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THE UNFINISHED BATTLE

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RUPEE RISES TWO PAISE TO SETTLE
AT 83.95 AGAINST US DOLLAR

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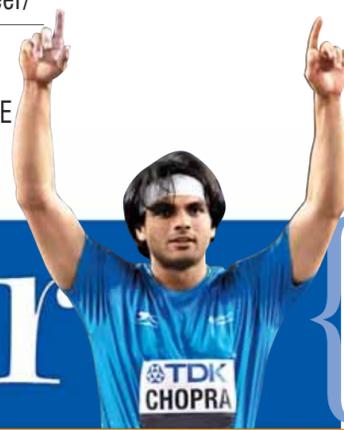
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NEERAJ CHOPRA
QUALIFIES FOR
DIAMOND LEAGUE
12 SPORTS

WHEN GOLDEN HOUR IS LOST IN A STUCK AMBULANCE

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

My father was in the ambulance, as he had just suffered a severe asthma attack. We were rushing to a hospital in South Delhi, hoping every second that we would make it in time. But as we got onto the main road, we realised we were trapped. The heavy rains in the morning had caused massive water-logging, and the traffic was completely stuck. The ambulance couldn't move an inch.

"Though, we eventually reached the hospital, the delay could have been fatal," said Ramesh Verma, echoing the helplessness of a family member stuck in a dire situation due to water-logging induced traffic snarls in the national capital.

This case is just one among many in the similar situation, highlighting systemic issues with emergency response and infrastructure, particularly during the monsoon season when water-logging is the common feature at various stretches. Despite the ongoing problems plaguing the city for years as climate change induced erratic weather plays truant, authorities continue to shift responsibility, leaving the situation unresolved year after year.

There have been cases of people dying in rain-related incidents as the capital has been witnessing heavy rainfall every other day, bringing it to a standstill with streets flooded, traffic in chaos and some commuters stranded on roads. Even upscale areas of Lutyens' Delhi, arterial lanes and key tunnels like the one at Pragati Maidan were closed due to flooding.

Clearly, this reflects a broader issue where emergency services are frequently hindered by inadequate infrastructure. Incidentally, while writing this, Sawati

Das Gupta, a commuter, called up in distress. "I am stuck up at a severe traffic snarl at Bharat Mandapam near Supreme Court due to water-logging, which is also blocking two ambulances.

"The vehicles with sirens blaring are honking consistently, but there's no space to move. I just can't imagine the distress of patients and their families inside the vehicle, trapped in gridlocked traffic. It's heart-wrenching. The pressure and fear of not knowing if they'll make it in time only add to their agony. The situation is further compounded by the fact that outside the vehicle, people seem unaware of the urgency," she said. Dasgupta asserted that such a situation is unacceptable and no one should have to endure this kind of helplessness.

"We need better emergency management and infrastructure to prevent such incidents," she strongly emphasised.

Drivers from Centralised Accident and Trauma Services (CATS), the State Government's medical emergency services too expressed their frustration, noting that their best strategy is to avoid known water-logged areas and stay updated via contacts and newspapers. Much also depends on the driving skill of the occupant behind the steering wheel, they agreed.

Jeetu (name changed), a CATS driver, emphasised the importance of the 'Golden Hour'—the critical first hour following an accident for improving survival chances.

The 'Golden Hour' principle, supported by WHO, stresses the importance of timely medical intervention to increase survival rates. Currently, traffic congestion often delays ambulances, with journeys that should take 15-20 minutes extending over an hour. The CATS vehicles are categorised into



patient transport ambulances, basic life-support ambulances, and advanced life-support ambulances.

He also shared that CATS is in the process of updating its fleet, with plans to add over 400 new vehicles equipped with advanced facilities. The Government has also taken the services of a private firm which is playing the vehicles as 'Rakshak.' Suraj (name changed), another driver with the CAT, lamented that while the population has increased, infrastructure improvements have lagged, putting critical patients at greater risk.

Requesting anonymity, a senior official from the CATS department maintained that the old fleets are on the way out. A tender has been passed in this regard and we are looking forward to adding the new vehicles equipped with improved and sophisticated facilities including at least three Oxygen cylinders. Soon there would be more than 400 vehicles.

The official admitted that roads are constructed without properly assessing actual needs, and issues like inadequate sewage management and insufficient desilting contribute to the chaos. Ultimately, it is the people and patients who suffer as a result.

Jeetu chipped in saying that most critical are especially those injured in road accidents, while on the way to hospitals. "I have been lucky that no patient has died in my ambulance due to heavy traffic on the road resulting in the ambulances getting stuck in traffic jams." Apart from patients of road mishaps, heart patients also needed to be rushed to hospitals in time.

However, on the brighter side, he said that people have been sensitised enough to give way to Ambulances.

According to the CAT drivers, if an ambulance gets a free lane it can cover the distance of 25 km within 15 to 20

minutes but due to traffic it generally takes more than an hour. If the water-logging issue is sorted, delay time in a patient reaching a hospital can be cut.

Delhi has several areas prone to waterlogging, including perennial hotspots like Minto Bridge, Pul Prahladpur Underpass, Jahangirpuri Metro Station Road, under Zakhira Flyover, Loni Road Roundabout, Karala Kanjhawala, and parts of the Ring Road, such as the area opposite WHO.

Other locations that frequently experience waterlogging include ITO, RK Puram, Janpath, Parliament Street, Karol Bagh, Nauroji Nagar, Pant Marg, and various spots in South Delhi, such as Mayur Vihar, Vasant Kunj, Greater Kailash, New Friends Colony, Saket, and Malviya Nagar.

Dr Jagdish Kaur from WILGA, an NGO working for the empowerment of women expressed displeasure at the situation, saying, "I can't recall a day when I haven't seen an ambulance struggling through our chaotic traffic, which is often anything but efficient.

"We often forget that the person in the ambulance could be someone we know or even ourselves. Imagine being in that emergency vehicle while someone in a car ignores the siren's urgent wail. That siren is actually a critical signal—a 'song of life or death.'

Each of us plays a role in ensuring that this siren leads to life, not death. Just as the ambulance driver, doctors, and nurses are responsible for responding to emergencies, we must also take responsibility for our actions on the road.

Also, the authorities instead of playing blame-games must do their part. They should responsibly ensure that the roads are free of water-logging and traffic jams," Dr Kaur summed up.

India's 1st silicon carbide facility in Odisha

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The groundbreaking ceremony for the India's first silicon carbide manufacturing facility, to be set up by the RIR Power Electronics Ltd, was held at the EMC Park, Infovalley, Bhubaneswar, on Friday. This development places India and Odisha at the forefront of the global power electronics market.

The event was graced by Chief Minister Mohan Majhi and high officials.

RIR's products are sold internationally, across North America, Europe and Asia for use in sectors such as railway, defence, power, trans-

portation, aerospace and sustainable energy.

The opening of this facility with an investment of INR 620 crore over three years marks a significant step for Odisha's entry into the power electronics industry. This will create over 500 jobs. It will enhance Bhubaneswar's industrial landscape.

Odisha has also received several other investment proposals in semiconductor and related fields for establishment of new facilities in Bhubaneswar. RIR is also in the process of tying up with IIT, Bhubaneswar for technical/research collaboration.

Jharpada jail ex-Super in Vigilance net

Raids conducted at 7 places

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

On the allegation of possession of disproportionate assets, the Vigilance on Friday conducted simultaneous raids at the office, residence and properties of Satyaprakash Swain, former Jail Superintendent of Jharpada jail in Bhubaneswar, currently posted as Superintendent, District Jail, Keonjhar.

Simultaneous house searches were conducted by 12 DSPs, 11 Inspectors SI/ASIs and supporting staffs on the strength of search warrants issued by Special Judge, Vigilance, Bhubaneswar.

The raids were conducted at seven places in Bhubaneswar and Bhadrak and Keonjhar districts:

1. Residential house at Govindprasad, Laxmisagar, Bhubaneswar.
2. Parental house at Siddhi Vihar, Khandagiri, Bhubaneswar.
3. Native village at Narsinghpur, Dhusuri, Bhadrak.
4. Government quarters occupied at Special jail Colony, Jharpada.
5. Government quarters of Jail Superintendent, Keonjhar inside jail campus, Keonjhar.
6. Office room at Keonjhar.
7. House of relative at Jharpada, Laxmisagar, Bhubaneswar.

The searches were in progress.



Assembly erupts over Ravenshaw name change row

Opposition protests police case against BJD MLA

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Assembly on Friday witnessed pandemonium over the proposed renaming of the Ravenshaw University.

The House was adjourned

twice as opposition BJD and Congress demanded withdrawal of a police case filed against a BJD MLA in connection with an incident in the university campus.

After the House reconvened, Congress members joined the BJD in protesting against the BJP government and demanded a statement from the government on the issue.

As the chaos continued, Speaker Surama Padhy adjourned the proceedings again until 4 pm.

The controversy arose during Zero Hour a day after police registered a case against three BJD leaders, including MLA Byomkesh Roy, based on a complaint by a student at the Malgodown police station.

The student accused Roy

and others of threatening him with weapons during a torch rally protesting the suggested renaming of Ravenshaw University. The proposal for the name change had been made by Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan during a visit to Cuttack on August 31.

In the Assembly, members from both opposition parties

disrupted proceedings, accusing the BJP government of suppressing opposition voices and describing the police action against Roy as "politically motivated" and an act of "vendetta politics".

MLA Roy stated that he attended the torch rally at the invitation of some students but did not enter the campus. He remained outside the university gate.

On the other hand, BJP MLA Irasish Acharya defended Dharmendra Pradhan's suggestion to rename the Ravenshaw University. He argued that Thomas Edward Ravenshaw should be held accountable for the deaths of millions during the Great Odisha Famine of 1866 as Ravenshaw went on a 70-day leave during the crisis instead of helping the people.

Heavy rains predicted in State till Sep 10

Low pressure likely to turn into depression

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Odisha is likely to experience heavy to very heavy rains till September 10 under the influence of a low-pressure area, which is expected to intensify into a depression over northwest Bay of Bengal and adjoining areas of Gangetic West Bengal, north Odisha and Bangladesh coasts around September 9, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Friday.

On Saturday, heavy rainfall is likely to continue at isolated places in Ganjam, Gajapati, Rayagada, Puri, Khordha, Koraput, Malkangiri and Nabarangpur districts. Thunderstorm with lightning is also likely at isolated places in Baleswar, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapada, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Puri, Khordha, Nayagarh, Ganjam, Gajapati, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Deogarh, Jharsuguda, Angul, Dhenkanal and Sambalpur.

On Sunday, heavy to very heavy rainfall (7 to 20 cm) might occur at isolated places in Sambalpur and Angul.

Heavy rainfall is also likely at isolated places in Kendrapada, Jagatsinghpur, Puri, Khordha, Cuttack, Nayagarh, Subarnapur, Boudh, Bargarh, Jharsuguda, Deogarh, Jajpur, Koraput, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur, Rayagada and Dhenkanal districts.

On Monday, heavy to very heavy rainfall might continue at isolated places in Sundargarh and Jharsuguda. Heavy rainfall is also likely at isolated places in Bargarh, Balangir, Nuapada, Sambalpur, Deogarh, Keonjhar, Subanrapur, Boudh, Kandhamal and Kalahandi districts, said the IMD.

4 IT firms' BBSR centres unveiled

Odisha committed to biz-friendly environ: CM

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

New operations centres of four leading companies in the IT Sector - Chubb Business Services, Integreon Managed Solutions, Bourntec Solutions, and SecudoSoft Technologies were inaugurated here on Friday, further strengthening

Odisha's position as a key destination for IT, professional services, and innovation.

The virtual event was graced by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, Minister for Electronics and IT Dr Mukesh Mahaling, Minister for Industries, Skill Development and Technical Education Sampad Chandra Swain and top officials.

Together, these four centres are expected to

create employment of over 2,000 persons in the State in the three years.

CM Majhi said, "The presence of these companies in Odisha is a testament to our State's commitment to fostering a business-friendly environment. From IT to manufacturing, from research and development to professional services, Odisha's diverse industrial landscape is expanding rapidly."

After Mamata Mohanta

BJD RS member Sujeet Kumar joins BJP

NALINI SAHU ■ BHUBANESWAR

Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Rajya Sabha member from Kalahandi district Sujeet Kumar on Friday resigned from his RS membership as well as from the BJD and minutes later joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

A few days ago, another BJD RS member, Mamata Mohanta of Mayurbhanj, had also resigned from her position and later joined the BJP. Subsequently, she was re-elected to

the RS on a BJP ticket.

Soon after Sujeet Kumar's resignation was accepted by Vice-President of India and Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar, BJD president Naveen Patnaik expelled the former from the party.

"Mr Sujeet Kumar has let down the party which sent him to Rajya Sabha and hopes and the aspirations of Kalahandi district," Naveen wrote in the expulsion letter.

Sujeet joined the BJP at the party's national headquarters in New Delhi. Senior BJP lead-



ers like Arun Singh, Dharmendra Pradhan, Bhartruhari Mahtab and Vijaypal Singh Tomar welcomed him to the party.

Sujeet said he was feeling suffocated in the BJD as a sec-

tion of its powerful leaders always forced him to follow their line.

"Some senior leaders of the BJD are involved in large-scale corruption and tender-fixing in Kalahandi district. Al-

though I drew the attention of the party's leadership to these irregularities, they did not pay any heed to it," said Sujeet.

Senior BJD leader Pramila Mallick said, "The BJP leaders

are trying to divide our party. However, they will not succeed in their attempts. They are threatening some of our leaders that the Enforcement Director (ED) and Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) will act against them if they do not join their party," alleged Mallick.

With the resignation of Sujeet Kumar and Mamata Mohanta, the BJD is now left with only seven members in the Upper House. Besides, the BJD has no representation in the Lok Sabha.

Fake police officer dupes woman of Rs 10L 'Scientist Sandip Mishra served motherland'

Case registered in Bhubaneswar

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Commissionerate Police have now taken Subhas Kanhar, who was recently arrested on the charges of impersonation, on remand. It is alleged that Subhas used to cheat people by introducing himself as a police officer. It has come to the fore that the fake police officer had cheated a woman of Rs 10 lakh on the pretext of marriage.

The matter came to light after the victim lodged a complaint in connection with the incident at the Khandagiri police station in Bhubaneswar.



Along with this case, two more cases have been registered against the fake police officer.

In the latest case, Subhas had developed intimacy with the victim who is a widow. He had

met her while travelling in a train to Brahmapur in 2021. Gradually, he built up a relationship and took away Rs 10 lakh from her on the pretext of marrying her. The Khandagiri police arrested Subhas on Sunday.

Bhubaneswar DCP Prateek Singh informed that a detailed investigation in connection with the cheating committed by the conman is underway.

"Subhas identified him as a police officer. He mostly used to target women and cheat money from them after keeping relationships. He had duped a victim to the tune of Rs 10 lakh. Khandagiri police has registered a case in this connection," said Singh.

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

International scientist Dr Sandip Mishra, who was associated with the Institute of Life Sciences (ILS) Bhubaneswar, had committed to serve his motherland and entire community, said senior leader Niranjan Patnaik paying his tributes on the twelfth day of Dr Mishra, who passed away on August 24.

Patnaik told that during his minister's tenure, the ILS was established by the State Government and he was its first chairman. Later, the institute was taken over by the Government of India. It's a matter of pride for Odisha which gave birth to Dr Mishra that



he invented medicines for breast cancer. His untimely death is a national loss.

Justice Satrugna Pujari described Sandip as a noble soul. Former ILS Director Dr Rabintran described Sandip's lab research as a miracle and said he would be remembered for his sincere works. 'Subartta' editor Pradyumna

Satpathy portrayed Sandip as a symbol of Odia pride who rejected the Western countries' offer and decided to work in his motherland in Odisha.

Among others, present ILS Director Dr Debashis Das, CPI national secretary Ramkrushna Panda and NCP Sharad Pawar State president

Bikram Swain spoke. Sandip's childhood friends Satya Mishra, Surya Dash and Soma Prusti recited Bhajans. Sandip's widow Subhalakshmi Mishra and son Sibansh Mishra, sister Suchishmita Mishra, Tapaswini Mishra, Rajalakshmi, Bhagyalakshmi and Debiprasad Prusti, among others, were present

6,700 panchayats to have model schools: CM

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi has promised to set up over 6,700 model schools in each panchayat of the State.

Addressing an event to celebrate the Teachers' Day, Majhi said there are over 6,700 panchayats in the State and his BJP government has decided to establish a model school in each panchayat to enhance the quality of education. All the expenses in this regard would be borne by the government.

He said the model schools would be named after Odisha's first Education Minister

Godabarisha Mishra.

Earlier, Majhi had criticised the previous Naveen Patnaik-led BJD government's smart schools under the 5T initiative terming it as a 'failure'.

"Students in 5T schools have no basic subject knowledge. The education system in the 5T schools is below standard. The students are found weak in subjects of lower classes. I had objected to the 5T school system when I was an MLA," Majhi said. This apart, Majhi promised that his government would also start a 'Madho Singh Haath Kharch Yojana', under which every tribal student would get Rs 5,000 per year.

Contractor Welfare Assn meets CM

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Members of the All Odisha Contractor Welfare Association (AOCWA), led by its president Jagadish Patra, met Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and invited him to the 2nd edition of the Odisha Infrastructure Conclave (OIC).

The event would be held on September 24 in Bhubaneswar.

The OIC stands as a crucial platform for discussing and deliberating the vital role infrastructure plays in driving the growth and development of the State. The aim is to highlight the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders within this critical sector and to cel-



brate the dedication, resilience and innovative spirit of those committed to nation-building.

This year's conclave will fo-

cus on fostering an ecosystem conducive to knowledge-sharing, skill development, capacity building, technology integration and collaborative

growth among all participants. Among others, AOCWA joint secretaries Rabi Naryan Mohapatra and Anshul Patel were present.

DigiYatra facility City airport gets contactless check-in

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The DigiYatra facility was formally introduced at the Biju Patnaik International Airport (BPIA), Bhubaneswar on Friday.

With the launch of this facility, the journey will be hassle-free and a passenger won't have to stand in queue for hours anymore. It would offer contactless entry to passengers.

Informing about the DigiYatra facility, BPIA Director Prasanna Pradhan, said, "To avail of the DigiYatra fa-

city, passengers have to download the DigiYatra App from Play Store. Then, they have to integrate Aadhaar credentials. On the day of travel, they have to upload the boarding pass. At the gate, they will easily access the airport using registered facial biometric data." If a passenger has the DigiYatra App, she/he can use it at the airport gate, security check and boarding gate without needing to carry travel documents. It will ensure contactless and seamless processing for passengers using their facial features uploaded.

Odisha Craft Odyssey 2024 Exhibition held

SUGYAN CHOUDHURY ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Craft Odyssey 2024 Exhibition was inaugurated at the Lailt Kala Akademi premises here by Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida on Thursday. Parida lauded the efforts of the organisers in creating such an occasion wherein the traditional craftsmanship of Odisha will be receiving a new shape and dimension through modern research and innovation by researchers and artists of the modern world.

The two-day Odisha Craft Odyssey is a multi-year initiative by the MGM Foundation in collaboration with the Bhubaneswar Experimental Art and Design Studio (BEADS).

Speaking to The Pioneer, Bhubaneswar Experimental Art and Design Studio's Steward Sandip Kumar Hota said they have decided to carry on



every year a programme on various indigenous arts and crafts of Odisha at various places of India to highlight the rich tradition of Orissan arts and crafts.

The residency programme has been conceptualised by noted curator Premjish Achari and in its maiden edition showcases the work of three resi-

dent artists collaborating with bell metal artisans of Balakati. The three eminent artists who had joined this maiden venture in Odisha are Disharee Mathur from Jaipur, Rajasthan, Kirti Kumari from Kanpur and Ritaban Ghosh from Kolkata.

Mathur said, "It has been very fascinating the way the sound (resonance of bell metal

production) of the craft gives it a beautiful shape and form". Kirti Kumari said, "It was indeed a very good learning experience for us all." Ritaban Ghosh said, "It was very interesting and ennobling an experience leaving us to think more and more on as to its integration with the modern technique."

Bird flu scare Poultry trucks prevented from entering WB

PNS ■ BALESWAR

Several chicken and egg-laden trucks were stranded near the Odisha border on Friday as the vehicles were not allowed entry into West Bengal due to the bird flu scare in several parts of Puri district.

Reports said that as many as 70 trucks were detained near Sunakhania of West Bengal by the local police and other enforcement agencies. No official statement was issued yet in this connection.

The drivers of stranded

trucks expressed resentment over the matter, pointing out that their goods are perishable.

One driver said his consignment was to be delivered in Assam and not West Bengal. Another driver claimed he came directly from Andhra Pradesh and did not collect any goods from Odisha. The stranded drivers said that they informed their owners about the crisis. They urged intervention of both the States' governments to end the crisis or else they would suffer huge losses.

Suffering due to officers' mistakes

No end to rush for Aadhaar card correction

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Despite Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida clarifying that there is no last date to apply for benefits under the Subhadra Yojana, people are thronging common service centres in huge numbers for correction in Aadhaar cards.

With many reports claiming PM Narendra Modi to release the first installment of the Subhadra scheme on his birthday on September 17, applicants have been seen queuing outside Post Offices and Mo Seva and Jana Seva Kendras as early as 3 am in the night.

The '50 corrections a day' policy in many correction centres has also added to the



misery of the people. Hundreds have to return home empty-handed after standing

in queue for the whole day. To get early appointments, people in several places are

even spotted spending the night outside the Seva Kendras. Women and chil-

dren are also sleeping outside the gates of the Post Offices and Seva Kendras.

"People have been standing in line since late at night 1 am. We have been running from pillar to post for the last three days. The problem is arising because people from all the panchayats depend on the Post Offices and Seva Kendras in the block. The administration should open the Seva Kendras in all panchayats. Lack of network connectivity is also affecting the Aadhaar corrections in panchayat offices," alleged a woman applicant.

Another applicant said, "It is the government officers who made mistakes in the names and spellings of our Aadhaar cards. Now, we have to suffer because of their mistakes."

Good news for Brahmapur PM likely to flag off 2nd Vande Bharat on Sep 15

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
In good news for residents of Brahmapur, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to flag off another Vande Bharat Express train on September 15.

If everything falls into place, this will be the second Vande Bharat train for Brahmapur, the Silk City of Odisha.

According to sources, Modi is expected to flag off three Vande Bharat trains, Tatanagar-Patna, Deogarh-Banaras, and Tatanagar-Brahmapur.

The Tatanagar-Brahmapur train will leave Tatanagar and reach Brahmapur via Rajkarsawan, Chaibasa,



Dangwaposi, Banshani, Kenujhar, Harschandrapur, Sukina Road, Jharkpura to Cuttack, Bhubaneswar and Khurda Road.

The distance from Tata Brahmapur is 586 km and the journey will take just six to eight hours for the semi-high-speed train. The timetable of the train will be released soon

by the Railway Board.

The Vande Bharat train expansion aims to boost connectivity and development across the key regions. The new train will reportedly run six days a week. Recently, Modi had flagged off three new Vande Bharat Express trains connecting Meerut-Lucknow, Madurai-Bengaluru, and Chennai-Nagercoil.

B.Ed not valid qualification for primary teachers

Rules Supreme Court

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In a significant judgment, the Supreme Court has reaffirmed that a Bachelor in Education (B.Ed.) is not a valid qualification for primary school teachers. The apex court reiterated that the essential qualification for primary school teachers' appointment is a Diploma in Elementary Education.

A Bench of the court comprising Justice Aniruddha Bose and Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia delivered the verdict while

maintaining its previous ruling in the case of Devesh Sharma Vs Union of India (2023 INSC 704).

The Bench opined that the fundamental right of primary education in India as guaranteed under Article 21A of the Indian Constitution as well as the Right to Education Act, 2009 does not just include 'free' and 'compulsory' education for children below 14 years of age but also includes 'quality' education to be imparted to the children.

So, the Supreme Court maintained that B.Ed holders would not be able to provide 'quality' education as they did

not pass the basic pedagogical threshold for teaching primary school students. However, the court directed that its decision would apply prospectively and protects the B.Ed teachers who were appointed before August 11, 2023.

Meanwhile, Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Majhi on the Teacher's Day in a major announcement said the government would recruit 16,010 junior teachers in the State within the next three weeks.

A total of 27,197 teachers would be recruited in the State, stated Majhi during the ongoing Budget Session of the State Assembly on Thursday.

Birla Tyres workers stage demo in Baleswar



As meeting to resolve their issues put off again

SIBDAS KUNDU ■ BALESWAR

The aggrieved workers of several unions of Birla Tyres staged a demonstration on Thursday in front of the Collector's office here after learning that a meeting scheduled for the day pertaining to their long pending issues was deferred due to some unknown reasons.

The agitators belonged to eight unions of Birla Tyres, besides stating that the earlier a meeting scheduled on August 29 couldn't be held due to some unknown reasons and was postponed to September 5. And again, the September 5 meeting was deferred to September 8 and the message regarding it was received only on Wednesday night. They charged that the meetings have been postponed intentionally for ulterior reasons.

The agitators got further enraged after they learnt from some sources that the meet-

ing couldn't be held due to the absence of the MP.

Notably, in the meeting, the district Collector, the management of the company which acquired Birla Tyres at Chhanpur, jointly by the Dalmia Bharat Refractories limited (DBRL) and Himadri Specialty Chemical limited (HISCL), the worker unions, District Labour Officer, Remuna MLA and Baleswar MP were to attend. The objective was to resolve the long pending issues, mainly the engagement of former workers of Birla Tyres and clearance of their dues including post-retirement dues and benefits etc. Birla Tyres was closed for several months from April 2021 owing to a financial crunch. Following the NCLT order, it was acquired by DBRL and HISCL. As per the order of NCLT, Kolkata the success resolution plan (SRP) was approved and according to the plan, the joint venture company would engage the previous workers who were with Birla Tyres. Besides, there were provisions to extend the previous workers with retirement benefits as per labour laws.

Protection of kids: NGO heads meet CM

PNS ■ RAYAGADA

A delegation led by Educo India country director, Guruprasad, and the PREM team, represented by its president Dr Jacob Thundiyil along with leaders of Odisha Adivasi Manch from Koraput, Rayagada, Kandhamal, Gajapati, Mayurbhanj and other districts coming under Schedule-V of Indian Constitution, met Chief Minister Mohan Majhi recently.

The delegation briefed the CM on Educo's work in India, with a special focus on its efforts to eradicate child labour and child marriage in Kandhamal district. The team submitted a list of demands, requesting the CM's intervention in directing the relevant ministries to take targeted actions for the protection and well-being of children and adolescents. Additionally, the delegation emphasised the importance of involving children in the governance processes in Odisha, highlighting how critical the participation is for their development.

The discussion also touched upon the need to promote awareness of child rights and child protection. The delega-



tion proposed strengthening the Child-Friendly Legislators' Forum, launched by Educo and PREM, to foster the development of child-friendly constituencies.

A key suggestion was to organise a series of orientation sessions for the MLAs on child rights and child care and protection mechanisms. These sessions would equip legislators with the necessary knowledge to better understand the situation of children and the laws and programmes related to their care and protection.

The CM acknowledged the importance of such a programme. He also emphasised the need for strong interventions for child protection in light of ongoing atrocities in various States and emphasised the role of the State and its institutions in safeguarding children. The meeting concluded with an assurance from the Chief Minister to provide all possible support under Educo and PREM in executing their programmes for the overall well-being of children.

No-holds-barred sand mining: R'kulya ecology under threat

As actions against mafias have been sporadic

KRISHNA CHANDRA PANDA ■ BRAHMAMPUR

For the first time, Pottalampur Ganda-the big natural water body on the Rushikulya river course, was found contaminated reportedly due to indiscriminate sand mining downstream of the river during the last two years facilitating intrusion of tidal waves, thereby making the water pollutant and unhygienic for day-to-day needs of both human and cattle population.

Such intrusion of tidal waves contaminated two intake wells located on either side of Sribana village leading to interruption of supply of drinking water to hundreds of villages covered by an inter-district mega drinking water project in the region.

Intellectuals and environment lovers have raised their concern over such state of affairs and demanded a thorough probe to unearth the



kingpins behind mining and transportation of sand from the Rushikulya and Bahuda rivers. The sand mafias even did not spare Rushikulya mouth and reportedly mined and transported huge sand worth crores of rupees during Covid-19 pandemic reportedly in connivance with some venal revenue and police officials.

Mining by the deployment of heavy excavator machineries at river-basin villages such as Hanspur, Badamadhapur, and Goba under Chhatrapur Block; Sribana, Kalyanpur under Ganjam block and Pandia Balia under Purushottampur block continues unabated lifting sand in the wee hours, posing a serious challenge to the environ-

ment and ecology of the rivers.

Sources informed that sand worth Rs 200 crore has been transported from Rushikulya alone to a neighbouring State, to some corporate bodies and to some real estate firms over last couple of years creating potential threat of overtopping of flood water near villages, like Hundata, Pandia, Balia, Goba, Baranga, Alladigaon, Barapalli, Hannapur, Karapada, Sirivana and Aliabad. Some lease holders and their associates are reportedly involved in the illegal lifting and smuggling from Allabad sand Ghat in Ganjam using 'Y' Form which came to light only a few months back. Some

show-piece action by Revenue and Police to detain sand mafias hardly changed the scenario and did not bring any tangible result.

According to reports, Kodala police had arrested a sand smuggling gang which lifted the minor mineral using forged Y Form (transit pass) in Ganjam district. Five sand-laden trucks were then seized by the police who arrested three members of the outfit. During interrogation, the drivers of the trucks said that the sand was lifted from the bank of Rushikulya river near Badamadhapur in Chhatrapur Tehsil.

Unless the Government and the district administration act swiftly to take stringent and exemplary action on a continued basis, it will lead to depletion of river bed, change the flow pattern inviting colossal loss to the valuable lives and properties, riparian flora and fauna, as well as drinking water, destroying irrigation infrastructure, besides affecting aquatic properties, said an environmentalist here.

Plaint filed with Vig against Naveen, Pandian

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Bhubaneswar-based advocate Biranchi Narayan Ray has lodged a complaint with the Vigilance police on September 3 against former Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and bureaucrat-turned politician VK Pandian.

Ray has accused Patnaik and Pandian of cheating, misappropriation, forgery and falsification of accounts and conspiracy to embezzle government money.

He alleged that the former Chief Minister and his then the then Principal Secretary misused their power and position and misappropriated government funds Besides, without passing the Budget, they declared

different kinds of attractive schemes worth crores of rupees to influence the voters for winning the general elections. By this, the State exchequer suffered huge losses.

The advocate also accused the duo of spending huge sums of money in construction of helipads, transporting people to public meetings, throwing feasts in which food and liquor were distributed to win over the voters.

Ray urged the Vigilance to register a case under the different sections of the new BNS law against the duo and conduct an impartial investigation into misuse and diversion of government funds, cheating people and making false promises.

Patnagarh's dragon fruits shipped to Dubai

Joint efforts of APEDA, Directorate of Horticulture, Dept of Agriculture, Palladium

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) and the Directorate of Horticulture with support from Palladium as the technical support unit (TSU) of the Promotion and Stabilisation of Farmer Producer

Organisations (PSFPO) project facilitated first ever export of dragon fruits from Patnagarh in Balangir district to Dubai.

Around 4 quintals of premium quality, organically grown dragon fruits were supplied to Dubai through the Bhubaneswar International Airport, on September 4.

Deputy Chief Minister KV Singh Deo, Principal Secretary Dr Arabinda K Padhee, Director of Horticulture Nikhil Pavan Kalyan, Regional Director of APEDA Sitakanta Mandal, Associate Director of Palladium Biswajit Behera, along with the team members of PSFPO, representatives

from the Airport Authority of India, World Trade Centre, and VeloExim flagged off the consignment at the airport.

The dragon fruits, known for their vibrant red flesh and superior size were meticulously cultivated using organic practices. Despite their quality, local market saturation had led to low prices-ranging from Rs 120 to 160 per kg. However, the export initiative has elevated the status of the fruit, fetching a price of Rs 250 to 260 per kg in the international market.

Deputy Chief Minister Singh Deo expressed his enthusiasm for the collaboration, highlighting its significant

impact on the State's agricultural exports.

He stated, "Organic dragon fruits have shown tremendous benefits for cancer patients and have also been effective in reducing blood pressure, managing sugar levels, and combating other diseases. I am optimistic that these fresh and organic products will reach every household, contributing to better health outcomes. Additionally, I look forward to expanding exports to South-east Asian countries where there is high demand. I am deeply grateful to APEDA, the Directorate of Horticulture, and Palladium India for making this export a reality."

Associate Director of Palladium Behera shared his thoughts on the successful export initiative, stating, "Palladium through its Market System Development (MSD) approach has been supporting FPOs to supply to the export markets by ensuring required quality control in place. Since the export journey began in May this year, we have facilitated FPOs to export products from several districts of Odisha to seven different countries across the globe. We are thrilled that fruit crops like dragon fruits, produced in Odisha, have now gained the recognition they deserve and are being sold with

around 100% incremental price value in the international market."

The achievement reflects the tireless efforts of Palladium India, which has been working closely with the Odisha Government to strengthen the farmers' ecosystem. The initiatives include upskilling farmers, enhancing supply chains, and facilitating market development. Notably, through collaboration with APEDA, they have successfully exported mangoes and vegetables in recent months. Future plans include expanding exports to new markets and initiating spice exports to the European Union.

Why still Unified Pension Scheme not acceptable

India, with its vast and diverse population, has always faced the challenge of ensuring social security for its workforce. One of the most contentious issues in this domain has been the transition from the Old Pension Scheme (OPS) to the National Pension Scheme (NPS), now more commonly referred to as the Unified Pension Scheme (UPS) to which the Central Cabinet approved on August 24. This shift has led to significant unrest among government employees, sparking numerous protests and struggle movements across the country.

The Old Pension Scheme was a defined benefit plan, which assured a fixed pension to government employees upon retirement. The pension was typically 50% of the last drawn salary, and the government bore the entire burden of funding these pensions. This scheme provided a sense of security to employees, ensuring that they had a stable income post-retirement.



BRUHASPATI SAMAL

ment of India introduced the National Pension Scheme as a move to reduce the pension burden. The NPS, which became mandatory for all government employees joining after January 1, 2004, was a defined contribution scheme. Under the NPS, both the employee and the government contribute 10% and 14% of the employee's salary, respectively, to the pension fund. The pension amount, upon retirement, depends on the accumulated corpus and the returns generated by the investments made during the

employee's service period. The NPS shifted the risk from the government to the employees, as the pension amount was no longer guaranteed. The OPS ensured that pensions were adjusted for inflation, which was not the case with the NPS. Employees feared that the NPS would not be able to keep up with the rising cost of living. The OPS was seen as a social security measure, ensuring that retired employees did not fall into poverty. The NPS, being market-linked, was perceived as lacking this crucial aspect of social security.

The transition from OPS to NPS sparked a series of protests and struggle movements across the country. Employees, particularly those in the public sector, were dissatisfied with the new scheme, as it did not offer the same level of security as the OPS.

But, ignoring the long pending demands of crores of government employees and pensioners across the nation to restore the Old Pension Scheme (OPS) and to scrap

out the NPS, the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved a new pension system in the name of Unified Pension Scheme (UPS) on August 24 guaranteeing an assured pension equivalent to 50% of the average basic pay drawn over the last 12 months prior to superannuation for a minimum qualifying service of 25 years which will be proportionate for lesser service period up to a minimum of 10 years of service, assured family pension equivalent to 60% of pension of the employee immediately before her/his demise and assured minimum pension of Rs10,000 per month on superannuation after minimum 10 years of service. On assured pension, assured family pension and assured minimum pension, dearness relief based on All India Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers (AICPI-IW) as in case of service employees will be there. Lump sum payment at superannuation in addition to gratuity will be given equivalent to 1/

10th of monthly emoluments (Pay + DA) as on the date of superannuation for every completed six months of service which will not reduce the quantum of assured pension.

As seen from the information disclosed so far by the government, while the OPS was non-contributory, UPS remains contributory like NPS, i.e. 10% from the employee's salary (Pay +DA) will be deducted every month. Under OPS, 50% of the last pay drawn or average of the last 12 months salary whichever is higher is given as pension. Instead, 50% of last 12 months average salary has been considered to fix the pension under UPS which may be suicidal in many cases. While a minimum service period of 20 years was required to get full pension, UPS goes for 25 years. UPS is silent about the 60% part-withdrawal allowed under NPS. As regards family pension, it was equivalent to the normal pension (50% of last pay drawn) till 67 years even if the pensioner dies before the age of 67.

Then it becomes 30%. But under OPS, the family pension is 30% (60% of 50%) from the beginning. In addition, there is no commutation facility and increase in pension under OPS as done under OPS at the age of 80, 85, 90, 95 and 100. Thus, it is a hybrid model of both the OPS and NPS.

Soon after the Press Release of UPS while negligible positive responses are there from those supporting the BJP led NDA Government, all the Central Trade Unions, Service Unions / Associations / Federations / Confederations involved in the pension movement for last 20 years have condemned the arbitrary action of the government and released Press Notes demanding restoration of OPS. Though the Union Minister for Labour and Employment held a round table meeting with ten Central Trade Unions (CTUs) on August 28 to discuss on Employment Linked Incentive (ELI) schemes recently announced in the Union Budget, nothing was discussed on

UPS except submission of a detailed memorandum by the CTUs to the Minister on the UPS demanding to restore the non-contributory Old Pension Scheme, to convene the Indian Labour Conference and to reconsider implementation of the four Labour Codes.

The struggle movements of employees in India against the shift of OPS to UPS reflect the deep-seated concerns about social security and financial stability after retirement. The success of the proposed UPS depends on its implementation and acceptance by the workforce. The government will need to strike a delicate balance between fiscal responsibility and social security to ensure that the interests of both the State and its employees are protected.

(General secretary, Confederation of Central Govt. Employees and Workers, Odisha State Coordination Committee, Bhubaneswar; Email: samalbruhaspati@gmail.com; Mobile / WhatsApp No. 9437022669)

Former BJD Rajya Sabha MP Sujeet Kumar joins BJP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Former BJD Rajya Sabha MP Sujeet Kumar joined the BJP in the presence of senior party leaders on Friday. The move came after the BJD expelled Kumar for anti-party activities earlier in the day. He subsequently resigned his Rajya Sabha membership.

Kumar joined the BJP in the presence of Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, BJP National General Secretary Arun Singh, the party's Odisha in-charge Vijaypal Singh Tomar, MP Bhartruhari Mahtab and other leaders. The BJP's chief spokesperson Anil Baluni, a Rajya Sabha member, was also present.

Addressing a Joint Press Conference at the BJP headquarters here, Kumar said he joined the saffron party as he was impressed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's work and his vision for making India a developed country by 2047 and Odisha a developed state by 2036.

"For me, country is first and foremost. India first has always been my philosophy. I lived abroad for many years and worked for organisations such as the UN (United



BJP National General Secretary Arun Singh greets former BJD Rajya Sabha Member Sujeet Kumar as the latter joins BJP in the presence of Union Minister and party leader Dharmendra Pradhan, in New Delhi, Friday, Sept. 6, 2024. The BJD on Friday expelled Kumar, who later quit his House membership, for anti-party activities. Photo by: RANJAN DIMRI/THE PIONEER

Nations) and the World Economic Forum. I returned to India in 2011 to contribute to the development of my country," he said. Kumar said he felt Odisha's Kalahandi district did not develop as it could have due to the "kind of corruption and bad policy" prevalent there. "Several BJD leaders, including those from the district, were involved. I tried to bring this to the notice of the BJD leadership several times. But when I saw that nothing was happening, I had to take this decision (to join the

BJP)," he said. "I resigned from the Rajya Sabha membership today. I was elected to Rajya Sabha as a BJD candidate in 2020. I want to thank BJD president and former Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik for sending me to the Rajya Sabha," he added.

Expressing his happiness at joining the BJP, Kumar thanked party chief J P Nadda, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and other leaders. "I have been an ardent admirer of Prime Minister Modi. I am glad that I am joining the

party to which he belongs... My goal is to further strengthen the BJP and contribute to the country's progress," he added. Welcoming Kumar into the BJP fold, Union Minister Pradhan said, "I am confident that he will contribute to fulfilling Prime Minister Narendra Modi's resolve of making India a developed country."

Baluni described Kumar as a very "important personality" and expressed happiness over his decision to join the BJP. "He had been a BJD Rajya Sabha member since 2020. He resigned from the Rajya Sabha today," he said.

The BJD on Friday expelled Kumar with immediate effect for anti-party activities. "He has let down the party, which sent him to the Rajya Sabha and the hopes and aspirations of the people of Kalahandi district," BJD chief Naveen Patnaik said in an order. In a social media post, the Vice-President's secretariat said Jagdeep Dhankhar, who is also the Rajya Sabha Chairperson, had accepted Kumar's resignation from the Council of States (Rajya Sabha) with immediate effect, finding the same in conformity with Article 101 3(b) of the Constitution.

Amidst global turmoil, India needs stable Government and capable leadership: Naqvi



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Senior BJP leader Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi on Friday said amidst the ongoing global turmoil, India or any other democracy needs a stable Government and capable leadership which can play the role of a "trouble shooter" and be a "flag bearer" of socio-economic and cultural empowerment.

Addressing the "Asian Brand and Leadership Conclave 2024" organised in Haryana's Surajkund, Naqvi also said artificial intelligence does not create a "perfect leader but a proxy reader". Technology is complementary and not a compulsion to confine capability and confidence, he said.

Naqvi said that a leadership emerges after being tested in the "furnace of struggle". "Our country is a witness to numerous leaders born from struggle such as Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Ambedkar, Deendayal Upadhyaya, Ram Manohar Lohia, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Sardar Patel, Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, Jai Prakash Narayan and Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who not only led the country but also planted the saplings of new leadership," he said.

Naqvi said that amidst the ongoing global turmoil, India or any other democracy needs a stable Government and capable leadership which can become a "trouble shooter" and the "flag bearer" of socio-economic and cultural empowerment.

He said that the most worrying situation in any democracy is when leadership emerges from "four walls of palaces" instead of "chaurahas (crossroads) and chaupals (village meeting places)".

Naqvi said he is happy that many effective and capable leaders are emerging amid problems and struggles in many democratic countries of the world, including India. "A few days ago, I read about a 34-year-old Democratic woman MP from America, Ocasio Cortez, whose short political journey is an example of crisis and struggles and success."

Her father died of cancer while working in a small job, her mother worked as a cleaner in people's houses to earn a living; she studied through school loan and worked as a waitress for a living. American MP Cortez, who had a challenging life, is a living example of turning struggle into resolve and resolve into success," he said. Senior JD(U) leader K C Tyagi, veteran actor Kabir Bedi, BRICS CCI Vice Chairman Sameep Shastri, BJP Maharashtra spokesperson Sagar Pandey, among others, were present at the event.



Envoys of five nations present credentials to President Murmu

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu on Friday received credentials from envoys of five nations including Israel and Italy at the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Those who presented their credentials were Anthony Makabo, High Commissioner of Solomon Islands, Kane Amandus, High Commissioner of the Republic of Nauru, Antonio Enrico Bartoli, Ambassador of the Republic of Italy, Benedikt Hoskuldsson, Ambassador of Iceland and Reuven Azar, Ambassador of the State of Israel, the President's office said in a statement.

Centre extends assistance to Andhra, Telangana for flood relief, rescue

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has been extending all the requisite and timely assistance to Andhra Pradesh and Telangana for flood relief and rescue efforts and an inter-ministerial central team will soon visit the affected areas in both the States, a senior officer of the Union Home Ministry said on Friday. The inter-ministerial team will make an on-the-spot assessment of the damage, the officer added.

Additional Secretary in the home ministry Sanjeev Kumar Jindal said 26 teams of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), eight helicopters of the Indian Air Force (IAF), three helicopters and one Dornier aircraft of the Indian Navy have been mobilised in Andhra Pradesh for rescue and relief operations. Seven teams of the NDRF, two helicopters of the IAF have been also mobilised in Telangana, he added.

"The central government has been extending all the requisite and timely assistance to the state governments of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana in the relief and rescue efforts," Jindal said in a statement. He said on the night of September 1, when flood affected many areas, following



a directive of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, additional NDRF teams and IAF helicopters were mobilised to assist the state governments in relief and rescue efforts. "On the directions of the home minister, a central team of experts has been deputed for Vijaywada (Andhra Pradesh) to make an on-the-spot assessment of flood management, reservoir management, issues of dam safety and making recommendations for immediate relief from the flood," Jindal said.

The NDRF teams, so far, have rescued 350 people and evacuated about 15,000 others in Andhra Pradesh and have rescued 68 people and evacuated about 3,200 others in Telangana. The additional secretary said the inter-ministerial central team has already been consti-

tuted and it will visit the flood-affected areas in both the States shortly for making an on-the-spot assessment of the damage. The central team will make its recommendations to the home ministry for additional financial assistance from the National Disaster Response Fund.

The IAF and Navy helicopters have carried out 65 sorties and around 71,000 kilograms of food and relief material have been dropped for affected population in Andhra Pradesh. The director general of the NDRF also visited Andhra Pradesh on September 2-3 to supervise rescue and relief operations, the statement said. The rains and floods affected several districts in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana since weekend while the deluge has claimed 32 lives so far in Andhra Pradesh.

India, Maldives defence dialogue focuses on Indian Ocean, defence projects

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and the Maldives on Friday held a fresh round of "productive" defence dialogue with a focus on the situation in the Indian Ocean and ways to expedite implementation of ongoing defence projects.

The defence dialogue in Delhi took place nearly a month after External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar paid a three-day visit to the Maldives, in the first high-level trip from New Delhi after the island nation's pro-China president Mohamed Muizzu assumed office. "The entire range of talks were productive which will advance shared interests of both the nations in near future and bring stability and prosperity in the Indian Ocean Region," the defence ministry said on the defence dialogue.

The ties between India and the Maldives came under severe strain since Muizzu, known for his pro-China leanings, took charge of the top office last November.

Within hours of his oath, he had demanded the withdrawal of Indian military personnel from his country. Subsequently, the Indian military personnel were replaced by civilians. The defence ministry said the fifth round of defence dia-



logue provided both sides with an opportunity to discuss matters related to bilateral defence cooperation. "This, inter alia, included expediting the implementation of various ongoing defence cooperation projects," it said. India is implementing various projects in the Maldives. "The two sides also deliberated on a few other areas of common interest such as high-level exchanges and capability development projects," the ministry said. "The aspects of participation in forthcoming bilateral military exercises were also discussed," it said. The Indian delegation at the talks was led by Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane. The Maldivian delegation was headed by Chief of Defence Force of the Maldives National Defence Force General Ibrahim Hilmy. The Maldives is one of India's key maritime neighbours in the Indian Ocean Region and the overall bilateral ties including in areas of defence and security witnessed an upward trajectory under the previous government in Male.

Parliament's Public Accounts Committee to review performance of regulatory bodies

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Amid a political storm over allegations of conflict of interest against Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) Chairperson Madhabi Buch, the Parliament's Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has decided to review the performance of regulatory bodies established by Acts of Parliament.

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) Chairman K C Venugopal said the Committee will take a decision on summoning Buch for examination of allegations against her.

"Rest of the things, the Committee has to take a decision," Venugopal said to questions on summoning the SEBI Chairperson before the PAC. He said members suggested various subjects, including the performance review of regulators established by the Acts of Parliament.

"Members suggested these things and we included that (in the agenda)," Venugopal said. Among the suo-moto subjects selected by the Committee are performance review of regulatory bodies established by Acts of Parliament, reforms in banking and insurance sector, review of implementation of centrally sponsored welfare schemes, policy measures



underway for transition in the energy sector and levy and regulation of fees, tariffs, user charges on public infrastructure and other public utilities. The PAC has selected 161 subjects for examination during its tenure, in addition to the pending matters before the Committee from previous year. Buch is facing allegations of conflict of interest over the SEBI investigation into the Hindenburg Research claims against the Adani Group. The Congress has questioned payments made to Buch made by the ICICI Bank, her former employer, after she became a whole time member of SEBI, and sought an independent probe into the matter. The PAC will hold its next meeting on September 10 when representatives of the Jal Shakti Ministry will brief the panel on the 'Performance Audit on National Rural Drinking Water Programme (Jal Jeevan Mission)' based on a CAG report.

The PAC will also audit "fees, tariffs, user charges and so on" levied at public infrastructure such as airports. Currently, seven Indian airports are managed by the Adani Group. The PAC is responsible for auditing the revenue and expenditure of the Government. The other subjects include review of the performance audit on construction of border roads along the India-China border by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) and cross-subsidisation of passengers and other coaching services by the Railways. Meanwhile, leveling more conflict of interest allegations against SEBI Chairperson Madhabi Buch, the Congress on Friday claimed that she received rental income from an entity affiliated with a company that the Capital Markets regulator was investigating for various cases, including that of insider trading.

U-Win to be launched for permanent digital record of vaccination, medicines

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Online vaccine management portal U-Win will be launched later this month to maintain a permanent digital record of vaccination and medicines of more than three crore pregnant women and almost 2.7 crore children born annually, Union Health Secretary Apurva Chandra said on Friday.

The U-Win platform, a replication of the COVID-19 vaccine management system CO-WIN, is being run in a pilot mode in all States and Union territories except for West Bengal and captures every vaccination event of all pregnant women and children under the Universal Immunization Programme (UIP). Speaking at the national conference on "Universal Access to Healthcare: Digital Solutions" held here, Chandra said that one of the goals of the nation-

al digital mission is to increase the reach of healthcare services and reduce the disparity between rural and urban areas. The health secretary highlighted the success of the Co-WIN and Aarogya Setu apps in helping to deliver more than 220 crore vaccinations across the country.

He stated that the Union government wants to replicate the same model through its flagship scheme Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission. Chandra also highlighted that there are already many portals operating across different segments like telemedicine, TeleManas and eRaktKosh, and the effort is to combine them in a single portal. He also informed about the upcoming launch of the U-Win portal later this month which will keep a permanent digital record of vaccination and medicines of more than three crore pregnant women and mothers and almost 2.7 crore children born annually. Dr V K Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog, who inaugurated the conference, highlighted that transformative changes are taking place across the health sector in India.

Fight against Multi-Drug-Resistant TB gets boost with Centre's nod for BPaLM regimen

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India's fight against Multi-Drug-Resistant Tuberculosis (MDR-TB) has received new ammunition with the Centre giving nod for the shorter and safer BPaLM regimen (bedaquiline, pretomanid, linezolid, and optionally moxifloxacin), with a target to eliminate the deadly disease by 2025, five years ahead of the global goal. While traditional MDR-TB regimen can last up to 20 months with severe side effects, BPaLM course can cure the drug-resistant TB in just six months with a high treatment success rate," said an official from the Union Health Ministry.

The regimen is a key component of the National TB Elimination Program (NTEP). Pretomanid has earlier been approved and licensed for use in India by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO). The BPaLM regimen has been proven to be safe, more effective and a quicker treatment option than the previous MDR-TB treatment procedure, a senior official from the Ministry said. "India's 75,000 drug-resistant



TB patients will now be able to avail the benefit of this shorter regimen," the official added. The Department of Health and Family Welfare, in consultation with the Department of Health Research ensured the validation of this new TB treatment regimen that witnessed a thorough review of evidence by in-country subject experts. A country-wide time-bound rollout plan of the BPaLM regimen is being prepared by the Central TB Division of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in consultation with States and UTs.

According to Soumya Swaminathan, principal advisor, NTEP, "the move should improve treatment outcomes and help thousands of patients." As per her statement on Social media X posted a few days ago: "India is getting ready to roll out BPaL regimen for all

M/XDRTB patients — training to begin this month. This should improve treatment outcomes & help thousands of patients. Scaling up NAAT coverage will be an essential element of the strategy." Leena Menghaney, South Asia head of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), called it a significant development in the fight against drug-resistant TB. She noted that the availability of generic bedaquiline has cut down treatment costs, with the BPaLM regimen priced at USD 426 (USD 130 for bedaquiline, USD 238 for pretomanid, USD 31 for linezolid, and USD 27 for moxifloxacin). "This development marks a pivotal moment for those with drug-resistant TB, as India transitions to the more effective, safer, and shorter BPaLM regimen, which is likely to improve cure rates significantly."

BJP MLA in tears after being denied ticket

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A former Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLA, who was denied a party ticket for the upcoming Haryana polls, on Friday burst into tears during an interview.

In a video viral on social media, Shashi Ranjan Parmar can be seen being asked about his name being excluded from the candidate list for the upcoming Haryana Assembly elections. Parmar was presenting his claim for a BJP candidature from Bhiwani and Tosham in the state. "I had thought that my name would be on the list... the leader says before he chokes, breaks down and starts weeping.

The interviewer tries to comfort the leader by saying that the party will see his worth and so will his constituency. But the former MLA continues to cry. "I had assured people that my name was being considered. What do I do now? I am helpless," the wailing MLA can be heard saying.

UNDP Resident Representative presents credentials to Ministry of External Affairs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Dr. Angela Lusigi, the newly appointed Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in India, has officially presented her credentials to the Ministry of External Affairs.

In a meeting with Tanmaya Lal, Secretary (West), Ministry of External Affairs, Dr. Lusigi expressed her gratitude for India's enduring partnership with UNDP and commended the country's leadership in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Dr. Lusigi, who took office on 8 July, highlighted India's pivotal role in driving global progress toward the 2030 Agenda. "India's strides in sustainable development, particularly in public healthcare, climate action, and inclusive growth, are exemplary. The nation's innovative use of digital technology to enhance health service delivery and expand social protection, which UNDP is proud to support, is ensuring that no one is left behind," she said. During the ceremony, Dr. Lusigi also highlighted the



strong interest from countries in learning from India's example in areas such as SDG localization and acceleration, SDG Finance and South-South Cooperation. She reaffirmed UNDP's dedication to supporting these efforts through the UNDP Country Programme 2023-27, which is tailored to bolster India's National priorities and global commitments. The UNDP Country Programme 2023-27 is intricately aligned with India's Fifteen Year Vision (2017-2032), Seven Year Strategy (2017-2024), and Three Year Action Agenda (2017-2020), as well as the Government of India-UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2023-27 and UNDP's Global Strategic Plan 2022-25.

Punjab farmers end protest after CM Mann's assurance on agriculture policy

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

Farmers protesting against the alleged delay in implementation of Punjab's new agriculture policy ended their strike on Friday, a day after Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann assured them that a draft of the policy would be shared with them by September 30. Mann also assured them that their suggestions would be incorporated before the policy's implementation. Mann on Thursday held an over two-hour meeting with leaders of the Bharti Kisan Union (Ugrahan) and Punjab Khet Mazdoor Union, which led the protesting farmers, to discuss their demands. Farmers under the banner of the Bharti Kisan Union (Ugrahan) and the Punjab Khet Mazdoor Union began a five-day protest on Sunday to press for their demands, including the agriculture policy's implementation. Speaking to reporters at the protest site, Bharti Kisan Union (Ugrahan) president



Joginder Singh Ugrahan said they had urged the state government to make the agriculture policy public. "They (the government) said it was being finalised... They said by September 30, they would finalise it and hand over a copy," he said. "We will wait till September 30. After we get a copy of the policy, we will go through it and hold a big meeting and decide the next course of action," he added. In the interim, "we have

The draft of the policy is ready but it will be finalised only after due deliberations with the farmers, the chief minister had said. The draft will be shared with the farmers by September 30 and their suggestions sought, he had added. The farmers' suggestions will be incorporated in the policy as the state government does not want to impose anything on the growers, Mann had said and added that his dispensation was committed to consulting them for making agriculture a profitable venture. Ugrahan said after the meeting that they were informed a 1,600-page draft of the policy would be shared with them by September 30. The farmers' other demands included the promotion of chemical-free crops, compensation to the families of farmers who committed suicide, and curbing the drugs problem in the state, Punjab Khet Mazdoor Union general secretary Lachhman Singh Sewewala had earlier said.

decided to end the protest in Chandigarh at 2 pm", Ugrahan said. On Thursday, when asked about the farmers' future course of action following the meeting with Mann, the farmer leader said they would take a call after a meeting. Mann assured the farmers that the state government was committed to safeguarding their interests and that the new agriculture policy would be a step forward in this direction.

SC dismisses Bombay HC order for drinking water at Mumbai cricket grounds

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday dismissed a plea challenging the Bombay High Court's order which had disposed of a petition seeking directions to provide drinking water and other facilities to cricket players during practice or unofficial matches on public grounds in Mumbai. "What kind of a PIL (public interest litigation) is this? Cricketers will take care if they are not provided toilets. Why an advocate should be bothered about it," a bench of Justices A S Oka and A G Masih observed. The bench was hearing a petition filed by a lawyer, who had challenged the high court's June last year order disposing of his petition. In his PIL filed before the high court, he had sought directions to the Mumbai Cricket Association and the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) to provide drinking water and other facilities to players during practice or unofficial matches on public grounds. "Look at the photographs which you have annexed.



Playing in these conditions, these grounds in Mumbai have given greatest cricketers," the apex court observed. The bench also asked the petitioner whether he was predominantly a cricketer or a lawyer. "I am a practising advocate," the petitioner, who was appearing in person, said. The bench observed, "What kind of prayers are made in a public interest litigation. You want toilets to be provided to the cricketers in various grounds in Mumbai?" The top court said the high court was right in not entertaining the PIL at the instance of the petitioner. "We concur with the view taken by the high court in paragraphs 3 and 5 of the impugned order," the bench said, while dismissing the plea. In its order, the high

court had said there was no reason given by the petitioner why the players cannot seek redressal of their grievance on their own. "In these circumstances, the appropriate course of action would be to call upon respondent nos. 1 and 2 (Mumbai Cricket Association and BCCI) to consider the PIL as suggestions made and if it is feasible for them to do so, proceed to implement the same. We make it clear that our order is not to be construed as direction to respondent nos. 1 and 2 to grant relief as sought for by the petitioner but only as suggestions," it had said. The high court had also clarified that if and when this cause would be raised by any aggrieved player, the same would be considered on its own merits.

Army being roped in to plug Budameru breaches in Vijayawada, says Andhra CM

PTI ■ AMARAVATI

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has said that Army teams are being roped in to plug the Budameru rivulet breaches to control the flood situation in Vijayawada. Addressing a press conference at the NTR district collectorate in Vijayawada on Thursday, Naidu, who was accompanied by Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, said Chouhan had been apprised about the catastrophe. Chouhan earlier in the day conducted an aerial survey of the flood-hit areas in Vijayawada. "The Army is also coming to close the breach... We are putting in all efforts we need to do," said Naidu. According to the CM, a technical team has arrived to analyse the situation, following unprecedented rains and floods in the centrally located commercial city. Naidu noted that the deluge had ravaged all the houses in its path, destroying vehicles, household appliances and many other things. He also said that there is a need to raise the capacity of Prakasam Barrage to discharge up to 15 lakh cusecs of floodwaters, noting that it can withstand only up to 11.9 lakh cusecs. Union Minister Chouhan said that the situation is bad in the flood-hit areas, adding that he has never seen such a situation before. He said 400 mm rainfall at one time is a major catastrophe, but appreciated the efforts being put in by the chief minister and the government machinery. He appreciated that drones are being used to deliver food in the affected areas, and said that the Army is expected to come soon to close Budameru breaches. Chouhan alleged that illegal mining had occurred near Budameru during the previous YSRCP government and claimed that it also contributed to the disaster.



Nadda inaugurates Regional Institute of Ophthalmology at Patna

PTI ■ PATNA

Union Health minister J P Nadda inaugurated the Regional Institute of Ophthalmology on the campus of Indira Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences (IGIMS) and also the institute's extended building here on Friday. Nadda arrived on a two-day visit to Bihar on Friday. During his two-day visit to Bihar, the Union Health Minister will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone of several health facilities in Patna, Muzaffarpur, Gaya, Darbhanga and Bhagalpur. Accompanied by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, Deputy Chief Ministers Samrat Choudhary and Vijay Kumar Sinha, Bihar ministers Mangal Pandey and Vijay Kumar Chaudhary, Nadda inaugurated the Regional Institute of Ophthalmology which has been constructed at a cost of around Rs 188 crore. According to health department officials, this institute is the biggest eye hospital in Eastern India with a trauma centre facility. Nadda also laid the

foundation stone of several health projects, including health sub-centre (HSC), additional primary health centre (APHC), health and wellness centre (HWC), community health centre, worth Rs 850 crore at the IGIMS. Later in the day, the Union Health Minister will also inaugurate a government-operated super-specialty block at Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College and Hospital in Bhagalpur and another at Anurag Narayan Magadh Medical College and Hospital in Gaya. Nadda was earlier in the day welcomed by BJP workers at Jay Prakash Narayan International Airport in Patna. Bihar BJP president Dilip Jaiswal, both DyCMs and other BJP ministers in the state government received Nadda at the airport. Shortly after his arrival at the airport, Nadda left for 1 Anne Marg, the official residence of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar. It was a courtesy meeting between Kumar, JI(U) supremo and the BJP national president, said a senior state BJP leader.

India, Japan discuss cooperation in railways, IT

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Union minister Ashwini Vaishnaw discussed further enhancing cooperation with Japan in the field of railways, innovation in the digital landscape and focusing on futuristic technological advancements during his visit to Tokyo. Vaishnaw, who holds the portfolios of railways, information and broadcasting, and information technology and electronics, held productive discussions with Tetsuo Saito, Japan's minister of land, infrastructure, transport and tourism on enhancing India-Japan cooperation. Vaishnaw said he discussed enhancing railway cooperation, promoting economic growth and deepening cultural ties with Saito. The meeting with Saito took place on Thursday. "Met with Mr. Tadashi Maeda, MD & Chairman of Japan Bank for International Cooperation, to discuss progress under the India-Japan strategic partnership. Exchanged views on key areas of cooperation and future opportunities," he posted on X on Friday.



Vaishnaw also met Taro Kono, the minister for digital transformation of Japan, to discuss strengthening India-Japan digital ties. "Explored avenues for collaboration and innovation in the digital landscape, focusing on futuristic technological advancements," he said. Vaishnaw said he also met Masafumi Mori, special adviser to Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, for a comprehensive discussion on the current state and future trajectory of the India-Japan strategic partnership.

Two CRPF personnel killed in lightning strike at training centre in Chhattisgarh

PTI ■ DANTEWADA

Two personnel of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) were killed in a lightning strike at an anti-Naxalite training centre of the paramilitary force in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada district on Friday, police said. The incident occurred around 3 pm when a training session was underway at the facility in the Barsoor police station area of the district, an official said. Constables Mahendra Kumar and S Sahuat Alam, belonging to the CRPF's 111th battalion, were struck by lightning and severely injured, he said.

The duo were shifted to Dantewada hospital in an ambulance, and after examination, doctors declared them dead, the official said. Kumar hailed from Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh, while Alam was from Sahibganj in Jharkhand, he said, adding that their families were informed about the tragedy. A CRPF jawan died in a similar incident of lightning strike in neighbouring Bijapur district during an anti-Naxal operation on Thursday, police said. The CRPF is extensively deployed in south Bastar, comprising Dantewada, Sukma and Bijapur districts for anti-Naxal operations.

Moon's seismic activity might be due to past meteorite impacts or heat effects: ISRO

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Seismic activity in the Moon's soil could be due to impact from meteorites in the past or local heat-related effects, according to ISRO's preliminary analysis of data received from Chandrayaan-3's quake-detecting instrument. However, detailed studies are needed to get more insights from the data, they said. Their research paper, published in the journal Icarus, is a summary of observations made on 190 hours of data recorded by the Instrument for Lunar Seismic Activity (ILSA). ILSA is one of the five major global scientific instruments, all of them carried by Chandrayaan-3's Vikram



lander and Pragyaan rover together. Chandrayaan-3 made a soft-landing on the Moon's south pole on August 23, 2023. The quake-detecting ILSA was operated continuously until September 2, 2023, after which it was switched off and was packed back up, before the lander was relocated to a new point roughly 50 centimetres away from the initial one, the researchers from the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) explained.

Great teaching echoes Gita's wisdom, empowers students to think, question: UGC chairman

PTI ■ KURUKSHETRA

University Grants Commission (UGC) Chairman Mamidala Jagadeesh Kumar on Friday said like Lord Krishna's guidance to Arjuna in the Gita, great teaching involves giving students the freedom to think, question, and make their own decisions. Kumar was the chief guest at the 17th Goyal Award ceremony organised by Kurukshetra University in the Senate Hall here. "Goyal Awards were instituted by late Ram S Goyal, an NRI settled in the US, in 1990, to honour scientists for their exceptional work. "Addressing the gathering at the event, Kumar highlighted that the teachings from the land of the Gita embody the

essence of great teaching. "At the start of Mahabharata, Lord Krishna says to Arjuna, I have told you everything you needed to know about but now you decide what you want to do," Kumar said, citing the holy scripture. "This is what a great teacher does to the students. They give the students the freedom to think and the freedom to question and know themselves and the world around them," he added. "He also said that 'students should never become conformists, but keep questioning, challenging what you feel an accepted fact'. "The UGC chairman said India has huge talent, and young people are our asset. "More than 10 per cent of CEOs of multi-national companies are headed by people coming from the

Indian education system. It is one of the biggest education systems. But, we have still to improve and reform the system so that over 50 per cent of the companies are headed by Indians, he noted. "On this occasion, the Vice-Chancellor of Kurukshetra University and chairman of the Goyal Award Organizing Committee Som Nath Sachdeva, during his address, said scientists make people's lives better in a meaningful and measurable way with their brilliant scientific research. "Sachdeva also announced that the Goyal Peace Prize will be awarded shortly to ISRO Chairman S Somnath. "Sachdeva proposed to the scientists of Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru that Kurukshetra University is ready to allocate 100 acres of

land if the institute plans to set up a science research centre in Haryana. "Professor S P Singh, co-chairman of the Goyal Award Organizing Committee, said the Goyal Awards have been recognising substantial research by scientists since 1992. "Bhim Singh, Professor Emeritus, IIT Delhi, professor Santanu Bhattacharya of IISc, Bengaluru, professor V. Nagaraja of Department of Microbiological and Cell Biology, IISc, Bengaluru, and professor S K Satheesh of Centre for Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences, IISc, Bengaluru were awarded the Goyal Awards for the year 2021-22 by Kurukshetra University. Each of them received a medal, a citation and a cash prize of Rs 2 lakh.

Houses in Bageshwar villages develop cracks, residents blame soapstone mining

PTI ■ PITHORAGARH (UKHAND)

Cracks similar to those in Joshimath have appeared on the walls and ceilings of houses in more than two dozen villages of Bageshwar district in Uttarakhand's Kumaon region, sending residents in a state of alarm. Locals attributed land subsidence, which had aggravated with time, to large-scale soapstone mining in the area and excavated ditches being left untreated by contractors, who often violated mining norms by blasting and using heavy machinery for digging. "Despite mining being stopped in the area two years ago, we found at least seven to eight houses in Kanda village with cracks still appearing on the walls and ceilings," said District Mining Officer Jigyasa Bisht, who visited the

village on September 3 along with a geologist and revenue officials. Around 1,000 people had to leave their homes in Joshimath, recently renamed Jyotirmath, in early 2023 when large cracks appeared on the walls and floors due to land subsidence. The administration's attention was drawn to the latest threat when locals raised the issue during a janata darbar at the collectorate in Bageshwar. However, the National Green Tribunal has not taken cognisance of any such incident in the district, Bisht said. Cracks have also appeared in houses in more than 25 villages adjacent to the areas where mining is still going on in the district, the officer said. These are mostly villages whose residents had given a no-objection certificate for



conducting mining rehabilitation as landslides were endangering their habitation. "More surveys of such villages are on the anvil," she said. Officials of the departments concerned visited the Kalika temple in Kapkot block after receiving complaints but found no violation of mining rules. "The mines in the Kalika

temple region of Kapkot were closed two years ago but the cracks are still occurring in houses," Bisht, the mining officer, said. Former Kapkot MLA and senior BJP leader Balwant Bhauriyal, who owns a soapstone mine in the Saneti region of Bageshwar, said soapstone mining in the region was done in fields given by villagers for mining. "So the question of mining being done against their wishes does not arise. At one time, the district had 121 soapstone mines, out of which only 50 are running at present," he said. "Regions of Kapkot and Kanda blocks have the maximum number of mines and, due to mining activities nearby, the villagers suffer from sliding and cracks in houses almost every monsoon," said Chandra Shekhar Dwivedi, who is

studying the effects of soapstone mining in Bageshwar's villages. "When mining norms are violated by contractors by using blasts and JCB machines (excavators), the villagers are compensated by them in various ways to placate them and prevent protests. This is also responsible for the aggravating problem of subsidence," Dwivedi said. Most of the villagers get jobs in these mines as compensation that stops them from reporting the damages caused to their fields by reckless mining, he said. Most of the houses are empty in Kandekanyal village. Only five families are living there, said Bisht, the district mining officer. "The National Green Tribunal is yet to take note of the matter and issue directions to us," she said.

Cricketer Ravindra Jadeja has joined BJP, says MLA wife Rivaba

PTI ■ JAMNAGAR

Cricketer Ravindra Jadeja joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) during its ongoing membership drive, his wife and party MLA Rivaba Jadeja has said. In a post on X on Thursday, Rivaba shared photos of Jadeja's membership card along with hers, with a hashtag, "Sadasyata Abhiyan 2024". Talking to reporters, Rivaba said the cricketer became a party member during the nationwide membership drive kickstarted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who renewed his membership in New Delhi on September 2. The seasoned India all-rounder announced his retirement from T20 Internationals after India's T20 World Cup victory against South Africa in June



this year. "The BJP has become a large banyan tree over the years and eventually became the world's largest party through its membership drive. Before asking others to join the party, it's better to start with our family. This will convince others to follow suit. Hence, I first enrolled my husband as the BJP's primary member to kickstart the membership drive in Jamnagar," Rivaba said. Rivaba joined the BJP in 2019 and won the 2022 state elections from the Jamnagar North assembly seat after defeating the AAP candidate by over 50,000 votes.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

India the peacemaker

With Putin now suggesting that India could mediate in peace talks, India's role on the global stage continues to grow

The Russia-Ukraine war, which erupted in February 2022, has resulted in devastating human and economic losses, with no clear end in sight. What began as a territorial conflict over Ukraine's desire to align itself more closely with Western institutions like NATO and the European Union has turned into a prolonged military engagement with Russia, leading to mass displacement, thousands of casualties, and significant global economic disruptions. In recent months, efforts to find a peaceful resolution have gained renewed attention. One potential pathway for peace emerged when Russian President Vladimir Putin suggested that countries like India, China, and Brazil could act as mediators in peace talks. This proposal points to a potential role for these major Global South nations in shaping the future of negotiations. Russian President Vladimir Putin's recent remarks on peace efforts are significant, especially in light of earlier failed negotiations. In the initial weeks of the war, a preliminary agreement was reached between Russian and Ukrainian negotiators during talks in Istanbul.



Now, Putin suggests that this could serve as a basis for future discussions, with mediation from nations like India, China, and Brazil, which have historically maintained neutral or balanced positions in the conflict. These nations, particularly India, could bring fresh perspectives to the table. India's long-standing policy of non-alignment and its diplomatic clout as a leader among Global South countries make it a credible mediator in a highly polarised international arena. India has consistently advocated for peace in the ongoing conflict, calling for both Russia and Ukraine to engage in dialogue. Prime Minister Modi's diplomatic stance has been underscored by his visit to Ukraine last month. During this historic visit, PM Modi met with Zelenskyy, who proposed that India could host the second Ukraine peace summit. This proposal, Zelenskyy said, was due to India's position as a major democracy and its efforts to remain neutral in the conflict. India's position as a potential mediator offers several advantages. First, India's diplomatic relations with both Russia and Ukraine have been strong over the years. Second, India's neutrality in the conflict positions it as an acceptable mediator to both sides, which have faced varying degrees of global isolation and support. For Russia, India remains a crucial partner, and for Ukraine, India's growing global influence makes it a key player in any future peace talks. Third, India's active participation in global multilateral forums, including the G20 and BRICS, gives it a platform to influence discussions on peace efforts at a broader level. While the potential for peace talks with India, China, and Brazil as mediators is promising, challenges remain. The conflict has seen entrenched positions from both sides, with Ukraine's territorial integrity at the center of any resolution. The success of such mediation will ultimately depend on the willingness of both Russia and Ukraine to make compromises and find common ground for peace.

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PICTALK



Giant panda cub Katyusha, the first panda bear born in Russia plays with her mother at a zoo in Moscow. AP/PTI

The death of window shopping: How e-commerce stole the joy

Spontaneity has given way to algorithms, and the sensory delights of browsing have been replaced by sterile scrolling

Once upon a time, I was a passionate window-shopper. I could spend hours gawking in a mall or a market, viewing and trying out things I didn't need, but often ended up purchasing. Not any longer. During my latest visit to a mall this week after several months, I realised how my appetite for browsing and buying had nearly died. Our family now happily gets everything delivered to our doorstep: from Apple to Android phones. Shopping had long been a cherished ritual, offering an experience that transcended mere transactions. It tapped into emotions and senses, creating memories, fostering relationships, and offering solace in unexpected ways. Yet, the rise of e-commerce has drastically altered this landscape, leading to the erosion of the joys of traditional shopping. The sensory overload of colours, smells, and sounds has been replaced by the sterile, one-dimensional world of online shopping. We now scroll through product images on a screen, devoid of any real human interaction. Shopping was



once an opportunity to step out of our daily routines, to wander through aisles with no particular destination in mind, and to let our imaginations run wild as we browsed items we didn't know we needed until we saw them. This spontaneity is all but lost in the algorithm-driven world of e-commerce, where every click is tracked and every recommendation is based on past behaviour, leaving little room for surprise or serendipity. Moreover, shopping in physical stores offered a tactile connection to the products we bought. We could feel the fabric of a garment, test the weight of a book in our hands, or smell the aroma of freshly baked bread before making a decision. These sensory experiences are deeply rooted in our memo-

ries and play a significant role in our attachment to the items we purchase. Online shopping, in contrast, offers a purely visual experience, reducing our interaction with products to mere images on a screen. The absence of this tangible connection often leads to a lack of emotional attachment to the items we buy, turning shopping into a mechanical process rather than an enjoyable pastime. In the past, shopping was as much about the experience as it was about the purchase. The thrill of discovery, the joy of window shopping, and the satisfaction of finding that perfect item after hours of searching were all part of the journey. However, it would be unfair to dismiss the advantages of e-commerce entirely. The convenience of shopping from the comfort of our homes and the ability to compare prices across multiple retailers are undeniable benefits. For those with busy schedules or physical limitations, online shopping has been a game-changer, providing opportunities that would have been unimaginable a few decades ago. Yet, as we embrace these con-

veniences, we must also consider what we are losing in the process. The act of shopping is not just a means to an end but a valuable experience in itself. It is a chance to connect with our communities, indulge our senses, and find joy in the unexpected. As we move towards a digital future, it is worth considering how we can preserve these intangible aspects of shopping that bring richness and depth to our lives. In the end, the choice is not about rejecting technology or clinging to the past, but about finding a balance that allows us to enjoy the best of both worlds. We can find ways to reintroduce the joy of discovery, the pleasure of the tactile, and the warmth of human connection into our shopping experiences, even as we click our way through the digital aisles. In my case, I attribute my loss of interest to a feeling of satiety, a recognition that I have more than I need and it's time for me to stop indulging in senseless accumulation of material things. Period. (The author is a columnist and writing coach based in Dubai. Views are personal)



ASHA IYER KUMAR

Sexism in politics: The unfinished battle

The recent disparaging remarks by Donald Trump against Kamala Harris have once again spotlighted the rampant sexism entrenched in politics



ARCHANA DATTA

The Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump's recent disparaging comments against her Democratic rival, Vice President Harris about her 'appearance', re-established the fact that 'sexism is very much alive in American politics'. His party, however, had denied that 'it had anything to do with race or gender'. Harris, on the other hand, urged Trump to commit to debating her, 'if he got something to say'. Such sexist vilification, many believe, is on the expected lines in a country that had no women, and only one person of colour as president, which is now, for the first time, having a woman of colour running for the presidency on a major party ticket. Harris' entry into the presidential battle has unleashed a wave of misogyny, and personal attacks on her marriage and stepchildren. She is also accused of leaning into 'being Black for political expediency'. Republican vice-presidential nominee Cyrus Vance's remarks that the Democratic Party is dominated by 'childless cat ladies', with no 'direct stake' in America's future, is also a dig at Harris' life choices.

While, early this year, Nikki Haley, the first woman governor of South Carolina, when encountered the race for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, she was dismissed as a 'token' candidate, and her achievements hardly got any attention. In 2016, Hillary Clinton had to undergo similar ordeals with apprehensions about her health and integrity, and even for her political ambitions. In 2008, Sarah Palin wasn't spared, she was constantly jeered at for her looks, personal life and intelligence, while her policy positions and records were overlooked. While only a relatively small share of the US adults (18%) consider that it is important that a woman be elected as president in their lifetime, most (64%) say this is not too or not at all important or that the president's gender doesn't matter. Overall, 62% of Americans believe that the media focuses too much on the physical appearance of women contesting for high elected offices, and there is not enough attentiveness to their views on key policy matters (Pew



Research Centre). Along the party lines, 25 per cent of Republicans are of the view that 'men generally make better leaders than women, only 4 percent said that women are better suited to lead'. While, Democrats, were found to be 'more likely to say women were better leaders than men' (August, 22, PerryUdem survey). Many of the politicians may be progressive in their policy beliefs, but, when it comes to equity, their socialisation around gender stereotypes and expectations is quite stubborn', commented Kelly Dittmar, professor of political science, at Rutgers University. In the USA, women hold only 27.9 per cent of seats in Congress, while, there is currently no Black woman in the Senate. A 2016 IPU study on the experiences of fifty-five women members of national parliaments from 39 countries across the continents of Africa, Europe, Asia-Pacific, the Americas and Arab countries, confirmed that 'sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians are very real and rampant'. While, psychological violence, the most widely spread, and, now, more on social media, affected 81.8 per cent of the respondents surveyed. A majority (61.5 per cent) believed that



HARRIS' ENTRY INTO THE PRESIDENTIAL BATTLE HAS UNLEASHED A WAVE OF MISOGYNY, AND PERSONAL ATTACKS ON HER MARRIAGE AND STEPCHILDREN. SHE IS ALSO ACCUSED OF LEANING INTO 'BEING BLACK FOR POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY'

such behaviour and/or violence was intended primarily to dissuade them from continuing in politics. While 'young and feminist women parliamentarians are particularly targeted', said an Asian parliamentarian. A parliamentarian from sub-Saharan Africa underscored that 'men need to be educated about the benefits of women's presence in parliament'. While, many opined that an increase in the number of women in parliament and solidarity among them, can help change such a political culture. While, in India, women parliamentarians, a minuscule minority, just 13.63% of the elected strength of the Lower House, much less than the 33% that the Women's Reservation Act, 2023, proposes to put into effect, face sexist comments from all corners, their colleagues, rivals or voters, and their achievements reduced to their gender only, rued a women's rights activist. An erstwhile woman Union minister lamented that 'when a woman is attacked, she gets attacked for her character, but never for her policymaking'. Women politicians, cutting across party lines, seem to agree on the issue of character assassination, and consider that it 'reflects the larger psyche of the society'. Many also complain that 'women politi-

cians aren't taken seriously... and male members have been often preferred for speaking on serious issues, while, women are only expected to raise soft issues'. Outright misogynist remarks are quite the norm in political discourse. Recently, a senior woman Rajya Sabha MP expressed discomfort with her identity being tied to her husband's name by the Chair. Globally, only 26.9 per cent of parliamentarians in single or lower houses are now women (IPU). Many countries have resorted to women's quotas and reserved shares. But, that's not enough. What is needed is a nuanced approach to addressing the issues of sexism and double standards existing within the political parties and parliament. Political parties must have an internal assessment mechanism to look into the gaps in all areas of internal practices and operations. A parliament must also ensure inclusivity in its work processes and outputs, with the help of a strong regulatory framework. Gender parity and pluralism are essential in electoral politics for the greater good.

(The author is former Director General, Doordarshan, All India Radio; views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FALL FROM GRACE

Madam — Malayalam film Industry has been in a crisis since the release of Hema Committee report which has recorded sexual exploitation by senior artistes/technicians over the women artistes/technicians. The women artiste/technicians in their enthusiasm/eagerness/greed approach the other side for a favor, over looking the others who score over them on merits in the industry and offer /submit to them with what would please them for grabbing the chance. If the person who is the so called perpetrator of the crime which is sexual exploitation in this case is wrong the lady who has approached him for favor of a chance and offering/accepting to entertain him is considered an abettor of the crime. It is a quid pro quo though apart from crime also unethical on the part of the grantor of the chance. Such quid pro quos exist not only in film industry and every other industry and in fact it is a universal phenomenon in today's world. While this affects the only individuals concerned and to a limited extent the industry or the corporate concerned, the political leaders /parties accepting bribes in any form say organized /un organized methods including through the electoral bonds route is also a quid pro even as per SC ruling and more harmful as it harms the nation as a whole.

Gopalaswamy J | Chennai

TEACHERS' CONTRIBUTION TO THE SOCIETY

Madam — The interruption of the Covid had been epochal and served to direct our focus on education, across the globe. It would be a great pity should we fail to subsequently comprehend the vital role of teachers, pe se. A greater tragedy if we still look to stitch up patchwork approach in education that is rendered more complex as the stakeholder base is vast. So are its key elements of content, quality and efficiency of transmission. In each of these there

Eco-friendly Ganesha



With environmental concerns gaining too much ground, many of the well-wishers of Lord Ganesha in the city have

started to conduct environmentally friendly Ganesh Utsav celebrations this year. So it is our earnest desire to avoid pollution. Paint from Ganesh Idols could form a deadly cocktail with oil spill on the sea may cause environmental problems after Ganpati immersion on Anant Chaturdashi day. The oil paint contains carcinogenic heavy metals such as lead, mercury and chromium which have an adverse effect on marine life as well. Despite caution, people prefer POP idols instead of clay. It is time to have a broader outlook on this subject. This responsibility rests with each and every one of us. The civic body should have proper planning and the pick and choose method to make sure the festivity achieves a religious objective rather than making it a politicised one with maximum pollution level.

Jayanthy Ramaswamy | Mumbai

FOR THE LOVE OF FOOTBALL

Madam — Rarely do our politicians talk sense. It was heartwarming therefore, to hear the CM of UP, Yogi Adityanath, announce that a number of football stadia as well as a large number of football grounds will be prepared to give a boost to the "beautiful game". This is far better than sponsoring temples that cater only to a particular religious constituency. To quote Nelson Mandela, "Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire, it has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope, where once there was only despair. It is more powerful than governments in breaking down racial barriers. It laughs in the face of all types of discrimination." Yogi's done well, in bending it like Beckham.

Avinash Godbole | Dewas

R Narayanan | Navi Mumbai

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Embrace divine shelter to overcome life's struggles



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

It may sound very insulting, but this is what most of us, if not almost all of us routinely do. Because it is so natural to do. We have a deep desire for something considered most dear. Or, we may not want to lose something considered crucial for our existence. So what do we do? We keep on thinking about it. Yes, we also do whatever we can to ensure it or should. What happens in most cases? We fall short because we are small, and helpless in the ultimate sense. God keeps control of Himself regarding the fruits of our actions. (The Bhagavad-Geeta 2.47) We have only been given the right to desire and do. (2.47) But we either don't give up trying by ourselves or with the help of others, if we choose to do that. Now worry sets in because we have set our hearts on it. And we hurt ourselves both in terms of mental health and physical health because they are so intertwined. Are we doomed? No, we are not, if we choose to do what we are expected to do, which is to approach God. That is why our scriptures, especially the Bhagavad-Geeta, persuade us to do that. I will cite some verses in this connection. The verse #18.62 goes like this, "In all respects take shelter of God only. By His mercy, you will achieve supreme peace." What does this mean? We will not suffer from mental problems, by which a quarter and more in the world are suffering. (9.22) Isn't what we want? You get started on this path and start becoming deserving. God will respond suitably. But our natures won't allow us to do what God wants us to do to qualify for His 'kripa' (grace). Even if we somehow curb our natures, our egos come in the way. For



us human beings, our egos are everything; we cannot imagine taking unconditional shelter from anyone including God of course. So we remain in the shelter of worry. Exalted personalities have surrendered to God and reaped all kinds of benefits from Him. Sanjaya of the Mahabharata fame illuminates, "Where there is the yogeshwar Shri Krishna and where there is a devotee of God (as Arjuna was), there will be opulence (saubhagya), victory (success), wealth and definite principles (dharma)." (18.78) God is unlimited and He can give what we cannot even imagine. Swami Vivekananda went to America in 1843. Not only did Swamiji give an iconic speech on Hinduism at the World's Religious in Chicago on September 11, 1843, but introduced Hinduism and Indian spirituality to the Western world.

We just have to get started and achieve what these exalted personalities achieved after several lives. It is not so difficult, but requires determination. What is so difficult to pray? All we have to ensure that whatever we pray for is according to dharma. God will respond in a way He decides about what we deserve. Then, doing 'naman' (namaskar) to a Deity of God in a temple shouldn't be so difficult. God, being what He is, cannot be a debtor ever. He will give something, again what He feels is good for us. What is wrong with chanting God's names? This activity appears so innocuous but people of all religions for ages have been chanting Ohm and God's names. It must be useful, otherwise it would have been discontinued a long time back. What is so difficult to thank God if something good happens? We know how thanking helps us to make friends even with strangers. Then, how it must benefit if we thank God. 'Dhyan' (meditation) is catching attention worldwide. Why? Because it is extremely useful. Remembering God is another spiritual activity, for which God rewards handsomely. I can go on. Believe that these spiritual acts are highly beneficial, and can be done by one and all. Spiritual acts help in this regard and change us for the better. Then, why take shelter from worry, anxiety, depression, sadness, etc.? Take shelter from the omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, controller and owner of the Creation and say goodbye to negative emotions.

(The writer is a spiritual teacher, views expressed are personal)

Bangladesh: Terrorism redivivus?

Some developments since the installation of the interim Government provides cause for concern



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR



Several developments in Bangladesh since the ouster of Sheikh Hasina raise the question: Is that country set to become a fundamentalist Islamist state and a cradle and exporter of Islamist terrorism? As of now, none of what the students who led the Anti-Discrimination Students' Movement (ADSM) have said indicates that they support fundamentalist Islam or terrorism. It is, however, not clear what they stand for. A report in the Dhaka Tribune (datelined August 16, 2024) quoted Nahid Islam, one of the coordinators of the ADSM and an advisor in the interim government, as saying, "The spirit of the movement was to create a new Bangladesh, one where no fascist or autocrat can return." The same reported quoted him as saying that structural reforms were needed to achieve this aim, and that would require time. One does not know what structural reforms they have in mind and the policies they intend to pursue. The Tribune report in question quotes Tahmid Chowdhury, another student leader, as saying that they were still working out their programme, which would be rooted in secularism and free speech. Reuters reported on August 16, 2024, that the students were contemplating forming their own party to carry their movement forward and bring a closure on the history of the last three decades when Bangladesh was governed either by the Awami League or the Bangladesh Nationalist Party. Not much has been heard about the matter since then. The question is whether the overwhelming majority of them share their leader's views. One needs to ask this as fundamentalist Islamist and terrorist organisations have been increasingly spreading their tentacles inside Bangladesh's colleges and universities. Consider the case of North South University (NSU), one of that country's best-known private universities. Professor Gias Uddin Ahsan, Dean of the School of Health and Life Sciences, and acting Pro-Vice Chancellor, was arrested on July 16, 2016, along with two of his associates, for renting out his flat, and not informing the police about the fact of its being rented out and details of the tenants-which he was required to do. The flat was subsequently used by the



THE QUESTION IS WHETHER THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF THEM SHARE THEIR LEADER'S VIEWS. ONE NEEDS TO ASK THIS AS FUNDAMENTALIST ISLAMIST AND TERRORIST ORGANISATIONS HAVE BEEN INCREASINGLY SPREADING THEIR TENTACLES INSIDE BANGLADESH'S COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

perpetrators of the terror attack at Holey Artisan Bakery restaurant in Dhaka on July 1, 2016. The University has suspended Professor Ahsan after his arrest. Earlier, it had dismissed four teachers for their links with the terrorist outfit, Hizbut Tahrir. Nibras Islam, one of the six identified as those attacking the Holey Artisan Bakery and killed by the police in the encounter that followed, was one of its students. Abir Rahman, one of those who attacked a police post guarding Bangladesh's largest eid prayer congregation at Sholakia in Kishoreganj on July 7, 2016, and was killed, was a student of NSU. The attack, which was repelled, led to three deaths. Quazi Mohammad Rezwanul Ahsan Nafis, who, in 2012, was convicted on the charge of attempting to blow up the New York Federal Reserve Bank, and of coming to the United States for waging jihad, had also been a student of NSU. Besides, all the young men-Sadman Yasir Mamun, Faisal Bin Nayeem Dwip, Ehsan Reza Rumman, Maksudul Hasan Anik, Nayeem Irad and Nafiz Intiaz-arrested for killing the blogger and Ganajagan Mancha activist, Ahmed Rajib Haidar, in 2013, were its students. There has been large-scale irregular inundation of educational institutions by fundamentalist elements. A report by Ekramul Huq Bulbul and Masud Milad in the Bengali daily Pratham Alo of August 12, 2004, states, "The allegation has been levelled of the jama'atification of the Chittagong University by violating all rules. Most applicants were not appointed as teachers despite getting four first classes in their educational life. Yet there has been the unprecedented occurrence of appointment of the supporters of Jamaat-e-Islami, a partner in the present four-party coalition government headed by Begum Khaleda

Zia of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) despite their being without a single first class." The report further stated that investigations by Pratham Alo revealed that of the 122 teachers appointed during this period, 57 had been appointed by ignoring the recommendations of the Departmental Planning Committee and the number of posts advertised. Whether all this has caused a significant section of students to be influenced by militant fundamentalist Islam need to be seen, given the continued operations of terrorist organisations. A number of Bangladeshis had fought the Soviet forces occupying Afghanistan. The Soviet Union's defeat at the hands of the Mujahideen and withdrawal from the country in February, 1989, had boosted their morale as also that of militant Islamists the world over. Osama bin-Laden, who had been involved in the jihad and who harboured the vision of establishing sharia rule worldwide, helped the establishment of the Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami Bangladesh (HUJIB) in 1992. The formation of Jama'at-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), followed. Pressure from the United States and other Western countries following the large-scale violence unleashed by these organisations, compelled the Khaleda Zia government to act against them. More resolute action followed the ascent to power of the second Awami League-led government, with Sheikh Hasina as prime minister, in 2009. Nine Islamist terrorist groups were banned during her prime minister-ship. These included the JMB, Shahadat-e al-Hikma, Hizb ut-Tahrir, HuJI-B, Ansarullah Bangla Team and the last-named's subsequent reincarnation, Ansar al-Islam. The list also included Jamaat

Ansar Fil Hindal Sharqiya formed in 2018. Another seven Islamic extremist groups were blacklisted during her regime. These were Ulama Anjuman E Al Bayyinat, Neo-JMB, Dawlatul Islam Bangladesh, Hezbut Tawheed, At-Tamkin, Tamiruddin-Bangladesh and Towhidi Trust. Particularly active among these was the Ansar al-Islam, which played a major role in the murder of the bloggers, which began with the killing of Ahmed Rajib Haider in Dhaka on February 15, 2013 and continued until 2015. The Neo-JMB, however, is believed to have been behind the attack on the Holey Artisan Bakery which killed 23 persons, including three Bangladeshis, seven Japanese, nine Italians and one Indian. The tough measures that followed, had kept Islamist terrorism more and less under control. Following Sheikh Hasina's ouster, the Hizb-ut-Tahrir (Hijb-ut) has been staging processions in different parts of Bangladesh and putting up posters articulating its ideology. On August 9, 2024, it held a rally in Dhaka demanding the establishment of an Islamic Caliphate in Bangladesh. Also, the statues of two police officers who died fighting the terrorists at the Holey Artisan Bakery, have been destroyed and a Hijb-ut Tahrir poster has been found at the site. On its part, the interim government has released Jashimuddin Rahmani, the chief of the Ansarullah Bangla Team, now Ansar al-Islam. Neither all this nor the very cordial meeting of Muhammad Yunus has had with leaders of the Jama'at and Hefazat-e-Islam, of course, indicates that the interim government supports Islamist militancy. Nevertheless, skating on thin ice is better avoided.

(The author is Consulting Editor, The Pioneer. The views are personal)

The United Nations' struggle for relevance in a changing global order

The United Nations faces unprecedented challenges that threaten its relevance in the modern world writes NAND KISHOR and AMAL CHANDRA

The United Nations (UN), a symbol of global cooperation since its founding in 1945, now finds itself at a pivotal moment. Established to promote international peace, security, and development, the organization faces growing pressure to reform in response to the ever-changing global landscape. However, despite widespread recognition of the need for restructuring, numerous obstacles hinder the reform process. Political, institutional, financial, legal, and socio-cultural barriers make consensus among member states difficult to achieve, thus stalling efforts to enhance the UN's relevance and effectiveness. Three critical areas demand attention—representation, effectiveness, and operational efficiency. Without

addressing these, meaningful reform remains elusive. One of the most significant barriers to UN reform is the veto power held by the five permanent members (P5) of the Security Council: China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. This power enables any of these nations to block resolutions, including those aimed at restructuring the UN. The P5's vested interest in maintaining their influential status has led to repeated failures to expand the Security Council to include new permanent members, such as India, which is the world's largest democracy. India's exclusion from permanent membership, despite its growing global influence, highlights a major flaw in the

UN's current structure. Similarly, other responsible powers, such as Japan and Germany, have long called for permanent seats on the Council. The reluctance of the P5 to share their privileged status stifles efforts to make the UN more representative of today's geopolitical realities. Another complicating factor is the principle of state sovereignty enshrined in the UN Charter. Many member states, particularly smaller or less powerful nations, are wary of reforms that they perceive as infringing on their sovereignty. These states fear that in a restructured UN, their voices might be drowned out by larger, more powerful countries. This divergence in priorities complicates efforts to build the broad consensus

necessary for substantial reform. While some states advocate for a more democratic and inclusive Security Council, others focus on regional issues or specific conflicts, making agreement difficult. The UN's effectiveness in addressing global challenges has been called into question, further complicating the reform debate. Public opinion and trust in the organization are crucial to its ability to implement meaningful changes. However, repeated failures to effectively address major crises, such as those in Afghanistan and Palestine, have eroded public confidence in the UN's capacity to respond to contemporary challenges. UN peacekeeping missions, a cornerstone of the organiza-



tion's efforts to maintain global peace, have also come under fire. Critics argue that these missions have often failed to prevent conflicts or protect civilians adequately. To enhance the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations, reforms must focus on improving the mandates, training, and resources available to peacekeepers. Additionally, addressing allegations of misconduct, including sexual

abuse and exploitation by peacekeepers, is essential to restoring the organization's credibility and ensuring accountability. These limitations highlight the urgent need for innovation and reform within the UN. Building and maintaining public trust is essential to securing the political and financial support necessary for any restructuring efforts. Efforts to improve the UN's operational efficiency, such as those initiated by former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, have demonstrated the institutional challenges of reform. While some administrative changes have been implemented, resistance from within the organization and differing priorities among member states have limited the

scope of these reforms. The UN's extensive bureaucracy presents a major obstacle to meaningful change. Established procedures and norms are deeply ingrained, making it difficult to implement significant reforms. Bureaucratic inertia often leads to resistance from within the organization, as staff and officials may be reluctant to change familiar processes and structures. Moreover, the UN's broad mandate, which covers peace and security, development, and human rights, adds complexity to any reform effort. This wide scope can lead to overlapping functions and responsibilities among different UN bodies, resulting in inefficiencies. Reforming the UN also involves navigating a com-

plex web of international law. Any proposed changes must comply with existing legal frameworks and secure broad international support. This legal complexity adds another layer of difficulty, as reforms must be not only politically acceptable but also legally sound. While the need for reform is widely acknowledged, the path to achieving it remains fraught with challenges. Political dynamics, institutional inertia, financial limitations, and legal hurdles all contribute to the slow pace of change.

(Dr Kishor is the HoD of Politics and International Studies, at Pondicherry University and Chandra is an author, political analyst and columnist. Views expressed are personal)

Israeli forces appear to withdraw from Jenin

AP ■ JENIN REFUGEE CAMP
Israeli forces appeared to have withdrawn from three refugee camps in the occupied West Bank by Friday morning...

milantants in Jenin, Tulkarem and the Al-Faraa refugee camps in an attempt to curb recent attacks against Israeli civilians...

Hamas war began, evacuating the wounded have been slowed on their way to nearby hospitals...

During the operation, Israeli forces sent military bulldozers into the camp, ripping up roads in search of buried explosives...

mage through the rubble of destroyed buildings and take stock of the damage. Twisted rebar protruded from the concrete of collapsed buildings...

In the morning outside a United Nations health centre in Khan Younis to receive the vaccine, which was being administered by local health care crews...

Telegram CEO addresses French charges

Paris (AP): Telegram founder and CEO Pavel Durov promised to step up efforts to fight criminality on the messaging app...

post said. "Building technology is hard enough as it is. No innovator will ever build new tools if they know they can be personally held responsible for potential abuse of those tools..."

ICICI Bank Public Notice
Branch Office: ICICI Bank Limited Plot No-23, Shal Tower, 3rd Floor, New Rohatkar Road, Karol Bagh, New Delhi-110005

Public Notice
This is to inform the general public that Smt. Gurmeet Kaur is the owner of Ground Floor and First Floor without roof rights area measuring 27.12 sq. yds. built on Property No. NA/19 out of Ghansu No. 21/25...

PUBLIC NOTICE
NOTICE is hereby given to public at large that my client Mr. Rohit Mathur who is purchasing the Plot No.4, 50 Sq. Yds out of area measuring 100 Sq. Yds. in Kharsa no. 31/192.19, Waka Mauza Gochi (Sanjay Colony), Tehsil Ballabhgarh, Dist. Faridabad from Pawan Kumar who is the owner of the above said property...

PUBLIC NOTICE
NOTICE is hereby given to public at large that my client Mr. Irshad Ahmed is the owner of Entire First Floor Northern Portion without roof rights, a Part of Property No. J-3159-A, admeasuring 35 sq. yds. (L-Shape), out of Rect No. 12, Kila No. 54, Situated at Abadi of J-Extension, Laxmi Nagar, Village Khurji Khas, Illaga Shahdara, Delhi-110092, vide Gift Deed dated 29.08.2024 Registered as Doc. no. 2024/51/7218 and intended to Mortgage the abovementioned property with SMFG India Home Finance Co. Ltd. (Formerly Fullerton India Home Finance Co. Ltd.). Any objections or concerns regarding this transaction should be raised within a period of 7 days from the date of this public notice...

FORM NO. 5 DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL
600/1, University Road, Near Hanuman Setu Mandir, Lucknow- 226007
Summons for Filing & Appearance by Publication
O.A. No. 453/2024 Date: 23-08-2024

MY MONEY SECURITIES LIMITED
REGD. OFF: 10-A, UNDERHILL LANE, CIVIL LINES, DELHI-110054
CIN : L67120DL1992PC047890; Website : www.mymoneysecurities.com
E-mail id : mymoneysecurities@outlook.com; Tel No. : 011-47087300, 011-23930655

AXIS BANK LTD. PUBLIC NOTICE FOR E-AUCTION OF PLEDGED ASSETS BEING GOLD ORNAMENTS
THE BORROWERS, IN SPECIFIC AND THE PUBLIC IN GENERAL ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED THAT PUBLIC AUCTION OF THE GOLD ORNAMENTS PLEDGE IN THE BELOW ACCOUNTS IS PROPOSED TO BE CONDUCTED BY THE AXIS BANK AT THE BELOW MENTIONED BRANCH...

Table with columns: Sr. No., CUSTOMER NAME, LOAN A/C NO., AMOUNT OUTSTANDING (IN RS.), DATE OF RECEIPT, GROSS WEIGHT, NET WEIGHT. Lists various borrowers and their loan details.

CORRIGENDUM
CORRIGENDUM TO PUBLICATION OF APPENDIX IV-A DATED 23.08.2024 ISSUED UNDER RULE 8(6) AND RULE 9(1) OF SECURITISATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002 (The Act).

IN THE APPENDIX IV-A DATED 23.08.2024:
For: The Reserve Price of the Immovable Property will be Rs. 9,00,000/- (Rupees Nine Lakh only) and the Earnest Money Deposit ("EMD") will be Rs. 90,000/- (Rupees Ninety Thousand only) i.e. equivalent to 10% of the Reserve Price.

NOTICE OF AGM AND ANNUAL REPORT
Notice of AGM and Annual Report: In compliance with general Circular No. 09/2023 dated September 25, 2023, issued by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) read together with previous circulars issued by the MCA (collectively to be referred to as "MCA Circulars") and Circular No. CFPDPO-2/P/CIR/2023/167 dated 07 October 2023 by the Securities and Exchange Board of India ("SEBI") read together with other circulars issued by SEBI in this regard (collectively to be referred to as "SEBI Circulars") and all other applicable laws and circulars issued by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA), Government of India and Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), to transact the Ordinary and Special businesses as set out in the Notice. The Notice setting out the business to be transacted at the AGM together with the Integrated Annual Report of the Company for the year 2023-24 has been sent on 06.09.2024 through electronic mode only to the members whose email address is registered with the Company / Depository Participant(s). The Notice and the Integrated Annual Report are also available on the Company's website at www.modirubberlimited.com and on the website of the Stock Exchanges, i.e. BSE Limited and National Stock Exchange of India Limited at www.bseindia.com and www.nseindia.com respectively.

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MODI RUBBER LIMITED
CIN: L25199UP1971PLC003392
Registered Office: Modinagar - 201204; Dist. Ghaziabad, (U.P.)
Corporate Office: 4-7C, DDA Shopping Centre, New Friends Colony, New Delhi-110025
Website: www.modirubberlimited.com; Email: investors@modigroup.net; Phone: +91-11-47107398

NOTICE
NOTICE is hereby given that the 51st Annual General Meeting ("AGM") of the members of Modi Rubber Limited ("Company") will be held on Monday, the 30th September, 2024 at 11:30 a.m. (IST) through Video Conferencing ("VC")/Other Audio Visual Means ("OAVM") facility provided by Mas Services Limited to transact the business set out in the Notice convening the AGM.

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AYUSHMAN INFRA TECH LTD
CIN: L45100DL1973PLC008795
Regd. Office: DSC-319, DLF SOUTH COURT, SAKET NEW DELHI 110017
Corporate Office: DSC-326, DLF SOUTH COURT, SAKET NEW DELHI 110017
Email id: cs@greatvalueindia.com; Website: www.ayushman.net.in
(Phone No: 011-41349612-14)

NOTICE OF 51st ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF AYUSHMAN INFRA TECH LTD
Notice is hereby given that an 51st Annual General Meeting of the Shareholders of AYUSHMAN INFRA TECH Ltd will be held on Monday, 30th day of September, 2024 at 12:00 PM at registered office of the Company situated at DSC-319, DLF South Court, Saket, New Delhi-110017, to transact the business, as set out in the Notice of AGM. The AGM Notice, proxy form and Attendance Slip have been sent through permitted mode to the members. These documents are also available on the website of the Company i.e. www.ayushman.net.in and on the website of Metropolitan Stock Exchange of India Limited i.e. www.mse.in.

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Zelenskyy meets top military leaders in Germany

US announces additional aid to Ukraine

AP ■ RAMSTEIN AIR BASE

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met Friday with top United States military leaders and more than 50 partner nations in Germany to press for more weapons support as Washington announced it would provide another USD 250 million in security assistance to Kyiv.

US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin said the meeting of the leaders was taking place during a dynamic moment in Ukraine's fight against Russia, as it conducts its first offensive operations of the war while



which provides critical rail and supply links for the Ukrainian army. Losing Pokrovsk could put additional Ukrainian cities at risk.

While Kursk has put Russia on the defensive, "we know Putin's malice runs deep," Austin cau-

tioned in prepared remarks to the media before the Ukraine Defence Contact Group met. Moscow is pressing on, especially around Pokrovsk, Austin said. Recent deadly airstrikes by Russia have renewed Zelenskyy's calls for the US to further loosen restrictions and obtain even greater Western capabilities to strike deeper inside Russia. However, the meeting Friday was expected to focus on resourcing more air defence and artillery supplies and shoring up gains on expanding Ukraine's own defence industrial base, to put it on more solid footing as the final days of Joe Biden's US presidency wind down.

Zelenskyy said he would continue to press for the long-range strike capability. "Strong long-range decisions by partners are needed to bring the just peace we seek closer,"

Zelenskyy said Friday on Telegram.

Western partner nations were working with Ukraine to source a substitute missile for its Soviet-era S-300 air defence systems, Austin said. The US is also focused on resourcing a variety of air-to-ground missiles that the newly delivered F-16 fighter jets can carry, including the Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile, which could give Ukraine a longer-range cruise missile option, said Bill LaPlante, the Pentagon's top weapons buyer, who spoke to reporters travelling with Austin. No decisions on the munition have been made, LaPlante said, noting that policymakers would still have to decide whether to give Ukraine the longer-range capability.

"I would just put JASSM in that category, it's something

that is always being looked at," LaPlante said. "Anything that's an air-to-ground weapon is always being looked at." For the past two years, members of the Ukraine Defence Contact Group have met to resource Ukraine's mammoth artillery and air defence needs, ranging from hundreds of millions of rounds of small arms ammunition to some of the West's most sophisticated air defence systems, and now fighter jets. The ask this month was more of the same — but different in that it was in person, and followed a similar in-person visit Thursday in Kyiv by Biden's Deputy National Security Advisor Jon Finer as Zelenskyy shores up US support before the administration changes.

Since 2022, the member nations together have provided about \$106 billion in security assistance to Ukraine.

Tallinn (Estonia) (AP): A Japanese man has been arrested in Belarus and is facing charges of working for Japan's special services by photographing military and civilian infrastructure near the border with Ukraine.

A report on Belarusian state TV on Thursday said suspect Masatoshi Nakanishi was arrested in July, and faces seven years in prison if convicted. The TV report said Nakanishi took 9,000 photographs of military installations, airfields, railway lines, bridges and other infrastructure in the Belarusian-Ukrainian border area. Nakanishi had lived in Gomel, Belarus' second-largest city, near the border, since 2018 and taught Japanese at a local university, the report said.

Japanese man held in Belarus for alleged espionage

APPENDIX IV-A
Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Property
 E-Auction Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) and Rule 9(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described Immovable Property mortgaged to Sammaan Capital Limited (Formerly known as Indiabulls Housing Finance Ltd.) [CIN : L65220UP50PLC136020] ("Secured Creditor"), the physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of the Secured Creditor, will be sold on "as is where is", "as is what is" and "whatever there is" basis on 27.09.2024 from 04.00 PM to 05.00 PM, for recovery of Rs. 20,27,919/- (Rupees Twenty Lakh Twenty Seven Thousand Nine Hundred Nineteen only) pending towards Loan Account No. HHLVAS00273932, by way of outstanding principal, arrears (including accrued late charges) and interest till 29.08.2024 with applicable future interest in terms of the Loan Agreement and other related loan document(s) w.e.f. 30.08.2024 along with legal expenses and other charges due to the Secured Creditor from PRASHANT KUMAR SHARMA and SUDHIR KUMAR.

The Reserve Price of the Immovable Property will be Rs. 13,00,000/- (Rupees Thirteen Lakh only) and the Earnest Money Deposit ("EMD") will be Rs. 1,30,000/- (Rupees One Lakh Thirty Thousand only) i.e. equivalent to 10% of the Reserve Price.

DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY

FLAT NO. FF -4 HAVING COVERED AREA 60 SQUARE METERS ON 1ST FLOOR (WITHOUT ROOF RIGHTS), REAR SIDE, RIGHT HAND SIDE (M. I. G.) IN THE COLONY KNOWN AS INDRAPRASHTH YOJANA, CONSTRUCTED UPON LAND BEARING FREEHOLD PLOT NO. - 337, GHAZIABAD - 201010, UTTAR PRADESH AND WITH ONE TWO - WHEELER PARKING SPACE AND WHICH IS BOUNDED AS UNDER :-

WEST : FLAT NO. FF -02
 EAST : PLOT NO. D -332
 NORTH : PLOT NO. D -336
 SOUTH : COMMON PASSAGE & STAIRS AND FLAT NO. FF -3.

For detailed terms and conditions of sale, please refer to the link provided on the website of the Secured Creditor i.e. www.sammaancapital.com; Contact No : 0124-6910910, +917065451024; E-mail id : auctionhelp@sammaanncapital.com. For bidding, log on to www.auctionfocus.in.

sd/-
AUTHORIZED OFFICER
SAMMAAN CAPITAL LIMITED
 (Formerly known as
 INDIABULLS HOUSING FINANCE LTD.)

Date : 02.09.2024
 Place : GHAZIABAD

UK watchdog slams Google for digital advertising policy

London (AP): Google was slammed on Friday by UK regulators who say it's taking advantage of its dominance in digital advertising to thwart competition in Britain, ratcheting up pressure that the tech giant is facing on both sides of the Atlantic over its "ad tech" business practices.

Britain's Competition and Markets Authority said the US company gives preference to its own services to the detriment of online publishers and advertisers in Britain's 1.8 billion pound (USD 2.4 billion) digital ad market. The watchdog levelled its accusations after an investigation, and the findings could potentially lead to a fine worth billions of dollars or an order to change its behaviour.

Google is a major player throughout the digital ad ecosystem, providing servers for publishers to manage ad space on their websites and apps, tools for advertisers and media agencies to buy display ads, and an exchange where both sides come together to buy and sell ads in real time at auctions. "We've provisionally found that Google is using its market power to hinder competition when it comes to the ads people see on websites," the watchdog's interim executive director of enforcement, Juliette Enser, said in a press release.

The watchdog's charges, known as a statement of objections, arrive two years after it opened its investigation. Google's digital ad business is also the focus of a European Union antitrust investigation and a US Justice Department

lawsuit that's set to go to trial this month. The CMA said that Google's "anti-competitive" conduct is ongoing, but the company disputed the allegations on Friday. "Google remains committed to creating value for our publisher and advertiser partners in this highly competitive sector," the company said in a prepared statement. "The core of this case rests on flawed interpretations of the ad tech sector. We disagree with the CMA's view and we will respond accordingly." The UK watchdog alleged Google has been exploiting its dominance since 2015 to strengthen the market position of its own AdX ad exchange and protect it from rivals.

AdX is where Google charges the highest fees in the ad tech system, taking about 20 per cent of the amount from bids, the CMA said.

The regulator's accusations include charges that Google manipulates advertiser bids so they have higher value when they go into AdX auctions than rival exchanges. AdX also gets to bid first in auctions run by Google's publisher ad server, potentially shutting out rivals from the chance to bid, the watchdog said. Google now has the chance to reply to the charges. The CMA said it's considering what is needed to make sure Google ceases the anti-competitive practices. It has the power to impose a fine worth up to 10 per cent of a company's annual worldwide revenue or issue a legally binding order to stop violations of competition law.

PUBLIC NOTICE
 To be known to all that Sh. Manjit Singh S/o Lt. Sh. Gopal Singh R/o H. 2/45, Near H. Block Gurudwara, Vikas Park, Tilak Nagar, Delhi-110018 is the allottee/Mutatee of Property No. E-163, Situated at Rewari Line Phase II, New Delhi 110064 File No. F.21(99)1976/(LSB) (A-161-A, area measuring 200 Sq. Yds. of Khasra No. 335/1, Situated in the abadi of Gali No. 4, Nehru Vihar, in the area of Village Mustafabad, District, Delhi. He is in Possession of the above Said Property through Notarized G.P.A. ATS & Will dated 05.04.2006 executed by Mr. Gader Singh, Raviak in favour of Mr. Manjit Singh. In respect of area measuring 200 Sq. Yds. of Khasra No. 335/1, Situated in the abadi of Gali No. 4, Nehru Vihar, in the area of Village Mustafabad, District, Delhi. He is in Possession of the above Said Property through Notarized G.P.A. ATS & Will dated 05.04.2006 executed by Mr. Gader Singh, Raviak in favour of Mr. Manjit Singh. In respect of area measuring 200 Sq. 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Rupee rises two paise to settle at 83.95 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

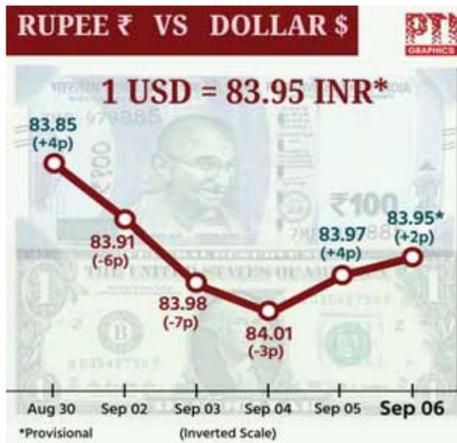
The rupee gained 2 paise to close at 83.95 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday amid a weak greenback in overseas markets.

However, negative domestic markets, rise in crude oil prices, and outflow of foreign capital capped sharp gains, forex traders said.

At the interbank currency market, the local unit opened at 83.97 and witnessed an intra-day high of 83.91 against the American currency.

The unit, which traded in the range of 83.91-83.97, finally settled at 83.95 (provisional), registering a gain of 2 paise. It had closed at 83.97 on Tuesday.

"Indian rupee recovered today on weak US dollar. However, weak domestic markets



capped sharp gains," Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said. "We expect rupee to trade with a slight negative bias on

weak global equities and concerns over global economic growth," he said, adding that the USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 83.70 to Rs 84.20. Traders may take cues from non-farm payrolls report and speeches by the US Federal Reserve's rate-setting panel members, he added. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was down 0.14 per cent to 100.96 points. Brent crude, the international benchmark, gained 0.58 per cent to USD 73.11 per barrel in futures trade.

In the domestic equity markets, Sensex tanked 1,017.23 points to settle at 81,183.93, while Nifty slumped 292.95 points to 24,852.15.

Revisiting Sri Lanka's debt sustainability assessment can derail IMF programme: Finance Ministry

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Any attempt to revisit Sri Lanka's debt sustainability assessment (DSA) can derail the ongoing IMF programme bailout, the finance ministry said on Friday.

"Any country can of course stand its ground and refuse to move forward based on the IMF's DSA if it disagrees with the outcomes of the model and the IMF's assessment," the Ministry of Finance said in a statement titled "Clarifications on Debt Restructuring and the Debt Sustainability Analysis". It added that a standoff in such a scenario would only delay an agreement on a financing programme for several months if not years. The statement highlighted that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) cannot proceed with a financing programme if a country's debt



is deemed unsustainable. The statement comes as Marxist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) front National People's Power (NPP) in its manifesto for the September 21 presidential election said last week that it would work for an alternative debt sustainability analysis and the Washington-based global lender's condition of revenue-based fiscal consolidation. The finance ministry

statement asserted that Sri Lanka's agreement with creditors for sovereign debt restructuring needed IMF endorsement "to confirm as the independent actor that the negotiated terms indeed provide the required debt relief to comply with the debt targets".

The ministry's warning on DSA aligns with incumbent president Ranil Wickremesinghe's narrative that the current bail-out

programme requirements must persist for Sri Lanka to achieve complete recovery.

The opposition parties have heavily criticised Wickremesinghe's steer of the economy since the island nation declared its bankruptcy in April 2022, announcing its first-ever sovereign default.

Wickremesinghe was able to revive the negative growth of six successive quarters with the help of international partners of recovery.

However, his reforms at the behest of the IMF, which sent the cost of utilities high, have made him unpopular.

Anura Kumara Dissanayake, the NPP candidate, believes he leads in the unofficial polls to win the election over Wickremesinghe and the main opposition challenger Sajith Premadasa.

The two main contenders, however, did not directly pledge to reverse them.

Allow natural growth of India's E-vehicle sector to avoid becoming EV colony for China: GTRI

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government should allow the domestic electric vehicle sector to grow naturally without relying on incentives as it would avoid India becoming an 'EV colony' for China, think tank GTRI said on Friday.

India faces unique challenges not faced by other countries in adopting EVs (electric vehicles) at large scale, it added.

These challenges include 80 per cent of electricity generated from fossil fuels like coal, frequent power cuts, and dependency on imports for making EVs in the country like batteries and critical minerals, the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said.

"Considering these challenges, instead of rushing into the fray with heavy incentives or falling into dependence on Chinese imports, India has the opportunity to let its EV sector evolve naturally. By allowing market forces to steer the sector's growth, India can avoid becoming an 'EV colony' for China and carve out its own path in the global EV landscape," it added.

It also said the global EV market is undergoing a seismic shift, driven by the US, EU, and Canada imposing high tariffs and restrictions on imports of EVs and parts from China.

These regions make up about half of China's global EV exports and in a strategic pivot, China is moving its production to ASEAN countries and setting its sights on India.

"These production units would still depend heavily on imports from China, with 70-80 per cent of parts, including batteries, coming from there. Thailand, the first to allow local production by Chinese firms, is already facing challenges with rising imports and complaints



of lower sales from established manufacturers," GTRI founder Ajay Srivastava said.

He added that there is also a risk that China might dump excess EVs in India as access to developed markets becomes tougher.

The GTRI suggested that India should focus on capturing leadership in the next phase of EVs, using a new generation of batteries.

Increasing investment in research and development (R&D) for advanced battery technologies, battery recycling infrastructure, and supporting clean energy sources to power EV charging stations are some of the steps which would help boost the sector's growth, it added.

Hi-Tech Gears Chairman Deep Kapuria said the world EVs market is all set to face more turbulence and structural transformation as the sector is witnessing several trends that are driving its growth.

"Firstly, many countries (developed and developing) are offering subsidies, tax benefits, and other incentives to encourage consumers to switch to electric cars. Secondly, the macroeconomic factors, such as the availability of critical minerals like lithium, cobalt, and nickel, essential for battery production, can positively impact the growth of the EV industry," Kapuria said.

Prozeal Green Energy, Golyan Power sign JV pact for solar projects in Nepal

PTI ■ New Delhi

Ahmedabad-based Prozeal Green Energy and Nepalese firm Golyan Power have inked a joint venture agreement for setting up solar power projects in the Himalayan nation.

The agreement was signed on Tuesday at Golyan Group headquarters in Kathmandu, marking a significant milestone in both companies' commitment to advancing renewable energy solutions, a statement said.

The agreement was signed by Shobit Rai, Director of Prozeal Green Energy, and Akshay Golyan, Director of Golyan Power.

The partnership underscores a shared vision to contribute meaningfully to a cleaner and greener future for Nepal. The joint venture -- Prozeal Green Energy Nepal -- aims to establish over 500 MW of solar energy projects across multiple locations in Nepal over the next 18 months.

Prozeal Green Energy will hold a 60 per cent stake in the JV and Golyan Group will own the remaining 40 per cent. Rai said this joint venture represents "a powerful alliance between Nepal and



India, uniting our expertise to lead the global decarbonisation movement. Together, we're setting new benchmarks for clean energy and sustainability in Nepal."

Golyan Power director Akshay Golyan said, "Nepal is growing rapidly in the renewable energy sector and I am confident that this partnership will open up new avenues for both entities. We have come together through our shared vision and the massive possibilities ahead."

The joint venture will develop both solar rooftop and ground-mounted photovoltaic (PV) solar plants.

The energy produced from these projects will be sold to the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) and various commercial and industrial consumers.

Spicejet plans to raise over ₹3,200 crore via debt, equity

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Cash-strapped domestic carrier Spicejet plans to raise Rs 3,200 crore through QIP, warrants and capital infusion by the promoter, the airline said in a presentation on Friday.

The funds will be utilised in taking back the grounded fleet in operations, liability settlement, new fleet induction and other general purposes, Spicejet in the presentations.

"Spicejet plan to raise Rs 2,500 crore through QIP and Rs 736 crore through Previous Warrants and promoter infusion, the airline said in an investor presentation," it said in a corporate presentation to investors ahead of its proposed capital infusion.

The proposed funds raised are subject to shareholders' approval.

Ajay Singh-promoted SpiceJet had earlier in January this year, could raise only Rs 1,060 crore through preferential issues against its Rs 2,250 crore funding plan announced in December last year.

The airline attributed factors



like reduction in fleet, and subsequent grounding, higher cost of working capital, escalating fixed costs, fixed rentals at airports, and outstanding statutory dues as the factors for its current problem.

According to the presentation, its operational fleet reduced to 28 planes in 2024 against 74 aircraft in 2019, while 36 aircraft remained on the ground due to the funding issue.

However, according to the live aircraft fleet tracking website, Planespotter.Net, it had only 20 aircraft in operations as of September 5 and 38 on the ground.

It may also be noted that several of these aircraft are out of operation due to SpiceJet's lessors and other vendors taking the airline to court for non-payment.

Bengaluru sees 19 per cent hike in home sales: Report

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Bengaluru's residential market continues to display steady growth as registered transactions maintain upward momentum both sequentially and annually, a report by Square Yards, an integrated platform for real estate and mortgages, said on Friday.

According to the data, 28,356 transactions were recorded in the city during the second quarter of 2024, marking a 19 per cent increase over the previous quarter.

"Despite challenges such as flooding and water shortage, home buyer demand remains notably resilient, underpinned by a strengthening IT sector and the blend of full-time and hybrid working models," said Sopan Gupta, Principal Partner, Square Yards.

According to him, east and southern suburbs retain their appeal, northern suburbs are rapidly emerging as key areas of interest for both apartments and plots.

"Branded developers, particularly those delivering quality projects, are witnessing successful launches with swift offtake," he added.

INBRIEF

SESSION ON TRADE VISION ORGANISED AT GNDU

NEW DELHI: The Dinero Finance Club of University Business School, Guru Nanak Dev University hosted a Industry Interactive Session Trade Vision: Decoding the Dynamics Of Stock Market under the guidance and scientific vision of Prof (Dr.) Jaspal Singh Sandhu, Vice Chancellor.

VIT UNIVERSITY DONATES ₹1,57,50,000 FOR FLOOD VICTIMS

AMARAVATI: To support the Andhra Pradesh government in the wake of recent floods, Dr.G.Viswanthan, Chancellor, Sri Sankar Viswantha, Vice-President, VIT University presented a cheque of Rs1,57,50,000 (One crore fifty seven lakhs fifty thousand) to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund.

ATES, ANOTHER STEP BY NFR TO ENHANCE SAFETY

MALIGAON: Northeast Frontier Railway has installed a prototype Automatic Train Examination System (ATES) for the first time at its rolling in & rolling out examination point at New Jalpaiguri. ATES is an Artificial Intelligence based technology that involves capturing, processing and analysing visual data such as images and videos of rolling stocks.

NBCC RECEIVES AWARD IN VARIOUS CATEGORIES

NEW DELHI: NBCC (India) Limited a Navratna CPSE under the aegis of Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, was presented with Shield by the Town Official Language Implementation Committee, Delhi (Undertaking-2) in their half yearly meeting and prize distribution ceremony organised at Silver Oak Auditorium, India Habitat Center, Lodhi Road, New Delhi on September 4, 2024 for exhibition in Rajbhasha Utsav; publication of in-house Hindi magazine "Nirman Bharti" and securing first position in Quiz Competition.

GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY CELEBRATES TEACHER'S DAY

AMRITSAR: Guru Nanak Dev University celebrated Teacher's Day with enthusiasm and reverence, honoring the dedication and commitment of its educators. The various departments includes Punjab School of Economics, Department of History organised special events and activities to express gratitude towards the teaching staff.

SRM INSTITUTE HOSTS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

KATTANKULATHUR: SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST) recently hosted the International Conference on Precision Bio-Medicine and Sustainable Smart City Development (ICPBSSC) in collaboration with National Chung Cheng University (CCU), Taiwan held over three days.

REC HONOURED AS NODAL AGENCY OF THE YEAR

NEW DELHI: REC Limited, a Maharatna CPSE under the Ministry of Power and a leading NBFC, has been conferred with the prestigious "Nodal Agency of the Year" award at the Bharat Electricity - Powering India Awards 2024.



Gold rises ₹100; silver bounces ₹1,200

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Silver prices surged Rs 1,200 to Rs 85,800 per kilogram, while gold rose Rs 100 to Rs 74,200 per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

In the previous session, the precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had ended at Rs 74,100 per 10 gram. The silver metal had ended higher at Rs 84,600 per kilogram in the previous session on Thursday.

Additionally, gold of 99.9 and 99.5 per cent purity rose Rs 100 each to Rs 74,200 and Rs 73,850 per 10 grams, respectively.

Traders attributed the rise in gold prices due to increased demand by jewellers and stockists as well as a jump in the precious metal rates in the overseas markets.

Globally, Comex gold rose 0.22 per cent higher at USD 2,548.80 per ounce. "Gold extended gains on Friday, as the US dollar and Treasury yields fell following another set of data showing a sluggish US labour market," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

Silver also quoted marginally higher at 0.26 per cent to USD 29.18 per ounce in the international markets.

"US jobs data released in

recent sessions have shown mixed readings, though it confirmed that the labour market is cooling enough to consider an interest rate cut in September meeting by the US Federal Reserve," Maneesh Sharma, AVP -- Commodities & Currencies, Anand Rathi Shares and Stock Brokers, said.

Following a strong monthly increase in July, gold posted another healthy gain in August to finish 3.6 per cent higher at USD 2,513 per ounce internationally, according to a report by World Gold Council (WGC). The custom duty cut on gold in India, which took place in late July, has been a shot in the arm for gold demand in the country. The reduction was followed by strong buying interest from jewellery retailers as well as consumers.

Meanwhile, global physically-backed gold ETFs extended their inflow streak to four months while western funds once again contributed to the share of flows, the report said.

According to Manav Modi, Senior Analyst, Commodity Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, after lower jobs data this week, focus now turns to all-important US non-farm payroll and unemployment rate data to be released later on Friday.

VA Tech WABAG bags ₹2,700 crore sea water desalination plant order from Saudi Water Authority

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Water treatment player VA Tech WABAG has secured an order from Saudi Water Authority worth USD 317 million (Rs 2,700 crore) for setting up a Mega Sea Water Desalination plant in Saudi Arabia, the company said on Friday.

The Engineering, Procurement, Construction and Commissioning (EPC) contract including design and supply of the 300 million litres per day mega desalination plant which would be developed on a greenfield site in the west coast of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The Saudi Water Authority, formally known as the Saline



Water Conversion Corporation, is responsible for regulating and monitoring water sector business and services to enhance water sustainability and achieve the objectives of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030.

The project is expected to be completed in 30 months and the plant would operate Dual Media Filters followed by a two-pass Reverse Osmosis process and re-mineralisation to produce clean potable

water. The plant would be built with the state-of-the-art desalination technologies, designed for superior energy efficiency and would produce stellar quality of water complying with the environmental regulations of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

"We are extremely honoured and proud to secure this mega order from prestigious customer Saudi Water Authority, which will contribute to the ambitious Saudi Vision 2030. This mega order is a testament to our expertise and commitment to delivering high-quality, sustainable water solutions worldwide," company Head-Strategy and Business Growth - GCC, Rohan Mittal

said in a company statement here.

WABAG said, globally, it has established 60 desalination plants in 17 countries, for various municipalities and industries.

"This (project) win reinforces our position in the desalination sector and we are confident that WABAG's Global Leadership in Desalination will grow further with this win," Mittal said.

The Saudi Water Authority currently manages over 40 desalination plants producing over 11 million cubic meters per day and over 139 ground and surface water purification stations producing over 4 million cubic meters per day.

RBI imposes penalties on Housing and Urban Development Corporation, two others

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank has imposed penalties on three entities, including Housing and Urban Development Corporation Ltd, for non-compliance with certain provisions of directions on 'non-banking financial company - housing finance company'.

A penalty of Rs 3.5 lakh has been imposed on Housing and Urban Development Corporation Limited, the central bank said in a statement on Friday.

In a separate release, RBI said it has imposed a penalty of Rs 5 lakh on Godrej Housing. The Reserve Bank of India has also imposed a monetary



penalty of Rs 5 lakh on Aadhar Housing Finance Ltd. In each case, the RBI added that penalties are based on deficiencies in regulatory compliance and are not intended to be pronounced upon the validity of any transaction or agreement entered into by the companies.

Forex reserves jump USD 2.3 billion to fresh record of USD 683.987 billion

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India's forex reserves jumped by USD 2.299 billion to a new high of USD 683.987 billion for the week ended on August 30, according to the RBI data release on Friday.

In the previous reporting week, the forex reserves had jumped by USD 7.023 billion to a high of USD 681.688 billion.

For the week ended August 30, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, increased by USD 1.485 billion to USD 599.037 billion, the data showed.

Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

Gold reserves increased by USD 862 million to USD 61.859 billion during the week. The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were up by USD 9 million to USD 18.468 billion.

India's reserve position with the IMF was down by USD 58 million to USD 4.622 billion in the reporting week, the apex bank data showed.



THE STORY BEHIND KABINI ON MY MIND AN AUTHOR'S PERSPECTIVE

Discover the inspirations, experiences and insights behind **VIKRAM NANJAPPA'S** compelling wildlife narratives in *Kabini on my Mind: Musings of a Naturalist*

BY **SHARMILA CHAND**

Vikram Nanjappa likes to be described as an interested and well-informed amateur. He draws inspiration from the band of men called the Orientalists, most of whom were amateurs. Like them, his field of inquiry is 'Man and Nature; (with an emphasis on Nature) whatever is performed by the one or produced by the other.'

Vikram's first exposure to wildlife came through the shikar tales he had heard from his friends while studying at Mayo College in Ajmer in Rajasthan, one of the country's oldest and celebrated institutions of learning. Vikram cites the writings of Billy Arjan Singh and Jim Corbett as having played a pivotal role in inclining him passionately and committedly towards wildlife.

After completing his Bachelor's in History and Political Science from St. Stephen's College in New Delhi, Vikram joined the tea plantations. It was during the thirteen years he spent in Kerala and the Duars of West Bengal that he found the opportunity to hone his twin hobbies of wildlife and photography. In 2002 he moved to Kabini and took up organizing wildlife tours full time. He is one of those rare gems who managed to turn his passion into a rewarding and fulfilling vocation.

After leaving Kabini, in a manner of natural progression, Vikram ventured into the field of wildlife conservation (Non-profit Organization Management) with the Asian Nature Conservation Foundation for a few

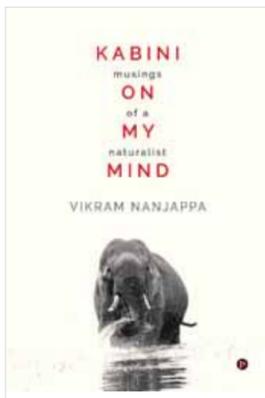
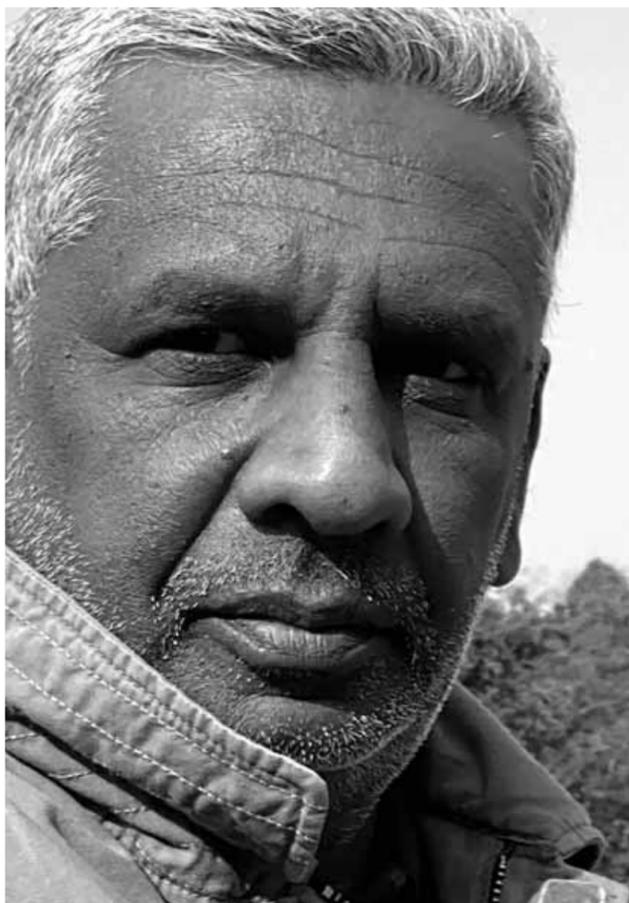
years. He also explored the world of fashion as a freelance writer and as a photographer. His current avatar is that of a marketing professional. Vikram avers that traditional knowledge and field skills coupled with good science and common sense is the best way to understand, expose and preserve our wildlife, which is alarmingly on the decline. He strongly disapproves of what he calls the 'tabloid portrayal' of wildlife, where aberrant animal behaviour is highlighted to reinforce false myths and stereotypes. This has to be eclipsed by an attitude of respect and reverence for the animal kingdom if we are to continue enjoying sightings of our wild brethren in their natural habitats.

In an informal chat, he talks about his book and more

Firstly, let's hear about your book....

In the winter of 2002-03 I found myself in Kabini managing a farmhouse that was taking its first baby steps towards becoming a wildlife resort and if you had asked me a year earlier if that was where I saw myself a year hence, I would have laughed in your face. As the 1900s turned to the 2000s I was happily living on the Bhutan border, managing a tea estate and indulging in my love of photography and wildlife.

I did not know then that the previously dreaded but now forgotten Y2K problem would culminate in me reaching Kabini in the middle of the night to discover that my quarters had an outdoor toilet without a door. Not wishing to make a fuss, I decided to tackle the problem in the morning



ABOUT THE BOOK

Book : 'Kabini on my Mind: Musings of a Naturalist' by **VIKRAM NANJAPPA**
Publisher : Notionpress

by catching the first available transport out. As day broke and I got my first look ... the rest, as they say, is history.

I was shortly joined by my wife Gowri, my daughter Tara and our dog (a St Bernard mix) Bernie. We later added another member to our family - Bruno, a dachshund. In Kabini I eagerly embarked on the next phase of my wildlife journey, exploring the forests and honing my skills as a Naturalist. Up until then I had been happily engrossed in tackling the human-elephant conflict prevailing in the Duars and keeping track of the resident leopards on the estate. I enjoyed my wild life in the Duars, observing elephants and, to a lesser degree, leopards.

We stayed in Kabini for nearly ten years, finally leaving in 2011 when I had become the Chief Naturalist at Evolve Back, and Kabini had become one of the premier wildlife destinations in India.

This book is a compilation of various musings, natural history notes, opinions and incidents that occurred in Kabini during my stint there. While they are arranged in no particular order, they were written as

they occurred and accurately reflect my mood, opinions and emotions as the incidents played out. A lot of water has flowed by since but I have resisted the temptation to 'update' them as I feel hindsight is not always a good thing - it can be unfair to those who actually lived through the moment.

How did you get the idea or let's say inspiration behind the book?

During my childhood my interest in wildlife was fueled by wildlife books written by various authors. Most of these books were written by western authors and were mostly about Africa. As I grew up, I realized that a lot of researchers from the west were writing and publishing 'popular' books about their research experiences while at the same time imparting knowledge on wildlife in a very easy to absorb manner. This unfortunately was missing in India and information on Indian wildlife was difficult to get. Sometime ago I realized that instead of complaining maybe I should write a book on my experiences as a naturalist in Kabini.

What is the target audience for the book?

The book is a compilation of various incidents that occurred during my stint and written in a very easy to read manner - the aim was to cater to both young adults and adults. It is also targeted at those who are not into wildlife as well as those who are. It's not really targeted at hardcore wild livers - but I am sure they will enjoy the stories.

Any specific aim of writing on this subject?

The idea is to get young people interested in wildlife by presenting facts in an easy to read format. The chapters are independent of each other and easy to digest, the book can be read at leisure - it's not a heavy and laborious read. With today's declining attention span this was a deliberate move on my part.

Your favorite chapters?

I love elephants and I think that comes out very strongly in the book. My favorite parts are the ones about elephants - the following chapters in particular:

Spirit of Kabini
A Trunk Full of Tales
A Tale of Two Giants
The Amphitheatre of Life and Death

You had mentioned the book is not tiger centric?

I have purposely not focused too much on the tiger - I feel that too our tourism industry is too tiger centric to the detriment of other species. There is much more to Indian wildlife and therefore I have given more

attention to other lesser known and charismatic species.

Any personal opinions / beliefs you have shared in the book?

Yes, I have also touched upon my personal beliefs which are not quite conventional but at the same time tried not to sensationalize aberrant animal behavior reinforce false myths and stereotypes.

Are you a Critique of current trends in wildlife guiding?

It ends with a mild critique (Last Chapter: The Mystic Naturalist) of the current trends in wildlife guiding which I feel is getting too 'professional' with scripted storytelling and more. I hope that this critique will be taken in the spirit it is intended and lead to a more mindful approach to guiding.

Is this your first book? Were you always into writing? You wanted to be an author?

Yes, it's my first book. I have always enjoyed writing and maintaining an online blog for a long time. I also briefly freelanced as a writer, writing articles on wildlife and men's style. Also dreamt of writing a book so one dream was fulfilled.

Why Kabini?

I spent nearly ten years of my life in kabini. I know it very well and it's my home jungle. It's my karma Bhoomi as far as wildlife goes

How and when did you become a naturalist?

I became a naturalist in 2003 when I decided to quit my job as a tea planter and work in the wildlife field. As I was not 'qualified' to do research it was the only viable option for me.

How has your journey been as a Naturalist? Pls share a couple of milestones or anecdotes to share.

It was great. The biggest learning was when my boss Krishan Prasad or KP for short who is a great wildlifer himself advised me to ditch my camera for a pair of binoculars. Best advice I ever received- the learning that followed was stupendous. Also getting the opportunity to interact with Dr Ullas Karanth and other such greats.

My outlook and philosophy towards wildlife was formed and greatly influenced by these individuals.

What did you enjoy the most about the book?

Writing it. I love to write.

What next? Which book? What subject?

Nothing definitive but I would like to write something from a foresters perspective about the day to day challenges of managing a national park in India.

NEW ARRIVALS

September Releases by Aleph Book Company



The Third Eye of Indian Art: Aesthetics as Vedanta
By HARSHA V. DEHEJIA (INR-499, PP-240)

The Third Eye of Indian Art delves into how Indian art offers more than just visual pleasure by inviting deeper, contemplative experiences. Harsha V. Dehejia introduces the 'third eye,' a concept for perceiving art not only objectively but through a serene, inner perspective. This book guides readers in appreciating art's spiritual and subjective dimensions, encouraging a profound understanding of beauty and truth. Dehejia, a physician and Indic studies professor with dual doctorates, offers insights drawn from his extensive expertise in Indian aesthetics.

A Wonderland of Words: Around the World in 101 Essays
By Shashi Tharoor (INR-999, PP-472)

Words possess extraordinary power. They can move, entertain and reveal the world in profound ways. In this captivating book, renowned wordsmith Shashi Tharoor invites readers into the fascinating realm of the English language. He unravels punctuation, spelling and grammar, while exploring the richness of acronyms, oxymorons, metaphors, idioms and more. Tharoor's engaging prose offers insights into English's history, regional variations and literary brilliance, making *A Wonderland of Words* a delightful read for language enthusiasts.

Unlocking Wealth: Secrets to Getting Rich at Any Age
By ROHIT SARIN (INR-599, PP-224)

Unlocking Wealth reveals how individuals and families can grip India's economic growth to build substantial wealth. Rohit Sarin, a seasoned banker and entrepreneur, offers practical strategies for smart saving, sound investments, and risk-taking, emphasising that it's never too early or late to start. The book is both a guide for personal wealth creation and a broader vision for societal advancement, showing how increased wealth can benefit all Indians. With nearly three decades of wealth management experience, Sarin provides clear, actionable advice for creating and growing wealth at any age.

Journey of Self-Discovery and Courage

Niharika Nigam's debut novel, *Joy of Missing Out*, explores the transformative journey of Nanki Mehta, a young woman searching for meaning and fulfillment beyond societal expectations. Through an unexpected adventure, Nanki learns to embrace uncertainty, redefine purpose and take a leap of faith towards a more authentic life, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

Joy of Missing Out by Niharika Nigam is a deeply engaging novel that explores the themes of self-discovery, existentialism and the quest for a meaningful life. Nigam, an entrepreneur with years of experience in the adventure sports industry, brings a unique perspective to her storytelling, blending personal insights with a broader commentary on modern life.

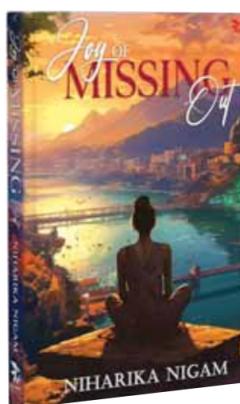
The novel centers around Nanki Mehta, a thirty-two-year-old brand strategist from Delhi, whose seemingly perfect life feels increasingly unfulfilling. Nanki's struggle is relatable, she grapples with societal expectations and a sense of stagnation in her career, marriage and personal life. Nigam paints a vivid portrait of a woman in crisis, yearning for something more than the mundane routines that have come to define her existence. Her portrayal of Nanki's internal conflict is rich and nuanced, making her journey of self-discovery both engaging and thought-provoking.

A turning point in the novel comes when Nanki stumbles upon a Bungy Jumping ad for Rishikesh, a place tied to her childhood memories. This ad becomes the catalyst for Nanki's journey towards transformation. Her interactions with River, a Bungy Jump Master, add a fresh dimension to her life. River's outsider perspective challenges Nanki to reconsider her own beliefs, offering new ways of thinking about purpose and fulfillment. This friendship serves as a mirror for Nanki's own soul-searching, encouraging readers to reflect on their own lives. One of the novel's most effective elements is its use of Bungy



Jumping as a metaphor for Nanki's leap of faith. What begins as a simple adventure turns into a powerful symbol of courage, trust and the willingness to embrace the unknown. This metaphor is woven throughout the narrative, providing a poignant backdrop to Nanki's internal transformation and reinforcing the novel's central themes of risk, renewal, and self-discovery.

Nigam's own experience in the adventure sports sector gives the book an authentic feel, especially in the scenes set in Rishikesh. Her understanding of courage, risk and the human desire for freedom adds depth and realism to Nanki's journey. The novel also delves into the challenges of social



entrepreneurship, showing how Nanki uses her business acumen to support a local NGO, blending purpose with practicality. The emotional core of the story is further enriched by Nanki's relationship with her grandfather, Nanu, whose illness and eventual death force her to confront her fears and redefine her understanding of loss and resilience. This subplot adds emotional weight to the narrative, making Nanki's journey even more

compelling. *Joy of Missing Out* is a novel that challenges readers to reflect on their own paths and the choices they make. It captures the tension between societal expectations and personal fulfillment, urging readers to take their own leaps of faith. Nigam's writing is insightful and empathetic, making this a book that resonates with anyone who has ever felt the need to step away from the familiar in search of a deeper sense of purpose.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Title: Joy of Missing Out

Author: Niharika Nigam | **Publisher:** Nu Voice

Price: INR 299 | **Pages:** 288

India's fast bowling makes them difficult to beat in Australia: Marnus Labuschagne

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Star batter Marnus Labuschagne reckons fast bowlers make India a "difficult" side to beat in Australian conditions as the hosts look to end their barren run in Border-Gavaskar Trophy which has lasted nearly a decade. India have won every bilateral Test series against Australia since losing 1-2 in an away affair in 2014-15. They have recorded identical 2-1 series wins in 2018-19 and 2020-21 Down Under to remain on top. "India's fast bowling is very good, which is really what brings them in Australian conditions and make them such a tough team to beat in Australian conditions," Labuschagne told Star Sports. The middle-order mainstay

termed the rivalry as 'tough' irrespective of where they are playing. "There is always high anticipation. To these two teams, it doesn't matter where we're playing, if it's in England, Australia, or India, it's always a tough contest," he said. Australia spinner Nathan Lyon termed Indian players as "superstars" while hoping to revive his on-field rivalry with India spinner Ravichandran Ashwin. "I've always said throughout my whole career (that) I want to compete against the best and you look through the whole Indian line-up, the whole squad, there's absolute superstars everywhere," he said. "I know Ashwin, we debuted around similar times and we've competed against each other in



a number of series. I have got nothing but respect for him. He is an absolute master in the craft of off-spin bowling and it's been an absolute privilege to play against him and learn off him," said Lyon. All-rounder Cameron Green reckoned the five-Test series

between India and Australia starting on November 22 at Perth could be a "preview" for the final of the World Test Championship next year. India lead the WTC table for 2023-25 cycle with 68.52 percentage points and 74 points, followed by Australia

with 62.50 percentage points and 90 points. The WTC final will be played at Lord's from June 11-15 next year and could feature both the current top two teams once again. India have featured in the summit clashes of the WTC on both occasions but have lost to New Zealand (2019-21) and Australia (2021-23). "Every single point is pretty crucial for the World Test Championship. Any way you can kind of (or) get an idea of (to) how to get one up on your opponent, we'll try and take," Green said. "If it is a bit of a preview for a World Test Championship final again, yeah, we've been trying to get as much information out of India and see how we can win it again," he added.



Neeraj Chopra qualifies for Diamond League season finale in Brussels

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's two-time Olympic medal-winning javelin throw star Neeraj Chopra has qualified for this month's season finale of the prestigious Diamond League after finishing fourth in the overall standings at the end of its 14 series meetings across the world. The season finale will be a two-day affair on September 13 and 14 in Brussels. Chopra accumulated 14 points from his two second-place finishes in the one-day meets held in Doha and Lausanne. He skipped the last series meet in Zurich on Thursday. The 26-year-old is two points

drift of Czechia's Jakub Vadlech. Grenada's Anderson Peters and German star Julian Weber occupy the top two spots with 29 and 21 points respectively. Peters had pipped Weber in the Zurich meet. Chopra, who won gold in the Tokyo Olympics in 2021 and added a silver to his kitty in the Paris edition last month, has been struggling with his fitness this season. The Haryana-lad has talked about a groin injury troubling him since before the Olympic Games that has come in the way of his quest to hit the 90m mark. The Indian finished second in the Lausanne Diamond Leg, bested by Peters, who threw 90.61m. In Paris Olympics, Pakistan's Arshad Nadeem had

taken the gold with a monster throw of 92.97m. "First goal, go to the doctor and make my groin 100 per cent fit and also I will be technically better and try to throw far again," he had said last month about his plans for this year and the coming one. Chopra had won the Lausanne leg in 2022 and 2023 and finished second behind Vadlech in the winner-takes-all finale in Eugene, USA, last year. Each Diamond League season final champion is awarded a prestigious "Diamond Trophy", USD 30,000 prize money and a wild card for the World Athletics Championships. The DL finale will mark the end of Chopra's season.

Vikram Rathour, Rangana Herath added to New Zealand coaching staff

PTI ■ AUCKLAND

Former India batting coach Vikram Rathour and Sri Lanka spin great Rangana Herath were on Friday added to New Zealand's coaching staff ahead of Tests against Afghanistan and Sri Lanka. New Zealand will play a one-off Test against Afghanistan before heading to Sri Lanka for a two-Test series. The one-off Test against the Afghans will be held at the Greater Noida Sports Complex Ground from September 9 to 13. The Kiwis are also due to play a three-Test series against India in October-November. While Herath has been appointed for Tests against Afghanistan and Sri Lanka as New Zealand's spin bowling coach, Rathour will be with the Kiwi side only for the contest against Afghanistan.



Rathour had a successful run as India's batting coach under head coach Rahul Dravid. His tenure ended after India's T20 World Cup win in June this year. The addition of Rathour and Herath

was announced by New Zealand Cricket on their website. "Sri Lankan spin maestro Rangana Herath has been appointed as spin-bowling coach for the three upcoming

Tests in Asia, replacing former Pakistan spinner and coach Saqlain Mushtaq who was originally announced to fill the temporary role before pulling out to take up a position with the Pakistan Cricket Board," New Zealand Cricket said in a statement. Head coach Gary Stead said, "We're really excited to introduce Rangana and Vikram into our Test group." "Both men are held in high regard in the world of cricket and I know our players are really looking forward to the opportunity to learn from them." Stead hoped Herath's expertise as a left-arm spinner will help New Zealand's Ajaz Patel, Mitchell Santner and Rachin Ravindra. "For our three left-arm orthodox spinners in particular, Ajaz, Mitch and Rachin, having the chance to work with Rangana across three Tests on the sub-continent will be hugely beneficial," he said.



Gagan Narang lauds performance of Indian athletes at Paris Paralympics

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

London Games bronze medalist shooter and India's Chef de Mission at the Paris Olympics, Gagan Narang on Friday heaped praise on the country's para athletes for their performance in the ongoing Paralympics. The Indian Paralympic contingent has already bagged a record 25 medals in this edition of the quadrennial showpiece with 5 gold, 9 silver and 11 bronze and is currently placed at the 16th position in the medal tally. When asked about his analysis of the Paris Olympic Games, the former shooter said he hasn't done it yet. "I haven't done my analysis of the Paris Olympics yet, everybody has spoken about it. But the most important thing right now is that in the

Paralympics we are performing well, we are on the 16th position today. "A fantastic effort by our Paralympians. They surpassed the Tokyo Paralympics medal tally, looking forward for more medals," Narang told PTI Videos on the sidelines of the Media Photojournalist Trust's photo exhibition event at the Press Club of India. Narang also shared his thoughts on his love for photography and expressed his admiration for the photos he saw at the exhibition. "Fantastic exhibition indeed, photographers are lifeline of journalism. They give us a perspective and no AI (Artificial Intelligence) can replace them. I wish, pray and help the association to do this function every year. Fantastic effort and great pictures," he concluded.

Kerala seeks football collaboration with Argentina

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Football-crazy Kerala is seeking collaboration with the Argentine Football Association (AFA), with a high-level delegation headed by State Sports Minister V Abdurahiman holding a meeting with its office-bearers in Madrid, Spain. In a Facebook post, Abdurahiman, who is currently in Madrid, said on Friday that the collaboration with AFA will be a huge investment for Kerala and expressed his desire to make this a reality as soon as possible. "The possibility of considering Kerala as a venue for international friendly matches



was discussed. As part of this, the association representatives expressed interest in visiting Kerala soon. AFA also expressed interest in setting up football academies in Kerala in collaboration with the state government," he said. According to the minister, the AFA said that the Argentine fan community in Kerala has always been warmly

welcomed. Commenting on their meeting, the AFA said: "Together with the delegation from the Government of Kerala, headed by V Abdurahiman, Minister of Sports, we had the opportunity to share initiatives and projects that will surely materialize in the short term." In recent years, the association has established itself as one of

the most important and popular sports brands in this strategic market through its global expansion strategy, it said in a statement. "In this context, our institution is working on developing sports and commercial projects in different parts of the country, with the aim of continuing to expand our brand and being closer to the fans of the Argentine National Team in India," it added. The AFA also thanked the Government of Kerala for "this important visit". Meanwhile, the Abdurahiman-led delegation also visited various sports development centres in Madrid and met with officials from the Spanish Higher Sports Council.

Australia stunned by Bahrain in World Cup qualifying as Palestinians draw with South Korea

AP ■ SEOUL

Australia fell to a shock 1-0 loss to Bahrain at home in the opening game of the third round of Asian World Cup qualifying. Meanwhile, South Korea was held to 0-0 by the Palestinians in Seoul. Despite losing all six previous games against Australia, Bahrain won thanks to an own goal from Harry Souttar with a minute remaining on the Gold Coast. Abdulla Al-Khalasi's cross from the left side of the area hit the defender and flew past goalkeeper Mat Ryan. Australia dominated the game but was reduced to 10 men when Kusini Yengi was red-carded after 77 minutes for a reckless tackle. "It's not the way that we want to start our campaign, a loss at



home, but we have to go away and improve," Australia winger Craig Goodwin said. "We have to look at the positives. This is the first game, there are nine games to go." Bahrain is second in Group C behind Japan, which thrashed China 7-0 in Saitama. First-half headers from midfielder Wataru Endo and winger Kaoru Mitoma put Japan in control by the break.

Indian Hockey can aim for gold in next Olympics: Sreejesh

PTI ■ PATNA

Riding high on the success of winning a bronze medal in Paris - ending a four-decade-long dry spell - the Indian hockey team now aims to build on this momentum with hopes of clinching gold at the Los Angeles Olympics in 2028, ace goalkeeper P R Sreejesh said on Friday. The former national team captain, who announced his retirement after the Paris Olympics, told journalists in the Bihar capital that he saw the state as the future "sports hub". "I see many positive developments in Bihar, particularly at the sports complex in Rajgir, which now features an astro turf and will host the women's Asian Cup Trophy tournament later



this year," Sreejesh remarked. He added, "I see no reason why Bihar cannot emerge as the country's next sports hub. I have met sports department officials here and found many initiatives, like establishment of a sports university, quite impressive". Sreejesh, who has taken up a

new assignment as the coach for the junior men's hockey team, said he had set his eyes on the next Asia Cup and revealed that he was drawing inspiration from former cricket team captain Rahul Dravid. After a successful playing career, Dravid, known as "The Wall" for his steadfast batting, has made significant contributions as head coach of the Indian cricket team, helping it to new heights. Sreejesh broke into a wide grin that like his idol, his own skills earned him the sobriquet "The Great Wall of Indian Hockey". At 36, Sreejesh reminisced about his experiences at the Paris Olympics and expressed hope that the national team would "revive the old glory of Indian hockey" by aiming for gold in

Los Angeles and performing well in tournaments leading up to the 2028 Games.

Errani and Vavassori win US Open mixed doubles title in Young's final match before retiring

AP ■ NEW YORK

Sara Errani and Andrea Vavassori won the U.S. Open mixed doubles title with a 7-6 (0), 7-5 victory Thursday over Taylor Townsend and Donald Young, who fell just short of a Grand Slam title in his final match before retiring. Errani, who won a career Grand Slam in women's doubles with fellow Italian Roberta Vinci, added her first career mixed doubles title to the Olympic gold medal in women's doubles she won last month with Jasmine Paolini. "It's incredible for me this year. It's amazing," Errani said. Townsend and Young, who have been friends since they were kids, were given a wild card into the event for what was the 35-year-old Young's

final tournament. The former top-ranked junior hadn't played much in recent years, having made the switch to pickleball. "Obviously wasn't the result we wanted," Young said, "but I can't think of a better spot, place to go out in, having watched that as a kid, and playing with someone I've known our whole life. It's pretty cool for me." He and Townsend made their way through the draw, knocking off defending champions Anna Danilina and Harri Heliövarra in the quarterfinals. But Errani and Vavassori, the No. 3 seeds, dominated the tiebreaker and then won the match by breaking Townsend's serve. Errani hadn't played a mixed doubles event for eight years before



partnering with Vavassori at Wimbledon. They were knocked out in the first round, then reached the quarterfinals at the Olympics before coming to New York. Young's parents coached Townsend, who lost in the women's doubles semifinals with Katerina Siniakova after they won the Wimbledon title.

The 28-year-old Townsend said after the match that she hoped fans seeing two Black players in the finals, after Coco Gauff won the women's title in Flushing Meadows last year and Frances Tiafoe in the men's semifinals Friday, would inspire more of them to play. Young was then presented with a framed collage of photos of himself playing at the U.S. Open. "For me, Donald and I, we go so far back. I mean, in life in general," Townsend said. "It's not the end. We both live in Atlanta, so I'm going to see him a ton and follow what he's doing in the next chapter. But it's cool to be able to close the book this way. Again, being able to leave here with some hardware when a lot of people didn't, that's the most special thing."

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS DIVISION, KUCHINDA
"e" Procurement Notice for Building Works
Identification No Online Tender / 01 / RWD, Kuchinda / 2024-25.

O-248

- Name of the work :: Building Works
- Total Number of Works :: 3 Nos.
- Class of Contractor :: B, C & D Class of Contractor
- Period of Completion :: 04 and 06 calendar months
- Availability of Tender online For bidding :: Dt.11.09.2024 to Dt.23.09.2024
- Last date & time of seeking tender clarification :: Dt.21.09.2024 at 5.00 A.M
- Date & time of opening of tender :: Dt.24.09.2024 at 11.00 A.M

Other details can be seen from Detailed notice inviting Tenders, available in website www.tendersodisha.gov.in

Corrigendum if any shall only be published in the above website.

OIPR-25151/11/0001/2425 Superintending Engineer
Rural Works Division,
Kuchinda

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA "e" PROCUREMENT NOTICE
Bid Identification No. 04 of 2024-25

The Executive Engineer RWS&S Division, Balangir on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites Percentage bid through e - Procurement in double cover system according to norm of e - Procurement system in online mode for the different work in different blocks under Balangir District.

- Nature of Work: - Construction of Percolation well in different villages of Balangir District.
- Total No of work :- 03 Nos.
- Estimated Cost :- Rs. 29.41 Lakhs to 30.87 lakhs
- Eligible Class of Contractor: - "B & C" Contractor.
- Period of Completion: - Three Month.
- Other Details

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender online for bidding	
		From	To
Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Balangir	04 of 2024-25	Dt. 11.09.2024 At. 11.00 Hrs	Dt. 25.09.2024 Up to. 17.00 Hrs

Further details can be had in the DTCN available in the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in

OIPR-25033/11/0004/2425 Executive Engineer
RWS&S Division, Balangir