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REAL MADRID COMEBACK WIN OVER ESPANYOL 12 SPORTS

INDIA LIFTS MAIDEN GOLD AT CHESS OLYMPIAD

RISHABH MALIK ■ NEW DELHI

In the battle of black and white India rose to the crown, the country's men's and women's contingent both have made the country proud by creating history, clinching the gold medal at the Chess Olympiad 2024 on Sunday. This is the triumph of India's first ever gold medal for the nation in the highly regarded chess tournament. India's chess grandmaster D Gukesh beats Vladimir Fedoseev from Slovenia and Arjun Erigaisi, who has also had a outstanding feat in Budapest picked up a win over Serbian Jan Subelj on the final

day of the event. The Indian team for the open category included Gukesh, Erigaisi, Praggnanandhaa R, Vidit Gujrathi, Pentala Harikrishna and Srinath Narayanan(Captain). The team who had an unbeaten streak in the tournament with incredible performances against Fabiano Caruana of United States(2.5-1.5) on Saturday day before the final round of the event which gave confirmation of gold medal. India despite having 19 points on the tally(table topper) only China is right after the India in points tally with 17 points which gave the medal confirmation, if somehow



Gukesh D of India, during the final round of the 45th Chess Olympiad in Budapest, Hungary, Sunday

AP/PTI

china takes 2 points in the final 11 round both teams going to share the gold medal. 18-year old Gukesh Dommaraju hails from Chennai marks his presence on the world stage after the historic India's maiden gold medal in the 45th Chess Olympiad, along with women's success with Harika Dronavalli, R Vaishali, Divya Deshmukh, Vantika Agarwal and Tania Sachdev is leading against Azerbaijan in the final by 1-0 gave India double joy with another gold medal in their category. Gukesh personify a character who knows how to control his nerves in the tense situation in

the crucial moments which helps him during the tournaments. International Chess Federation congratulated the team's success on platform X Congratulations to Gukesh D, Praggnanandhaa R, Arjun Erigaisi, Vidit Gujrathi, Pentala Harikrishna and Srinath Narayanan (Captain), anand Mahindra gave his wishes on X Indian Women and Men.. Both WORLD CHAMPIONS An extraordinary feat May this inspire future generations of Indians to always keep the crown in the place where Chess Began. Welcome home, Chess. Swagatam.

The legendary Viswanathan Anand, held the FIDE(The International Chess Federation)title from 2000 to 2002, and the unified title from 2007 to 2013. Gukesh D (challenger) and Ding will face each other again in the FIDE World Championship Match 2024, which is going to happen between November 20 and December 15 this year in Singapore. This victorious moment has opened the doors for young minds for increased participation all across the nation and will work as the baton for the future generation.

In Rourkela Minor girl gang-raped; sibling sexually assaulted

2 youths detained AUROBINDA DAS ROURKELA

A minor girl was allegedly gang-raped and her sibling, who is also a minor, was sexually assaulted by some youths near Birsa Munda Chhak in Rourkela on Saturday evening.

According to a source, the two sisters had gone to

a market near Birsa Munda Chhak when some youths allegedly picked them up and raped the younger sister and also sexually assaulted the elder sister.

A case in this connection has been lodged at the Plant Site police station and the cops have detained two youths for interrogation.

"There were seven youths. Three of them gang-raped

a minor girl and sexually assaulted the victim's sister, who is also a minor. This is a very heinous act and we demand capital punishment for the accused," said Pramila Das, a social activist.

Zone-II DSP Nirmala Kumar Mohapatra said, "Acting on the complaint, a case has been registered at the Plant Site police station

and we have detained two accused so far. A hunt has also been launched to nab others involved in the case."

"Medical examination of the victims will be performed and CWC will be informed about the incident. On the DIG's directions, two teams have been formed and raids are underway to nab the other accused," Mohapatra added.

Fresh low pressure likely to form today

Heavy rains predicted in State PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

With a fresh low pressure taking shape over the Bay of Bengal, several parts of Odisha are likely to witness rains over the next few days, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Sunday.

Under the influence of these two upper air cyclonic circulations, a low-pressure area is likely to form over west-central Bay of Bengal and neighbourhood around Monday, the IMD said.

On Monday, heavy rains (7 to 11 cm) might occur in the

districts of Kendrapada, Jagatsinghpur, Cuttack, Baleswar, Bhadrak, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Ganjam, Gajapati, Rayagada, Koraput and Malkangiri, the weather office said, issuing a Yellow warning.

On Tuesday, heavy rains (7 to 11 cm) is likely to occur in the districts of Ganjam, Gajapati, Kandhamal, Rayagada, Koraput, Malkangiri, Kalahandi and Nabarangpur.

On Wednesday, heavy rains (7 to 11 cm) is likely to occur in the districts of Malkangiri, Koraput, Nabarangpur, Kalahandi, Nuapada, Balangir and Bargarh, said the IMD.

CM returns to BBSR by road

PNS ■ KEONJHAR

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Sunday returned to Bhubaneswar after a three-day visit to Keonjhar district.

The CM had to go to Baripada in Mayurbhanj district after attending a public meeting. He went to the Raisuan Airstrip, from where he had to proceed to Baripada to attend a meeting. But due to mechanical fault in the helicopter, he had to wait in the airstrip for hours.

Later cancelling the Mayurbhanj tour, he returned to Bhubaneswar by road. For this, all police stations were informed for his safe return.

The helicopter had been taken to the Raisuan Airstrip



from the Police Reserve Ground.

It is worth mentioning that after becoming the Chief Minister, this was the second time that Majhi visited his native district and was involved in various government and private activities.

Army officer, fiancée assault CB mulls polygraph test of axed cops, victim

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The case alleged assault on an Indian Army officer and his fiancée has taken a twist with the Crime Branch (CB) mulling to conduct a lie detector test on the five suspended cops of the Bharatpur police station and the Army officer's fiancée.

The investigating agency is exploring the possibility of conducting the lie detector test on the five cops facing charges of custodial abuse. The agency

would also conduct test on the fiancée of the Army Major who has been accused of misbehaving with the on-duty personnel in the police station.

The Crime Branch said a polygraph test may be necessary to verify allegations and counter allegations before reaching a logical conclusion.

The absence of CCTV cameras at the police station has made it difficult for the Crime Branch to ascertain the truth. On the other hand, the

seven road Romeos, who are students of two engineering colleges, because of whom the whole scuffle started, were released on bail from the JMFC Court here within four hours after their arrest on Saturday.

Meanwhile, the family members of one of the woman cops, who have been suspended, resorted to protest outside the 120 Battalion headquarters alleging partiality in the probe and demanded her suspension to be revoked.

Bharatpur PS torture case

BJD calls Bhubaneswar Bandh tomorrow

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) on Sunday called for a six-hour Bhubaneswar Bandh on Tuesday (September 24) against the alleged custodial torture of an Indian Army Major and his fiancée at the Bharatpur police station here. The bandh will be observed for six hours from morning 6 am to 12 am.

BJD leader Debi Prasad Mishra said, "The bandh will be observed to intensify the protest against police action meted out to Major Gurvansh Singh and his fiancée Ankita Pradhan." Leaders cutting across party lines have condemned



the police brutality and demanded a thorough probe into the incident. Earlier, Leader of Opposition Naveen Patnaik had demanded a judicial probe into the matter.

The ruling BJP also assured of stern action and an impartial probe into the incident while the Crime Branch has been probing the case. "The State Government views the matter seriously

and has taken necessary action in this regard. Even CM Mohan Majhi himself is committed to a proper investigation into the incident. He is not like Naveen Patnaik to hide his face," said BJP leader

Dilip Mallick while responding to the Opposition's allegations. "The BJD, which has a history of whitewashing such matters in the past, is just trying to give it a political angle," he added.

No chance to join hands with BJD: Congress

'Baitarani West Coal mining to trigger ecological disaster'

Samantaray is daydreaming, says Moquim



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
Politics has heated up in Odisha after BJD Rajya Sabha member Debasish Samantaray on Saturday stated that his party would join hands with the Congress and form government in the State.

Senior Congress leader Mohammed Moquim said, "The BJD is known for changing its colour and supporting the BJP in the Parliament and passing of Bills. Hence, there is no chance of joining hands with the BJD."

"The cases against Debasish Samantaray are still pending in the court. His prediction to win in a by-election (in Cuttack) is certainly laughable," Moquim said.

On Sunday, Samantaray reiterated his comments and said his assumption would soon turn true after the by-election. He said, "Naveen Patnaik is our vote-catcher. This is just my speculation because I had

He asked me why and I said that at least seven BJP MLAs will join us and we will reach 60. I told him to only waive his hands sitting inside a vehicle during the by-election and we will definitely win. If needed, we will join hands with Congress and form the new government," he added.

On the other hand, the BJP also slammed Samantaray and told the BJD to come out of its 'power hangover'. BJP leader Biranchi Tripathy said, "The condition of BJD without power has become like that of a fish without water. They are not able to come out of power hangover. Till now, they are conspiring to come back to power."

Environmentalist Samantara urges for withholding EC to mining firm

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Lok Shakti Abhiyan president environmentalist Prafulla Samantara has urged the Central Pollution Control Board and MOEFCC to reject the Environmental Clearance (EC) to Gujarat Mineral Development Corporation Private Limited for mining in Baitarani West Coal mine in Chhendipada Tehsil in Angul district.

report of the company and sought a fresh study for EIA through a credible expert agency without bias to the mining company.

In a memorandum to the Member-Secretary, State Pollution Control Board, Bhubaneswar, Samantara said Angul-Talcher region is a most critically polluted area due to excess coal mining and power plants. Any further mining needs to have a study on cumulative effect, but the EIA report has not such studies.

"The mining will create a disaster on many reserved forests within 10 km as well as the natural water resources like Kumbhira Nala and Gurukul Nala water projects which are used for irrigation.

The open cast mining will divert or close the water flows in many perennial water springs like Sinhada Jhor, Gundijeri Nala, Anali Nadi and others," said Samantara.

Besides, he apprehended that the mining will affect the elephant corridor nearby and elephant reserve project along with creating a huge loss to living organisms.

Hundred acres of agriculture land will be lost leading to huge displacement of villagers being deprived from right to life and livelihood. Extraction of underground water will make wells, tube wells dry as the water level will go down leading to drinking water and irrigation crisis for people, he said.

Forum demands exemplary action in Bharatpur case



Forum members at a meeting.

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
A State-level civil society body, Rajya Nagarika Samaj, led by its president Prakash Rath, advisers Piyush Mohanty and Lalit Mishra, member Nihar Dhal held a Press meet here on Saturday and expressed concern over the Bharatpur incident demanding early completion of Crime Branch investigation and exemplary action against the erring police personnel.

sending Deputy CM Pravati Parida to meet the female victim. They further said that there was good relationship among police, paramilitary and armed forces in Odisha but the acts of certain police officers have spoiled the relationship which should be resolved at the earliest.

They demanded installation of CCTV cameras in all police stations, quality inspection system of police stations, training of police officers, promotion of good officers and demotion of inefficient officers, hassle-free duty duration and leave of station officers to make them psychologically fit.

Attack on Army officer, fiancée Cong asks if attackers had links with CM

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Even as the alleged assault on an Army officer and his fiancée at the Bharatpur Police station in Bhubaneswar has triggered a row, several videos of the incident that preceded their ordeal have gone viral.

On Chandaka road going viral, the Congress has raised several questions about those who allegedly attacked the couple. The video showed one of the hooligans taking the name of Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi while threatening the woman, said the Congress in a post on X.

When the women tried to resist the attackers and sought to know who they were, one of them was heard asking whether she knew Mohan Majhi. Some social media posts also mentioned the youth as having close links with the CM, congress leaders said.

The Congress also urged Chief of Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi to reach out to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to seek action in the Odisha incident. Addressing a press meet in New Delhi on Saturday, AICC Odisha in-charge Ajay Kumar said the Chief of Army Staff must reach out to the Prime Minister and convey to him that all this is not acceptable to them.

Pratyasa wins Ekalabya Puraskar



Pratyasa Ray receiving an award.

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
Pratyasa Ray has been awarded the 32nd Ekalabya Puraskar-2024. The decision was reached unanimously by the Ekalabya Puraskar Committee, which comprises distinguished jury members from various sectors.

Pratyasa, a rising star in swimming with impressive track records, emerged as this year's standout recipient. She will be awarded a cash prize of Rs 7 lakh along with a citation at the Ekalabya Puraskar award ceremony to be held at a later date.

In Baleswar Man sets himself on fire

Protests govt road on his land

PNS ■ BALESWAR

A man allegedly attempted to end his life by setting himself on fire protesting against the construction of a government road on his land at Kadambagadi village under the Barabampur police station in Baleswar district.

has been protesting the construction of the concrete government road on his land for a long time. As his protest yielded no results, he, finding no other option, set himself on fire by pouring petrol on him.

As per reports, the daughter of the victim also sustained serious burn injuries while trying to save her father. The duo has been rushed to the Nilagiri Hospital. The district administration or the police were yet to comment on the issue.

FM Varsity in Top 2% Scientist Rankings of World



Three scientists being honored.

PNS ■ BALESWAR
The Stanford/Elsevier Top 2% Scientist Rankings for 2024 have been released, showcasing the world's most impactful researchers across various fields.

The list, based on Scopus data and curated by Elsevier in collaboration with Stanford University, identifies top scientists by analysing citations, h-index and a comprehensive set of bibliometric indicators. Researchers are grouped into

22 fields and 174 subfields. The rankings are designed to acknowledge both recent-year achievements and career-long contributions. The methodology focuses on metrics like the composite citation score (c-score), which ranks scientists based on the impact of their research publications.

Prof Pankaj Kumar Parhi, Dept. of Chemistry, Dr Gouranga C Samanta, Dept. of Mathematics, and Dr Manojit Bhattacharya, Dept. of Zoology of Fakir Mohan University are enlisted Top 2% Scientist Rankings for 2024.

In Keonjhar CM lays stone, opens projects worth Rs 900 cr



CM laying a stone for a project.

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Sunday, attending a district-level function in Keonjhar to mark the 100 days of the BJP government in Odisha, said his is a "people's government".

He inaugurated or laid the foundation-stones for projects worth Rs 900 crore for the development of Keonjhar district.

Majhi said in the current year a trauma care centre would be opened in the Dharanidhar Medical College. Besides, Rs 50 crore has been sanctioned for beautification of the Tarini Temple. The State Government would provide another Rs 200 crore for the project.

Sangam Fest Inaugural evening Odishi, Kathak dances glue audiences to seats



Performers on stage during Sangam Fest.

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
The 20th Sangam Festival organised by Art Vision was inaugurated on September 21 by esteemed guests former Vice Chancellor, Sambalpur University and eminent Odishi dancer Dr Priyambada Mohanty Hejmadi; Professor and linguist Debi Prasanna Pattanayak; Publisher, Pen In Book Subhansu Panda; writer Dr Hiranmayee Mishra and

secretary, Art Vision Dr Ileana Citaristi. On the occasion, Dr Hejmadi launched the Odia translation of Ileana's autobiography 'Gotie Jibana Dui Janama.' The book has been translated from the original English version 'My Journey a Tale of Two Births' by Hiranmayee Mishra and published by Pen In Book, Bhubaneswar.

The evening's first presentation was Odishi dance by the dancers of Art Vision. They presented two productions choreographed by Guru Dr Citaristi and dedicated to the beauty and melodic richness of traditional raga belonging to the Odissi classical music. The first Saptaswara depicts the origin of the seven musical notes from the animal world and the second Bachanika based on traditional poems from Odia literature

Red Cross training-cum-orientation prog at BJB



Over 150 volunteers from different wings of college join

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Under the guidance of BJB Autonomous College Principal Prof Saroj Kanta Mohapatra, a first training-cum-orientation

programme on Red Cross was organised at the college premises. Over 150 volunteers from different wings of the college like Youth Red Cross, NSS, NCC and Rovers and Rangers joined the programme.

Junior Red Cross officer and master trainer first aid Laxman Swain joined as a resource person. The volunteers were oriented and demonstrated on different life survival skills of first aid like unconscious victim management, recovery position, CPR, drowning, electric shock, bleeding, fracture, heart attack, stroke and fits etc.

The main objective of the programme is to build capacity in volunteers so that when an emergency situation comes, the volunteers can render services to save precious lives.

YRC convenor secretary Lekha Das coordinated the programme. NSS Programme Officer Dr Sampriya Panda, NCC Army CTO Dr Sujit Mishra, NCC Air Wing Ratan Acharya, Rovers and Rangers coordinator Dr Gitanjali Panda joined the programme to motivate the volunteers.

Kujang BDO assault takes political colour

■BJD holds demo, accuses BJP of halting development works
■BJP points to BJD's 'hooliganism'

KAHUN NANDA
JAGAT SINGHPUR

The attack on the Kujang BDO on September 13 has taken a political colour with both ruling BJP and BJD accusing each other of complicity in the incident.

The district BJD unit comprising Raja Sabha MP Debasis Samant, MLAs Sarada Jena, Dr Ramakanta Bhoi, former legislators Prasanta Muduli, Sambit Routray, Pratap Jena, Raghunandan Das, former



MP Dr Rajashree Mallick and BJD State women wing president Snehangini Chhuriya among others, staged a demonstration and protest meeting in front of Kujang block office on Friday. The BJD heavyweights alleged that the BJP leadership of Paradip indulged in rough behaviors and attack against BJD PRI members including the Block Chairperson, inside the Kujang block office conference hall and demanded immediate transfer of Kujang BDO Deepak Kumar Swain.

They threatened to hold

demonstrations and stir demanding the shifting of BDO Swain from Kujang who they alleged to be working at the behest of the ruling party. "We will tell the people of Paradip constituency how the developmental works undertaken by the erstwhile BJD Government are being halted due to the influence of the BJP leaders," they said.

On the contrary, BJP-supported PRI members from Kujang block met the district SP demanding stringent action against the BJD-supported Sarpanches and Samiti

members who assaulted BDO Swain and some BJP supporters on the day. An FIR was lodged at the Kujang police station by BDO Swain seeking action against the culprits who manhandled him.

Meanwhile, the Jagatsinghpur District OAS Officers Association submitted a memorandum to Collector J Sonal seeking action against the culprits who assaulted BDO Swain in block office premises.

Sources informed that the attack on the BDO was triggered by anger over long pending bills among the contractors who got work orders for different projects in the district. The village-level contractors, Sarpanches and Samiti members got work orders and are uncomfortable as they are not getting their payments released after completing the works.

In Baleswar 3 women held for thrashing Anganwadi Worker

Deputy CM directs for stringent action

PNS ■ BALESWAR

Police on Sunday arrested three women for allegedly thrashing an Anganwadi Worker after tying her to a tree at Mahapada in Kundali gram panchayat under Basta block in Baleswar district on September 19.

The matter came to light after a video of the incident went viral on social media.

The victim, identified as Urmila Samal, is undergoing treatment at the District Headquarters Hospital.

Samal was doing some work in her Anganwadi Centre when the accused barged into the centre and roughed her up. Though she screamed for help, nobody came to her rescue.



Instead, some women filmed the incident on their mobile phones.

Getting information, the Singhla police reached the spot and began an investigation after registering a case. Six women connected with the incident but would be arrested soon, police said.

Later, Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida spoke to the victim and directed the Baleswar SP to take stringent action against the accused.

Though the motive behind the attack was yet to be ascertained, some of the accused were angry that Urmila was not giving eggs in midday meals to their children.

IN BRIEF

Man killed, 4 injured in bee attack in Kalahandi

Bhawanipatna: A man was killed while four other persons were injured when they were attacked by a swarm of honeybees near Betiapada under the Bijepur police station in Kalahandi district on Sunday. All five persons were reportedly gone to the forest nearby when they were attacked by the honeybees. Following the incident, all of them were first rescued and rushed to the Benganoo Primary Health Centre for treatment. One person was subsequently transferred to the Bhawanipatna Community Health Centre, where he succumbed to his injuries while undergoing treatment.

5 pilgrims critically injured as SUV hits tree in Puri

Puri: Five pilgrims sustained critical injuries when an SUV they were seated in rammed into a tree in Puri district on



Sunday. The mishap took place near Gop when the pilgrims were returning from Konark and heading to Puri for Lord Jagannath's darshan. The injured passengers were rushed to the Gop CHC, from where they were shifted to a private hospital in Bhubaneswar. Sources said the passengers belong to Dhenkanal.

Man held for killing father-in-law in Koraput

Koraput: A man allegedly killed his father-in-law at Lakshmiipur Railway colony in Koraput district on Saturday and also attacked his mother-in-law and wife over a family feud. The deceased, identified as Lochan Baipari, was stabbed to death with an iron rod by his son-in-law Krushna Jani and three of his associates. The incident occurred when Jani and his aides barged into his in-laws' house and allegedly attacked Lochan, his wife and mother-in-law. Jani also threatened the neighbours not to interfere in the matter. Police have detained Jani and two of his associates and they were being interrogated. A hunt was launched to nab the absconding accused.

Ganjam Retired Employees' Fed meet held



Various demands voiced

PRASANT DAS
BRAHMAPUR

The 4th half yearly general body meeting of Odisha State Retired Employees' Federation, Ganjam district, was held here on September 15. District Committee president D Mohan Rao presided over it.

Central Committee general secretary Gokulananda Behera and working president Nirmal Chandra Das attended as the guests. Secretary Sankarshan Patra, vice president Sahasranama Pathi, joint secretary Nilanchal Mishra and treasurer Nirakar Savat were also in the dais. About 300 delegates attended the meeting.

At the outset the National Anthem was recited and a minute's silence was observed on the death of two of our active members Madan Mohan Sahu and Shiv Prasad Sahu. President Rao discussed the 9-point demands of the association including medical allowance for the employees.

While 26 States of India are giving medical allowance, the Odisha Government is silent on it, he alleged, and demanded to include all the pensioners in BSKY or AYUSMAN scheme. Secretary Patro read out the secretarial report.

Milan Teshi, Maharshi Singh, Sefali Das, Rameshwar Satapathi, Chitta Ranjan Panigrahi, Panchanan Jena and Nilachala Mishra spoke.

Man held for repeated death threats to S'pur MLA

PNS ■ SAMBALPUR

Police arrested Bijay Nanda Sahoo (51), a resident of Puri, on Thursday for repeatedly threatening to kill former Minister and Sambalpur MLA Jay Narayan Mishra for the last one and a half years.

MLA Mishra said the accused used to make phone calls at night to say if he says anything against former CM Naveen Patnaik in the Assembly, he would be killed.

A party person, Sushanta Purohit, lodged a complaint on Thursday at Town Police Station. In the FIR, the contact number of the accused was also mentioned. Town Police IIC Ranjan Biswal said, "We apprehended the man threatening the MLA and seized his phone. He confessed to having abused the local MLA. We are investigating his motive behind

those threats. He has never met the MLA, but he often came to Balangir and Sambalpur."

The accused, having a garment business, had been abusing MLA Mishra through phone calls for the last one and a half years, when Naveen Patnaik was in power. He did not stop even after the Government changed in the State. Mishra used to ignore it until his wife received the call on Tuesday. "I have no idea whether he used to do so with any other politician, but he used to say if you speak against Naveen Patnaik in the Assembly, I will kill you. After the election also, he called, threatening to kill me. I have never seen or met him. He was a resident of Puri and was staying in Balangir. I told my party people about his threat calls. So they lodged an FIR. He was calling me after 11 pm," said Mishra.

JSpur youth gets 20 yrs in jail for raping minor

PNS ■ JAGAT SINGHPUR

The Additional and Session Judge, POCSO Court, Jagatsinghpur, sentenced an accused person to 20 years imprisonment and slapped a fine of Rs 50,000 on him after convicting him in a minor girl rape case.

The convict was identified as Gyanaranjan Swain (26), a resident of Nua Betenda village near Niali police limits under Cuttack district. He kept physical relations with a 16-year-old girl from Naugaon area after developing intimacy with her in social media and promised to marry her. But after a couple of months, Gyanaranjan did not keep his word and assaulted the victim when she insisted on marrying him.

Being enraged with the

boyfriend's behaviour, the victim lodged an FIR at Naugaon police station on October 17, 2022. Acting on the complaint, the police arrested Gyanaranjan and booked him under various sections of BNS and Section 6 of the POCSO Act.

The trial of the case was taken up in the POCSO Court in Jagatsinghpur. After examining depositions of 13 witnesses and cogent evidence supplied by the prosecution, Judge Haraprasad Patnaik found the accused guilty and awarded the punishment. In default of payment of fine, the convict would undergo six months more rigorous imprisonment. Moreover, the court directed the DLSA Jagatsinghpur to pay Rs 7 lakh compensation to the victim girl.

In Rengali Case against MLA, ex-MLA for blocking coal dispatch

PNS ■ SAMBALPUR

The Thelkolo Police of Sambalpur district registered a case against former MLA of Jharsuguda Dipali Das and sitting MLA of Rengali Sudarshan Haripal on Saturday for blocking coal transport by road of NLC India Limited in Talabira area of Rengali.

The company in its FIR also mentioned 13 more people for leading the agitation of around 3,000 people, who had 12 demands, including employment, CSR activities, and a ban on illegal blasting of houses in the mining area.

Reportedly, villagers of Patrapali and Malda Gram Panchayats of Jharsuguda and Khinda Panchayat of Sambalpur staged a dharna at the entrance gate of the company. They stopped the movement of coal-plying vehicles, raising slogans against the mines authority and district administration. Das and Haripal, along with Rengali Block Chairman and a few other people, allegedly impacted the continuous dispatch of coal to the power and non-regulated sectors.

NLCIL Talabira GM Raghunath Behera said in the complaint that due to the

blockade, the company incurred substantial financial losses affecting the Government revenue in terms of royalty.

Rengali MLA Haripal said, "There is no issue in going to jail for raising the long-standing demands of people who have voted for me. We have the genuine demand of employment, water facilities, ambulances, and CSR activities in villages. As I'm their MLA, they would definitely need my presence in a mass agitation. The company was informed about the agitation earlier." Former Jharsuguda MLA Das said, "On Septem-

ber 6 and 11, the villagers of Khinda, Patrapali, and Malda informed the district Collector, district administration, and NLC officials that if their demands were not fulfilled, they would stage a protest on September 20. As public representatives, we went to support them in their efforts to get their demands met. However, it is very sad that cases are being filed against the people who are fighting for the rights of the poor." She added, "If the villagers' demands are not met within 48 hours, then they will stage a protest and may also organise an economic blockade."

IIT BBS talk 'Needed: Microgrids with high renewable integration'

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The requirement and consumption of electrical energy has increased manifold in recent times, with significant impact on sustainability at the global level. In this context, innovative solutions like development of microgrids with high renewable integration is the need of the hour," said Chairman, Board of Governors, IIT Bhubaneswar Dr Rajendra Prasad Singh. He addressed the students, faculty members and employees of the institute, while participating in a seminar organised by the institute as part of the Engineer's Day celebrations.

In his address, Dr Singh shared his insights on the crucial role of electrical energy in



modern society. He brilliantly showed how an electrical power system is analogous to the hu-

man body, heart being the generator, arterial system the grid, blood pressure the voltage, heart rate the frequency, brain the control system and pacemaker the battery. Dr Singh highlighted the pressing challenges posed by climate change, globalisation and population growth, all of which significantly impact electrical power consumption.

He pointed out several factors contributing to the increasing demand for electricity, such as the depletion of coal and oil reserves, challenges of alternative energy sources like hydropower and nuclear energy, and the rising costs of transmitting power from centralised generation systems. He also emphasized the growing challenges of power

transmission to remote regions and the increasing concerns over system reliability.

In response to these issues, Dr. Singh advocated for the integration of renewable energy and localized energy systems, particularly through solar and wind power, as viable solutions. He suggested that these approaches could lead to sustainable energy sources, reduced transmission costs, minimized system losses, and a more reliable power supply.

Additionally, he underscored the potential of creating networked microgrids and virtual power plants (VPPs) to enhance energy management.

Speaking on the occasion, Director of IIT Bhubaneswar Prof Shreepad Karmalkar appreciated Dr Singh's talk.

Committed to Olive Ridleys' safety for 30 yrs!

Meet physically challenged Bichitrinand of Astarang
KAMAL LOCHAN DIXIT
ASTARANG



At that time, the Odisha Government had not implemented any significant measures to protect the endangered Olive Ridley turtles. Bichitrinand had a chance meeting with Dr Robert Sackliff, a retired dentist from Canada, and that sparked a lifelong passion for environmental protection in him.

Dr Sackliff, who was visiting Odisha for turtle conservation, recognised Bichitrinand's keen interest in saving turtles when the young boy witnessed several turtles' untimely deaths on the shore near his home. This encoun-

ter led Bichitrinand to dedicate his life to the cause. Since 1996, he has been actively working at key nesting sites like Devi, Rushikulya and Siali, engaging in conservation and awareness campaigns to safeguard these critically endangered species.

Over the years, he has collaborated with renowned scientists, including Kartik Shanker, Dipan Sutar, and Muralidharan Manohar Krishnan working on projects ranging from turtle protection to marine biodiversity including the conservation of dolphins and other aquatic species.

Despite lacking formal higher education, Bichitrinand's extensive knowledge and hands-on experience have made him an invaluable resource in the field of wildlife conservation.

His work extends beyond scientific collaboration—he has also mobilised local communities, particularly youth and women's groups to take action for forest and environmental conservation. One of his most significant achievements is the formation of the Pir Jahania Mahila Van Suraksha Samiti, a local women's forest protection group that won the National Biodiversity Award in 2012. His efforts have resulted in not only wildlife protection but also forest preservation, particularly after the devastating Super Cyclone that ravaged Odisha in 1999. At that time, deforestation became a serious issue and Bichitrinand was instrumental in educating people about the critical role forests play in protecting their livelihoods and farms.

Bichitrinand's contributions are far-reaching. He has treated over 200 injured turtles and released two rare sharks back into the sea along with ensuring the safe release of over a hundred thousand turtle hatchlings into the ocean. His commitment to cleaning up the environment is equally impressive having led efforts to remove around 50 tons of polythene, plastic, discarded fishing nets and other waste from the sea with the help of local students and youth groups. Furthermore, he has trained more than 150 young people from coastal districts in turtle and biodiversity conservation.

For his unwavering dedication, the Odisha Government honoured him with the prestigious 'Biju Patnaik Wildlife Protection Award' in 2019. Under his leadership, there has been an 80% reduction in turtle mortality at the Devi river nesting site between 1995 and 2024—an extraordinary achievement that underscores the impact of his work.

Defrauded of lakhs in Coop Society scam Rajkanika farmers march to BBSR to meet CM



To seek inquiry by CAG

RAJESH BEHERA
KENDRAPADA

Having failed to get justice from the law enforcing department, co-operative society authority and district administration over swindling of lakhs of rupees at the Baruna Primary Agriculture Cooperative Society under Cuttack Central Cooperative Bank, some farmers of Rajkanika block on Wednesday started a Padayatra by holding ploughs on shoulder from Rajkanika to Bhubaneswar to meet CM Mohan Charan Majhi.

They sought an inquiry by the CAG into irregularities in all PACS under Aul Assembly

constituency.

It may be noted here that lakhs of rupees have allegedly been withdrawn from the accounts of farmers without their knowledge at Baruna Primary Agriculture Cooperative Society at Rajkanika. The victim farmers have been staging an agitation in front of the Cuttack Central Cooperative Bank at Rajkanika in protest against the irregularities for the last 10 days. Since no action has been taken against the accused despite repeated complaints, the farmers decided to meet the CM.

The agitators alleged that Asit Behuria, secretary of Baruna Primary Agriculture Cooperative Society and former Branch Manager of Cuttack Central Cooperative

Bank Sanjay Kumar Mohapatra were hand in gloves in swindling them of their money. Though the farmers had lodged an FIR against the duo at Rajkanika police station on August 3 and subsequently, 12 FIRs have been lodged by the victims, but the local police, except registering cases, did nothing.

Similarly, though the Co-operative department got evidence of the fraud, it too has remained silent. Meanwhile, District BJP president Kishore Panda took up the matter and he, along with the activists of Padayatra, met Sub Collector Rabintra Kumar Pradhan to settle the matter. However, dissatisfied with the meeting with the Sub Collector, the farmers held the march to Bhubaneswar.

TMC alleges no Parliamentary Committees formed after 100 days of 18th Lok Sabha

Warns Parliament being turned into a deep, dark chamber

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

TMC leader Derek O'Brien on Sunday alleged Parliamentary Standing Committees had not been formed despite the 18th Lok Sabha completing 100 days since its constitution and said Parliament was being turned into a "deep, dark chamber". In a social media post, the Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader in the Rajya Sabha said seven out of 10 Bills were sent to department-related standing committees of Parliament in the 15th Lok Sabha while only two out of 10 Bills were sent to the panels in the last Lok Sabha. "Parliamentary standing committees have not yet been formed. In the 15th Lok Sabha, seven out of 10 Bills were sent to committees for scrutiny. In the last Lok Sabha, only two out of 10



Bills got scrutinised," O'Brien said. "Parliament is being turned into a deep, dark chamber," he added. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said on September 11 that

cent of Bills were referred to standing committees in the 17th Lok Sabha. About 50 per cent of reports on the Bills were presented within 115 days. On an average, standing committees held nine meetings to finalise reports on the Bills. Apart from the Data Protection Bill, only the Biological Diversity (Amendment) Bill, 2021, was discussed for at least 15 meetings. The three Bills to reform the country's criminal laws were examined together over 12 meetings. In the 16th Lok Sabha, 28 per cent of Bills were sent to parliamentary committees while 71 per cent of Bills were sent to the panels in the 15th Lok Sabha. While a majority of the standing committees come under the Lok Sabha Secretariat, some are serviced by the Rajya

department-related standing committees and consultative committees of Parliament would be constituted shortly. According to data compiled by think-tank PRS Legislative Research, 16 per

Environment Ministry approves 111 urban forests in first 100 days of new Government



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

In the first 100 days of the Modi 3.0 Government, the Union Environment Ministry has sanctioned 111 urban forests in six states and one Union Territory against the target of 100 urban forests during the period. The initiative is part of the Ministry's revised Nagar Van Yojana in 2020 which was

launched to enhance urban greenery, improve the quality of life, and increase social cohesion in cities. The scheme provides financial assistance of Rs 4 lakh per hectare for the creation and maintenance of urban forests, encouraging the involvement of citizens, students and other stakeholders in managing these green spaces. The size of the urban forests ranges between 10 and 50

hectares. Each urban forest must have at least two-thirds of its area under tree cover and include components such as biodiversity parks, Smriti Vans, butterfly conservatories, and herbal gardens and Matri Vans created under the Ek Ped Ma Ke Naam campaign. Under this mass tree plantation special campaign, it is targeted to plant 80 crore trees this year by September

end and 140 crores by next year March end. Provision has been made on MeriLiFE portal for uploading details of plantation done by any individual or institution or organization private or government and tracking plantation efforts. More than 75 crore saplings have been planted by now under this campaign and detailed information has been uploaded on MeriLiFE portal, said the Ministry. The Nagar Van Yojana aims to develop 1,000 urban forests by 2027 with financial support from the National Fund of the National Compensatory Afforestation Management and Planning Authority. This initiative will help protect forest land within and around urban centres from degradation and also address environmental concerns such as air pollution, urban heat islands, loss of biodiversity, and habitat degradation, said the Ministry.



SC to deliver verdict on watching child porn not POCSO offence

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court is scheduled to deliver on Monday its judgment on a plea challenging a Madras High Court ruling that has said mere downloading and watching child pornography is not an offence under the POCSO Act and the information technology law. A bench of Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra is likely to pronounce the verdict. Terming atrocious, the apex court had earlier agreed to hear the plea challenging the high court ruling that has said mere downloading and watching child pornography is not an offence under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and Information Technology (IT) Act. On January 11, the Madras High Court quashed the criminal proceedings against a 28-year-old man charged with downloading pornographic content involving children on his mobile phone. The high court had also said that children these days are grappling with the serious issue of watching pornography and instead of punishing them, the society must be "mature enough" to educate them. The Supreme Court had taken note of the submissions made in the matter by senior advocate H S Phoolka, who represented two petitioner organisations, that the high court verdict was contrary to the laws in this regard. The senior lawyer appeared in the court on behalf of NGOs

Parliamentary Panel examines Waqf Bill amid 1.2 crore email responses

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI



A parliamentary panel examining the Waqf (Amendment) Bill has received a staggering 1.2 crore email responses amid campaigns launched by rival groups to ratchet up support for their respective viewpoints regarding the draft law. Parliamentary sources said the Joint Committee on the Waqf Amendment Bill, chaired by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Jagadambika Pal, has also received 75,000 responses with documents to support the respective views, prompting the panel to seek additional staff from the Lok Sabha Secretariat. "We have deployed 15

additional personnel to go through the email responses and categorise and document those," one of the sources said. Radical Islamic preacher Zakir Naik has appealed to his supporters to oppose the Waqf (Amendment) Bill by sending responses to the parliamentary panel examining the draft law. The appeal from Naik has triggered a counter-reaction

and several Hindu groups too have urged their supporters to write emails to the committee in support of the Bill. Last month, the committee sought written suggestions from the general public, NGOs, experts, stakeholders and institutions on the Bill. In a statement, the committee asked people to send their comments to the joint secretary, Lok Sabha Secretariat, Room No. 440, Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi-110001 or mail those to jpcwaqf-iss@sansad.Nic.In. The committee is also embarking on a five-city tour to seek feedback from government officials, legal experts, Waqf Board members and community representatives.

Railway Ministry launches ticket-checking drive around festive season

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI



The Railway Ministry has decided to launch a special ticket-checking drive around the festive seasons to keep a check on ticketless travellers, including policemen as they are among the top violators, officials said. The Ministry, on September 20, wrote a letter to the General Managers of 17 Zones asking them to start a special drive against ticketless and unauthorised travellers "for the period October 1 to 15 and October 25 to November 10" and take suitable action as per the provisions of the Railway Act of 1989. Railway commercial officers, who are part of the ongoing regular drive in various rail

divisions, say that along with common people, policemen will also be on their radar during the festive rush as they are among the top violators. "In our recent surprise check between Ghaziabad and Kanpur, we found hundreds of policemen travelling in AC coaches of various Express and Mail trains without any ticket. When we imposed a

fine on them, initially they refused to pay and threatened us with dire consequences. We remained undaunted and made them pay. The response of the passengers was very encouraging as they were happy and surprised to see action being taken against police personnel," railway official said.

First tri-services Future Warfare course to be conducted in New Delhi



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

First of its kind, a tri-services "Future Warfare" course is scheduled to be conducted in New Delhi from September 23 - 27 here under the aegis of Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff, defence ministry said here on Sunday. A pioneering initiative by Chief of Defence Staff(CDS)General Anil Chauhan, this will be a rank agnostic course for Major Generals to Majors and their equivalent level officers from other services. The course intends to acquaint the

officers with the operational and technological aspects of modern warfare. The course will focus on key areas related to future warfare to develop an understanding on the manner in which future wars will manifest in terms of being contact, non-contact, kinetic, non-kinetic, psychological or informational as also the domains where they will be fought, be it cyber, space or electromagnetic spectrum. It will also throw light on how emerging and disruptive technologies like Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, robotics and

hypersonics will impact the conduct of warfare. The need for a Future Warfare Course for Tri Services officers arises from the rapidly evolving nature of modern warfare, driven by technological advancements, changing global dynamics, and emerging threats. Officers must be equipped to navigate this complex landscape, leveraging new technologies, and adapting to innovative tactics. The course will foster jointness, and facilitate the development of a cohesive, futuristic, and tech-savvy force, capable of securing national interests in an increasingly uncertain and competitive environment. The course has been curated by Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff with the help of veteran and serving subject matter experts. Subsequent courses will build upon the curriculum of this course and be of longer duration with the larger objective of making the Indian Armed Forces "FUTURE READY".

Indian Navy to host fifth edition of Goa Maritime Symposium



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Indian Navy will host the fifth edition of Goa Maritime Symposium (GMS - 24) at Naval War College, Goa for two days starting Monday, navy said here on Sunday. Giving details, officials said conceptualised and instituted by the Indian Navy in 2016, the GMS is a forum for fostering collaborative thinking, cooperation and

mutual understanding between India and key maritime nations of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). The theme for the event is "Common Maritime Security Challenges in the Indian Ocean Region - Progressing Lines of Efforts to Mitigate Dynamic Threats such as Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing and other Illegal Maritime Activities". The discussions will dwell on collaborative efforts towards enhancing maritime security in the region. The symposium will see participation of Naval representatives from 12 Indian Ocean Littoral countries - Bangladesh, Comoros, Indonesia, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Myanmar, Seychelles, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Thailand. Observers from Kenya and Tanzania will also attend the event.



Congress appoints Uday Bhanu Chib as President of Indian Youth Congress

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress on Sunday appointed Uday Bhanu Chib as the president of the Indian Youth Congress (IYC), replacing Srinivas B.V. Chib was currently serving as the general secretary of IYC and is a former president of the Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Youth Congress. Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge has appointed Uday Bhanu Chib as the president of the Indian Youth Congress with immediate effect, a party statement said. The party appreciates the contributions of the outgoing president Srinivas B.V. Chib, it added. Congress also appointed M K Bhardwaj and Bhanu Mahajan as acting working presidents of its Jammu and Kashmir unit. The appointments come amid the ongoing assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir. The party in August appointed Tariq Hameed Karra as president of its Jammu and Kashmir unit. He had replaced Vikar Rasool Wani. Kharge had also appointed two working presidents for Jammu and Kashmir — Tara Chand and Raman Bhalla. Elections in Jammu and Kashmir are being held in three phases. Voting for 24 seats was held in the first phase on September 18. The next phase of polling for 26 seats will be held on September 25. Voting for the third phase would be held on October 1 while results would be declared on October 8.

Rhino numbers surge in India amidst climate threats: Report

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

On World Rhino Day on Sunday, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged citizens to visit Assam's Kaziranga National Park, home to one-horned rhinos, a government report has flagged climate change threats, including prolong monsoons that flood critical grasslands and the spread of invasive plant species eating away the native flora essential for rhinos' survival. The report 'Assam's Role in Protecting the Greater One-Horned Rhino' indicated that while the increase in rhino numbers is encouraging, it necessitates the urgent expansion of habitats to ensure their long-term survival and prevent overcrowding.



"With over 70% of its population residing in Assam's Kaziranga, this species stands as a testament to India's commitment to wildlife preservation," it said while enlisting several measures

taken to protect this iconic species whose number stood at 3,262 at the end of 2021. The majestic animal remains classified as Vulnerable by the IUCN. Yet, the greater one-horned

rhino in India has made a remarkable comeback, thanks to India's proactive conservation policies and the dedicated efforts of Assam's authorities. The report prepared by the

research unit of the PIB said that besides climate change threats exacerbating flooding in the region and the proliferation of invasive species, human-wildlife conflict is a pressing concern, especially as rhino habitats are increasingly adjacent to densely populated agricultural areas. As rhinos venture into these regions seeking food or territory, they can damage crops and create risks for local communities. Effective management strategies that incorporate community engagement and education are essential to mitigate these conflicts and foster coexistence. According to the report, the conservation efforts must prioritize habitat

restoration, the creation of wildlife corridors, and the involvement of local communities in protection initiatives. "Combining traditional knowledge with modern conservation techniques will be crucial for ensuring that both rhinos and humans can thrive together," it said about the conservation measures for these animals that usually weigh around 2,800 kg and live for 45-50 years. The Prime Minister posted on X: "Today, on World Rhino Day, let us reiterate our commitment to protect one of our planet's most iconic species—rhinos. Compliments to all those involved in rhino conservation efforts over the last many years."

"It is a matter of immense pride that India is home to a large number of one horned rhinos. I also fondly recall my visit to Kaziranga in Assam and urge you all to visit there as well." The Indian rhino is the largest of the three Asian species and shares its single horn characteristic with the Javan rhino. The Sumatran rhino, in contrast, has two horns, a trait linking Asian and African rhinos. Rhinos play a crucial role in maintaining ecosystems. As mega-herbivores, they shape grasslands by grazing, creating open spaces that benefit other wildlife. Their wallowing behavior also creates waterholes, supporting various species.

BJP leaders campaign in Jammu ahead of second round of polling

Vow to ensure peace Jammu and Kashmir, promising restoration of statehood, tough stance on terrorism

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

Bharatiya Janta Party's trioka Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Health Minister and Party President JP Nadra Sunday aggressively campaigned in different parts of Jammu region ahead of the second round of polling on September 25.

The senior BJP leaders promised restoration of 'statehood' soon after the formation of the BJP government in Jammu and Kashmir. They also thrashed alliance partners Congress and the National Conference for promoting the Pakistani agenda, wanting to bring Jammu and Kashmir back to

the status quo and restore Article 370.

Home Minister Amit Shah, addressing a rally in support of Ravinder Raina in Nowshera on Sunday said talks will not be held with Pakistan till terrorism is eliminated. He maintained the BJP must come to power in Jammu and Kashmir to ensure peace and teach the neighbouring country a lesson. The home minister castigated the National Conference, Congress and PDP over the issue of terrorism and said no stone-pelter or terrorist would be released from jail.

After forming a government in Jammu and Kashmir, the BJP will issue a white paper to expose the role of the three

families who had 'biryanis' with terrorists.

Shah said he would like to talk to the youths of Jammu and Kashmir whom he referred to as 'lions'. "The BJP government is a must in J&K for peace, prosperity and development besides giving a befitting reply to terrorism and teaching a lesson to Pakistan," Shah said, urging them to vote for BJP candidates, especially Raina whom he praised for strengthening the party in the region. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh addressed three election meetings in Poonch, Rajouri and Sunderbani and one in the RS Pura area of Jammu. Addressing a rally in Poonch in support of BJP candidate



Choudhary Abdul Gani Rajnath Singh said, Pakistan is feeling 'pain in its belly' watching democracy flourishing in the Union Territory after the abrogation of Article 370. Singh also accused the National Conference (NC), Congress

and People's Democratic Party (PDP) of misleading people by talking about the restoration of Article 370 of the Constitution in their manifestoes and said these parties should stop working as 'proxies of Pakistan'. "The NC, Congress and PDP are making a lot of noise over Article 370 and have promised to restore it. How will you restore it as only a government at the Centre has the power to do so?" Singh asked.

He said real politics is to tell the truth to people by looking in their eyes, instead of misleading them to secure their votes.

"The BJP is clear in its stand that we will not allow restoration of Article 370 come what may," the defence minister asserted. "The first phase of the Assembly election registered more than 61 per cent polling, surpassing the record-breaking 58 per cent polling in the Lok Sabha election. The message has gone to the world that Article 370 was abrogated

for the betterment of India.

Six election rallies were addressed by these leaders across different assembly segments of Poonch, Rajouri and Jammu on Sunday. JP Nadra also conducted a road show and addressed a meeting of intellectuals in Jammu. Addressing an election rally in support of BJP candidate Sham Lal Sharma contesting from the Jammu North Assembly segment BJP chief J P Nadra labelled the Congress and the National Conference (NC) as "non-nationalist forces" and said Pakistan's defence minister himself "certified" the two parties for carrying out that country's agenda in Jammu and Kashmir. He also highlighted the "wave

of change" in Jammu and Kashmir under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership and underscored BJP's "deep connection" with the Union Territory. Nadra claimed terror attacks have significantly reduced and said the lifespan of terrorists under Prime Minister Modi's leadership is "only a few days", but these parties are trying to negotiate with them. Accusing the Congress, NC, and PDP of "corruption" and "ruining" Jammu and Kashmir, Nadra said, "These three political dynasties - the Abdullah family, Mufti family, and Nehru-Gandhi family - have harmed Kashmir. They brought rampant corruption and destroyed this beautiful state."

Didi 2nd letter to PM on 'manmade' Bengal floods

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Two days after writing a protest letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi about the Central Government-run Damodar Valley Corporation's alleged "reckless release" of 5 lakh cusecs of water from its dams in Jharkhand causing "massive man made floods" in southern districts of Bengal, State Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday wrote a second letter to him explaining how the DVC had released water without consulting her Government.

To register its protest against the DVC's "reckless act" Bengal which too is a member of the DVC withdrew its representative from its board making State Power Secretary Shantanu Basu and another Chief Executive Engineer on Sunday to resign from the Damodar Valley Reservoir Regulation Committee (DVRRC). Hours before Banerjee had threatened to snap her Government's ties with the DVC. Referring to a reply letter from the Union Jal Shakti Minister CR Patil in which he reportedly said that the State level officials were informed by the DVC authorities about the release of water, Banerjee on Sunday wrote, "all the critical decisions are made unilaterally



by representatives of the Central Water Commission, Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India without arriving at a consensus," contrary to the claims made by the Union Minister that "release (of water) from DVC dams was carried out by consensus and collaboration with the Damodar Valley Reservoir Regulation Committee, including consultations with representatives of the government of West Bengal." Banerjee told the media how Bengal was informed only little more than three hours before the release of water. "They released more than 2.5 lakh cusecs of water" and overall more than 5 lakh cusecs of water released causing it the

worst flood" in the southern districts of Bengal since 2009, she said. "Peak release from the reservoirs lasting for a prolonged period of nine hours were conducted with only 3.5 hours notice which proved insufficient for effective disaster management," she wrote. Four major barrages including those at Panchet, Maithon, Konar and Tilaya are operated by the DVC. Apart from this Durgapur barrage and the canal networks which were originally part of the DVC were handed over to the Bengal Government in 1964. It remains as a part of the total system of water management. There are many minor dams also operated by the two States

in Bengal and Jharkhand. "They are telling that they wanted to save Jharkhand from floods ... I have no problem in that ... I too want the people of other States to be saved but why should the people of Bengal suffer for others ... it is the duty of the DVC to see the interests of the people of Bengal too," Banerjee told reporters.

In his previous letter to the Prime Minister she had said how 5 million people in the state were affected by the floods," requesting him to "immediately sanction and release central funds to address the widespread devastation." However in his reply letter, Patil wrote that the whole affair is managed by the DVRRC, which had representatives from the Central Water Commission, Bengal, Jharkhand, and the DVC. Meanwhile, the flood situation continued to remain grim in large parts of southern Bengal with several blocks of Hooghly, Howrah, East and West Midnapore districts remaining inundated often under neck-deep or even more water. Not only the villages but urban areas had also been largely affected with the towns like Ghatal, Panshkura, Purushura remaining under water for the past more than 60 hours or so.

Omar Abdullah leads Shikara rally on Dal lake ahead of polls

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

After leaving no stone unturned on ground zero former Chief Minister and National Conference Vice President Omar Abdullah Sunday led a mega 'Shikara rally' on Dal Lake to woo voters ahead of the second round of polling across 26 Assembly segments on September 25. The Election Commission of India has also made special arrangements for a floating booth to allow the Dal dwellers to cast their votes without facing the ordeal of moving out of their floating houseboats.

In the second round, two arch rivals National Conference and the Peoples Democratic Party are pitted against each other while the entry of independent and Awami Ittehad party candidates in the fray has made the contest more interesting and competitive on many Assembly segments of the central Kashmir districts of Srinagar, Ganderbal and Budgam. Omar himself is facing a tough challenge in the family bastion of the Ganderbal Assembly segment. His



grandfather Sheikh Mohd Abdullah and Dr Farooq Abdullah represented the seat. Omar tasted humiliating defeat at the hands of a PDP candidate in the 2002 Assembly polls. He later won the 2008 Assembly polls from Ganderbal but decided to move out to Beerwah in Budgam district in the 2014 Assembly polls. This time Omar is being challenged by the PDP nominee Bashir Mir. Mir used to contest from the neighboring Kangan constituency but he was shifted from there after the seat was reserved for a Scheduled Tribe candidate. Former NC leader Ishaq Jabbar, who is also in the fray

as an Independent, is expected to dent Omar Abdullah's poll prospects. Last-minute entry of jailed cleric Sarjan Wagay, popularly known as Sarjan Barkati, and Sheikh Ashiq, the candidate of Baramulla MP Engineer Rashid's Awami Ittehad Party, in the fray has turned the poll battle more interesting. Other prominent candidates in the fray in the second round of polling include Pradesh Congress Committee chief Tariq Hamid Karra, Jammu and Kashmir BJP president Ravinder Raina from Nowshera, Pahari leaders including Mushtaq Ahmed Shah Bukhari, and Murtaza Khan from the Pir Panjal region.

Raj Babbar criticizes BJP's civic failures in Gurugram

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

Congress leader Raj Babbar here on Sunday said the BJP has been in power for the last ten years, but here in Gurugram, they failed to address the civic issues of the district.

The senior Congress leader was present in Gurgaon to support Congress Badshahpur candidate Vardhan Yadav and Gurgaon seat candidate Mohit Grover on Sunday. While addressing a public meeting, Babbar scorched an attack on the BJP and said that only making a few flyovers is not called development. The BJP failed to fix the state of civic infrastructure in the constituency, which, despite contributing a hefty sum to Haryana's coffers, has been given a short shrift. Babbar said this time, people want Congress to retain the power and correct the wrongdoing of the current state government.

Naveen Goel, Congress rising vote count may challenge BJP in upcoming poll

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

The political landscape of the Gurgaon constituency has become increasingly intriguing as independent candidate Naveen Goel, and Congress's increasing vote count may pose a challenge to the BJP in this poll, scheduled on October 5.

The notable contender is Naveen Goel, a BJP rebel, whose participation as an independent candidate has heightened concerns for the ruling party. Mukesh Sharma, the BJP candidate, faces the daunting task of securing victory this time.

In the assembly elections of 2014, the BJP candidate had secured 84,095 votes while the Congress candidate got just 19,094 votes. In 2019, the winning margin of the BJP candidate was 33,315, while the



Independent candidate Mohit Grover managed to secure over 48,000 votes, and Congress secured third position with 23,126 votes. The contest is primarily seen as a three-way battle between BJP leader Mukesh Sharma, Congress' Mohit Grover and Independent candidate Naveen Goel. Naveen Goel, who was previously associated with the BJP has entered the race after he was denied a BJP ticket, making him a formidable challenger with a personal stake in avenging his

rejection. The BJP's biggest threat is perceived to be from its dissenters. Mukesh successfully secured his ticket, but he now must contend with the votes that may shift towards Naveen and Mohit, who are both seen as significant contenders.

With a total of 17 candidates in the fray, the real contest remains among Mukesh, Naveen and Mohit. However, Mukesh's and Naveen's entries could siphon off crucial votes from the Punjabi and Vaishya communities traditionally aligned with the BJP. In the Gurgaon constituency, voter demographics play a critical role in election outcomes. Approximately 50,000 Vaishya, 85,000 Punjabi, and 55,000 Brahmin voters reside in the area. Historically, the Vaishya and Punjabi community's support has been pivotal in determining the winner.

TMC-compatible Subhankar is new Bengal PCC President

PNS ■ KOLKATA

By appointing Subhankar Sarkar a new "Mamata Banerjee-friendly" president of the Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee the Congress may have begun to drop its aggressive line --- as was witnessed during the Adhir Chowdhury era --- against the Trinamool Congress, sources in the Bidhan Bhavan, the Pradesh Congress headquarters say. When asked to comment on the Congress' future conduct vis a vis the TMC the new PCC president said that he had nothing personal against any outfit or their leaders and that the Congress Party would tow a democratic line commensurate and consistent with its democratic values and traditions. "The Congress is clear about its secular democratic values ... we have nothing personal against



the Trinamool Congress ... if we see that Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is working towards restoring the democratic culture in the State then we will have no reason to be unnecessarily combative," Sarkar a comparatively lesser known leader and known for his moderate ways and "workable chemistry with the TMC," said. On what he had to say about

the Chief Minister and her handling of recent affairs Sarkar said he had nothing personal against any leader adding her would work according to the directions received from the high command and as per the wishes and desires of the party rank and file. He tended to remain evasive on whether his tenure would see a gradual distancing from the Left, particularly the CPI(M) in alliance with which it had been contesting election since 2016 Sarkar said Congress was a friend of all secular democratic forces and that he would go by the general will of the people and the party rank and file. Sarkar was named the PCC president late on Saturday evening. He has formerly been the All India Congress Committee (AICC) secretary in charge of northeastern states.

NHRC seeks Labour Ministry's response on CA death due to work pressure

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has sought a detailed response from the Union Ministry of Labour and Employment regarding the tragic death of a young chartered accountant in Pune in July. Anna Sebastian Perayil, a 26-year-old employee at Ernst & Young (EY), had died in July 2024, allegedly due to excessive workload and intense work pressure, according to her family.

In a statement issued here, the NHRC, citing media reports, expressed grave concern over the circumstances surrounding Perayil's death. It called on the Union Ministry of Labour and Employment to provide a comprehensive report on the case, including

details of the ongoing investigation.

According to the NHRC, the reports surrounding Perayil's death raise serious concerns about the mental and physical toll of corporate work culture on young employees, particularly those in high-pressure industries like finance, consulting, and law. Stress, anxiety, sleeplessness, and the relentless pursuit of impossible targets have, the NHRC noted, led to "grave violations of their human rights."

In response to the growing concerns around workplace safety, the NHRC has constituted a 'Core Group on Business and Human Rights.' This body will review current labour legislations and regulations, aiming to create robust recommendations for both central and state governments.

Triangular contest expected in Haryana Ateli Assembly constituency

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

A triangular contest is expected this time in Haryana's Ateli assembly constituency. Here political legacy and caste equations can affect the election result. This time in Ateli, all eyes will be on BJP's candidate Aarti Rao, who is the daughter of six-time MP and Union Minister Rao Inderjit Singh. Aarti Rao is contesting her maiden election. This election is no less than a litmus test for her. It remains to be seen whether she can carry forward the legacy of her father, who was the most prominent Ahirwal leader of this region.

Meanwhile, Congress has fielded former MLA Anita Yadav against Aarti Rao and another Ahir community leader. Anita Yadav won this seat on a Congress ticket in 2009, but she faced consecutive defeats in 2014 and 2019 from BJP candidates. Political experts said that despite losing the last two elections, the Congress party has fielded Anita again. The reason for this is that the BJP is facing an anti-incumbency wave, and Anita Yadav can attract the votes of the Ahir community. Meanwhile, the locals called Aarti Rao as an outsider. They alleged that Rao doesn't even know the village names of the

constituency. She is active here in Ateli just to woo voters. "Aarti Rao is fighting the elections in her father's name. She was not active earlier in the constituency. She won or lost but we know that she will leave the area after the elections are over," a resident alleged. Meanwhile, this election battle has been made more interesting by INLD-BSP alliance candidate Thakur Atar Lal. An experienced politician, Atar Lal has been contesting elections in Ateli for the last two decades, but he has not been able to win yet. Rajput voters are 8% in Ateli, but INLD's pre-poll alliance with BSP can give Atar Lal a

chance to woo the 28% Scheduled Caste (SC) vote bank.

In the last assembly elections, BJP had fielded Sitaram Yadav from the Ateli seat, who got 55,793 votes. On the other hand, BSP candidate Atar Lal was in second place with 37,837 votes. Ateli is considered a stronghold of the BJP; in 2014 also, the party's Santosh Yadav easily won this seat. Atar Lal is known for being connected with the voters at the grassroots level. Due to his active presence in Ateli, he also has the support of some Ahir voters. The special thing about the Ateli seat is that the rural population here is very high.

YS Jagan Mohan Reddy seeks PM Modi's intervention in Tirupati laddu adulteration issue

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ TIRUPATI/ NEW DELHI

Dubbing the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister as a "habitual liar," YSR Congress chief YS Jagan Mohan Reddy on Sunday sought Prime Minister Narendra Modi's intervention into the Tirupati laddu adulteration issue and that Chandrababu Naidu be reprimanded. In a letter addressed to Modi, Jagan alleged that CM Naidu has stooped so low as to hurt the beliefs of crores of people purely for political objectives. Detailing the process undertaken at Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams



(TTD) the custodian of the super-rich shrine of Sri Venkateswara Swamy for accepting ghee, in an eight page letter, Jagan alleged that Naidu's actions lowered not only the stature of CM but also that of everyone in public life, the sanctity of TTD and its practices. Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu

Naidu's claim that animal fat was used in preparing Tirupati laddus during the previous YS Jagan Mohan Reddy-led government in the southern state has triggered a massive political row, with the YSR Congress Party accusing Naidu of indulging in "heinous allegations" for political gains and the ruling TDP in the state circulating a laboratory report to back its claim. Amidst the furore over the adulterated Prasad, a public interest litigation (PIL) matter has been filed in the Supreme Court, seeking a probe by a Special Investigation Team (SIT) into the alleged use of animal fat in Tirupati laddus.

The petition filed by Surjit Singh Yadav, a farmer and the president of the Hindu Sena, has contended that the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD), by serving "laddu prasadam" prepared using animal fat instead of ghee to devotees at the Sri Venkateswara Swamy temple, has ridiculed the Hindu religion and outraged the sentiments of Hindus. The controversy surrounding Tirupati laddus and the demand for "freeing" temples across the country from government control are among the key issues to be discussed at a meeting of the VHP's apex body in Andhra Pradesh on Monday.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Quad is here to stay

PM Modi highlights Quad's role in promoting peace, stability and inclusive growth in Indo-Pacific

The latest Quad Summit in Wilmington, USA, highlights the growing importance of cooperation between the four member nations — India, the United States, Japan, and Australia, especially in a politically volatile Indo-Pacific region. It also underscores the importance of India in attaining peace in the region. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during his opening remarks, reaffirmed the group's commitment to ensuring a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific region, emphasising that this priority is shared by all Quad members. Addressing fellow leaders— US President Joe Biden, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, PM Modi noted that the summit was taking place at a time of heightened tensions and conflicts globally. His message was clear: the Quad's strength lies in its shared democratic values, its support for a rules-based international order, and its commitment to peaceful dispute resolution. PM Modi's address reflected India's delicate balancing act in maintaining strategic autonomy while engaging in critical international collaborations. The Indo-Pacific region has become a key area of focus, particularly due to the shifting power dynamics in Asia.



India, with its strategic location and economic influence, sees itself as a natural leader in advocating for an inclusive, prosperous Indo-Pacific. PM Modi emphasised that the Quad is not an exclusive group but one committed to advancing collective interests, particularly in areas of health security, climate change, emerging technologies, and capacity building. India's role in the Quad has grown significantly over the past few years, positioning itself as a key player in advancing shared objectives in the Indo-Pacific. PM Modi's proposal to host the next Quad Summit in India in 2025 is a further testament to the country's increasing involvement and influence within the group. The Wilmington summit comes at a time when global challenges such as supply chain disruptions and geopolitical conflicts have increased the urgency for international collaboration. India's contribution to health security initiatives and capacity-building efforts within the Quad has bolstered its standing as a critical partner. As the Quad moves forward, India remains committed to working with its allies to ensure that the Indo-Pacific remains a region where the rule of law is respected, and prosperity can be shared by all nations. The Prime Minister's visit to the US was part of a broader diplomatic engagement, which also includes bilateral talks with President Biden and an address at the UN General Assembly's Summit of the Future. This diplomatic push underlines India's active role in shaping global conversations on peace, stability and inclusive growth. In the evolving international landscape, India's leadership within the Quad reflects its commitment to fostering cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, ensuring that it remains a region of stability and shared prosperity.

delicate balancing act in maintaining strategic autonomy while engaging in critical international collaborations. The Indo-Pacific region has become a key area of focus, particularly due to the shifting power dynamics in Asia. India, with its strategic location and economic influence, sees itself as a natural leader in advocating for an inclusive, prosperous Indo-Pacific. PM Modi emphasised that the Quad is not an exclusive group but one committed to advancing collective interests, particularly in areas of health security, climate change, emerging technologies, and capacity building. India's role in the Quad has grown significantly over the past few years, positioning itself as a key player in advancing shared objectives in the Indo-Pacific. PM Modi's proposal to host the next Quad Summit in India in 2025 is a further testament to the country's increasing involvement and influence within the group. The Wilmington summit comes at a time when global challenges such as supply chain disruptions and geopolitical conflicts have increased the urgency for international collaboration. India's contribution to health security initiatives and capacity-building efforts within the Quad has bolstered its standing as a critical partner. As the Quad moves forward, India remains committed to working with its allies to ensure that the Indo-Pacific remains a region where the rule of law is respected, and prosperity can be shared by all nations. The Prime Minister's visit to the US was part of a broader diplomatic engagement, which also includes bilateral talks with President Biden and an address at the UN General Assembly's Summit of the Future. This diplomatic push underlines India's active role in shaping global conversations on peace, stability and inclusive growth. In the evolving international landscape, India's leadership within the Quad reflects its commitment to fostering cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, ensuring that it remains a region of stability and shared prosperity.

Key reforms needed for unified electoral system

While many proposals offer a streamlined approach, significant reforms are still needed to address gaps, such as mid-term election disruptions

Recently, the Union Cabinet approved the recommendations of the high-level committee led by former President Ram Nath Kovind. While many of these proposals are commendable, there are still gaps that need to be addressed. Notably, the plan should encompass not just Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections but also local body elections. The current recommendation to hold local body elections 100 days after the simultaneous Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections falls short of a truly unified electoral system. As a one-time reform, it is necessary to hold all elections, including to local bodies, concurrently.

Another issue that remains unresolved by the Kovind Committee is the problem of mid-term elections, which arise when a State government or the Lok Sabha falls due to a hung house or the collapse of a coalition. This challenge can be addressed by electing Prime Ministers and Chief Ministers simultaneously with Speakers and Deputy Speakers through a secret ballot, utilising Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) equipped with Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trails (VVPATs). Such elections should require nominations signed by at least 34 per cent of members. This system ensures stability, as a Prime Minister or Chief Minister could only be removed through a similar process, but with the mandatory nomination of an alternative leader in the same motion. Failure to vote in this process would result in the loss of voting rights in the House, though membership would remain intact. Implementing this system is crucial for the success of the "One Nation, One Election" initiative, as it would prevent the frequent dissolution of assemblies and the Lok Sabha. Current officeholders could also be re-elected using this method. In terms of candidacy rules, a person should not be allowed to contest elections from more than one constituency or hold both Parliament and State Assembly memberships simultaneously.



Additionally, any sitting MP or MLA who seeks to contest for a different seat should first resign from their current position. This would prevent situations like the one that arose during Atal Bihari Vajpayee's government, which fell due to a single controversial vote cast by Odisha Chief Minister Giridhar Gomango, who remained an MP after assuming office as Chief Minister. Another important reform is the need to restore secret voting for Rajya Sabha elections, again using EVMs equipped with VVPATs. Additionally, the constitution should be amended to abolish legislative councils, which are often seen as redundant. Only those who have never contested any election should be nominated to the Rajya Sabha, ensuring that this house remains a body of experienced statespersons rather than active politicians. MPs and MLAs should also be barred from holding any party or social positions to avoid conflicts of interest. Ministerial positions should be limited to 10 per cent of the strength of the lower house, and the post of Parliamentary Secretary should be abolished. Candidates who lose their security deposits in elections should be barred from contesting for the next six years. The "None of the Above" (NOTA) option, introduced to allow voters to reject all candidates, should be made more effective. Candidates who receive fewer



MINISTERIAL POSITIONS SHOULD BE LIMITED TO 10 PER CENT OF THE STRENGTH OF THE LOWER HOUSE, AND THE POST OF PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY SHOULD BE ABOLISHED. CANDIDATES WHO LOSE THEIR SECURITY DEPOSITS IN ELECTIONS SHOULD BE BARRED FROM CONTESTING FOR THE NEXT SIX YEARS

votes than NOTA should be barred from contesting future elections, even though the candidate with the next highest vote tally could be declared the winner for that particular term. Furthermore, immunity for MPs and MLAs from legislative proceedings should be reconsidered. In the infamous JMM bribery case, the Supreme Court was unable to act against guilty individuals due to parliamentary immunity. Parliament's rules should be rewritten to introduce fixed penalties for members who violate norms, removing the discretionary powers of the Speaker. This would prevent lenient punishments like the one imposed on MP Rajesh Manjhi, who faced only a brief suspension for taking his lady friend, pretending she was his wife, on a foreign trip at government expense. Absconding parliamentarians, if present in the House during sessions, should not be allowed to leave until legal authorities execute pending warrants against them. Additionally, MPs and MLAs with less than 75 per cent attendance should be barred from contesting elections for the next six years. Cases like that of George Fernandes, who was elected to the Rajya Sabha despite losing his memory, highlight the need for a minimum medical fitness certificate for candidates. Parliamentarians should also



SUBHASH CHANDRA AGRAWAL

be required to disclose all details of their assets, including the names of their spouses, to avoid cases of undisclosed multiple marriages, as occurred with actor-turned-MP Dharmendra. All dues, including those for utilities, rent, and government accommodations, should be deducted from their salaries or pensions. Pensions should be withheld until former MPs and ministers vacate government accommodations. Additionally, political parties that fail to contest elections for five consecutive years should be de-recognised. Finally, electoral reforms should be accelerated by empowering the Election Commission to implement reforms with a one-year notice to Parliament. If Parliament does not disapprove the proposed reforms within this timeframe, they should be deemed approved. To reduce the influence of black money, sections of the Income Tax Act that allow for contributions to political parties should be abolished. Moreover, the controversial MPLADS scheme, which allocates funds to MPs for local area development, should be scrapped. It is time to bring sweeping reforms to India's electoral system to ensure a more transparent, accountable, and stable political process.

(The writer is Guinness record holder and an RTI consultant, views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

RAHUL'S IRRESPONSIBLE REMARKS

Madam — Your newspaper (September 22) carries several news relating to statements of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, counter allegations by BJP and Congress party's explanations on Rahul Gandhi's asseverations on certain crucial issues in his foreign visits and election campaigns. His assertions on reservations, Sikh community's freedom, abrogation of Article 370 and its standing as alliance partner of National Conference in J&K are drawing flak in the political spectrum and in public. Weakening the country and painting gloomy pictures while abroad, will not go well for Congress and Rahul Gandhi. Selected foreign media has vested interest in maligning India. Desperation of Rahul Gandhi and his lack of conviction is writ large while his narratives against BJP and PM Modiji are failing in absence of report cards of Congress and allies' ruled states. His statements are also silently eroding the INDI alliance base. The country is facing tough times and the country needs a committed voice from all political parties against the deep state forces conspiring unrest and anarchy in our country. Our neighbourhood is troubled and no peace and normalcy is predictable in the near future. Apparently, these are the most challenging times since independence and PM Modiji and the bulk of non-BJP political parties have identified, analysed and diagnosed the threats. We need to fight unitedly.

Vinod Johri | Delhi

ADULTERATION IN LADOOS

Madam — After Karnataka's nandi milk, it's now the turn of ex Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh Jagan Mohan Reddy government, who has been solely blamed for the adulteration of south famous Sri Venkateswara Swami Tirupati prasadam laddus by the ruling Chief Minister N.Chandrababu Naidu. It came as a shock to devotees that sub-

High voter turnout in J and K



This refers to the editorial, "India wins in J and K" (September 20). Polling for 24 Assembly seats in the first phase of Jammu and Kashmir Assembly elections held on September 18. Polling was not only peacefully but it witnessed impressive turnout of voters also. People's enthusiasm for polling in the first phase assumes more significance as this is the first Assembly polls after abrogation of Article 370 in the state. People's record participation in the election has

given a befitting reply to the nefarious forces attempting to disrupt the electoral process. People of the state have shown the entire world, their deep trust and confidence in the democratic exercise. It is good that people have realised that no stone and bullet but power of voting is more effective tool to serve their purposes. Demise of Hurriyat Conference, a conglomerate of separatist parties also have contributed to bring peace in the state particularly Kashmir valley. It is evident that separatist groups have been politically marginalised. However, growing support to Sheikh Abdul Rashid's AIP after his shocking win in Lok Sabha polls has made the political pundits to watch final result of Assembly polls closely and keenly.

Manoj Parashar | Ghaziabad

EXPLODING PAGERS

Madam — Israel has been blamed for a recent explosive attack in Lebanon that targeted Hezbollah's communication devices but injured over 3,000 civilians, raising questions about its indiscriminate nature. The operation's extremist-like methods blur the line between state action and terrorism, risking wider conflict. A ceasefire through negotiation is urgently needed. Israel is facing widespread criticism for its alleged role in a recent explosive attack in Lebanon, which targeted Hezbollah's communication systems but left over 3,000 civilians injured. The attack's broad, indiscriminate impact has sparked concern about blurred boundaries between state action and terrorism, resembling extremist tactics more than a conventional military operation. With tensions rising, the conflict risks spreading to a broader regional theatre. Diplomacy is urgently needed to de-escalate the situation.

Anshu Bharti | Begusarai

Janga Bahadur Sunuwar | Jalpaiguri

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

PICTALK



A one-horn Rhino at the Assam State Zoo on the World Rhino Day, in Guwahati

PTI

Social media age limit: Will banning children be enough?

While setting an age limit may seem like a straightforward solution, enforcing it is a much more complex challenge

Australia's recent proposal to introduce a minimum age for children to use social media has sparked a global debate about how best to protect young people from its negative effects. With the government suggesting an age limit between 14 and 16, the intention is clear: shield children from the social harms linked to excessive screen time, mental health issues, and unrealistic social comparisons. But is an outright ban the answer? Can we expect this move to be effective, or are we merely sweeping the problem under the carpet?



In theory, setting an age limit seems like a straightforward solution to mitigate the risks associated with social media. However, the reality is far more complex. One of the most significant challenges in enforcing an age limit on social media is the sheer difficulty of verifying users' ages reliably. Most platforms already have minimum age requirements. Yet, we all know that younger children are active on these platforms, often bypassing age restrictions by simply entering a false birth date during registration.

It's a loophole too easy to exploit, and without a robust verification system, raising the age limit can't be a solution. Some platforms have attempted to introduce measures such as ID verification or even facial recognition, but these solutions come with their own set of concerns. For instance, YouTube Kids requires credit card information to verify the parent's identity. While well-intentioned, this method raises privacy concerns and is far from foolproof. Moreover, tech-savvy children often outsmart such measures using VPNs. Banning social media for children without a watertight system to monitor and regulate their access is like locking the front door while leaving the back door wide

open. When discussing social media and its impact on children, parental oversight inevitably comes into play. Parents are expected to monitor and control their children's access to these platforms, but can they realistically do so in this hyper-connected world? The answer, unfortunately, is no. Even the most diligent parents cannot be expected to oversee every minute of their children's online activity. A well-meaning ban on social media might give parents a false sense of security, but it doesn't change the reality that children will find ways to access these platforms. If we push them off regulated, mainstream platforms, they may seek refuge in the darker, unregulated corners of the internet—spaces where risks of cyberbullying, exposure to harmful content, and even predatory behaviour are even greater. Social media is, undeniably, a double-edged sword.

On the one hand, it exposes children to unrealistic portrayals of life, leading to anxiety, depression, and a constant need to measure up to others. On the other hand, it provides a space for young people to connect, express themselves, and access educational resources. Banning it outright may remove the toxic aspects but also deny them these valuable opportunities.

As parents and educators, our challenge is to strike a balance. Instead of rushing towards a ban, it might be more prudent to focus on equipping children with the skills they need to navigate the online world responsibly. Digital literacy, mental health education, and open conversations between parents and children can go a long way in protecting young minds from the pitfalls of social media. Rather than looking at social media as an enemy to be vanquished, we should view it as a tool that requires careful handling. Age restrictions, when implemented properly, can help shield younger users, but without holistic solutions—ranging from better parental support to more reliable age verification methods—their efficacy will be limited. (The author is a columnist and writing coach based in Dubai. Views are personal)



ASHA IYER KUMAR



FIRST COLUMN

HEALTHY SPINE AND WELLBEING

A healthy spine forms the cornerstone of overall wellbeing, enabling us to restore vitality to our bodies



RAVI VALLURI

How many of us get up in the morning and virtually struggle to get out of bed as the body feels sore, the neck remains stiff, knees wobble, and shoulders and feet pain? The entire day is a torturous nightmare. Such individuals run to doctors, seeking a magical cure for the pestilence. Unless the problem is genetic or hereditary, humans get afflicted with such disorders because of a deficient lifestyle, stress accumulated over a period and poor dietary habits. The vertebra and our skeletal frame are an extremely important part of the human body, which we ignore at our peril.

Therefore, a healthy spine leads to a healthy life. Do we recall when a child begins to walk, the preliminary baby steps are raising his/her thumbs; this is called the 'Merudanda Mudra'. The vertebra consists of a series of small bones that form the backbone of the spine, having several projections for articulation and muscle attachment, and a hole through which the spinal cord passes. Office goers who for making a living are programmed to undertake a typical quotidian 9 to 5 routine, and several among them use computers for prolonged hours, or those professionals who are compelled to drive long distances to their places of work from their dwelling paces ought to necessarily know how to protect their backs, necks, and hand muscles.

These days people have become addicted to the usage of smartphones and are constantly fixated on texting messages on WhatsApp, watching various features ending up with stiff necks and sore fingers. Not only do these muscles need to be protected and fortified but the tissues should be sufficiently strengthened. Working men and women should be educated on how to deploy the correct activity posture while executing their professional tasks. Many homemakers at times develop severe middle



or lower back medical problems for a variety of reasons. Continuously undertaking repeated chores and even activities involving the handling of small or no weights, performed with an incorrect posture, damages tissues and muscles, which causes irreparable damage to the back and neck.

The afflicted suffer from infirmity for years together with pain and anguish. Awareness about the structure of the spine and adopting the right postures along with simple strengthening stretches significantly helps to avoid these misadventures in one's life. In the cases these problems assume the shape of chronic disorders the patient suffering can be guided through simple stretching exercises under the supervision of a physiotherapist or an orthopaedic. A special programme has been developed by the Art of Living to ameliorate the condition of those suffering from these debilitating health issues. Those suffering from spondylitis, frozen shoulder, middle and lower back problems, knee problems, and inter disc problems will immensely benefit upon undergoing the rehabilitation process and will certainly see visible dramatic changes in their lifestyle patterns and their daily routine. The programme encompasses the techniques mentioned below:

- Walk: For the alignment of vertebrae to open energy channels
- Posture Awareness and its correction
- Ergonomics
- Simple but powerful Stretches and Yoga – For inner surgical alignment of the spine to release the nerves that were being continually pressed
- Gait Training helps immensely
- Guided Meditation techniques to release accumulated stress
- In-depth knowledge of the spine
- Ancient wisdom and knowledge about acupressure points for overall well being "Total relaxation is the secret to enjoying sitting meditation. I sit with my spine upright, but not rigid; and I relax all the muscles in my body," writes Thich Nhat Hanh.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway and is a faculty of the Art of Living. Views are personal)

GST cess extension: Is it Justified Beyond 2026?



UTTAM GUPTA

With loans likely to be repaid by January 2026, the question arises—can the continued levy of the cess be logically justified in light of buoyant tax collections



In its meeting held early this month, the GST Council had decided to set up a Group of Ministers (GoM) to suggest 'how to go about the GST compensation cess, which is levied on luxury, sin and demerit goods such as automobiles, aerated drinks and tobacco, after the loans taken to meet the shortfall in revenue of states during Covid-affected years are repaid. The GoM will be headed by Union Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary and include members from states. The statement 'how to go together with reports suggesting that the GoM will be reworking the nomenclature for GST compensation cess points towards the intent of the GST Council to continue its levy even after the deadline of March 2026 when it is to be withdrawn as per the subsisting arrangement. The matter requires deeper examination. The key question is: Why should GST Cess be continued? In the follow-up to The Constitution (One Hundred and First Amendment) Act, 2016, which introduced the GST, the Union Government also introduced The GST Compensation Act, 2017. It provided for compensation to the States for five years (2017-18 to 2021-22) for the loss of revenue to be calculated as the difference between their actual collection (including transfer of their share in indirect tax collected by the Centre) and the amount they would have got with annual growth at 14 per cent over the 2015-16 level under the erstwhile dispensation (Central Excise Duty (CED)/service tax/sales tax/Value Added Tax (VAT) plus other local taxes).

To discharge this obligation, the Centre also passed an amendment to the GST Compensation Act (2018) to levy a cess on the so-called demerit goods (those which fall in the highest tax slab of 28 per cent – other slabs being five per cent, 12 per cent and 18 per cent besides the exempt category) such as automobiles, tobacco, drinks and so on with a proviso to use the proceeds for compensating States. The cess was to remain in force for five years in sync with the commitment to compensate States for that period.

The rationale behind keeping these arrangements in place for five years was that at the



THE BUOYANCY IN GST COLLECTION SINCE 2022-23 REINFORCES THE CASE FOR WITHDRAWAL OF COMPENSATION CESS. MEANWHILE, TAXING PETROLEUM PRODUCTS UNDER GST HAS BEEN PENDING FOR LONG

end of this transition, i.e., June 30, 2022, the GST dispensation would have acquired the much-needed "vitality" and "resilience" to yield sufficient resources for the States to meet their budgetary requirements within a prudential limit set under the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act (FRBM) thereby obviating the need for any extra support beyond this deadline. However, even before the June 30, 2022 deadline arrived, the States had been clamouring for continuing the compensation beyond it. So, first, they requested the 15th Finance Commission to extend it for five years not realising that the mandate for this is with the GST Council. Thereafter, they started pestering the Central Government.

The States gave two reasons for their demand (i) they continued to face a shortfall in tax revenue and (ii) The - pandemic had severely impacted their revenue - both their tax collection as well as transfer from the Centre - pushing them behind the curve. We need to look at the factual position on the quantum of shortfall in tax revenue experienced by the States during those five years and the extent to which collections from the cess plugged it. From the time GST was introduced on July 1, 2017, till March 31, 2019, collections from the Cess exceeded the shortfall resulting in a surplus of about Rs 47,500 crore in the pool. However, the equation changed in the subsequent years. During 2019-20, the cess proceeds were Rs 95,000 crore against a shortfall in tax collection of Rs 165,000 crore resulting in a deficit of Rs 70,000 crore. Even after using the surplus from the previous two years, the unmet deficit carried forward to the next year was Rs 22,500 crore. During FY 2020-21, the shortfall in tax revenue zoomed to over Rs 300,000

crore; courtesy, of the devastating effect of Covid pandemic. Against this, cess proceeds were only Rs 65,000 crore, leading to an unmet deficit of Rs 235,000 crore. During FY 2021-22 also, the collections in the Cesspool couldn't fully meet the shortfall in tax collection though the deficit was much less. To make up for the deficit, the Centre, in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) set up a special window for borrowings at a "low" rate of interest and transferred the funds to states as back-to-back loans. Under this window, it borrowed a total of Rs 270,000 crore including Rs 110,000 crore during 2020-21 and Rs 160,000 crore during 2021-22. To generate the required money to repay the loan and interest, the GST Council decided to extend the cess till March 2026.

The necessary amendment was made to the GST Compensation Act (2018) to give effect to this decision. According to the Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, the entire loan of Rs 270,000 crore would be fully serviced by January 2026, two months ahead of the March 31, 2026 deadline. As per estimates, the collections from GST compensation cess in February and March 2026 are expected to be about Rs 40,000 crore. How this surplus money would be apportioned between the Centre and States is a task the GoM will have to carry out. The States want the GST compensation cess to continue even beyond March 31, 2026.

Naturally, its continuation can't be justified in terms of the need to service loan liabilities from the past; those would have already been extinguished before that. Do they have any logical argument? To say that they require more revenue to meet the development needs, as

reported, is plain rhetoric. Tax collection is far from being a constraint.

Only a couple of years ago, top officials in the Department of Revenue used to gloat over a collection of GST Rs 150,000 crore if achieved in any given month. Since, the beginning of FY 2022-23, monthly GST collections have been more than Rs 150,000 crore.

In fact, during FY 2023-24, the average monthly GST collection was even higher at Rs 168,000 crore. Therefore, Cess's continuation on the basis that there could be a shortfall in tax collection is untenable. The raison detre behind giving the States a buffer (read: compensation) over a fairly long period of 5 years (2017 – 2022) was to ensure that they get adjusted to the new dispensation and are in a position to garner enough revenue thereby obviating the need for any further support. At the end of this transition, it is only apt that the buffer should go. The buoyancy in GST collection since 2022-23 reinforces the case for withdrawal of compensation cess. Meanwhile, taxing petroleum products under GST has been pending for long. Currently, these are taxed under the pre-GST regime entailing a much higher level of levy. For instance, in Delhi, the taxes (central excise duty or CED plus VAT) account for about 80 per cent of the ex-refinery price of petrol.

Taxing it under GST will result in lowering this to 28 per cent (even if it is put in the highest slab). This will end up reducing tax collection in the States by over one-third. To help them make up for this loss, the GST Council may consider extending the Compensation Cess with a sun-set rider of say five years.

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

Nostalgia meets new age storytelling in India's diverse cinematic landscape

Beyond merely providing convenient access, OTT platforms have revived iconic shows and introduced regional cinema to the global audience

In recent years, the rise of over-the-top (OTT) platforms has dramatically transformed the way we consume entertainment. These platforms have revived classic content and introduced regional gems into mainstream media, offering a broad spectrum of India's diverse cinematic landscape to a global audience. Moreover, OTT has changed the way we socialize, becoming a central part of conversations, from casual chats to virtual gatherings.

Where once people exchanged pleasantries with questions like "Aur Batao" (What's up?), today, the perfect response is often about the latest series or film one is watching. Virtual watch parties have emerged as popular avenues for friends and families, separated by dis-



CHAITANYA K PRASAD

tance, to connect and share viewing experiences in real time. OTT platforms cater to diverse tastes, ensuring there's something for everyone. But what makes people subscribe to one OTT platform after another? The simple answer is content. OTT platforms have built vast libraries of classic shows and films, making iconic series easily accessible. Shows like "Malgudi Days", celebrated for its story-

telling and memorable music, and "Fauji", featuring Shah Rukh Khan's debut, are just a click away. This accessibility allows viewers to journey back in time, relive cherished moments, and introduce younger generations to timeless narratives that shaped Indian television during the Doordarshan era.

Contemporary creators are also blending nostalgia with new storytelling. Content like "Laapata Ladies", "Heeramandi", "Guns and Gulaabs", "Jubilee", "Bambai Meri Jaan", and "Rocket Boys" weave retro elements into engaging plots. These narratives are often set in simpler times, free of modern technology, offering viewers a respite from the chaos of the modern world. They transport audi-

ences to the past, making the stories richer and more captivating.

Take "Laapata Ladies", for instance. Set in the early 2000s, its storyline is centered around a lost bride, but what captivates viewers is its charming simplicity. Scenes featuring a tea stall on a forgotten railway station or a sketch of the bride being shared in the absence of digital photos transport viewers to a different era. Such moments invite the audience to reminisce about their own memories, perhaps recalling special moments from railway journeys or simpler times in their lives.

The use of cultural symbols—retro fashion, old advertisements, vintage phones, cars, and even homes—evokes a sense of nostalgia. Everyday



objects like tape recorders, old computers, and the way people socialized in the past contribute to the surreal experience of OTT content. It's a reminder of how far society has come, while also showcasing the beauty of the past. This emotional connection enriches the overall viewing experience and keeps viewers coming back for more.

OTT's appeal to nostalgia has also fueled the popularity of the "OTT and Chill" culture. A recent example is Manoj

Tiwari's rendition of the famous Bhojpuri Sohar "Hind Ke Sitare" for an OTT show, which became an internet sensation. The track went viral, with people of all ages singing along, demonstrating how content that resonates with simpler times can bring generations together.

In addition to revisiting the past, OTT platforms continuously release new content, often with extensive promotional efforts that make certain shows highly popular. Red carpet events for premieres, media coverage, and articles listing the "10 best OTT shows to watch" have all become part of the cultural zeitgeist. Even major events like the Indian Premier League (IPL) stream on OTT platforms, drawing massive audiences.

OTT also champions diverse talent. Independent filmmakers and regional storytellers, who might have been overlooked in traditional media, now have a platform to showcase their work to a global audience. This has led to the discovery of fresh voices and unique stories, breaking down geographical barriers. OTT's ability to feature content in multiple Indian languages has helped regional films and series gain national and international recognition.

According to a FICCI-EY report from 2023, regional content on OTT platforms overtook Hindi language content for the first time, with the share of regional language titles rising from 47% in 2021 to 52% in 2023. Stars like Mohanlal, Junior NTR, Vijay

Setupathi, and Fahadh Faasil, once confined to regional industries, have now become household names across India, thanks to the reach of OTT. Films like "RRR" (Telugu), "Pushpa" (Telugu), "KGF" (Kannada), "Kantara" (Kannada), have found new audiences through OTT platforms. Actors like Vijay Sethupathi, who gained prominence in Tamil cinema, have become pan-Indian stars, appearing in films like "Jawan" and "Merry Christmas". This cross-cultural fusion, accelerated by the pandemic, reflects the growing demand for diverse content.

(The writer is former additional DG, DFF and Festival Director, IFFI. Research and Inputs by Priya Kamra, Views are personal)

Israel raids, shuts down Al Jazeera bureau in West Bank

Hezbollah fires over 100 rockets across Israel

AP ■ DUBAI

Israeli troops raided the offices of the satellite news network Al Jazeera in the Israeli-occupied West Bank early Sunday, ordering the bureau to shut down amid a widening campaign by Israel targeting the Qatar-funded broadcaster as it covers the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip.

Al Jazeera aired footage of Israeli troops live on its Arabic-language channel ordering the office to be shut for 45 days. It follows an order issued in May that saw Israeli police raid Al Jazeera's broadcast position in East Jerusalem, seizing equipment there, preventing its broadcasts in Israel and blocking its websites.

The move marked the first time Israel has ever shuttered a foreign news outlet operating in the country. However, Al Jazeera has continued operating in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and in the Gaza Strip, territories that the Palestinians hope to have for their future state.

The Israeli military acknowledged conducting the raid 12 hours later, alleging without providing evidence that the newsroom was "being used to incite terror, to support terrorist activities and that the channel's broadcasts endanger ... security and public order."

Al Jazeera denounced Israel's "unfounded accusations" as it continued broadcasting live from Amman, Jordan, even as Israeli troops welded shut its office doors in Ramallah and confiscated its equipment.

"Al Jazeera will not be intimidated or deterred by efforts to silence its coverage," it said.

Armed Israeli troops entered the office and told a reporter live on air that it would be shut down, saying that staff needed to leave immediately. The network later aired what appeared to be Israel troops tearing down a banner on a balcony used by the Al Jazeera office. Al Jazeera said it bore an image of Shireen Abu Akleh, a



Hospital staff and soldiers move patients and equipment to the underground ward at Rambam medical center as fighting escalates between Israel and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah. In Haifa, Israel, on Sunday. AP/PTI

Palestinian-American journalist shot dead by Israeli forces in May 2022.

Al Jazeera's local bureau chief, Walid al-Omari, later told the AP that the Israeli military cited laws dating back to the British Mandate of Palestine to support its closure order. The Palestinians secured limited self-rule in Gaza and parts of the occupied West Bank through the 1993 Oslo agreements. While Israel occupies and controls vast areas of the West Bank, Ramallah is under full Palestinian political and security control, making the Israeli raid on the Al Jazeera office that much more surprising. Journalists criticise raid and closure order.

The Palestinian Journalists Syndicate denounced the Israeli raid and closure order. "This arbitrary military decision is a new aggression against journalistic work and media outlets," it said.

The Palestinian Authority administers parts of the West Bank. Its forces were driven from Gaza when Hamas seized power in 2007, and it has no power there. The Authority's Foreign Ministry condemned the raid.

Israeli Communication Minister Shlomo Karhi later described the raid as affecting "the mouthpiece of Hamas and Hezbollah", the Shiite militia in Lebanon that Israel targeted with strikes on Sunday after cross-border fire from the militants.

"We will continue to fight the enemy channels and ensure the safety of our heroic fighters," Karhi posted on X. Neither he nor the Israeli military addressed what legal authority Israel had to order the bureau closed.

Israel's Foreign Press Association said it was "deeply troubled by this escalation, which threatens press freedom, and urges the Israeli government to reconsider these actions".

"Restricting foreign reporters and closing news channels, signals a shift away from democratic values," it said.

The Israel-Hamas war has been extensively covered by Al Jazeera. The network has reported on the Israeli-Hamas war nonstop since the militants' initial cross-border attack on October 7. Al Jazeera has maintained 24-hour coverage in the Gaza Strip amid Israel's grinding ground offensive that has killed and wounded members of its staff.

It remained unclear whether the Israeli military would target Al Jazeera's operation in Gaza as well. While including on-the-ground reporting of the war's casualties, Al Jazeera's Arabic arm often publishes verbatim video statements from Hamas and other regional militant groups.

That has led to Israeli claims by officials, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, that the network has "harmed Israel's security and incited against soldiers". Those claims have been vehemently denied by Al Jazeera, whose main funder, Qatar, has been key in negotiations between Israel and Hamas to

AP ■ NAHARIYA

Hezbollah launched more than 100 rockets early Sunday across a wider and deeper area of northern Israel, with some landing near the city of Haifa, as Israel launched hundreds of strikes on Lebanon. The sides appeared to be spiralling toward all-out war following months of escalating tensions. The rocket barrage overnight set off air raid sirens across northern Israel, sending thousands of people scrambling into shelters. The Israeli military said that rockets had been fired "toward civilian areas," pointing to a possible escalation after previous barrages had mainly been aimed at military targets.

Lebanon's Health Ministry said that one person was killed and another wounded in an Israeli strike near the border. Israel's Magen David Adom rescue service said that it treated four people for shrapnel wounds, including a 76-year-old man who was moderately wounded in Kiryat Bialik, a community near Haifa where buildings were damaged and cars set on fire. It wasn't immediately clear if the damage was caused by a rocket or an Israeli interceptor. The barrage came after an Israeli airstrike in Beirut on Friday killed at least 45 people, including one of Hezbollah's top leaders as well as women and children. Hezbollah was already reeling from a sophisticated attack that caused thousands of personal devices to explode just days earlier.

The Israeli military said that it carried out a wave of strikes across southern Lebanon over the past 24 hours, hitting about 400 militant sites, including rocket launchers. Lt Col Nadav Shoshani, an Israeli military spokesman, said those strikes had thwarted an even larger attack. "Hundreds of thousands of civilians have come under fire across a lot of northern Israel. They spent the night and now the morning in bomb shelters," he said. "Today we saw fire that was deeper into Israel than before."

Israel's Health Ministry said that all hospitals in the north would begin moving operations to protected areas or shelters within the medical centres.

In a separate development, Israeli forces raided the West Bank bureau of Al-Jazeera, which it had banned earlier this year, accusing it of serving as a mouthpiece for militant groups, allegations denied by the pan-Arab broadcaster. Israel and Hezbollah have traded fire since the outbreak of the war in Gaza nearly a year ago, when the militant group began firing rockets in solidarity with the Palestinians and its fellow Iran-backed ally Hamas. The low-level fighting has killed dozens of people in Israel, hundreds in Lebanon, and displaced tens of thousands on both sides of the frontier.

Neither side is believed to be seeking a war. But in recent weeks, Israel has shifted its focus from Gaza to Lebanon, and vowed to bring back calm to the border so that its citizens can return to their homes. Hezbollah has said that it would only halt its attacks if there is a cease-fire in Gaza, which appears increasingly elusive as long-running talks led by the United States, Egypt and

Qatar have repeatedly bogged down.

The war in Gaza began with Hamas' Oct 7 attack into Israel, in which Palestinian militants killed about 1,200 people and took around 250 others hostage. They are still holding around 100 captives, a third of whom are believed to be dead. Gaza's Health Ministry says that more than 41,000 Palestinians have been killed. It doesn't say how many were fighters, but says women and children make up more than half of the dead.

Families of the hostages have raised fears that a war in the north would distract from their plight and further complicate the negotiations over their release.

Israeli media reported that rockets fired from Lebanon early Sunday were intercepted in the areas of Haifa and Nazareth, which are further south than most of the rocket fire to date. Israel cancelled school across the north, deepening the sense of crisis.

Hezbollah said that it had launched dozens of Fadi 1 and Fadi 2 missiles - a new type of weapon the group hadn't used before - at the Ramat David air-base, southeast of Haifa, "in response to the repeated Israeli attacks that targeted various Lebanese regions and led to the fall of many civilian martyrs". In July, the group released a video with what it said was footage it had filmed of the base with surveillance drones.

Hezbollah also said it had targeted the facilities of the Rafael defence firm, which is headquartered in Haifa, calling it retaliation for the wireless devices attack. It didn't provide evidence, and the Israeli military declined to comment on the statement.

Britain's Labour Party gathers after rocky start in government

AP ■ LONDON

This should be a time of celebration for Britain's Labour Party, which opens its annual conference Sunday less than three months after winning power in a landslide after 14 years in opposition. But it's no victory lap for Prime Minister Keir Starmer. His government is facing a reckoning with a battered economy and an electorate impatient for change. The mood among Labour members gathering in the northwest England city of Liverpool has been further dampened by a tempest over Starmer's acceptance of freebies at a time when the millions of people are struggling with the cost of living.

Starmer insists he followed the rules when he took clothes and designer eyeglasses from Waheed Alli, a media entrepreneur and longtime Labour donor. But after days of negative headlines, the party now says Starmer won't accept any more free outfits.

"I get that people are angry," said Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner, who also accepted donations to pay for clothing.

"But donations for gifts and hospitality and monetary donations have been a feature of our politics for a very long time," she told the BBC. "People can look it up and see what people have had donations for, and the transparency is really important." Starmer won the July 4 election on a promise to "restore politics as a force for good" after scandal-tarnished years under the Conservatives. He vowed to get the country's sluggish economy growing and restore frayed public services such as the state-funded National Health Service.

Since then, he has struck a gloomy note, saying there is a 22 billion pound (\$29 billion) "black hole" in the public finances left by the Conservative government, and warning that "things will get worse" before they get better. One of the government's first major acts was to strip millions of retirees of a payment intended to help heat their homes in winter. Starmer also had to deal with anti-immigrant unrest that

Dissanayake to become Sri Lanka President

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Marxist leader Anura Kumara Dissanayake rose from a humble background to the pinnacle of leadership in Sri Lanka, presenting himself as a transformative leader to young voters and those tired of the "corrupt politics" of the traditional politicians. Dissanayake, 56, popularly known as AKD, was on Sunday declared the winner of Saturday's presidential election.

The election on Saturday was the first to be held since mass protests unseated Gotabaya Rajapaksa in 2022 after the country suffered an economic crisis.

His accession to the post is a remarkable turnaround for his half-century-old party Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), which had long remained on the margins. He is Sri Lanka's first-ever Marxist party leader to become head of state.

The leader of the JVP's broader front, the National People's Power (NPP), Dissanayake's anti-corruption message and

4 killed, many hurt in Birmingham late night shooting

AP ■ BIRMINGHAM

Four people have died and more than 20 were wounded in a shooting in a nightlife area in Birmingham, Alabama, according to police and news reports.

There were multiple people shot on 20th Street near Magnolia Avenue in the Five Points South area on Saturday, the Birmingham Police Department said in a social media post.

Birmingham Officer Truman Fitzgerald said the shooting with up to 21 people wounded happened shortly after 11 pm in the 2000 block of Magnolia Avenue South. AL.COM reported.

Fitzgerald said there were "dozens of gunshot victims" and at least four had "life-threatening" injuries, AL.COM reported. Birmingham Fire and Rescue Service pronounced the three victims dead on the scene and a fourth

German chancellor's Social Democrats seek to hold off far right in vote

Berlin (AP): A state election is taking place in Brandenburg on Sunday, three weeks after a far-right party made gains in two other states in eastern Germany. Around 2.1 million people are registered to vote for a new state parliament in Brandenburg, the state that surrounds Berlin, the capital of Germany.

Sunday's election is being watched closely for signs about the country's political direction. The latest polls showed the far-right Alternative for Germany neck-and-neck with the Social Democrats, the party that has governed Brandenburg continuously since German reunification in 1990. The Social Democrats, the largest party in Chancellor Olaf Scholz's three-way coalition government, are hoping to maintain control of their stronghold in the face of rising support for parties on the extreme right and left. If the Social Democrats lose in Brandenburg, where Scholz himself has his constituency, it would be seen as a bad sign for him a year before federal elections are due to be held.

Outlook gloomy as world leaders gather in NY for UN General Assembly

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

Facing a swirl of conflicts and crises across a fragmented world, leaders attending this week's annual UN gathering are being challenged: Work together — not only on front-burner issues but on modernizing the international institutions born after World War II so they can tackle the threats and problems of the future.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres issued the challenge a year ago after sounding a global alarm about the survival of humanity and the planet: Come to a "Summit of the Future" and make a new commitment to multilateralism — the foundation of the United Nations and many other global bodies — and start fixing the aging global architecture to meet the rapidly changing world.

The UN chief told reporters last week that the summit "was born out of a cold, hard fact: international challenges are moving faster than our ability to solve them." He pointed to "out-of-control geopolitical divisions" and "runaway" conflicts, climate change, inequalities, debt and new technologies like artificial intelligence which have no guardrails.

The two-day summit starts Sunday, two days before the high-level meeting of world leaders begins at the sprawling UN compound in New York City. Whether it takes even a first step toward the future remains to be seen. There was no final agreement Saturday on its main outcome document — a lengthy pact that requires support from all 193 UN member nations to be adopted. Diplomats said Russia and a few others still had objections to the final text.

"Leaders must ask themselves whether this will be yet another meeting where they simply talk about greater cooperation and consensus, or whether they will show the imagination and conviction to actually forge it," said Agnès Callamard, the secretary-general of Amnesty International. "If they miss this opportunity, I shudder to think of the consequences. Our collective future is at stake." This is the UN's biggest week of the year.

The summit is the prelude to this year's high-level meeting, held every September. More than 130 presidents, prime ministers and monarchs are slated to speak along with dozens of ministers, and the issues at the summit are expected to dominate their speeches and private meetings, especially the wars in Gaza, Ukraine and Sudan and the growing possibility of a wider Mideast war.

"There is going to be a rather obvious gap between the Summit of the Future, with its focus on expanding international cooperation, and the reality that the UN is failing in Gaza, Ukraine and Sudan," said Richard Gowan, UN director for the International Crisis Group. "Those three wars will be top topics of attention for most of the week."

One notable moment at Tuesday's opening assembly meeting: U.S. President Joe Biden's likely final major appearance on the world stage, a platform he has tread upon and reveled in for decades.

At the upcoming meetings, US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield told reporters this week: "The most vulnerable around the world are counting on us to make progress, to make change, to bring about a sense of hope for them."

To meet the many global challenges, she said, the US focus at the UN meetings will be on ending "the scourge of war." Roughly 2 billion people live in conflict-affected areas, she said.

Last September, the war in Ukraine and its president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, took center stage at the UN's global gathering. But as the first anniversary of Hamas' deadly attack in southern Israel approaches on October 7, the spotlight is certain to be on the war in Gaza and escalating violence across the Israeli-Lebanon border, which is now threatening to spread to the wider Middle East.

Iran supports both Hamas in Gaza and Lebanon's Hezbollah

militants. Its new president, Masoud Pezeshkian, will address world leaders on Tuesday afternoon. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas is scheduled to speak Thursday morning and Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday afternoon.

Zelenskyy will get the spotlight twice. He will speak Tuesday at a high-level meeting of the UN Security Council — called by the United States, France, Japan, Malta, South Korea and Britain — and will address the General Assembly on Wednesday morning.

Slovenia, which holds the council's rotating presidency this month, chose the topic "Leadership for Peace" for its high-level meeting Wednesday, challenging its 15 member nations to address why the UN body charged with maintaining international peace and security is failing — and how it can do better.

"The event follows our observation that we live in a world of grim statistics, with the highest number of ongoing conflicts,

with record high casualties among civilians, among humanitarians, among medical workers, among journalists," Slovenian U.N. Ambassador Samuel Zbogar told reporters. He cited a record-high 100 million people driven from their homes by conflict.

"The world is becoming less stable, less peaceful, and with erosion of the respect for the rules, it is sliding into the state of disorder," Zbogar said. "We have not seen this high need to rebuild trust to secure the future ever before."

A key reason for the Security Council's dysfunction is the deep division among its five veto-wielding permanent members. The United States, Israel's closest ally, is a supporter of Ukraine alongside Britain and France. Russia invaded Ukraine and has a military and economic partnership with China, though Beijing reasserted its longstanding support for every country's sovereignty without criticizing Russia in a recent briefing paper for the UN meetings.

Donald Trump's goal of mass deportations falls short

AP ■ SAN DIEGO

Donald Trump has long pledged to deport millions of people, but he's bringing more specifics to his current bid for the White House: invoking wartime powers, relying on like-minded governors and using the military.

Trump's record as president shows a vast gulf between his ambitions and the legal, fiscal and political realities of mass deportations of people in the United States illegally — 11 million in January 2022, by the Homeland Security Department's latest estimate. Former President Barack Obama carried out 432,000 deportations in 2013, the highest annual total since records were kept.

Deportations under Trump never topped 350,000. But he and his chief immigration policy architect, Stephen Miller, have offered clues in interviews and rallies of taking a different approach if they are returned to power in November. They could benefit from lessons learned during their four years in office and, potentially, from more Trump-appointed judges. "What Trump seems to be contemplating is potentially lawful," said Joseph Nunn, counsel at the Brennan Centre for Justice at New York University's School of Law. "There might not be a lot of legal barriers. It is going to be logistically extraordinarily complicated and difficult. The military is not going to like doing it and they are going to drag their feet as much as they can, but it is possible, so it should be taken seriously."

The Trump campaign, asked how his pledge would be carried out, said Trump would begin the largest deportation programme in US history, without elaborating in detail. Karoline Leavitt, a spokeswoman, said Trump "would marshal every federal and state power necessary to institute the largest deportation operation of illegal criminals, drug dealers, and human traffickers".

How would Trump overcome inevitable legal challenges? Trump has said he would invoke the Alien Enemies Act, a 1798



law that allows the president to deport any noncitizen from a country that the US is at war with.

Texas Gov, Greg Abbott has advanced a theory that illegal immigration amounts to an invasion to justify state enforcement measures, so far without success, but legal scholars say judges may be reluctant to second-guess what a president considers a foreign aggression.

The sweeping Alien Enemies Act authority may sidestep a law that bans the military from civilian law enforcement.

Trump has said he would focus on deploying the National Guard, whose troops can be activated on orders of a governor. Miller says troops under sympathetic Republican governors would send troops to nearby states that refuse to participate.

"The Alabama National Guard is going to arrest illegal aliens in Alabama and the Virginia National Guard in Virginia. And if you're going to go into an unfriendly state like Maryland, well, there would just be Virginia doing the arrest in Maryland, right, very close, very nearby," Miller said last year on "The Charlie Kirk Show."

The military has been peripherally involved at the border since President George W Bush's administration with activities that are not deemed to be law enforcement, such as surveillance, vehicle maintenance and installing concertina wire.

Nunn, of New York University's Brennan Centre, said Trump may look to 2020, when he ordered the National Guard to disperse peaceful Black Lives

Matter protests near the White House, despite the mayor's opposition. Trump did so without invoking the 18th-century war powers law, but the District of Columbia's federal status gives the president outsized authority to act.

Trump may also contend with rights afforded under immigration law and court rulings that took shape after 1798, including a right to seek asylum that became law in 1980. Under a 2001 Supreme Court ruling, people in the country illegally can't be detained indefinitely if there is no reasonable chance their countries will take them back.

Cuba, Venezuela, Nicaragua and others are either slow to accept their citizens or refuse. US Immigration and Customs Enforcement is funded by Congress for 41,500 detention beds this year, raising questions about where Trump would house people before their board deportation flights and how long they could hold them if countries refuse to take them back.

Miller floated the idea of "large-scale staging grounds near the border, most likely in Texas."

ICE officers are painstakingly deliberate, researching backgrounds of their targets and prioritizing people with criminal convictions. They try to capture suspects outside their homes because they generally work without court warrants and people don't have to let them in.

A single arrest may require hours of surveillance and research, a job that one ICE official likened to watching paint

dry. "On practical level, it will be nearly impossible for (Trump) to do the things he's talking about, even if could bring in the military," said John Sandweg, a senior Homeland Security Department official in the Obama administration.

Obama's deportation numbers were made possible by local police who turned people over to ICE, but many state and local governments have since introduced limits on cooperation with federal immigration authorities. Obama's presidency also predated a surge of asylum-seekers at the border, which drained limited resources of the Trump and Biden administrations.

While many support Trump's plans, mass deportation could tear apart families, exacerbate labour shortages and uproot people with deep ties to their communities. Pew Research Centre estimates 70% of households with at least one person in the United States illegally also have someone in the country legally.

Military leaders are likely to resist because it would undercut other priorities and damage morale, Nunn said. "The military is going to see this and say this is not the kind of duty that soldiers signed up for," he said. "This is getting the military involved in domestic politics in a way the military doesn't like to do."

Adam Goodman, associate professor of history and Latin American studies at the University of Illinois, Chicago, who has written about deportations, said a threat of a mass expulsion can have a serious impact even if it isn't carried out. He thinks it is highly unlikely that Trump can do what he promises but it can strike fear in immigrant communities.

In June 2019, Trump announced ICE would "begin the process of removing the millions of illegal aliens" the following week. A month later, the agency said it targeted about 2,100 people, resulting in 35 arrests, indicating the president's plans fell far short but only after they generated widespread concern in immigrant communities.

US to return 297 Indian antiquities

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US President Joe Biden was testing them, thus reflecting upon the American seriousness of the emerging Chinese threat.

Biden's remark came during the Quad Leaders' Summit on Saturday, which was attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida.

"We believe Xi Jinping is looking to focus on domestic economic challenges and minimise the turbulence in China," Biden told the leaders at the Summit.

His opening remarks were caught on the hot mic as pool reporters were leaving the Summit venue. Biden was heard saying that Chinese President Xi Jinping is "looking to buy himself some diplomatic space, in my view, to aggressively pursue China's interest."

Biden added that China continues to "behave aggressively, testing us all across the region on several fronts, including on economic and technology issues."

"At the same time, we believe intense competition requires intense diplomacy," he said. Later a senior administration official tried to downplay the error. "I don't think I have much to elaborate on that. It's consistent with what has been said before, and I don't think it'll be much of a surprise that our inside voice matches our outside voice," the official said. "I think it's not surprising

China testing us, Biden caught telling Quad leaders on hot mic

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

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that China would have been on the agenda. It's an Indo-Pacific convening. This is an Indo-Pacific partnership. China is a major country in the Indo-Pacific. But I think it's also fair to say that there were a number of other topics on the agenda," said the official.

China is engaged in hotly contested territorial disputes in both the South China Sea and the East China Sea.

It claims sovereignty over all of the South China Sea. Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, Brunei and Taiwan have counterclaims.

The four-member Quad, or the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, advocates upholding a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific. China claims that the grouping aims to contain its rise.

Over 20 wounded after Russia strikes apartment blocks

AP ■ KYIV

Russian strikes hit high-rise apartment blocks in Ukraine's Kharkiv, leaving dozens wounded in a second consecutive nighttime attack this week. The bombs fell Saturday night on the district of Shevchenkovsky, in Ukraine's northeast, local Governor Oleh Syniehubov said. Residential 16 and 9-story buildings were destroyed, and seven more buildings were damaged, he added. Twenty-

one people were wounded, including an eight-year-old, two 17-year-olds and several older adults, according to Syniehubov and Kharkiv mayor Ihor Terekhov.

The attack came after another late Friday that wounded 15 people, including a 10- and 12-year-old, as Russian airstrikes hit three Kharkiv neighbourhoods, Terekhov said.

According to Ukrainian officials, KAB-type aerial glide bombs were used in both attacks, a retrofitted Soviet

weapon that has for months laid waste to eastern Ukraine. Russia also launched 80 Shahed drones and two missiles at Ukraine overnight into Sunday, the Ukrainian air force said in an online statement. Ukrainian air defence shot down 71 drones, and another six were lost on location due to electronic warfare countermeasures, the statement said.

Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in Feb 2022.

Biden positive about India's plan to procure MQ-9B drones from US

PTI ■ WILMINGTON

US President Joe Biden welcomed the progress towards India concluding the procurement of 31 long-endurance MQ-9B armed drones from American defence major General Atomics as he and Prime Minister Narendra Modi vowed to boost two-way reciprocal supply of defence hardware amid common concerns over China's growing military might.

the US-India defence industrial cooperation roadmap, including ongoing collaboration to advance priority co-production arrangements for jet engines, munitions, and ground mobility systems.

"President Biden welcomed the progress towards India concluding procurement of 31 General Atomics MQ-9B remotely piloted aircraft and their associated equipment, which will enhance the intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities of India's armed forces across all domains," it said.

India is procuring the 'hunter-killer' drones (16 Sky Guardian and 15 Sea Guardian) from US Defence major General Atomics at a cost of over USD 3 billion primarily to crank up its surveillance apparatus along the frontier with China as well as in the Indian Ocean region. It is learnt that the price negotiations for the procurement have been sealed and both sides are likely to formally conclude the deal by next month. The remotely piloted drones are capable of remaining airborne for around 35 hours and can be deployed on a range of missions. However, there was no specific mention of the ambitious plan to co-produce F-414 fighter jet engines in India.

Explosion at coal mine in eastern Iran kills at least 34 workers

AP ■ TEHRAN

An explosion in a coal mine in eastern Iran killed at least 34 workers and injured 17 others, officials said Sunday, marking one of the worst mining disasters in the country's history as others remained missing hours after the blast. The blast struck a coal mine in Tabas, about 540 km (335 miles) southeast of the capital, Tehran, on Saturday night. By Sunday, weeping miners stood alongside mine cars that brought up the bodies of their colleagues, all covered in coal dust.



In this photo released by Iranian Red Crescent Society, miners and police officers are seen at the site of a coal mine where methane leak sparked an explosion on Saturday, in Tabas on Sunday. AP/PTI

Around 70 people had been working at the time of the blast. State television later said that 17 were believed to be trapped at a depth of 200 metres (650 feet) down a 700-metre (2,300-foot) tunnel. However, figures kept changing throughout Sunday regarding the disaster in the rural area with some reports suggesting the death toll was higher.

A provincial emergency official, Mohammad Ali Akhoundi, told the state-run IRNA news agency Sunday afternoon that the death toll had reached at least 34 as rescue efforts continued. Survivors interviewed by state TV, still smudged in coal dust,

described chaotic scenes after the blast. "We were in the mine, working. Suddenly there was some smoke rising...then I noticed I had difficulty breathing," said one miner, whom state TV did not identify. "I jumped off from the workshop and I scrambled until I reached somewhere (safe). My friends (remained) in there."

Authorities blamed the blast on a leak of methane gas. Such gases are common in mining, though modern safety measures call for ventilation and other measures to protect

workers. It wasn't immediately clear what safety procedures were in place at the privately owned Mandanjo Co, which operated the Tabas Parvadeh 5 mine. The firm could not be reached for comment Sunday. Iran's new reformist President Masoud Peshkian, preparing to travel to New York for the UN General Assembly, said he ordered all efforts be made to rescue those trapped and aid their families. He also said an investigation into the explosion had begun. "I spoke with the ministers of

health, interior and security and ordered that the issues of the families of the victims and the injured be quickly resolved," Peshkian said, according to a statement from his office. "I also requested to take measures to prevent the recurrence of such incidents by improving work standards in the country's mines."

But Iran's mining industry has been struck by disasters before. In 2017, a coal mine explosion killed at least 42 people. Then-President Hassan Rouhani, campaigning ahead of winning reelection, visited the site in Iran's northern Golestan province and angry miners besieged the SUV he rode in, kicking and beating the armored vehicle in a rage.

In 2013, 11 workers were killed in two separate mining incidents. In 2009, 20 workers were killed in several incidents. Lax safety standards and inadequate emergency services in mining areas were often blamed for the fatalities. Oil-producing Iran is also rich in a variety of minerals. Iran annually consumes around 3.5 million tons of coal, but only exports about 1.8 million tons from its mines per year. The rest is imported, often consumed in the country's steel mills.

Nepal to organise Yoga Retreat to enhance physical, spiritual health

Kathmandu (PTI): In an attempt to promote spiritual tourism, the Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN) is organising a yoga retreat in western Nepal's Pokhara where renowned yoga enthusiasts from across the world will train in theoretical and practical aspects of the ancient wisdom. The event to be organised in collaboration with Purna Yoga Centre between October 16 and 19 will see the participation of more than 100 yoga enthusiasts in the retreat in the tourist hub Pokhara, according to the organisers. Vegetarian and organic foods will be served and devotional songs as well as relaxing music will be played during the four-day retreat. By organising this event, Nepal aspires to position itself as one of the favourite yoga and spiritual destinations in the global travel market, said Binayak Shah, HAN president.

The retreat will be organised annually to promote spiritual tourism, he said. "The art and science of yoga originated from the Himalayas and lord Shiva is the first yogi who taught the ancient wisdom to the humans," he pointed out. "Now we want to cash on this ancient wisdom which is believed to have originated from the Himalayas, the abode of lord Shiva."

A joint fact-sheet on Modi-Biden talks said the two leaders recognised the remarkable progress achieved under



LOST & FOUND

Rajwinder Kaur W/o late Sh. Jasvinder Singh has lost original allotment letter of flat No. B-103, vasundhara apartments CGHS Ltd., Plot No.16, Sector-6, Dwarka, New Delhi. Finder contact- 9971867474. PD(775A)

NOTICE

SHAHNAJ BEGUM wife of Late MOHD. SAMED residence of Q. NO. 1480, TYPE-2, DMW COLONY, PATIALA (PUNJAB) INDIA do hereby solemnly and declare as under:-

1. That I am permanent resident of above mentioned address.
2. That this is to inform to all that my husband Late Mr. MOHD. SAMED booked a FLAT NO. B1B/412A in SUPERTECH GOLF VILLAGE COUNTRY PROJECT AT YAMUNA EXPRESSWAY (U.P.) in 2014. He has expired on 19.04.2015.
3. That now after his death I requested to supertech to transfer this property to my only daughter **MS. JAINAB SAMAD**.
4. That if anybody has objection for the same he/she may contact in Supertech Head office E-square Plot No. C2, Sector-96, Noida (U.P.) within 15 days of this notice or can contact on 931100-12345

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the Public at large that Smt. Neha Kawara Madan W/o. Sh. Karan Madan and Sh. Umesh Kawara S/o. Late Sh. Krishna Chandra Kawara are the 'Title Holders' in possession of 'Entire Ground Floor of Freehold Built up Residential Property Bearing Plot No. 111, Block No. B (Commonly Known as B-111), Malviya Nagar, New Delhi-110017' measuring 289.00 sq. yards, hereinafter referred to as 'Secured Property', vide Sale Deed dated 9th August, 2023 duly registered as Regn. No. 6802, Book No. 1, Vol. No. 5571, pp. 112-130 of 108.23 in the office of the Registrar of Assurances, New Delhi. That original documents i.e. (i) Lease Deed dated 31.10.64, (ii) Deed of Conveyance dated 31.10.64, (iii) Death Certificate of Mrs. Ram Rashtra, (iv) Death Certificate of Mrs. Raj Kumari Nanda, (v) Death Certificate of Mr. Ram Prakash Nanda, (vi) Substitution Letter (L & C) dated 24.05.04, (vii) Substitution Letter (L & C) dated 15.07.04 and (viii) Substitution Letter dated 02.03.12 w.r.t. the Schedule Plot have been lost/misplaced and are untraceable as on date, in lieu of which Information Report dated 22.08.24 bearing LR No. 2140399/2024 has been filed with Delhi Police. This notice is thus issued to the Public at large, i.e. any Person(s), Company(s), Author(s), Officer(s), Society(s), Organisation(s), Financial Institution(s), Bank(s), HUF(s), etc. having any knowledge, custody or possession of the above mentioned lost/misplaced/untraceable original documents or otherwise having any claims, rights, title, interests, possession etc. in the Schedule Property, by way of Ownership, Succession, Interference, Sale, Mortgage, Exchange, Charge, Lien, Gift, Trust, Encumbrance etc., may come forward with supporting documents, to be delivered to the undersigned within 15 days from the date of this Publication, post expiration of which, any claim(s) or objection(s), if raised or received, shall be treated as null & void and as waived.

Jain Kasturba Advocate
Address: Chamber No. 6, Block-F, Karkardooma Court
New Delhi-110032, Contact No. +91 99716 26467

Number of rhinos is slightly up but poaching has increased too

AP ■ NAIROBI

The rhino population across the world has increased slightly but so have the killings, mostly in South Africa, as poaching fed by huge demand for rhino horns remains a top threat, conservationists said in a new report.

The number of white rhinos increased from 15,942 in 2022 to 17,464 in 2023, but the black and greater one-horned rhino stayed the same, according to the report published by the International Rhino Foundation ahead of Sunday's World Rhino Day. Another subspecies, the northern white rhino, is technically extinct

with only two females being kept in a secure private conservancy in Kenya, known as Ol Pejeta. A trial is ongoing to develop embryos in the lab from an egg and sperm previously collected from white rhinos and transferring it into a surrogate female black rhino. A total of 586 rhinos were killed in Africa in 2023, most of them in South Africa — which has the highest population of rhinos at an estimated 16,056. The killings increased from 551 reported in 2022, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

With all five subspecies combined, there are just under

28,000 rhinos left in the world, from 500,000 at the beginning of the 20th century. Rhinos face various environmental threats like habitat loss due to development and climate change but poaching, based on the belief that their horns have medicinal uses, remains the top threat.

Philip Muruthi, the vice president for species conservation at the Africa Wildlife Foundation, said protection has played a big role in increasing rhino population. In Kenya, their numbers rose from 380 in 1986 to 1,000 last year, he said. "Why has that happened? Because the rhinos were brought into sanctuaries

and were protected." Muruthi advocates for a campaign that will end the demand for rhino horn as well as adoption of new technology in tracking and monitoring rhinos for their protection while also educating communities where they live on the benefits of rhinos to the ecosystem and the economy.

Known as mega herbivores that mow the parks and create inroads for other herbivores, rhinos are also good for establishing forests by ingesting seeds and spreading them across the parks in their dung. Muruthi lamented that the northern white rhino — whose only two females are left in the

world — should have never gotten so close to the brink of extinction. "Don't get the numbers to where it's very expensive to recover and we are not even sure that it will happen," he said.

The body of the last male northern white rhino — named Sudan — that died in 2018 has been preserved and displayed at the Museums of Kenya in Nairobi.

A research scientist and curator of mammals at the museum, Bernard Agwanda, said preserving Sudan will tell the story of how the species lived among humans and why conservation is important.

ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005

PUBLIC NOTICE-TENDER CUM E-AUCTION FOR SALE OF SECURED ASSET
[See proviso to Rule 8(i)]
[Notice for sale of immovable asset(s)]

E-Auction Sale Notice for the sale of immovable asset(s) under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

This notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/ charged to the Secured Creditor, the physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of ICICI Bank Limited will be sold on 'As is where is', 'As is what is' and 'Whatever there is' as per the brief particulars given hereunder;

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower(s)/Co-Borrowers/ Guarantors/ Loan Account No.	Details of the Secured asset(s) with known encumbrances, if any	Amount Outstanding	Reserve Price	Date and Time of Property Inspection	Date & Time of E-Auction
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)
1.	Mr. Rajesh Kumar (Borrower), Mrs. Ratnavali (Co-Borrower) LBBWD00002987335	Plot No-178, Plot-S Khosra No-556/559 Shree Paras Residency Vill Patan Kala Teh Tijara, Bhiwadi, Rajasthan. Area: 908.55 Sq.Ft	Rs. 8,50,774/- as on September 11, 2024	Rs. 4,00,000/- and 40,000/-	October 04, 2024, From 12:00 Noon to 02:00 Noon	October 15, 2024, From 11:00 AM to 12:00 Noon

The online auction will be conducted on the website (URL Link- https://disposalhub.com) of our auction agency M/s Nexen Solutions Private Limited. The Mortgagee/Noticees are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest by October 14, 2024 before 05:00 PM else the secured asset(s) will be sold as per schedule.

The prospective bidder(s) must submit the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) Demand Draft (DD) (Refer Column E) at ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005 on or before October 14, 2024 before 05:00 PM. Thereafter, they have to submit their offer through the website mentioned above on or before October 14, 2024 before 05:00 PM along with the scanned image of the Bank acknowledged DD towards proof of payment of EMD. In case the prospective bidder(s) is/ are unable to submit his/ her/ their offer through the website, then the signed copy of tender documents may be submitted at ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005 on or before October 14, 2024 before 05:00 PM. Earnest Money Deposit DD/PO should be from a Nationalised/Scheduled Bank in favour of 'ICICI Bank Limited' payable at Delhi

For any further clarifications in terms of inspection, Terms and Conditions of the E-Auction or submission of tenders, contact ICICI Bank Employee Phone No. 865476284/8584874809

Please note that the Marketing agencies i. M/s Nexen Solutions Private Limited 2. Augeo Asset Management Pvt Ltd 3. Hesta Proptech Pvt. Ltd. have also been engaged for facilitating the sale of this property.

The Authorised Officer reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without furnishing any further reasons. For detailed Terms and Conditions of the sale, please visit www.icicibank.com/n4p4s

Date: September 23, 2024
Place: Delhi and Gurgaon
Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

Vodafone Idea commits ₹30,000 crore to Nokia, Ericsson, Samsung for network upgrade

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



Debt-ridden Vodafone Idea on Sunday said it has awarded contracts worth about ₹ 30,000 crore to Nokia, Ericsson and Samsung for supply of 4G and 5G network equipment for three years. It is the largest deal awarded by any Indian telecom operator during this year. The deal also marks the first step towards the roll-out of the company's three-year capex (capital expenditure) plan of about USD 6.6 billion or Rs 55,000 crore announced earlier. "Vodafone Idea (VIL) has concluded a mega, about USD 3.6 billion (around Rs 300 billion), deal with Nokia, Ericsson and Samsung for supply of network equipment over a period of three years. The capex programme is directed towards expanding the 4G population coverage from 1.03 billion to 1.2 billion, launching 5G in key markets and capacity expansion in line with data growth," the company said in a statement.

The supplies against these new long-term awards will start in the coming quarter. The top priority for the company is to expand the 4G coverage to 1.2 billion Indians, the statement said. VIL CEO Akshaya Moondra said that the company has started the investment cycle and it is on the journey of VIL 2.0. "From hereon, VIL will stage a smart turnaround to effectively participate in the industry growth opportunities. Nokia and Ericsson have been our partners since our inception and this marks another milestone in that continuing partnership. We are pleased to start our new partnership with Samsung. We look forward to work closely with all our partners as we move into the 5G era," Moondra said. Vodafone Idea (VIL) was the biggest telecom operator formed with the merger of Vodafone India and Idea Cellular in August 2018 with a mobile subscriber base of 40.8 crore. With continuous decline in the subscriber, VIL is now left with 21.5 crore mobile services subscribers as per latest data released by telecom regulator Trai.

VIL has recently raised Rs 24,000 crore through sale of equity and will fund the capital expenditure from the latest capital. The capex is currently being funded out of the equity raise. For the long-term capex, the company is in advanced stage of discussions with its existing and new lenders to tie up Rs 25,000 crore of funds and Rs 10,000 crore of non-funded facilities. VIL said that it has completed techno economic evaluation of the company's long-term projections by an independent third party. The report has been submitted to all the banks and financial institutions basis which the banks will now progress with their internal evaluation and approval processes. VIL in the last auction had acquired spectrum worth Rs 3,500 crore to increase its network capacity. The company executed some quick-win capex for the deployment of more spectrum on existing sites and the roll-out of some new sites. VIL said that the small capex

roll-out boosted its network capacity by about 15 per cent and an increase in population coverage by 16 million by end September, 2024. The company claimed that it has started witnessing an improvement in customer experience in select geographies where these roll-outs have been completed. VIL holds a large spectrum portfolio including mid band 5G spectrum in 17 circles and millimetreWave 5G spectrum in 16 circles. After the Rs 24,000 crore fundraise, including Rs 18,000 crore through a follow-on offer, the company was reeling under the debt of around Rs 2.14 lakh crore. The company had payment obligations of Rs 2,09,520 crore towards the government as of June 30, 2024, which included the deferred payment obligations and adjusted gross revenue liability. Post Rs 24,000 crore fundraise, VIL promoters Aditya Birla Group and Vodafone hold 37.3 per cent and the government 23.2 per cent stake in the company.

Luxury carmakers expect surge during festive season

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



Luxury carmakers Mercedes-Benz, Audi and BMW are eyeing robust sales during the festive period this year with demand for high-end cars continuing to see an upward trend in India. In an interaction with PTI, Mercedes-Benz India MD and CEO Santosh Iyer said the luxury car segment is set for its best-ever performance this year with festive season oftakes playing a major role in the overall performance. He noted that the festive season generally gives high double-digit sales growth, helping the automaker to average out single-digit growth of the earlier quarter. "So in that sense, on an average, then we are able to get a double-digit growth during the festive season," Iyer stated. Elaborating on the overall industry, which still remains a very small part of the overall passenger vehicle market in the country, he said the segment is headed for record volumes this fiscal year but not all players are witnessing growth. "Some (companies) are even degrowing, some are flat and they are facing headwinds, but because we are the primary player in the market, we still feel the luxury car market should cross 50,000-51,000 cars this year," Iyer said. The luxury car market in India currently remains very small accounting for less than 2 per cent of the overall passenger vehicle market in the country. Audi India Head Balbir Singh Dhillon said the demand in the last few months has grown steadily and the company expects this to continue in the period ahead.

"We are working relentlessly with our HQ to get additional allocations for India, to fulfil this growing demand," he stated. Having said that, one cannot disregard the fact that the waiting period for Audi cars has gone up owing to demand and supply mismatch, he added. "It is also important to mention that the prevailing Global challenges are not only impacting the adequate supply of new cars, but also instilling pressure on the prices," Dhillon stated. With the upcoming festive season, Audi is expecting good growth on the back of sustained demand models like A4, A6, Q5, Q7 and Q8. BMW Group India President Vikram Pawah said the fundamentals of the Indian economy are sturdy and consumer confidence in the luxury segment is on the rise. "For BMW Group India, the order book is solid and we are trying our best to speed up deliveries for our customers. Along with additional bookings around Diwali and Dussehra, we are confident of closing the year on a high note while clocking impressive growth," he stated.

India, EU to have new round of FTA talks

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



Senior officials of India and the 27-nation European Union (EU) will commence the next round of talks for a proposed free trade agreement from Monday here, an official said. The agreement is aimed at further boosting bilateral trade and investments between the two regions. The two sides are negotiating a free trade agreement, an investment protection agreement and an agreement on geographical indications (GIs). "The five-day talks will start from September 23. It will be the ninth round of negotiations. Also, the concerns of Indian stakeholders regarding the EU's sustainability measures, such as CBAM, deforestation and others, will be discussed with the EU," the official said. During the ninth round, both sides will discuss core trade issues covering goods, services, investment and government procurement along with necessary rules such as rules of origin, SPS (sanitary and phytosanitary), and technical barriers to trade. The Carbon Border

Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) or carbon tax (a kind of import duty) will come into effect from January 1, 2026. It will initially be based on seven carbon-intensive sectors, including steel, cement, fertiliser, aluminium and hydrocarbon products. India has raised concerns over these two regulations as it would have an impact on the country's exports to the bloc. According to think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI), the European Union's Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) would hit India's agricultural exports worth USD 1.3 billion to the EU starting December 2024. The GTRI said that Indian firms are concerned about the potential negative impacts of regulations like the carbon tax, deforestation regulation, and supply chain regulation. "These regulations would

adversely impact India's exports to EU. After implementation of the trade agreement, the EU products will continue to enter India at zero duties, but Indian products may pay 20-35 per cent tariff equivalent as CBAM charges. A suitable text may be inserted in the FTA chapters dealing with this possibility," GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said. In June 2022, India and the European Union resumed the negotiations after a gap of over eight years. It was stalled in 2013 due to differences over several issues. "Initially, from 2007 to 2013, multiple rounds of negotiations took place but were hindered by disagreements over market access, intellectual property rights, labour standards, and sustainable development. By 2013, the talks hit a standstill, particularly due to differences on tariffs for automobiles,

wine, spirits, data security for Indian IT firms, and public procurement," it said. It added that one of the major reasons for the delay is the differing aspirations between the two parties. The EU seeks tariff elimination on over 95 per cent of its exports, including sensitive agricultural products and automobiles, while India is comfortable opening up only around 90 per cent of its market and is hesitant to lower tariffs on bulk agricultural products, the GTRI said. GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said that major Indian goods exports to the EU, such as ready-made garments, pharmaceuticals, steel, petroleum products, and electrical machinery, will become more competitive, if the pact gets concluded successfully. Additionally, key services exports like telecommunications, other business services, and transportation services will also see substantial growth. On the other hand, the EU will benefit from increased exports of essential goods from India, including aircraft and parts, electrical machinery, diamonds, and chemicals.

President to inaugurate 16th ASOSAI

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



President of India Droupadi Murmu will inaugurate the Assembly of the Asian Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (ASOSAI) here on Tuesday. The four-day conference will be followed by a series of discussions on the evolving role of Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) in fostering transparency and accountability. "The President of India, Droupadi Murmu will inaugurate the prestigious 16th Assembly of the Asian Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions (ASOSAI) here on September 24th, 2024," Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) said in a release. A key highlight of this year's assembly is the assumption of the chair of ASOSAI by the CAG of India Girish Chandra Murmu for the term 2024-2027. "His leadership is expected to drive the association towards new frontiers in public audit, particularly in strengthening governance frameworks across Asia," CAG said. As part of the programme, the delegates will also participate in a one-day symposium on Digital Public Infrastructure and Gender Divide Issues of Inclusion and Accessibility. The symposium aims to explore critical issues at the intersection of technology, governance, and social inclusion, addressing how digital advancements can bridge the gap between genders in accessing public services. The assembly will witness participation from more than 200 delegates representing 42 countries and international organisations, underscoring the diverse and collaborative nature of ASOSAI. Delegates will engage in high-level discussions

to enhance the effectiveness of public audit, with a focus on improving accountability and promoting best practices in government operations. CAG said the conference promises to be more than just a formal gathering -- it will serve as a platform for exchanging innovative ideas and forging stronger regional and global partnerships to fortify the pillars of good governance. Founded in 1979 with 11 members, ASOSAI has grown to 48 Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs), an important regional group under the umbrella of the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI). ASOSAI plays a central role in promoting collaboration, sharing experiences, knowledge exchange, and capacity building in the field of public audit amongst its members, as per a statement. The first ASOSAI Assembly and Governing Board meeting was held in New Delhi in May 1979.

Users threaten to quit UPI over fees: Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Around 75 per cent UPI users will stop using it if any transaction charge is levied on the service, a survey by LocalCircles said on Sunday. The survey found that 38 per cent of users make over 50 per cent of their payment transactions via UPI instead of debit, credit or any other form of digital transaction. "Only 22 per cent UPI users surveyed are willing to bear a transaction fee on payments, 75 per cent of respondents stated that they will stop using UPI if a transaction fee is introduced," the survey said. The survey comprising three broad areas claims to have received 42,000 responses from 308 districts but the number of replies on each question varied. The questions regarding transaction fee on UPI received 15,598 responses. The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) posted a record 57 per cent rise in the volume of transactions and 44 per cent rise in value in the 2023-24 fiscal year, compared to the previous fiscal year. For the first time UPI transactions crossed 100 billion and closed at 131 billion in a financial year, compared to 84 billion in 2022-23. In value terms, it touched Rs 199.89 trillion, compared to Rs 139.1 trillion, the report said. The survey found 37 per cent of respondents shared UPI transaction accounts for more than 50 per cent of their total payment in value terms.

GST rate review meeting scheduled on September 25

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



The ministerial panel on GST rate rationalisation will meet on September 25 and is expected to discuss tweaking of tax slabs and rates. "The meeting of the GoM on rate rationalisation is scheduled for September 25 in Goa," an official told PTI. The six-member Group of Minister (GoM) under Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Chaudhary, last met on August 22 and had submitted a status report to the GST Council on September 9. During the August meeting, the panel had tasked the fitment committee comprising tax officers from the Centre and states to analyse the implication of tax rate change on some items and gather more data. Currently, goods and services tax (GST) is a four-tier tax structure with slabs at 5, 12, 18, and 28 per cent. Under GST, essential items are either exempted or taxed at the lowest slab, while luxury and demerit items attract the highest slab. Luxury and sin goods attract the highest 28 per cent slab. There have been talks of merging the 12 and 18 per cent tax slabs, but nothing has been proposed so far. Around 12 per cent, the average GST rate has fallen below the revenue neutral rate

of 15.3 per cent. This has prompted the need to start discussions on GST rate rationalisation. States such as West Bengal and Karnataka were not in favour of tinkering with GST slabs for now. West Bengal Finance Minister Chandrima Bhattacharya had said after the GoM meet in August, "I have said there should be no changes in the GST slab". Karnataka Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda had said the GoM has to analyse whether there is need to "disturb" the GST system, which has now broadly stabilised. "What do you achieve by disturbing it. We said in next meeting we will discuss it (reducing slabs)," Byre Gowda had said. The six-member GoM also includes Uttar Pradesh Finance Minister Suresh Kumar Khanna, Rajasthan Health Services Minister Gajendra Singh, and Kerala Finance Minister K N Balagopal.

Government to start FY26 budget making exercise from next month

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The finance ministry will commence the exercise to prepare the annual budget for 2025-26 from the second week of next month in the backdrop of the Indian economy recording 7 per cent growth rate for the fourth consecutive year. The budget for the next financial year would focus on reforms to be pushed to further accelerate growth momentum and measures to generate jobs and boost

demand in the economy. "Pre-budget meetings chaired by Secretary (Expenditure) shall commence in the second week of October 2024. Financial Advisers shall ensure that necessary details...Are properly entered in UBIS (Union Budget Information System) before/latest by October 7, 2024," Budget circular 2025-26 issued by the Department of Economic Affairs said. Hard copies of the data in the specified formats should be submitted for cross-

verification, it said. It will be the second budget of the Modi 3.0 government and 8th straight Budget for Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, a rare distinction in Indian polity. "All the ministries/departments should submit details of autonomous bodies/implementing agencies, for which a dedicated corpus fund has been created. The reasons for their continuance and requirement of grant-in-aid support, and why the same should not be

wound up, should be explained," it said. The Budget Estimates for 2025-26 will be provisionally finalised after completion of pre-budget meetings, it said. Pre-budget meeting shall commence from second week of October, 2024 and shall continue till around mid-November, 2024, it said. During the pre-Budget meetings requirement of funds for all categories of expenditures along with receipts of ministries/departments and

expenditure estimates on net basis are discussed. Besides, receipts of departmentally-run commercial undertakings, which are netted against the gross expenditure and non-tax revenues, including arrears of non-tax revenue are also assessed during the meetings. The Budget 2025-26 is likely to be presented on February 1 during the first half of the Parliament's Budget session which usually begins in the last week of January every year.

GCCI seeks review of SC's mineral taxation ruling

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



The Goa Chamber of Commerce and Industries (GCCI) has demanded an urgent review of the mineral taxation ruling by the Supreme Court, stating that the increased cost of mining will inevitably lead to higher prices for essential commodities, including steel, power, cement, etc. The Supreme Court last month allowed states to collect past dues on royalty on minerals bearing land from the Centre and mining companies from April 1, 2005 onwards. "The imposition of further taxes/ cess/ levies, if any, as permitted by the ruling, will further impact the economics of mining operations possibly making it unviable with its natural consequences.

"Additionally, the increased cost of mining will inevitably lead to higher prices for essential commodities e.g., steel, power, cement, etc. Further fuelling inflation and consequential impact on the nation's economy," GCCI said in a statement. "The possible impact would be a change of goalpost particularly when the auction regime is in vogue post enactment of MMDR (Amendment) Act in 2015, while creating an uncertainty in the mineral taxation regime of the country, it said. It may adversely impact the

downstream industries and lead to mining cost push inflation affecting the entire economy. While GCCI respects the apex court's decision, it believes that the decision could have devastating consequences in future, for the mining industry in the country as a whole including Goa which is yet to recover from the aftereffects of mining ban in 2018. "The iron ore mining in Goa has just begun and/or looking forward to resume its operations after a long gap of 6 years - it is in everybody's

knowledge that after the change of mining regulations in 2015, the mining companies are required to pay a substantial amount in the form of auction premium for winning the bid, besides other statutory dues like Royalty, DMF/NMET contributions, etc," it said. The imposition of further taxes/ cess/ levies, if any, as permitted by the ruling, will further impact the economics of mining operations possibly making it unviable with its natural consequences. "We are compelled to request the authorities to review the verdict in light of the submissions from the industry to find a balanced solution that ensures revenue generation while ensuring the survival of the mining sector," GCCI President Shrinivas Dempo said.

IN BRIEF

LIC INDIA CONFERENCE OF CEO AND FOREIGN HEADS
MUMBAI: LIC of India organised a conference of its CEOs & Heads of foreign units from UK, Singapore, Bahrain, Kenya, Fiji, Mauritius, Nepal, Sri Lanka & Bangladesh at GIFT city, Gandhinagar on 20.09.2024. LIC of India got an approval from IFSCA, the regulator of GIFT city to open an insurance office.

RPF RECOVERED SMUGGLED GOODS
MALIGAON: On 2nd September, 2024 RPF & GRP of Lumding jointly conducted checking in train no. 01666 (Agartala – Rani Kamalapati Express) at Lumding railway station. During checking, they apprehended four persons and recovered 19.7 grams of Brown Sugar worth Rs. 3.94 lakhs (approx.) and 18.10 kgs of Ganja worth Rs. 1.81 lakhs (approx.) from them. Later, the apprehended persons along with the recovered items were handed over to OC/GRP/Lumding for necessary legal action.

NFR TAKING STEPS TO ENHANCE SAFETY MEASURES IN TRAINS
MALIGAON: N. F. Railway to prioritize the safety and well-being of its passengers during their journey they are continuing the effort of modernizing and upgrading its infrastructure to meet the highest standard of safety and convenience.

SIGNING OF GAS DEAL IN ACG, AZERBAIJAN
NEW DELHI: ONGC Videsh, together with the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan (SOCAR), bp, MOL, INPEX, Equinor, ExxonMobil, TPAO, and ITOCHU, have signed an addendum to the existing Production Sharing Agreement (PSA) for ACG Field in the Azerbaijan sector of the Caspian Sea.

THE MAGIC OF MILLETS

Millets are a super-food that can bring about a radical change in the health of the people. They can be an answer to malnutrition and an effective way to fight various ailments

BY DR AVULA LAXMAIAH

Millet is a superfood loaded with fiber, protein, essential vitamins, and minerals. One serving of this super grain can meet the daily requirements for several nutrients needed for optimum function of the brain and body. Millets also offer significant ecological benefits. Its ability to thrive in harsh, arid conditions with little maintenance makes it a viable crop option for countries with challenging climates. Furthermore, millets require less water than other crops making it an environment-friendly produce with a smaller carbon footprint. Cultivating it also decreases dependence on imported cereal grains and promotes sustainable agriculture practices, globally.

In a conference on Global Millets, Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi while referring to millets as Shree Ann, defined the super food as the core medium to address the nutritional concerns across different population segments as well as an ideal way for a nation to grow exponentially. Millets can collectively bring ample opportunity for the small farmers of the country to scale and offer benefits for a sustainable future. The Government of India has been making tremendous efforts to revive the production and consumption of millets through Minimum Support Price (MSP) schemes that provide financial aid to farmers for cultivating millets, and the introduction of millets in the

IN A CONFERENCE ON GLOBAL MILLETS, HON'BLE PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI WHILE REFERRING TO MILLETS AS SHREE ANN, DEFINED THE SUPER FOOD AS THE CORE MEDIUM TO ADDRESS THE NUTRITIONAL CONCERNS ACROSS DIFFERENT POPULATION SEGMENTS AS WELL AS AN IDEAL WAY FOR A NATION TO GROW EXPONENTIALLY

Public Distribution System (PDS) to make them accessible and affordable. This has led to India becoming the world's largest producer and second-largest exporter of millets, today. The nodal nutrition institute in India National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) and the Indian Institute of Millet Research (ICAR-IIMR), in their research studies, have established that millet consumption has a significant impact on health and nutrition.

Millet, thus, is being promoted as a means of addressing the challenges of malnourishment, which is most prevalent amongst women and children in our country. The government's initiative to add millet to the mid-day meal is a visionary approach to support the POSHAN Abhiyaan 2.0 mission and address the issue of malnutrition, particularly in children. Their food-on-table initiatives such as Take-Home Ration (THR) and Hot Cooked Meals (HCM) are gradually helping to overcome the nutritional imbalance among children, especially in ages 3-6 years.

ICMR-NIN has been actively contributing towards the government's initiatives to combat malnutrition by

providing supplementary foods, diversified diets, health check-ups, and community-based interventions. Despite significant efforts by the government and various stakeholders, the challenge of malnutrition remains complex and multifaceted, requiring innovative solutions. It is imperative that the private sector and civil society partner with the government on driving the mission to promote millets to address malnutrition concerns comprehensively.

The recent launch of multi-millet Nutri-bars for pre-school children by Anil Agarwal Foundation & Vedanta is one of the first such a unique nutrition program seen after the Union Budget. The organization has piloted a project to provide multi-millet bars to 50,000 children every day in anganwadis in Varanasi district for 6 months, thus aiming to improve the daily nutrient intake of children, boost

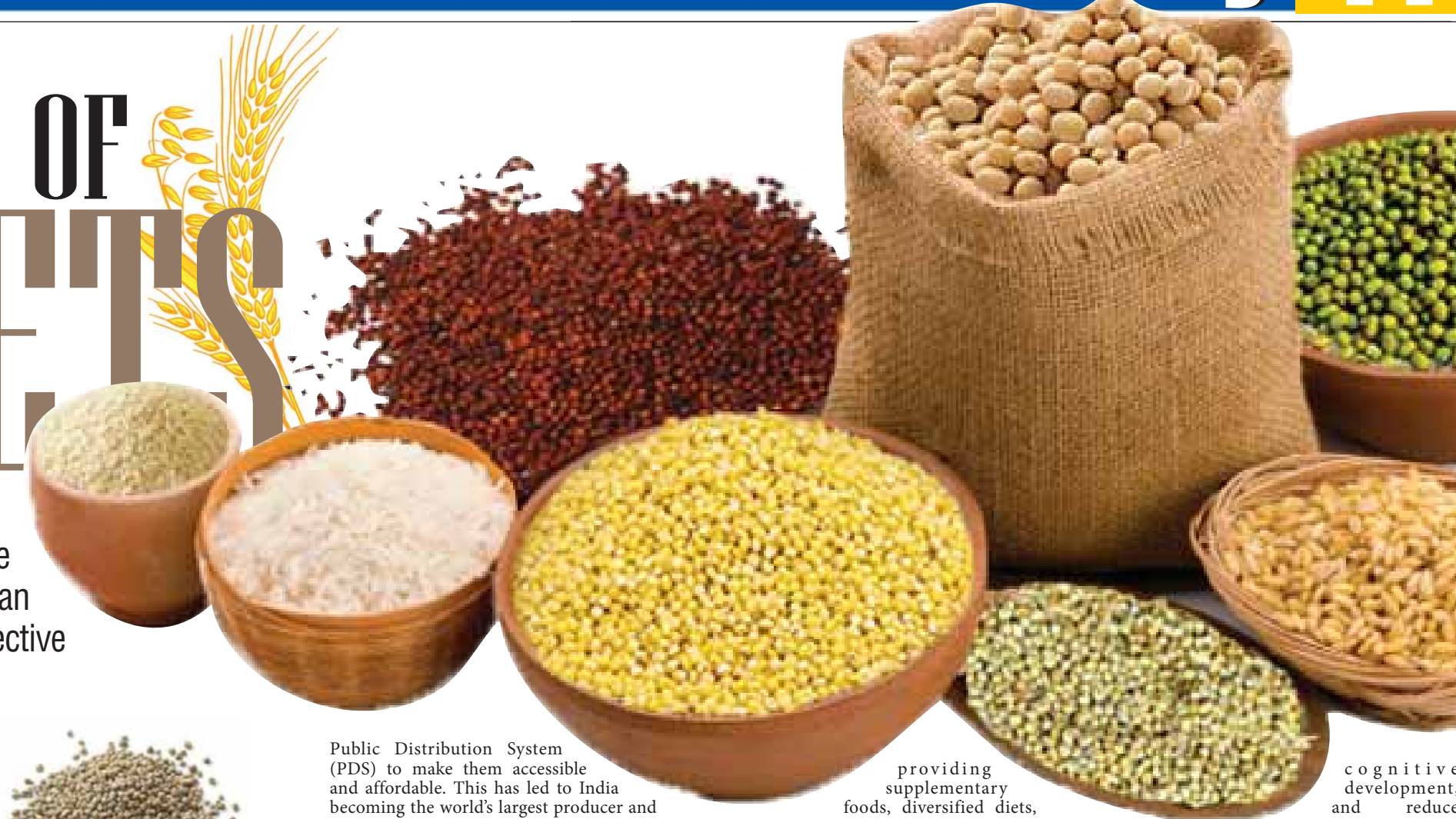
cognitive development, and reduce absenteeism while increasing enrolment in pre-schools.

To advance sustainable health with the power of millets, we need to continue taking a holistic approach that involves multiple stakeholders, including government, policymakers, farmers, food manufacturers, corporations, and consumers. Consumers need to be educated about the nutritional and ecological benefits of millet and encouraged to incorporate them into their diets thus creating a healthier and nourished India.

Quantified efforts are being observed by corporate to add millet-based products into their portfolio and introduce nutritious food products with millet as the core ingredient, to the community. This paradigm shift by corporate signifies a positive trend in nutrition delivery, reflecting their responsibility to contribute to the welfare of society.

We have an opportunity to transform the way we approach food, health, and nutrition. Growing and consuming ancient millets will be a key to addressing this transformation, enhancing human health, protecting the environment, and preserving cultural traditions, in times to come!

The writer is Former Scientist G & Head of Public Health Nutrition Division, ICMR-NIN



Training on the Well-being of Individuals with IDD (Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities)

TEAM VIVA

The Manbhavan Mitra Mandali, a Self-Advocacy Group of Manovikas Charitable Society on Saturday organised a training program to augment the well-being of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). The training included the individuals with conditions such as autism, intellectual disability, learning disability, and cerebral palsy. The training was mostly determined on promoting better well-being and empowering individuals with IDD to take charge of their health and happiness. Kaka, a South Asian football player and a 16-year-old with an intellectual disability, shared that the workshop helped him make a decision to improve his well-being. Kaka said, "This program helped me understand how important my well-being is." He further added that he learned about what makes him feel good and how to take care of himself better. Another attendee Deepika



who is currently undergoing Domestic Data Entry Skill Training at the Aryaman Center of Excellence (ACE Lab) in Delhi and a Governing Board Member of Manovikas shared how the program helped her open her eyes to discovering the new ways to well-being. She stated, "I learned simple things that I can do daily to feel better. These small steps make a big difference in my feelings, and I can do them independently." Harsh Bharadwaj, another boy who attended the training, also a talented arts and crafts artist from the Love Arts Training Lab, spoke about choosing well-being activities. He said, "Our activities made me

feel happy and calm." He further added that he knows what to do when he feels stressed or sad, and it helps him stay positive. The event saw the active participation of more than 25 adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. The training was also attended by the parents and family members of the participants where they were taught about the valuable strategies which will help them to support their loved ones in their well-being and encourage independence. The session also emphasised practical ways to enhance the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of people with IDD.

STUDY REVEALS WHY AGING IMPAIRS IMMUNE RESPONSE

Researchers discover metabolic changes that hinder disease treatment in the elderly says KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

There is hope for old-age people suffering from certain ailments from which they had no route to escape hitherto. All treatments had failed to resuscitate them from the octopus-like shackles of the disease. A team of medical and bio-engineering researchers in the University Of Miami Miller School Of Medicine Immunology in the US have found out the reasons behind old men failing to respond to any treatments for a series of diseases. Nay, they have not invented any medicine for such diseases but have made a landmark invention about the reason behind the failure of drugs to cure the medical problems faced by the veterans. A research paper published in Nature Communications, a widely followed scientific publication after peer review lists the reasons for the failure of medicines among old people. What makes the findings distinct is the part played by Dhananjay Suresh, a 20-year-old bio-medical engineer, and a key team member. Dhananjay is waiting for admission to a leading medical school in the US for his MBBS course after the four-and-a-half-year-long B Tech course when he joined the team. Suresh is the son of India-born medical microbiologist couple Dr. Suresh Pallikuthu and Dr Ranjini Valiathan. The researchers led by Dr. Daniela Frasca, principal investigator and associate professor of microbiology and immunology, have successfully proved for the first time in medical history that the aged fails to respond to medicines because of the "inability of immune cells to generate protective immunity". The metabolic abnormalities in immune cells lead to a reduced ability to generate protective immunity, according to Dr Frasca. Her team identified metabolic changes that decrease the body's



immunity as people age. Dr Frasca explained that aging is associated with elevated levels of inflammation and metabolic changes. "We have identified and characterized age-associated metabolic changes that may accelerate and exacerbate deficiencies in immune cells from older adults, particularly those responsible for diminished secretion of protective antibodies against infections and vaccines. The research team also pinpointed the role a metabolic compound - long thought to be inessential - plays in immunity. Contrary to accepted wisdom, lactate can induce pathogenic B lymphocyte behavior and increase bodily inflammation. "The metabolite lactate, the end product of anaerobic glycolysis, which has long been considered a discarded metabolic compound, plays a crucial role in age-associated defects in dysfunctional humoral responses," Dr. Frasca



DHANANJAY SURESH

said. "The effects of lactate, as described in the paper, recapitulate key features of B lymphocytes that infiltrate inflammatory tissues, where lactate-induced signaling may contribute to various pathological features." Lactate can induce pathogenic B lymphocyte behavior and increase bodily inflammation. With the script ready, medical doctors can step in and start a new

therapy that will spur helpful immune responses in the elderly and keep the diseases at bay. Now, it is for medical doctors to shape new therapies that selectively target metabolic products involved in the generation of inflammatory pathogenic immune cells to improve antibody responses in elderly individuals who are susceptible to infections and/or do not respond adequately to vaccination. If the initial response from the world of medicine is any indication, this landmark research will go a long way in helping the aged to remain healthy and guarded against any kind of immune deficiency. In Ayurveda, the Indian system of medicine, there is a treatment that reverses the effects of time and regenerates the entire body, mind, and spirit. It is known as Kaya Kalpa. Is Kaya Kalpa getting Americanized and reappearing as a Metabolic Regeneration Study? Let's wait.

INDIA TRUMPS BANGLADESH WITH ASHWIN'S SIX WICKETS

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Veteran off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin's mastery over his craft, underlined by a six-wicket haul, proved too immense for Bangladesh as India cantered to a massive 280-run victory in the first Test with five sessions to spare, here on Sunday. Maintaining a clean slate against the Asian neighbours, India now lead the two-match series 1-0. Starting from their overnight 158 for four, Bangladesh were bundled out for 234 in their second innings as Ashwin scythed through their line-up (6/88). Ravindra Jadeja supported him with a three-wicket haul (3/58). Skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto waged a lone battle for

the visitors with a sparkling 82 (127b, 8x4, 3x6), but there was hardly any meaningful support for him from his colleagues. The day, however, began on a bright note for the Bangladeshis with Shanto and Shakib Al-Hasan (25) extending their fifth-wicket stand to 48 runs, resisting the Indian bowlers in the first hour. Mohammed Siraj was the standout bowler for India during this phase as he worked up good pace and hit fine lines, but luck was not in his favour as edges eluded him or fell short of fielders. It left the pacer a frustrated man, evidenced in his constant tirade against Shanto, who remained unruffled. Shakib, who played a lovely front foot pull off Siraj for a



Jadeja when the batter was on a boundary, also received a reprieve as Rishabh Pant missed a stumping chance off Ashwin when the batter was on a boundary, also received a reprieve as Rishabh Pant missed a stumping chance off Ashwin when the batter was on a boundary, also received a reprieve as Rishabh Pant missed a stumping chance off

home side. However, the introduction of Ashwin immediately after the resumption of play changed the complexion of the proceedings. There was nothing much on the surface for the spinners but Ashwin, who possesses a scientist's acumen, does not need such generosity from the deck or conditions. The Chennai man put into use his ability to find acute angles from around the fiddle to left-handers to optimum effect against Shakib. Ashwin pushed the ball a bit deep and it hit the handle of Shakib's bat as he attempted a forward defence, and the resultant edge went into the eager hands of Yashasvi Jaiswal at backward short leg. Soon, the star off-spinner completed his 37th five-

wicket haul, equalling Australian legend Shane Warne, nipping the stay of Mehidy Hasan Miraz (8), who lobbed a catch to Jadeja at long-on. In the process, Ashwin also went past New Zealand legend Richard Hadlee's five-wicket haul tally - 36. It was also the fourth time the veteran all-rounder took five-wicket or more in a Test match alongside a hundred. Jadeja, the long-time second fiddle to Ashwin, too had his own moments as he scalped the wickets of Shanto and Litton Das, who edged the left-arm spinner to Rohit Sharma at first slip. However, Shanto's batting will give a speck of hope for Bangladesh ahead of the next match for the visitors. While the wickets were on a constant tumble at the other

end, Shanto batted calmly and with purpose. The left-hander swept, reverse swept and cut spinners and pacers to collect his runs from all corners of Chepauk. But the task was way beyond such a one-man show on this day. Given his cavalier methods at the crease, the dismissal was inevitable and it came in the 59th over. Shanto tried to hoist Jadeja out of the park, but the shot lacked power and timing, and Jasprit Bumrah comfortably settled under the ball near mid-wicket. The dismissal also ended Bangladesh's hopes to last at least beyond the first session, and now they will have to think of ways to regroup ahead of the second Test at Kanpur, beginning September 27.

Bumrah, Pant's fitness and form crucial for India's chances in Australia says Chappell

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah and flamboyant wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant must remain injury-free and in top form if India are to achieve a historic hat-trick of series wins Down Under, said former Australia captain Ian Chappell.



One of the most respected voices in world cricket, Chappell feels that five Test matches, including three against New Zealand, is just the ideal build up to the most high-profile bilateral series in this cycle of the World Test Championship. "...India's priority will be to get as many players as possible into form without suffering major injuries. However, the most pressing matters are to achieve those aims with Jasprit Bumrah and Rishabh Pant," Chappell wrote in his column for ESPN Cricinfo. "Pant's ability to bounce back onto the Test scene is quite remarkable given his horrific car accident. He is a crucial wicketkeeper-batter in the Indian line-up and he'd give the team a major boost if he's at the peak of his powers for the Australian tour." Pant was the hero of India's last series win in 2020-21 when he scored 97 at Sydney

improves the team's fielding but also allows the slip fielders to spread wider to cover extra territory," he elaborated. Chappell believes that a stern warning from erstwhile head coach Ravi Shastri during his time at the helm might have helped Pant in raising the level of his glove work. "Pant's keeping standing up to the stumps drastically improved before his serious injury, following an ultimatum from coach Ravi Shastri. The fact that Pant progressed from being a dubious keeper against spinners to a very good gloveman standing up to the stumps, admirably displayed his willingness to work hard." The other crucial aspect in Australia will be Bumrah's fitness and form. Since his comeback post lower back stress fracture surgery in August 2023, the star pacer has managed his workload beautifully across formats focussing on priority format at any given point in time. However, he has also been pretty regular in Test matches playing bulk of the red-ball games against South Africa and England at home. "The good form and fitness of both Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj - the two most successful pace bowlers on the last Australian tour - is essential. Of those two,

Indonesia Para Badminton: Umesh clinches gold; Sukant, Sivarajan, Mandeep claim silver

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Umeh Vikram secured gold in the SL3 event, while the trio of Sukant Kadam, Sivarajan Solaimalai, and Mandeep Kaur claimed silver medals in their respective categories at the Indonesia Para-Badminton International on Sunday. Sukant bagged the silver in the men's singles SL4 event, while Sivarajan won the silver in men's singles SH6 category. Mandeep clinched the silver in women's singles SL3 category. India delivered a stellar performance in Sarakata, Indonesia, winning as many as 34 medals in the International Level 2 tournament. In men's singles SL3, Umesh triumphed over compatriot and top seed Nehal Gupta, winning 12-21 21-8 21-19 in the final.

Sukant, who had missed out on a bronze medal in Paris after losing to Indonesia's Freddy Setiawan in the play-off, fell short again in the SL4 final, losing 14-21 14-21 to the Indonesian. "I gave my best in the final, but Freddy played an exceptional game," Sukant said. "It was a great learning experience, and I'll keep pushing to aim for gold in future competitions." Sivarajan, who had lost to Great Britain's Krysten Coombs in Paris, faced a tough challenge from top-seeded Indonesian Subhan in the SH6 final, ultimately losing 19-21 15-21. Mandeep, who had suffered a defeat to Nigeria's Mariam Eniola Bolaji in Paris, also finished with silver after losing 10-21 5-21 to Indonesia's top seed Qonitah Iktiar Syakuroh in the SL3 final. Despite the silver medal

finishes, the Indian overall performance was strong, with Umesh claiming the lone gold in singles. Jagadeesh Dilli added to India's success by securing bronze in the same category, making it a sweep for India with seven players reaching the quarter-finals. In women's singles SL3, Mandeep's silver was complemented by Neeraj's bronze. In the men's singles SH6 category, Sudarsan Saravanakumar Muthusamy also earned bronze, while Sivarajan secured silver. Among other Indians in fray, Naveen Sivakumar won bronze in men's singles SL4 category, while Ruthick Ragupathi claimed silver in the men's singles SU5. Koshika Devda secured bronze in the women's singles SU5. In the mixed doubles SL3-SL4 category, Nehal and Naveen Sivakumar earned silver, while

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
e-Procurement Notice, Superintending Engineer, M.I. Division, Angul
Bid Identification No.-04 OF 2024-25
Bid ID - ceemidivision_angul@yahoo.com
Letter No. 2305 / Date: 18.09.2024

1.	Number of Works	: 23[TWENTY-THREE] numbers of Civil works
2.	Approximate estimated cost	: 4.41 lakh to 13.22 lakh
3.	Cost of Tender Paper	: Rs.400/- to Rs.600/- (Non-Refundable)
4.	Period of completion	: As mentioned in the column no 8 of each work
5.	Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal	: Dt. 24.09.2024 at 10.00 A.M. to Dt. 03.10.2024
6.	Last date / Time for receipt of bid in the portal	: Dt.03.10.2024 up to 5.00 P.M
7.	Date of opening of bid documents	: Dt. 04.10.2024 at 11.00 A.M
8.	Date of lottery, if required	: Dt. 09.10.2024 at 11.00 A.M.
9.	Name and address of the Office Inviting Bid	: Superintending Engineer, Minor Irrigation Division, Angul, M.I. P.O.: Hakim pada, College Square, District:Angul, PIN-759143 Ph. No. : 06764-236522 Email ID: ceemidivision_angul@yahoo.com
10.	The bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal	: http://tenders.orissa.gov.in

OIPR-32284/11/0005/2425
Superintending Engineer M.I.Division, Angul

Super sub Vinicius leads to Real Madrid comeback win over Espanyol

AP ■ BARCELONA

Joan Garcia showed why he is an up-and-coming goalkeeper - until Vinicius Junior got the Real Madrid scoring machine going. Vinicius went off the bench to assist Rodrygo and score one of his own and Kylian Mbappé added a late penalty as Madrid topped a tenacious Espanyol 4-1 in the Spanish league on Saturday. Garcia made several saves for the visitors before the Olympic gold medalist started an attack with a long pass from his box that ended with an own goal by counterpart Thibaut Courtois in the 54th minute. But Garcia's only slip of the match let Dani Carvajal equalize four minutes later when Jude Bellingham's low pass squirmed under the goalie. The Madrid right back had to only push it over the line for 1-1. Vinicius rested in the first half as Carlo Ancelotti rotated his attacking bunch. But the coach sent the Brazil forward on immediately after Espanyol went ahead. Vinicius then took control, curling in a perfect cross with the outer tip of his left boot for Rodrygo to score in the 75th. Vinicius beat Garcia in the 78th for his goal after Espanyol lost the ball and Mbappé played his attack partner clear on the break. Mbappé converted a 90th-minute spot kick after Endrick went on late and earned a penalty from Carlos



Romero. "We made mistakes that maybe you can get away with in other games, but not here," Espanyol coach Manolo González said. Madrid pulled to one point behind leader Barcelona before it plays at Villarreal on Sunday. Bellingham had a scare when he fell awkwardly on his right shoulder in the first half, but after briefly being seen by a doctor on the sideline he went back on. Ancelotti said it did not look like the England midfielder was fine. Unsurprisingly, Ancelotti said he was satisfied with the "well-rounded" performance. Garcia in goalAfter helping Spain win Olympic gold this

launched Jofre Carreras down the left flank. Jofre won the end line before his low pass hit Courtois' leg and turned into the net. But once Madrid started clicking, even an inspired Garcia couldn't keep them out. Double deflectionTwo similar goals within three minutes of one another lifted Valencia to a 2-0 win over Girona at home. A pair of shots by Luis Rioja and Dani Gómez in the 56th and 58th both took deflections off Girona defender Juanpe Ramirez before skirting past goalkeeper Paulo Gazzaniga. Gazzaniga was to blame for Girona's loss at Paris Saint-Germain midweek in the Catalan club's Champions League debut. The goalie let a cross slip through his hands in stoppage time in a 1-0 loss in France. Can't get goingReal Sociedad's surprising struggles continued after a scoreless draw at promoted Valladolid. The team from San Sebastian, which has consistently finished near the top of the table in recent years, has only one victory in seven rounds. Sociedad visits Nice when the Europa League group stage opens next week. Also, Ante Budimir earned and converted a penalty and Aimar Oroz took the winner as Osasuna beat Las Palmas 2-1 at home. The team from the Canary Islands remained in last place and without a win.

OFFICE OF THE PANCHAYAT SAMITI RAJANGAPUR
DISTRICT : SUNDARGARH
Phone : 06624-220312, E-mail : ori-rajangapur@gramsul.nic.in
Notice No -02/ date-21.09.2024

Sl.N o	Location	Name of the Work	Amount put to Tender in Rs.	Cost of Tender paper (Non-refundable) in Rs.	Bid security EMD 1 %in Rs.	Period of Completion	Class of Contractor
1	Budham	Construction of Additional Class Room at Govt. Upper Primary School, Budham GP	1237026/-	6,000/-	12,370/-	Six (06) Calendar months	"C & D" class contractor
2	Kutunia	Construction of Additional Class Room at Govt. Upper Primary School, Ranthupada, Kutunia GP	1221744/-	6,000/-	12,217/-	Six (06) Calendar months	"C & D" class contractor

The detailed terms and conditions can be downloaded from the District website www.sundargarh.nic.in.
1. Date and time for download Tender Paper: From Dt. 23.09.2024 to 05.10.2024.
2. Last Date of Receipt of Tender Paper: Dt 05.10.2024 (5.30 P.M.)
3. Date of Opening of Tender Paper: Dt 07.10.2024 (11.00 A.M.)
Block Development Officer Rajangapur
OIPR-19332/11/0002/2426

GOVT.OF ODISHA DEPARTMENT OF PANCHAYATRAJ & DRINKING WATER
OFFICE OF THE PANCHAYAT SAMITI, SADAR, SUNDARGARH
Email ID - ori-bsundargarh@nic.in
NOTICE NO:- 01 DATED. 21.09.2024

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Tender Cost	Class of Contractor
1	Construction of Additional Class Room at Lambodar High School, Kundukela, Sundargarh.	1226669/-	C and D class
1	Additional Class room at B.S High school, Sundargarh	1229194/-	C and D class
2	Period of completion	6 months	
3	Date and time of availability of bid documents in the portal	24.09.2024 AT 11:00 A.M	
4	Last date/Time for receipt of bids at the block office.	3.10.2024 Upto 05:00 P.M	
5	Date and time of opening of bid	4.10.2024 AT 11:00 A.M	
6	Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid	Block Development Officer, Sadar, Sundargarh, PIN 770001	

Further details can be seen from the Govt. website sundargarh.odisha.gov.in
Block Development Officer Sadar, Sundargarh
OIPR-19346/11/0001/2426