaign was using Harris mostly as its chief spokeswoman for abortion rights, an issue they believe can help them win in November as restrictions grow and health care worsens for women following the fall of Roe v. Wade. The pair have appeared at official events and met together at the White House since the ticket-swap. For more than 3 1/2 years, Harris has been one of Biden's chief validators. Now the tables are turned, as Harris looks to lean on Biden — a native of Scranton, Pennsylvania — to help win the potentially decisive state. Biden, for his part, has laid low since ending his reelection bid. He was last at the White House on Aug. 19 and has since been vacationing in Southern California and Delaware. But even as she's taken on the mantle of leading the Democratic Party, Harris has stood steadfastly at Biden's side. In her first sit-down interview of her candidacy, Harris delivered an impassioned defense of Biden's record and ability to do the job, even despite the events of the past two months that ended with her running for the Oval Office and Biden a lame duck.

Far-right success in German votes piles new pressure on Scholz's coalition

AP ■ BERLIN

The Alternative for Germany party's success in two state elections piled new pressure on Chancellor Olaf Scholz's fractious government and left the country's main opposition party facing political contortions on Monday to find a way to govern a pair of eastern regions without involving the far-right party. Alternative for Germany, or AfD, became the first far-right party to win a state election in post-World War II Germany in Thuringia on Sunday under one of its hard-right figures, Björn Höcke. In neighbouring Saxony, it finished only just behind the mainstream conservative Christian Democratic Union, which leads the national opposition. Voters punished the

three parties in Scholz's governing coalition, which took well under 15 per cent of the vote between them. Deep discontent with a national government notorious for infighting, inflation and a weak economy, anti-immigration sentiment and scepticism toward German military aid for Ukraine are among the factors that contributed to support for populist parties in the formerly communist east, which is less prosperous than western Germany. A new party founded by a prominent leftist was the second big winner on Sunday — and will probably be needed to form state governments since no one is prepared to govern with AfD. The debacle for the governing parties added to awful performances in the European Parliament election in June for

Scholz's coalition, and it's not obvious that they have any recipe to turn things around with Germany's next national election due in a bit over a year. Another state election on Sept. 22 in an eastern region — Brandenburg, which unlike the two that voted Sunday is currently led by Scholz's center-left Social Democrats — could add to their embarrassment. Voters "wanted to send a signal to Berlin above all," Jens Spahn, a senior CDU lawmaker, told ZDF television. "They want to send a signal to the (coalition) that the chancellor no longer has their confidence. Olaf Scholz is the face of failure in Thuringia and Saxony too." But the two elections also bring difficult decisions for the CDU, which leads national polls. AfD holds now more

than a third of the seats, at least in Thuringia's state legislature — which would, for example, allow it to block appointments of judges to the regional constitutional court — and that will make it hard to build workable governments. AfD's strength in the east has pushed other parties into unconventional coalitions as far back as 2016, but Sunday's results took that to a new level. In Thuringia, even a previously improbable combination of the CDU, Scholz's party and the new leftist Sähra Wagenknecht Alliance lacks a majority; to get one, the conservatives would also need help from the Left Party, which is descended from East Germany's communist rulers and led the outgoing state government. So far, they have refused to work with it.

Man fatally shoots 3 in Hawaii: Police

Honolulu (AP): Three people were killed and two others injured in a shooting at a home stemming from a dispute between neighbors on Saturday night in Hawaii, police said. The shooter was also fatally shot by a resident, who was arrested on a second-degree murder charge. Witnesses reported that a 58-year-old man was using a front-end loader to ram cars into the home where a family gathering was taking place, then opened fire at people gathered in the carport, fatally shooting three women at the residence in Wainanae, a community about 30 miles (48 kilometers) west of downtown Honolulu, Honolulu police detective Lt. Deena Thoommes said. At some point, a 42-year-old man who lived in the home fatally shot the suspect with a handgun, she said at a news conference. A police

spokesperson did not immediately respond to a telephone message or an email asking for details about why the resident was arrested. The women who were killed were 34, 36 and 29, Thoommes said. A 31-year-old man and a 52-year-old woman were taken to the hospital in critical condition, she said. The suspect, who was not identified, had four 55-gallon drums containing an unknown fuel in the front-end loader, Thoommes said. Witnesses reported that he fired rounds into them but police have not confirmed that yet, she said. The shootings are the latest of several shootings in recent weeks in the area that have led to police to pledge to work to fight gun violence, Police Chief Joe Logan said at the news conference. But he said Saturday's shootings were not related to the earlier ones.

Some Lebanese fearing war plan to move to Syria

AP ■ BEIRUT

Residents of Beirut's southern suburbs have been scrambling to make contingency plans since an Israeli airstrike on an apartment building in a busy neighbourhood killed a top Hezbollah commander and touched off fears of a full-scale war. For most, that means moving in with relatives or renting homes in Christian, Druze or Sunni-majority areas of Lebanon that are generally considered safer than the Shiite-majority areas where the Hezbollah militant group has its main operations and base of support. But for a small number, plan B is a move to neighbouring Syria. Although Syria is in its 14th year of civil war, active fighting has long been frozen in much of the country. Lebanese citizens,



who can cross the border without a visa, regularly visit Damascus. And renting an apartment is significantly cheaper in Syria than in Lebanon. Zahra Ghaddar said she and her family were shaken when they saw an apartment building reduced to rubble by the July 30 drone strike in her area,

known as Dahiyeh. Along with Hezbollah commander Fouad Shukur, two children and three women were killed and dozens more were injured in the targeted Israeli attack. Previously, the Lebanese capital had been largely untouched by the near-daily cross-border clashes that have displaced around 100,000 people from southern Lebanon and tens of thousands more in Israel since October 8. That's when Hezbollah began firing rockets into northern Israel in support of its ally Hamas, which a day earlier led a deadly raid in Israel that killed some 1,200 people and took another 250 hostage. Israel responded with an aerial bombardment and ground offensive in Gaza that has killed more than 40,000 Palestinians. In recent weeks, the conflict in Lebanon appeared on the brink of spiralling out of control. Ghaddar said her family first considered moving within Lebanon but were discouraged by social media posts blaming displaced civilians, along with Hezbollah, for the threat of all-out war. Also, surging demand prompted steep rent hikes. "We found the rents started at USD 700, and that's for a

house we wouldn't be too comfortable in," she said. That amount is more than many Lebanese earn in a month. Ghaddar's family found a four-bedroom apartment in Aleppo, a city in northwestern Syria, for USD 150 a month. They paid six months' rent in advance and returned to Lebanon. Israel periodically launches airstrikes on Syria, usually targeting Iranian-linked military sites or militants, but Bashar Assad's government has largely stood on the sidelines of the current regional conflict. Israel and Hezbollah fought a bruising monthlong war in 2006 that demolished much of southern Lebanon and Beirut's southern suburbs. At the time, some 180,000 Lebanese took refuge in Syria, many staying shelter in schools, mosques and empty factories. Those who

could afford it rented houses. Some put down permanent roots. Rawad Issa, then a teenager, fled to Syria with his parents. They returned to Lebanon when the war ended, but Issa's father used some of his savings to buy a house in Syria's Hama province, just in case. "That way, if another war happened, we would already have a house ready," Issa said. The house and surrounding area were untouched by Syria's civil war, he said. A few weeks ago, his sister and her husband went to get the house ready for the family to return, in case the situation in Lebanon deteriorated. Issa, who works in video production, said he initially planned to rent an apartment in Lebanon if the conflict expanded, rather than joining his family in Syria. But in "safe" areas of Beirut, "they are asking for fantastic prices," he said.

Russia launches drones, missiles at Kyiv school

AP ■ KYIV

Russia launched an overnight barrage of drones and cruise and ballistic missiles at Kyiv, officials said on Monday, as children prepared to return to school across Ukraine. Some pupils found classes cancelled because of damage from the attack.

Several series of explosions rocked the Ukrainian capital in the early hours. Debris from intercepted missiles and drones fell in every district of Kyiv, wounding three people and damaging two kindergartens, Ukraine's Interior Ministry said. City authorities reported multiple fires.

After more than 900 days of the war, Russia and Ukraine show no sign of letting up in the fight or moving closer to the negotiating table. Both sides are pursuing ambitious ground offensives, with the Ukrainians driving into Russia's Kursk region and the Russian army pushing deeper into the Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine that is part of the industrial Donbas region. Russian President Vladimir Putin said Monday that Ukraine's Kursk assault won't prevent Russian forces from advancing in eastern Ukraine. Ukrainian forces haven't achieved their goal of diverting Russian troops from the fighting there, he said. "The main task that the enemy set for themselves — to stop our offensive in Donbas — they haven't achieved it," Putin told school students during a trip to southern Siberia. However, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said last month that the aim of the Kursk incursion is to create a buffer zone that might prevent further attacks by Moscow across the border.

Putin predicted that Ukraine's Kursk offensive, which began August 6, will fail and that subsequently Kyiv officials will want "to move to peace talks". Russia launched 35 missiles of various types and 26 Shahed drones at Ukraine overnight

from Sunday to Monday, the Ukrainian air force said. Nine ballistic missiles, 13 cruise missiles and 20 drones were downed, it said. Residents of the capital hurried into the city's bomb shelters.

Oksana Argunova, an 18-year-old student at a Kyiv high school, said that she was still shaking after the nighttime scare.

"I woke up, my neighbour was shouting: Let's go down (to the shelter), there are big explosions. We all ran," Argunova told The Associated Press.

Monday was the first day back at school after the summer vacation. In Ukraine, the day involves ceremonies and rituals. Students of all ages and often teachers or parents wear traditional costumes. Celebrations include concerts and dances.

Small groups of children and parents gathered outside a damaged Kyiv school as firefighters put out flames and removed rubble.

One 39-year-old mother turned up at the school with her 7-year-old daughter, Sophia, unaware it had been hit. It was Sophia's first day at what for her was a new school, her mother said, after a frightening night. "Of course, the child was scared. We hid in the bathroom, where it was relatively safe," said the mother, who provided only her first name, Olena. "Today is one of the most important days of the year for millions of our Ukrainian children, families and teachers," Zelenskyy said on his Telegram channel. "Ukraine is doing everything to give children as many opportunities as possible. And all our schools, all higher education institutions that are working today are proof of the resilience of our people and the strength of Ukraine," he said. Both sides are battering each other with regular long-range drone and missile strikes, sometimes launching more than 100 weapons in aerial attacks that suggest they are still pouring resources into weapon production.

Pacific summit removes Taiwan reference after Chinese backlash

AP ■ NUKUALOFA

Turmoil over China's push for influence in the South Pacific has overshadowed the region's most important diplomatic summit after a Pacific island leader apparently pledged to erase an affirmation of Taiwan's involvement in the meeting from its closing statement, at Beijing's behest.

The Pacific Islands Forum — a group of 18 island nations, plus Australia and New Zealand — initially included a reassertion of the standing of self-governing Taiwan, which China claims as its own territory, in a public communique Friday outlining leaders' agreements after their weeklong annual meeting. But it was then removed on Saturday. Officials at the summit in Nuku'alofa, Tonga, did not explain why the statement had changed. But video posted by a news outlet late on Sunday appeared to show a Pacific leader assuring China's special envoy to the Pacific, Qian Bo, that the reference to Taiwan would be removed after Qian demanded it in remarks to reporters.

The document row highlights a fraught, largely private regional debate about China's

geopolitical pawns, analysts said. "The ability of the (forum) to pursue increasingly demanding regional agendas... and at the same time manage the geopolitical interests of external actors is clearly at risk," said Anna Powles, a professor at Massey University's Center for Defense and Security Studies. The public display of China's influence-wielding as it denounced the summit's men-



In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, Chinese President Xi Jinping, right, meets with President of Congo Felix Tshisekedi, at the Great Hall of the People, ahead of the China Africa Forum in Beijing, Monday.

AP/PTI

tion of Taiwan was "deeply troubling" and provoked questions about autonomy for the region's top diplomatic body, she added. In 2019, six Pacific nations recognized Taiwan as an independent democracy — a snub to Beijing — but Taipei's allies in the region have since dwindled to three.

The Pacific Islands Forum began in 1971 for leaders to coordinate responses to the issues confronting a remote, diverse region where individual nations hold little sway on the global stage. Its leaders, from low-lying islands imperiled by rising seas, were at the forefront of urging action on climate change.

Annual meetings were not widely attended until the Pacific Ocean in recent years emerged as the site of an intense geopolitical contest for influence over waters, resources and political power. As Beijing wooed Pacific leaders with loans, diplomacy and security agreements, Western alarm about its foothold in the region grew, prompting a rapid expansion of attendance of forum summits.

This year, Pacific leaders sought to channel the global clamor toward their preferred topic — the climate change havoc and

crises of debt, health and security, including fundraising for a Pacific-led climate and disaster resilience facility in Tonga — while warning major powers against overshadowing the summit with geopolitical squabbling. "We don't want them to fight in our backyard here. Take that elsewhere," Baron Waqa, the forum's secretary-general and a former president of Nauru, told reporters in July. For most of the five-day summit, an uneasy calm prevailed, at least in public, with superpowers making unusual overtures of cooperation to opponents. As the forum's partner nations presented their offerings to Pacific leaders on Wednesday, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell said the United States and China had pledged to work together to find areas of cooperation on Pacific projects.

In response, China's emissary, Qian, said Campbell's words were encouraging and that cooperation between Beijing and Washington was in the region's best interests — although those remarks were not recorded in a public version of his statement. "It's a different approach, that's for sure," said Mihai Sora, director of the Pacific Islands Program at the

Lowy Institute, an Australian think tank, adding that in the past the United States and China had each cast the other as the region's aggressor. "I remain deeply skeptical about what potential there would be for any credible cooperation." Still, it reflected an effort by superpowers to display new restraint.

Even the announcement of a regional policing program, which Australia will fund to apparently counter China's offers to equip and train Pacific police, did not provoke rancor from Beijing.

"China welcomes all parties to make concerted efforts for the development and prosperity of the Pacific Island countries," said China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian when asked about the initiative Wednesday.

Campbell was later recorded on a reporter's microphone candidly telling Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese that the United States had stepped aside in the Pacific policing matter to allow Australia to take the lead. At the summit's final news conference, Pacific nations underlined health care and climate initiatives as their central concerns for the year ahead.

B'desh interim govt to re-investigate 2009 BDR mutiny

PTI ■ DHAKA

Bangladesh interim government on Monday said it will "soon" start re-investigation and fair trial into the 2009 mutiny in the paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) that had killed 74 people, including 57 army officers serving in the force. Home and Agriculture Affairs Advisor to the interim government Lt Gen (ret.) M Jahangir Alam Chowdhury said that as a citizen and a former member of the military, he was committed to ensuring justice for the tragic event.

"The proper re-investigation and fair trial process into the BDR carnage will start soon," he told the media after a meeting with Swedish

Ambassador to Dhaka Reto Siegfried Renggli at his office here.

The mutiny started on February 25-26, 2009, when army officers refused to fulfill the demands made by the BDR jawans. The rebel soldiers staged the revolt at the BDR's Pikhana headquarters in Dhaka and it quickly spread to sector headquarters and regional units of the frontier force across the country.

The rebellion saw the paramilitary soldiers turn their guns to their commanders, shooting them from close ranges or hacking and torturing them to death, hiding their bodies in sewers and hurriedly dug graves and captivated and humiliating their frightened family members in

barracks. The mutiny left 74 people, including 57 army officers, killed.

Under a massive reconstruction campaign, the government renamed the mutiny-stained BDR as Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) in 2012, changing its logo, uniform, flag and monogram to free the force from the rebellion stigma.

Alam, who previously served as the (BGB) chief, said, "Not only as an adviser but as a former member of the army and a general citizen, I want a just trial of the BDR killings as well."

His comments came as demands for a re-investigation mounted particularly on social media, though a special three-judge High Court bench in 2017 upheld 139

BDR soldiers' death penalties after their trial in the lower court.

The lower court had given death sentences to 152 BDR members and two civilians, and life imprisonment to 158 others in the case, which is pending before the apex Appellate Division of the Supreme Court for a review.

The accused were tried on charges like masterminding the mutiny, torturing and killing their officers, looting their belongings or captivating their family members during the two-day rebellion. They also killed eight civilians, eight BDR soldiers, who were opposed to the revolt, and an army soldier apart from the 57 military officers.

Legal experts earlier called it

Bangladesh's biggest-ever criminal trial in which some 800 ex-paramilitary soldiers stood accused of killing 74 people.

The rebel soldiers staged the revolt for what they said was "deprivation", coinciding with the annual Darbar or meeting of ordinary soldiers with the top brasses.

The then BDR chief Maj Gen Shakil Ahmed was the first victim of the rebellion.

The mutiny occurred weeks after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League government came into power in the December 2008 elections. In 2012, Bangladesh concluded another phase of the trial of the rebellion with 11 paramilitary courts sentencing 6,011 rebel soldiers of 57 units to jail terms of up to seven years under the relatively lenient BDR Act.

Russian officials recover 22 bodies from far east helicopter crash

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russian emergency officials said on Monday they had recovered all 22 dead from a helicopter that crashed with tourists on board in Russia's Far East. The crash occurred in Kamchatka — a pristine peninsula with numerous volcanoes, known for its rugged beauty and rich wildlife. A Mi-8 helicopter with 19 passengers and three crew members on board took off close to the Vachkazhets volcano on Saturday and rescuers located the wreckage the following day. Russian state news agency RIA Novosti said, citing the Emergency Ministry, that it likely crashed due to poor visibility in bad weather conditions. The local branch of the Investigative Committee, Russia's top law enforcement body, said in a statement Monday that an investigation

has been launched into a possible pilot error or a technical malfunction.

The Mi-8 is a two-engine helicopter designed in the 1960s. It is widely used in Russia, where crashes have been frequent, as well as in neighbouring countries and many other nations. Russian media described the flight operator Vityaz-Aero as one of the largest carriers in the Kamchatka region. After a helicopter crash in 2021, in which eight people were killed, authorities had banned the company from transporting passengers pending an investigation into a possible violation of flight safety rules.

Vityaz-Aero is the biggest of several local carriers that fly tourists to the Kronotsky reserve, a top attraction that includes Russia's only geyser basin.

Storm causes floods, landslides in Philippines

AP ■ MANILA

A storm set off landslides and unleashed pounding rains that flooded many northern Philippine areas overnight into Monday, leaving at least 14 people dead and prompting authorities to suspend school classes and government work in the densely populated capital region. Tropical Storm Yagi slammed

into Casiguran town in the northeastern province of Aurora Monday afternoon and gained strength with sustained winds of 85 kilometers (53 miles) per hour and gusts of 105 kph (65 mph), according to the weather bureau.

The storm, locally called Enteng, gained speed and was moving northwestward at 20 kph (12 mph) toward the country's northernmost

provinces. It was forecast to strengthen further, possibly becoming a typhoon, before blowing away toward southern China in the next two days, the weather bureau said. At least 14 people died, mostly due to landslides and drownings, officials said.

A landslide hit two small shanties on a hillside in Antipolo city on Monday in Rizal province just to the west

of the capital, killing at least three people, including a pregnant woman.

Four other villagers drowned in swollen creeks, Antipolo's disaster-mitigation officer Enrilito Bernardo Jr. told The Associated Press by telephone.

"The creeks overflowed and a part of the hillside gave in because of the heavy rains," Bernardo said.

Expenditure violations lead to Presidential disqualification, says SL election commission

Colombo (PTI): Any candidate found to have violated campaign finance regulations in Sri Lanka's presidential election can face disqualification, the island nation's election commission said on Monday.

Defying expenditure limitations in the September 21 presidential poll can result in the disqualification of the candidate apart from him/her losing their civil rights for three years, Commissioner General of Elections Saman Sri Ratnayake told the media in the central district of Kandy. The presidential election has come under the campaign finance regulations for the first time since the new act was made into law in January last year.

On January 19, 2023, the Parliament of Sri Lanka passed the Regulation of Election Expenditure Bill, the first framework to regulate "expen-

diture incurred by candidates" in local, provincial, parliamentary, and presidential elections.

Each candidate contesting the presidential election this year is authorised to incur expenses not exceeding Rupees 109 per elector for election propaganda activities, totalling Rs 1,868,298,586 (approx USD 5 million) per candidate, a gazette notification said on August 16.

The parties must submit expenditure reports to the Elections Commission within 21 days of the declaration of the results. Ratnayake said voters have the right to lodge a police complaint and proceed to court if candidates are found to have violated the expenditure law.

As many as 38 candidates have been contesting the election with over 17.1 million registered voters eligible to elect a president for five years.

ORISSA SPONGE IRON & STEEL LIMITED
(Formerly Orissa Sponge Iron Limited)
(An ISO 9001 & 14001 Certified Company)
CIN: L27102OR19PLR0000819
Regd. Office: OSIL House, Gangadhar Meher Marg, Kili, Bhubaneswar - 751024
Corporate Office: A-201, First Floor, Okhla Industrial Area, Phase-1, New Delhi - 110 020
Site: P.O. Palaspanga, Dist. Keonjhar - 758 031, Odisha
E-Mail: corporate@orissasponge.com; Website: www.orissasponge.com; Tel: +91 11 43742000

NOTICE CONVENING 44TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, BOOK CLOSURE AND E-VOTING INFORMATION

In continuation to our newspaper advertisement dated August 31, 2024 Notice is hereby given that Forty-Fourth (44th) Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the members of Orissa Sponge Iron & Steel Limited (the "Company") will be held on Saturday, September 28, 2024, at 03:00 P.M. through Video Conferencing/other audio visual means (VCOAVM) only without physical presence of the members at the venue, in compliance with all the applicable provisions of the Companies Act, 2013 ("the Act") and the Rules made thereunder and the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015 read with General Circular No. 20/2020 dated 5th May, 2020 and 9/2023 dated 25th September, 2023 issued by Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) read with SEBI Circular dated 7th October, 2023 (collectively referred to as Circulars) to transact the business as set out in the Notice of the AGM. The registered office of the Company shall be the deemed venue of the Meeting. In terms of the said MCA Circulars and SEBI Circulars, the Notice of the 44th AGM along with the Annual Report 2023-24 including financial statements for the financial year 2023-24 along with Board's Report, Auditor's Report and other documents required to be attached thereto, have been sent on Monday, September 02, 2024 through electronic mode has sent only to those Members whose e-mail addresses are registered with the Company or Registrar & Share Transfer Agent (RTA) or Depository Participants (DP). The requirement of sending physical copies of the Notice of the AGM has been dispensed with under MCA Circulars and the SEBI Circular. However, in line with SEBI circular dated January 5, 2023, hard copy of AGM documents will be sent to those members who specifically request for the same. In respect to the receipt of hard copy of Annual Report for 2023-24, members are requested to drop an email to Corporate@orissasponge.com duly quoting their Folio No./ DP ID/ client ID. The Annual Report 2023-24 of the Company, inter-alia, contains the Notice of the 44th AGM is also available on the website of the Company at <https://orissasponge.com/docs/Notice%202024.pdf> and on the website of National Securities Depository Limited ("NSDL") at www.evoting.nsdl.com.

Further, Members may directly access the Annual Report for FY 2023-24 at the following link: <https://orissasponge.com/docs/Annual%20Report%202023-24.pdf>

Remote E-Voting and joining AGM through VCOAVM: In compliance with Section 108 of the Companies Act, 2013 read with Rule 20 of the Companies (Management and Administration) Rules, 2014, as amended from time to time, the Secretarial Standard on General Meetings (SS-2) issued by the Institute of Company Secretaries of India and Regulation 44 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, the Company is providing to its Members the facility of remote e-Voting before as well as during the AGM in respect of the business to be transacted at the AGM and for this purpose, the Company has appointed NSDL for facilitating voting through electronic means.

The detailed instructions for remote e-Voting and joining AGM are given in the Notice of the AGM. Members are requested to note the following:

- The remote e-Voting will commence from 09:00 A.M. (IST) on Wednesday, September 25, 2024 and ends at 05:00 P.M. (IST) on Friday, September 27, 2024. The remote e-Voting module shall be disabled thereafter by NSDL for voting.
- The voting rights of the Members shall be in proportion to their share of the paid-up capital of the Company as on Saturday, September 21, 2024 ("Cut-off date").
- The facility of remote e-Voting system shall also be made available during the AGM and the Members attending the Meeting, who have not already cast their vote by remote e-Voting shall be able to exercise their right during the Meeting. A person whose name is recorded in the Register of Members/ Register of Beneficial Owners as on the Cut-off date shall be entitled to avail the facility of remote e-Voting before/during the AGM.
- Any person who acquires shares of the Company and becomes a Member of the Company after dispatch of the Notice and holds shares as on the Cut-off date, may obtain the login-id and password for remote e-Voting by sending a request at evoting@nsdl.com, or may contact on toll free number 022-48867000 as provided by NSDL. A person who is not a member as on the Cut-off date should treat the Notice of the AGM for information purpose only.
- The notice of AGM inter-alia includes the process and manner of remote e-voting-voting and instructions for participation in the AGM.
- Members who have cast their vote by remote e-Voting prior to the meeting may also attend the meeting electronically, but shall not be entitled to vote again.
- The same login credentials for e-Voting, may also be used for attending the AGM through VCOAVM.
- The Company has appointed Mr. Neeraj Jain, Practising Company Secretary (Membership No. FCS 9599, COP No. 26163), Proprietor of M/s. Neeraj Jain & Associates, Company Secretaries, to act as the Scrutinizer for conducting the e-voting process in a fair and transparent manner. The Scrutinizer will submit his report to the Chairman / or a person as may be authorized by the Chairman, within 48 hours of the conclusion of the AGM. The voting results of the voting conducted for 44th AGM along with the Scrutinizer's Report will be made available on the website of the Company at www.orissasponge.com and on the website of NSDL at www.evoting.nsdl.com.
- Any person who acquires shares and become member of the Company after dispatch of notice and holding shares as on cut-off date i.e. Saturday, 21st September, 2024 may obtain login id and password by sending a request over email at evoting@nsdl.com or call on toll free no. 022-48867000 or send a request to Ms. Pallavi Mehta, Senior Manager at evoting@nsdl.com. Further, the shareholders may also write to Mr. Suraj Thakur, Company Secretary at email ID corporate@orissasponge.com. The members are requested to carefully read all the notes set out in the notice of 44th AGM and in particular, instructions for joining AGM through VCOAVM, manner of casting vote through remote e-voting.

BOOK CLOSURE: Notice is hereby given that pursuant to Section 91 of the Act and rules framed thereunder, the register of members and the Share Transfer Books of the Company will remain closed from 23rd September, 2024 to 28th September, 2024 (both days inclusive) for the purpose of holding 44th AGM.

For Orissa Sponge Iron and Steel Limited
Sd/-
Suraj Thakur
Company Secretary and Compliance Officer

Place: New Delhi
Date: 02.09.2024

verka
Har Din Da, Har Din Da

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Notice Inviting Tender

e/Sealed tenders are hereby invited for the purchase and supply of following items:-

Sr. No.	Name of Work/Item	Period/Tentative Qty
1.	For Verka Head office, Chandigarh Hiring of milkpowder plant having conversion capacity in the range of 2.00 to 4.00 LLPD for conversion of liquid milk into standard grade SMP and WMP for Verka Dairies.	Annual
2.	For Verka Sangrur Dairy Hiring of commercial insulated/ refrigerated vehicles for circulation of packed milk and fresh milk products.	1.7 Ton-03 No's 3.0 Ton-05 No's 4.0 Ton-04 No's
3.	For Verka Bathinda Dairy Notice inviting expression of interest to run the Verka Milk booths location in Bathinda city & Bathinda Army Cantt. Area:- i. Nai Basti. ii. Ajit Road, Street No.17 iii. Mehna Chowk iv. P.A.U Research Station v. Partab Nagar vi. Shopping Complex No.1 (Army Catt.) vii. Abdul Hamid Enclave (Army Cantt.) viii. Badlu Singh Enclave (Army Cantt.) ix. Gurnam Singh Enclave (Army Cantt.) x. Shopping Complex No.06 (Army Cantt.)	Three Year
4.	For Verka Jalandhar Dairy Outsourcing of Milk Booths at:- i. Civil Hospital, Phillaur. ii. Nagar Council, Kartarpur iii. Civil Hospital, Sultanpur Lodhi iv. MCC Lasara v. Civil Hospital Nakodar vi. Municipal Corp., Jalandhar vii. Civil Hospital Kapurthala viii. MCC Khat Kar Kalan ix. Shalimar Bagh Kapurthala x. Kemra Bagh Kapurthala xi. Lalpat Nagar, Backside Petrol Pump (Rose Park) Jalandhar xii. Rail Coah Factory, Kapurthala xiii. Jang E-Azadi, Kartarpur xiv. Adarsh Nagar Chaupatti, Jalandhar	Three Year
5.	For Verka Ferozepur Dairy Hiring of insulated road milk tanker for transportation of milk from BMC's to various Milk Chilling Centres/Milk Plants in Punjab etc. on rate contract. Cap.10000 Kg.	01 No.
6.	For Verka Ferozepur Dairy Hiring of:- a) Insulated road milk tankers for transportation of milk from:- i. MCC's to various Milk plants in Punjab or to any other destination etc. Capacity 15000 Kgs (Double Chamber). ii. BMC's to Verka Ferozepur Dairy (Malwal, Ghalu, Jalalabad, Zira) Cap. 10000 Kgs (Double Chamber). Cap. 5000 Kgs b) Mahindra Pickup/ Balero camper / Max Pickup etc, to lift the Cattlefeed to Mcc/Malwal, Jalalabad, Ghalu, Zira .	2 year/08 No's 2 year/ 03 No's 02 No's 01 year/02 No's

NOTE:
1. For complete details regarding above tender (NIT), please visit our website i.e. www.verka.coop & e Tendering portal i.e. eproc.punjab.gov.in.
2. Corrigendum, if any, will be uploaded on website only.

NA/12/25125/2023/37207 Dated CHD :- 9/2/2024
Dy. General Manager (Purchase)

FICCI CASCADE underlines need for global cooperation to curb smuggling for sustainable growth

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

To combat the menace of smuggling and counterfeiting that feed into terror financing and organised crime, FICCI Committee Against Smuggling and Counterfeiting Destroying the Economy (CASCADE) will be organising the 10th edition of MASCARADE (Movement Against Smuggling and Counterfeit Trade) this month in the national Capital.

MASCARADE is an international forum that hosts senior officials from prominent international organizations, including the World Customs Organization (WCO), World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), INTERPOL, among others, and representatives from several countries to provide insights against smuggling and illicit trade.

India is the fastest growing major economy in the world and has been the sole 'bright spot' in an otherwise sagging scenario of slowing global economy, but the silent menace of smuggling and



illicit trade threatens its ambition of becoming a \$5 Trillion economy. "Smuggling and counterfeiting threaten Indian industries, hampering job creation and impeding economic growth, apart from depriving the government of tax revenue and bleeding resources for enforcement and public health measures," said Anil Rajput, Chairman FICCI CASCADE which has been running an incessant campaign against the menace. It has roped in the international community and organisations to highlight and underline the hidden links between smuggling, counterfeiting and terrorism

and organised crime. The body has also been organising awareness programmes on strategies to counter smuggling, including inter-school competitions to educate the young or the to-be-consumers. MASCARADE ropes in experts from various fields such as cyber-law, artificial intelligence, intellectual property rights and e-commerce, along with senior officials from the Government of India to brainstorm on the detection of connections between smuggling, organized crime and terror financing. Meanwhile, the MASCARADE discussions on solutions would revolve

around consumer awareness, stricter enforcement and calibrated government policies in terms of taxation, trade deals etc. There also needs to be a multinational collaboration to address the issue comprehensively. "This collaborative effort could involve optimizing intelligence sharing, conducting joint investigations and enforcement actions, sharing best practices, establishing bilateral and multilateral agreements and enhancing mutual legal assistance, among other measures," said Rajput. Additionally, the

collaboration should leverage the power of new-age and emerging technologies, such as AI and machine learning, to identify and analyse patterns of illicit trade, thereby enhancing detection and enforcement capabilities. The 9th edition of MASCARADE last year was a two-day event organised on the theme- "Tackling Illicit Trade: Socio-Economic Perspectives and Way Forward". A 2022 FICCI CASCADE study titled 'Illicit Markets: A Threat to Our National Interests' revealed a staggering 163% increase in tax losses due to smuggling in India from 2010 to 2020. The government faced a substantial financial impact, with losses reaching ₹58,521 crore, compared to ₹22,230 crore, spanning crucial sectors such as alcoholic beverages, mobile phones, FMCG household and personal goods, FMCG-packaged foods, and tobacco products. These industries collectively suffered an astounding 340% surge in sales losses, escalating from ₹59,046 crores in 2010 to ₹2,60,094 crores in 2020, highlighting the gravity of the illicit trade issue.



Sensex, Nifty hit all time high

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty hit their fresh all-time closing high levels on Monday, tracking foreign fund inflows and a rally in the US markets. The US rate cut hopes and renewed foreign fund inflows are fuelling the recent rally in domestic equities, traders said. Surging for the 10th straight session, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 194.07 points or 0.24 per cent to settle at an all-time closing high of 82,559.84. During the day, it surged 359.51 points or 0.43 per cent to reach a new intra-day record peak of 82,725.28. The NSE Nifty climbed 42.80 points or 0.17 per cent to settle at a lifetime closing high of 25,278.70, taking its winning run to the 13th day in a row. During the day, it

soared 97.75 points or 0.38 per cent to hit a fresh all-time intra-day peak of 25,333.65. Among the 30 Sensex firms, Bajaj Finserv, Bajaj Finance, HCL Tech, IndusInd Bank, ITC, UltraTech Cement, Axis Bank and Infosys were the biggest gainers. On the other hand, Tata Motors, NTPC, Mahindra & Mahindra, Bharti Airtel, Larsen & Toubro and Power Grid were among the laggards. In Asian markets, Seoul and Tokyo settled in the positive territory, while Shanghai and Hong Kong ended lower. European markets were trading in the negative territory. The US markets ended higher on Friday. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 5,318.14 crore on Friday, according to exchange data. The market has entered a zone of steady

but mild up-move caused by the accumulation of quality large-caps. FIIs turning buyers last week mainly due to some large bulk deals also has improved sentiments in the market," said VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.14 per cent to USD 77.04 a barrel. Gross GST collections in August grew 10 per cent to about Rs 1.75 lakh crore, reflecting higher domestic consumption. On Friday, the BSE benchmark climbed 231.16 points or 0.28 per cent to settle at an all-time closing high of 82,365.77. In its best winning streak since its launch in 1996, the NSE Nifty soared 83.95 points or 0.33 per cent to hit a new lifetime closing high of 25,235.90.

Single filing with exchange to be reality very soon says SEBI chief

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Capital markets regulator Sebi Chief Madhabi Puri Buch on Monday said a single disclosure by listed companies on one stock exchange will soon be automatically uploaded on the other bourse. This comes after the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) recently proposed sweeping changes to disclosure as well as listing requirements by listed companies based on recommendations from a committee led by S K Mohanty, former whole-time member of Sebi. Speaking at a CII event, Sebi chairperson said, "a single filing with the exchange will be a reality very soon". As part of the proposed changes, a filing made on one exchange will automatically collate on the other exchange, she said.



A filing made on one exchange will automatically collate on the other exchange. Additionally, Buch said soon investors will be able to start SIP (Systematic Investment Plan) with as low as Rs 250 per month. "We are on the way of Rs 250 SIP becoming a reality," she said. Buch avoided commenting on Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs), but said there are regulations simplifying such entities. "If I utter a word on REITs, I

will be accused of conflict of interest," she added. The remarks came as US short-seller Hindenburg Research raised questions about a potential conflict of interest involving Buch and private equity major Blackstone. Her husband Dhaval Buch is a senior advisor with Blackstone, a major player in the REIT space. However, the couple refuted the allegations. Also, Hindenburg alleged that Sebi's recent amendments to

REIT regulations 2014 favoured a specific financial conglomerate, which Sebi denied. The Sebi chief highlighted plans to make IPO documents available in multiple languages to remove language barriers and increase investor awareness. Also, she emphasised on the importance of the inclusion. Additionally, she said that creating capital for the industry and wealth creation for the citizens of the country are two very important areas of the regulator. Buch stressed on the need of adoption of technology in markets, complexity of the market (right product for the right person) and co-creation with the industry. On co-creation, Buch said, "It is not because that a regulator is magnanimous, it's out of sheer necessity, which will actually serve the market".

Rupee falls seven paise against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee declined 7 paise to close at 83.92 (provisional) against the greenback on Monday on disappointing domestic macroeconomic data. However, positive domestic markets, wherein both the benchmark indices scaled lifetime high levels and foreign fund inflows cushioned the downside. Moreover, easing crude oil prices and weakness of the American currency in the overseas market supported the local unit and restricted further slide. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened 2 paise lower at 83.87 against the American currency. It rose to the intra-day high of 83.85 but pared gains and slipped to the day's low of 83.93 before settling at 83.92 (provisional) against the US dollar, registering a decline of 7 paise over its previous close. "Indian rupee depreciated by 7 paise on Monday on



positive US Dollar and disappointing domestic macroeconomic data," said Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas. India's manufacturing sector growth moderated in August as output and sales rose at slowest rates since January, while competitive pressures and inflation concerns hampered business confidence, a monthly survey said on Monday. The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) stood at 57.5 in August, below July's reading of 58.1.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a slight positive bias as domestic markets are trading at fresh record highs with fresh FII inflows. A weak tone in crude oil prices may also support the rupee. However, any recovery in the US Dollar may cap sharp upside," Choudhary added. Meanwhile, in the domestic equity markets, Sensex climbed 194.07 points to settle at a new all-time closing high of 82,559.84, while Nifty rose 42.80 points to hit its fresh record peak of 25,278.70. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, dipped marginally

by 0.06 per cent to 101.64. Brent crude, the international benchmark, fell 0.23 per cent to 76.75 in futures trade. On the domestic macroeconomic front, gross goods and services tax (GST) collections in August grew 10 per cent to about Rs 1.75 lakh crore on Sunday, reflecting higher domestic consumption. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net buyers in the capital markets on Friday, as they purchased shares worth Rs 5,318.14 crore, according to exchange data. Meanwhile, the Centre's fiscal deficit at the end of the first four months of the current fiscal year touched 17.2 per cent of the full-year target, according to data released by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA). India's forex reserves jumped USD 7,023 billion to touch a new high of USD 681.688 billion in the week ended August 23, according to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data released on Friday.



Maruti Suzuki cuts prices of selected models of Alto K10, S-Presso

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Maruti Suzuki India on Monday said it has reduced prices of select variants of entry-level models Alto K10 and S-Presso with immediate effect. The price of S-Presso LXI

Petrol has been reduced by Rs 2,000 and the price of Alto K10 VXi Petrol has been reduced by Rs 6,500, the auto major said in a regulatory filing. The Alto K10 range is priced from Rs 3.99 lakh and Rs 5.96 lakh while the S-Presso trims

are tagged between Rs 4.26 lakh and Rs 6.11 lakh (ex-showroom Delhi). In August, sales of the company's mini segment cars, comprising Alto and S-Presso, declined to 10,648 units last month as against 12,209 units a year ago.

Indian manufacturers see softer increases in new business: PMI

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's manufacturing sector growth moderated in August as output and sales rose at slowest rates since January, while competitive pressures and inflation concerns hampered business confidence, a monthly survey said on Monday. The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) stood at 57.5 in August, below July's reading of 58.1 but above its long-run average of 54.0, signalling a substantial improvement in operating conditions. In PMI parlance, a print above 50 means expansion, while a score below 50 denotes contraction. "The Indian manufacturing sector continued to expand in August, although the pace of expansion moderated slightly. New orders and output also mirrored the headline trend,



with some panellists citing fierce competition as a reason for slowdown," Pranjal Bhandari, Chief India Economist at HSBC, said. According to the survey, new business rose sharply through the second quarter of the fiscal year, but the pace of expansion eased to a seven-month low. New export orders, likewise, increased at the weakest pace

since the start of the 2024 calendar year. On the prices front, goods producers benefited from a moderation in cost pressures during August. "On a positive note, the rise in input costs slowed sharply. Manufacturers increased their raw material buying activity in order to build safety stocks. In line with input costs, the pace of output price inflation

also decelerated, but the deceleration was to a much smaller extent, thereby increasing margins for manufacturers," Bhandari added. The survey further noted that job creation softened midway through the second fiscal quarter as a few firms trimmed headcounts. Nevertheless, the overall rate of employment growth was

solid in the context of historical data. According to the survey, business confidence retreated and panellists were at their least optimistic level since April 2023. "Business outlook for the year ahead moderated slightly in August, driven by competitive pressures and inflation concerns," Bhandari said. Meanwhile, India's economic growth slowed to a 15-month low of 6.7 per cent in April-June 2024-25, mainly due to poor performance of the agriculture and services sectors, government data showed on Friday. The gross domestic product (GDP) expanded 8.2 per cent in the June quarter of 2023-24. The HSBC India Manufacturing PMI is compiled by S&P Global from responses to questionnaires sent to purchasing managers in a panel of around 400 manufacturers.

INBRIEF

VIT-AP UNIVERSITY, ARCT SIGN MOU
VJAYAWADA: The Vellore Institute of Technology-Andhra Pradesh University and Amara Raja Advanced Cell Technologies Private Limited sign a Memorandum of Understanding. The MoU signifies the start of a 5-year collaboration aimed at advancing research and innovation, facilitating knowledge transfer, and developing the workforce.

GM OF NFR INTERACTION WITH TRAIN RUNNING STAFF
NEW DELHI: Shri Chetan Kumar Shrivastava, General Manager of N. F. Railway today interacted with various categories of field officials at New Jalpaiguri under Katihar Division who plays an important role in safe train operations. General Manager in his speech asked all railway officials to be alert and ensure safety at any cost.

Godrej Properties wins bid for two housing plots in Gurugram costing ₹515 cr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Realty firm Godrej Properties has won bid for two residential plots in Gurugram costing Rs 515 crore and will develop luxury homes worth Rs 3,400 crore on these land parcels. In a regulatory filing on Monday, Godrej Properties informed that it has "emerged as the highest bidder and has secured the Letter of Intent to develop two group housing plots at premium locations in Gurugram through an e-auction conducted by the Haryana Shethri Vikas Pradhikaran (HSVP)". The combined bid value for

both plots is Rs 515 crore, it added. The plot measuring 3.6 acres is located in the prestigious Golf Course Road micro-market whereas the plot measuring 1.97 acres is strategically located in Sector 39 with proximity to NH 48. "The land parcels together will offer a development potential of over 1 million square feet and an estimated revenue potential of over Rs 3,400 crore comprising luxury residential apartments of varied configurations," Godrej Properties said. In the last fiscal, Godrej Properties Ltd had bought two prime parcels of 5.15



acres and 2.76 acres in Golf Course Road micro-market from HSVP at auction and plans to launch both these projects during this fiscal. The company also won

Delhi-NCR portfolio having a total estimated revenue potential in excess of USD 1 billion. Gaurav Pandey, MD & CEO, Godrej Properties, said, "We have witnessed strong demand for our projects in NCR market demonstrating huge trust and confidence which the customers have placed in us. I am very confident that these two new acquisitions will further strengthen our development portfolio in NCR as well as cater to strong demand for our products in this market." Godrej Properties is one of the leading real estate developers in the country.

It became the largest player last fiscal in terms of sales bookings. The company sold properties worth Rs 2250 crore in 2023-24 and has set a target of Rs 2750 crore for the current fiscal. In the first quarter of this fiscal also, Godrej Properties has retained its number one position in sales bookings by selling properties worth Rs 8637 crore. Godrej Properties is focusing on Delhi-NCR, Mumbai Metropolitan Region, Pune, Bengaluru and Hyderabad markets for group housing projects. It is also coming up with plotted developments in smaller cities.

Kathuniya bags second consecutive Paralympic silver in men's discus throw F-56 event



Shuttler Thulasimathi Murugesan makes Paralympics final with win over fellow Indian Manisha Ramadass

PTI ■ PARIS

Thulasimathi Murugesan outlasted compatriot Manisha Ramadass in an all-India affair to reach the women's singles SU5 badminton final at the Paralympics here. Murugesan, the top-seed from Tamil Nadu, defeated Ramadass 23-21, 21-17 in the semifinal played on Sunday night. "It is like a dream come true. There is happiness but I need to prepare for the final. I mentally prepared for this match. We have a healthy competition every time (Manisha). Strategy for final, we are playing after a long time, we will see. It has been a very hard journey for me," Murugesan said after the win. The SU5 category is for

athletes with impairment on the upper limbs, which could be in the playing or the non playing hand. Assured of at least a silver medal, the 22-year-old Murugesan will face a stiff test from China's Yang Qixia in the final on Monday. Only six athletes are competing the women's singles SU5 category at the Paris Paralympics. Having started at a tender age of seven, Murugesan has gone on to become an accomplished para athlete. She won three medals at the 2022 Para Asian Games including a gold in women's singles. She was born with a congenital deformity in her left hand resulting in the loss of her thumb finger. A major accident further limited the mobility of her left hand.



odds with the help of his mother Meena Devi, who learnt physiotherapy to help him regain muscle strength to walk again. His father has served in the Indian Army. Kathuniya is a commerce graduate from Delhi's prestigious Kirori Mal College. Besides two Paralympic silver medals, he has three world championship medals, including two silver and a bronze. On Monday, Kathuniya won't be satisfied with his performance given that he won the silver in Tokyo with a much better effort of 44.38m. Kathuniya's toughest competitor, the 45-year-old Dos Santos broke the Paralympic record twice on Monday, first registering 46.45m in his second attempt and then hurling the discus to 46.86m in his penultimate throw. Dos Santos is a three-time world championships gold-medallist, and has also held the Paralympic record of 45.59m in this category which he achieved in the last edition in Tokyo. Slovakia's Dusan Laczko finished fourth and last with a best effort of 41.20m.

PTI ■ PARIS

India's Yogesh Kathuniya clinched his second consecutive Paralympic silver medal in men's discus throw F-56 event with a season's best effort 42.22m at the ongoing Games here on Monday. The 27-year-old hurled the discus to the podium-clinching distance in his very first attempt to add to the silver he won in the Tokyo Paralympics three years ago. Brazil's Claudiney Batista dos Santos registered a hat-trick of Paralympic gold medals, creating a new Games record with an effort of 46.86m in his fifth attempt. Greece's Konstantinos Tzounis won the bronze with 41.32m. The F-56 classification covers limb deficiency, leg length difference, impaired muscle power and impaired range of movement. At the age of 9, Kathuniya developed the Guillain-Barre syndrome, a rare autoimmune condition which causes numbness, tingling and muscle weakness that can progress to paralysis. He was bound to the wheelchair during his childhood but overcame the

Para-athletes Preethi, Nishad win silver and bronze; shuttlers Suhas, Manisha assure medals

PTI ■ PARIS/CHATEAURoux

Para-athletes Nishad Kumar and Preethi Pal fetched a silver and bronze for India respectively while shuttler Suhas Yathiraj positioned himself for glory by reaching the summit clash for a second consecutive time at the Paris Paralympics here on Sunday. Another shuttler, Manisha Ramadass also assured India of a medal but star shooter Avani Lekhara missed out on repeating her medal-winning feat in her pet event. India ended the Day 4 of competitions at 27th spot in the rankings with seven medals (1 gold, 2 silver, 4 bronze). Preethi created history as she became the first Indian woman track and field athlete to win two medals at the Paralympics while Nishad Kumar clinched his second successive silver at the showpiece in the men's high jump T47 category. The 23-year-old Preethi, a farmer's daughter from Muzaffarnagar in Uttar Pradesh, bagged a bronze in the 200m T35 category with a personal best time of 30.01 seconds. She also won a bronze in the 100m T35 category on Friday. She faced significant physical challenges when she was born as

her lower body was plastered for six days after birth. Weak legs and an irregular leg posture made her prone to various diseases. Preethi also became only the second Indian woman to win two medals -- both bronze -- in a single Paralympics after shooter Avani Lekhara who won a gold and a bronze in Tokyo three years ago. T35 classification is meant for athletes who have coordination impairments such as hypertonina, ataxia and athetosis. Later in the day, the 24-year-old Nishad, who hails from Una in Himachal Pradesh, won India's third medal from para-athletics and seventh overall for the country in Paris Paralympics with a season's best effort of 2.04m. He lost his right hand in a grass-cutting machine when he was six-year-old. Nishad, who had also won a silver in Tokyo Paralympics three years ago with a jump of 2.06m, had a tough fight with world record holder and defending champion Townsend Roderick of the USA, who clinched the gold after clearing 2.12m. **STRONG SHOW BY SHUTTLERS:** Tokyo Games silver medallist Suhas is set to

become the first Indian shuttler to win back-to-back medals at the Paralympics after outplaying compatriot Sukant Kadam in straight games to reach the men's singles SL4 final. The 41-year-old Suhas, a 2007 batch IAS officer, beat Sukant 21-17, 21-12 to make another final at the global showpiece. Later, Nitesh Kumar also guaranteed a medal for himself in SL3 with a 21-16 21-12 victory over Japan's Daisuke Fujihara in the semifinal. Before Suhas sizzled, it was Manisha who set up an all-Indian women's singles SU5 semifinal with compatriot Thulasimathi Murugesan, assuring the country of at least a silver. The 19-year-old Manisha, who was born with Erb's palsy which affected her right arm, had no trouble in dispatching Japan's Mamiko Toyoda 21-13 21-16 in the quarterfinals. The second seeded Indian left-hander needed 30 minutes to down her unseeded rival. Erb's palsy is a nerve disorder in the shoulder and arm that results in weakness or loss of muscle function. In the last four, Manisha will meet top seed Thulasimathi, who had defeated Portugal's Beatriz Monteiro in group A on



Saturday. In the SU5 category, the players have impairment of the upper limbs. The impairment could be on the playing or non-playing hand. However, Mandeep Kaur and Palak Kohli were eliminated in the quarterfinals. **NO SUCCESS IN SHOOTING RANGE:** After the high of four medals in two days, there was disappointment in store for India in the shooting range with Lekhara failing to qualify for the final following a 11th-place finish in the mixed 10m air rifle prone (SH1) qualification in which Sidhartha Babu ended 28th. In the mixed 10m air rifle prone (SH2) qualification, Sriharsha Devaraddi Ramakrishna ended in 26th place with a total of 630.2. In the Paralympics mixed event, both men and women compete on the line against each other. Coming off her historic gold medal in the 10m air rifle standing SH1 event, Lekhara ended the competition with a total of 632.8. Lekhara's sequence of scores read 105.7, 106.0, 104.1, 106.0, 104.8, 106.2, while Sidhartha had scores of 104.6, 103.8, 105.7,

104.9, 103.6, 105.7. In SH1, athletes are able to hold their gun without difficulty and shoot from a standing or sitting position (in a wheelchair or chair). Sidhartha aggregated 628.3 across six series. Athletes classified in SH2 category are unable to hold their rifle independently, so they use a stand, but can aim by themselves and control the weapon when they shoot. Certain athletes may have an assistant to reload their gun. Only the top eight from qualification progress to the final. **RAKESH SHINES:** World No 1 archer Rakesh Kumar overcame a blip to defeat Ken Swagumilang of Indonesia in the shoot-off and enter his successive Paralympics quarterfinals in the compound men open category. Rakesh held his slender one-point lead and needed a 9-point to seal the issue in five ends. But he slipped with an 8-pointer red-ring, leaving both the archers locked at 144-144 after regulation five ends comprising 15 arrows. In the shoot-off, the 39-year-old veteran held his nerve to shoot a perfect 10, while Ken managed an 8.



Ukrainian badminton player chasing first Paralympic medal with an unexpected guest in the stands

AP ■ PARIS

Oksana Kozyrna's Paralympic debut was sure to have some unexpected moments, but the surprise she received might beat anything that could have happened on the court. The Ukrainian para badminton player was raised in an orphanage for disabled children in Dnipro, Ukraine, alongside teammate Oleksandr Chyrkov. Before her first singles match in the SL3 classification (standing with lower limb impairment), she met one of her former teachers from the orphanage - a reunion that brought back memories of learning the sport while also featuring all the emotions felt by Ukrainians as the war continues back home. "I didn't recognize her at first and then, when I recognized her, I just couldn't believe it," Kozyrna said of her teacher, Svitlana Shabalina, while

meeting with reporters Sunday evening. "It's like a dream." Shabalina had left the orphanage years earlier and recently emigrated to Sweden. Kozyrna fled Ukraine shortly after Russia attacked in 2022 and now lives with Chyrkov, two other Ukrainian athletes and their families in France, where she trained for the Paralympics. Kozyrna has been a key player in Ukrainian para badminton since winning silver at the European Championships in 2017. The 29-year-old also won Ukraine's first world para badminton championship in 2022. Shabalina didn't plan to see her former student. Chyrkov actually surprised Shabalina while training near where she lives in Sweden. The two had stayed in touch in the years after Chyrkov left the orphanage, and he invited Shabalina to watch him and Kozyrna compete. Two weeks

before the games began, Shabalina decided to go. "Ever since we began the war, we've tried to figure out how to do it in a proper way," Chyrkov said. "It really helped because a lot of Ukrainians came and supported." Kozyrna said the trio has spent the last few days discussing how life has changed since they left the orphanage. Kozyrna had not seen Shabalina since before the war began. Kozyrna had her first women's singles loss on Sunday, falling in straight sets to No. 1 seed Qonitah Ikhtiar Syakuroh of Indonesia. She will play Nigerian Mariam Bolaji for the bronze medal on Monday. "I did have favorite pupils, (and) they were one of them," Shabalina said about Kozyrna and Chyrkov. "I loved what I do and my kids, because I really think they are like my kids."

Suhas, Nitesh keep India on track for badminton gold in Paralympics

PTI ■ PARIS

Suhas Yathiraj and Nitesh Kumar Sunday inched closer to their maiden gold medal after progressing to the men's singles final in their respective categories at the Paris Paralympics here. While Suhas, a silver medallist from Tokyo Games, is set to become the first Indian shuttler to secure back-to-back medals at the Paralympics after outplaying compatriot Sukant Kadam 21-17, 21-12 in SL4, Nitesh guaranteed a medal for himself in SL3 with a 21-16 21-12 victory over Japan's Daisuke Fujihara in another semifinal. However, Indian shuttler Nithya Sre Sumathy Sivan lost her women's singles SH6 semifinals to China's Lin Shuangbao 13-21, 19-21. She will play for a bronze medal. The 41-year-old Suhas, a 2007 batch IAS officer, will now face France's Lucas Mazur, aiming to settle the score after losing to him in the Tokyo Paralympics final three years ago. "I still can't believe (back-to-back finals). I thank God. I tried my best and didn't let pressure get to me," Suhas said. Nitesh, who had lost his left leg after a train accident in 2009, will square off against Great Britain's Daniel Bethell in the summit clash. Bethell, who was the runner-up to Pramod Bhagat in the Tokyo Games, is a formidable opponent, setting the stage for an electrifying final on Monday. Sukant, meanwhile, will next play for the bronze medal. With his win, Nitesh, an IIT Mandi graduate, who won three medals,



including a singles silver at the Asian Para Games, ensured that India return with a medal from the SL3 category, after Pramod Bhagat clinched the gold when para badminton made its debut three years ago in Tokyo. "I have been performing consistently, so I had the self belief that I will make the finals and it feels amazing to actually do that because there is pressure and I had lost my mixed doubles but I didn't let it affect me," the 29-year-old said. A computer engineer, Suhas, who served as the District Magistrate of Gautam Buddha Nagar during the COVID-19 pandemic and was also the DM of Prayagraj, delivered a commanding performance to book his place in the final. Talking about Mazur, Suhas, who never let his ankle impairment hinder his passion for badminton, said: "We know each other very well. I defeated him in World championships this year and he would want to take revenge. "I lost to him in Tokyo but fortunately I have won Asian Para Games gold,

became world no 1. I don't want to put too much pressure on myself. I will just go out there and enjoy myself." In SL4, athletes compete while standing with less severe impairment than in SL3, which is for players, like Nitesh, who compete with more severe lower limb disabilities, requiring play on a half-width court. Nitesh's sports journey began with a passion for football in childhood. However, an accident in Visakhapatnam left him bedridden for months and resulted in permanent leg damage. Despite this, his interest in sports endured, particularly during his time at IIT-Mandi, where he developed a keen interest in badminton. He kept honing his skills along with studies and made his debut at the Nationals in Faridabad, winning a bronze while representing Haryana. The following year, he clinched a silver in singles and bronze in doubles at Bengaluru, establishing himself in para-badminton. His domestic success peaked at the 2020 Nationals, where he defeated

Pramod and Manoj Sarkar to win gold. Nitesh's win assured India its third medal from para badminton after Manisha Ramadass confirmed a podium after setting up a women's singles SU5 semifinals duel with compatriot Thulasimathi Murugesan. The 19-year-old Manisha, who was born with Erb's palsy which affected her right arm, had no trouble in dispatching Japan's Mamiko Toyoda 21-13 21-16 in the quarterfinals. Erb's palsy is a nerve disorder in the shoulder and arm that results in weakness or loss of muscle function. The second seeded Indian left-hander needed 30 minutes to down her unseeded rival. In the last four, Manisha will meet top seed Thulasimathi, who had defeated Portugal's Beatriz Monteiro in group A on Saturday. In SU5 category, the players have impairment of the upper limbs. The impairment could be on the playing or non-playing hand. India's medal hopes were further bolstered by Nithya Sivan Sumathy, who advanced to the women's singles SH6 semifinals with a 21-4, 21-7 victory over Poland's Oliwia Szmigiel. On Saturday, Sukant Kadam earned the right to take on compatriot Suhas Yathiraj in SL4 semifinals to assure the country its first medal in badminton from this edition of the Games. However, Mandeep Kaur and Palak Kohli were eliminated following contrasting defeats in their respective quarterfinals on Sunday. Competing in SL3 category, Mandeep hardly posed a challenge to Nigeria's third seed Bolaji Mariam Eniola, losing the contest 8-21 9-21 in 23 minutes.

Saina Nehwal reveals struggles with arthritis, to decide on retirement by end of year

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

As Indian shuttler and former Olympic bronze-medallist Saina Nehwal has revealed that she is battling arthritis and will have to decide on her future in badminton by the end of this year as the ailment has made it impossible for her to train the usual hours. The 34-year-old former world No.1, who was the first Indian shuttler to win an Olympic medal with her bronze in London 2012, participated in three editions of the Games before being hampered by injuries.

The 2010 and 2018 Commonwealth Games gold-medallist said she can no longer overlook the fact that her career is in its final leg. "The knee is not very good. I have arthritis. My cartilage has gone to a bad state. It is very difficult to push for eight-nine hours," Nehwal said on the House of Glory podcast hosted by shooting great Gagan Narang, who was India's chef-de-mission in the recent Paris Olympics.

"How will you challenge the best players in the world in such a state? I think I will have to accept it somewhere. Because two hours of training is not good enough to play with the highest level of players and get the desired results," she added.

Nehwal said she is still considering the impact retirement will have on her but admitted that she would eventually have to take a call. The trailblazing star, who is also a BJP member now, was last seen in action more than a year ago in the Singapore Open where she lost in the opening round.

"I am also thinking about it (retirement). It will be sad



because it is like a job that a normal person does. Obviously, a sports person's career is always a short one. I started at the age of 9. I will be 35 next year," she said. "I have also had a long career and I am very proud of that. I have broken my body to a great extent. I am happy with what I have done and given it all. (I) will assess how I feel by the end of this year," she added. The Padma Shri awardee said competing at the Olympics was

her childhood dream and she would look back at her run in the Games with pride. "But I have done a lot of hard work. I competed in three Olympics. I gave my 100 per cent in all of them. I can take pride in that and be happy about it," she said.

Nehwal also spoke about the pressure of expectations and said as a top athlete, she has faced it not just from observers of the game but also from near and dear ones.

"When you become a big player, your friends, family, coaches, sponsors, everyone wants you to perform. There are a lot of stakeholders involved," she said.

"With already a short career span, athletes cannot afford to take a four-year break and have to keep performing continuously. If you wish to become an international champion, you have to be strong to make tough decisions," she added.

Nagal pulls out of Davis Cup tie against Sweden due to back injury

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's top singles player Sumit Nagal on Monday pulled out of the upcoming Davis Cup tie against Sweden due to a back injury.

Nagal recently lost his first round singles contest to Tallon Griekspoor at the US Open. The indoor hard-court contest in Stockholm will be played on September 14-15. Reserve player Aryan Shah has been drafted into the main team after Nagal's withdrawal while Manas Dhame has been put on standby.

"I was really looking forward to representing in the upcoming Davis Cup tie against Sweden," Nagal wrote on social media.

"However, due to a back issue that's been bothering me for the past few weeks, doctors have advised me to rest for the next two weeks, leaving me without enough time to



prepare and compete in Sweden. This same issue also led to my withdrawal from the US Open doubles. "I'm deeply disappointed to be missing this tie, but I have to listen to my body to prevent the back from worsening, so that I can finish the season strong and healthy. Good luck to the Indian team - I'll be cheering for you all from home!" he added. Nagal reached a career-high ranking of 68 in July but has dropped to 82 in the latest rankings. India's highest-ranked singles player not being part of the Davis Cup tie is a big blow to the team. Former national champion Ashutosh Singh has been named as new coach of the national team.

Bopanna-Ebden ousted from US Open

PTI ■ NEW YORK

India's challenge in the mens doubles event of the US Open ended with the defeat of Rohan Bopanna and his Australian partner Matthew Ebden in the third round, here.

The second seeded Bopanna-Ebden pair lost 1-6 5-7 to the 16th seed Argentine combo of Maximo Gonzalez and Andres Molteni in 66 minutes on Sunday night.

Bopanna and Ebden had won the Australian Open early this year.

The 44-year-old Bopanna has already announced retirement from Davis Cup and it will be interesting to see if he will return to defend his Australian Open crown in January 2025.

Sumit Nagal had exited the mens singles with an opening round defeat while Yuki Bhambhani and N Sriram Balaji earlier lost in mens doubles at different stages of the tournament.



Bopanna's challenge is still alive in the mixed doubles event with Indonesian partner Aldila Sutjiadi and interestingly, he and Ebden will now be up against each other. Ebden and Czech Republic's Barbora Krejčíková are seeded fourth in the mixed doubles.

Juventus remains unbeaten following a 0-0 draw with visiting Roma in Serie A

AP ■ ROME

For Thiago Motta Juventus, it was a well-earned point that kept the Bianconeri unbeaten.

For Daniele De Rossi Roma, it was a step in the right direction after a difficult start to the season.

Juventus was held to a 0-0

draw at home by Roma in Serie A on Sunday with each side producing only one shot on goal.

Roma dominated the possession early on before Juventus grew more dangerous through Dusan Vlahovic.

De Rossi kept former Juventus forward Paulo Dybala on the bench at the start then sent the Argentina international, who recently turned down an offer from Saudi Arabia, on midway through the second half.

But Dybala produced little with both sides slowing down by then on a warm evening in Turin.

Juventus moved level on seven points with defending champion Inter Milan, Torino and Udinese in Motta's first season since coming over from Bologna.

Winless Roma, which was coming off a dispiriting defeat at home to Empoli, has two points in De Rossi's second campaign after replacing Jose Mourinho in January.

Having grown more offensive under De Rossi last season, Roma has produced only one goal in three matches this season.



Udinese beat promoted Como 1-0 with a first-half volley from Brenner. Como forward Patrick Cutrone missed a late penalty.

MALDINI FROM DISTANCE: Robin Gosens scored a late equalizer on debut for Fiorentina, which came back from two goals down for a 2-2 draw with

Alessandro Nesta's Monza.

Gosens, who was signed on loan from Union Berlin on deadline day, redirected in a corner with a looping header in stoppage time.

Monza went ahead with early goals from Milan Djuric and Daniel Maldini before Moise Kean pulled one back for Fiorentina before the break.

It was a third consecutive draw in Serie A for Fiorentina under new manager Raffaele Palladino, who previously coached Monza.

Fiorentina was coming off a penalty-shootout win over Puskas Akademia in the Conference League. Fiorentina also drew the first leg with Puskas, and the second leg was locked at 1-1 before the shootout.

Maldini's long-distance effort was his third goal from outside the box in 2024, tied for the joint lead in Serie A over that span with Dusan Vlahovic, Khvicha Kvaratskhelia, Alexis Saelemaekers and Michael Folornsho.

Hellas Verona beat Genoa 2-0 with goals from Jackson Tchatchoua and Casper Tengstedt for its second win in three matches after defeating Napoli 3-0 in its opener.

Kylian Mbappé ends scoring drought in Spanish league and scores 2 in Real Madrids win over Betis

AP ■ MADRID

With two goals in less than 10 minutes, Kylian Mbappé ended his scoring drought in the Spanish league, leading Real Madrid to a 2-0 win over Real Betis.

Madrid's biggest signing in years, Mbappé had scored once in the teams win over Atalanta in the UEFA Super Cup final last month, but he had yet to find the net in his previous three Spanish league matches.

"I was looking forward to scoring in this legendary stadium, the best in the world," Mbappé said. "But the most important thing was the victory."

He opened the scoring at the Santiago Bernabeu with a low left-footed shot from inside the area after a neat backheel pass by Federico Valverde in the 67th minute. Mbappe then added to the lead by converting a 75th-minute penalty kick after a foul on Vinicius Junior.

Madrid had drawn two of its first three games, with its lone victory coming against

Valladolid two rounds ago, also at the Bernabeu. This win moved the defending champion four points behind leader Barcelona, the only team to win all four matches to start the season.

"After the game against Las Palmas we knew that we had to win and we did it," Mbappé said. "It was a tough match, but we are Real Madrid and in the end we won it."

Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said there was never any pressure on Mbappé to end his drought in the league.

"For him it was important to score, but we evaluate the work of the team as a whole, which was better than in the previous match. It was a step forward."

The result kept Betis winless after three matches. Manuel Pellegrini's team had drawn its first two games.

Vitor Roque, a young Brazilian forward, was a second-half substitute for the Seville club where he is playing on loan from Madrid rival Barcelona.

Madrid has not conceded in its last five league games at



Bernabeu, going back to last season, a first for the club in the competition since 1996.

Madrid is unbeaten in 26 home games in the league, with 22 wins and four draws, the best run under Ancelotti.

The five points from three matches until now had meant Madrid's worst start in the league since 2019-20, when it won the competition.

SEVILLA CONTINUES TO STRUGGLE: Sevilla lost 2-0 at home to Girona to remain winless after four matches.

Iván Martín and Abel Ruiz scored a goal in each half for Girona, which has now won two in a row. It will play the Catalan derby against Barcelona in the next round.

Sevilla had drawn two of its first three matches, both on the road, with a loss to Villarreal at home.

OTHER RESULTS: Getafe, another team without a victory, drew 0-0 with Real Sociedad at home, while Las Palmas - also winless - lost 2-0 at Alaves. Osasuna won 3-2 against Celta Vigo, which had opened with two straight wins but now has lost two in a row.

Coco Gauff loses at the US Open to Emma Navarro

AP ■ NEW YORK

This is pretty much all anyone needs to know about defending champion Coco Gauff's 6-3, 4-6, 6-3 loss to Emma Navarro in the U.S. Opens fourth round: Gauff wound up with more double-faults, 19, than winners, 14.

It was the latest in a series of early-for-her exits in recent weeks, including bowing out in the third round at the Paris Olympics, then going 1-2 at hard-court tuneup events before arriving in New York.

"I feel like there's 70 other players in the draw that would love to have the summer that I had, even though it's (the) least, probably, (I've) done well during this time of the year," said the No. 3-seeded Gauff, who went 18-1 during the North American swing on hard courts 12 months ago, including the run to her first Grand Slam title. "So many people want to be in the fourth round. So many people want to make the Olympics.

So many people want to be flag bearer. Its perspective." The 20-year-old from Florida did fight her way back into the match with a four-game run in which she claimed 14 of 17 points and grabbed the second set. "Had a little bit of a lull there," said the 13th-seeded Navarro, an American who was 0-2 at the U.S. Open until this year, "but I was able to regroup."

After each of her past two contests in New York, Gauff headed back out onto the practice courts to work on her serve. That didn't help much on Sunday, when she tied her career high for double-faults: She also had 19 in a loss at the 2020 French Open. Against Navarro, Gauff delivered a trio of double-faults in four different games. Eleven of the double-faults came in the final set alone.

Gauff attributed her problems to a mix of issues with her mechanics - "I go down on my left side a lot on my serve, and it's something I'm aware

of, but it's tough in the moment to, I guess, try not to do it," she explained - and in her mind.

"Its sometimes more of an emotional, mental thing, because if I go out on the practice court right now, I would make, like, 30 serves in a row. I've done it before," Gauff said. "I think its also just kind of a mental hurdle that I have to get over when it comes. ... But I definitely want to look at other things, because I don't want to lose matches like this anymore."

She finished with a total of 60 unforced errors - a whopping 29 on her forehand side.

The 23-year-old Navarro, who also eliminated Gauff in the fourth round at Wimbledon in July, was far steadier on Sunday, although she still did have 35 unforced errors. "It was a little bit of a battle of will there for a bit. But proud of just my effort today," said Navarro, a U.S. Teammate of Gauff's at the Paris Games. "I was able to

Ending her title defense with 19 double faults



stick in there through some tough moments." This result follows a third-round loss by defending mens champion Novak Djokovic on Friday, meaning the lengthy droughts without anyone winning consecutive titles in New York will continue. The last woman to win at least two in a row was Serena Williams with three from 2012-14; the last man to do so was Roger

Federer with five from 2004-08. Frances Tiafoe eliminated No. 28 seed Alexei Popyrin, the player who stunned Djokovic, with a 6-4, 7-6 (3), 2-6, 6-3 victory on Sunday night. The No. 20 seed advanced to his third straight U.S. Open quarterfinal and will play No. 9 Grigor Dimitrov, who held off Andrey Rublev 6-3, 7-6 (3), 1-6, 3-6, 6-3 with 23-time

Grand Slam champion Williams watching and offering a thumbs-up at matches end.

Also moving on Sunday was No. 12 Taylor Fritz, who beat three-time Grand Slam finalist Casper Ruud 3-6, 6-4, 6-3, 6-2. Fritz's quarterfinal opponent will be 2020 U.S. Open runner-up Alexander Zverev, who got past Brandon Nakashima 3-6, 6-1, 6-2, 6-2.

"I'm at the point now where I'm still happy to make quarterfinals, but I wouldn't be happy with it ending here," said Fritz, who has yet to reach a Grand Slam semifinal. "I definitely am at the point where I really want more than that."

The Wimbledon win over Gauff earned Navarro, the 2021 NCAA singles champion for the University of Virginia, her first appearance in a major quarterfinal. Her second will come Tuesday in New York against No. 26 Paula Badosa, a 6-1, 6-2 winner against Wang

Yafan. The other womens match that day will be between No. 2 Aryna Sabalenka - she was last years runner-up to Gauff and beat Elise Mertens 6-2, 6-4 on Sunday - and either No. 7 Zheng Qinwen or No. 24

Donna Vekic. The quarterfinals will give Navarro another chance to play at Arthur Ashe Stadium in front of a big crowd. She never hit a ball in the place until Sunday - and felt rather at ease, anyway.

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