



OPINION 6 MODI@74: A JOURNEY OF TRIUMPHS AND CHALLENGES

WORLD 8 CANADA CUTS STUDY PERMITS FOR FOREIGN STUDENTS

MONEY 10 BANKING SECTOR TO PLAY MAJOR ROLE IN INDIA'S DEVELOPMENT: FM

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ASHWIN-JADEJA TANGO SAVES INDIA

12 SPORTS

Cong, NC celebrated in Pak: Modi

JAMMU AND KASHMIR ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a roadshow for J and K Assembly elections, at Katra in Reasi district, Jammu and Kashmir, Thursday

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ KATRA

Training his guns on the alliance partners-- Congress and the National Conference, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Thursday launched a fierce attack saying that Pakistan is doing 'balle-balle' over their manifesto for the assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir.

Devi Shrine, PM Modi said, "Nobody is giving them (Congress and National Conference) any importance here. But in Pakistan, inki balle balle ho rahi hai (they are being celebrated)." Modi also accused the alliance partners of aligning with Pakistan's interests. The Prime Minister's remarks follow Pakistan's Defence Minister Khwaja Asif's statement in an interview in which he said that Pakistan and the NC-Congress alliance were on the same page on the

restoration of Article 370. "They (Congress-National Conference) are declaring that they will bring back Article 370. They want to return to the era of bloodshed. The neighbouring country is asking questions about it. Pakistan seems to be happy with the Congress-National Conference's manifesto. The Defence Minister of Pakistan has openly supported it. The agenda of Congress and the National Conference aligns with Pakistan's agenda," PM

Modi said at the rally in Katra. He said that Pakistan has itself exposed the Congress and the National Conference. He went on to say that the BJP government will not allow the implementation of Pakistan's agenda in Jammu and Kashmir. "Pakistan itself has exposed the Congress and the National Conference. They wanted to implement Pakistan's agenda here... We will not allow the implementation of Pakistan's agenda in Jammu and Kashmir. No power in the world can bring back Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir". PM Modi also sounded a note of caution saying that a vote for Congress would lead to the reinstatement of Article 370, which he said would pave the way for violence to return to the Valley. "Every vote given to Congress will implement the manifesto of PDP and NC. PM Modi said that the upcoming elections will be a turning point for the region, framing the choice as one that will define the future of Jammu and Kashmir. This election is about choosing Jammu and Kashmir's future," PM Modi said

Addressing another rally earlier inside the fortified Sheri-Kashmir stadium in Srinagar, PM Modi praised the high voter turnout in the first phase stating that it represents a rejection of parties that 'sympathise with stone pelters and terrorists'.



A Lebanese army bomb disposal specialist wearing a protective gear prepares, with his comrade, to detonate a walkie-talkie that was found at the parking of the American University Hospital, in Beirut, Lebanon AP/PTI

Hezbollah fires new barrage into northern Israel

AP ■ BEIRUT

Hezbollah fired a new barrage into northern Israel on Thursday, continuing its drumbeat of exchanges with the Israeli military as fears of a greater war rise after hundreds of electronic devices exploded in Lebanon, killing at least 32 people and wounding more than 3,000 others. The device explosions appeared to be the culmination of a monthslong operation by Israel to target as many Hezbollah members as possible all at once. Over two days, pagers and walkie-talkies used by Hezbollah detonated, wounding and even crippling some fighters, but also maiming civilians connected to the group's social branches and killing at least two children. It was unclear how the attack fit into warnings by Israeli leaders in recent weeks that they could launch a stepped-up military operation against Hezbollah, Lebanon's strongest armed force. The Israeli government has called it a war aim to end the Iranian-backed group's crossborder fire in order to allow tens of thousands of Israelis to return to homes near the border.

India takes strong objection to US court's summons over Pannun's suit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Taking strong objection to a US court's summons to the Indian government over Khalistani terrorist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun's civil suit alleging a plot to murder him, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri on Thursday termed it as "unwarranted" and "unsubstantiated imputations."

The US District Court for Southern District of New York named the Government of India, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval(NSA) and former R&AW chief Samant Goel, in the summons. Foreign Secretary Misri said, "As we've said earlier, these are completely unwarranted and unsubstantiated imputations. Now that this particular case has been lodged, it doesn't change our views about the underlying situation. I would only invite your attention to the person behind this particular case whose antecedents are well known." "I would also underline the fact that the organisation so-called that this person represents is an unlawful organisation, has been declared as such under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act of 1967 and it has been done so on account of its involvement in anti-national and subversive activities aimed at disrupting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India," he added. Pannun heads the radical Sikhs for Justice and is known to put out incendiary speeches and threats against Indian leaders and institutions. New Delhi designated him a terrorist in 2020. Earlier, the US District Court for Southern District of New York named



the Government of India, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, former R&AW chief Samant Goel, in the summons. The summons also named Indian businessman Nikhil Gupta and R&AW agent Vikram Yadav and seeks a reply within 21 days. In November, the UK newspaper Financial Times reported that the US had thwarted a plot to kill Pannun, who holds dual citizenship in the US and Canada. Officials in the Joe Biden administration later confirmed this. In its first response, the External Affairs Ministry had said it is a "matter of concern" and stressed that India has launched a high-level probe. "As regards the case against an individual that has been filed in a US court, allegedly linking him to an Indian official, this is a matter of concern. We have said that this is also contrary to government policy," then MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi had said.

India 'effective' in terror, money laundering combat, says FATF

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Global anti-money laundering and terror financing body FATF on Thursday launched its much-awaited mutual evaluation report on India, saying the country's systems were "effective" but "major improvements" were required to strengthen prosecution in these cases. The 368-page report was released after the assessment was adopted by the Paris-headquartered body at its June plenary meeting. The last such review of India's combating of money laundering and terror financing regime was published in 2010. The report, which comes after an on-site visit of FATF experts to India last November, has placed the country in the "regular follow up" category, a distinction shared by only four other G20 countries. India will undergo its next evaluation in 2031. The report said India implemented such an anti-money laundering (AML) and combating financing of terror (CFT) system that was effective in many respects. It, however, said "major improvements" were required to strengthen the prosecution in money laundering and



terror financing cases. It said improvements in the system were also required to protect the non-profit sector from terror abuse. "India's main sources of money laundering originate from within, from illegal activities committed within country," it said, adding the country faced a "disparate" range of terror threats, most significantly from ISIL (Islamic State or ISIS) or AQ-linked groups (Al Qaeda) active in and around Jammu and Kashmir. The report analyses the level of compliance with the FATF 40 Recommendations and the level of effectiveness of India's AML/CFT system, and provides recommendations on how the system can be strengthened. Finance ministry Additional Secretary (Revenue) Vivek Agarwal said global crime

watchdog FATF has given high rating to India on parameters, including financial intelligence, anti money laundering and terror financing risks, as well as disclosure of beneficial ownership. Of the recommendations made by FATF, fast tracking trials in terror financing and money laundering cases is important. Rest of the recommendations are ancillary in nature, Agarwal said. "We have passed the test with distinction," Agarwal said, adding since India is in regular follow up as per FATF, the country may report risk assessment after three year. "But there is no compulsion on us," Agarwal said. On possibility of terror financing abuse by not-for-profit organisations (NPO), Agarwal said FATF has said that preventive measures should be taken to check terror financing. The income tax department has used multiple data points to identify "at risk" NPOs and there is ongoing engagement with NPOs to sensitise them so that they are not used as a medium for financing terror, Agarwal said. "India has no low rating (by FATF) on any parameter... It is either high rating or medium rating," Agarwal added.



A damaged SUV after it crashed into a guardrail, in New Delhi, Thursday, Sept. 19, 2024. At least two people suffered injuries in the accident, according to officials PTI

Drunken college goers meet mishap

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

A first year college student of Delhi University died, one was grievously injured while three received minor injuries when their speeding SUV crashed into a guardrail that pierced through the middle of the vehicle near Rajghat in north Delhi on early Thursday. The deceased has been identified as a 19 year old Aishwarya Pandey, who was sitting just behind the driver seat. He is a first-year student at Delhi University's Dyal Singh College and hailed from Uttar Pradesh's Etawah. He had rented the car for a night to celebrate his birthday. According to police, the black coloured Hyundai Venue car had five occupants, all students of Delhi University colleges, who were returning from a birthday party at a pub in neighbouring Gurugram. Prima facie, it appears that the car was being driven at a high

speed and the driver lost control leading to the crash, police said, adding that the incident occurred on the stretch of road from Shanti Van to Geeta Colony. "The car was going from Shanti Van Red light towards Geeta Colony, when it reached at ISBT Slip road at around 05.52 am where it collided with the divider," DCP North Manoj Kumar Meena said. "On Thursday, a call was received of an accident on the road from Shanti Van to Geeta Colony. It was subsequently found that one Aishwarya Mishra to celebrate his birthday, along with his friends 19 years old Aishwarya Pandey, who was a first year student at Deshbandhu College, and 20 year old Keshav, second year student at Dyal Singh College, rented a Hyundai Venue for the night at Rs 1500 from Shadipur," he said.

Majhi presents his govt's 100-day report card

NALINI SAHU ■ PURI



Says Naveen admn fell because of its arrogance

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and his Council of Ministers on Thursday chose pilgrim city Puri to present a comprehensive report on his government's achievements in the first 100 days in office. The CM said the new BJP government has tried to deliver on the party's all pre-poll promises and thereby has succeeded in winning the hearts of the people. He outlined the opening of the four gates of Jagannath Temple at Puri for devotees and re-opening of the temple's Ratna Bhandar after a gap of 40 years, launching of women welfare initiative Subhadra Yojana, hike of paddy's minimum support price to Rs 3,100 per quintal and attracting investment to the tune of Rs 45,000 crore as his government's major accomplishments during this period. "The first 100 days has been a period of fulfilment of our pre-poll promises. Besides, we

have been trying to ensure that the governance reaches to the doorsteps of the people," said the CM. Majhi said that because of the arrogance of the previous Naveen Patnaik government, the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Ayushman Bharat Yojana could not be implemented in Odisha. As a result, Odia people living in other States could not avail the benefits of this scheme. The CM released a booklet which contained a graphical presentation of his government's achievements and activities in the first hundred days. "The previous government was quite haughty and arrogant. It was also thoroughly corrupt and inefficient. It did not hesitate to misuse the name of Lord Jagannath to get votes. However, Lord Jagannath does not tolerate such low-level politics and the Lord punished the BJD government," Majhi observed. Deputy Chief Ministers Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo and Pravatī Parida, Health Minister Mukesh Mahaling, BJP national spokesperson and Puri MP Dr Sambit Patra, local MLAs and BJP State party president Manmohan Samal were, among others, present on the podium.

'I was sexually assaulted by IIC of police station'

Alleges Army Major's fiancée SAROJ MISHRA ■ BHUBANESWAR

In a shocking development in the case of assault and arrest of Sikh Regiment Army officer Major Gurvansh Singh and his fiancée at the Bharatpur police station, the woman victim on Thursday alleged sexual harassment by on-duty police officers in the police station. Talking to the media after a health checkup at the All India Institute of Medical Science here, the fiancée of the Army officer said, "I was physically and sexually assaulted by the on-duty police officers includ-

ing the Bharatpur PS IIC." Narrating her ordeal with tears in her eyes, she said, "After closing my restaurant at around 1 am on September 15, I was returning with Gurvansh when some miscreants obstructed us and misbehaved with us." "Somehow, we managed to escape from them and reached Bharatpur police station to register a complaint in this regard. After reaching the police station, we found a woman Constable at the reception wearing a night dress. When we urged her to register the complaint, she started to hurl abuses at us," she alleged. "After some time, a male officer

came and forcibly put Gurvansh in the lockup. When I requested the cop to release him saying that you cannot keep an Army officer in custody as it is unlawful, two women officers dragged me by holding my hair and started thrashing me. In between, a woman officer tried to strangle my throat; and in self-defence, I bit her hand," she said. "Later, they tied my hands with my jacket and legs with a scarf of a woman Constable. They put me in a room. Moments later, a male officer sexually assaulted me. At around 6 am, the IIC came and started assaulting me sexually," she alleged.

Custodial abuse of Army Major, fiancée DGP orders police probe into attack on couple

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Even as the alleged custodial abuse of an Indian Army officer and his fiancée in the Bharatpur police station in Bhubaneswar continues to hit headlines and a Crime Branch investigation into the incident is underway, DGP YB Khurania on Thursday ordered a thorough police probe into the role of the 'roadside Romeos' who also abused and attacked the couple. While the issue started after anti-socials attacked the couple, it took an ugly turn after the cops at the Bharatpur police station allegedly



refused to lodge a complaint based on the statements of the Army Major. Amidst allegations and counter-allegations, Khurania directed police to register a case based on the complaints of the Major and immediately apprehend the miscreants who misbehaved with the couple. The Major has accused the mis-

creants of even assaulting his partner while they were driving home from her workplace in Bhubaneswar. "All the miscreants will be identified and strict action will be taken against them," the DGP assured. The Army officer and his partner had even noted down the registration numbers of one of the vehicles before seeking help of the Bharatpur police. However, contrary to their expectations of swift action, the couple alleged that the police personnel on duty refused to act immediately and also insisted they

first file a written complaint. Tension escalated after the couple urged the police to apprehend the miscreants first, leading to a heated exchange. Soon, the situation worsened after the Army officer's partner was allegedly taken into a separate room and stripped, molested and physically assaulted. Besides, the Army officer was also allegedly detained, physically man-handled and held in custody for over ten hours. The couple was also allegedly pressured to issue an apology before they were released after the intervention of senior Army officials.

State to have medical colleges in each dist Cong protests hate speeches against Rahul

Says Health Minister Mahaling

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
The new BJP government in Odisha is committed to set up medical colleges in every district headquarters of the State, said Health Minister Mukesh Mahaling on Thursday.



to power at the Centre in 2014, he made an agenda that every district in the country will have a medical college."

"Eleven medical colleges are functioning in Odisha offering MBBG UG courses. Two more medical colleges are in the pipeline in Talcher and

Kandhamal. We have a double-engine government and we will definitely set up medical colleges in all district headquarters," Mahaling said.

"The BJP government in Odisha completed 100 days today. We have already prepared a roadmap for enhanced medical education. Recruitment of faculties will be made soon," the Minister added.

Earlier on Wednesday, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi had also said that the government aims to open medical colleges in each of the 30 districts and fill up vacant posts of doctors on a priority basis.

Stages demo before BJP office: Files FIR against saffron leaders in police station

LALIT MOHAN MISHRA ■ BHUBANESWAR

Congress leaders under the leadership of OPCC Steering Committee member and former MLA Mohammad Moquim organised a massive protest rally here and gheraoed the BJP's State office on Thursday condemning the "death threats" against Rahul Gandhi.

More than a thousand Congress leaders and cadres started

the rally from the Congress Bhawan and reached the BJP headquarters, where police prevented them from moving ahead. The leaders included PCC Steering Committee members Barabati-Cuttack MLA Sofia Firdous, Basudevpur MLA Ashok Das, former PCC presidents Niranjan Patnaik, Jayadev Jena, Sarat Pattanayak and Prasad Harichandan, former Union Minister Srikanth Jena, former MLA Sarat Rout, Biswaranjan Mohanty and leaders of the party's youth, women and student wing.

This was the second protest public rally of Odisha Congress after it had gheraoed the Bhubaneswar ED office last



month.

Speaking to the media, Moquim stated that Congress leader and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi has been constantly protesting against the divisive ideology of BJP and RSS and the anti-people governance policies of the Modi govern-

ment for which the Central Government and the BJP have been trying to suppress the voice of Rahul Gandhi by misusing government agencies and engaging its leaders in hate speech against Gandhi.

Recently, Moquim said, BJP leader Tarvinder Singh Marwah, BJP ally MLA Sanjay

Gaikwad, Union Minister Ravneet Bittu and UP Minister Raghuraj Singh gave hate speech against Rahul Gandhi which not only poses serious security threat to Gandhi but also creates social disharmony at a time when Assembly elections are in progress in J&K and Haryana.

He demanded legal action against these hate mongering leaders and said that the Congress would continue to protest if such activities are continued by the BJP.

Later, the Congress leaders proceeded to the Kharavel police station and filed an FIR against the hate mongers under Sections of 351, 352, 353 and 61 of BNS.

2 separate incidents of bomb attacks in city

Miscreants still at large

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Two separate incidents of bomb attacks were reported from the Bapuji Nagar area under the Capital police station in Bhubaneswar on Wednesday night.

Both the attacks occurred in the Kedarpali slum. While no exact motive for the attack was known immediately, it was suspected that the incidents were fallout of past enmity. The first attack was reported from Kedarpali Lane-1 while

the other was reported from Barahampur Street near the Sishu Bhawan.

According to sources, a few youths were standing near Lane-1 when two miscreants came on a bike and hurled bombs at them. Luckily, everyone fled and saved their lives. However, the bomb attack left a minor boy injured who was rushed to the Capital Hospital.

The bomb attacks were captured in a CCTV camera installed in the area. Based on the CCTV footage, police formed a special team to arrest the miscreants. However,

police were yet to arrest the criminals. "We were sitting when they came from nowhere and hurled bombs at us. There were two of them and they were wearing masks. They were riding a Pulsar 220 bike. Both the bombs were thrown by them," said an eyewitness.

Meanwhile, the unprecedented rise in crimes like burglaries, chain snatching and bomb attacks has once again become a matter of concern for the city residents. A few days back, some youths were arrested for creating terror on Janpath by zigzag and reckless driving.

XIMB holds 'Business Excellence Summit'

Joined by corporate world's best minds

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Xavier Institute of Management, Bhubaneswar (XIMB) organised the 6th edition of the annual Business Excellence Summit from September 14 to 15. The theme for the summit was "Redefining Possibilities."

The inaugural event was presided over by Vice Chancellor Fr Antony R. Uvari, S.J., while Deputy Registrar and Chief Financial Officer Fr V Arockia Das, S.J., Associate Dean - Career Advisory Ser-

vices Prof Francis Thomas Castelino, Prof DV Ramana and President - Mercer, Siddhartha Gupta were present.

The welcome address was delivered by the Vice Chancellor while general secretary, Student Executive Council, Swayam Deep Dash introduced the theme of the summit. Gupta spoke on the challenges of corporate capitalism and India's lower consumption rates, urging the audience to think beyond the status quo.

Director and Head of Bid Management, ANZ and India, SAP Subhankar Pattanayak spoke about the similarities and differences between tech-

nological changes over the years. Director, Tech Modernisation, Grant Thornton INDUS, Rajen Mishra, shared valuable insights on the essential skills required to thrive in the corporate world. CRO, Axis Bank, Amit Talgeri highlighted the need to 'redefine possibilities' in banking, aligning with the summit's theme for 2024.

Chief Marketing Officer, Larsen and Toubro Metro Rail Hyderabad Limited Rishi Kumar Verma, Chief Human Resources Officer, Bajaj Housing Finance Limited Sayantani Dutta, Chief People Officer, KiE Square Analytics Ena Khurana, Chief

People Officer, PhonePe Manmeet Sandhu - all alumni of XIMB - joined a group discussion moderated by Professor of Information Systems, Bhaskar Basu. It was followed by a panel discussion moderated by Prof Soumya Sarkar around the theme "Creating a brand from a company perspective and consumer perspective by marketing and people handling".

The second day of the event was presided over by Associate Dean - Career Advisory Services Prof Francis Thomas Castelino. The keynote speaker of the day was Richard Lobo - CPO, Tech Mahindra who focused on innovation

and ethics in the face of rapid technological changes.

Business Development Leader, India Startups at Siemens Digital Sambit Mohanty detailed tech's impact on industries. Chief Evangelist, Fractal Analytics Biju Dominic emphasized that advanced technology alone is insufficient to address human challenges. Professor Shridhar Dash moderated a group discussion shedding light on the decision-making process based on data. The participants included Dr Debabrata Dash, HR Head, Eastern India, ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India, Arnab Pal, Executive Director - HR, Disney Star India.

RSC's Anniversary Week celebration begins 3 from Odisha join Delhi meet on old pension

STEM exhibition inaugurated

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Regional Science Centre (RSC), Bhubaneswar is holding its 36th Anniversary Week celebration from September 17 to 23.

On this occasion, a number of activities and competitions like "Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Exhibition", "Interactive Lecture on AI Potential and Concerns", programme like "Meet the Scientists" and many Outreach Science Demonstration programmes have been planned for the visitors, particularly students.



The main objective of the celebration is to highlight the role of the Science Centre as a learning platform which helps to nurture scientific enquiry and analytical thinking in the society.

To encourage students' participation in STEM exhibition, Dr Bhagyalipi Malla, Superin-

tendent Odisha State Museum, attended the function as chief guest and interacted with the students. The students showcased their STEM-based 3D models, catering to various issues, S&T challenges with a problem-solving approach.

Regional Science Centre

Project Coordinator Kapil Jain is hopeful that the institution will continue to expand this S&T-based learning ecosystem with an inclusive approach to reach out to every corner of the society. The programme concluded with a vote of thanks by Education Officer Rabindra N Marandi.

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A Central Executive Meeting of the National Old Pension Campaign Organization was convened on December 15 last in New Delhi. The primary objective was to advocate forcefully for the restoration of old pension benefits for government employees across India, a longstanding demand that has garnered significant support from various employee unions and organizations nationwide.

Representing the Odisha State, a delegation of three members led by State NM OPS Committee president Bijay Malla, state committee vice presidents Bankim Chandra Sagar and



Priyabata Nayak participated in the meeting. The decision to organize a grand-scale rally in Delhi, aptly named "Delhi Chalao," was taken to bolster State-level organisations, amplify awareness about the pressing issue of old pensions, and exert pressure on the

Central Government to address the matter promptly and decisively.

A comprehensive conference is scheduled to be held to disseminate information about the campaign to government employees, encouraging their active participation and solidarity.

Additionally, a significant milestone is marked on September 26, when claim letters will be issued through the District Magistrate, a crucial step in the process of seeking justice for affected employees and ensuring that they receive the pension benefits they rightfully deserve.

SOCIAL CANVAS

Land distribution among poor still incomplete in Odisha

Right to housing is a fundamental right but unfortunately still after 76 years of independence when we are celebrating Amrutk, there is a sizeable number poor families from the marginalised sections in rural areas having no homestead Patta-land to securely construct houses. Most of them are living on the Government or community land since generations which have not been recorded in their names because there were no survey and settlement initiatives by the Revenue Department.

Though homestead land is a basic necessity for a dignified life and livelihood, the Revenue Department says that there are about three lakh families in the State who are landless though the real number is much more. A majority of these homestead-less families belong to the Dalit, Adivasi, minority and SEBC communities of rural and urban areas who have been denied land right since generations.

There are many tiny hamlets consisting of six to ten Dalit fami-



MANAS JENA

lies living amidst paddy fields, coconut stretches and on banks of irrigation canals and rivers. Hundreds of years back, their forefathers came there to serve the landlords and since then they got stuck there as bonded labourers. Later on though their family sizes grew numerically but they didn't get any legal sanction either from the ex-

Zamindar or the Revenue authorities to own that land though they have been staying there since generations.

Odisha has 53,845 revenue villages, about 4,091 Pada villages and urban locations including NACs, Municipalities and Municipal Corporations having thousands of homeless families living in subhuman conditions in the slums and on outskirts of the city areas. Land ownership including homestead land was central to anti-British and anti-feudal struggles against the Gadajats kings and the British in almost all 26 Gadajats areas which were later merged in Odisha in 1948.

The landless poor agricultural workers mostly Dalits, had demanded getting land of their own to build houses and be liberated from the yoke of Zamindars. The framers of the Constitution of India, recognizing the problem, have made provisions of radical land reforms. Land being a State subject, it depends much on the State Government, though there are Central

guidelines and schemes, for fair and equitable land distribution among the poor and landless under various housing programmes. The Odisha Government brought two important legislations, i.e., the Odisha land Settlement Act, 1962 and the Odisha Prevention of land Encroachment Act, 1972 to settle homestead land with the landless poor both in rural and urban areas. The laws worked very effectively during the 1980s in spite of their limitations, but they failed to reach out to all homestead-less families.

Realising the situation, the State Government launched a programme in a mission mode in the name of Vasundhara since 2007, when there was BJP-BJD alliance Government, with the objective to make the State homestead landless-free, though the programme is limited to rural areas only. But again after 18 years, the BJP Government is repeating the old promises they made during their alliance Government. The approach of the Government in-

cludes both land settlement and wherever settlement is not possible the assigned land like ceiling surplus and wasteland would be distributed for homestead purposes. In addition to this, there is also Bhoodian land available for distribution.

The FRA also expanded the scope of forestland distribution for the Adivasis and other traditional forest dwellers. The Union Ministry of Rural Development has issued an order to the States to purchase private land for prospective beneficiaries of the PMAY. The Union Ministry of Rural Development also issued directives to all States, including Odisha, to bring a legislation integrating several laws to avoid confusion exclusively to solve the homestead landless issues and recognizing the rights of landless people occupying Government land and to issue titles in the name of women.

The 12th Plan document of the Planning Commission of India strongly recommends continuing

with the approach to ensure homestead land and housing for all landless poor. However, in spite of all such legal provisions and programmes, the homestead land distribution process is very slow. Even, the beneficiaries are waiting for years together to get the Patta. It is almost in all Tahsils that there are many landless people who have only Patta waiting for demarcation of their land since long.

They often visit the Tehsil office but are harassed by the Revenue officials. Though a Government order has been issued to provide ten decimals of land but in reality almost all the beneficiaries have got only four decimals. A provision of ten decimals of land was considered because along with housing the beneficiaries could have backyard vegetable gardens to improve their livelihood. The Tahsil offices are demanding court fee from the landless applicants applying for homestead land under Form 1 of the OGLS Act, 1962. It is a burden on a beneficiary. The revenue officials

are not proactive in dealing with the process of submission of application. They work in a very careless manner and are not willing to provide acknowledgement receipt to the applicants. For the last three decades the State Government has been busy in evicting people from their homestead land to set up industry and mining.

Thousands of hectares of land were leased out to private companies in the name of employment generation and development while the poor and historically marginalized people have been harassed for decades.

The land once demarcated to distribute among the poor are being handed over to companies. The land reform agenda has slowed down in the interests of private corporations. States like Odisha should seriously think over it because a majority of homestead-less rural and urban families are poor and belong to the marginalised communities.

(manasbbs15gmail.com)

HLCAs clears 12 projects worth Rs 39,000 cr

To generate employment for 17,098 persons

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
The State Government has approved 12 key industrial projects worth over Rs 39,000 crore during the 36th High-Level Clearance Authority (HLCA) meeting held under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Wednesday. The government sanctioned a total investment of Rs 39,271.50 crore, which is expected to generate employment opportunities for 17,098 persons across various sectors. Officials said the Chief Minister had set a target of attracting industrial investments to the tune of Rs 2.5 lakh crore in the coming five years.

However, in the first 100 days of the new government itself, 90 percent of the annual target has been achieved, as investments of Rs 44,682.92 crore have already been approved, generating employment opportunities for 36,462 persons. Earlier, the State-Level Single Window Authority meeting held in July had approved projects spanning a wide range of industries, including ESDM, steel, metal downstream, chemicals, cement, green ammonia, and rubber/plastics. These projects, strategically located in eight districts such as Khordha, Dhenkanal, Jagatsinghpur, Cuttack, Sambalpur, Ganjam, Baleswar and Keonjhar are poised to enhance Odisha's manufacturing capabilities and significantly contribute to the state's economic development.

"This is our first HLCA meeting under the new government, and I am honoured to lead this significant event," Majhi said. Silectric Semiconductor Manufacturing Pvt Ltd received approval for a Silicon Carbide Device manufacturing unit, while Heterogeneous Integration Packaging Solutions Private Limited will establish a manufacturing plant for glass substrates in the form of wafers for semiconductor packaging. Additionally, Kaynes Circuits India Pvt Ltd received approval of the HLCA for a manufacturing unit for the production of Printed Circuit Boards (PCBs). All these projects will be located in Khurda, with a combined investment of Rs 6355.50 crore.

In the chemicals sector, Laxmi Organic Industries Ltd will set up a Synthetic Organic Chemicals Manufacturing unit in Jagatsinghpur while Epigral Limited will establish a chemical manufacturing unit in the same district. Together, these projects represent an investment of Rs 5,355.00 crore. In the metal downstream sector, Electrosteel Castings Limited would establish a 500,000 MT Ductile Iron Pipe manufacturing plant in Dhenkanal, while Jindal (India) Limited would set up a steel pipe processing facility in Dhenkanal to produce ERW pipes. Besides, Bhusan Power and Steel Limited will create a metal downstream complex in Sambalpur. These three approved projects represent a

combined investment of Rs 12,191.00 crore. The steel sector would see investment from Shyam Steel Manufacturing Limited's 0.5 MTPA integrated steel plant in Keonjhar with an investment of Rs 2,510.00 crore. The cement sector would benefit from Ambuja Concrete North's Cement grinding unit in Cuttack, with an investment of Rs 1,400.00 crore. The green ammonia sector includes Torrent Green Hydrogen Private Limited's green ammonia project in Ganjam with a significant investment of Rs 10,260.00 crore. In the rubber or plastics sector, Dalmia Bharat Refractories Limited would set up a manufacturing unit for tyres, tubes and flaps in Baleswar with an investment of Rs 1,200 crore.

'There's need to translate Tagore into Odia'

2-day talk held at CUO

PNS ■ KORAPUT

A two-day national seminar titled "The Role of Magazines and Periodicals of Odisha for Social Prosperity" began on September 17 at the Central University of Odisha (CUO). The seminar, organized by the Department of Odia Language and Literature in collaboration with Visva Bharati Praktani, Odisha, was inaugurated by CUO VC Prof Chakradhar Tripathi. The opening ceremony featured Dr Mihir Kumar Sahu, president of Visva Bharati Praktani, Odisha, as the chief guest and Dr Laxmikant Tripathy, president, Fakir Mohan Sahitya Parisad, as the chief speaker. The event was also graced by Prof NC Panda, Registrar I/c, and Prof VC Jha, Advisor-Academic and Administration, who attended as guests of honour. Dr Rudrani



Mohanty, Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Odia Language and Literature, coordinated the seminar and delivered the welcome address. VC Prof Tripathi underscored the importance of the visionary work of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, advocating for the translation of Tagore's ideas into Odia literature. He highlighted the contributions of social reformers such as Utkalmani Gopabandhu Dash and recommended translating these works into English, Hindi, and other languages to broaden their reach. Dr Sahu emphasized the role of periodicals in promoting regional literature and noted

that alumni of institutions like CUO could play a pivotal role in societal development. Dr Tripathy provided a historical overview of Odisha's periodicals, tracing their evolution from Kujibara Partika to contemporary publications and their impact on social reform. Prof Jha discussed the influence of Buddhist literature on social change and drew parallels with the role of periodicals during India's freedom struggle. He suggested that the seminar's outcomes should be documented to inform future policy decisions. Prof Panda spoke on the transformative potential of literature in various languages, advocating for translations to foster a constructive societal mindset.

In Jajpur

Anganwadi Supervisor missing in river

Jumped into water body after family feud

PNS ■ JAJPUR
A woman went missing after she jumped into the Kharasrota river in the Jajpur Sadar police station area on Thursday. A search operation was underway. The woman was identified as Mandakini Samal, a resident of Adampur village in Rasulpur tehsil in the district. She reportedly jumped into the river parking her two-wheeler vehicle, shoes and

mobile phone on a bridge at Baruan. The incident took place at around 6.30 am. Fire Service personnel launched a search operation in the river. It was obscure under which circumstances the woman jumped into the river to end her life, a local said. A source said Mandakini, an Anganwadi Supervisor at Rasulpur, had married in Santara. However, she was staying separately at a rented house in Jajpur as the relationship between the couple was strained. She was suspected to have jumped into the river over a family feud.

Dowry torture in Keonjhar

Woman gets lifer for killing daughter-in-law

NARESH PATTANAYAK ■ KEONJHAR
In a dowry torture incident, Keonjhar District Session Judge Ashok Kumar Panda sentenced life imprisonment and slammed fine of Rs 5,000 on Chandini Mohanta for killing her daughter-in-law, by setting her ablaze by pouring kerosene. In the event of non payment of fine, the court ordered her to undergo two months additional imprisonment. The incident took place in the year 2021 in Sadar police station area. According to sources, Sunil Kumar Mahanta, son of Jagbandhu Mahanta of Keonjhar sadar police station area, married to Manasi Mohanta (21) in the



year 2018. They have a daughter. However, after a few days, Sunil went to jail in a case. When Sunil went to jail, father-in-law Jagbandhu (58) and mother-in-law Chandini (52) started torturing Manasi. They beat Manasi almost every day. After a lot of torture, Manasi was thrown out of the house. On the evening of February 4, 2021, Jagbandhu and Chandini tied Manasi's hands and legs and smashed her with a brick. Then they poured kerosene and set her on fire. As Manasi's body caught fire, he held Jagbandhu's leg who also sustained burn injury. Meanwhile, Chandini tried to rescue her husband Jagbandhu. As a result, both Jagbandhu's legs were burnt and Chandini's

hand was burnt. Neighbours informed police about the incident. Manasi, in a half-burnt state, spoke about what happened to her to police. On February 5, 2021, she gave her dying statement in front of doctor and police at hospital. Manasi died under treatment on February 8 at Cuttack. Similarly, Jagbandhu, who was burnt and injured in the fire, also died on May 24 2021 in the hospital. Later, Chandini was arrested in the case. "After hearing the testimony of 15 witnesses, police investigation report and dying statement of Manasi, the court sentenced Chandini to life imprisonment today," said Public Prosecutor Pradeep Kumar Das.

In Kalahandi

Forester found hanging in residence

Kin level serious allegations against DFO

PNS ■ BHAWANIPATNA
In a major twist to the death of Forester Sanjay Nayak, whose body was found hanging at his official quarters at Bhawanipatna on Wednesday, the wife of the deceased levelled serious allegation against the local DFO. Priyanka Subudhi, the wife of the deceased, alleged that the DFO mentally harassed Nayak for money from various projects of the department under the region. Unable to bear the pressure, Nayak took the extreme step, she alleged. "My husband has committed suicide for the DFO. My husband would give Rs 20,000 to Rs 30,000 to the DFO every month and I am aware of it. He had been alleging that the DFO was torturing him. I demand justice," Subudhi said. Meanwhile, Rabi Narayan, the brother of the deceased, has lodged a complaint in this connection at the Town po-



lice station. As per the complaint by Rabi Narayan, Nayak had been posted at the Jaring Research Centre for the last four years and he was continuously pressurised for percentage (PC) by the DFO. "The DFO had demanded Rs 7 lakh PC last year. Nayak gave Rs 2.5 lakh PC this year. The DFO had also demanded an air conditioner from him," Rabi Narayan alleged, adding that the DFO used to threaten Nayak to terminate him from the job. Unable to bear the harassment, Nayak committed suicide, the family members alleged. Rayagada ACF Tapas Kumar Behera said, "After getting the (death) information, we reached Bhawanipatna. We also informed his family. After postmortem, his body was handed over to his family."

Dharna held before ECoR office



Nod of Jajpur Road-Dhamara rail line demanded

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
There is serious discontentment among the inhabitants of Jajpur, Bhadrak and Kendrapada districts as the Central Government has not approved and not allocated fund in 2024-25 Budget for the Jajpur Road-Dhamara new rail line in spite of completion of final location survey report and DPR by July 16, 2024. Consequently, people from Jajpur, Bhadrak and Kendrapada districts held a demonstration before the East Coast Railway office demanding the approval of the project and allocation of fund. Former MP and trade union leader Dr RC Khuntia, who is also president, Jajpur Road Dhamara Sangram Parisad, leading the protestors, said that the Sangram Parisad will launch dharna before the Par-

liament in the Winter Session along with continuing with the local agitation if the fund is not allotted to Jajpur Road Dhamara Railway Line. As per the DPR total budget estimate is Rs 3,315 crore. It has 12 railway stations including Jajpur Road, Chhotraipur, Rampur Sagadi, Mahabalpur, Jajpur, Jaleswarpur, Sripura, Mangalpur, Pradi, Chandbali, Bhitarkanika and Dhamara. As per the FIIR estimate the profit would be 14.51% whereas AIIR report says 24.22%. The railway line could earn Rs 413 crore from mines and give communication service to 16 lakh people. After the dharna, the Parishad submitted a memorandum to the East Coast Railway General Manager Office addressed to the Prime Minister and Railway Minister. Among others, Amiya Pandab, Manoj Rout, Padmakar Guru, Santosh Nanda, Manoj Biswal and Madan Mohan Dhal were present.

To get Subhadra money

Stampede-like situation as women throng bank in Jajpur

PNS ■ JAJPUR
A stampede-like situation occurred on Wednesday in a bank at Bari as a large number of women started lining up outside it to withdraw the Subhadra money. Around 500 women account holders rushed to the Indian Bank branch at Baliapala village under Bari block to withdraw the amount a day after the State Government deposited Rs 5,000 in the accounts of many women under Subhadra Yojana. This led to a stampede-like situation. Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the largest, single women-centric scheme on Tuesday. Modi also initiated the fund transfer into the bank accounts of more than 10 lakh women.



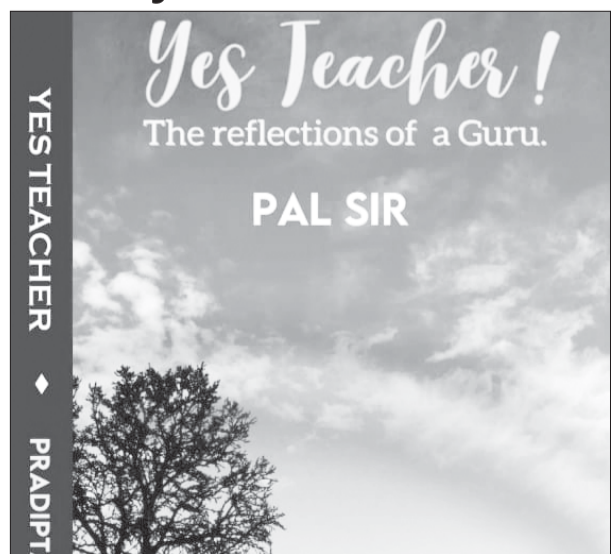
Anima Rout (32) of Baliapala rushed to the nearby bank to withdraw the amount. "I am quite happy after getting Rs 5,000 in my account. I need the money to purchase a grinder," said Anima. "I waited four hours on Wednesday. By the time my

turn came, the bank shut down for which I am unhappy," said Janaki Behera of Bari. Many women expressed happiness that the new BJP government has given the gift of Subhadra Yojana to them. Most of the account holders

have no ATMs. As a result they rushed to the banks to withdraw money. A huge rush of women at our bank resulted in a near stampede-like situation on Wednesday for which we sought the help of police, said a bank officer of Bari.

Book about story of a teacher in the making

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
If you are holding this book in your hands and have just turned to read the review on its back cover, let me welcome you to the world of a group of students and their beloved teacher. From the title and cover page, you might have guessed that this book is about the story of a student and a teacher, highlighting the dedication of a teacher in shaping the future of a country through his students. However, once you start reading, you will realise that this is not just about turning students into responsible citizens or showcasing the contributions, sacrifices, and dedication of a teacher. Instead, this book reveals the story of the 'making of a teacher.' You will discover how a young teacher initially feels



awkward answering the questions of his adolescent students, but over time, that same teacher takes on the responsibility of lifelong education beyond the books. The book is not the usual tale of a guru who is a friend, philosopher,

and guide. It spans 25 years, chronicling the journey of becoming a teacher. Through the memories shared by the students of Pradipta Pal, every young teacher can learn the art of adopting alternative learning

methods while remaining within the mainstream teaching system. Pradipta Pal has been a dedicated teacher at Navodaya Vidyalayas for the past 25 years, committing his professional life to the holistic and scholastic enrichment of his students. Fondly referred to as 'Pal Sir' by his pupils, he has significantly enhanced the teaching and learning process, extending education beyond traditional classroom boundaries. Pal's excellence and transparency in education have earned him numerous accolades, including the Navodaya National Awards, Guruvar Awards, Yes Teacher Awards, NVS-Intel Awards, and Pearson Teaching Awards. Currently, he serves at Navodaya Vidyalaya in Cuttack.

Even as farmers cry for water

350 LI points worth crores lying idle in Ganjam

As their electrification work not undertaken
KRUSHNA CHANDRA PANDA ■ BRAHMAMPUR
About 350 LI points drilled in 2022 in different blocks of Ganjam district are yet to be electrified though the executive agency/service provider was mandated to complete the projects including electrical connection in six months of their drilling work. Due to erratic rainfall, the farmers are running from pillar to post to get water to irrigate their fields making the situation most pathetic. It appears that a contractor from outside the State was given the work order to ex-

ecute the projects. The delay in electrification work has not only disheartened the farmers, but also has shattered their hopes to grow better crops. It may be mentioned here that, during the past government, several representations were made from the farmers to complete electrification work, but the contractor reportedly absconded leading to the delay, sources said. Though there are sufficient electrical contractors available in Odisha, surprisingly how the corporate office nominated an outside agency to carry out the work has raised a question. It is also not known yet, as to why the field officers are not allowed to engage locally available contractors competent to electrify the projects in a time-bound man-

ner. Thanks to such callous planning, agricultural works of the district have suffered a lot and assets worth crores of rupees with each LI point costing at Rs 30 to Rs 50 lakh are lying idle and defunct. In the entire State, such LI projects numbering about 1,000 are pending for electrification impeding irrigation in non-flow irrigated and high land regions, sources said. Added to this, about 200 LI points involving assets of crores of rupees are now lying idle for the last several years following disputes between Pani Panchayat and power distribution companies over the issue of payment of arrear dues. According to some farmers, the electrical infrastruc-

ture of many projects were damaged in recurring natural calamities like Phailin in 2013, Hudhud in 2014, and Titili in 2018. According to a farmer, though the energy meters were damaged and projects were defunct, the distribution companies continued to generate power bills based on previous load factors, but not according to actual consumption. According to some farmers, inflated energy bills have led to accumulation of huge arrears with the poor farmers unable to clear them. The earlier government failed to intervene and resolve the problems for which thousands of projects raised at huge public cost are reportedly lying idle hampering the development of agriculture.

BJP slams Congress-NC alliance over Article 370 remarks

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Thursday slammed the Congress-National Conference alliance for their remarks on restoration of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir after the Pakistani Defence Minister Khawaja Asif backed the allies over their stance on Jammu & Kashmir's special status. Union Home Minister Amit Shah and several other BJP leaders posted Asif's remarks to a Pakistani channel that his country shared the view of the Congress-NC alliance that Article 370, which gave the union territory special powers and was scrapped in August 2019, should be restored.

The controversy erupted after Pakistani Defence Minister Khawaja Asif during an interview with Geo News said that the Shehbaz Sharif government and the Congress-National Conference alliance are on the "same page" on the issue of restoration of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir.



Shah said the Pakistan defence minister's statement on the Congress and National Conference lending support to Article 370 and 35A has once "again exposed" the opposition party. Shah also claimed that the tune of opposition leader Rahul Gandhi's party and Pakistan has always been the same and the Congress has always been "hand in glove with the anti-national forces". He said the statement of Pakistan Defence Minister Khawaja Asif proved that the



neighbouring country and the Congress have the "same intentions and agenda". "Pakistan defence minister's statement about the Congress and the JKNC's support on Article 370 and 35A has once again exposed the Congress. This statement has once again made it clear that the Congress and Pakistan have the same intentions and agenda. For the last few years, Rahul Gandhi has been standing with every anti-India force, hurting the sentiments of the countrymen," Shah

wrote on X in Hindi. The home minister said he is asking for proof of air strikes and surgical strikes against Pakistan or saying "objectionable things" about the Indian Army, the tune of the Congress Party and Pakistan has always been the same. The Congress has always been "hand in glove with the anti-national forces", he asserted. "But, the Congress party and Pakistan forget that there is Modi government at the Centre, hence neither Article

370 nor terrorism is going to come back in Kashmir," he said. BJP's Amit Malviya also attacked Congress and Rahul Gandhi, sharing the video of the interview on social media. "Pakistan's defence minister Khawaja Asif, on Hamid Mir's Capital Talk on Geo News says, 'Pakistan and National Conference-Congress alliance are on the same page in Jammu & Kashmir to restore Article 370 and 35A,'" he wrote. Former Union Minister Rajeev Chandrasekar echoed similar sentiments, accusing Congress of aligning with Pakistan on various issues. He questioned what leverage Pakistan might have over Congress. BJP general secretary Tarun Chugh, who is in charge of the party's affairs in Jammu and Kashmir, claimed the opposition alliance is running Pakistani agenda in the ongoing polls. Ram Madhav, one of the two BJP election in-charges for the polls, said on X while sharing Asif's reported

comments, "A clear challenge to people of J&K. NC-Congress alliance is 'on same page' with Pakistan, declares Pak Defence Minister Khawaja Asif. People will teach a big lesson to this treasonous alliance in the elections. J&K will stand with those who stand with Hindustan, not those 'on same page' with Pakistan." Chugh alleged that it is now clear that the Congress-NC alliance is working at the behest of Pakistani government, and that the intention of Pakistan to interfere in the elections has been exposed as well. It has been a key agenda of the Abdullah and Gandhi families to keep the situation unstable in Jammu and Kashmir, he charged. Expressing confidence in the people of Jammu and Kashmir, Chugh said they would not succumb to Pakistan's agenda. "The nationalist people of Jammu and Kashmir will not allow the implementation of Pakistan's agenda through the Gandhis and Abdullahs."



JP Nadda hits back at Kharge, accuses Rahul Gandhi of abusing PM Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

BJP National President J P Nadda on Thursday hit back at Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, calling it an effort to "polish and re-launch" their "failed product" and accused Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi of having a history of abusing Prime Minister Narendra Modi and OBCs, and of siding with anti-India forces. Nadda also accused the grand old party of hurling abuses at PM Modi over 110 times in the past decade after Kharge asked the PM to school his party leaders regarding the use of "violent languages" against Rahul Gandhi. In a tit for tat response Nadda wrote, "Respected Kharge ji, due to what compulsion are you trying to justify Rahul Gandhi, a person whose history is of abusing the entire OBC community including the Prime Minister of the country by calling them thieves, and using extremely indecent words for the Prime Minister of the country?" He further criticized Kharge for allegedly overlooking or ignoring past actions of Congress leaders, including Rahul Gandhi. "It's unfortunate that under the influence of its 'famous prince', the oldest political party in the country has now become a 'copy-paste' party," Nadda's letter stated. "After reading that letter, I felt

that the things said by you are far from reality. It seems that in the letter you have either forgotten the misdeeds of your leaders including Rahul Gandhi or have deliberately ignored them, so I felt that it is important to bring those things to your notice in detail. It is said that the oldest political party of the country has now become a 'copy & paste' party under the pressure of its famous prince," Nadda responded in the letter. Further intensifying his attacks, the BJP chief said, "It is very sad that the oldest political party of the country has now become a 'copy and paste' party under the pressure of its famous 'yuvraaj' (prince)." Listing over a series of abuses, Nadda alleged, "In the last 10 years, the leaders of Congress and Company have abused the country's illustrious Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji more than 110 times and the unfortunate thing is that the top leadership of Congress is also involved in this." "Sometimes it was said 'Modi will dig your grave', sometimes it was said 'neech', sometimes 'bastard', sometimes 'merchant of death', sometimes 'poisonous snake', sometimes 'scorpion', sometimes 'rat', sometimes 'Ravan', Sometimes 'Bhasmasur,' he said as he went on to mention a series of inappropriate words. He said that the Congress' letter exposed the "double standards" of the party adding that



Delhi High Court seeks dismissed IAS response to UPSC perjury charges

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday sought the stand of Pujja Khedkar on the UPSC's charges that the former IAS probationer committed perjury by making a false statement in relation to her anticipatory bail plea. Justice Subramaniam Prasad asked Khedkar to file her reply to the Commission's application, which is filed in the proceedings on her pre-arrest bail plea. "I will issue notice. File your reply," Justice Prasad told Khedkar's counsel, and listed the matter for hearing on September 26. Khedkar has been accused of cheating and wrongly availing Other Backward Classes (OBC) and disability quota benefits in civil services examination.

The UPSC submitted that Khedkar, in her rejoinder, made an "absolutely false" statement on affidavit that the Commission had collected her biometrics during personality tests. Seeking initiation of inquiry and appropriate proceedings against her for the violation, the application alleged that even in another proceedings pending in the high court, Khedkar has committed "perjury", which is an offence under the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita. Senior advocate Naresh Kaushik, appearing for the UPSC, said her conduct was "dangerously wrong". "The claim that the Commission collected her biometrics is absolutely false made with the sole aim and purpose of deceiving this Hon'ble Court for obtaining



favourable orders. The said claim is denied since the Commission did not collect any biometric (eyes and fingerprints) during her Personality Test or carried out any attempts verification on the basis of the same. The Commission has not collected any biometric information from any candidate during the Personality Test of the Civil Services Examinations held so far," the application said. "There is little doubt in the

conclusion that the conduct of Ms. Pujja Manorama Dilip Khedkar amounts to perjury," it asserted. Khedkar's counsel, on the other hand, termed the application a "pressure tactic". Khedkar allegedly misrepresented information in her application for the UPSC Civil Services Examination, 2022 to get reservation benefits. The High Court has earlier granted her interim protection from arrest in the case. Both the UPSC and the Delhi Police have sought dismissal of her plea for pre-arrest bail. The UPSC initiated a series of actions against Khedkar in July, including lodging a criminal case against her for availing attempts in the civil services exam by faking her identity.

Def Min urges navy commanders to strengthen Indo-Pacific presence

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday said the Indian Navy's growing strength in the Indo-Pacific region should not be taken for granted and called upon the naval commanders to continue introspection from time to time, and be prepared for every situation in today's volatile global scenario. This note of caution was in apparent reference to China flexing its muscle in the region. Making these observations here while addressing the second edition of Naval Commanders Conference, he also emphasised on the need of a strong naval capability to protect the economic, trade, transport and overall national interests. He commended the Indian Navy for playing a crucial role in promoting peace and prosperity in the Indian Ocean, terming the region as valuable and sensitive in view of the economic, geopolitical, trade and security aspects. Pointing out that India was once a landlocked country with sea shores, but now it can be seen as an island country with land borders, Rajnath Singh lauded the Indian Navy's readiness towards safeguarding the maritime interests of the country, which has resulted in establishing its credibility as the first responder in the region. "A large part of the world's trade passes through the

region, which makes it valuable. At the same time, incidents like piracy, hijacking, drone attacks, missile attacks and disruption of sea cable connections in the seas make it extremely sensitive. Our Navy has made a significant contribution in protecting the economic interests of all stakeholder nations of Indo-Pacific and in smooth movement of goods in the Indian Ocean region. Its anti-piracy operations are garnering appreciation not only in India but also globally. India is now seen as a preferred security partner in this entire region. Whenever we need, we will ensure security in the region," Rajnath Singh said. The defence minister reiterated Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government's endeavour to make the Indian Navy more potent by inducting state-of-the-art ships, submarines etc. for its capability development, with focus on being Aatmanirbhar. He highlighted that 64 ships and submarines are currently under construction in Indian shipyards, and orders have been placed for 24 additional platforms. He added that, in the last five years, more than two-third of the Navy's modernisation budget has been spent on indigenous procurement, resulting in accelerated development of the domestic defence ecosystem.

PM Modi urges public to bid on auctioned mementoes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday urged people to bid for the mementoes he has received and which are now being auctioned, noting that their proceeds will be used for the 'Namami Gange' initiative. He said in social media post, "Every year, I auction the various mementoes I receive during the public programmes. The proceeds of the auction go to the Namami Gange initiative. I'm delighted to share that this year's auction has opened. Do bid for the mementoes you find interesting!" Namami Gange is a government's initiative for conservation and rejuvenation of the Ganga river.

Modi and Biden to sign agreements at Quad Summit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Joe Biden will have a substantive engagement on the sidelines of the Quad summit on Saturday, and the two sides will sign at least two agreements following the talks. One pact will be related to the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) and the other memorandum of understanding (MoU) will be on the India-US drug framework, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said here on Thursday. Modi will pay a three-day visit to the United States beginning September 21 to attend the annual Quad summit and address the "Summit of the Future" at the United Nations General Assembly. Modi will hold separate bilateral talks with Biden, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and his Japanese counterpart Fumio Kishida on the sidelines of the Quad summit in Wilmington, Delaware on September 21.



At the meeting with Biden, Modi is also expected to apprise US President of his recent talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow and with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv on finding a peaceful solution to the Russia-Ukraine conflict. "There will be an opportunity to have a substantive engagement between the prime minister and President Biden, where they will have the opportunity to review the comprehensive global strategic partnership between

India and the US, which today covers almost every aspect of human endeavour through the 50-plus engagements and bilateral dialogue mechanisms," Misri said. He was briefing the media on Modi's trip to the US. "It will also give an opportunity to thank President Biden for his pioneering role in strengthening the India-US relationship and several new initiatives, such as the initiative on critical and emerging technologies," Misri said.

The foreign secretary said there will be an opportunity for both sides to exchange a few agreements, including one on the IPEF. The pact on the IPEF is related to the clean economy and fair economy pillars. In line with Washington's long-term vision for the Indo-Pacific, Biden launched the ambitious Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) in May 2022. It is an initiative aimed at deeper cooperation among like-minded countries in areas like clean energy, supply-chain resilience and digital trade. Besides India, Japan and Australia, the other member countries of the IPEF are Brunei Darussalam, Fiji, Indonesia, South Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. The IPEF has four pillars -- trade, supply-chain resilience, clean economy and fair economy. India is yet to join the trade pillar and discussions between the two sides on it are underway.

Jawhar Sircar resigns from RS, after criticising TMC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Jawhar Sircar, who had questioned the TMC government in West Bengal over steps taken after the Kolkata rape-murder incident, on Thursday resigned from his Rajya Sabha membership. According to official sources, Rajya Sabha chairperson Jagdeep Dhankhar has accepted his resignation as Rajya Sabha member with immediate effect. Sircar had recently written to his party head and state chief minister Mamata Banerjee describing the steps taken by her government in handling the rape and murder of the doctor at RG Kar hospital "too little and quite late". He had also announced that he would quit politics altogether.

PM 2.5 pollution linked to increased brain stroke risk surpassing smoking: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As winter approaches and smog becomes a concern, a study published in The Lancet has sounded alarm that fine ambient particles like PM2.5 in the environment can directly damage arterial cells, the risk of subarachnoid hemorrhage, a serious type of brain stroke, surpassing the impact of smoking. The research, led by an international team from India, the US, New Zealand, Brazil, highlighted how PM air pollution was responsible for the loss of 2.6 million healthy life years due to subarachnoid hemorrhage in 2021, surpassing the impact of smoking. It has called for urgent need for public health measures to improve air quality and protect vulnerable populations like kids, elders and those with co-

morbidities. The authors said that air pollution contributed to 14% of deaths and disabilities caused by this severe stroke subtype, the same level as smoking. Data speaks: As pollution has been on rise, in 2021, 11.9 million people experienced new strokes—an increase of 70% since 1990—while stroke-related deaths reached 7.3 million, a 44% rise since 1990. The study has identified 23 modifiable risk factors responsible for 84% of the global stroke burden in 2021. The top five were high systolic blood pressure, particulate matter air pollution, smoking, high LDL cholesterol, and household air pollution. Despite significant efforts to reduce these risk factors, more work is needed to mitigate the damage caused by



environmental pollutants and unhealthy lifestyles, said the study. Dr Catherine O Johnson, co-author and lead research scientist at the University of Washington's Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), emphasised on the urgent need for climate actions and air pollution reduction strategies, particularly as air

pollution is intricately linked to climate change. The findings, based on the Global Burden of Disease Study, revealed that more than three-quarters of those affected by strokes live in low- and middle-income countries. Professor Valery Feigin from Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand, explained that fine particles

like PM2.5 can directly damage arterial cells, increasing the risk of ruptures. Prof. Kalpana Balakrishnan from Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education and Research, Chennai, and Dr. K. Srinath Reddy from the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) echoed these concerns. "Masking is not a solution because it is impossible to reduce exposure for large populations with them. Emission reductions at source and use of cleaner technologies are proven ways. We just need to allocate sufficient resources to make green development possible," Prof Balakrishnan said. According to Dr Reddy, well-ventilated indoor spaces and an outdoor environment with good airflow and greenery reduce pollution-related complications.

Shashi Tharoor to head parliamentary standing committee on external affairs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor will head the parliamentary standing committee on external affairs and veteran leader Digvijaya Singh will head the panel on education, party sources said on Thursday. Former Punjab chief minister Charanjit Singh Channi will lead the parliamentary standing committee on agriculture and Koraput MP Saptagiri Ulaka will head the panel on rural development. Channi, who is a Dalit, and Ulaka, who hails from a tribal community, were chosen by the party with social justice being the centrepiece of all recent appointments. The leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi



has been stressing the participation of the deprived sections in governance and calling for the party organisation to be more inclusive. The sources said the Congress has forwarded the names of the four leaders to head the four department-related parliamentary standing committees it has been assigned to lead. While there has been no official notification on the chairship of the

parliamentary standing committees, it is expected to come out soon. The Congress will chair the Department Related Standing Committee on External Affairs; Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Food Processing; Rural Development and Panchayati Raj in the Lok Sabha; and Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports in the Rajya Sabha. This was decided after hectic parleys between the government and the opposition over the panels' chairship. Congress' chief whip in the Rajya Sabha Jairam Ramesh and the party's deputy leader in the Lok Sabha Gaurav Gogoi were involved in the negotiations with the government to arrive at a consensus.

BJP releases Sankalp Patra ahead of Haryana Assembly polls

Promises 2 lakh Government jobs, ₹ 2,100 monthly for women, job guarantee for Agniveers, 10 new industrial towns

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ROHTAK/NEW DELHI

BJP national president JP Nadda on Thursday released the party's 20-point manifesto, "Sankalp Patra", for Haryana ahead of the Assembly poll, promising two lakh government jobs, Rs 2,100 monthly assistance to women and government job guarantee to Agniveers hailing from the State. The party also promised creation of 10 industrial towns and full scholarship to Scheduled Caste (SC) and Other Backward Class (OBC) students of government medical and engineering colleges, among other things. Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, Union Ministers M L Khattar, Rao Inderjit Singh, Krishan Pal Gurdar and head of the party's poll manifesto

committee were present at Rohtak during the release of the Sankalp Patra. The ruling BJP in Haryana, which is eyeing to ride to power for a third consecutive term after the polls next month, also promised to purchase 24 crops at Minimum Support Price (MSP). The BJP government in Haryana was already buying 14 crops at MSP. Last month after Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini's announcement, the state cabinet gave approval to a proposal of buying 10 more crops at MSP. Facing flak from opposition parties over the Agnipath scheme, which is for short-term military recruitment, Nadda said there will be a guarantee of government job for every Agniveer hailing from Haryana.

Among 20 main points in the manifesto, the BJP promised Rs 2,100 per month for all women under the Lado Lakshmi Yojna. The ruling party said two lakh government jobs will be given to the youth without 'kharchi-parchi', a reference to the alleged corruption prevailing earlier under the Congress regime. The ruling BJP also announced to give cooking gas cylinder at Rs 500 under the Har Ghar Grihni Yojna. Notably, the state government is already giving cooking gas cylinder at Rs 500 under the Har Ghar Grihni scheme to BPL and antyodaya families in the state. The BJP also promised 5 lakh houses in urban and rural areas if it is voted to power after the assembly elections besides a scooter for every college-



going female student in a rural area under the Avval Balika Yojna. Scholarships for Haryana students belonging to the OBC and SC communities in any government medical and engineering colleges in the country will be given, the BJP manifesto stated. Among the other promises made by the BJP are starting new Vande Bharat trains and setting up of KMP Orbital Rail corridor with the assistance of the Centre. The party further promised the start of inter-city express metro service between Faridabad and Gurugram.

The BJP also promised setting up of 10 industrial cities on the line of Industrial Model Township Kharkhoda, and said industrialists will be given special incentive for giving 50,000 jobs to local youths in every city. Under the Chirayu-Ayushman scheme, each family will be given free medical treatment of up to Rs 10 lakh and an elderly person above 70 years of age in each family will be provided free medical treatment of up to Rs 5 lakh. The party also promised employment opportunities for 5 lakh youths and monthly stipend through the National Apprenticeship Promotion scheme. According to the manifesto, the party will set up welfare boards for backward classes and a sufficient budget for their

welfare. Sports nurseries will come up in every district for the Olympic Games, the manifesto stated. Tourism was also the focus in the manifesto with the party promising an Aravalli Jungle Safari of international level in South Haryana. Unveiling the manifesto at the party's Rohtak media centre, Nadda said the Congress had made manifesto a "diluted document" and "ended its relevance", but the BJP had started the "culture of report cards" and was committed to fulfil the promises made in its manifesto. Haryana has changed under BJP's leadership. In 2014, the state's per capita income was 1.37 lakh, which has increased to 3 lakh rupees. In terms of export, Haryana export was only Rs 68,000 crore, which has gone up to

2.5 lakh crore," said Nadda. "What was the image of Haryana 10 years back? Jobs used to be given on paper. Actions were taken against people. Haryana used to be known for land scams, so while discussing their manifesto, then we should look into these facts. Hence, when we talk manifesto, I want to say that we are doing non-stop work," said Nadda. Attacking the Opposition, Nadda said 10 years ago Haryana was known for corruption in jobs and land scams, but during the BJP's rule over the past decade the per Capita income of the State had doubled, exports had grown three times and 5,800 villages were getting round-the-clock electricity compared with only 538 such villages in 2014.

BJP faces electoral challenge in Gurgaon amid internal strife

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM



Gurgaon, a long-time Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) stronghold, may prove to be an electoral challenge for the BJP as Haryana prepares for the October 5 Assembly elections. The party, thanks to six-time parliamentarian and senior leader Rao Inderjit Singh, has successfully maintained a strong grip on the Gurgaon Lok Sabha seat, winning three consecutive terms since 2014 and successfully defeating the Congress and the regional party, the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) in prior Assembly battles. However, the upcoming assembly elections in Gurgaon are interesting due to the internal rifts within the BJP following recent candidate selections. The Gurgaon parliamentary constituency, which covers nine Assembly seats across three districts, four in Gurgaon, three in Mewat, and two in Rewari, has always been a critical political battleground. Historically, the BJP has achieved remarkable strength in the urban segments of this region. This time, internal clashes and dissatisfaction among party members threatened the BJP's performance in this segment. The dissatisfaction among the party workers arises after the allocation of tickets, sidelining experienced party workers and igniting rebellion. The impact of this discord could be affecting voter turnout and loyalty. The selection of candidates may affect party dominance in Gurgaon, which further weakens the party's voter base. The Gurgaon includes four seats from the district: Gurgaon, Badshahpur, Sohna, and Pataudi. In the 2019 state assembly elections, the BJP secured three of these four

seats, except for Badshahpur, which elected independent candidate Rakesh Janghu alias Daultabad. Rakesh had beaten BJP's Manish Yadav by a margin of 10,000 votes. The Gurgaon seat has historically been an urban seat and a mixture of Punjabi, Brahmin and Vaishya (Baniya) castes. In the last election, BJP's Sudhir Singla won comfortably, defeating his closest rival by more than 32,000 votes, while the Congress candidate Sukhbir Kataria finished third. This time the he has denied sitting MLA Sudhir Singla a ticket for the upcoming election, opting instead for Mukesh Sharma, a wrestler turned politician and a close associate of Rao Inderjit Singh, the party's MP from the area from Gurgaon seat. The party's decision has sparked internal dissatisfaction, leading to the resignation of senior leaders like G L Sharma, a former vice president of the Haryana state BJP unit, and Navin Goel. Their resignation is likely to affect party voter sentiment significantly. Meanwhile, the Congress party, which has fielded Mohit Grover, a young Punjab leader, who recently joined the Congress, had secured second position as an independent candidate in the previous assembly election. The BJP's new candidate, Mukesh Sharma, 's success in this election may not be easy because Gurgaon is currently facing numerous civic issues, including infrastructure failures, waterlogging, poor road conditions, pollution, water shortages, and inconsistent electricity supply.

Kejriwal to launch AAP campaign in Haryana ahead of Assembly elections

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI



AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal will join the party's campaign in poll-bound Haryana with a roadshow in the Jagadhri constituency on September 20, AAP national general secretary (organisation) Sandeep Pathak said on Thursday. He will also participate in 13 events across 11 districts, covering the Dabwali, Rania, Bhiwani, Meham, Kalayat, Assandh and Ballabgarh constituencies, among others, in the coming days, Pathak said at a press conference. "AAP national convener Kejriwal has come out of jail after defeating the BJP's conspiracy. Now he is fully prepared for the election campaign in Haryana and will start on September 20," he said. His further campaign schedule will be announced later, he added. Kejriwal resigned as Delhi chief minister after being released from Tihar jail last week in the excise policy case. He will have a hectic

campaign schedule in Haryana, which goes to the polls on October 5. The AAP is contesting all 90 seats in Haryana after talks with the Congress over a seat-share agreement broke down. It is clear that "the BJP is going to be completely wiped out from Haryana", Pathak claimed. The BJP has governed Haryana since 2014. "The BJP itself did not trust its chief minister, so they removed Manohar Lal Khattar and made Nayab Singh Saini the new chief minister. The question that arises is why did the BJP need to bring in a new chief minister in the last year (of its

term)?" Pathak asked. Alleviating that unemployment was at its peak in Haryana and inflation was record-breaking, he stressed that there was rampant "misgovernance" in the state. "Haryana first gave a chance to one party for five years, then to another for 10 years and then 10 years to a third party. Haryana gave a chance to all the parties, there is no party in Haryana that can say they have not got a chance. No one can complain," Pathak said. Claiming that the other parties failed to serve the people, he said the voters were fed up with all the outfits. "This time, for the first time, Arvind Kejriwal has come to Haryana with AAP. So, a new and great option for change is in front of the people of Haryana. They have seen the work done by AAP in Punjab, and have seen the government of Delhi. After seeing everything, the people will go for a change and vote for Arvind Kejriwal's new and honest politics and AAP," he said.

Flood situation in WB worsens as Didi blames Centre

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA



Even as the flood situation in Bengal worsened with large swathes of lands in Hooghly, Burdwan, Howrah, East and West Midnapore going under water following the release of lakhs of cusecs of water by the dams controlled by the Damodar Valley Corporation, Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee once again lambasted the Centre for "planning to inundate Bengal." Vowing to snap all the ties with the DVC of which Bengal too is a part Banerjee said, "this is a centrally controlled authority which does not listen to our prayers ... instead of dredging the rivers they release waters and inundate Bengal every year ... so I will go back and snap all the ties with the DVC if they continue to flood Bengal like this." Banerjee who visited parts of West Midnapore and the Pursura block of Hooghly district said she would go to Howrah to inspect the flood affected areas too. "For years there is a talk of Ghatat Master Plan but that

has not taken place as yet as a result of which the Ghatat town and the remaining areas sink every year ... will this continue year after year," she asked. Banerjee alleged how North Bengal gets flooded when there is heavy rains in Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim alleging nothing is done in that respect. She also alleged that the Centre was not dredging the Ganges at Farakka causing floods in lower regions of Malda and Murshidabad. "Similar is the case here as in a bid to save Jharkhand they are inundating Bengal ... it is good to save others but why should we bear brunt of that ... why should Bengal be

flooded ... they have released more than 4 lakh cusecs of water ... thousands of houses have been destroyed and thousands of acres of lands have been flooded with crops worth crores finished ... who is responsible for this," Banerjee said. "This is a man-made flood ... we are facing this problem because of the irresponsible behavior of the Centre," she said. Reacting to the charges leveled by her Bengal BJP president and junior Union Minister Sukanta Majumdar said that instead of blaming the Centre Banerjee should send her local MPs to the appropriate ministers to sort out the issues.

Doctors refuse to end cease work, allege arm-twisting by Government

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The West Bengal Medical Council, the umbrella body of the doctors in the State on Thursday removed the name of former RG Kar Medical College and Hospital Sandip Ghosh --- who is presently in the custody of the Central Bureau of Investigation in connection with the rape-murder case of a woman doctor at the hospital --- from the list of registered medical practitioners. The practicing license of Ghosh was cancelled after he failed to respond to a show cause notice issued to him by the Council on September 7,



sources said adding the step was taken under various provisions of the Bengal Medical Act 1914. Ghosh has been arrested by the on charges of corruption and destruction of evidence in the rape and murder case. The Enforcement Directorate too has lodged cases against him under Prevention of Money Laundering Act. The development amid a new twist in the junior doctors' movement vis a vis the RGKMCH case after the tent house owners who had provided them with facilities like tents, bio-toilets, fans power connections at their sit-in site in front of the Swasthya Bhavan on Thursday

withdrew their services amid allegations that they were asked to do so by the State police. "They came and forcibly took away the tents, bio-toilets, fans, camp cots and other things that were being used at the demonstration site," said Dr. Ankush one of the agitators alleging, "though they would not say anything in public we were told that they had pressure

from the police and the Government to do so. Though a major portion of the doctors' demands had been accepted by the Government during a meeting with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee they had still been insisting on the fulfillment of the "fourth and fifth demand that entails the removal of State Health Secretary NS Nigam and ensuring of safety and security inside the medical colleges and hospitals where some vested interests with high political connection perpetrate a syndicate raj and threat culture extorting lakhs of rupees from the students after failing them in exams ... or selling honours courses for

cash," the doctors said. "We had even told the State Chief Secretary Manoj Pant in our Wednesday's meetings to ensure these things at the earliest so that we can return to work ... but instead of taking any measure they are now arm-twisting us to withdraw the movement," the doctors said adding they were holding a general body meeting to decide on their new course of action. Meanwhile, in new development the senior doctors on Thursday gheraoed the West Bengal Medical Council "with a mission to cleanse it." Scores of senior doctors held a demonstration

Maha Vikas Aghadi leaders begin final round of seat-sharing talks

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI



With more than a fortnight to go for the announcement of the schedule for the Maharashtra Assembly polls, the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi leaders - belonging to the Congress, NCP (Sharad Pawar) and Shiv Sena (Uddhav Thackeray) - have begun their final round of seat-sharing talks for the polls. Given that the Election Commission of India (ECI) is expected to announce the Assembly poll schedule for Maharashtra and Jharkhand in mid October after the completion of the ongoing Assembly polls in J & K and Karnataka, the political parties in the state are gearing themselves for 288-member Maharashtra Legislative Assembly in the end of November or early December. Not wanting to delay further the seat-sharing tie-up among them, the MVA leaders got down to three-day seat-sharing negotiations which will continue till September 20. The leaders of the Congress,

NCP (SP) and UBT have already held several rounds of preliminary seat-sharing talks. In the final round of seat-sharing talks that began on Wednesday, the three constituents of the MVA will decide on the number of seats to be contested by each party and the identification of the constituencies from which each party will field their candidates. Having emerged as the number-one party in the recent Lok Sabha polls, the Congress has staked claim for a maximum of 120 to 130 seats out of the total 288 seats. The Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT) is rooting for 90 to 100 seats while the Sharad Pawar-led NCP (SP) is

seeking 75 to 80 seats. All the three MVA constituents have expressed their readiness to adopt a "give and take" approach in the seat-sharing talks. The criteria being adopted for the seat-sharing arrangement are the performances of the three parties in the recent Lok Sabha polls, the base of the three parties in the respective constituencies and the "winnability" factor. On its part, the Shiv Sena (UBT) is insisting that it be allotted maximum number of seats and that the "winnability" factor should be only criterion for the seat-sharing tie-up. Shiv Sena's chief spokesperson has gone on record saying that his party's votes were transferred

in a big way to the candidates belonging to the Congress and NCP (SP). In an effort to avoid differences over the leadership during the seat-sharing talks, the three MVA constituents have decided to go to the Assembly polls under the joint leadership of three parties. It may be recalled that on September 4, NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar - who is considered the architect of the MVA - had said that the Opposition's grand alliance would declare its nominee for the chief minister's post based on which constituent party wins the maximum seats in the State Assembly polls. Pawar's announcement came in the backdrop of the Shiv Sena (UBT) leaders' insistence that their president Uddhav Thackeray be declared as the MVA's chief ministerial candidate ahead of the State Assembly. However, after Pawar's announcement, the Sena (UBT) has agreed to accept Pawar's suggestion that the MVA's chief ministerial nominee be announced after the State Assembly polls. The Congress team that is

taking part in the seat-sharing talks comprises among AICC general secretary Ramesh Chennithala, state Congress president Nana Patole, Congress legislature party leader Balasaheb Thorat, while Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray and his aide Sanjay Raut are representing the Shiv Sena (UBT). Sharad Pawar and his party's state unit president Jayant Patil are involved in the talks. Since there were serious differences in the sharing of seats like Kolhapur, Sangli, Bhiwandi and seats of Mumbai in the recent Lok Sabha polls, the leaders are trying their best to paper over their differences. Of the total 288 seats in the state, Mumbai and Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) account for 36 and 65 seats respectively. Naturally, the two regions play a crucial role in the seat-sharing talks. Given its strong base in Mumbai and surrounding areas, the Shiv Sena (UBT) are staking a claim for a larger number of seats from Mumbai and MMR.

PIL against Manoj Saunik appointment as MahaRera Chairman to be heard on September 23

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI



A public interest litigation challenging the appointment of Manoj Saunik, a retired IAS officer and husband of current State Chief Secretary Sujata Saunik, as the chairman of the Maharashtra Real Estate Regulatory Authority (MahaRera), will come up for hearing in the Bombay High Court on September 23. In his PIL filed in the high court, noted RTI activist and lawyer Pravin Wategaonkar has urged the court to issue writ of quo warrant against Manoj Saunik and stay the Government resolution (GR) dated July 16, 2024 appointing him as the MahaRera chief. The petitioner also urged the court to direct the Maharashtra government to produce all relevant documents before it and examine the procedure adopted and the material considered in the appointment. "The MahaRera authority is constituted to protect the

interest of the consumers in the real estate sector, and is expected to adjudicate the disputes between the consumers and developers. The record of Mr. Saunik while in administration is tainted with mala fides and corruption, is certainly not free from blemish," Wategaonkar alleged. "The Additional Chief Secretary (Housing) and convener of the Selection committee has failed to respond to the notice issued to him," the petition stated in his PIL. The State Housing department, issued a GR on 16.07.2024, announced

Saunik's appointment as the MahaRera chairman. "The act lays down that the chairperson shall be appointed by the government on the recommendations of 3-member selection committee, consisting of the Chief Justice of the High Court or his nominee Judge, the Secretary, Housing Dept., and the Law secretary," Wategaonkar said. "The law provides eligibility for Chairman of a person as 'who is or has been' in the service of the state Government and has held the post of Additional Secretary. The words 'who is or has been' have been authoritatively construed as meaning one 'who is or has been' in service 'without any blemish whatsoever,'" the petitioner said. Wategaonkar said that he had issued a notice on August 19, 2024, to the convener of the Selection Committee and Additional Chief Secretary (ACS), Housing alleging "illustrative instances of misconduct of Shri Manoj Saunik."



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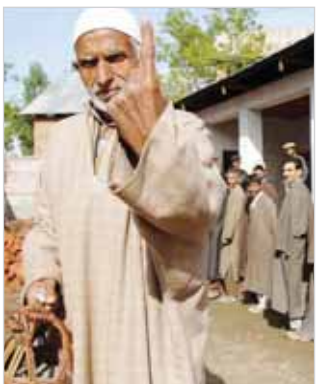
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PAPER WITH PASSION

India wins in J and K

The large turnout and peaceful voting in phase I of the elections marks a significant victory for the nation

The first phase of polling in Jammu and Kashmir, held on September 18 was not only peaceful but also a thumbs up for democracy as 58 per cent voters cast their vote. Approximately 23.27 lakh voters, including 5.66 lakh youths, were eligible to cast their votes to determine the fate of 219 candidates in Phase 1. Though two more phases are left but morning shows the day. Widespread apprehensions arose following a series of attacks in Jammu, raising serious concerns about the high likelihood of disruption. The successful democratic exercise in itself is a victory for the country. Indeed, it marks a crucial moment in the political landscape of the region. For the first time since the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019, the Union Territory is witnessing elections that hold significant weight for both the state and the country at large. This election is not merely a democratic exercise; it is a test of the stability, governance, and the long-term vision for integrating the region more firmly with the rest of India. The elections are being



closely watched, particularly after the transition of Jammu and Kashmir from a state to a Union Territory. For the people of the region, the act of voting is more than just a participation in democracy. The return of democratic process after years of instability, militancy and unrest is expected to reassure the local population that their voices matter in shaping their future. The turnout, especially in rural areas, is a clear indication that people feel secure enough to participate in democratic process.

The election campaign has brought a range of issues to the forefront, which will determine how the political winds blow in the region. Development, unemployment, and security are the most pressing concerns, with local leaders attempting to address the economic stagnation that has plagued Jammu and Kashmir for years. Tourism, once the backbone of the state's economy, has taken a severe hit, and while efforts have been made to revitalise the sector, it remains a sensitive issue in the polls. At the same time, political parties have taken contrasting stances on the abrogation of Article 370. While some align with the central government's move, touting it as a path to progress, others continue to advocate for the restoration of special status. This dichotomy underscores the ongoing divide between different regions of Jammu and Kashmir, which will likely influence the outcome of the elections. A high voter turnout and peaceful elections emboldens the government's stance on its Kashmir policy, reinforcing the narrative that the decision to revoke Article 370 was justified and has led to positive outcomes for the region. For opposition parties, the elections offer an opportunity to challenge the ruling government's narrative and build alliances with local players. As the first phase of polling concludes, Jammu and Kashmir stands at a crossroads. The region's political future hinges on how the rest of the election unfolds and what messages the electorate sends through their vote.

PICTALK



Pilgrims arrive at the Shri Badrinath Dham in Chamoli district

Modi@74: A journey of triumphs and challenges



K S TOMAR

Narendra Modi, a man who rose through the ranks, from RSS worker to become a global leader, has undergone a remarkable transformation

As Narendra Modi turns 74, the Prime Minister of India stands at a pivotal point in his political career. Having transformed from a grassroots worker in the RSS to a global leader, Modi's leadership has been marked by several triumphs, while also weathering significant criticism. A closer look at his governance reveals a complex blend of successes and shortcomings, reflecting his unique vision for India and the challenges of implementing sweeping reforms in a diverse, evolving democracy. Successes: Economic Reforms: Modi's tenure has been defined by key economic reforms aimed at spurring growth and investment. The implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in 2017 stands as one of India's most transformative reforms, simplifying the tax system and promoting ease of business.

Another flagship initiative is the "Make in India" program, which sought to position India as a manufacturing hub, attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) in sectors such as defence, electronics, and pharmaceuticals.

Digital India: Modi's push for a digital revolution has reshaped India's financial and technological landscape. The Digital India campaign significantly expanded internet connectivity, especially in rural areas. Innovations like the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) have revolutionized digital transactions, while the Aadhaar system has streamlined welfare distribution, reducing inefficiencies in benefit transfers.

Foreign Policy: On the global stage, Modi has strengthened India's relationships with key nations like the U.S., Japan, and Israel. Under his leadership, India has played a more prominent role in global forums such as G20 and BRICS. A major achievement has been the International Solar Alliance (ISA), promoting global cooperation on renewable energy and showcasing India's leadership in sustainable development.

Nationalism and Identity Politics: Modi has adeptly tapped into nationalist sentiments, reinforcing the Bharatiya Janata Party



(BJP) as a champion of Hindu pride and Indian sovereignty. His government's initiatives, such as the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and the abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir, reflect a blend of cultural and political assertiveness, though the latter move drew international criticism. **Infrastructure Development:** Under Modi's leadership, infrastructure has seen significant growth. Projects like Bharatmala and Sagarmala have expanded transportation networks, while initiatives like Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana and Ujjwala Yojana have improved housing and provided cooking gas to millions of households.

Challenges Before Modi: As Narendra Modi enters the later stages of his political journey, he faces a series of challenges that will shape his legacy and influence India's future. While his tenure has seen significant achievements, Modi's leadership must now address pressing concerns across various sectors that demand urgent attention and innovative solutions.

Economic Recovery and Job Creation: India's economic recovery post-COVID-19 remains fragile. Despite some growth, inflation continues to be a persistent challenge, driven by rising global oil prices and domestic supply chain disruptions. For the average citizen, higher living costs are



ON THE GLOBAL STAGE, MODI HAS STRENGTHENED INDIA'S RELATIONSHIPS WITH KEY NATIONS LIKE THE US, JAPAN, AND ISRAEL. UNDER HIS LEADERSHIP, INDIA HAS PLAYED A MORE PROMINENT ROLE IN GLOBAL FORUMS SUCH AS G20 AND BRICS

squeezing household budgets, particularly for the poor and middle class. Modi's government must balance inflation control with promoting sustained economic growth. The issue of unemployment, especially among the youth, looms large. Urban and rural areas continue to experience high joblessness, and despite various reforms, the informal sector, which provides most jobs, is still recovering from the effects of demonetization, the Goods and Services Tax (GST), and the pandemic. Modi will need to focus on bolstering labour-intensive industries, strengthening small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and encouraging entrepreneurship.

Agriculture and Farmers' Discontent: Even after repealing the controversial farm laws following large-scale protests, rural distress persists. Indian farmers continue to face challenges such as low productivity, insufficient infrastructure, and limited access to credit. To address these problems, Modi will need to prioritize rural development and improve agricultural infrastructure. However, he must tread cautiously with new reforms to avoid reigniting protests. Farmers will require sustained support through initiatives like improving Minimum Support Prices (MSP) and introducing technological innovations to

enhance productivity. **India-China Relations and Regional Security:** India's strained relations with China, particularly after the 2020 Galwan Valley clashes, remain a significant foreign policy challenge. The border standoff continues, and while diplomatic negotiations have curbed escalation, the potential for conflict still exists. Managing the delicate balance between regional security and diplomatic efforts with China is critical. Despite these successes, Modi's tenure has not been without shortcomings. The "Make in India" initiative has struggled to create enough manufacturing jobs, and his government's 2016 demonetization policy disrupted the informal economy without yielding long-term benefits. Modi also faced one of the largest protests in Indian history over controversial farm laws, which he ultimately had to repeal. Additionally, his leadership has been criticized for deepening communal divisions, with incidents of religious violence and the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) sparking social tensions. As Modi continues to lead, his legacy will depend on balancing development with social harmony and democratic governance.

(The writer is a strategic affairs columnist and political analyst; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ONE NATION ONE POLL

Madam — The Cabinet nod for 'One nation - One election' (19-9-24) displays the misplaced priority of the Union government. Except the cost factor there is no other point worth considering to support the decision of the Cabinet. Election is an opportunity for the people to demonstrate their democratic sanction or resentment over the policies and programmes of a government. People exercising this right to ventilate their agreement or disagreement over the governments in the Center or the States should not be curtailed just to avoid expense. The expectations of the people being state specific in assembly elections and nation specific in the Parliament elections there is possibility of either of them getting swayed by the general mood. Possibility of holding elections in a massive way is not practically feasible. We are seeing the inability of the Election Commission to hold elections to a few States at one stroke. The Commission is not able to hold elections to Maharashtra Assembly along with elections in J&K and HP. Even elections to the state assembly are held in multiple slots. We have also seen the Commission rendered helpless to deal properly with the violations reported during the last General elections. The very idea of mandating holding elections to assemblies along with election to the Parliament is against the very Federal structure of the constitution. Proposal to hold elections to local bodies in 100 days after the General elections is also expensive and it is aimed at swaying the polls taking advantage of the outcome of national level elections. The arbitrary decision is undemocratic, anti-federal and strangles the right of the people to decide their choice on local, state and nation specific needs and demands. Above all, the move of government is, as usual, to divert the attention of the people from the basic and burning issues of the nation in many of which the performance of the government is definitely not upto the mark.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

Hundred days of achievements



Prime Minister Narendra Modi's first 100 days of his third term have demonstrated a clear focus on development and global leadership. The government's investments of 73 lakh crore in infrastructure projects like roads, railways, and ports are vital steps toward boosting the economy and creating jobs. Raising capital expenditure to Rs11.11 lakh crore reflects

a strong commitment to job creation and overall economic growth. Efforts in agriculture, such as the 20,000 crore allocation to farmers and increased MSP, along with the recognition of 1 crore "Lakshpati Didis," are praiseworthy. Foreign policy initiatives, including Modi's engagement with nations like the U.S., Russia, and China, indicate a proactive approach in shaping India's global standing. These accomplishments set a positive tone for the future, even as challenges like inflation and political tensions remain.

In his first 100 days of a third term, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has focused on development and global leadership, with significant investments in infrastructure, agriculture, and foreign relations. While progress is evident, challenges like inflation and political tensions continue to test his government's future agenda.

Vishesh Shukla | Lucknow

WORLD BAMBOO DAY

Madam—Bamboo is one of the largest members of the grass family and is the fastest growing woody plant on the planet. Its growth rate varies according to the soil and climate, and is best known as a major food source for pandas. Bamboo is also used for culinary and medicinal purposes in many parts of the world, as well for construction materials, furniture, textiles, musical instruments, bicycles, clothing and more. As a packaging material, bamboo is strong, durable and sustainable. It is one of the more remarkable natural materials available to us. The Economist recently quoted that bamboo is literally, the green equivalent of plastics. This is because it is renewable and low-carbon. It also said bamboo is now part and parcel of our packaging material. Furthermore, bamboo produces up to 35% more oxygen than trees, thus helping to offset carbon-dioxide emissions. It's easy to see why bamboo is a favorite when it comes to sustainable materials.

C.K. Subramani Iyer | Coimbatore

CONGRESS PROMISING THE MOON

Madam — The Congress election manifesto in Haryana is a bundle of high cost freebies not at all feasible financially for the State to implement. While the political parties must examine the impact of their pre poll announcements over the health of the State exchequer and present the detailed outline of available revenue which would bear the brunt of the freebies. The poll regulator Election Commission of India should also draft strict rules for manifestos and promises which are not viable.

The cult of freebies must stop if we really wish to progress morally, economically and socially and if Election Commission fails, the Supreme Court of India must take cognizance of the matter and direct the Election Commission to stop this nonsense. The freebies can become a real liability for the exchequer.

Jai Prakash Gupta | Ambala

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Kolkata's protests and the culture of rape: A call for societal change

The tragic incident at RG Kar Medical College, Kolkata underscores the urgent need for a profound societal shift in attitudes toward women

The recent public outcry in Kolkata, sparked by the tragic incident at RG Kar Medical College, has transformed into a significant and sustained protest. Junior doctors gathering in front of the Health Department, alongside widespread public engagement, underscores a profound frustration with the pervasive violence against women in India. Reflecting on the August 9 incident, it's evident that the protest is not merely about the individual responsible. Despite the apprehension of the perpetrator, the continuing movement raises crucial questions about why such intense outrage persists.

The root problem, as I see it, lies in the cultural context that enables such violence. It's not just about one person's actions but about a broader cultural environment. The protests highlight a growing recognition that the issue is embedded within a culture that normalizes and perpetuates violence against women. The Kolkata demonstrations have brought to light a critical aspect of this cultural problem: the normalization of rape and the way women are



perceived and treated. In Indian culture, women are often valued primarily for their reproductive roles, linking respect to their capacity as mothers. This perspective reduces women to their biological functions, overlooking their full humanity. The "culture of rape" is evident in societal behaviors and attitudes that tolerate and perpetuate violence against women. This deeply ingrained culture is reflected in everyday interactions and institutional practices, indicating that the issue goes beyond individual acts. The ongoing protests signify a crucial desire for a profound cultural shift. The movement in Bengal represents a broader call for cultural transformation. To address the problem effectively, we need to funda-

mentally change societal norms and practices that contribute to a pervasive culture of violence and exploitation. As long as these cultural attitudes persist, incidents of rape will continue. The troubling normalization of sexual violence in Indian society is evident in various ways. For instance, the fact that the name of the doctor murdered and raped in Bengal was trending on porn websites for an extended period reflects a serious cultural issue. It shows how sexual violence is often sensationalized and dehumanized rather than addressed with the seriousness it deserves.

This critique extends to societal behaviors and attitudes, illustrated by the public reaction to the Ujjain incident. The fact that such a violent act occurred in a busy area, with onlookers observing and recording it, underscores the disturbing normalization of sexual violence. Such incidents are met with alarming indifference. Examining the cultural foundations of this issue reveals how cultural norms perpetuate gender inequality and violence. There are many

subtle signs of rape culture that are often overlooked, such as the objectification of women and the normalization of harmful attitudes and practices. Addressing this issue requires a profound cultural transformation. It's not just about legal measures or punishing offenders; it's about transforming the norms and values instilled from a young age. Culture is nurtured in our homes, and changing how we educate and raise our children is crucial to addressing rape culture.

In conclusion, the protests in Kolkata and similar movements across India are not just reactions to individual cases of violence but a critical response to a deep-seated cultural issue that normalizes and perpetuates sexual violence. This situation underscores the urgent need for a fundamental cultural shift. Until we address the broader culture of rape, incidents of sexual violence will continue to plague our society.

(Acharya Prashant is a Vedanta teacher and an advocate of women rights; views expressed are personal)



ACHARYA PRASHANT



FIRST COLUMN

APPLY SPORTS ETHICS IN THE WORKPLACE

The lessons learned through sports cultivate a healthier and productive work environment



SAKSHI SETHI

Sports have since long been a crucial element of human culture, teaching participants important life skills and values. The discipline, teamwork and perseverance developed in sports can easily be translated into a professional setting, where these qualities often lead to success. Applying sports values to the workplace creates a healthier and more productive environment that benefits individuals and teams alike.

The term 'resilience' is one of the core values in sports, where athletes regularly face challenges, setbacks and failures. Whether it's losing a game, dealing with injuries or facing tough competition, athletes learn to recover, adapt and continue working toward their goals. The similar value is crucial in the workplace, where employees encounter stress, failed projects and unexpected obstacles. Resilience helps employees bounce back from difficulties and maintain a positive attitude despite setbacks. It encourages them to see failure as an opportunity for growth rather than a reason to give up.

There is no denying the fact that athletes exhibit tremendous commitment and passion for their sport, dedicating hours of practice, maintaining a strong mental focus and striving to overcome challenges. At the workplace, too, similar commitment is essential for both personal as well as organizational success. Employees who are passionate about their work are more engaged, motivated and willing to go the extra mile. Just as athletes work toward improving their performance, committed employees consistently seek opportunities to learn, grow and contribute to their team.

When talked about the Paralympics, these athletes provide a powerful



source of inspiration when it comes to work ethics. They demonstrate exceptional dedication, resilience and perseverance—qualities that can directly inspire and shape one's approach to professional life. The lessons learned from their incredible journeys highlight the importance of maintaining a strong work ethic, overcoming adversity and striving for excellence in any field. Passion fuels innovation and creativity, leading to breakthroughs and a sense of fulfillment in one's job encouraging professionals to remain committed to their goals even when facing challenges at the workplace. It teaches us that obstacles, whether personal or professional, can be overcome with time, effort and persistence.

The values learned through sports are not only essential for athletic success but also for professional growth and productivity in the workplace. By embracing these values, individuals and teams can foster a work culture that promotes collaboration, perseverance and a drive for excellence. Recognizing progress, no matter how small reinforces one's belief that effort pays off and celebrating these victories along the way keeps the individual motivated and energized to continue. Instead of shying away from difficulties, one must see them as opportunities to learn and grow. When an individual approaches obstacles with the belief that effort leads to improvement, they build resilience and perseverance.

As stated above, undoubtedly, Paralympians have to cope with significant adversity, whether it's learning to use a prosthetic limb or recovering from a life-altering injury. In the workplace, this means that failures, mistakes or even unexpected challenges are not the end but an opportunity to bounce back stronger. In the workplace, adopting a mindset that welcomes challenges rather than avoiding them is a key part of developing a strong work ethic. It pushes professionals to take on difficult tasks, expand their capabilities and evolve in their careers. Sports values do provide excellent lessons that can be transferred to the workplace, promoting personal growth, team cohesion and overall success.

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

Sri Lanka's pivotal presidential election

With traditional parties in decline and new alliances emerging, this election may spring surprises. The outcome will determine Sri Lanka's capacity to address its urgent challenges



NILANTHA LANGAMUWA

Sri Lanka faces a pivotal moment in its political history as it prepares for the presidential election this Saturday, 21 September. This election, the ninth for the executive presidency, unfolds amid severe political polarisation, sharply contrasting with the last election in November 2019. The decline of traditional political parties and the rise of various political alliances are prominent features of this election, with three main candidates competing in a manner distinct from the two-horse races of previous presidential contests. The fragmentation of political parties, the absence of anti-defection laws, and the formation of new alliances driven more by personal interests than by cohesive agendas pose significant risks to democratic stability and governance. The 2019 presidential race featured two main candidates and a notable but relatively minor third-party candidate. It saw a record voter registration of 15,992,096 and a turnout of 83.72% (13,387,951), surpassing previous highs of 81.52% in 2015 and 81.06% in 1982. Despite this high turnout, 135,452 votes were invalid, leaving 13,252,499 votes as valid. Gotabaya Rajapaksa of the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna won with 52.25% of the valid votes (6,924,255), while his main opponent, Sajith Premadasa of the National Democratic Front, received 41.99% (5,564,239). Anura Kumara Disnayake of the National People's Power secured a mere 3.16% (418,553 votes). In the subsequent general election on 5 August 2020, Premadasa and Disnayake faced off again for parliamentary seats. Premadasa won 305,744 votes, while Disnayake received 49,814 votes.

In the 2015 parliamentary elections, Premadasa garnered 112,645 votes from Hambantota, whereas Disnayake, contesting from Colombo, secured 65,966 votes. Ranil Wickremesinghe, one of main three main contenders, in this year's race but absent from the 2019 presidential election, leads the United National Party. His party received 249,435 votes (2.25%) in the general elections, including 30,875 from Colombo and 28,282 from Gampaha. Although his party did not win a parliamentary seat, Wickremesinghe was appointed to a national list position. Amid severe social upheaval caused by economic mismanagement, which resulted in the resignation of both the President and Prime Minister, Wickremesinghe, a seasoned politician and six-time Prime Minister, capitalised on the moment to make his comeback. After Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa was forced to resign, Wickremesinghe was appointed as Prime Minister.

However, protests demanding the resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa led to his dramatic escape, first to Trincomalee by navy ship, then back to Colombo by air force chopper, and finally to the Maldives by air force cargo flight. Rajapaksa officially resigned on 14 July 2022. Subsequently, Prime Minister Wickremesinghe was appointed as President by the constitutional process. Wickremesinghe's appointment highlights the complexities of Sri Lanka's political system.

According to the constitution, the President must appoint a Prime Minister who commands the majority's confidence in Parliament, illustrating the considerable unchecked powers inherent in the executive role. Rajapaksa's assumption that Wickremesinghe, who came to Parliament through the national list, was the candidate who earned the majority's confidence reflects the intricate dynamics of Sri Lanka's



THE FRAGMENTATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES, THE ABSENCE OF ANTI-DEFECTION LAWS, AND THE FORMATION OF NEW ALLIANCES DRIVEN MORE BY PERSONAL INTERESTS THAN BY COHESIVE AGENDAS POSE SIGNIFICANT RISKS TO DEMOCRATIC STABILITY AND GOVERNANCE

politics. However, Wickremesinghe has effectively stabilised the situation after the social upheaval. In this context, Wickremesinghe has emerged as a major candidate, yet the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna has nominated its candidate, Namal Rajapaksa.

Reports suggest that Rajapaksa's ambitions to secure the prime ministership were opposed, leading a faction of his party to break away from Wickremesinghe. Rajapaksa's candidacy appears more focused on maintaining his family's political lineage rather than presenting a genuine bid for leadership. Nonetheless, his endorsement of supporting Sajith Premadasa, where he appeals to supporters to cast their second vote for Premadasa, could be a decisive factor in the election outcome. Meanwhile, the NPP, initially opposed to the public uprising that led to Rajapaksa's removal, has become a significant political entity.

Anura Kumara Disnayake, who ironically led his political party into alliances with traditional parties to secure ministerial positions over the past few decades, has skilfully capitalised on widespread dissatisfaction with corruption and the growing anger towards conventional politicians to bolster his standing. His alliance's emotionally charged propaganda has infiltrated every corner of society, despite its lack of deep ideological substance. The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), his original party, has skilfully harnessed this discontent to challenge the status quo.

However, Disnayake's path to victory remains uncertain, especially with three major candidates in the race. Voter statistics reveal additional obstacles: with 17.1 million registered voters and an anticipated 80% turnout (13.7 million), a candidate would need approxi-

mately 7 million votes to secure the presidency in the first count.

The NPP's past performance shows limited success, receiving 418,553 votes (3.16%) in 2019 and 445,950 votes (3.84%) in parliamentary elections in 2020. The party faces challenges in Tamil-majority districts like Nuwara-Eliya, Jaffna, Wannu, Batticaloa, and Trincomalee, and in areas with lower voter counts, such as Polonnaruwa and Matale. To succeed, the NPP must secure substantial votes from Colombo, Gampaha, Kalutara, Kandy, and Kurunegala, requiring an estimated 700,000 to 800,000 additional votes.

Given these dynamics and the competition among three candidates, the NPP or JVP may struggle to achieve significant success in this election. However, the election remains crucial in determining the country's social and governance structure. Conversely, Sajith Premadasa appears to have significant potential to garner a majority of the votes, while Wickremesinghe has also gained substantial ground. Therefore, it is unlikely that any candidate will secure over 50% of the vote in the first round of counting, which may necessitate counting the second votes.

This uncertainty could trigger a new wave of political instability if major alliances and key candidates fail to manage the results effectively and refuse to accept the people's verdict. Despite flashy manifestos and hefty campaign budgets, none of the candidates have provided a clear plan to tackle the staggering \$100 billion national debt. They all parrot the same old IMF rhetoric, yet almost none offer a concrete strategy beyond this worn-

The situation in the island nation is dire, and there's no straightfor-

ward path for the incoming leader to steer the country out of its deepening crisis. As of 1 July 2024, about 24.8% of Sri Lanka's population lives in poverty, with rates varying dramatically between districts—3.5% in Colombo versus 44.2% in Nuwara-Eliya.

Poverty in rural areas has surged from 15% to 32%, while urban poverty has tripled from 6% to 18%. A recent survey revealed that 31% of the population is impoverished, with 33% skipping meals and 47% cutting back on meal sizes. Malnutrition affects nearly one-third of children under five, and over 40% of women aged 18-60 are overweight or obese, reflecting severe economic and health issues. Regardless of the election's outcome, Sri Lanka's entrenched political divisions threaten to entrench a fragmented legislative body, where effective governance and decisive action may become increasingly elusive.

Such divisions risk entrenching a cycle of delays and inefficiencies, potentially leading to a state of perpetual gridlock that hampers national progress. Antonio Gramsci's notion of passive revolution becomes pertinent here, warning of significant changes that merely preserve existing power structures. Hannah Arendt's insight that "The most radical revolution may become a conservative the day after the revolution" cautions against decisions driven by emotion over reason.

Thus, the question looms: can this election transcend emotional politics to instigate genuine reform, or will it simply entrench the status quo? Regrettably, the candidates' manifestos seem to hint at the lat-

(The writer is a journalist and author. Views expressed are personal)

Chronicles of compliance: The missing case diaries in money laundering probes

Money laundering poses a significant threat to society, undermines democratic institutions, and fosters criminal activities and corruption

The international community established the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to combat money laundering and terrorist financing through international standards. The FATF's 40 Recommendations provide a comprehensive framework for countries to prevent and address these financial crimes. India enacted the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in 2002, effective from July 1, 2005, in alignment with its international obligations. The PMLA aims to combat the laundering of illicit funds, including those from activities such as drug trafficking, thereby safeguarding the country's financial integrity.



PRAKHAR BAJPAI

Section 172 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), maintains a chronological record of the investigation process conducted by the police officer. This detailed documentation includes every step taken during the investigation, such as the date and time of receiving information about the crime, the start and finish times of the investigation, locations visited, witness statements recorded, and evi-

dence collected. This comprehensive record ensures continuity and transparency in the investigation, serving as a crucial handover document when different officers handle the case at various stages. The case diary is essential for maintaining continuity and transparency in the investigation process, offering a comprehensive overview of progress to courts and defence lawyers. This transparency is indispensable for maintaining procedural integrity and accountability in the investigative process.

Concerns Regarding the Absence of a Case Diary under PMLA: In contrast, the PMLA mandates thorough investigations into money laundering but does not specify the need for a

detailed case diary as in the CrPC. This absence raises concerns about potential misuse by the Enforcement Directorate. Without a mandated case diary, there is no obligation for investigators to maintain a comprehensive, chronological record of their actions. This lack of documentation could reduce accountability and allow for the manipulation or selective presentation of evidence without a transparent trail of how and when it was obtained, compromising the investigation's integrity.

This can lead to biased or unjust conclusions, undermining the integrity of the investigation and in cases where multiple officers are involved in different stages of the investigation, the absence



of a detailed case diary can result in inconsistent handovers. Critical information might be lost or altered, impacting the continuity and coherence of the investigation. This ultimately leads to violations of individual rights and compromise on due process of law.

Case Diary Maintenance: It is important to understand that the accused under CrPC does not have an automatic right to

view the case diary. Access to the case diary is at the discretion of the Court or the police officer. However, the significance of maintaining a case diary as noted above lies in its ability to keep investigating agencies diligent and accountable throughout the investigation process.

Furthermore, under the criminal law procedure, it is considered a dereliction of duty if the Magistrate does not request and review the case diary before authorizing any form of custody to the accused which means the perusal of the case diary by the magistrate is essential before any remand, whether judicial or police custody and haphazard maintenance of a case diary discredits those responsible and defeats the very purpose for

which it is required. Therefore, it is suggested that similar practice needs to be followed under the PMLA cases as well. Mandating ED to maintain a case diary ensures that it adheres to the due process of law during investigations and thereafter, the court will become entitled to use the case diary during trials or inquiries as an aid in the inquiry or trial, thereby holding the ED accountable for its investigative procedures, doing this the magistrate will be getting aid and true picture of the detailed record of the investigation proceedings conducted by ED till date in a narrative form, recorded promptly, with sufficient detail, and in chronological order and thus, will be able to objectively decide whether to remand the

accused or not. The Supreme Court is set to review 2 aspects of PMLA in July 2024, firstly, the FIR which is akin to ECIR under PMLA should be supplied to the accused or not. Secondly, the reversal of the presumption of innocence. It is to be noted that giving a case diary a statutory requirement under PMLA and thereby, mandating the ED to maintain one will be crucial in shaping the final judgement, which could fundamentally impact the legal framework for money laundering investigations in India. A ruling in favour of maintaining a case diary would enhance the fairness and transparency of PMLA proceedings, ensuring the accused's right to a fair trial.

(The writer is a law student; views expressed are personal)

Exploding devices dealt a major but not crippling blow to Hezbollah, analysts say

AP ■ BEIRUT
The waves of remotely triggered explosions that hit pagers and walkie-talkies carried by Hezbollah members in grocery stores, on streets and at a funeral procession this week made for an eerie and shocking spectacle. Analysts said Hezbollah will be able to regroup militarily and find communications workarounds after the attack, but the psychological effects will likely run deep. The explosions — widely blamed on Israel, which has neither confirmed nor denied involvement — killed at least 37 people, including two children, wounded more than 3,000 and deeply unsettled even Lebanese who have no Hezbollah affiliation. The detonating devices hit workers in Hezbollah's civilian institutions, including its health care and media operations, as well as fighters, dealing a blow to the militant group's operations beyond the battlefield. It is not clear how many civilians with no link to Hezbollah were injured. The attacks also exposed the weaknesses in the low-tech communications system the group had turned to in an

attempt to avoid Israeli surveillance of cellphones. Retired Lebanese army Gen. Elias Hanna described the attacks as the "Pearl Harbor or 9/11 of Hezbollah." Mohamad Hage Ali, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Middle East Center think tank who researches Hezbollah, said that because the blasts hit people across the group's institutions, the attack was "like a sword in the guts of the organization." Hundreds of people were severely wounded, including many who lost eyes or hands. "It will require time to heal and replace those who were targeted," he said. But Hage Ali and other analysts agreed that the loss of manpower is not a crippling blow. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah has said the group's fighting force numbers more than 100,000, meaning that the attack — as dramatic as it was — would have put only a small percentage of its militants out of commission even if all those wounded and killed were fighters. Qassim Qassir, a Lebanese analyst close to Hezbollah, said the detonating devices actually struck mostly civilian workers within the group and not military or security officials, which

Lebanon bans pagers, walkie-talkies on flights from Beirut

AP ■ BEIRUT
Lebanon's civil aviation authorities have banned pagers and walkie-talkies on all airplanes departing from Beirut's Rafik Hariri International Airport. The measure announced Thursday comes after such devices, mainly used by members of the militant Hezbollah group, exploded in different parts of Lebanon, killing dozens and wounding 3,000 people over the past two days. The authorities called on all airline companies to inform passengers using the airport that carrying pagers and walkie-talkies onto jets is banned "until further notice." It added that authorities will confiscate such devices found with passengers.

has allowed it to contain the impacts on its war effort. Hezbollah, which is Lebanon's strongest armed force, has exchanged fire with Israel's military almost daily since Oct. 8, the day after a deadly Hamas-led assault in southern Israel triggered a massive Israeli counteroffensive and the ongoing war in Gaza. Since then, hundreds have been killed in strikes in Lebanon and dozens in Israel, while tens of thousands on each side of the border have been displaced. Hezbollah said its strikes are in support of its ally, Hamas, and that it will halt its attacks if a cease-fire is implemented in Gaza. Hezbollah continued to launch rockets over the border Wednesday and Thursday after the pager and walkie-talkie attacks, though at a slower pace than usual. The impacts on Hezbollah's communications network are likely to be more disruptive than the human loss. "Telecommunications is the nerve of military operations

and communications," said retired Lebanese army Gen. Naji Malaeb, an expert on security affairs. A delay in communication could spell disaster, he said. During a speech in February, Hezbollah's leader, Nasrallah, warned members against carrying cellphones, which he said could be used to track them and monitor their communications. But long before that, Hezbollah relied on pagers and its own private fiber-optic landline network to avoid the monitoring of its communications. The pagers that detonated Tuesday were a new model the group recently began using. It appears that small quantities of explosives had been implanted in the devices at some stage in the manufacturing or shipping process and then remotely detonated. Hanna said the group might rely more heavily on its landline network — which Israel has attempted to tap into on multiple occasions — going forward, or on even lower-tech solutions such as hand-delivered letters. "Maybe you have to go back to human communication, the postman," he said. "This is what is really helping (Hamas

leader) Yahya Sinwar not to be targeted" in his hiding spot in Gaza. Orna Mizrahi, a senior researcher at the Tel Aviv-based think tank Institute for National Security Studies and former intelligence analyst for the Israeli military and prime minister's office, said losing the ability to communicate through pagers is a "dramatic blow," but the militant group has other communication methods and will rebuild their communication network. The bigger damage to Hezbollah was psychological, she said. "It's the humiliation of having such an operation, it shows how much the organization is exposed to the Israeli intelligence," she said. Amal Saad, a lecturer in politics and international relations at Cardiff University in Wales who researches Hezbollah, said much of the attack's impact was the "demoralization and the fear" it sowed. "It's not just a security breach against the military," she said. "Hezbollah's entire society is going to be extremely concerned because everything is liable now to being hacked and rigged." The group will "be rethinking many things now, not just the pagers," Saad said.

'Israeli indicted for role in Iranian assassination plot'

AP ■ JERUSALEM
Israeli security officials on Thursday said an Israeli citizen has been indicted for involvement in an Iranian assassination plot against top Israeli leaders, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. A statement from the Shin Bet internal security agency said that the citizen was recruited by Iranian intelligence to "carry out terrorist activities" on Israeli soil and "promote assassination attacks" on Netanyahu, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant and the head of the Shin Bet, Ronen Bar. It was unclear how far the alleged plot had advanced. The statement did not say whether the Israeli had obtained a weapon or developed a concrete plan. The statement said the Israeli had traveled to Iran twice — once in August following the assassination of top Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in an explosion in Iran's capital that was widely blamed on Israel. Israel has not said whether it was involved. The Shin Bet said the assassination plot was an attempt by Iran to follow through on its pledge to avenge his death. The statement said the Israeli was paid 5,000 Euros (USD 5,575.60) but had demanded a million dollars before doing anything. The Iranians refused the demand but said they would be in touch, according to the Shin Bet. Earlier this week, the Shin Bet said an explosion in a Tel Aviv park last September was linked to an attempt by Hezbollah to assassinate Moshe Yaalon, a former military chief of staff and defense minister. The Lebanese militant group is closely allied with Iran.

Starmmer faces backlash over freebies; insists he's done nothing wrong

AP ■ LONDON
Less than three months after he was elected on a promise to restore trust in politics, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer is trying to shake off criticism over donations from a wealthy businessman and the hefty salary of his most senior aide. The Labour Party leader, who won power in a landslide victory on July 4, denies impropriety over thousands of pounds (dollars) worth of clothes and eyeglasses paid for by Waheed Alli, a media entrepreneur and longtime Labour donor. Starmer is also facing grumbling among his own employees over the salary of chief of staff Sue Gray. The BBC disclosed that she is paid 170,000 pounds (\$225,000) a year — about 3,000 pounds more than the prime minister's salary. Gray's salary is at the top of a set of pay bands for political advisers, which have been



raised since the election. The government said it did not interfere in setting the pay scale. "The pay bands for any official, any adviser, are not set by politicians. There's an official process that does that," Business Secretary Jonathan Reynolds said Thursday. In recent days British media have been full of largely anonymous grumbling from government officials about Gray, a former senior civil servant best known for leading an investigation into lockdown-breaching parties

in government buildings during the COVID-19 pandemic. Gray's findings helped topple Conservative Prime Minister Boris Johnson, and her subsequent move to work for Starmer led the Conservatives to claim the "partygate" probe was politically biased, something Gray denies. Labour claims the leak of Gray's salary and the donation revelations — branded "frockgate" in the press after dresses bought for the prime minister's wife, Victoria Starmer — is being whipped up by the Conservatives and their media supporters to tarnish the government. Lawmakers are allowed to accept gifts but have to declare donations and extra-parliamentary income within 28 days. Starmer missed the four-week deadline to declare the donations of clothes and a personal shopper for his wife from Alli. He says the delay was due to his staff seeking advice on exactly what needed to be declared. "I'm very consistent with following the rules," Starmer said this week. He rejected suggestions that prime ministers should get a wardrobe budget, saying taxpayers should not have to pay for politicians' clothes. The scale of the freebies accepted by Starmer has raised eyebrows even among supporters. Sky News reported that Starmer has declared "gifts, benefits and hospitality" worth more than 100,000 pounds since December 2019, more than any other lawmaker. The donations include thousands of pounds' worth of tickets for Premier League games involving Starmer's beloved team Arsenal. "I'm a massive Arsenal fan," Starmer told reporters during a trip to Rome this week. "I can't go into the stands because of security reasons. Therefore, if I don't accept a gift of hospitality I can't go to a game.

Voters view Harris more favourably as she leads Democratic ticket, poll says

AP ■ WASHINGTON
Until recently, Lillian Dunsmuir of Bullhead City, Arizona, "didn't really think about" Kamala Harris and had no opinion of the vice president. But now she likes what she's seeing. "She's funny. I think she's very smart. She can speak well," said Dunsmuir, a 58-year-old real estate agent. "I would feel safe with her because I think she can handle herself with foreign leaders. I like her because she's for pro-choice, and so am I." Voters view Harris slightly more favorably than they did in July, just after President Joe Biden dropped out of the race, according to a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. The Democratic presidential nominee is now seen more positively than negatively. Former President Donald Trump's favorability ratings remained steady,

although the poll was conducted prior to the apparent assassination attempt of the Republican nominee on his golf course in Florida on Sunday. According to the survey, about half of voters have a somewhat or very positive view of Harris, and 44% have a somewhat or very negative view. That's a small shift since late July, just after Biden dropped out of the race, when views of Harris were slightly more unfavorable than favorable. Six in 10 voters, meanwhile, have a somewhat or very unfavorable view of Trump, while about 4 in 10 have a somewhat or very favorable view of him. Changes in views of national figures like Biden, Trump or Harris have been rare over the past few years. Trump's favorability rating didn't budge over the course of the summer, despite a felony conviction, a close call with a would-be assassin in Pennsylvania, and a new opponent in the presi-

dential contest. But Trump has prevailed in the past with similarly low favorability ratings. He won the 2016 election despite being broadly unpopular, and came close to winning in 2020 under similar conditions. The survey also found that relatively small shares of voters — around one-third — say the phrase "would change the country for the better" describes Trump or Harris extremely or very well, suggesting that voters retain some gloom about their options in the race. "Everyone talks about how polarized we are. I don't see the election solving that," said Sean Luebbers, a 55-year-old high school history teacher in Upland, California, who supports Harris. "I don't see Harris solving that. I think a lot of the damage has already been done, so I'm not hopeful that the election will solve that. Right now, you might call it triage. We can't make things worse."

Pak-origin man jailed for stirring up racial hate during UK riots

London (PTI): A Pakistani-origin man who used a fake identity to stir up racial hatred online during last month's riots in different parts of the UK has been sentenced to two years and four months imprisonment after admitting to disseminating offensive messages on social media. Ehsan Hussain, 25, was sentenced at Birmingham Crown Court on Wednesday after a West Midlands Police investigation revealed he had used a fake name belonging to an innocent member of the public. He is said to have posted "numerous and vile messages" through the app Telegram in a chat group containing over 12,000 members during far-right and anti-immigrant violent disorder in August. The police presented screenshots captured of the posts, which called for disorder in Alum Rock and Bordesley Green in Birmingham and incited racial violence.

Canada cuts study permits for foreign students

Ottawa (PTI): Canada has announced to reduce study permits for international students, a move that is likely to affect many Indian nationals. In a post on X late Wednesday night, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said, "We're granting 35% fewer international student permits this year. And next year, that number's going down by another 10%." "Immigration is an advantage for our economy — but when bad actors abuse the system and take advantage of students, we crack down," he said. The move comes as the Canadian government is looking to reduce the number of temporary residents. Canada is one of the most sought-after destinations for Indian students. Trudeau's announcement is likely to impact many Indian students who wish to study in Canada.

Floods spread in central Europe; heavy rains hit Italy

AP ■ WARSAW
A massive flood wave moving across Central Europe was threatening new areas and raising concerns among residents and leaders. It also prompted European Union head Ursula von der Leyen to plan a visit to the region on Thursday. Heavy rains also caused flooding and evacuation of some 1,000 residents in the northern Italian region of Emilia-Romagna. The death toll was rising in Central Europe, as receding waters were revealing the huge scale of the destruction caused by exceptionally heavy rains that began a week ago. Czech Interior Minister Vit Rakusan said the death toll had risen to five in the hard-hit northeast Czech Republic, and that eight were still missing. That brings the death toll so far to 24 in the region. Authorities have also reported seven deaths each in Poland and Romania, and five in Austria. Authorities across the



affected region have deployed their militaries. In the two hardest-hit regions in the northeast Czech Republic, troops joined firefighters and other emergency officials to help residents with cleanup and recovery efforts. Army helicopters have been used to distribute humanitarian help while soldiers are building temporary bridges after many were destroyed in the flooding. Some 400 people remain in evacuation centres in the regional capital of Ostrava and are not able yet to return home. In the country's southwest near the border with Austria, the water level of the Luznice River has reached an extreme level but the evacuation of 1,000 people in the town of Veseli nad Luznici was not necessary for the moment, officials said. Further to the south, in

Hungary, flood waters continued to rise on Thursday as authorities shut down roadways, rail stations and ferries along the Danube River. In the capital, Budapest, water spilled over the city's lower quays and threatened to reach transport infrastructure like trams and metro lines. Some transport services were suspended. Further upriver, in a region known as the Danube Bend, homes and restaurants near the riverbanks were inundated as officials and volunteers continued to place sandbags to reinforce levees. Nearly 6,000 professionals, including members of Hungary's water authority and military, have been mobilised to assist in flood preparations, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said in a news conference Thursday morning. Inmates from prisons had also been mobilised to help fill sandbags, Orbán said. The Danube rose nearly one metre (3.3 feet) in 24 hours, and by Thursday morning stood at

771 cm, approaching the 891-cm record set during major flooding in 2013. In southwestern Poland, the high water reached the city of Wroclaw and a stretched-out wave was expected to take many hours, even days to pass, exerting pressure on the embankments. Concerned by the scope of the destruction and the need for immediate aid, Prime Minister Donald Tusk invited von der Leyen to Wroclaw to see the situation with her own eyes. Government leaders from the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Austria are also to be present. To the south in Italy, about a thousand residents were evacuated in the northern region of Emilia-Romagna after it was hit by torrential rains and severe flooding overnight, local media reported Thursday. Rivers flooded in three of the region's provinces — Ravenna, Bologna and Faenza — as local mayors asked people to stay on the upper floors or leave their houses.

US lawmakers express outrage over vandalism of temple in New York

PTI ■ WASHINGTON
More than two dozen top American lawmakers have expressed outrage over the recent vandalism of a Hindu temple in New York, which came days ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the US. The road and the signage outside the BAPS Swaminarayan Temple in Melville, New York, were sprayed with expletives on Monday. Melville is located in Suffolk County, on Long Island and is about 28 kilometres from the 16,000-seat Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum, where Prime Minister Modi is scheduled to address a mega community event on September 22. "The desecration of this Hindu house of worship is vile. Hate has no place on Long Island or anywhere else in New York or across America," Senate Majority Leader Senator Chuck Schumer said. "I am deeply saddened by the desecration of the BAPS Mandir in Melville, NY. This act of vandalism is a clear attempt to incite hatred against Hindus and has no place in our country. We must come together to show that love and understanding will always triumph over intolerance and division," Congressman Rich McCormick said. "It is upsetting to see the hateful vandalism of the BAPS Hindu Temple in Melville, New York. I'm wishing our Hindu community strength and peace in the face of this unacceptable display of intolerance. Standing together, we can remain stronger than hate," said lawmaker Andy Kim. Congressman Brad Sherman said the vandalism of the temple is not only a "vile act of hate" against the Hindu community but also an "unjust attack on our shared value of

Congo gold mining town emerges as mpox hot spot

AP ■ KAMITUGA
Slumped on the ground over a mound of dirt, Divine Wisoba pulled weeds from her daughter's grave. The 1-month-old died from mpox in eastern Congo in August, but Wisoba, 21, was too traumatized to attend the funeral. In her first visit to the cemetery, she wept into her shirt for the child she lost and worried about the rest of her family. "When she was born, it was as if God had answered our prayers — we wanted a girl," Wisoba said of little Maambi Katengey. "But our biggest joy was transformed into devastation." Her daughter is one of more than 6,000 people officials suspect have contracted the disease in South Kivu province, the epicentre of the world's lat-

est mpox outbreak, in what the World Health Organisation has labeled a global health emergency. A new strain of the virus is spreading, largely through skin-to-skin contact, including but not limited to sex. A lack of funds, vaccines and information is making it difficult to stem the spread, according to alarmed disease experts. Mpox — which causes mostly mild symptoms like fever and body aches, but can trigger serious cases with prominent blisters on the face, hands, chest and genitals — had been spreading mostly undetected for years in Africa, until a 2022 outbreak reached more than 70 countries. Globally, gay and bisexual men made up the vast majority of cases in that outbreak. But officials note mpox has long dis-

proportionately affected children in Africa, and they say cases are now rising sharply among kids, pregnant women and other vulnerable groups, with many types of close contact responsible for the spread. Health officials have zeroed in on Kamituga, a remote yet bustling gold mining town of some 3,000 people that attracts miners, sex workers and traders who are constantly on the move. Cases from other parts of eastern Congo can be traced back here, officials say, with the first originating in the nightclub scene. Since this outbreak began, one year ago, nearly 1,000 people in Kamituga have been infected. Eight have died, half of them children. Last month, the World Health Organisation said mpox out-

breaks might be stopped in the next six months, with governments' leadership and cooperation. But in Kamituga, people say they face a starkly different reality. There's a daily average of five new cases at the general hospital, which is regularly near capacity. Overall in South Kivu, weekly new suspected cases have skyrocketed from about 12 in January to 600 in August, according to province health officials. Even that's likely an underestimate, they say, because of a lack of access to rural areas, the inability of many residents to seek care, and Kamituga's transient nature. Locals say they simply don't have enough information about mpox. Before her daughter got sick, Wisoba said, she was infected herself but didn't know it. Painful lesions emerged

around her genitals, making walking difficult. She thought she had a common sexually transmitted infection and sought medicine at a pharmacy. Days later, she went to the hospital with her newborn and was diagnosed with mpox. She recovered, but her daughter developed lesions on her foot. Nearly a week later, Maambi died at the same hospital that treated her mother. Wisoba said she didn't know about mpox until she got it. She wants the government to invest more in teaching people protective measures. Local officials can't reach areas more than a few miles outside Kamituga to track suspected cases or inform residents. They broadcast radio messages but say that doesn't reach far enough. Kasindi Mwenyelwata goes door to

door describing how to detect mpox — looking for fevers, aches or lesions. But the 42-year-old community leader said a lack of money means he doesn't have the right materials, such as posters showing images of patients, which he finds more powerful than words. ALIMA, one of the few aid groups working on mpox in Kamituga, lacks funds to set up programmes or clinics that would reach some 1,500,000 people, with its budget set to run out at year's end, according to programme coordinator Dr Dally Muamba. If support keeps waning and mpox spreads, he said, "there will be an impact on the economy, people will stop coming to the area as the epidemic takes its toll. ... And as the disease grows, will resources follow?"

SC rejects telecom companies curative pleas on AGR computation

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a jolt to telecom firms, the Supreme Court has dismissed a batch of pleas filed by companies, including Vodafone Idea and Bharti Airtel, seeking correction of alleged errors in the Adjusted Gross Revenue.



gone through the Curative documents. In our opinion, no case is made out within

the parameters indicated in the decision of this court in Rupa Ashok Hurra v Ashok Hurra. The Curative Petitions are dismissed," the bench observed in an order dated August 30, which was uploaded on Thursday.

there were several errors in arriving at the AGR dues which totalled over Rs 1 lakh crore. Vodafone-Idea's total liability was Rs 58,254 crore and Bharti Airtel's Rs 43,980 crore.

India-US trade potential worth 500 billion USD: Hardeep Puri

PTI ■ HOUSTON

The United States is India's sixth largest energy trade partner and the growing bilateral trade has the potential to cross the USD 500 billion-mark from USD 200 billion at present, Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri has said.



The hydrocarbon trade between the two countries has reached USD 13.6 billion in 2023-24 nearly double the figure from 2018-19, Puri said at a roundtable with energy companies.

Banking sector to play major role in India's development: Sitharaman

PTI ■ PUNE

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday said the banking sector will have to play a crucial role in driving the agenda of making India a developed nation or Viksit Bharat by 2047.



you need to have a robust and resilient system for which every now and then you need to make sure that the firewalls are adequate, any emergency drill which you need to do, what if situation so you know to handle if there is an emergency in terms of digital insecure incidents."

Government to soon release committee report on MSP of crops: Shivraj

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Thursday announced that the government will soon release the report of the committee on Minimum Support Price (MSP) for crops, which was established following the withdrawal of the three controversial farm laws.



Shivraj Singh Chouhan at a press conference on 100 days achievements of the ministry at National Media Centre, in New Delhi on Thursday.

agriculture ministry, in an initiative dubbed "Kisan Samvad." On genetically modified (GM) cotton technology awaiting regulatory approval, Chouhan said, "This is a sensitive topic for us. The approval will be given after wider consultations."

The committee on MSP, headed by former agriculture secretary Sanjay Agrawal, has held more than two dozen meetings and workshops so far.

make suggestions so as to make MSP more effective and transparent; to promote natural farming; and to change crop patterns keeping in mind the changing needs of the country.

expected to provide significant relief to farmers preparing for rabi sowing, he said. Risk mitigation remains a cornerstone of the government's agricultural policy.

SEBI eases rules for public issuance of debt securities

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi has amended rules to streamline the process for public issuance of debt securities aimed at providing faster access to funds for such issuers.



offer document filed with stock exchange(s) for one day immediately after the date of filing the draft offer

period has been cut from 3 to 2 working days. Further, in case of revision in the price band or yield, the bidding period disclosed in the offer documents, can be extended by one working day instead of three working days.

advertisement) in newspapers. Further, Sebi has simplified disclosure requirements for non-convertible securities in the offer documents.

India to become third largest economy by FY31: S&P Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India is on track to become the third-largest economy by 2030-31, driven by a projected annual growth rate of 6.7 per cent this fiscal, S&P Global said in a report on Thursday.

expected to stay dynamic and competitive due to strong growth prospects and better regulation, and foreign inflows into Indian government bonds have surged since the country joined major emerging market indexes, with further growth anticipated.

Nearly 90 per cent of India's trade is seaborne, necessitating robust port infrastructure to manage increasing exports and bulk commodity imports, it added.

Centre announces steps to resolve shipping related woes of traders

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Thursday announced steps, including reducing certain charges at ports and purchase of five additional second-hand container vessels by SCI, to resolve shipping sector-related problems of exporters and importers.

shipping delays at the Indian ports, and turnaround time at the ports. Briefing media after the deliberations, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said that several issues were discussed to look at addressing the challenges that exporters and importers are facing in the shipping area.

announced that empty containers can now be stored at the yard at zero cost for 90 days. The charges of Rs 3,000, that is being levied beyond 90 days, are now halved to Rs 1,500.

India, South Korea begin to share electronic bill of lading

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India and South Korea have started sharing the bill of lading in an electronic transfer mode between the customs of both sides, a move that will help promote ease of doing business, a senior official said on Thursday.



billion. Sarangi added that doing away with physical submissions may happen in the next 1-1.5 years. The United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) has taken this initiative to ensure that all trade documentations happen through the electronic transfer mode and that work is under progress as various countries are participating.

and containers on real-time basis. "Each of the containers coming into our country is RFID tagged and the movement is tracked on real time basis and going forward enabling IoT (internet of things) and ensuring that these containers movement is tracked from origin till it is shipped and beyond outside our shores also is something which is a work in progress," he said.

INBRIEF

KENYA HIGH COMMISSION VISITS GNDU
AMRITSAR: Esther Karema Mutua from the Kenya High Commission visited Guru Nanak Dev University. During her visit, Ms. Mutua met with Kenyan students and the Chairman of the International Student Cell at the Golden Jubilee Centre for Entrepreneurship and Innovation of the Guru Nanak Dev University.

REC SIGNS MOU WITH RE DEVELOPERS
GANDHINAGAR: REC Limited has signed an MoU during the 4th Global Renewable Energy Investors Meet & Expo (RE-INVEST 2024) in Gandhinagar with RE developers aggregating about Rs 1.12 lakh crore.

STUDENTS ENGAGE IN CONFERENCE ON ANATOMY, AI & AMP
KATTANKULATHUR: The 45th National Conference of the Association of Anatomists-Tamil Nadu at the SRM Medical College Hospital and Research Centre, drawing participation from over 300 students.

VIT-AP UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
AMRAVATI: Global South as a region signifying economic growth questions of inequality, development, sustainability take precedence in scholarly debate as witnessed in the efforts of the School of Social Sciences and Humanities (VISH), VIT-AP to highlight these issues.

A DIVINE JOURNEY

SHARANYA CHANDRAN'S *Hymns to Hara* was more than a performance, it was a profound tribute to Lord Shiva, blending tradition, personal devotion and artistic grace in a moving return to the stage, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**



The stage was set, the lights dimmed and the air filled with anticipation as Sharanya Chandran stepped gracefully onto the Stein Auditorium stage. What followed was not merely a dance performance but a spiritual journey, an exquisite expression of devotion, emotion and divine energy. In her solo Bharatanatyam presentation, *Hymns to Hara*, Sharanya Chandran paid tribute to Lord Shiva. The term *Hymns to Hara* refers to devotional songs or praises dedicated to Lord Shiva, who is often called "Hara," meaning "the remover" or "destroyer of evil" in Sanskrit. This title perfectly encapsulated the performance, as it was a spiritual offering through dance, celebrating the multifaceted aspects of Lord Shiva, his power, love and divine qualities. From the very first moment, it became evident that this was much more than a dance, it was a deep exploration of the divine, a celebration of devotion and a portrayal of the complex emotions evoked by Lord Shiva. Sharanya's depiction was powerful and moving, capturing the essence of Shiva's multifaceted nature. As the daughter of the renowned Bharatanatyam dancer Geeta Chandran, Sharanya has long been admired for her ability to infuse depth and emotion into her performances. In *Hymns to Hara*, she explored the many dimensions of Shiva, his compassion, his wrath, his fearlessness and even his more unsettling aspects. Each emotion was brought vividly to life through Sharanya's precise movements, her expressive face and her profound understanding of the Bharatanatyam tradition. What made this performance particularly meaningful was the personal connection Sharanya

brought to it. After a hiatus from the stage, *Hymns to Hara* marked her return to performing and it was clear how much the experience meant to her. The performance was a tribute to her grandparents, both devout followers of Lord Shiva, making it a poignant expression of familial love and devotion. Additionally, the evening carried personal significance for Sharanya as it coincided with her ten-year anniversary at J-PAL South Asia, where she successfully balances a career in development alongside her passion for dance. The beauty of *Hymns to Hara* lay in Sharanya's ability to work together with various elements of Indian culture. Drawing inspiration from poems and verses in Tamil, Maithili and other languages, she crafted a vivid portrayal of Shiva's complex character. The traditional Bharatanatyam pieces were carefully selected, creating a cohesive and visually captivating performance. Throughout the evening, Sharanya was accompanied by her mother and guru, Geeta Chandran, who provided the rhythmic beats of the Nattuvangam. The live music, featuring K Venkateshwaran on vocals, Manohar Balachandirane on the Mridangam, Varun Rajasekharan on the ghatam and G

Raghavendra Prasath on the violin, enhanced the emotional depth of the performance, adding an even greater spiritual resonance to the evening. What set Sharanya's performance apart was not just her technical prowess as a dancer but her ability to connect with the audience on a deeper level. Her dual life as a policy professional and a dancer gave her work a unique perspective, adding richness to her portrayal of themes such as duty, devotion and the search for meaning. In *Hymns to Hara*, Sharanya Chandran did more than just perform Bharatanatyam, she invited the audience into her world, a world shaped by family, faith and art, where tradition and personal history beautifully intertwined. It was a performance that touched the heart, leaving the audience not only in wonder of her talent but deeply moved by the sincerity and emotion she poured into every step.



Photos: Pankaj Kumar

EXPLORING THE ARTISTIC SPIRIT

The Capital Art Show in Delhi is a vibrant celebration of artistic expression, showcasing the rich diversity and creativity of Indian artists through over 80 stunning artworks and sculptures, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

Delhi, a city full of cultural richness, has become a vibrant place of artistic energy, blending its historic heritage with modern creativity. As visitors entered The Claridges for "The Capital Art Show," they were immediately immersed in Delhi's vibrant artistic spirit. The exhibition unfolds as a space of mesmerising beauty, where every artwork tells a unique story that goes beyond language. This curated collection stands as a tribute to the artist's mastery, each piece reflecting their inner world with precision and passion. The exhibition celebrates the artist's world, where every piece is a masterpiece that touches the soul. It's a space where everyone wants to be included, as artists have a special way of expressing what words cannot, painting straight from the heart. The Capital Art Show is more than an exhibition, it's a compelling display of human creativity and expression. Each piece offers a distinct appeal, drawing visitors into a space where emotions, memories and nature blend seamlessly. The gallery's peaceful yet vibrant atmosphere makes it feel as though the artworks are alive, quietly engaging with those who appreciate them. This collection, rich in diverse styles and mediums, invites deep reflection and enriches a profound connection. It pulls you into the artist's world, much like M.F. Hussain's bold acrylic strokes, which capture the energy and complexity of Indian life in a single painting. The show, curated by the renowned Rahul Kumar and featuring the debut of Sameera Anand, offers a fresh perspective on Delhi's evolving art scene. Her collection masterfully blends works from past legends with emerging talents, showcasing both legacy and innovation. Attendees were treated to



Photos: Pankaj Kumar

masterpieces by iconic artists like F.N. Souza, S.H. Raza, B. Prabha and Krishen Khanna, along with dynamic pieces from contemporary artists such as Jeram Patel. With over 80 stunning artworks and sculptures, the exhibition celebrated the rich diversity and creativity of India's artistic landscape. The exhibition left no doubt that in the world of art, everyone yearns to be

included. Through the universal language of visual expression, The Capital Art Show had created a space where attendees could feel truly alive, connecting with the indescribable and experiencing the profound beauty of human creativity. It was, in every sense, a masterpiece of curation and artistic expression. The gallery was thoughtfully arranged into thematic

sections, each offering a unique yet interconnected view of artistic expression. "Post-Modernism & The Indian Approach" challenged Western conventions with abstract and figurative works rooted in Indian identity. "Memory as a Tool," featuring Viswanath Kuttum's evocative pieces such as *What Do We Want to See in the World - (2024)* and *Ellora Caves Series (Set of 6) (2024)*, explored

recollection through materials like paraffin, beeswax, resin and brown powder on paperboard, creating a dreamlike experience. In "The Self," N. Ramachandran's mixed media boxes captured childhood memories, revealing different stories when opened or closed, with nostalgic engravings. "In Celebration of Nature," highlighted by KP Pradeepkumar's *Flower Seasons (2020)*, used mixed media including watercolours, gouache, tempera and pastels to honour the beauty and fragility of the natural world. In "Ecology & Environment" showcased Pankaj Chouhan's compelling watercolour on paper, addressing environmental degradation and human impact. "Changing Architecture," represented by Sunil Yadav's *Geometric Paradox (2024)* in pastels on paper, blended geometric and organic forms to explore how spaces shape emotions. "Abstracted Forms" featured deep sentiments manifested in non-representational works, with notable pieces like Kumaresan Selvaraj and Yuwan Bothisathuvar's *Nothing From (2022)* on Canson paper and plywood, evocative art. Finally, "Progressives & Associates" paid tribute to the pioneers of Indian modernism, celebrating their bold innovation and influence on the future of Indian art. The Capital Art Show was a deeply moving experience. It felt as though each artwork was speaking directly to us, creating a dialogue that spanned across time and personal boundaries. The art didn't just hang on the walls, it seemed to breathe and interact, inviting us to see our own reflections in its depths. The show made the beauty of human creativity feel personal, reminding us that in the world of art, we all have a place. It was truly an immersive journey that left a lasting impression.

A RICH TRIBUTE TO THE DHRUPAD MAESTRO

18th Pandit Siyaram Tiwari Music Festival Celebrates the Legacy of Dhrupad

By **GYANESHWAR DAYAL**

The 18th edition of the Pandit Siyaram Tiwari Music Festival paid a grand tribute to one of the most revered figures in Indian classical music. The festival honoured the life and legacy of Pandit Siyaram Tiwari, a maestro of the ancient Dhrupad tradition. Dhrupad, the oldest form of North Indian classical vocal music, has roots in the chanting style of the Samaveda, a sacred Sanskrit text dating back over 3,000 years. This meditative and contemplative genre, once confined to Hindu temples and royal courts, has evolved into a sophisticated art form over the centuries. A key feature of Dhrupad is its deep connection to nada yoga, the practice of exploring the inner sounds and vibrations of the body, believed to be the fundamental building blocks of the universe. Dhrupad vocalists cultivate an extraordinary resonance, enabling them to express a wide range of tones and microtones. It is this ancient tradition that Pandit Siyaram Tiwari, a leading exponent of the Darbhanga gharana, championed throughout his life until his passing in 1998. Born on March 10, 1919, Pandit Siyaram Tiwari was celebrated for his mastery of Dhrupad and was particularly known for introducing fast-paced laykari (rhythmic play) within the genre. His contributions were recognised with prestigious awards such as the Padma Shri in 1971 and the Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship in 1984, India's highest honor for musicians. The Pandit Siyaram Tiwari Memorial Sangeet Trust, under the curatorship of Dr. Sumeet Anand Pandey, organised this festival to preserve and promote the rich tradition of Dhrupad. Dr. Pandey, Tiwari's maternal grandson and an acclaimed Dhrupad vocalist, continues to uphold the family's musical legacy. As the co-founder and secretary of the Trust, Dr. Pandey is committed to sharing the timeless beauty of Dhrupad with a wider



Photos: Pankaj Kumar



audience. This year's festival featured captivating performances, beginning with Shashi Kant Pathak, who delivered a mesmerising solo on the Pakhawaj, a classical Indian drum. Pathak's performance earned him the "Navodit Kalakar Samman" award. He was accompanied by Rajesh Mishra on the Sarangi and Dr. Pandey himself on vocals. The evening concluded with a masterful Sarod recital by Pandit Biswajit Roy Chowdhury, who performed ragas from the Malhar family, accompanied by Pandit Durjay Bhaumik on Tabla. The noted music critic Pandit Vijay Shankar Mishra served as the compère for the event, guiding the audience through the evening's rich offerings. Speaking at the event, Dr. Pandey said, "It's a great honor to continue the legacy of my grandfather, Pandit Siyaram Tiwari, through this annual festival. Dhrupad is a timeless tradition that deserves to be celebrated and shared with the world. We hope that this festival will inspire new generations to appreciate and learn this beautiful art form." This year's festival held particular significance as the Pandit Siyaram Tiwari Memorial Sangeet Trust marked its 10th anniversary. Over the past year, the Trust organised 10 festivals across India, showcasing the beauty of Indian classical music. Two notable initiatives, Geetam Vadyam Nrityam and Vani Veena Venu, received widespread acclaim. Additionally, Dr. Pandey launched the "Naya Swar" series in Delhi, featuring performances by young maestros, with plans to expand to cities like Kolkata, Mumbai, and Bengaluru in the coming year. The Darbhanga school, to which Pandit Siyaram Tiwari belonged, is known for producing versatile vocalists skilled in Dhrupad, Khayal, Thumri and Bhajans. Pandit Tiwari's exemplary mastery in these forms continues to serve as a guiding light for future generations of musicians. Dr. Pandey's dedication to his craft extends beyond India. He has been invited as a Fulbright visiting fellow for 2024-25 at the University of California, Los Angeles, where he will engage in teaching, research, and concerts. His recent tour of seven European countries, where he presented Dhrupad on prestigious stages, further solidifies his role in taking Indian classical music to a global audience. As the 18th Pandit Siyaram Tiwari Music Festival concluded, it not only celebrated the enduring legacy of the Dhrupad maestro but also reaffirmed the vibrant future of this ancient musical tradition.

ASHWIN, JADEJA TANGO SAVES INDIA AFTER HASAN MAHMUD'S EARLY STRIKES

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Seasoned off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin sparked on home turf with his sixth Test hundred as he combined with Ravindra Jadeja to steer India out of trouble and post a formidable 339 for six on day one of the first Test against Bangladesh here on Thursday.

Ashwin (102 batting) and Jadeja (86 batting) added 195 runs (174 minutes, 225 balls) for a riveting unbroken seventh wicket stand after young pacer Hasan Mahmud (4/58) reduced India to 144 for six, despite Yashasvi Jaiswal making a solid 56.

The ebb and flow of the day's proceedings was quite remarkable and mostly revolved around Ashwin, Jadeja and Mahmud, who made his Test debut in March this year and was just three games old in the format before this match.

In a stunning first spell of 5-2-6-3, the 24-year-old Mahmud accounted for the cream of Indian top-order -- Rohit Sharma (6), Shubman Gill (0) and Virat Kohli (6) -- before snapping Rishabh Pant's return to Test cricket (39 off 52 balls) in the initial moments of the second session.

KL Rahul, another Indian batter who is re-entering the Indian Test establishment, fell for 16 to off-spinner Mehidy

Hasan Miraz as fortune's pendulum stayed firmly in Bangladesh's quarter. But then came the two gladiators who know Chepauk like the back of their hand -- Ashwin by birth and Jadeja through his long association with the Chennai Super Kings. One more wicket at that stage would have extended the dominance of Bangladesh, but such thoughts hardly disturbed Ashwin and Jadeja.

Ashwin went off the blocks with a flurry of boundaries, a firm validation of his oh-so-smooth timing born out of fluent hand movement through shots and precise footwork.

There was this ramp shot off Mahmud, who tried to rattle Ashwin with a short-pitched delivery that climbed onto his body.

But the veteran player arched himself back ever so slightly to gain space to execute the ramp over the slip -- fabulous in conceptualisation and execution.

At times, he scored at a strike rate in excess of 100 and was not hesitant to travel the more uncultured way. A slog sweep that went for six over mid-wicket off left-arm spinner Shakib Al-Hasan testified that. Jadeja was a tad different in his approach. Sensing that Ashwin was in good touch, the left-hander had the simple job of keeping his end going and he



did that with minimum fuss. A past master in operating from behind the giant shadows of superstars, Jadeja looked extremely comfortable doing that once more, providing the assurance Ashwin needed.

But there were moments, the showman in Jadeja came forth and Shakib was the aggrieved party, getting hammered for three fours.

Bangladesh's star of the day Mahmud, too was not spared as Jadeja, who raised his fifty off 73 balls, played a drag-pull off the pacer to send him for a six.

Other times, he wing-heeled across the pitch for those ones and twos to keep the Bangladesh bowlers frustrated. The spectators eventually witnessed the moment that they had been waiting for when Ashwin reached the hundred with a single off Shakib, and they welcomed it with applause, cheers and loud bugling. It was his second consecutive hundred at his home ground after going past the three-figure mark here against England in 2021. And it could not have come at a better time as well.

But before the epic fightback, the Indian innings resembled a crumbling rampart. It's not often that a team winning the toss would elect to bowl first here as that translates into a fourth-innings chase. But Bangladesh skipper

Najmul Hossain Shanto bit the bullet while going against the trend, and was rewarded for it too. Rohit, who was saved by DRS when he was on 1, was the first to depart.

The Indian skipper had little choice other than playing a wobble seam delivery that came at him on a tight angle as he edged to Shanto at second slip.

Gill lasted just eight balls but he would count himself unlucky, feathering Mahmud's down the leg side delivery to stumper Litton Das.

Kohli walked into the Chepauk amid loud cheers and looked confident. But an old failing resurfaced to haunt him. Mahmud pitched one just short of the length outside the off-stump, and the length was not suitable for a drive.

But the star batter chose to play an expansive one with the ball nestling in Litton's gloves after taking a healthy edge off his bat.

Jaiswal and Pant added 62 runs for the fourth wicket to temporarily check the free fall before both perished in close succession in the middle session.

Bangladesh might have thought the effort was good enough to keep the home side flat on the ropes, but Ashwin and Jadeja made them wiser as to why it is so tough to keep India on the back-foot at home for long.



Indian women crush Georgia; Gukesh leads men to victory over China

PTI ■ BUDAPEST

Grandmaster R Vaishali and Vantika Agrawal put up impressive performances as Indian women defeated Georgia while World Championship challenger D Gukesh led the men to victory over China in the seventh round as both teams continued their unbeaten streak in 45th Chess Olympiad here.

Vaishali and Vantika notched wins against Lela Javakhishvili and Bella Khotenashvili as Indian women thumped second seeds Georgia 3-1, while the men eked out a 2.5-1.5 over China.

On a day that saw D Harika settling for a draw with Nana Dzagnidze and Divya Deshmukh being held by Nino Batsiashvili from a better position, it was Vantika who handled her time pressure extremely well to play almost 20 moves with just about a minute on her clock to win her game and seal India's seventh straight victory.

The Indian women took their tally to an impressive 14 points out of a possible 14 and stretched their lead to two points over nearest rivals Poland, Kazakhstan and France who all have 12 points apiece.

In a surprising turn of events a blunder by Olivia Kiolbasa of Poland against Nataliya Buksa of Ukraine cost the Polish team dearly in the sixth hour of play as what looked like a certain victory became a 2-2 draw.

In the open section, Indian Grandmaster Gukesh showed the way.

Playing the white side of a Closed Sicilian Gukesh reached a drawn endgame after nearly five hours of play but he remained focus to find one mistake that was made by Chinese top board Wei Yi.

Speculation were rife about a possible clash between D Gukesh and Ding Liren - the two contestants in the next World Championship for a final showdown ahead of their match in Singapore in November.

However, the Chinese think

tank decided to rest the reigning world champion. That was already a shock for the pundits of the game.

R Pragnanandhaa played out a quick draw as black against Yangyi Yu of China while P Harikrishna pressed for some time before the position petered out to be equal in the ensuing rook and pawns endgame against Wang Yue of China on the fourth board.

Earlier Arjun Erigaise went for the kill against an alert Bu Xiangzhi and the latter found a nice piece sacrifice to force a draw through repetition.

With just four rounds to come, the Indian men have done everything correct thus far and are sitting pretty with a 100 percent score like their female counterparts.

Iran is the only team in close pursuit of the leaders on 13 points while a pack of four teams - Serbia, Hungary, Armenia and defending champions Uzbekistan share the third spot on 12 points each.

In the next round now, the Indian men will take on Iran while the women are pitted against Poland.

RESULTS ROUND 7 OPEN: India (14) beat China (11) 2.5-1.5 (D Gukesh beat Wei Yi; Yu Yangyi drew with R Pragnanandhaa; Arjun Erigaise drew with Bu Xiangzhi; Wang Yue drew with P Harikrishna); Iran (13) beat Vietnam (11) 2.5-1.5; Lithuania (10) lost to Hungary (12) 1.5-2.5; Uzbekistan (12) beat Ukraine (10) 3-1; Serbia (12) beat Netherlands (10) 3-1; Armenia (12) beat England (10) 2.5-1.5; France (11) drew with Georgia (11) 2-2.

Women: India (14) beat Georgia (11) 3-1 (D Harika drew with Nana Dzagnidze; Lela Javakhishvili lost to R Vaishali; Divya Deshmukh drew with Nino Batsiashvili; Bella Khotenashvili lost to Vantika Agrawal); Ukraine (11) drew with Poland (12) 2-2; Azerbaijan (10) lost to Kazakhstan (12) 1-3; Armenia (11) drew with United States of America (11) 2-2; Mongolia (11) drew with Germany (11) 2-2; Spain (10) lost to France (12) 1.5-2.5.

Kevin de Bruyne injury scare as Man City is held 0-0 by Inter Milan in the Champions League

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Manchester City faces a new injury concern for Kevin de Bruyne ahead of a showdown with Premier League title rival Arsenal after the playmaker was substituted at halftime of Champions League match against Inter Milan.

The Belgium international looked in discomfort after making a run late in the first half. After receiving treatment, De Bruyne didn't return for the second half and was replaced by Ilkay Gundogan. The game ended 0-0.

City hosts title rival Arsenal at Etihad Stadium on Sunday. City manager Pep Guardiola said he didn't know the extent of De Bruyne's injury, but was informed by the club doctor the playmaker could not carry on in the second half.

"I didn't speak with the doctors yet," Guardiola said about De Bruyne's availability for the weekend. "(He will be) Assessed tonight, maybe tomorrow. We will have more info tomorrow."

De Bruyne endured an injury-disrupted campaign last season when he was sidelined from August to January with a hamstring problem. He returned to help the club secure a record fourth straight English title.

He has started every game this season and scored in City's 4-1 win against Ipswich last month.

City held off challenges from Arsenal in each of the last two seasons to lift the title. The north London club is expected to be City's main rival again this term.

Arsenal has its own injury



problems ahead of the game after captain Martin Odegaard was ruled out with ankle ligament damage.

Without De Bruyne, City failed to find a breakthrough against Inter and was shut out at home in the Champions League for the first time since a 0-0 draw with Sporting Lisbon in March 2022.

It was only the second time in all competitions since then that Guardiola's team failed to score at home - the other coming in a 0-0 with Arsenal in the league in March.

City extended its unbeaten home run in European games to 32, dating back to a 2-1 loss to Lyon in 2018.

Haaland locked on 99 Erling Haaland has looked unstoppable this season with nine goals in his first four games of the campaign before

Wednesday match. But that run was snapped by Inter with the Norway striker stuck on 99 goals for City.

Haaland also failed to score against the Italians when the teams met in the Champions League final in 2023, which City won 1-0 to lift the trophy for the first time in its history.

"They are masters of defending," Guardiola said. Guardiola's future With his contract expiring at the end of the season, Guardiola sounds like he's still loving life at City.

Asked by an Italian journalist if he could see himself working in Italy in the future, Guardiola said: "I really enjoy being here. I love English football, it is fantastic, really enjoyable. They leave you alone to get on with the job. That doesn't happen anywhere else."



PSG's post-galactico era begins with a last-gasp win

THANKS TO GIRONA GOALKEEPER'S BLUNDER

AP ■ PARIS

It took a huge blunder to gift Paris Saint-Germain victory in the first Champions League match of its post-galactico era.

PSG scraped a 1-0 home win over tournament newcomer Girona on Wednesday with a stoppage-time goal, which came when goalkeeper Paulo Gazzaniga let a left-wing cross from Nuno Mendes trickle under his hands and through his legs.

For the first time in more than a decade, PSG began its Champions League campaign without at least one star player, known in soccer as a "galactico."

But after the likes of Zlatan Ibrahimovic, Edinson Cavani, Neymar, Kylian Mbappé and Lionel Messi came and went without winning Europe's elite club competition, PSG started this campaign with a new identity based on more

French players and greater teamwork.

It was also PSG's first Champions League game without Mbappé for seven years after France's star joined Real Madrid, scoring for his new club on Tuesday.

Mbappé was reproached by his critics for not tracking back or closing down enough when he played up front for PSG.

Yet PSG coach Luis Enrique could be heard shouting when his players failed to close down properly and, at one point, Girona kept the ball for 2 1/2 minutes with PSG's ball-watching players chasing aimlessly.

Malvika beats Kristy Gilmour to enter China Open quarterfinals

PTI ■ CHANGZHOU (CHINA)

Young Indian shuttler Malvika Bansod continued her fine form as she cruised to her maiden Super 1000 quarterfinal after eking out a hard-fought victory against higher-ranked Kristy Gilmour in the China Open here on Thursday.

Malvika, ranked 43rd, toiled hard for one hour and five minutes before pulling off a 21-17 19-21 21-16 win over the two-time Commonwealth Games medallist and world number 25 from Scotland in a women's singles round-of-16 contest.

"This is the first time I will play a quarterfinal of a Super 1000 tournament so it is a dream come true and the biggest achievement of my life so far," Malvika said after the match.

"I dreamt about this before the tournament that how would it be if I reached the

quarters and now I'm top 8, so it's a great feeling," she added.

Talking about the match, the Indian, who now leads head-to-head against Gilmour 3-2, said "There is a lot of drift from this part so I found it difficult to control in the last parts of the last game and second game as well. But I'm glad god helped me."

The win comes a day after the 22-year-old defeated Paris Olympics bronze medallist Gregoria Mariska Tunjung of Indonesia.

The Nagpur shuttler feels she has been able to control the shuttle in the tricky conditions here.

"My retrieving is working well, I am able to control the shuttle better than the others. The conditions are a bit tricky for both players but I'm able to handle it better," she said.

She added that she has focused on enhancing her strength, and it is yielding

positive results.

"This circuit is very tough because if you are entering a Super 500 or 1000 you end up playing a top 10 in the first round as I'm not seeded yet. So, I need to be physically strong from the beginning itself. I have been working on that."

However Malvika, who is the lone Indian shuttler remaining in the competition, has a tough challenge ahead of her as she will be up against fourth seed and two-time world champion Akane Yamaguchi of Japan in the last eight stage.

Although the Japanese shuttler has won both the outings against Malvika, the Indian had come close to defeating Yamaguchi and hopes she can cross the line this time round.

"Hope for the best. I am in good form let's see how it goes tomorrow. I will give my best," she said.

BARAPADA SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY
(A Society Registered under Societies Registration Act, 1860)
Registration No. BLS-3968-98 of 1992-1993, Barapada, Bhubaneswar-756113 (Odisha)

FIRST NOTICE

THIS FIRST NOTICE is issued by the BSET Society in the public interest to the staffs on unlawful strike, protest who are also involved in vandalism, acted against the interest of the institution, leading to obstruction of academic activities including ingress and egress to the institution campus which is continuing in front of the main entrance gate of the BIET institutions being an unaided private technical institution, to resume their duties loyally and faithfully by 23rd September, 2024, recalling the ongoing unlawful strike, protest and vandalism in the interest of the students and the willing staffs to pursue their respective career in various technical education and the staffs for imparting of the various courses. The BSET Society shall take all lawful steps in the letter and spirit of the direction dated 19.02.2019 passed in W.P. (C) No.12796/2016 filed by the BSET Society which is still in force and pending before the Hon'ble High Court of Orissa. It is brought to your kind notice that you and your representatives who are on unlawful strike are fully aware of the directions passed in the above mentioned writ petition, despite the direction the striking staffs have also forcibly stopped to release the salary. This notice is served lawfully and widely circulated in the vernacular newspapers giving ample opportunity to the staffs on strike.

Please treat this notice as urgent and resume duties by 23rd September, 2024 in the interest of the students and the institution at large.

Secretary, (BSET Society)
Barapada, Bhubaneswar

C-629 **OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, P.H. DIVISION, BHUBANESWAR, SAHID NAGAR, ODISHA**
Phone / FAX :- 0674-2540578 (O) / e-Mail: eephiibbsr@ori.nic.in

Office Order No. 9400 /Dt.18.09.2024

Bid Identification No. EEPHBSR-18(3) / 2024-25 Dt. 31.08.2024

1) The Tender ID :- 2024_PHEO_104590_1 for the work "Installation of 250 KVA, 11/0.4KV Sub-station towards power supply to the Intake well at Kuanria, Dasapalla. is hereby cancelled due to Single Tender as per OPWD Code Vol-I, Para-3.5.18, Amendment-2015.

ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER, P.H.DIVISION, BHUBANESWAR

OIPR-13205/11/0020/2425

O-290 **OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER RURAL WORKS DIVISION, PADAMPUR**

2nd Corrigendum to Tender call notice No. Online 20 of 2023-24

Due to some administrative reasons the following tenders are hereby cancelled.

SL.no. 16- Construction of Sub-centre building at Patharla of Bijepur Block
SL.no. 19- Construction Sub-centre building at Sanbaunsen of Bijepur Block

All other terms and conditions remains unchanged.

Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division, Padampur

OIPR-25069/11/0003/2425