

**OPINION 6**  
TRANSFORMING INDIA THROUGH 'MAKE IN INDIA'

**WORLD 8**  
CHINA URGES ALL PARTIES TO COOL DOWN TENSIONS IN WEST ASIA

**MONEY 10**  
INDIA'S SEVEN PER CENT GROWTH FAILS TO GENERATE JOBS: RAGHURAM RAJAN

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MBAPPÉ, RODRI, BARELLA  
12 SPORTS



## WEST ASIA ON FIRE



People check the site of the assassination of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah in Beirut's southern suburbs, Sunday AP/PTI

**PTI ■ JERUSALEM/ BEIRUT**  
The Israeli military said Sunday that it killed another high-ranking Hezbollah official in an airstrike as the Lebanese militant group was reeling from a string of devastating blows and the killing of its overall leader, Hassan Nasrallah. The military said Nabil Kaouk, the deputy head of Hezbollah's Central Council, was killed on Saturday. There was no immediate comment from Hezbollah, and it was not known where the strike took place. Hezbollah has confirmed that one of its

senior commanders, Ali Karaki, died in the Israeli airstrike that killed its top leader Hassan Nasrallah on Friday. Israel has killed several top commanders in the Lebanese militant group in recent weeks in a series of strikes. The Israeli military said it carried out another targeted strike on Beirut later on Sunday. In Syria, 37 militants affiliated to the extremist Islamic State group and an al-Qaeda-linked group were killed in two strikes, the United States military said Sunday. Two of the dead were senior militants, it said.

Hezbollah has also been targeted by a sophisticated attack on its pagers and walkie-talkies that was widely blamed on Israel. A wave of Israeli airstrikes across large parts of Lebanon has killed at least 1,030 people - including 156 women and 87 children - in less than two weeks, according to Lebanon's Health Ministry. Hundreds of thousands of people have been driven from their homes in Lebanon by the latest strikes. The Government estimates that around 2,50,000 are in shelters, with three to four times as

many staying with friends or relatives, or camping out on the streets, Environment Minister Nasser Yassin told The Associated Press. Hezbollah has continued to fire rockets and missiles into northern Israel, but most have been intercepted or fallen in open areas. No Israelis have been killed since the latest wave of strikes on top Hezbollah leaders began on Sept. 20. Kaouk was a veteran member of Hezbollah going back to the 1980s and served as Hezbollah's military commander in southern Lebanon during the 2006 war with Israel. He often appeared in local media, where he would comment on politics and security developments, and he gave eulogies at the funerals of senior militants. The United States had announced sanctions against him in 2020. Hezbollah began firing rockets, missiles and drones into northern Israel after Hamas' October 7 attack out of Gaza triggered the war there. Hezbollah and Hamas are allies that consider themselves part of an Iran-backed "Axis of Resistance" against Israel. Israel has responded with waves of airstrikes, and the conflict has steadily ratcheted up to the brink of all-out war, raising fears of a region-wide conflagration.

## Kashmir reacts, India bleeds

**MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU**

The situation remained volatile in several parts of Kashmir after sporadic protests broke out over the killing of Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah in an Israeli air strike in Lebanon. People took to the streets in Srinagar and Budgam to condemn Nasrallah's death, chanting anti-Israel and anti-US slogans. Political leaders Mehbooba Mufti, National Conference Member Parliament from Srinagar Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi and Shia leader and former cabinet Minister Imran Reza Ansari also suspended election campaigns to condole the killing. The gesture, however, triggered sharp reactions.



Reacting strongly to the developments the BJP on Sunday lashed out at PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti for "shedding crocodile tears" and indulging in "vote bank politics" after the former Chief Minister cancelled her poll campaign over the killing of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah. Vice President of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference Omar

Abdullah condemned the actions of Israel and called for world support to end the ongoing massacre of innocent people in Gaza and Lebanon. Another Shia leader and former Minister Imran Reza Ansari labelled him as a 'Lion'. Ansari posted a message on X, "A lion has fallen, his roar remains. In every heartbeat his struggle sustains. I am suspending all campaigning activities to honour the supreme sacrifice made by Shaheed Sayed Hassan Nasrallah". Meanwhile, the security forces deployed on ground zero have been asked to exercise utmost restraint to prevent any flare-up ahead of the third and final round of polling on October 1. Labelling her as "pro-militant", BJP national spokesperson RP Singh said, "By cancelling her campaigning, she has shown she is shedding tears over the death of terrorists. It is her habit to call terrorists martyrs. She had similarly wept for Burhan Wani some time back." However, she is not alone in expressing solidarity with terrorists, he said. "Sonia Gandhi too shed tears for the terrorists killed in Batla House. All leaders of the INDIA alliance do this for vote bank politics. For them, the country doesn't come first. She is doing this for the vote bank," he charged. Former deputy Chief Minister and senior BJP leader Kavinder Gupta also condemned Mehbooba's stance, asking, "What problem does Mehbooba Mufti have with the death of terrorist Nasrallah? When Hindus are killed in Bangladesh and Pakistan, there is a grave silence from them."



A braveheart of Jammu and Kashmir police, Head Constable Bashir Ahmad, who sacrificed his life in the line of duty after neutralising a Pakistani terrorist in the Billawar tehsil of Kathua district

## Terror in Jammu, one personnel killed

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU**

A braveheart of Jammu and Kashmir police, Head Constable Bashir Ahmad, who sacrificed his life in the line of duty after neutralising a Pakistani terrorist in the Billawar tehsil of Kathua district late Saturday evening, was eagerly waiting to come home to finalise the marriage arrangements of his elder daughter and son. On Sunday his mortal remains, draped in the tricolor, reached home after a formal wreath-laying ceremony at the police lines. A large number of close relatives and family friends were assembled at their residence to pay their last tributes to him. Only recently the family had finalised the marriage proposal of their elder daughter. Before returning to his duty, Bashir had promised his elder brother to firm up the marriage proposal of his son before decide the dates. "My brother wanted to throw a big party after finalising the marriage proposals of his daughter and son", Barkat Ali, elder brother of the martyred head constable, told The Pioneer at his residence in Channi Himmat.

## In Ganjam Women prevent excise staffs from nabbing liquor smuggler

**PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR**

Hundreds of women in Patisanapur village under the Sunapur Marine police station in Ganjam district gheraoed excise officials while they had gone to nab a liquor smuggler on Saturday. Getting information, a police team reached the spot and intervened to release the

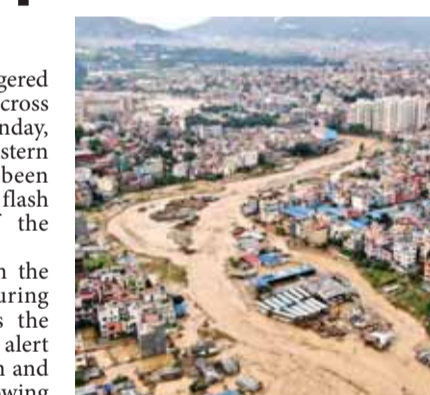
detained excise officials, whose vehicles was detained by the agitators. According to sources, the accused illegally used to brew and sell country liquor in the area. On getting information from reliable sources, a team from the Excise Department reached the village and arrested the accused.

However, hundreds of women from the village came to his rescue and blocked the vehicle. The women were adamant about setting the accused free. The officials were detained for hours as the women refused to let go of their vehicle. Police or the excise officials are yet to issue any comment regarding the incident.

## Intense rain claims 125 lives in Nepal, jeopardise Bihar

**PTI/PNS ■ KATHMANDU/PATNA**

The death toll from rain-triggered floodings and landslides across Nepal climbed to 125 on Sunday, police said. Large swathes of eastern and central Nepal have been inundated since Friday, with flash floods reported in parts of the country. Due to the prevailing situation the border districts of neighbouring Bihar remained vulnerable as the State Government sounded an alert for floods in northern, southern and central parts of the State following heavy discharge of water from Birpur and Valmikinagar barrages on Sunday. The embankment of the Bagmati River in Madhkaul village in Sitamarhi district broke on Sunday, which is being repaired, they said.



say that while climate change is changing the amount and timing of rainfall across Asia, a key reason for the rise in the impact of floods is the built environment, including unplanned construction, especially on floodplains, which leaves insufficient areas for water retention and drainage. A total of 6.61 lakh cusecs of water was released from Birpur barrage on Kosi river till 5 am, the highest in 56 years. According to the latest bulletin by the State Water Resources department, the last time the maximum water discharged from this barrage was 7.88 lakh cusecs of water in 1968.

## Chandrayaan-3 lands at Shiv Shakti Point



Chandrayaan-3 landed on possibly oldest craters of Moon, say researchers File Photo

## Bhadrak tension Internet shutdown extended by another 48 hrs

**PNS ■ BHADRAK**

Strict restrictions under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) continued to remain effective for the third day while internet services were also suspended in the violence-hit Bhadrak district on Sunday. The State Government has extended the suspension of

internet services in the district for another 48 hours. Six platoons of police force, a company of Rapid Action Force (RAF) and Odisha Special Armed Police have been deployed in the Dhamnagar NAC and other nearby areas. Police have arrested a total of 21 people in this incident including the person who shared the objectionable Facebook post. As per reports, the clashes

started following a post on Facebook and a group took out a rally and staged a road blockade demanding immediate arrest of the person behind the post. However, when police tried to pacify them, the matter took an ugly turn and stones were pelted at the cops. In the process, three senior police officials sustained injuries. Later, police resorted to a lathi-charge to disperse the protesters.

## Odisha ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> in Urban Governance Index

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**

Odisha is ranked second behind Kerala in Urban Governance Index (UGI) 2024, according to a two-year-long study conducted across several cities in India by the Praja Foundation. Odisha scored 55.10 out of 100 in various metrics. While the State scored high in empowered citizens, it still has a long way to go in empowerment of the city administration, which assessed multiple Indian cities, mapped progress, developments and policy changes across 42 UGI indicators. Kerala at 59.31 was the only State among the top five to have scored better than Odisha. The national average of

UG, including 28 States, two Union Territories and the National Capital Territory of Delhi, stands at 39.70. "This recognition reflects our longstanding efforts to decentralise power and ensure that our cities and urban local bodies have the resources and autonomy needed to deliver on their mandates. Odisha will continue to prioritise transparent, accountable, and citizen-driven governance," said Housing and Urban Development Minister Krushna Chandra Mahapatra. In the 2020 study, Odisha had topped all States in urban governance with a score of 56.88 while Nagaland was ranked at the bottom. Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh followed Odisha to round up the top five.

## Major IPS reshuffle Suresh Dev Datta Singh new Police Commissioner

**Vinaytosh Mishra posted CB, ADG PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**

The State Government on Sunday affected a major reshuffle in the IPS cadre and appointed Suresh Dev Datta Singh as the Commissioner of the Twin City Commissionerate police. According to a notification issued by the Home Department, Singh, who is presently posted as Additional DG of Police (Operations), would replace Sanjeeb Panda, who was posted as ADG, Training and Director, BPSPA. AK Ray, at present Director, Printing, Stationary and Publication, Cuttack, was transferred as DG of Prisons and Correctional Services. SM Narvane, at present OSD, Home Department, was posted as Director Printing, Stationary

and Publication. Vinaytosh Mishra, at present Director SCRB, Bhubaneswar was posted as ADG, CID-CB. RP Koche, at present ADG SAP, Bhubaneswar, was transferred as Director, Intelligence. Radha Kishan Sharma, at present ADG of Police (Headquarters), Cuttack, was posted as Special Secretary, Home Department. Saumyendra Kumar Priyadarsi, at present Director Intelligence, was posted as ADGP, Modernisation. Santosh Bala, at present Special Secretary to Government Home Department in the rank of ADG of Police in additional charge of CMD, OPHWC, was posted as Director SCRB and SPSL. Arun Bothra, at present ADG CID, CB with additional charge of CRUT, was posted as ADGP, Railways and Coastal Security.



Dayal Gangwar, at present ADG of Police Modernisation, was posted as ADGP, Headquarters. Rajesh Kumar at present ADGP Railways and Coastal Security, was posted as ADGP, SAP. Jay Naryan Pankaj at present IGP SR, with additional charge of IGP EOW, STF, was posted

## In State Fresh low pressure likely before Dussehra

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**

A fresh low-pressure area is likely to form over the west-central Bay of Bengal and neighbourhood around October 6, predicted the India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Sunday. Several districts in Odisha are very likely to experience light to moderate rains and thundershowers from October 4 to 10 under the influence of the system, the Regional Office of the IMD here said. The low-pressure-induced rains are likely to dampen the Durga Puja celebration in the State as the Sasthi Puja of Goddess Durga falls on October 9. The IMD said Odisha recorded 1,090.8mm seasonal cumulative rainfall as against its normal rainfall of 1,144.3 mm between June 1 and September 29, 2024. During the period, Malkangiri and Nuapada districts recorded excess rainfall of 1978.7 mm and 1235.6 mm, respectively. As many as 24 districts reported normal rainfall and four districts were in the deficient category. In the last 24 hours, Sheragada in Ganjam witnessed the highest rainfall of 41 mm followed by Chandbali (26.9), Nawapara in Nuapada (24.4), the IMD said.

# '3 families looted Jajpur in name of development'

PEO Smitarani's death to be probed: CM Majhi

PNS ■ JAJPUR

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, who participated in the BJP's membership drive organised at Barchana in Jajpur on Sunday, trained guns at the former BJD government over large-scale irregularities in the State in the name of development.

Without taking names, Majhi launched a scathing attack on three BJD leaders and said, "Three families have looted Jajpur in the name of development. Such leaders have not given justice to



people and destroyed the area." "BJD ruled the State for 24 years. The BJD leaders, who were representing Jajpur, never refrained themselves from act-

ing as slaves. Jajpur is rich in mines and minerals. But there is no development of people in the area," he said.

The CM also announced

that there would be an investigation into lady Panchayat Executive Officer Smitarani Biswal's death case and stern action would be taken against those found guilty.

"The BJD blows 'respect to women' trumpet, but we have seen what had happened in the last two to three years. Dharmasala PEO was brutally murdered. Instead of giving justice to the victim's family, the local leaders were shielded," he said.

Raising the malnutrition death issue at Nagada village in the district, the CM said, "Nagada village in the district hogged headlines when 15 children died due to malnutrition. In between, many years have passed, but there is no development in the region," he said.

# Govt to release Phase-II money of Subhadra 1st instalment on Oct 9

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Government on Sunday announced that the second-phase money of the first instalment of the Subhadra Yojana would be released during Durga Puja on October 9.

Giving this information, Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida said all women applicants waiting for their first instalment of Rs 5,000 would receive the money in the second phase on October 9.

She said the beneficiaries who were unable to receive the money in the first phase would get it on October 9.

The phase-II money of the first instalment would be released at Baripada in Mayurbhanj district, Parida said, adding the highest number of Subhadra beneficiaries are also from Baripada.

Stating that all those who can apply on or before Octo-



ber 7 would get the money on October 9, she said that at least 40 lakh women would get the financial assistance during the second-phase disbursement of the first instalment.

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi would present it as a Dussehra gift to all the women of Odisha, said Parida.

She further stated that the second instalment under the scheme would be given on the

occasion of International Women's Day on March 8, 2025.

Parida stated that over 97 lakh women beneficiaries have already registered for the scheme,

# Spinal cord injury notwithstanding Puri para javelin thrower wins golds

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A physically disabled person suffering from severe spinal cord injury has overcome her limitations to bring national and international glory as a para javelin thrower.

Meet 30-year-old Suchitra Parida from Bhuana village under Gop block in Puri district who has excelled in wheelchair javelin throw at the national and international level with her sheer determination and hard work.

Though Suchitra's lower limbs are not functioning due to the severe spinal cord injury because of an unfortunate injury, yet that has not deterred her spirit from achieving success in sports.

Suchitra has so far managed to win a bronze medal in the National Championship held in Bhubaneswar in 2022, a silver medal each in the National Championship in Pune in 2023 and in the Open International in Bangalore in the same year.

Bolstered by her performances in the tournaments, she emerged as champion at the World Ability Sports Game in Thailand in the same year. She also clinched gold medal in the Khelo India Games.

Subsequently, her performances improved in leaps and bounds as she went on to bag



two gold medals by emerging champions in the National Championship in Goa and Open International in Bengaluru this year.

Suchitra suffered a severe spinal cord injury on April 28, 2016, when she fell down from a ladder while plucking mangoes from a tree in her backyard. She was 22 then.

"Following the severe injury, my lower limbs didn't work. I had to undergo treatment for years at many hospitals. While undergoing physiotherapy at SV Nirtar in Olatpur, my physiotherapist advised me to play basketball to maintain fitness. I followed his advice and practiced basketball on wheelchair despite resistance from my family. Subsequently, I was selected for the Indian team to play in the Asian-Oceania Championship in Thailand in 2018. Though I played basketball, I didn't get much success as it was a team game," said Suchitra.

# Samanta gets AHPI honour

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Dr Achyuta Samanta, founder of KIIT, KISS and KIMS, has been awarded the 'Iconic Healthcare Leader' honour by the Association of Healthcare Providers India (AHPI). The award was presented during the second AHPI Leadership Convention held in Chennai on Sunday.

Dr Samanta received this accolade for his significant contributions to the healthcare sector in the country. The AHPI recognises individuals in India who have made exemplary contributions to healthcare each year. This year, two recipients were honoured:



Dr Samanta and Dr Prathap Reddy, Chairman of the

Apollo Group. Dr Samanta said this recognition would

inspire him to contribute more to the healthcare field.

## In city

# Rs 4.77L seized from car during checking

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Commissionerate police seized over Rs 4 lakh from a car during a drive against drunk driving near OMFED Square in the Chadrasekharpur area in Bhubaneswar on Saturday night.

As per reports, the driver of the car, Dibyajyoti Nayak was allegedly driving the vehicle at high speed under the influence of alcohol.



When Nayak was asked to stop by the police personnel, his vehicle crashed into the barricades. During a search, the police recovered around Rs 4.77 lakh from the car. The youth was detained and further investigation in connection with the incident was on, said Twin City Commissioner of Police Sanjeeb Panda.

Sources said that an investigation was on to ascertain the source of the money.

# PM hails Odisha youth for saving Santali

As Ramjeet develops digital platform for the language

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday heaped praises on Ramjit Tudu, a young resident of Mayurbhanj, for his efforts to save the 'Santali' language.

In his radio programme Mann Ki Baat, which marked its 10th anniversary, Modi praised Ramjit for developing a digital platform where literature can be read and written in the Santali language.

"A campaign has been started to give a new identity to Santali with the help of digital innovation. There are some languages which are used by very few people. One such language is the 'Santali' language,"



the PM said.

Elated after Modi's praise, Ramjit said, "When I started using a mobile phone, I came to know that there were only mainstream languages for chatting or sending messages. So, it struck me that I should develop Santali alphabets. Hopefully, my little effort will go a long way in helping lakhs of my people."

Santali is spoken by the people of the Santal tribe residing in many States. Apart from India, the tribal communities speaking Santali are also present in Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan.

# Mohanty new UCCIL chief

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Dr Prabodh Mohanty has been elected as president of the Utkal Chamber of Commerce & Industry Limited (UCCIL). Besides, his entire team also got elected as other UCCIL office-bearers.

Dr Mohanty is the Managing Director of the SNM Group, which is spearheading to various sectors, including mining, hospitality, manufacturing, power production, green energy.



Dr Mohanty, as Chairman, Resurgent Odisha Global Trade Show 2024, successfully organised the international event, which was an initiative of the UCCIL to showcase Odisha's potential and progress to shape the industrial landscape of India.

## XIM Univ's INNOVEX 2024

# Speakers motivate students on innovation

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The X-Cubate, the Student Entrepreneurship wing of XIM University (New Campus), in collaboration with XPRENEURS, the UG Entrepreneurship Cell of XIM University and the Xavier Council of Innovation, conducted the INNOVEX 2024: Igniting the Spark of Innovation, on Saturday.

The event began with the welcome address by Registrar of XIM University Fr S Antony Raj, SJ.

Following the welcome note, the first speaker was Rajeev Kumar, ex-Young Professional, Atal Innovation Mission, NITI Aayog. In his address at the event celebrating entrepreneurship and innovation at the Xavier Council of Innovation, he emphasised the nation's need to prioritise innovative think-

ing. He highlighted the Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) as a critical initiative for fostering a robust startup ecosystem.

The second speaker of the day, Ravi Kabra, co-founder of the popular ice popsicle brand Skipki, shared the journey of his startup from its inception to becoming a successful brand. He emphasized the importance of resilience, core values, and focusing on profitability over seeking investors.

Arka Prava Ghosh, alumnus of XIM University, co-founder of Kin&Ken Café at XIM University shared insights on the rapid growth of his venture from small beginnings. He emphasized the importance of comparing domestic and foreign universities to understand global startup ecosystems and mentioned the role XIM University and X-Cubate played in supporting and validating their

business idea.

Nikita Singh, an alumna of XIM University, is the co-founder and CIO of Nexus Power, a pioneering startup focused on sustainable energy solutions. Nexus Power has gained recognition for its innovative approach to creating protein-rich crop-based batteries, which offer an eco-friendly alternative to traditional lithium-ion batteries. Throughout her journey, Nikita has received significant support, including grants from the Government of India and HDFC Bank, specifically aimed at fostering startups.

Finally, the enlightening talks were wrapped up with a standup comedy session by an alumnus of XIM University, Satyabrat Mohapatra, who delivered witty and relatable interactions with the students and the guests, gaining constant applause from all.

## For empowering visually-impaired kids

# Teachers trained on digital accessible info system

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A two-day workshop was hosted by the VIEWS organisation for teachers in 30 districts from 45 schools for the visually-impaired. The workshop aimed to support visually impaired students in embracing digital systems, empowering them to move forward and achieve greater independence.

On the first day of the programme, VIEWS executive director Bheema Rao outlined the objectives.

Assistant director of training institute, Sonalika Suman was the chief guest. She spoke about the employment opportunities available for visually impaired students and how they can be empowered through proper education and skills.

Deputy Secretary of the SSEPD Department, Sanyasi Behera also attended and engaged in the session by shar-



ing his personal experiences. He recounted the challenges he faced due to the lack of digital resources in his time, but despite those obstacles, he achieved success and became an OAS officer.

In the workshop, VIEWS committed to providing life skills training for teachers to better assist visually impaired students. Pragnya Behera, a life skills trainer from Pingalakh Special Diploma College, facilitated the training, emphasizing the vital role

that life skills play in shaping the lives of visually impaired students.

Bidyadhara guided the teachers on using DAISY Books and the Sugamya Pustakalaya platform. The goal was to equip children with the ability to easily access and read any book by registering with Sugamya Pustakalaya.

On the second day, the session began with beautiful hymns, setting a serene tone for the day. The VIEWS team then provided training to the

teachers on using the speakers effectively to ensure that students could hear the audio more clearly.

Later, Pramod Kumar Mallik, a Disability Expert from UNFPA, delivered a concise overview of the ten key points of life skills. This was followed by an interactive question-and-answer session, allowing the teachers to gain deeper insights into life skills education.

Under Secretary of Finance of the Government of Odisha

Prachurya Pradhan provided an insightful demonstration to teachers, showcasing new technology designed for visually impaired children.

Rajib Kumar Raul from the Azim Premji Foundation motivated the teachers attending the training by emphasizing the importance of collaboration.

Afterward, the teachers were awarded certificates and speakers, in recognition of their contributions to the children's education.

## In State Unemployment rate among youths down by 2%

Compared to last fiscal

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The unemployment rate among youths in the age group of 15-29 in Odisha has marginally come down as compared to the last fiscal, a study revealed.

The study by the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) for the period July 2023 to June 2024 shows a two-per

cent decline in the sState's unemployment rate.

The study was released earlier this week by the Labour Bureau. However, the lack of jobs continues to remain a concern in the urban areas.

While the unemployment rate was around 13.8% in 2022-23, it has declined to 11.1%. Moreover, the survey shows an improvement in the participation of women in job place.

As per the study, unemployment among youths in rural

areas has registered a substantial decline from 12.7% in 2022-23 to 9.3% in 2023-24. However, in urban areas, it rose from 21.8% to 22.9%. The overall unemployment rate across all age groups is 3.1%, marginally less than last year when it was 3.9%.

Besides, the overall unemployment rate of males in the State has decreased from 4.7% to 3.3% while the female workforce has slightly increased from 2.4% to 2.7%.

## In S Odisha TPSODL's solar drive: 2.7L register for PM Surya Ghar

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

The TP Southern Odisha Distribution Limited (TPSODL) is actively promoting the PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana across southern Odisha to encourage the adoption of solar energy. The government initiative aims to empower citizens with affordable solar energy solutions, contributing to a sustainable, green future.

TPSODL's extensive outreach efforts span key districts, including Boudh, Koraput, Rayagada, Malkangiri, Ganjam, Kandhamal, Gajapati and Nabarangapur through stalls, outreach programmes, and participation in Vikas Melas.

The PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana enables households to install solar systems of up to 3 kW capacity, which can help consumers save up to 300 units of electricity per month. The scheme also provides a Government subsidy, offering financial assistance of up to Rs

78,000, making solar energy more accessible to a wide range of consumers. TPSODL's initiative is focused on educating people about these benefits and guiding them through the process of adopting solar power. At each event, TPSODL employees are available to assist consumers with detailed information on the scheme and to explain the technical and financial benefits of solar energy adoption. Consumers are also provided with information leaflets that outline the long-term savings and environmental impact of switching to renewable energy sources.

TPSODL representatives ensure consumers understand the application process and offer end-to-end support from registration to installation, making the transition to solar energy seamless and hassle-free. So far, over 2.7 lakh consumers have already registered for the scheme through the online portal, demonstrating a growing interest in solar power.

## Uphold integrity in legal proceedings: HC to lawyer

Who submits fake docu to prove client juvenile

PNS ■ CUTTACK

In a strong rebuke, the Orissa High Court lambasted a lawyer for misleading the court by submitting a forged document to show his client as a juvenile. The Division bench comprising Justice SK Sahoo and Justice Chittaranjan Dash cautioned the lawyer and emphasised that 'justice may be blind, the judges are not sightless'.

The judges called on the legal professionals to uphold the integrity and honesty in legal proceedings. As per a report, the case concerned appellant Jata Sanatan Hessa, who had filed an appeal against his conviction in a criminal matter. In support of his appeal, his legal team submitted a forged school transfer certificate to establish that he was a juvenile at the time of the offence.

However, discrepancies soon arose over the authenticity of the school leaving certificate and prompted the court to intervene.

The HC then firmly rejected the interim application and issued a cautionary note to the legal fraternity.

"Justice may be blind, but the judges are not sightless," the Bench declared.

"It is not only the power but also the duty of the Court to uphold and maintain the dignity of the courts and the majesty of law. If for proper administration of justice, it is required to take strict view, it should not hesitate in wielding the potent weapon of contempt," Justice Sahoo stated expressing dismay at the growing trend of submitting forged documents to obtain favourable outcomes in courts.

In a powerful observation, the Bench quoted, "High Court is a temple; its presiding deity is Justice. Lawyers are its priests. It is most unfortunate when priests undermine the sanctity and purity of the temple."

## Cabinet decision Rs 1,400-cr scheme to increase milk production

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Government has decided to launch a Rs 1,400-crore 'Mukhyamantri Kamadhenu Yojana' (MKY) to enhance milk production in the State.

The decision was taken at a Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Mohan Majhi on Saturday.

The aim is to boost the dairy sector and increase the income of dairy farmers, Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan told reporters. Under the new

scheme, the government would provide incentives to people to rear cows and buffaloes to enhance milk production. The OMFED (Odisha Milk Federation) would be strengthened further.

The MKY will be implemented for five years from 2024-25 to 2028-29 with a budgetary outlay of Rs 1,423.47 crore. The scheme aims to increase the milk production of the State benefiting 15,47,837 farmers in five years, Harichandan said.

Under the MKY, the gov-

ernment would bear 85% of the insurance for cattle while the farmers would have to give the remaining 15% of the premium, he said.

He said the Cabinet approved seven different proposals.

The Cabinet approved construction of over 550 quarters for the employees of the Orissa High Court. It also decided to hike the fees of the Advocate General for appearance before the High Court and the Supreme Court, other authorities and tribunals.

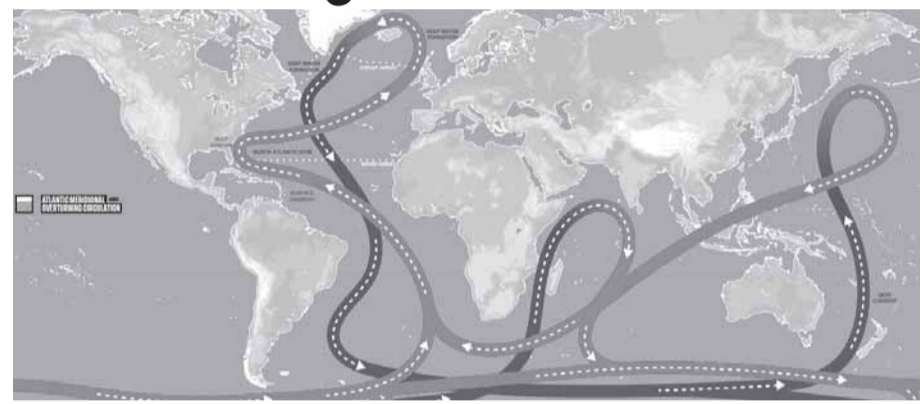
## IIT-BBS researcher comes up with vital climate change indicator

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A new study has revealed the importance of mixing Atlantic and Arctic waters in sustaining the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC), a key driver in regulating Earth's climate. The research, conducted by an international team from IIT Bhubaneswar, University of Southampton (UK), National Oceanography Centre (UK), and Stockholm University (Sweden), explores the mechanisms behind AMOC formation.

The AMOC functions like a vast ocean conveyor belt, transporting warm tropical water northward and cold water southward, thus distributing heat globally. It plays a vital role in keeping Northern Europe, including the UK, relatively mild for its latitude.

"As warm water reaches cooler regions of the North



Atlantic, it loses heat, becomes denser, and sinks," explains Dr Dipanjan Dey of IIT Bhubaneswar, lead author of the study. "We discovered that much of this dense water travels northward, mixing with colder Arctic waters before flowing southward, bolstering the AMOC's strength."

The study estimates that Atlantic-Arctic water mixing accounts for 33% of the transformation of warm water into denser, colder water, with the

remaining 67% driven by ocean-atmosphere interactions. This challenges prior assumptions that focused primarily on heat loss, underestimating the impact of water mixing.

As the planet warms, models suggest that the AMOC may weaken, potentially causing significant shifts in global climate patterns. These findings offer new insight into how Atlantic-Arctic water mixing affects climate dynamics.

"The study also has relevance in Indian context as far as climate change is concerned," highlights Dr Dey. "The Indian summer monsoon, which occurs from June to September, contributes approximately 80% of the country's annual rainfall. Any variations in the timing or distribution of this rainfall can have far-reaching impacts on agriculture, the economy, and public health, both physically and mentally," he explains.

## Int'l conf at CUTM; 200 join in physical, virtual modes



PNS ■ PARALAKHEMUNDI

The Centurion University of Technology and Management (CUTM), in collaboration with the Operational Research Society of India (ORSI), Bhubaneswar Chapter, conducted a two-day international conference, "Viksit Bharat: Innovative Business, Agriculture, Technology, and Resource Management for Sustainable Growth" on September 26-27.

The event attracted over 200 participants, including global experts, researchers, and policymakers, in both physical and virtual formats, from more than 15 countries.

A highlight of the event was the keynote session on "Sustainable Development for Viksit Bharat: The Way Forward," chaired by Abha Mishra from UNDP, Odisha. It featured an esteemed panel of global experts. Topics ranged from AgriTech's role in sus-

tainable agriculture to innovative strategies for resource management, aligning with the core goals of Viksit Bharat.

The conference also featured 160 research paper presentations across various themes, encouraging collaboration between experienced professionals and young researchers to develop innovative solutions for India's future.

The release of the Book of Abstracts cum Souvenir captured the key discussions and

breakthroughs presented during the sessions.

Centurion University's leadership, including president Prof Mukti Kanta Mishra and Vice-Chancellor Prof (Dr) Supriya Pattanayak, emphasized the conference's critical role in advancing sustainable growth. Prof Mishra said, "The event has strengthened our commitment to innovation and collaboration, key to achieving India's aspirations for 2047."

## In Kendrapada Girl blackmails cousin sister, demands Rs 1L

After spat between two over WhatsApp

PNS ■ KENDRAPADA

A case has come to the fore in Kendrapada district where altercation between two cousin sisters in WhatsApp turned ugly, following which one of the sisters tried to blackmail the other with the help of her boyfriend.

The incident came to the light after the victim lodged an FIR at the Sadar police station. One Dayena Gochhait (name changed) and Chandol

police outpost had an altercation with her elder cousin sister, Princess Gochhait (Name changed) over posting of a status in WhatsApp. So in a bid to teach a lesson to Princess, Dayena hatched a plan with her boyfriend to defame her.

Later, Dayena's boyfriend called Princess' parents and started abusing them in vulgar languages and threatened them to make the morphed photos of Princess viral in social media. He also demanded Rs one lakh from them.

Based on the victim's complaint, the Sadar police have started an investigation.

## Woman killed in road mishap in B'pur Rs 20L compensation demanded

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

A tragic road accident claimed the life of one Basanti Naik (52) at Bijipur under the Brahmapur Municipal Corporation (BeMC) on Sunday morning. Basanti, a roadside vendor from Paluru village, was run over by a car while selling flowers and fruits to support her family.

Irate people accused the administration of inaction and irresponsibility that leads to road mishaps regularly in the area. Despite repeated public complaints about traffic congestion and the unsafe conditions faced by roadside ven-

dors, no significant measures have been taken by the authorities. Residents have highlighted the administration's lack of accountability in addressing the rehabilitation of roadside vendors, further exacerbating the traffic problem.

There are widespread allegations of corruption in the vendor rehabilitation projects, with claims that the vending zone built for them are unsuitable and that bribes are taken in the process. The public has repeatedly written to the administration, but no concrete action has been implemented, resulting in human rights violations and a decline in public safety, an NGO activist said.

The people have demanded Rs 20 lakh for Basanti Naik's family.

## In Sundargarh Tension as youth mowed down by truck

PNS ■ SUNDARGARH

Tension prevailed after a youth was crushed to death under a speeding cement mixer vehicle at Champapada village under the Dharuadihi police station in Sundargarh district on Sunday.

Irate locals staged a road blockade by placing the dead body on the road, leading to disruption of the movement of vehicular traffic. Hundreds of vehicles were stranded on both sides of the road near the village.

The deceased was identified as Santosh Sunani, who was standing on the village road when the vehicle ran over him, leading to his death on the spot. The agitators demanded stringent action against the accused driver and adequate compensation for the kin of the deceased. On being informed, police rushed to the spot and tried to bring the situation under control.

However, the locals refused to call off the protest and continued their agitation, which was ongoing.

## Poor living conditions NHRC notice to CS on mining-hit K'jhar tribals

NARESH PATTANAYAK ■ KEONJHAR

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), New Delhi has issued notice to the Chief Secretary, Government of Odisha and sought for an Action Taken Report (ATR) on the plight and sufferings of the villagers especially from the tribal and SC community living in mining affected areas in Keonjhar district.

The NHRC sought the ATR taking cognizance of a petition filed by lawyer and rights activist Radhakanta Tripathy and ordered on September 19 to submit within four weeks.

Sources said that the Commission has received a complaint on different issues of difficulties being faced by the people in Keonjhar district due to mining. The complainant has alleged that the people in-

cluded in mining activities as workers are forced to live in pathetic conditions. There are no proper roads, drinking water, school and employment opportunities for them. The complainant stated that the administration is solely responsible for their pitiable conditions as no social welfare schemes are functioning in the area and the rights of the people, mostly Scheduled Tribe, are being grossly violated. The complainant requested the Commission to intervene in the matter.

"The Commission shall be constrained to invoke coercive process u/s 13 of the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 calling for a personal appearance of the authority concerned for submission of the report, in case the report is not received within the stipulated time," the NHRC said in its order.

## 2 elderly deceased women's corneas collected

After their family members motivated by Friends Helping Club

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

The Corneas of two deceased women were collected by a team of doctor from the MKCG MCH on September 25 after their family members were prevailed upon for the act by the Friends Club, Brahmapur.

Killam Shetty Damayanti, wife of late Kameswara Rao, a resident of Kaviti village in Srikakulam district, died at the age of 71 at her brother's house in Gandhinagar 3rd Lane Extn, Brahmapur.



Friends Club member Kota Ravikumar, brother of Damayanti, initiated for eye donation. Accordingly, Dr Vivekananda Sahu and Dr Ruchitra Nayak of the MKCG Medical College Hospital, Brahmapur, collected two corneas of the de-

ceased Damayanti in the presence of their family members K Ganageyya Senapati, K Rupanari, K Ravi Kumar, K Sauvagayam, K Gautam, K Pramila Devi and T Saraswathi.

Similarly, the corneas of

Vaddi Rajni (79), wife of late V Raghav Rao who expired at her daughter's house at Shastrinagar 3rd Lane, Brahmapur, were collected in the presence of her four daughters E Babi Rani Patra, K Rojarani, Sandhyarani Patra and Sujatarani and her son in law E Arun Patra, K Murali, V Madhu and relatives and friends.

Members of Friends Helping Club Jammula Suresh, VV Raju, E Raghunatham, K Purusottam Kumar Subudhhi, E Purma Chandra Patra and Dr K Murali were also present at the time of eye donation.

The Friends Helping Club motivated five persons during September and 14 persons during 2024 so far for eye donations.

## Vedanta holds Swachhata drive in J'suguda

PNS ■ JHARSUGUDA

As part of the Government of India's "Swachhata Hi Sewa" initiative aimed at building up a strong sense of responsibility towards the environment, the Vedanta Aluminium conducted a week-long "Swachhata Abhiyan" in Jharsuguda.

While over 1,300 company employees, local students and community members participated in the mega event, which witnessed activities like large-scale clean-up drives, waste to art competitions and tree plantation, enhancing community hygiene, and fostering long-term positive change.

Sharing his views, Chief



Operating Officer (COO), Vedanta Aluminium, Sunil Gupta said, "Our 'Swachhata Abhiyan' embodies Vedanta Aluminium's dedication to building a cleaner and greener Jharsuguda. By combining clean-up efforts, creative competitions, and tree plantation, we are not only enhancing public spaces, but also nurturing environmental conscious-

ness among the community, particularly the younger generation."

Jharsuguda MLA Tankadhar Tripathy said, "Initiatives like the 'Swachhata Abhiyan' sets a strong precedent for how industries can play an active role in local development, particularly in fostering civic responsibility and environmental sustainability."

In her reactions, District Magistrate and Collector, Jharsuguda, Aboli Sunil Naravane said, "Vedanta Aluminium's efforts towards the Swachhata Abhiyan is a testament to the power of public-private partnerships in driving meaningful change at the grassroots level."

Notably, the week-long effort underscored Vedanta's commitment to environmental sustainability, aligning with its Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) goals and supporting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and SDG 13 (Climate Action).

# Centre to hold simultaneous elections with three new bills

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

The Centre is likely to bring three bills, including two to amend the Constitution, to put in place its plan to hold simultaneous elections. One of the proposed Constitution amendment bills, that deals with aligning the local bodies elections to that of the Lok Sabha and the Assemblies, will require an endorsement from at least 50 per cent of the states. Moving ahead with its 'one nation, one election' plan, the government earlier this month accepted the recommendations of the high-level committee for holding simultaneous polls for the Lok Sabha, state assemblies and local bodies in a phased manner after a countrywide consensus-building exercise. The proposed first constitutional amendment bill would deal with making provisions for holding Lok Sabha and state legislative assembly elections together. Citing recommendations of the high-level committee, sources said the proposed bill would seek to amend Article 82A by adding sub-clause (1) relating to the 'appointed date'. It will also seek to insert sub-clause (2) to Article 82A relating to the end of terms



of the Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies together. It also proposes to amend Article 83(2) and insert new sub-clauses (3) and (4) relating to the duration and dissolution of the Lok Sabha. It also has provisions related to the dissolution of the legislative assemblies and amending Article 327 to insert the term 'simultaneous elections'. This bill will not require ratification by at least 50 per cent of the states, the

recommendation said. The proposed second Constitutional amendment bill will require ratification by at least 50 per cent of the state assemblies as it will deal with matters relating to state affairs. It will seek to amend constitutional provisions relating to the preparation of electoral rolls by the Election Commission (EC) in consultation with State Election Commissions (SECs) for elections to local

Constitutionally, the EC and SECs are separate bodies. The EC holds elections to the post of the President, the Vice President, Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, state assemblies and state legislative councils while the SECs are mandated to conduct polls to local bodies such as municipalities and panchayats. The proposed second Constitutional amendment bill will also create provisions to hold simultaneous elections to municipalities and panchayats, along with

elections to Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies by inserting a new Article 324A. The third bill will be an ordinary one to amend provisions in three laws dealing with Union territories having legislative assemblies — Puducherry, Delhi and Jammu and Kashmir — to align the terms of these Houses with other legislative assemblies and the Lok Sabha as proposed in the first constitutional amendment bill. The statutes it proposes to

amend are the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act-1991, the Government of Union Territories Act-1963 and the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act-2019. The proposed bill will be an ordinary legislation not requiring a change in the Constitution and will also not need ratification by the states. The high-level committee had proposed amendments to three Articles, insertion of 12 new sub-clauses in the existing articles and tweaking three laws related to Union Territories having legislative assemblies. The total number of amendments and new insertions stands at 18. In its report submitted to the government in March, just before the general election was announced, the panel recommended implementing "one nation, one election" in two phases. It suggested simultaneous polls for the Lok Sabha and state assemblies in the first phase and elections for local bodies like panchayats and municipal bodies within 100 days of the general election in the second phase. It also recommended a common electoral roll, which would need coordination between the Election Commission and State Election Commissions.



Union Minister and BJP National President JP Nadda, and others listen to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Mann Ki Baat' radio programme, in New Delhi, Sunday  
Photo by: RANJAN DIMRI/THE PIONEER

## 'Mann Ki Baat' showcases positive developments: Modi

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserted on Sunday that his monthly radio broadcast 'Mann Ki Baat' has shown that people like positive developments and inspiring and encouraging stories. Speaking in the latest episode of the radio programme in which he touches about social issues and highlights people's efforts for a cause in different parts of the country, he noted that the broadcast is completing 10 years. Describing it as an "emotional" episode, he said the programme has become a unique platform that celebrates the spirit of India and showcases collective strength of the nation. He also thanked the media for taking its message to people. Modi said there is generally a perception that people don't pay attention if the content is not spicy or negative. However, 'Mann Ki Baat' has shown that they are eager for positive information. People like

positive things, inspiring examples and encouraging stories, he noted. Modi said the 'Make in India' programme is completing its 10 years, asserting that export is rising in every sector and the rise in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is a testimony to its success. It has helped local manufacturers a lot, he added. He urged people to buy 'Made in India' products in the coming festival season. Referring to his recent visit to the US, Modi said the return of nearly 300 antiquities to India is being widely talked about. When people start taking pride in their heritage, the world also respects their sentiments, he said, asserting that a large number of ancient artefacts has been returned to India by different countries in the last 10 years of his government. In the programme, he highlighted the success of the 'Swachh Bharat' mission, lauding it as a great tribute to Mahatma Gandhi who put special emphasis on cleanliness all his life.



## Himalayan research project to analyse sediment impact

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

As climate change intensifies hazards such as landslides, avalanches, and glacial floods in high mountain regions including Himalayas, a team of researchers from India, Canada and UK is set to conduct a study to understand the long-term impacts of sediment moved by these disasters on communities and river systems including Ganges river. The team, including experts from IIT Roorkee and the Dehradun-based Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology, will start research at a 150 km stretch of the Ganges River impacted by the 2021 disaster in Chamoli nestled in Himalayan region in Uttarakhand. Triggered by a rock and ice avalanche, this catastrophic event caused a devastating debris flood, resulting in over 200 fatalities and significant damage to two hydropower stations including Tapovan Vishnu Gad Hydropower. The landslide also temporarily created a dam in the Rishiganga valley, which eventually breached. The £1 million research SUPERSLUG project, led by researchers from the University of Plymouth, will centered around the 2021 disaster and focus on understanding how massive sediment flows—termed "sediment slugs"—affect river systems over time, often impacting areas far from the original disaster site. Utilising advanced monitoring technologies such as drones, satellite imagery, seismic sensors, and "smart cobbles," the team will gather data on sediment transport and landscape changes. This information will help create a digital twin of the river system, offering insights for disaster management and resource sustainability. Dr. Matt Westoby, the project lead and Associate Professor

of Physical Geography at the University of Plymouth, emphasised the urgency of this research which is backed by an £840,000 grant from the Natural Environment Research Council. He noted that while the immediate impacts of disasters are clear, the long-term consequences often remain unexplored. "High mountain regions like the Himalayas are among the most hazardous on the planet. The effects of climate change are likely to exacerbate these hazards, leading to increased landslide activity and landscape instability," he said. "We urgently need to understand the legacy impacts of sediment flows on river catchments and the communities that depend on them for water and livelihoods." The project will engage directly with local communities and authorities to ensure that findings are practical and beneficial for disaster preparedness and hydropower operations. Collaborating institutions also include Exeter, Hull, Leeds, Newcastle, Staffordshire, and the University of Calgary. Professor Tom Coulthard from the University of Hull highlighted the importance of understanding sediment movement. "Often it's the sheer volume of sediment, rather than just floodwaters, that causes significant damage during these multi-hazard events. Understanding how long sediment slugs persist in the system is crucial for predicting their impacts and managing future disasters." In a nut-shell, as per the statement from the University of Hull, this three-year initiative aims to fill critical knowledge gaps regarding the long-term effects of sediment slugs on ecosystems and communities, ultimately enhancing disaster resilience in vulnerable regions.

## CITU protests FSNL disinvestment

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) on Sunday protested on Government's move to disinvest the profit-making PSU Ferro Scrap Nigam Limited (FSNL). The CITU general secretary Tapan Sen in a statement said the Central Government is resorting to all "illegal practices" to sell the Mini Ratna company to Japan's M/s. Konoike Transport Co. Ltd and must roll back from the sale. Extending solidarity with the striking employees of FSNL, the CITU pointed out that PSU Navratna steel companies

are completely dependent on FSNL for scrap handling since its inception. "With utter surprise, no consultation with them has at all been initiated by the government on such a vital issue and the top managements of FSNL are also not properly aware of this clandestine move. "FSNL is a company having a reserve fund of about Rs 200 crore and movable assets worth Rs100 crore employing more than 600 employees and 5,000 contract workers. During the year ended March 31, 2022, Company has paid Interim Dividend for FY 2021-22 amounting to Rs 9.50 per

equity shares," said CITU in a statement detailing the profits of the FSNL. CITU said that "such a golden egg producing company is straight away being guillotined by the government because of its sheer obsession for privatization factually without any valid reason." "CITU once again condemns the authoritarian anti-National move of the Modi government and stands strong with striking FSNL workers. CITU calls upon all its units to take this issue to all sections of workers and mobilize them insolidarity with this anti-privatization struggle," said CITU.

## Mental health certificates now needed for Transgender pre-hormonal therapy, surgery

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

Transgenders who want to go for pre-hormonal therapy or gender assignment surgery need to be assessed and certified by mental health professionals, according to the Union Health Ministry's standard operating procedures for the purpose. As for gynaecologists, the 'SoP for Medical Treatment of Transgender Persons' states that they should enquire as to how the patient wishes to be addressed in terms of name and pronoun, and also ensure that the words they use uphold the principles of safety, dignity and respect. Outlining the responsibilities of mental health professionals, the SoP document said their primary role would include assessment for gender incongruence, as per the

current diagnostic system followed by the World Health Organization, and certification for the same. Gender incongruence is characterised by a marked and persistent disparity between an individual's experienced gender and the assigned sex. It often leads to a desire for a 'transition' through hormonal treatment, surgery or other healthcare services in order to live and be accepted as a person of the experienced gender. According to the SOP, "Before endocrinology treatment, a certificate from one psychiatrist is required. Before Gender Affirmation Surgery, two certificates are required -- one by a psychiatrist and one by a clinical psychologist/psychiatrist." Apart from that, a mental health professional would also assess for distress and co-



morbid mental and/or substance use disorders and provide management of the same, the document stated. They would also provide support or therapy, if needed, to cope with issues related to gender incongruence, including participation in integrated cross-disciplinary care and intersectoral

collaboration for clients and caregivers. "The support would be provided pre-hormonal therapy/gender assignment surgery, during the period as well as post-surgery, if need be," it stated. According to the document, one cannot undergo gender affirmation surgery before the age of 18 years and a

certificate of being stable on endocrine treatment for one year and suitability for surgical procedure is required before gender affirmation surgery. The SOP stressed the need to make STD clinics friendly to gender-diverse patients and such facilities should document gender identity and sex assigned at birth for all patients to improve sexual healthcare for transgenders and gender nonbinary persons. Primary care providers should take a comprehensive sexual history, including a discussion on Sexually transmitted infection (STI) screening, HIV PrEP and PEP, behavioural health, and social determinants of sexual health. Clinicians can improve the experience of sexual health screening and counselling for transgender persons by

asking for their choice of terminology or modifying language to be used during clinic visits and history taking and examination, the SOP stated. Options for fertility preservation, pregnancy potential and contraception options should also be discussed, if indicated, the document said. As for the Fertility Preservation in Transgenders (Female to Male), the SoP states that the established method for fertility preservation includes cryopreservation of embryos and oocytes for females. Ovarian tissue cryopreservation is also a successful technique for fertility preservation and is no longer experimental, the document stated, adding that it has limited availability and is possible only after attaining puberty.



## Prakash Karat to lead CPI(M) interim

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

Senior CPI(M) leader Prakash Karat will be the coordinator of the party's Polit Bureau and the Central Committee as an interim arrangement until the 24th Party Congress to be held in April next year. The decision comes in the wake of the death of CPI(M) General Secretary Sitaram Yechury on September 12 at the age of 72. "The Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), now in session in New Delhi, has decided that Comrade Prakash Karat will

be the coordinator of the Polit Bureau and the Central Committee, as an interim arrangement until the 24th Party Congress to be held in April 2025 at Madurai," the CPI(M) said. "This decision was taken due to the sad and sudden demise of the sitting General Secretary of the CPI(M), Comrade Sitaram Yechury," it added. Karat, one of the senior most leaders of the CPI(M), was its general secretary from 2005 to 2015. He was elected to the Central Committee in 1985 and became a Polit Bureau member in 1992.

## Congress demands Sitharaman's resignation over extortion

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

Congress on Sunday attacked the BJP after a case was lodged against Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and others on a complaint relating to the now-scrapped electoral bonds scheme and demanded her resignation for "undermining democracy." The opposition party reiterated its demand for a Supreme-court monitored inquiry through an SIT into the whole electoral bond scheme. Addressing a press conference here along with party spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi, Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh charged that four ways were used to extort money through the "conspiracy of electoral bonds — prepaid bribery, postpaid bribery, post-raid bribery and through farzi companies". He said the Finance Minister should immediately resign as



she is "guilty" politically, legally and morally. Ramesh said the FIR was lodged on orders of the court and the Congress has nothing to do with the FIR. He said the Congress has been demanding a Supreme-court monitored inquiry through an SIT into the electoral bonds scheme and reiterates that demand. Singhvi also accused the BJP of "undermining democracy." "The Finance Minister cannot do this on her own. We know who is number 1 and number 2 and this was done on whose

directions," he said. "The larger issue is the level playing field which is necessary for free and fair polls. Free and fair polls are critical for democracy. This is an attack on our democratic system," Singhvi said while terming it as "EBS - Extortionist BJP Scheme". A case was registered on Saturday against Sitharaman and others on the directions of a court in Bengaluru, following a complaint relating to the now-scrapped electoral bonds scheme. According to police, an FIR

was registered under IPC sections 384 (punishment for extortion), 120B (criminal conspiracy) and 34 (acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention) against Sitharaman, ED officials, office-bearers of the BJP at state and national level, based on the order of a special court. BJP Karnataka chief B Y Vijayendra and party leader Nalin Kumar Kateel have also been named in the FIR. The complaint was lodged by Adarsh R Iyer, Co-President of 'Janadhikara Sangharsha Parishath' (JSP) alleging that the accused "committed extortion under the guise and garb of electoral bonds" and benefited to the tune of more than Rs 8,000 crore. The complainant further alleged that Sitharaman through the clandestine aid and support of ED officials facilitated extortion of thousands of crores of rupees for the benefit of others both at the state and national levels.

# Udhayanidhi promotion spurs DMK discontent

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

While there is all round rejoicing among the DMK cadres over the elevation of Udhayanidhi Stalin as deputy chief minister by papa M K Stalin, the chief minister as well as the party supremo, a sense of dejection and discontentment are visible among the top echelons of the Dravidian major. Veteran ministers and regional satraps of the DMK are aghast over the speed with which Udhayanidhi has been promoted as the second-in-command of the government as well as the party. Even those ministers who are hangers on in the Stalin household are of the view that Stalin Junior made it to the top of the hierarchy only because of his "pedigree". The DMK, founded by C N Annadurai in the company of M G Ramachandran, M Karunanidhi and V R Nedumchezhian has transformed itself over the last four decades from a democratic outfit to a dynastic entity, according to Malan, political critic and author.



"The promotion of Udhayanidhi is all set to weaken democracy, strengthen dynasty politics, corruption and sycophancy," Malan explained to The Pioneer. He also pointed out that only children of veteran DMK politicians could become MLAs, MPs and ministers. "The minimum qualification to become minister or people's representatives on DMK ticket is that one should be born as the son or daughter of Stalin's acolytes," said Malan. He pointed out that there was discontentment

from the Stalin household, the chief minister is not in the best of health. "His recent trip to the US was for a medical check up and the results are not music to the party cadres. Udhayanidhi, though actively involved in politics since 2021 is yet to inspire the party," said P K Srinivasan, another veteran commentator and author based in Chennai. Malan's apprehensions about corruption and dynasty politics get substantiated as Senthil Balaji who was arrested and was imprisoned for more than 470 days too was sworn in as minister on Sunday. "Balaji was a synonym for massive corruption according to Stalin till the former crossed over to the DMK from the AIADMK. Now the chief minister describes him as the embodiment of honesty," says Srinivasan. According to Sekhar, the DMK continues to remain in power because of the disunity in opposition camps. "The AIADMK and BJP are fighting each other ferociously than they fight the DMK. If an alliance is forged between the AIADMK and the BJP, it may enliven Tamil

Nadu politics," said Sekhar. All the three are unanimous in their view on what makes the DMK click. "The DMK is not strong without its allies. Fringe outfits like VCK, MDMK, the Lefts and Islamist organisations sustain the DMK. In the 2021 assembly election, the DMK scraped through by just 4.4 per cent. The VCK, a Dali outfit has started bargaining with the DMK for a share in the power or more seats and this has made the Dravidian major a sitting duck," said Malan. The recent declaration by super star Vijay Joseph that he would be a strong contender in the 2026 assembly polls has made the political landscape lively. Vijayan is likely to cut into the Christian and Dalit votes of the DMK. Chennai-born Shirley Murphy, an Evangelist based in Wales said after her recent tour to Tamil Nadu that the Christian population in the State is likely to cross 10 million in the near future. "This is one reason why Vijay, himself son of an evangelist, chose to launch a political party of his own," said Gauthaman Ramakrishnan, chief editor, Sri TV.

# Bihar Government issues flood alert amid heavy water discharge



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PATNA

Bihar government has sounded an alert for flood in northern and central parts of the State following heavy discharge of water from Birpur barrage on Sunday, officials said. A total of 6.61 lakh cusecs of water was released from Birpur barrage on Kosi river till 5 am, the highest in 56 years. According to the latest bulletin by the state Water Resources department, the last time the maximum water discharged from this barrage was 7.88 lakh cusecs of water in 1968. The development may aggravate the condition of over 16.28 lakh people in 13 districts, who were already

affected by inundation following heavy rain. Similarly, 5.38 lakh cusecs of water was released from Valmikinagar barrage on Gandak till 7 pm on Saturday. This is the highest water discharged from this barrage after 6.39 lakh cusecs released in 2003. Traffic movement has been stopped near the Kosi barrage as a preventive measure. "The teams of the Water Resources Department are monitoring the embankments on a 24/7 basis...so prompt action can be taken as soon as any erosion or danger is detected. Three superintending engineers, 17 executive engineers, 25 assistant engineers and 45 junior engineers of the department are working on a 24/7 basis and they are always alert", the official said. "The water level of rivers Gandak, Kosi, Bagmati, Burhi Gandak, Kamla Balan and Mahananda and Ganga-- has been rising across the state, following continuous rainfall over the past two-three days. Incessant rainfall in the catchment areas of Nepal has led to rivers touching or flowing above the danger level at several places in the bordering districts," the senior official said. Authorities from Nepal released 5.40 lakh cusecs of water in Gandak barrage from their side till 7 pm on Saturday and 4.99 lakh cusecs of water in Kosi barrage, he added. Following the heavy discharge of water from these two barrages, the excess river water entered low-lying areas of West and East Champaran, Gopalganj, Araria, Supaul, Katihar, Purnea and several other districts, officials said. An alert has already been sounded for several districts of Bihar as the IMD predicted heavy rain and warned of flash flood risk in parts of the state.

# PM launches projects worth ₹ 11,200 crore in Assembly poll-bound Maharashtra

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a slew of development initiatives aimed at giving a boost to prospects of the BJP-led MahaYuti (grand alliance) in the forthcoming Maharashtra Assembly polls, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday laid the foundation stone, inaugurated and dedicated to the nation various projects, including the inauguration of the Pune Metro Rail Project (Phase-1) and the revamped Solapur airport—worth more than Rs 11,200 crore in western Maharashtra. Through video-conferencing, Modi—who was to visit Pune and launch various projects on September 26 but cancelled his trip to Maharashtra due to inclement weather—inaugurated the Pune Metro section from District Court to Swargate, laying the foundation stone for Swargate-Katraj Extension of the Pune Metro section.



The Prime Minister also inaugurated the Solapur Airport which would significantly improve connectivity, making the western Maharashtra city more accessible to tourists, business travellers and investors. The existing terminal Building of Solapur airport has been revamped to serve around 4.1 lakh passengers annually. Modi dedicated the nation to Bidkin Industrial Area, a transformative project covering an expansive 7,855

acres under the National Industrial Corridor Development Program of Govt. of India, situated 20 km south of Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar in Maharashtra. The Bidkin Industrial Area project—developed under Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor—holds immense potential as a vibrant economic hub in the Marathwada region. The Central Government has approved this project with an overall project cost of over Rs 6,400 crore for development in 3 phases. The Prime Minister also laid the foundation stone for the Memorial for Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule's First Girls' School at Bhidewada. Even before the announcement of the schedule for the Maharashtra Assembly by the Election Commission of India (ECI), Modi has reached out to people in four regions in the state. On August 25, Modi addressed "Lakshmi Didi Sammelan" at Jalgaon in north Maharashtra on August 25, laid a foundation stone for Rs 76,000 crore Vadhvan Port at Palghar in coastal Konkan region August 30 and participated in the first anniversary function of the Pradhan Mantri Vishwakarma Yojana at Wardha in Vidarbha region. Today, he launched projects worth Rs 11, 200 meant for western Maharashtra. Speaking on the occasion, Modi said: "Today,

Maharashtra needs big goals with new resolutions. We need to make cities like Pune a center of progress and urban development. Keeping in view Pune's progress and the pressure of the growing population, We need to take steps to augment development and capacity of the city. To achieve this goal, the Prime Minister said that the our government in Maharashtra is working with the approach of modernizing Pune's public transport and giving a boost to connectivity as the city expands". He underscored the importance of development-driven governance in ensuring Maharashtra's progress, emphasizing that any disruption in this continuity leads to significant losses for the state. He highlighted various stalled projects, from Metro initiatives to the Mumbai. Recalling the discussions about Pune Metro began in

2008 but its foundation stone was laid in 2016 when quick decisions were taken by his government, the Prime Minister said: "Today, Pune Metro is gaining speed and expanding. On one hand, Pune Metro section of District Court to Swargate has been inaugurated while on the other hand foundation stone for Swargate to Katraj line has also been laid". Lauding the work done for the expansion of Pune Metro from 2016 till now, Modi said: "The present government in Maharashtra has prepared a modern network of metro in Pune while the previous government could barely construct a single Metro pillar in 8 years". Modi underscored the importance of development-driven governance in ensuring Maharashtra's progress, emphasizing that any disruption in this continuity leads to significant losses for the state.



# Change needed in Haryana: Kejriwal

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) supremo and former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, while addressing a public rally on Sunday, said the BJP had been intentionally putting him behind bars in a false case and it was time for voters to put the BJP out of power. Kejriwal also claimed during the rally that the government will not be formed in Haryana without AAP's support. In Haryana, the assembly election is scheduled on October 5. "Haryana is asking for a change and development. The government will not form in Haryana without AAP's support," said the former Delhi chief minister during the public rally held in the Badshahpur constituency area in support of AAP candidate Beer Singh alias Beeru Sarpanch. Kejriwal, while addressing a public gathering, said he spent five months behind bars without any crime, "BJP targeted me because of my honesty. AAP government developed better schools and provided better health facilities in the national capital, which the BJP don't like, and only because of good work I had to spend several months in jail," the AAP chief said. "If the people of Haryana think Kejriwal is dishonest, don't vote for me. But if they believe I am honest, only then vote for AAP" Kejriwal added. Polling will be held for the Haryana assembly on October 5, and results will be declared on October 8. "They sent me to jail, and now the people of Haryana will send them out of power," he said. AAP chief claimed that if APP came into power, free electricity would be provided. Education and Health systems in the state will be improved. Rs 1,000 will also be given to the women. While targeting the BJP, Kejriwal said, "The BJP failed to provide better facilities to the people of the state. They spread corruption, unemployment, inflation and drug addiction to your children and nothing else. This time, the entire Haryana is demanding change, and any government that is formed in Haryana will not be formed without the support of AAP".

# Memorial for P Keshava Dev takes shape

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

More than four decades after his demise, a memorial for P Keshava Dev, Malayalam literature's eternal rebel and social reformer, is becoming a reality. V D Satheshan, Leader of the Opposition in Kerala Legislative Assembly, who inaugurated a Cultural Yathra from the dilapidated residence of the winner of National Academy of Literature, assured the people in the constituency that their dream would soon become a reality as he himself would take the initiative to construct the memorial. Keshava Dev (1904-1983) was born at Paravoor in Ernakulam district and remembered as the writer who portrayed the life of farm workers, head load workers, sex workers and other downtrodden sections of the society through his novels and short stories. Along with Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai and P C Kuttykrishnan, Dev formed the triumvirate of Malayalam's modern literature. He was the one of the pioneers in Kerala to get converted to Arya Samaj and that was how Keshava Pillai became Keshava Dev. "Though he was attracted towards Communism, Dev was upset with the comrades who bulldozed civil rights and freedom of expression. The ire towards Communism resulted in the path breaking literary work "You turned Me Against Communism". His novels From The Gutter (1942) and Rowdy said the stories of a rickshaw puller and a depredator respectively.



The 1963 work Neighbors, an epic of a village and how the three major communities Nairs, Christians and Eezhava underwent a transformation in post-independent India, is rated as an all time great novel. The memorial meeting at Dev's ancestral house was held as part of Kochi Literary Festival which is getting ready to observe the 28th edition with a month long cultural events. Writers from Ernakulam district undertook a cultural yatra from Dev's house in Paravoor to Irinjalkkuda, the cultural capital which boasts of th birth place of Samgama Grama Madhava (1340-1425), the founder of the Kerala school of astronomy and mathematics. The team of writers also called on Paliyam Palace, the headquarters of the Prim Minister and Chief of Army Staff of the Kingdom of Kochi. The gurukula launched by Padma Bhushan Ammannoor Madhava Chakyar (Chakyars are the proponents of Koothu, an art form), the palace of Kunhikuttan Thampuran and Unnayi Varrier Memorial too figured in the itinerary of the team.

# Himachal Minister reaffirms Congress loyalty after vendor ID remarks

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/SHIMLA

Himachal Pradesh Minister Vikramaditya Singh met Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and assured him about being steadfast to the party's ideology and principles, sources said on Sunday. The meeting on Saturday evening came amid a row over Singh's recent remarks that it would be mandatory for street vendors to display their identity cards at their shops. The state government later clarified no such decision had been taken. Sources said Singh met Kharge and conveyed his



steadfastness to the Congress ideology and principles. Singh on Saturday said he has assuaged the Congress high command's concerns about ideology following his recent remarks on the street vendors issue and described as "misconception" the perception that the Uttar

Pradesh model was being followed in his state. Singh's remarks had come a day after the Congress top brass chided him over his remarks on the mandatory display of names by the street vendors and told him that no one was allowed to go against the party's policies and ideologies. Amid the row over the comments, Congress general secretary in-charge organisation KC Venugopal held a meeting with Singh here on Friday during which the minister was told that the party believed in Rahul Gandhi's mantra of fighting hatred with love.

# Stakes high for BJP in third phase of polling in J and K

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The high-octane campaigning for the third and final phase of Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir came to an end on Sunday with the voting set to be undertaken across 40 Assembly segments on October 1. Across the Jammu region where polling is scheduled to take place on 24 out of 40 Assembly seats, the stakes are high for the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) as it is locked in a straight fight with the Congress party on the majority of seats. In Kashmir Valley, where polling is scheduled to take place across 16 Assembly segments, the future of Sajad Lone's Peoples Conference and the Engineer Rashid-led Awami Ittehad Party (AIP) is also hanging in balance. The National Conference is

hoping to repeat its past performance in the 2002 and 2008 Assembly polls when it won 9 and 7 Assembly seats respectively. In 2014 NC's tally had come down to three seats in the region. PDP won seven seats in the 2014 Assembly polls from North Kashmir. Both Lone and Rashid, labeled as BJP's proxy by the National Conference and the PDP are hoping to retain their stronghold in their bastions across North Kashmir. Engineer Rashid, after receiving a healthy voter response at the time of his release from the Tihar jail (on bail) is hoping to encash on the similar sentiments that propelled his Lok Sabha campaign in May 2024. Sajjad Lone who lost to Engineer Rashid in the Baramulla constituency is now contesting from two Assembly seats — Handwara and Kupwara, while Rashid is

hoping to make inroads in pockets of North Kashmir to romp home victoriously. The fate of several high-profile leaders and turncoats who were given the mandate by the BJP by denying tickets to some of their 'unpopular' leaders will also be decided in this crucial phase. DS Rana contesting from Nagrota, Sham Lal Sharma from Jammu North, and Surjit Singh Slathia from Samba are going to test the political waters for the first time as BJP candidates in the fray. From the congress party several of its candidates are locked in a tough fight with their rival BJP candidate. Lal Singh contesting from Basohli, Raman Bhalla from RSPura-Jammu South and Tara Chand from the Chhamb Assembly segment are also making the 'battle of ballot' more interesting in these seats.

Elaborate security arrangements have been made by the Election Commission of India to ensure peaceful conduct of the polls in the wake of the prevailing security scenario in the region. A total number of 415 candidates remain in the fray for 40 assembly constituencies spread across seven districts of Jammu, Samba, Kathua, Udhampur, Baramulla, Kupwara, and Bandipora. A handful of independent candidates in the fray are also giving a tough competition to the BJP. The party's performance in this crucial phase is going to make or mar the chances of government formation. BJP won 25 Assembly seats in the 2014 Assembly polls, the highest-ever tally so far. This time, the party is hoping to gain an absolute majority. In 2014, BJP swept the polls

winning 19 out of 21 seats in these four districts. Addressing Vijay Sankalp Mahalarly in support of BJP candidates at M A M Stadium on Saturday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said this assembly election has given the people of Jammu a historic opportunity to decide on the next government. They need to seize this moment and choose the BJP, Modi said. Modi also claimed, "The people of Jammu and Kashmir, who have been at the receiving end of the rule of three families — Congress, National Conference and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) — do not want them back." On the occasion, Modi reiterated his government's promise of restoring statehood to Jammu and Kashmir and cautioned people against bringing the NC, Congress, and the PDP back to power.

During the month-long campaign period, the Prime Minister himself led from the front addressing four election rallies in Doda, Srinagar, and Katra in which he communicated directly with the voters to elect a BJP government in the maiden assembly polls after the Abrogation of Articles 370 and 35-A in August 2019. Home Minister Amit Shah also campaigned extensively in the region along with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari, and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. Chief Ministers from the BJP-ruled states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttarakhand and other star campaigners including Smriti Irani, and Anurag Singh Thakur also campaigned for the party candidates during the high-voltage campaigning.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Saving Sunita Williams

Relying on her mental fortitude, Sunita has not only survived the ordeal but plays a crucial role in her rescue

It is heartening to hear that Sunita Williams will be back home soon. Elon Musk's SpaceX has launched a Falcon 9 rocket from Cape Canaveral, Florida to rescue two astronauts stranded in the International Space Station (ISS). The mission aims to retrieve American astronauts Butch Wilmore and Sunita Williams, who have been stranded on the International Space Station for months due to issues with Boeing's Starliner spacecraft. Originally planned for an eight-day stay, the astronauts' mission was extended far beyond after technical problems with the Starliner. As every Indian waits for her rescue the image of Kalpana Chawla flashes in the mind who lost her life in a space mission. She was one of the seven crew members who died in the Space Shuttle Columbia disaster when the spacecraft disintegrated during its re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere on February 1, 2003. The vast, unexplored frontier of space offers countless wonders, but it also brings unique challenges. The present snag is no fault of the astronauts but a lapse on the part of NASA and Boeing company which allowed the mission to proceed despite several alarms and glitches.

Sunita Williams, a veteran of two spaceflights and a woman who has spent over 300 days in space, embarked on her latest mission with the confidence and expertise that comes from years of training and commitment. However, space is as unpredictable as it is vast. A critical error occurred during her mission, which disabled vital components of the spacecraft, leaving her stranded in the ISS. The malfunction wasn't just a minor glitch—it was a cascade of failures. Yet, if there was one person equipped to face such adversity, it was Sunita Williams. Her resilience, mental fortitude, and the ability to maintain calm in even the most extreme conditions became the defining elements in her survival. Williams is no stranger to adversity. The daughter of Indian and Slovenian immigrants, she broke barriers early in her career by rising to prominence in a male-dominated field. Her indomitable spirit and work ethic have always stood out. She has done spacewalk, she holds the record for the longest single spaceflight by a woman, spending 195 days in space until 2017. Over her career, Williams has accumulated more than 322 days in space, marking her as one of the most experienced female astronauts in history. Sunita Williams approached this life-threatening situation with a mix of grit, hope, and resourcefulness. She immediately got involved in troubleshooting, all the while keeping her own morale high through mental exercises and meditation. Let's hope and pray that the rescue mission succeeds and Sunita along with colleague Butch Wilmore reaches home safely and is united with her family. This mission is also a lesson and learning for NASA and its contractors to ensure zero tolerance for any glitches and snags in their operations.

### PICTALK



Artistes perform 'Mahishasur Mardini' act ahead of Durga Puja festival, in Nadia district

# Transforming India through 'Make in India'



PIYUSH GOYAL

The 'Make in India' initiative has completed 10 years of transformative impact. PM Modi's vision has ignited a revival in manufacturing and spurred job creation

On September 25, the country observed 10 years of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's game-changing 'Make in India' initiative that is transforming India's industrial landscape by encouraging job-creating investments and giving many ordinary citizens the confidence to become wealth creators. It's been a remarkable 10-year journey, which gave renewed vigour to industrial sectors turning these into engines of growth, meeting domestic demand as well as contributing to exports. The exciting journey began at a difficult time when domestic investors were despondent because of the policy paralysis and poor governance by the indecisive Congress government.

The economy was down, confidence was shattered, headlines were dominated by a regular dose of corruption scandals, inflation was soaring, interest rates were high and the rupee had an uncertain outlook. To end the feeling of doom and gloom, the Indian voters decisively voted for PM Modi. Our Prime Minister came with a vision for India. He wanted to ensure that India became a global superpower. He wanted India to provide jobs and opportunities to our youth, recognising that manufacturing was critical to India's success story. That is when the PM launched the 'Make in India' initiative. Ten years has been a remarkable journey, but it would not have been possible for the multidimensional and transformative changes done by the Modi government. Initiatives include GST, the Bankruptcy Code and a multitude of other reforms. To improve the ease of doing business, as many as 42,000 compliance requirements were done away with, and 3,700 provisions that provided for criminal penalties for minor offences were removed from various statutes to protect small businesses from harassment. India sharply improved its rank in the World Bank's Doing Business Report from 142nd in 2014 to 63rd in 2019. The government's Startup India initiative



has encouraged many job seekers to become job creators with the help of Startup India initiative. This has helped the number of recognised startups increase to 1,40,803 in June this year, bringing in investments, and creating more than 15 lakh jobs.

These startups are driving the innovation ecosystem in the country, working on solutions to pressing issues in areas such as sanitation, space navigation, reducing food wastage, improving access to healthcare, and empowering women. The development of 11 Industrial Corridors is another focus area of the Government. 20 industrial smart cities are being developed under the program, which would help make these corridors the backbone of India's manufacturing growth. Four of these smart cities have already become magnets of investment with infrastructure and clearances available for manufacturing units to be set up. Potential investment of Rs 1.7 lakh crore is already committed which will provide direct employment to 80,000 persons and indirect to many more. The Government's PLI schemes focus on critical sectors such as electronics, pharmaceuticals, automobiles, textiles and medical devices to create the eco-systems in these sectors for sustained growth



MANY COUNTRIES ARE KEEN TO SIGN TRADE DEALS WITH INDIA. THE WORLD IS NOW LOOKING AT INDIA AS A MANUFACTURING DESTINATION. AND THE KEY REASON FOR THIS INTEREST IS INDIA'S COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE AND ROBUST ECONOMIC FUNDAMENTALS

and ensure their global competitiveness. PLI schemes have resulted in Rs 1.32 lakh crore in investment and a significant boost in manufacturing output of around 11 lakh crore. More than 8.5 lakh jobs have been created directly and indirectly through this initiative. The Prime Minister's initiatives on infrastructure have been another shot in the arm of Indian manufacturing, apart from generating demand for goods and services, infrastructure development is a major facilitator of industrial activity. Today, India has a huge, and growing, network of expressways and highways. New, world-class railway stations are being built, while new freight corridors are coming up. India is increasingly being seen as a very attractive destination for investment. The country provides the 4D advantage - The decisive leadership of PM Modi; the Demographic dividend of our youthful, talented, skilled Indians; the Demand that 140 crore Indians generate in the economy; and Democracy that ensures the safety and security of investors, and the rule of law which will never allow discrimination against one or the other. The 4-D is a very, very compelling case to attract manufacturers to India. Domestic and international investors today find a golden

opportunity to grow their business. There is a flurry of activity in the investor community. A series of delegations is visiting India, hungry for opportunities to invest and participate in the Indian growth story. Foreign governments and global CEOs are keenly eyeing opportunities in India. Many countries are keen to sign trade deals with India. The world is now looking at India as a manufacturing destination. And the key reason for this interest is India's competitive advantage and robust economic fundamentals. Today, inflation is under control, economic growth is strong and the Modi government is following strict fiscal discipline. This is all the more commendable in the current global situation marred by conflict and uncertainty. The initiatives of PM Modi have helped India rise from the unenviable situation of being regarded as one of the "Fragile Five" in the world in 2014, to being one of the Top Five in the world. In effect, PM Modi's initiatives like Make in India have contributed to making the last 10 years a transformational decade - a quantum jump over the lost decade of Congress rule. (The writer is Minister of Commerce and Industry; views expressed are personal)

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### QUAD STRENGTHENS INDIA'S ROLE

Madam — China's aggressive posture has consistently threatened peace in the Indo-Pacific region. India, has faced quite a few challenges from the latter. It is a matter of pride that New Delhi is looked upon by other countries to be their firm partner on global platforms to tackle Beijing's economic and military prowess. Specifically, the Asia-Pacific region was described as Indo-Pacific to denote India's increasingly active involvement in the region. The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) is one international forum that glues the four friendly nations—the United States, Japan, Australia and India—together. All these nations are keen to usher in a free and open Indo-Pacific region, diminishing the influence of a marauding Beijing. The four have been able to sustain a momentum that no country can ignore. In the fourth in-person Quad summit at US Wilmington, leaders of the four countries underlined the importance of shared democratic values that have kept them together. Issues of health, security, climate change, capacity building and technology occupied the leaders' attention. More importantly, India is emerging as a 'leader' of the four, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi has proposed to host the next year's summit in New Delhi in 2025. It can only grow stronger from here.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

#### TOP COURT REJECTS GUJARAT PLEA

Madam— The Supreme Court has dismissed a plea filed by the Gujarat government seeking a review of the court's verdict, which contained certain observations against the State while quashing the remission granted to 11 men convicted of raping Bilkis Bano and murdering seven of her family during the 2002 riots. Having carefully gone through the review petitions, the order under challenge and the papers annexed therewith, the judges were satisfied

## Durga Puja has transformed



This is in response to the article titled "A symphony of tradition and transformation" (September 29). In the mid-1980s, Durga Puja used to get celebrated with utmost devotion according to rituals with dominance of Bhakti encompassing both the organisers and public. Only on Saptami morning, we used to get awakened by the rhythmic beats of Dhak, all puja rituals used to

commence with rendition of Sanskrit mantras and people used to start flocking to the pandals. But in last 4 decades all things associated with Durga Puja have undergone a sea change! Far from commencing the Puja on Saptami morning, many pandals and idols now open up for public "consumption" right from the Mahalaya itself thereby "promoting" 4-day Puja to a "modern" 10-day extravaganza! After all majority of these "glamorous" Puja committees do not care to actually offer homage to it through rituals mantras holy hymns or flowers! Durga Puja of today is nothing but a fashion show of sorts with exhibition of flexing muscles - be it monetary might or trophies garnered! Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

that there is no error apparent on the face of the record or any merit in the review petitions, warranting reconsideration of the order impugned. The review petitions are, accordingly, dismissed and it is a landmark decision. The Gujarat government in its plea had said the apex court's observation in the January 8 judgement, holding the State guilty of "usurpation of power" and "abuse of discretion" for complying with an order of another top court bench, was an "error apparent on the face of the record" primarily on three grounds.

CK Subramani | Kerala

#### TOURISM EDUCATION EMPOWERMENT

Madam — Tourism plays a pivotal role in the global economy acting as a bridge between cultures and fostering economic growth in various regions. It contributes approximately 10 per cent to the world's GDP and generates millions of employment opportunities, especially in rural and less developed areas.

By integrating tourism studies into academic curricula, institutions can equip students with essential skills in areas such as sustainable tourism practices, travel management and hospitality management. This education not only prepares students for diverse career opportunities but also fosters a deeper understanding of how to balance tourism's economic benefits with environmental sustainability and cultural preservation. Promoting tourism education in colleges cultivates a new generation ready to take the bull by the horns, driving innovation while advocating for responsible tourism practices that balance economic growth with social and environmental accountability. Moreover, it supports regional development by teaching students how to effectively market and manage local attractions thereby preserving cultural heritage while boosting local economies.

Tanisha Gupta | Ujjain

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## Breaking life into small steps for lasting fulfillment

Happiness is actually the most important project of life. True contentment comes from savouring each step, no matter how small

Happiness is the most important project of life. It should be broken up into smaller activities to attain the eventual goal. The only time that we probably understand this is in our childhood. As a child, I had intuitively learned the art of allocating the hours of the day for various activities, like waking up, getting ready and spending time in school, having lunch on return, completing homework, going out to play, returning for dinner, and going to bed. We lived in the present from one hour to the next. I was a satisfied and happy person as I could complete the 'Project Day'. We did not have the need or the time to look too far into the future. As we outgrew childhood, we forgot the lessons learned. I joined college. Like others, I too started making grand resolutions on the first day of the year. My resolution could be as mundane as losing the 15 kgs within the first three months, which had taken me a year to gain. It could also be an important resolution to secure 90 per cent marks in my semester examinations, a substantial



improvement over the 60 per cent in the previous one. Each resolution would fly out of the window within the first few months. I had forgotten to take small steps to reach the end destination. Things did not improve even after I started working. I found a new toy - a 'To Do List'. A diary would be earmarked for this most important ritual. I would start with one such list and continue adding till I had inked the second or third page with only a few activities completed. I would give up, and start all over again. The previous year's diary was promptly destroyed lest anyone glanced into it and called my bluff. This continued for a few years till I discovered the computer. I could delete these pending activities at will, with

no one any wiser to my shenanigans. I was fooling only myself. I quit my railway job to join a government company working in the execution of construction projects. I was exposed to software-based project management tools for the first time. I reluctantly spent weeks with the consultant to develop an activity-based project breakdown structure. He educated us about the importance of breaking each activity into smaller sub-activities. We were reluctant to accept that more activities to monitor would result in successful and timely completion. He was not satisfied with the first draft of less than 100 activities. He was a tough taskmaster. We marched on, to our ever-increasing despair, and his impatience, till we



SANJAY CHANDRA

called it quits after we had reached 1000 odd activities. It was a revelation to me. I now appreciated the time that my wife spent planning the daily household chores. The exercise in project management also brought into stark focus all the wrong I was doing while making my New Year resolutions and the To-Do Lists, and more importantly, living my life. I now understand why we remain unhappy most of the time. We forget to derive joy out of each step that we take, however small it may be. The young of today are far more mature. Hina Khan, a young actor, recently diagnosed with cancer, is a courageous woman fighting all that life has to throw at her. Her thoughts are the most inspiring words I have read in some time, "First normalise the challenges of your lives then set goals for yourself and try to live up to them all along the way. No matter how hard. Never back down. Never give up." (The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)



**FIRST COLUMN**

**HARNESSING INNER POTENTIAL**

The human mind is still an enigma. It has enormous potential and is a reservoir of energy



RAVI VALLURI

His alcoholism became a quotidian habit. Dharmendra was making a last-ditch effort as he boarded a flight from Jaipur to the Art of Living Ashram in Bangalore. Fortuitously, Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar had given him an appointment at 4 PM that evening. Stinking of liquor, and reeking of stale cigarettes, with an unsteady gait he landed at Bangalore airport. He needed a physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional, parachute. Only a 'Master' through grace could provide such a life support system. For some time, my friend was trying to seek redemption from the lethal disease of alcoholism. My inventory list was prepared: join a rehab, attend Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, and undertake the Happiness Programme of the Art of Living. Gurudev advanced the appointment to 11 AM., and after one glance asked my friend to get admitted to the Ayurveda Hospital in the Ashram for a complete detoxification of body, mind, and soul, and after a 15-day rehab to undergo the Happiness Programme. The Guru had scripted a change in the life of Dharmendra, it was for his mind to grab the opportunity. But the monkey mind invented an excuse and Dharmendra left the Ayurveda Hospital and once again indulged in brinkmanship. He could not draw the redlines or flag the issues confronting his mind and succumbed to temptation. While the brain is an organ that serves as the centre of the nervous system, the mind is the faculty of consciousness and thoughts. It is an individual's intellect, memory or attention span and will, whose potential needs to be enhanced or live in the past. Such individuals are unable to break the patterns and barriers of their comfort zone. Their prana levels



are exceedingly low and the pendulum of their mind's swings to the past. The moot question is how we use this enormous energy. If we look at the brighter aspects of life, such mental imagery works miraculously. Over some time the mind feels blessed, gains in abundance and becomes grateful. This is what Masters refers to as the

**Law of Attraction**

The Law of Attraction remains an illusion if it is not in conjunction with the Law of Gratitude. Both these laws operate in tandem and will fuel inner potential to harness growth leading to robust minds. Low and the pendulum of their minds swings to the past. They carry the burden of the past and attempt a course correction without any professional help (Guru) displaying false bravado in their imaginary worlds. They invariably try to also change the behavioural patterns of those close to them, essentially to market their point of view. Such minds invariably resort to shortcuts in life, trying to please everyone without any success. Ignoring the larger picture, this is a cunning and selfish mind, which does not trust anyone: basically, short of confidence and haunted by fear. The human mind is an enigma. It has enormous potential and is a reservoir of energy. The moot question is how we use this enormous energy. If we look at the brighter aspects of life, such mental imagery works miraculously. Over some time the mind feels blessed, gains in abundance and becomes grateful. Positive thoughts beget positivity and have a spiralling effect. The jigsaw puzzle of life gets sorted out. This is what Masters refer to as the Law of Attraction. The Law of Attraction remains an illusion if it is not in conjunction with the Law of Gratitude. Both these laws operate in tandem.

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

# Can India become a manufacturing hub?



UTTAM GUPTA

Growth is driven by strong domestic demand, export potential, government infrastructure efforts, private sector investment, and initiatives like 'Make in India'



According to a Study Report by IDBI Capital, India is set to add US\$ 1 trillion to its gross domestic product (GDP) every 18 months over the next six years. It goes on to say that "with this momentum, the country is on track to become a US\$ 10 trillion economy positioning itself as the world's third-largest economy by 2030". Currently, India has a GDP of US\$ 4 trillion. The report has also highlighted that "India's accelerated growth will be driven primarily by the manufacturing sector, which is projected to contribute 32 per cent to the incremental Gross Value Added (GVA)". It adds "India will overtake the top five economies in manufacturing IIP (Index of Industrial Production) viz. US, China, Germany, South Korea and Japan...". Manufacturing essentially involves the production of a wide spectrum of consumer products, industrial machinery and so on.

It is the most important component of Industrial activity at a broader level which also includes Construction (primarily building infrastructure); Logistics (transportation and storage of goods); Aerospace (aircraft and spacecraft etc) and maintenance and services required to support industrial activities. The contribution of the Industrial sector to India's GDP is around 30 per cent of which manufacturing alone is 17 per cent. The share of Agriculture and allied activities in GDP is around 18 per cent. The remaining 52 per cent comes from the Services sector (SS).

The SS encompasses 'intangible' services such as education, health, entertainment, hospitality and tourism, banking, insurance and so on.

While, all three sectors play a crucial role in growth, creating jobs and increasing incomes, manufacturing can provide a more sustainable basis for providing jobs and surety of income. This is in sharp contrast to agriculture which is fundamentally a seasonal activity and economic fortunes are largely tied to how monsoon pans out. Manufacturing can also provide a good buffer for absorbing the excess workforce from agriculture with positive spin-offs even for the latter in terms of higher productivity and income. Within the manufacturing sector, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) occupy a pivotal position. The



WHILE, ALL THREE SECTORS PLAY A CRUCIAL ROLE IN GROWTH, CREATING JOBS AND INCREASING INCOMES, MANUFACTURING CAN PROVIDE A MORE SUSTAINABLE BASIS FOR PROVIDING JOBS AND SURETY OF INCOME

MSMEs are ancillary units engaged in the production, manufacturing and processing of goods and commodities (mostly intermediate goods) which are supplied to large enterprises or master units. These units operate on a small scale and are further categorized into micro, small and medium enterprises depending on the 'investment' and 'turnover' threshold. According to the Ministry of Statistics & Program Implementation, the share of MSME manufacturing output in all India Manufacturing output is around 36 per cent. The share of export of MSME-specified products in all India exports has oscillated between 44 - 50 per cent during the last couple of years. As for employment, according to a report released by the McKinsey Global Institute (MGI), MSMEs in India contribute 62 per cent to the total. Yet, in the past, manufacturing hasn't been given the desired push. Its low contribution of 17 per cent in GDP and even lower share of total employment at about 10 per cent says it all.

Now, India aiming at the generation of 32 per cent of the incremental GVA from manufacturing shows its determination to put in the effort during the next six years or so, which is nearly double what it has done cumulatively to date. At this pace, by 2030, the share of manufacturing in GDP will have reached 26 per cent (4x0.17+6x0.32)/10.

The factors that can make it happen are robust domestic demand; strong export potential; heavy lifting by the Central Government (plus support to States) by building infrastructure; increasing investment by the private sector; key initiatives such as 'Make in India' playing a pivotal role in bolstering the country's manufacturing capabilities underpinned by the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes; India taking up a lead role in recalibrating global supply chains to position the country

as a global manufacturing hub; giving a boost to the micro small and medium enterprises (MSME) and so on. Nearly 70 per cent of India's GDP is driven by domestic consumption; Stimulating demand holds the key to putting manufacturing on an 'accelerated' and 'sustained' growth trajectory. For this, not only people's income should grow, but it should also be evenly and widely distributed. What do the facts speak? According to an Oxfam report, 'Inequality Kills', the collective wealth of India's 100 richest people in 2021 hit a record high of US\$ 775 billion or over 25 per cent of India's GDP. This shows the extreme inequalities in the distribution of income and wealth. There are other pointers to confirm that this is indeed so. According to an analysis of the financials of India's largest companies - those comprising the BSE 500 index - over five years, the profits of corporations included in this index more than doubled from Rs 480,000 crore during 2017-18 to Rs 1000,000 crore during 2021-22, whereas their revenue growth was only 47 per cent.

This means that payments to factors of production other than the owners of capital such as to employees/workers, etc., have been kept under a tight leash, resulting in a disproportionate boost to profits. The aggregate dividend paid by these firms increased from Rs 176,000 crore during 2017-18 to Rs 302,000 crore during 2021-22, which is an increase of 72 per cent. In those five years, cumulatively, they paid 34 per cent of aggregate net profit as dividends. This is an unusually high payout ratio - even higher than 30 per cent paid by the world's largest companies in America's S&P 500.

The products made in India need to be priced low if they are to be competitive. But, there are three major reasons as to why prices are downward inflexible. First, several big businesses operating in metals

such as copper, zinc, aluminium or hydrocarbons like oil and gas, enjoy a natural monopoly enabling them to set high prices. Firms in the chemical, petrochemicals, pharmaceutical and agrochemicals sectors also charge more courtesy, high tariffs on imports and licensing and registration requirements. Second, you have the impact of high taxation particularly when it comes to petroleum products. These are taxed under the pre-GST regime leading to the high incidence of 80 per cent of the ex-refinery price of petrol (Delhi). Ditto in the case of diesel. Increasing the cost of the movement of goods raises the cost of almost every manufactured item. Third, how can one be oblivious of the exorbitant power tariff set in double digits in many states? The power distribution companies or discoms (mostly owned and controlled by the States) are forced to charge high rates on supplies to industries as they have to make up for the under-recoveries incurred on supplies to farmers and households, either free or at a heavily subsidized price.

Finally, industries are operating in highly interesting environments. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has kept the policy rate (the interest rate at which it lends money to banks) unchanged at a high of 6.5 per cent along with a 'withdrawal of accommodation' stance (a jargon for tight liquidity) for nearly 20 months. This leads to high cost loans to all industries across the board. The MSMEs are more vulnerable to all the above cost-push factors. To add salt to the injury, they get delayed payment for their dues from large firms. Unless the above fault lines are addressed, Initiatives under 'Make in India' won't yield the desired result and India becoming a manufacturing hub of the world will remain a distant dream.

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

# India's education system must prioritise learning over infrastructure

Despite schools being filled with students, foundational skills like basic literacy and numeracy continue to lag

Since gaining independence, India has made significant strides in the field of education, especially in terms of infrastructure and expanding access to schools. Classrooms now accommodate children from all walks of life, and government initiatives have succeeded in bringing millions of students into the education system.

However, despite these achievements, a critical component remains neglected—the quality of learning. Infrastructure may be flourishing, but the foundational skills that students require for future success often lag behind. To understand this, imagine a farmer who diligently sows seeds in well-tilled soil, only to find the harvest insufficient because the seeds weren't suit



ASHU KAPOOR

ed to the soil. In the same way, India's educational progress in infrastructure is commendable, but the students' foundational skills—the seeds of education—are still not producing the robust results we hope for. Year after year, surveys like the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) and the National Achievement Survey (NAS) reveal a startling reality: a large proportion of students struggle with essential

skills like basic literacy and numeracy.

These are the building blocks of education, without which the entire edifice remains shaky. Students are spending years in school, but many are not learning at the expected level. The alarming gap between schooling and actual learning points to a crucial flaw in the system. If foundational skills are not nurtured early on, the benefits of educational progress will remain elusive, much like the farmer's poor harvest.

The introduction of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 brings a renewed sense of hope. It promises transformative change and a shift towards a system that values not just access to education but the quality of learning.

Together with the National Curriculum Framework for Foundational and School Education, NEP 2020 emphasizes the need to measure educational progress through well-designed assessments and to tailor interventions accordingly.

The goal is clear: to raise a generation of learners who are not only equipped with knowledge but also the critical thinking skills required to thrive in the modern world. Research consistently shows that assessments play a transformative role in improving education. Their primary goal is not to rank students or schools but to provide insights into where learners stand on their educational journey. By identifying what students know and can do at individual, school, and

system levels, assessments offer a roadmap for educators to develop targeted interventions that can address specific learning gaps.

In the quest to transform learning, large-scale assessments like ASER and NAS will be pivotal. ASER, a household-based survey, provides insights into basic literacy and numeracy skills, while NAS offers a broader view of students' achievement of curricular outcomes. Recently, the State Educational Achievement Survey (SEAS) was conducted by NCERT to provide state-level insights into educational progress.

Simply generating report cards on students' performance is not enough. The data must be used to inform policy decisions and to implement specific

interventions aimed at improving learning outcomes. If not, students will continue to face the same challenges year after year, with little improvement. Large-scale assessments should be seen as the first step in a larger strategy to address educational inequities.

While NAS offers a broad overview of the education system, state-level assessment surveys (SAS) have the potential to zoom in on specific issues at the school level. NEP 2020 recognizes the importance of these surveys and recommends that each state conduct its own census-based assessment to drive continuous improvement. By focusing on local contexts, SAS can provide valuable insights into the unique challenges faced by

individual states, enabling more targeted interventions. However, the effectiveness of SAS depends on how well states define their objectives. To make SAS truly impactful, states need to align their assessment frameworks with clear objectives. A well-designed assessment should consider the needs of the educational system at the state level, and the data collected should be used to support and improve schools, rather than ranking them. India's states would do well to ensure that all stakeholders in the education system—teachers, school administrators, and district-level educators—are trained in data use and analysis.

The road ahead is challenging, but the promise of census-based state assessments is

transformative. By monitoring student progress and providing data-driven insights, SAS can reshape India's educational landscape. When combined with national-level assessments like NAS, SAS has the power to create a more responsive, equitable education system. With a strategic approach and strong governance, India can ensure that every student has the opportunity to thrive.

The writer is a Research Fellow at Australian Council for Educational Research (India) and a former Senior Academic Consultant at NCERT and Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India. Views are personal. Inputs by Dr Priyanka Sharma, Director ACER (India)

# China urges all parties to cool down tensions in West Asia

**PTI ■ BEIJING**  
China on Sunday called on "parties concerned, especially Israel", to immediately take actions to cool down tensions to prevent the conflict in West Asia from going out of control in the aftermath of the killing of Iranian-backed Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah in Israeli bombing. "China is closely following the incident and is deeply concerned over the escalation of tensions in the region," a Chinese Foreign Ministry statement said. Separately, China also issued an advisory asking its citizens not to travel to Lebanon due to the intensification of the conflict. "China opposes the infringement on Lebanon's sovereignty and security, opposes and condemns any action against

innocent civilians, and opposes any move that fuels antagonism and escalates regional tensions," the Chinese Foreign Ministry statement said. "China urges parties concerned, especially Israel, to immediately take actions to cool down the situation and prevent the conflict from escalating or even spiralling out of control," it said, without directly referring to Nasrallah's killing, regarded as a major setback to Iran, the main backer of the Hezbollah. Reports from Tehran said Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who said Nasrallah's death "will not go unavenged", has been shifted to a secure location. Khamenei also announced five days of public mourning after Nasrallah's death. In recent years, China has stepped in its diplomatic engagement in the Middle East

to counter US influence. Last year, Beijing managed to bring about a landmark peace deal between Iran and Saudi Arabia. After the intensification of the Gaza war, China hosted a meeting of 14 Palestinian factions, including Fatah and Hamas, in July to bring about unity among them. China has also strongly condemned the assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran in July, warning that the killing could plunge the region into deeper chaos. The Chinese embassy in Lebanon, meanwhile, issued an advisory warning its citizens about escalating violence along the Lebanon-Israel border. "We advise all Chinese citizens to pay close attention to the developments and refrain from travelling to Lebanon at this time. Those currently in the country are urged to evacuate or move to relatively safe areas

as soon as possible," the Chinese embassy said in a statement released on Saturday. Meanwhile, in its first statement since the recent escalation with Israel and following the killing of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, Lebanon's military called for calm among the Lebanese "at this dangerous and delicate stage." Government officials fear that the country's deep political divisions at a time of war could rekindle sectarian strife and violence in the small Mediterranean country. "The Israeli enemy is working to implement its destructive plans and spread division among the Lebanese," the military said. Military vehicles have been deployed in different parts of the capital as thousands of displaced people continue moving from the south to Beirut.

# Norway plans to build fence on Russia border, like Finland

**AP ■ HELSINKI**  
Norway may put a fence along part or all of the 198-kilometer (123-mile) border it shares with Russia, a minister said, a move inspired by a similar project in its Nordic neighbour Finland. "A border fence is very interesting, not only because it can act as a deterrent but also because it contains sensors and technology that allow you to detect if people are moving close to the border," Justice Minister Emilie Enger Mehl said in an interview by the Norwegian public broadcaster NRK published late Saturday. She said the Norwegian government is currently looking at "several measures" to beef up security on the border with Russia in the Arctic north, such as fencing, increasing the number of border staff or stepping up monitoring.

The Storskog border station, which has witnessed only a handful of illegal border crossing attempts in the past few years, is the only official crossing point into Norway from Russia. Should the security situation in the delicate Arctic area worsen, the Norwegian government is ready to close the border on short notice, said Enger Mehl, who visited neighbouring Finland this summer to learn about how the entire 1,340-kilometer (830-mile) Finnish-Russian land border was closed. The Finnish government was prompted to close all crossing points from Russia to Finland in late 2023 after more than 1,300 third-country migrants without proper documentation or visas — an unusually high number — entered the country in three months, just months after the nation became a member of NATO.

To prevent Moscow using migrants in what the Finnish government calls Russia's "hybrid warfare", Helsinki is currently building fences with a total length of up to 200 kilometers (124 miles) in separate sections along the border zone that makes up part of NATO's northern flank and serves as the European Union's external border. Finnish border officials say fences equipped with top-notch surveillance equipment — to be located mostly around crossing points — are needed to better monitor and control any migrants attempting to cross over from Russia and give officials time to react. Inspired by Finland's project, Enger Mehl said that such a fence could also be a good idea for Norway. According to NRK, her statement was supported by police chief Ellen Katrine Hætta in Norway's northern Finnmark county.

# Sikh group's campaign against Islamophobia gains support

**London (PTI):** A British Sikh organisation campaigning against a "flawed" definition of Islamophobia adopted by the Labour Party a few years ago being made legal has received a boost as the government admitted the proposal would not be in line with the UK's Equality Act. The Network of Sikh Organisations (NSO) had written to Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner and the government Faith Minister Lord Wajid Khan earlier this month to caution that the proposed definition would jeopardise even a factual discussion of the history of the Indian subcontinent. Back in 2018, the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on British Muslims had defined Islamophobia as a "type of racism" that targets expressions of Muslimness. "As you have mentioned, the definition proposed by the APPG is not in line with the Equality Act 2010, which defines race in terms of colour, nationality and national or ethnic origins," reads Lords Khan's reply to the NSO released this week. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Faith, Communities and Resettlement in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government goes on to admit that defining Islamophobia as a "complex issue" and something ministers are approaching in a "more holistic" way. "We want to ensure that any definition comprehensively reflects multiple perspectives and implications for different communities. This government is actively considering our approach to tackling Islamophobia through a more holistic lens, and will provide further information on this in due course," he said. The minister concurs with NSO's letter that freedom of speech including the freedom to discuss religion should not be impacted by any new laws to clamp down on hateful speech that is motivated by hostility towards individuals based on race or religion. In its letter, the NSO had warned that the adoption of a "contested definition" into law would have serious implications on "free speech, not least the ability to discuss historical truths".

# France's new govt pledges hardline stance on migration

**AP ■ PARIS**  
France's new government is set to take a hardline approach to migration issues as key officials have pledged to significantly reduce the number of people entering and staying illegally in the country. After calling for snap legislative elections in June, President Emmanuel Macron appointed Prime Minister Michel Barnier, a veteran conservative from The Republicans party, hoping the Brexit negotiator would work with the divided legislature to end the political turmoil that has upended French politics in recent months. The Barnier government — dominated by conservatives and centrists — does not have a majority in parliament and efforts to pass any new legislation are bound to be fought, and potentially blocked. The National Assembly is now split between three major political blocs: the left-wing New Popular Front leftist coalition, Macron's centrist allies — who made a deal with the conservatives — and the far-right



National Rally party, the largest single party in the new assembly. The new prime minister will outline his priorities in a general policy speech scheduled for Tuesday at the National Assembly. In recent televised interviews, Barnier criticised French borders as "sieves" and expressed concern that "migratory flows" were "not under control". He promised to "limit immigration", citing measures taken by neighbouring countries like

Germany, which expanded controls at all land borders earlier this month. Critics have denounced Barnier's government immigration stance as strongly influenced by the National Rally's proposals, as its survival depends on the party's goodwill. Far-right and left-wing lawmakers can force the whole government to resign on condition they agree on a no-confidence vote. Marine Le Pen, the National

Rally's leading figure, said she would not seek to bring down the new government for now, waiting to see its initial "acts". In a recent interview with La Tribune-Dimanche newspaper, she said: "It's undeniable that Michel Barnier seems to have, on migration, the same assessment as ours." Barnier's hardline approach is reflected in the appointment of Bruno Retailleau, a fellow conservative known for his tough rhetoric on migrants, as the interior minister. Retailleau shared this week his intention to reign in immigration. He said he would seek to "reform" France's state medical assistance that covers health care expenses for undocumented migrants. He has argued for years that it should be strictly limited to minimum emergency care. Eight former health ministers from the left, centre and right signed a column in French newspaper Le Monde to call on the government to maintain the state medical assistance, saying limiting it would put France's healthcare system "under

increased pressure" because it would lead "to taking care of people later" when their condition is "more serious" and "more expensive". Retailleau also said he would try to toughen up random border controls, bring back a law that sanctioned with fines or prison sentences those caught entering French territory illegally, and seek deals with North African nations such as Morocco so that those countries retain migrants before they even set foot in France. A shift to the right that worries civil society groups Yann Manzi, who started working alongside migrants during the 2015 migration crisis when well over 1 million people fleeing war in Syria and Iraq, denounced France's long-conging shift to the right. Manzi's nonprofit, Utopia 56, currently runs a temporary shelter in Paris' suburbs and coordinates hundreds of voluntary workers daily in different French regions. He said that decades ago when France's National Rally was

still on the fringes, it came up with the rhetoric that welcoming migrants would dramatically increase the number of foreigners coming into the country and wreak havoc in French society. This has slowly but steadily spread to other parties, including the left, Manzi said. The nonprofit founder believes migrants have been met with increasingly harsh conditions in France and the rest of Europe. "The message sent to those seeking to come to the country is very clear: We no longer welcome you," said Manzi. Some proposals to stem migration could prove difficult to implement as they need to go through the already divided parliament while others, such as sanctioning migrants who have entered France illegally, appear to go against European rulings. Barnier, suggested while campaigning, in vain, to be his party's presidential candidate in 2022 that France should find ways to bypass justices from the Court of Justice of the European Union and the European Court of Human

Rights. Still, the prime minister and Retailleau argue they can still take action without passing new legislation, such as decrees and instructions to national and local administrations in charge of implementing migration policies. Retailleau said he would convene next week a meeting with prefects of regions the most impacted by migrant issues to "tell them to deport more" and "regularise less". Critics say France's hardline shift on migration has long been in the works. Macron's former centrist government passed since 2017 several bills meant to tighten immigration controls and accelerate asylum procedures. The latest immigration bill, adopted in January this year, intended to strengthen France's ability to deport foreigners considered undesirable. Conservative President Nicolas Sarkozy, in office from 2007 to 2012, also emphasized a more stringent immigration policy as he sought to siphon off voters from the far right.

# Austrians vote as far-right party hopes for its first election win

**Vienna (AP):** Austrians voted on Sunday in a national election that the far-right Freedom Party is hoping to win for the first time, tapping into anxieties about immigration, inflation, Ukraine and other concerns following recent gains for the hard right elsewhere in Europe. Herbert Kickl, a former interior minister and longtime campaign strategist who has led the Freedom Party since 2021, wants to become Austria's new chancellor. He has used the term "Volkskanzler", or chancellor of the people, which was used by the Nazis to describe Adolf Hitler in the 1930s. Kickl has rejected the comparison. But to become Austria's new leader, he would need a coalition partner to command a majority in the lower house of parliament — and rivals have said they won't work under Kickl. And a win isn't certain, with recent polls pointing to a close race. They have put support for the Freedom Party at 27 per cent, with the conservative Austrian People's Party of Chancellor Karl Nehammer on 25 per cent and the centre-left Social Democrats on 21 per cent. Nehammer said as he voted that "it is important from my point of view to provide stability as a responsible politician but also the political centre, so that the radicals don't get a chance". More than 6.3 million people age 16 and over are eligible to vote for the new parliament in Austria, a European Union member that has a policy of military neutrality. Kickl has achieved a turnaround since Austria's last parliamentary election in 2019. In June, the Freedom Party narrowly won a nationwide vote for the first time in the European Parliament election, which also brought gains for other European far-right parties. In

# Contenders to lead Britain's defeated Conservative Party woo members

**AP ■ LONDON**  
Members of Britain's defeated and divided Conservative Party gathered on Sunday for an annual conference dominated by the search for a new leader capable of bringing the right-of-centre party back from a catastrophic election defeat. UK voters ousted the Tories in a July election, leaving the party that had governed since 2010 with just 121 seats in the 650-seat House of Commons. The centre-left Labour Party won more than 400 seats and returned to office under Prime Minister Keir Starmer. The day after the election, defeated ex-Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said he would quit, remaining caretaker leader until his replacement is chosen. The four candidates remaining in the race to replace him — whittled down by lawmakers from an initial six — will spend the four-day conference in Birmingham, central England



speaking to as many party members as possible. Former Immigration Minister Robert Jenrick, ex-Business Secretary Kemi Badenoch, former Foreign Secretary James Cleverly and ex-Security Minister Tom Tugendhat make final pitches from the conference stage on Wednesday, before Conservative lawmakers will eliminate two candidates in a vote the following week. Party members across the country will then vote to pick

a winner, who will be announced on November 2. The winner will take over a party depleted by years of turmoil under ex-Prime Minister Boris Johnson — ousted by colleagues in 2022 amid ethics scandals — and his successor Liz Truss. She resigned after just 49 days in office when her tax-cutting plans rocked the financial markets and battered the value of the pound. In the July election, the Conservatives lost votes to hard-right Reform

UK, led by populist politician Nigel Farage, which won five seats in Parliament and came second in dozens more. Other voters deserted the Tories for the centrist Liberal Democrats, who won 72 seats. The current front-runners in the party race are Jenrick and Badenoch, both of whom are appealing to the party's right wing. Jenrick argues that the UK should drastically curb immigration and leave the European Convention on Human Rights in order to take tough measures to stop people seeking asylum in the UK. "He told Sky News on Sunday that the party lost because 'we didn't deliver the strong economy, the strong (health service) and the strong border that we promised'. Nigeria-raised Badenoch evokes Tory icon Margaret Thatcher with her calls for a smaller state, appeals to patriotism and criticism of multiculturalism. She said Sunday that too many immigrants don't love Britain and 'hate Israel'.

# Starmer suffers first leadership setback as party MP resigns

**London (PTI):** British Prime Minister Keir Starmer has suffered his first setback since taking charge at 10 Downing Street in July after one of his members of Parliament resigned from the Labour Party, delivering a scathing attack on his leadership. Rosie Duffield, MP for Canterbury in Kent, will now sit in the House of Commons as an Independent after her resignation letter published in 'The Sunday Times' attacked the Labour leader's "cruel and unnecessary" policies amid an ongoing expensive free gifts row. Duffield claimed there were many "last straws" that led to her decision to resign, but her main reason to step down this weekend is over the government's programme of unpopular policies. "They are cruel and unnecessary and affect hundreds of thousands of our poorest, most vulnerable constituents. This is not what I was elected to do. It is not even wise politics, and it certainly is not

'the politics of service,' writes Duffield in her resignation letter. The MP goes on to state that she has no confidence in the Labour PM's commitment to deliver the "so-called change" he promised during the general election campaign and that she could not look her "constituents in the eye and tell them that anything has changed". Delivering a more personal broadside on Starmer, she added: "As Prime Minister, your managerial and technocratic approach and lack of basic politics and political instincts, have come crashing down on us as a party after we worked so hard, promised so much, and waited a long fourteen years to be mandated by the British public to return to power. "Since the change of government in July, the revelations of hypocrisy have been staggering and increasingly outrageous. I cannot put into words how angry I and my colleagues are at

your total lack of understanding about how you have made us all appear. "How dare you take our longed-for victory, the electorate's sacred and precious trust, and throw it back in their individual faces and the faces of dedicated and hardworking Labour MPs!! The sleaze, nepotism and apparent avarice are off the scale. I am so ashamed of what you and your inner circle have done to tarnish and humiliate our once proud party." Responding to Duffield's resignation, Indian-origin Labour MP for Nottingham East Nadia Whittome said: "It is deeply disappointing that she has been allowed the privilege of resigning, as she should have lost the whip a long time ago." It alludes to Duffield's previous clashes with Labour's senior figures, especially over her views on transgender issues and speaking out for protected spaces for women and against people being able to self-identify as trans to gain access to those spaces.

# US: Trump lays into Harris on immigration during rally

**AP ■ WISCONSIN**  
Former President Donald Trump sought again to link Vice President Kamala Harris to illegal border crossings, speaking in a western river town where he said she could never be forgiven for "erasing our border." A day after Harris discussed immigration at the US-Mexico border, Trump spoke to a crowd in the Wisconsin town of 5,000 people just across the Mississippi River from Iowa, claiming the Democratic nominee was responsible for migrants who have come into the country illegally and have committed crimes. "Kamala Harris can never be forgiven for her erasing our border and she must never be allowed to become president of the United States," Trump said. "She's letting in people who are going to walk into your house, break

into your door," he said. Trump is hoping frustration over illegal immigration will translate to votes in Wisconsin and other crucial swing states. The Republican nominee has denounced people who cross the US-Mexico border as "poisoning the blood of the country" and vowed to stage the largest deportation operation in American history if elected. "I will liberate Wisconsin from the mass migrant invasion," he said. "We're going to liberate the country." But Trump also intensified his personal attacks against Harris, insulting her as "mentally impaired". "If a Republican did what she did, that Republican would be impeached and removed from office... Joe Biden became mentally impaired. Kamala was born that way," he said. And he also professed not to

understand what Harris meant when she said he was responsible for taking children from their parents. Under his administration, Trump separated children from their parents at the US-Mexico border in a policy that was condemned globally as inhumane and one that Trump himself ended. On the Wisconsin rally stage with Trump were three mugshots of men in the US illegally accused of a crime, including Alejandro Jose Coronel Zarate, a case Trump cited in his speech. Wisconsin Republicans in recent days have held up the story of Coronel Zarate's arrest in Prairie du Chien as more evidence that people in the country illegally are committing crimes across the United States, not just in southern border states. Prosecutors charged Coronel Zarate on September 18 with sexual assault,

child abuse, strangulation and domestic abuse. Police Chief Kyle Teynor posted statements on Facebook saying that Coronel Zarate is not a US citizen and that he had two fake immigration documents, including a fake Social Security card. The chief added that Coronel Zarate's tattoos indicate he's affiliated with the Tren de Aragua gang, which started in Venezuelan prisons and is posing a growing threat in the US. Speaking to the crowd Saturday, Teynor stressed to the crowd that Coronel Zarate is the only Venezuelan gang member his agency has encountered, but the violence his two alleged victims suffered at his hands earlier this month was very real. Court records show Coronel Zarate was previously charged in Madison, the state capital, in December with strangulation, false imprisonment, battery and

disorderly conduct. According to a criminal complaint in that case, Coronel Zarate was driving with a female friend in November and attacked her when she tried to get out of the car. The complaint does not say why. The woman told investigators that they were just acquaintances and Coronel Zarate was homeless. Police in Madison said that Coronel Zarate allegedly stole a car and fled before he could be processed. He was arrested in Minneapolis a day after the alleged attack but was released from jail there. Asked why, Hennepin County Sheriff's Office spokesperson Megan Larson spoke a reporter to file a request for Coronel Zarate's jail records. The Associated Press filed such a request but government agencies typically take months to fulfill them. Crawford County Sheriff Sheriff Dale McCullick also addressed

the crowd, and said he was sure Trump would solve the border problem and urged people to vote for Trump. Republicans including US Sen. Derrick Van Orden, who is from Prairie du Chien, have criticized authorities in both Minneapolis and Madison for letting Coronel Zarate go, saying they essentially allowed him to attack the woman in Prairie du Chien. They have accused both jurisdictions of being sanctuaries for people in the country illegally. Speaking Saturday, Van Orden said Trump was the only one who could restore order. "You're going to see the one man who has enough strength and courage of conviction to stand up to anyone up to and including being shot in the head for us," he said. Michelle Marie Dietrich, a public defender representing Coronel Zarate in the Prairie du

Chien case, declined to comment. Charlotte Wynes, another public defender representing him in Prairie du Chien along with Dietrich, did not respond to a voicemail seeking comment. Michelle Brandemuehl, a public defender representing him in Madison, also didn't respond to a voicemail message seeking comment. Trump has repeatedly portrayed migrants as criminals and blamed Harris for failing to stem an unprecedented surge in illegal immigration, though border crossings have fallen since President Joe Biden instituted an executive order limiting asylum claims. Democrats, in turn, have blamed Trump for persuading allies in Congress to kill bipartisan legislation that would have funded more border agents and given the Homeland Security secretary authority to prohibit entry for most people over a daily limit.



# Russia downs over 100 drones in major barrage

AP ■ KYIV

More than 100 Ukrainian drones were shot down over Russia on Sunday, officials said, sparking a wildfire and setting an apartment block alight in one of the largest barrages seen over Russian skies since Moscow invaded Ukraine in February 2022.

Russia's Ministry of Defence reported that it had shot down 125 drones overnight across seven regions. The southwestern region of Volgograd came under particularly heavy fire, with 67 Ukrainian drones reportedly downed by Russian air defences.

Seventeen drones were also seen over Russia's Voronezh region, where falling debris damaged an apartment block and a private home, said Gov.



Aleksandr Gusev. Images on social media showed flames rising from the windows of the top floor of a high-rise building. No casualties were reported. A further 18 drones were

services were fighting to extinguish the blaze, which had engulfed 20 hectares (49.4 acres) of for

Elsewhere, 16 civilians were injured in an overnight barrage on the southern Ukrainian city of Zaporizhzhia after Ukrainian military leaders warned that Moscow could be preparing for a new military offensive in the country's south.

The city was targeted by Russian guide bombs in 10 separate attacks that damaged a high-rise building and several residential homes, regional Gov. Ivan Fedorov wrote on his official Telegram channel. More people could still be trapped beneath the rubble, he said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy also said that the Zaporizhzhia attack had damaged the city's transport links. "Today,

Russia struck Zaporizhzhia with aerial bombs. Ordinary residential buildings were damaged and the entrance of one building was destroyed. The city's infrastructure and railway were also damaged," Zelenskyy said in a post on X.

The Ukrainian leader appeared Sunday at a memorial service to make the 83rd anniversary of the Babyn Yar massacre, one of the most infamous mass slaughters of World War II.

Babyn Yar, a ravine in the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, is where nearly 34,000 Jews were killed within 48 hours in 1941 when the city was under Nazi occupation.

"Babyn Yar is vivid proof of the atrocities that regimes are capable of when led by leaders who rely on intimidation and violence. At any time, they are no different," Zelenskyy said in a state-

ment.

"But the world's response should be different. This is the lesson the world should have learned. We must guard humanity, life, and justice." The Ukrainian military warned Saturday that Russian forces may be preparing for offensive operations in the wider Zaporizhzhia region.

Vladyslav Voloshyn, spokesperson for Ukraine's southern military command, said that Russia was amassing personnel in this direction.

Ukraine's air force also reported that 22 Russian drones were launched over the country overnight.

It said that 15 were shot down in Ukraine's Sumy, Vinnytsia, Mykolaiv, and Odesa regions, and that five more were destroyed using electronic defences. The fate of the remaining two drones was not specified.

# Humanitarians enlist creators to engage youth during UN week

AP ■ NEW YORK

A lively discussion broke out backstage during Climate Week NYC between a TikTok comedian, a buzzed-about actress, a Latin cuisine entrepreneur and a cooking content creator.

Convened by World Food Programme USA to educate the panel's audiences — over 1.8 million Instagram followers combined — about hunger, the four weighed best practices for authentically breaking down weighty topics on social media.

"I want to force myself to be more active on TikTok," said "Avatar: The Way of Water" star Bailey Bass. Users "have a thought, and they are talking on their phone, and they post it. It feels very palpable." "But how do you know this is true?" asked Manolo Gonzalez Vergara, who co-founded the culinary brand Toma with his mother and actress Sofia Vergara. "This is just a person talking." "But it's someone you can relate with, so there's a level of trust," added Drea Okeke, a Nigerian-American engineer turned social media star with over 6 million TikTok followers.

The exchange underscored the questions faced by the humanitarian establishment as they try to reach younger, more environmentally conscious generations who — they routinely acknowledged throughout the many events unfolding this week alongside the United Nations General Assembly in New York — are tasked with digging the world out of the hole left by years of climate inaction. Billionaire Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates

acknowledged as much at a Thursday Q&A promoting his new Netflix show. "We have left some real challenges for this next generation," acknowledged Gates, who runs one of the world's largest philanthropic foundations.

Young people with large online followings can be good "placeholders" for older institutions seeking relevance with new generations, said Wawa Gatheru. The Kenyan-American activist regularly uses Instagram to promote Black Girl Environmentalist, the national community she founded to diversify the climate movement's leadership pipeline. But Gatheru cautioned against looping "any young person who is visible online as an influencer" or, alternatively, cheapening youth leaders' expertise simply because they are active online.

"In order to do it well and effectively and not be tokenistic, it's so important to see young people as collaborators, young people as capable," she told The Associated Press. "Content creator" land-yards hung from some Clinton Global Initiative attendees' necks in a new feature of the yearly gathering hosted by the former First Family's philanthropic foundation. The two-day event marked the first time that organisers intentionally dedicated space for influencers to collaborate. It came from the recognition that creators help shape how "millions of people relate to others and understand their world," according to Clinton Foundation Chief Brand and Digital Officer Francesca Ernst-Khan.

# 7 labourers killed by separatist militants in Balochistan

Islamabad/Karachi (PTI): At least seven labourers from Punjab province were killed by separatist militants in Pakistan's restive Balochistan province, police said on Sunday.

The labourers from Multan were shot dead late on Saturday night when they were asleep in an under-construction house in the Khuda-e-Abadan area of Panjgur town, Balochistan Inspector General of Police Moazzam Jah Ansari said.

Ansari said the labourers were in deep sleep when the armed terrorists entered the under-construction house and opened indiscriminate fire with automatic weapons.

The official said one of the labourers luckily escaped with an injury while another was not present at the time of the shooting.

The official said an investigation has been opened into the attack. "This latest attack appears to be the work of the Balochistan Liberation Army as it has all their footprints on it," another security official said.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who immediately condemned the attack, sought a report from Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti and reiterated the government's resolve to take all possible measures to root out terrorism from the motherland.

President Asif Ali Zardari also condemned the attack.

In another development, armed men abducted at least 20 labourers of a gas company from a construction site near a highway in the Musakhail district of the Balochistan province on Sunday.

The Express Tribune newspaper reported that armed men raided a gas company's site in the district and abducted 20 labourers. Police or security officials have not commented on the incident so far.

The report said the armed men opened fire after rounding up the workers and abducting 20 of them before fleeing into the mountainous region near the highway. On Saturday, a senior leader of the Balochistan National Party-Mengal (BNP-M), Agha Khalid Shah, was shot dead and his cousin was injured by unidentified assailants in Quetta.

# Tory leaders demand tougher visa rules on India

PTI ■ LONDON

The two frontrunners in the race to replace Rishi Sunak as Conservative Party leader and take his place in the House of Commons as Leader of the Opposition have thrown the spotlight on cutting immigration into the UK, with visas for Indians being singled out in heated debates.

Against the backdrop of the launch of the Conservative Party conference in Birmingham on Sunday, former immigration minister Robert Jenrick singled out India as one of the countries that should be subjected to tough visa restrictions across all categories unless it takes back its nationals who enter Britain illegally.

His closest contender, shadow housing secretary Kemi Badenoch, has also zeroed in on the same issue and condemned new migrants bringing their disputes from India to cause unrest on the streets of the country.



It is quite clear that there are many people who have recently come to this country who have brought views from their countries of origin that have no place here," Badenoch told the BBC.

"I saw as equalities minister people bringing cultural disputes from India to the streets of Leicester... we need to make

Leicester in September 2022 in the wake of an India-Pakistan Asia Cup cricket match. Meanwhile, her former ministerial colleague Robert Jenrick who has notched up an early lead in the contest told 'The Daily Telegraph' earlier this week that while India benefited from 250,000 visas in the past year, there were as many as 100,000 Indian nationals estimated to be illegally residing in the UK.

He lamented that deportations or removals to India remain stuck in the hundreds despite an India-UK Migration and Mobility Partnership which is designed to cover such returns of illegal migrants.

"The government must stop other countries exploiting our generosity by imposing severe visa restrictions and restricting foreign aid to countries that do not take back their nationals here illegally," said Jenrick.

Over the four-day Tory conference starting on Sunday, Jenrick and Badenoch will go

head-to-head with two other party colleagues — former Cabinet ministers James Cleverly and Tom Tugendhat — as they make their leadership pitches before MPs vote in the next round.

This time the field will be whittled down to the final two candidates who will then fight it out for the online ballot of the wider Conservative Party membership, many of whom will be making up their minds during the party conference.

The new Conservative Party chief and Opposition Leader is then scheduled to be declared on November 2 after the voting closes.

The election follows the resignation of Sunak as Tory leader in the wake of the party's bruising general election defeat in July under his leadership.

The British Indian politician, who was re-elected member of Parliament from Richmond and Northallerton in northern England, has meanwhile been serving as interim leader until his successor is elected.

Chinese President Xi Jinping, right, awards the national medal to Brazil's former President and President of the New Development Bank (NDB) Dilma Rousseff during a ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, Sunday. AP/PTI



Chinese President Xi Jinping, right, awards the national medal to Brazil's former President and President of the New Development Bank (NDB) Dilma Rousseff during a ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, Sunday. AP/PTI

# Pope wraps troubled visit to Belgium by praising victims, demanding abusers be judged

AP ■ BRUSSELS

Pope Francis demanded on Sunday that sexually abusive clergy be judged and their bishops stop covering up their crimes as he ended a troubled visit to Belgium by responding to the outrage over the scandal here that has devastated the church's credibility. "Evil must not be hidden. Evil must be brought out into the open," Francis told some 30,000 people at Belgium's sports stadium, drawing applause repeatedly as the crowd took in what he was saying.

Francis deviated from his prepared homily to respond to the meeting he held with 17 abuse survivors on Friday night, where he heard first-hand of the trauma and suffering they endured and the tone-deaf response of the church when they reported the crimes.

Belgium has had a wretched legacy of abuse and cover-up, none more symbolic of the church's hypocrisy than the case of Bruges Bishop Roger Vangheluwe. He was allowed to quietly retire in 2010 after he admitted that he had sexually abused his nephew for 13 years. Francis only defrocked him

this year — 14 years later — in a move clearly seen as finally dealing with a problem before his arrival in Belgium.

Once here, he couldn't escape the criticism. Belgium's king demanded the church work "incessantly" to clean up the scandal, and the prime minister insisted that victims' needs be placed first, in a remarkable dressing-down from the leadership of the once-staunchly Catholic country.

"In the church there is room for everyone, everyone, but everyone will be judged and there is no place for abuse. There is no place for the covering up of abuse," Francis said in his homily. "I ask the bishops not to cover up abuse. Condemn the abusers and help them to recover from this disease of abuse." Francis' visit to Belgium was always going to be difficult, given the country's wretched legacy of abuse and overall secularising trends which have emptied its majestic cathedrals and churches.

But it's unclear if he or his entourage expected such sharp public expressions of outrage or the pointed calls for reform from Belgium's intellectual elite. The main reason for the trip was

to celebrate the 600th anniversary of the Leuven/Louvain Catholic University, the oldest Catholic university in the world and long the Vatican's academic fiefdom in Belgium.

But the rector of the Dutch campus told Francis that the abuse scandal had so harmed the church's moral authority that it would do best to reform if it wants to regain credibility and relevance. Rector Luc Sels suggested that opening up greater roles for women — including the priesthood — and being more welcoming to LGBTQ+ Catholics would be a good place to start. Francis heard a similar call from the Francophone campus, where students staged a reading of an articulated critique of his landmark environmental encyclical "Praised Be" in which they called for a "paradigm shift" in the way the church views women. They noted that the encyclical virtually ignores women, cites no female theologians and contributes to women's "invisibility" in the church and society. Women have long complained they have a second-class status in the church, barred from the priesthood and positions of power despite doing the lion's share of the work educating the young, caring for the sick and passing on the faith.

**THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS**

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Neetu Sharma W/O Sh. Ravinder Vashisth R/o V&Po Baghola, Teh & Distt Palwal, Haryana 121102, Declare That My Name Wrongly Written In My Husband Army Record As Neetu Vashisth. My Correct Name Is Neetu Sharma. For All Future Purposes. Vide Affidavit No.36AA729755 Dated 27 Sep 2024. PD(812)C

I, Rajani Mirdha W/O Sh. Krishna Kishan R/o V&Po Jamtalia, Teh & Distt Sundergarh Odisha. 770019, Declare That My Name Wrongly Written In My Husband Army Record As Rajani Kishan. My Correct Name Is Rajani Mirdha. For All Future Purposes. Vide Affidavit No. 36AA729756 Dated 27 Sep 2024. PD(813)C

It is for general information that I, Machal Singh S/O Dayaram, Parliament R/o Roriya Pura, Ambah, Ambah Morena, Madhya Pradesh-476111, Present R/o D-286, U/G/E, gali no-9, Sadh Nagar, Palam Colony, Palam South West, NCT of Delhi-110045, declare that name of my wife has been wrongly written as Mamta Devi in my minor daughter namely Vaishali aged 14 years in her School Record. The actual name of my wife is Mamta Kumari respectively, which may be amended accordingly. PD(807)C

# Hospital clowns bring joy to young patients who survived Russian attack

AP ■ KYIV

Their costumes are put on with surgical precision: Floppy hats, foam noses, bright clothes, and a ukulele with multicolored nylon strings.

Moments later, in a beige hospital ward normally filled with the beeping sounds of medical machinery, there are bursts of giggles and silly singing.

As Ukraine's medical facilities come under pressure from intensifying attacks in the war against Russia's full-scale invasion, volunteer hospital clowns are duck-footing their way in to provide some badly needed moments of joy for hospitalized children.

The "Bureau of Smiles and Support" (BUP) is a hospital clowning initiative established in 2023 by Olha Bulkina, 35, and Maryna Berdar, 39, who already had more than five

years of hospital clowning experience between them. "Our mission is to let childhood continue regardless of the circumstances," Bulkina, told The Associated Press.

BUP took on new significance following a Russian missile strike on Okhmatdyt Children's Hospital in Kyiv in July. The attack on Ukraine's largest pediatric facility forced the evacuation of dozens of young patients, including those with cancer, to other hospitals in the capital — and the clowns did not stand aside. Together with first responders, Berdar and Bulkina helped with clearing the rubble after the attack and attended to the children who were relocated to other medical facilities. But even for them, the real heroes there were young patients.

"When the children were evacuated from Okhmatdyt after the missile attack, many

of them were in extremely difficult medical conditions, but even in this situation they tried to support the adults," said Berdar, recalling the events after the strike.

The hospital clowns, who use traditional clown noses and bright costumes, are now visiting multiple hospitals in the Ukrainian capital region, including the National Cancer Institute, where patient numbers have surged after the Okhmatdyt attack.

Tetiana Nosova, 22, and Vladyslava Kulnich, 22, are volunteer hospital clowns who go by Zhuzha and Lala and joined BUP more than a year ago. For them, hospital clowning is as challenging as it is rewarding.

"I volunteer so that children don't think about their illness, even for a short moment, so that laughter replaces tears, and joy replaces fear, especially during medical procedures,"

Kulnich said. In her practice, she stays together with children, sharing all their feelings, whether they are fear, pain, or joy. For Nosova, the process itself is what made her start clowning. "I am motivated by joy. I simply enjoy it. All my life I studied to be an actress, all my life I enjoyed making people laugh. That's enough motivation for me," she said.

In a city grappling with nightly air raid alerts and power outages, overworked doctors say the presence of the volunteers brings a much-needed distraction, often helping children who had been undergoing painful medical treatment to feel happy again.

"Clowns play a very important role in the treatment of children. They help distract the children, they help them forget about the pain, they help them not pay attention to the nurses or doctors who come to treat them," Valentyna

Mariash, a senior nurse on the Okhmatdyt cancer ward, told AP. The July attack complicated treatment plans for many families. Daria Vertetska, 34, was in Okhmatdyt with her 7-year-old daughter, Kira, when the missile exploded just outside their ward. Kira, who was diagnosed with rhabdomyosarcoma of the nasopharynx, was asleep, medicated with morphine.

"It saved her that she was covered with a blanket during the strike, but still, her head, legs, and arms were cut with small glass shards," said Vertetska. She and Kira returned to Okhmatdyt in less than a week after the attack.

Not all the children returned to the hospital. Some stayed in the medical facilities where they had been evacuated, while others were moved to apartments paid for by charity organizations and located in the hospital's vicinity.

Despite hospital clown initiatives like BUP across Ukraine, the need for their work grows exponentially. "When I see how our work is needed in the large children's hospitals located in Kyiv, I can only imagine what a great need there is in regional and district hospitals, where such (clown) activity, as for example in Okhmatdyt, to be honest, simply does not exist," Berdar said.

The World Health Organization, earlier this month, warned that the country faces a deepening public health crisis, largely due to devastating missile and drone strikes on the country's electricity system as well as hospital infrastructure.

Since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, WHO has recorded nearly 2,000 attacks on Ukraine's health care facilities and says they are having a severe impact.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Notice is hereby given that my client Saqib Khan is in process of purchasing Residential Plot Bearing No. 195, area measuring 70 sq. mtr., in Block C-10, situated in the revenue estate of Yamuna Vihar, New Delhi (leaving loan from DCB Bank) from Yegendra Singh Rana, having acquired the said property vide Conveyance Deed dated 4/6/2012. (Document No. 10363) executed by PDI through DDA. He confirmed that this sale is not having the below documents pertaining to the property in question for that period. FIR has already been lodged on dated 29/9/2024 vide LR no. 216264/2024.

(a) Original Allotment letter DB.08.1978 issued by DDA in favour of Kushi Ram Malhotra

(b) Original Possession letter dated 12.10.1978 issued by DDA in favour of Kushi Ram Malhotra

(c) Original Possession slip dated 12.10.1978 issued by DDA in favour of Kushi Ram Malhotra

(d) Original Perpetual lease Deed dated 26.10.1979 executed by PDI through DDA in favour of Kushi Ram Malhotra (Doc. No. 305)

(e) Original GPA, ATS and Will dated 06.02.1989 executed by Kushi Ram Malhotra in favour of Yegendra Singh Rana

All persons having any claim against or in respect of the said property, or any part thereof, by way of sale, exchange, mortgage (equitable/registered) or otherwise, are requested to have their claims/arrangement/maintenance, request, partnership, possession, lease, sublease, tenancy, license, lien, charge, pledge, easement or otherwise however, or persons who will be considered to have been waived with supporting document/ evidence at the address mentioned below within 7 days from the date hereof, failing which the claim or claims, if any, of such person or persons will be considered to have been waived and/or abandoned. Kamal Kant Gupta (Advocate) Unit No. FF-2, First Floor, Mahatma Metro Tower Sec-4, Vashai, Gb, U.P. Mob. 9810083351

# India's seven per cent growth fails to generate jobs: Raghuram Rajan

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

With 7 per cent economic growth, India is not creating enough jobs as reflected by the number of applicants for vacant posts in some states, Reserve Bank's former governor Raghuram Rajan said and suggested the government needs to focus on promoting labour-intensive industries to generate employment. Rajan further said some Indians, especially those at upper level, are comfortable and have high incomes, but consumption growth from the lower half of the country has still not recovered to pre-pandemic level. "That is the unfortunate part...You would think with 7 per cent growth, we would be creating a lot of jobs. But if you look at our manufacturing growth, it is more capital intensive," he told PTI. Rajan was asked whether the Indian economy, which is growing at 7 per cent, is creating enough jobs. According to him, the industries that are more capital-intensive are growing faster, but labour-intensive industries are not growing.

"It is not going well at the lower level. I think the desperate need is for jobs. And you can see this, forget the official statistics. "You can see it in the number of applications for government jobs, which are overwhelming," said Rajan, who is a professor of finance at US-based Chicago Booth. He said that in the medium term, the Indian economy will grow at 6-7 per cent. While welcoming the apprenticeship schemes announced by the finance minister in this year's Budget, Rajan said, "But we have to monitor that very closely, see what works and expand what works much more." Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced in the Union Budget of FY25 that the government will launch three employment-linked schemes based on enrolment in Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO). Citing examples of Vietnam and Bangladesh, which are doing well in labour-intensive industries like textile and leather, he said, "We need to look at this (labour-intensive industry)



very, very carefully, we cannot be left out." Asked why the private sector is still lagging as far as capital expenditure is concerned, Rajan said it is a little bit of a mystery. "When you look at capital utilisation (of the private sector), it is about 75 per cent...It seems as if demand has not kept up to the point where they feel they need to make all that kind of investment," he opined. And more importantly, Rajan said, India has a short span of 15 years to reap benefits of demographic dividend and it should not lose this opportunity. Responding to a question on benchmark interest rate cut by the US Federal Reserve, Rajan said, "The 50 basis points rate cut by Fed has given them (central banks) more room to proceed at a pace that they think appropriate."

According to him, if the Fed had not cut rates, there would be a sense that, oh, the Fed is keeping rates high, so 'we have no room to moderate our policies.' "I think the Fed has created more room for others to perhaps reduce interest rates, and so in that sense, people will be looking at their policies," he said. To a question on Goods and Services Tax (GST) rates rationalisation, Rajan said after a policy has run for a fair amount of time, it is useful to ask, what has been the experience and 'do we need the policy change.' "I would try and appoint an expert committee to go into it, to take the opinions, just like the Finance Commission does, take the opinions of the various stakeholders, including the states, and come up with something that meets the needs of the country," he said. Currently, GST is a four-tier tax structure with slabs at 5, 12, 18, and 28 per cent. The new taxation regime came into effect in 2017. Responding to a question about the ongoing debate on economically and socially better-off southern and western states

'subsidising' the northern and eastern states, Rajan said the Finance Commission has always been about the appropriate sort of allocation of taxes between the Centre and states. "If India grows together, (then) in fact, it prevents this kind of conflict...There is the equity issue, which is that the states that are growing faster, have also in the process, typically grow wealthier. And that is what is happening in the case of western and in the southern states," he said. Rajan pointed out that the western and southern states feel that they are penalised in two ways one is, they have to hand over more of their revenues to help some of the states who are falling behind. "Plus, on the political front, they may lose seats if there is a delimitation process (where seats in the Lok Sabha are to be allocated based on the results of the next Census), because, you know, the more populous states will get more seats," Rajan said. Observing that there has to be some transfers from the richer states to the poorer states, he said, "We need to bridge this gap."

# Government seeks industry inputs on Income Tax simplification

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government has proposed to invite suggestions on Income Tax Act, 1961, from the private sector and tax experts beginning October, as part of an exercise to simplify the direct tax law, sources said. In a meeting with industry chambers earlier this month, the government said that a functionality will be created in the Income Tax portal wherein suggestions could be made on different sections of the I-T Act with a view to simplifying the language and reducing litigation. Following the Budget announcement, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) had set up an internal committee for a comprehensive review of the six-decade old direct tax law and make it concise, lucid, easy to read and understand. "In the meeting with industry associations, the revenue department suggested that the functionality be developed by the first week of October to give suggestions for reworking



the income tax law," a source said. Another source said that the exercise is not to write a new tax law or a tax code. "Just by removing the outdated clauses, the number of pages could be brought down by about 100. The aim of the I-T law review is simplification of language and mitigation of litigation," the source added. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in 2024-25 Budget presented in July had proposed that the I-T law review would be completed in six months. Considering that the six-month timeline ends in January, it is widely expected that the amended I-T Act could be brought in the Budget session of Parliament. Since no new changes are expected in the law, the amended Act could form part of the Finance Bill, 2025 as well, another source said.

# Can the Tata's pull off their aviation plan?

KUSHAN MITRA ■ NEW DELHI

At midnight between 11-12, November Air Vistara will cease to function as an independent entity as the merger of Air India and Air Vistara will be solemnised. While it is certain that several of the 60-plus aircraft in Air Vistara's fleet will continue to operate in the airlines' famous aubergine livery for a few years, the Vistara flight code UK will be retired and it is certain that Air India will rationalise routes and services between the two airlines, a process that will not be easy. To be fair, Tata Sons has already managed an airline merger, that of the former Air Asia India and Air India Express. However, that was much easier as both airlines were low-cost single-class operators, even though they operated different aircraft, Air Asia India, the Airbus A320 and Air India Express, the Boeing 737. But as the leases on older Airbus aircraft end, it is likely that the airline will move to a single fleet of Boeing 737 MAX aircraft. Things are much more



complex for the Air India and Vistara merger even though there is largely a single-type, the Airbus A320-family of aircraft. This is because of different aircraft configurations as well as different service and training standards. Many frequent flyers, including this writer, particularly on routes out of Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru are unhappy about small things like Air India's new domestic catering options. On a recent flight between Delhi and Kochi at lunchtime, the meal provided was wholly inadequate with a sandwich and stuffed bread roll, unlike Vistara's continuing proper meal service.

with middle-eastern airlines such as Emirates and Qatar Airlines. Particularly as the Indian diaspora across the world grows and will travel back to their home, as well as growing the international inbound tourism market. India is also going to grow domestic aviation at an incredible rate with an estimated 250 million flyers annually by 2028. But if the merger stalls for any reason, Tata Sons ought to be worried as IndiGo which has built themselves up into a massive presence in India, controlling half the domestic market, will certainly make an international and premium passenger play. On the latter front they have already announced that they will be starting a 'premium' class offering from later this winter as well as a new Frequent Flyer program called 'Blu-Chip'. And with an order for 30 new Airbus A350-900 wide-body aircraft and the new Airbus A321XLR entering service next year, IndiGo can potentially threaten Air India's global expansion plans as well.

# SBI plans combo product of recurring deposit, SIP to attract depositors: Chairman

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a bid to attract depositors, State Bank of India is contemplating to come out with innovative products including a combo product of recurring deposit and SIP, said the bank's chairman C S Setty. With the economy progressing, he said, customers are becoming financially more aware and demanding, and have started looking for innovative investment instruments. Today the customers are looking at the value proposition as financial literacy improves and the concept of asset allocation will gain greater importance, he said. "Obviously, nobody wants to put everything in a risky asset or a speculative asset...Banking products will always be part of the basket. So, we are trying to bring products which will appeal to

them," he told PTI in an interview. "We are trying to bring innovation in some of the conventional products like recurring deposit, which is actually a conventional SIP...Maybe, we can combine both fixed deposit/recurring deposit and SIP, a combo product that could be digitally accessible," he said. So, he said, these are the innovations which the bank is thinking of in terms of popularising the deposit products among the Gen Z. Besides, he said, the bank has undertaken a massive outreach programme for the deposit mobilisation. "As I said, for us, deposit mobilisation is a franchisee job. We have the largest number of physical outlets across the country. We are leveraging our huge physical reach by initiating outreach programmes where customers are contacted. Today, the effort on part of



SBI is to reach out to every customer both existing as well as new customers," he said. Stressing that deposit is a function of interest rate and customer service, Setty said, "obviously, there is a requirement of adequately compensating our customers, but we would not like to fight in the rate war. I think most of the banks are also pursuing a balancing act of giving the right rate as well as right service. So, our focus is on improving the customer service and also adequately

compensating our customers." In addition, he said, SBI has given thrust on opening new accounts and almost 50,000 to 60,000 savings bank accounts opened a day. On the fixed deposit side, Setty said, almost 50 per cent of our fixed deposits are garnered through the digital channels only and also many accounts are opened through digital means. Meanwhile, he also said that SBI is aiming to become the first Indian financial firm to cross a milestone of Rs 1 lakh crore net profit in the next 3-5 years. SBI recorded a standalone net profit of Rs 61,077 crore in FY24, registering a growth of 21.59 per cent. "We have potential. Definitely, we would like to be the first company in India to reach that milestone," Setty said when asked if it is possible to cross Rs 1 lakh crore in the next 3-5 years.

# PM celebrates 10 years of Make in India, calls India a manufacturing powerhouse

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

With his government's flagship 'Make in India' initiative completing 10 years, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said India has become a manufacturing powerhouse and it is because of the country's youth power that the "whole world is looking up to us". As the 'Make in India' initiative marked its 10th anniversary last week, the prime minister talked about it in his monthly 'Mann Ki Baat' radio broadcast and said the success of this campaign includes the contribution of the country's big industries as well as small shopkeepers. Today, it gives me immense joy to see that the poor, the



middle class and MSMEs are getting a lot of benefit from this campaign. Now, both sides are in the final stages of the merger, making some adjustments to the business as per the directions of the Competition Commission of India (CCI). On August 30, the NCLT approved the scheme of merger of Viacom18 Media and Digital 18 Media, holding media and entertainment assets of Reliance Industries, with Star India. The scheme had proposed the transfer and vesting of Media Operations

whole world is looking up to us. Be it automobiles, textiles, aviation, electronics or defence... every sector in the country's exports are constantly on the rise," he added. The prime minister said the continual rise of FDI in the country is narrating the success saga of 'Make in

India. "Now we are mainly focusing on two things... The first is 'Quality', that is, goods made in our country should be of global standards... and the other is 'Vocal for Local'. That means, local products should get maximum promotion," Modi said. "In 'Mann Ki Baat' we've also

discussed 'My Product My Pride'. How the people of the country can benefit from promoting local products can be understood through an example. In Bhandara district of Maharashtra, there is an old textile tradition of 'Bhandara Tussar Silk Handloom'. Tussar Silk, is known for its colour, design and strength. "In some areas of Bhandara, more than 50 'Self Help Groups are working to preserve it. Women have a huge participation in that. This silk is fast becoming popular and empowering local communities... and that is the spirit of 'Make in India', he added. In this festive season, Modi urged people that anything that they buy, should

necessarily be 'Made in India'. "Anything you gift that too should be 'Made in India'. Merely buying earthen lamps is not 'Vocal for Local'. You should promote local products made in your area and more. Any such product, that has been made with the sweat of an Indian artisan, that is made on Indian soil, is our pride - we always have to lend glory to this pride," he said. On the 10th anniversary of his government's 'Make in India' drive, Prime Minister Modi on Wednesday affirmed that the flagship initiative to boost manufacturing has transformed a dream into a powerful movement and its impact shows that "Bharat is unstoppable".

# Reliance infrastructure wins arbitration case against DVC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Calcutta High Court has upheld a Rs 780 crore arbitration award in favour of Reliance Infrastructure Ltd in a dispute with West Bengal-based Damodar Valley Corporation, the Anil Ambani group firm said in a stock exchange filing. More than a decade back, Reliance Infrastructure had won a contract to set up a 1,200 MW thermal power plant in Purulia in West Bengal for Rs 3,750 crore. The project was delayed due to disputes and other reasons, leading to DVC seeking damages from Reliance Infrastructure. Reliance Infrastructure, however, challenged this, and

an arbitration tribunal in 2019 ruled in favour of the company and directed DVC to pay Rs 896 crore to the company. DVC challenged the order of the arbitration tribunal in the Calcutta High Court, which was dismissed by the court. "This is to inform that on September 27, 2024, the Division Bench of Hon'ble High Court of Calcutta delivered its judgment in a petition filed by DVC challenging the arbitration award under Section 34, dated September 29, 2023, amounting to approximately Rs 780 crore, including accrued interest in favour of the company concerning the Raghunathpur Thermal Power Project," the firm said.

# Government approves transfer of Reliance TV licenses to Star India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government has approved the transfer of licence relating to non-news and current affairs TV channels held by the media entities of billionaire Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries to Star India. According to regulatory filings by Reliance Industries and TV18 Broadcast, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting granted the approval in an order dated September 27. "The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, vide its order dated September 27, 2024, has granted its approval for transfer of Licenses relating to Non News & Current Affairs TV channels held by Viacom18 Media

Private Limited in favour of Star India," it said. This would be "subject to conditions laid by the Competition Commission of India." Viacom18 is the holding company that owns the media and entertainment business of Reliance Industries and Bodhi Tree Systems. Now, both sides are in the final stages of the merger, making some adjustments to the business as per the directions of the Competition Commission of India (CCI). On August 30, the NCLT approved the scheme of merger of Viacom18 Media and Digital 18 Media, holding media and entertainment assets of Reliance Industries, with Star India. The scheme had proposed the transfer and vesting of Media Operations

Undertaking from Viacom 18 and Jio Cinema into Digital18, which is a subsidiary of Viacom 18. This would be followed by "demerger, transfer and vesting of V18 Undertaking from Digital 18 into Star India." The merger of the media assets of Reliance Industries and The Walt Disney Co. Will create the country's largest media empire worth over Rs 70,000 crore. Earlier, the CCI had said it had cleared the "proposed combination involving Reliance Industries Ltd, Viacom18 Media Pvt Ltd, Digital18 Media Ltd, Star India Pvt Ltd and Star Television Productions Ltd, subject to the compliance of voluntary modifications". Viacom18 is part of the RIL group, and SIPL is wholly

owned by The Walt Disney Company. STPL, a company incorporated in the British Virgin Islands, is owned indirectly by Walt Disney. The CCI, however, did not disclose voluntary modifications in the original deal made by the two parties. Under the deal, the Mukesh Ambani-led RIL and its affiliates will hold 63.16 per cent of the combined entity that will house two streaming services and 120 television channels. Walt Disney will hold the remaining 36.84 per cent stake in the combined entity, which will also be India's largest media house. Nita Ambani, wife of RIL Chairman Mukesh Ambani, will head the joint venture, while Uday Shankar will be its vice-chairperson.

# Mcap of 10 most valued firms surges to ₹ 1.21 lakh crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The combined market valuation of eight of the top-10 most valued firms surged Rs 1,21,270.83 crore last week, with Reliance Industries becoming the biggest gainer, in line with an outstanding rally in benchmark equity indices. Last week, the BSE benchmark jumped 1,027.54 points or 1.21 per cent. The BSE Sensex hit its record high of 85,978.25 on Friday. The market valuation of Reliance Industries jumped Rs 53,652.92 crore to Rs 20,65,197.60 crore. State Bank of India added Rs 18,518.57 crore taking its valuation to Rs 7,16,333.98 crore. Bharti Airtel's market valuation soared Rs 13,094.52

crore to Rs 9,87,904.63 crore and that of ITC grew by Rs 9,927.3 crore to Rs 6,53,834.72 crore. The market capitalisation (mcap) of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) surged Rs 8,592.96 crore to Rs 15,59,052 crore. HDFC Bank's valuation climbed Rs 8,581.64 crore to Rs 13,37,186.93 crore and that of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) zoomed Rs 8,443.87 crore to Rs 6,47,616.51 crore. The mcap of Infosys went up by Rs 459.05 crore. However, the market valuation of ICICI Bank tumbled to Rs 9,20,520.72 crore. The mcap of Hindustan Unilever declined by Rs 3,195.44 crore to Rs 6,96,888.77 crore. In the chart of the most valued firms, Reliance Industries retained the highest ranking.

# INBRIEF

### 22ND KISHORE KUMAR MEMORIAL AWARDS

**NEW DELHI:** Dr. Kamal Pathak, Registrar of IP University was speaking as the chief guest at the inaugural function of 22nd Kishore Kumar Memorial Awards organised by Kishore Kumar Memorial Club at Pyarelal Lal Bhavan.

### GNU RELEASED SCHEDULE THROUGH ONLINE PORTAL

**AMRITSAR:** The online examination form submission and fee payments for Sem-1 December 2024 exams of Law FYIP/TYP, B.Ed, B.A-B.Ed, B.Sc-B.Ed, B.Com-B.Ed and B.Ed-M.Ed for Regular students through online portal has been scheduled.

### GNU ZONAL YOUTH FESTIVAL

**AMRITSAR:** The three-day Zonal Youth Festival of "B-Zone" of Guru Nanak Dev University began, marked by an impressive inauguration ceremony presided over by Dr. Ravjit Singh from Dr Daljit Singh Eye Hospital, Amritsar.



# BREAKING THE CYCLE THE URGENT NEED TO COMBAT ANAEMIA

## ANEMIA SYMPTOMS AND CAUSES

### SYMPTOMS

- Fatigue
- Weakness
- Dizziness
- Shortness of breath
- Headache
- Cold hands, feet
- Irregular heartbeat

### CAUSES

- Nutrient deficiencies
- Blood loss
- Health conditions
- Menstrual periods
- Women pregnancy



In a world where health often takes a backseat to the demands of modern life, anaemia has emerged as a silent epidemic writes **ABHI SINGHAL**

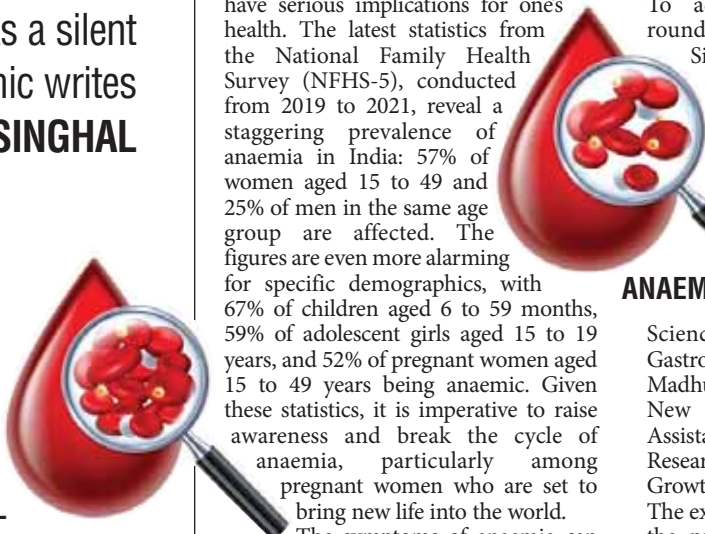
In today's fast-paced world, many individuals struggle to prioritize their health and wellness, particularly those aged 21 to 50. This neglect can lead to significant health issues, including a common yet often overlooked condition: anaemia. Anaemia, characterized by a reduced number of red blood cells or malfunctioning red blood cells, can have serious implications for one's health. The latest statistics from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), conducted from 2019 to 2021, reveal a staggering prevalence of anaemia in India: 57% of women aged 15 to 49 and 25% of men in the same age group are affected. The figures are even more alarming for specific demographics, with 67% of children aged 6 to 59 months, 59% of adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 years, and 52% of pregnant women aged 15 to 49 years being anaemic. Given these statistics, it is imperative to raise awareness and break the cycle of anaemia, particularly among pregnant women who are set to bring new life into the world. The symptoms of anaemia can

significantly impact daily life, including fatigue, weakness, shortness of breath, pale skin, cold extremities, dizziness, rapid heartbeat, and difficulty in concentrating. These symptoms create a vicious cycle: anaemia leads to weakness, which in turn results in laziness and decreased productivity, ultimately affecting one's overall well-being and work output. To address this critical issue, a roundtable discussion titled "India's Silent Epidemic: Raising Awareness & Fostering Urgent Action Against Anaemia" was convened. The panel of experts included Dr Manju Puri, Director Professor of Obstetrics & Gynaecology at Lady Hardinge Medical College, New Delhi; Dr Tulika Seth, Professor of Haematology at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences; Dr Sarath Gopalan, Gastroenterologist and Hepatologist at Madhukar Rainbow Children's Hospital, New Delhi; and Dr William Joe, Assistant Professor at the Population Research Centre, Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi. The experts identified iron deficiency as the primary cause of anaemia. They

**NUTRITION ALONE IS INSUFFICIENT. THE GOVERNMENT HAS IMPLEMENTED A SUPPLEMENTARY PROGRAM FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS, PROVIDING LOW-COST SUPPLEMENTS THAT ARE WIDELY AVAILABLE. EVEN WHEN PURCHASED, THEY ARE AFFORDABLE. IT'S IMPORTANT TO VIEW SUPPLEMENTS AS A NECESSARY BACKUP**

emphasized that one can have normal haemoglobin levels yet still be iron deficient. This situation is like to an iceberg, where anaemia is merely the visible tip. For instance, a person with a haemoglobin level of 12 could still suffer from iron deficiency. By administering iron supplements, their iron stores may improve, alleviating many symptoms, even if the haemoglobin level changes only slightly. Dr Tulika Seth highlighted the need for greater awareness regarding iron-rich foods. She noted that even educated individuals often struggle to name two iron-rich foods. "Unless you know about red meat and similar options, you're unlikely to consume sufficient amounts," she remarked. The discussion also underscored the significance of dietary counselling to enhance iron intake through improved dietary choices, which is essential for health management. Experts stressed that knowledge and awareness are crucial initial steps toward addressing anaemia. Furthermore, the quantity of nutrient intake was discussed as a pivotal factor. The experts addressed the role of iron supplements, particularly in light of the younger generation's reluctance to

consume leafy vegetables, which are vital for nutrient intake. While supplements can serve as a backup, they cannot replace the benefits derived from natural food sources. In response to inquiries about nutritional solutions and reliance on supplements, Dr Manju Puri noted, "Nutrition alone is insufficient. The government has implemented a supplementary program for vulnerable groups, providing low-cost supplements that are widely available. Even when purchased, they are affordable. It's important to view supplements as a necessary backup." Awareness remains the first step in combating anaemia. By understanding the symptoms, causes, and prevention strategies, individuals can take proactive measures to safeguard their health. Incorporating iron-rich foods—such as leafy vegetables, red meat, and fortified cereals—into one's diet is essential, and supplements can provide additional support when needed. Ultimately, health is one's greatest asset. Individuals are encouraged to prioritize their health by staying informed about anaemia and taking steps to prevent or manage this condition.



NORMAL

ANAEMIC

## "Nourishing Your Body: The Role of Nutrition in Daily Wellness"

BY **Dr Wajih Mehtab**

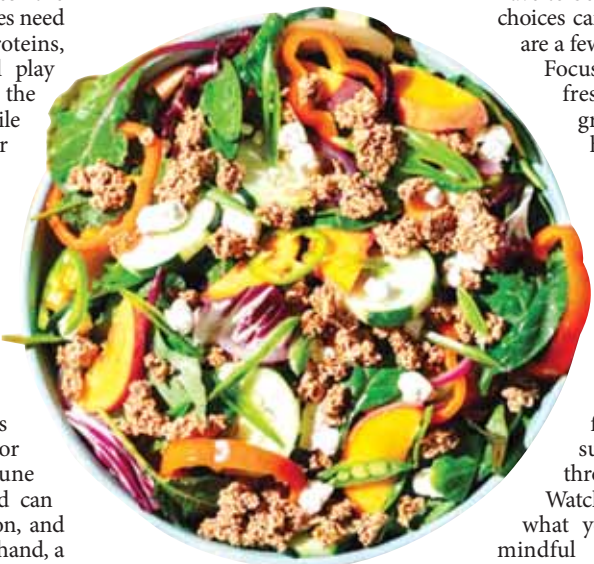
In a world filled with fast food, busy schedules, and growing health concerns, the importance of nutrition in our daily lives cannot be overstated. Proper nutrition is the foundation of a healthy body and mind, influencing everything from energy levels to disease prevention. Eating a well-balanced diet is more than just fuelling the body—it's about enhancing overall well-being and leading a vibrant, fulfilling life.

**The Building Blocks of Health**  
At its core, nutrition provides the essential building blocks our bodies need to function. Carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, and minerals all play crucial roles. Carbohydrates are the body's main source of energy, while proteins help build and repair tissues. Healthy fats, such as those found in nuts, seeds, and fish, support brain health and protect vital organs. Vitamins and minerals, found in abundance in fruits and vegetables, help regulate processes such as metabolism, immune function, and cell repair. Without these key nutrients, the body struggles to perform its everyday tasks efficiently. Poor nutrition weakens the immune system, slows down healing, and can lead to fatigue, poor concentration, and overall poor health. On the other hand, a diet rich in whole, nutrient-dense foods can optimise energy, mood, and productivity.

**Preventing Chronic Disease**  
One of the most important reasons to prioritize nutrition is its role in preventing chronic diseases. Conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, and obesity are increasingly common, yet many are preventable through better dietary choices. Diets high in processed foods, refined sugars, and unhealthy fats contribute to the development of these diseases, while diets rich in whole grains, lean proteins, fruits, and vegetables offer protection. The World Health Organization (WHO) stresses that a diet full of fruits and vegetables can reduce the risk of heart

diseases and certain types of cancer. Foods high in fiber, like whole grains and legumes, promote healthy digestion and reduce the risk of gastrointestinal disorders. Meanwhile, cutting down on salt, sugar, and saturated fats helps control blood pressure and maintain a healthy weight.

**Mental Health and Nutrition**  
The link between nutrition and physical health is well-documented, but its impact on mental health is equally significant. Nutrients such as omega-3 fatty acids, found in fish and flaxseeds, and



antioxidants in fruits and vegetables, support brain function and mood regulation. Studies show that a diet rich in these nutrients may reduce the risk of depression and anxiety while improving memory and cognitive function. Conversely, diets high in processed and sugary foods are linked to higher rates of mood disorders. Blood sugar spikes and crashes, caused by refined sugars and simple carbohydrates, can lead to irritability, fatigue, and feelings of anxiety. By maintaining a balanced diet, people can stabilize their energy levels and emotional health.

**Fuelling Daily Energy**  
The food we eat directly impacts how we feel throughout the day. A balanced meal

gives the body a steady supply of energy, while junk food leads to quick energy crashes. Eating a variety of nutrient-rich foods ensures that the body has everything it needs to keep going strong. Complex carbohydrates, such as brown rice and sweet potatoes, provide long-lasting energy. Proteins and healthy fats offer sustained energy release, keeping us feeling full and energised for longer periods. Vitamins and minerals also play a role, helping the body efficiently convert food into energy.

**Practical Tips for a Healthier Diet**  
Maintaining a nutritious diet doesn't have to be complicated. Simple, mindful choices can make a big difference. Here are a few tips:

- Focus on whole foods: Prioritise fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats. Limit processed and packaged foods.
- Eat the rainbow: Aim to include a variety of colours on your plate. Different coloured fruits and vegetables provide a wide range of vitamins and minerals.
- Stay hydrated: Water is essential for nearly every function in the body. Make sure to drink enough water throughout the day.
- Watch portion sizes: It's not just what you eat, but how much. Be mindful of portion sizes to avoid overeating, even with healthy foods.
- Plan ahead: Planning meals and snacks in advance can help you make healthier choices and avoid unhealthy last-minute options.

*The author is MSc, PhD, Consultant Nutritionist and Founder & Director, Artisan Academy of Advanced Clinical Nutrition.*

BY **Dr Dinesh Kumar Tyagi**

Monsoon is the season that brings a necessary cool to the weather after the scorching summers. Although the weather becomes extremely pleasant, monsoons also open the gate to a plethora of waterborne and viral diseases and infections. The stagnant pools of water the puddles are breeding grounds for germs and bacteria and the humidity becomes another ally of viral infections. Let's discover some tips and habits that can help you avoid monsoon diseases. A healthy gut ensures a good immune system. It is important to maintain a nutritious diet in all your meals ensuring that you are getting the fats, minerals, and vitamins you need. Eat seasonal fruits and vegetables and avoid oily spicy food that could meddle with your digestion. Food made at restaurants, streets, or cafe's are usually made in unhygienic conditions. Food made in unhygienic conditions can lead to typhoid, infections as it carries various germs and bacteria. Try to eat home-cooked meals as much as possible and even if you eat out, eat freshly prepared food that is served hygienically to you. Waterborne diseases are very common during the monsoons. Drinking unsafe or impure water from public water coolers can lead you to catch them. Drink safe water from RO or try to get bottled water when you are out and about. Damp clothes can cause skin infections and even lead to allergies. Wearing dry, clean clothing during rainy seasons is very important. Go for Synthetic, quick-



drying materials as they won't stay damp for long and don't retain moisture like cotton or linen. They help you stay dry and comfortable. Many of us love to enjoy the rain and get drenched in rain like kids. This may seem refreshing but it can lead you to catching cold, fever, and other waterborne diseases, especially during the peak monsoon season downpours. Keeping your umbrella and raincoat handy while going out during monsoons is a power move. It is an easy and effective way of keeping you from getting drenched in the rain and will protect you from exposure of the rain and the atmosphere that weakens your immunity. Viral infections are rampant during monsoon season due to the weather and humidity. Close contact in crowded places during this season should be avoided as that is where you will catch an

infection like swine flu or hepatitis. While monsoons will come and go, life goes on and you will have to go out and interact with people at offices or public spaces or even crowds. All you can do is maintain a good amount of space between you and others to avoid the risk of catching any infections. Make sure you are up to date about getting all your vaccines and booster doses. Outbreak diseases like hepatitis are very common during monsoons. Consult your doctor and make sure that you are not behind on getting any vaccines. Infections through insects like malaria and dengue are rampant during the monsoons. It is important to protect yourself from such diseases. Get a mosquito repellent that you can use in areas where there are a lot of stagnant bodies and mosquitoes. You can also use nets at night to prevent mosquito bites. Germs, bacteria, and insects including mosquitoes all have one hotspot during winter that is stagnant water. You should avoid going to water-logged areas during monsoons to avoid all such bacteria and germs and make sure to disinfect yourself properly after you have been through those areas. It becomes important to cover your full body during monsoons to prevent mosquito bites or fungal infections of any kind. Stick to wearing full-length skirts, t-shirts, and pants to avoid any such issues. Sunlight, although is very important for us for Vitamin D, during the rainy season the sunlight can weaken your immunity. The combination of sun and humidity after a rain shower can lead to dehydration. Wear shades, apply sunscreen, and try to stay in shaded areas during monsoons as much as possible. Good sleep is very important for your immune system. Good sleep regenerates your body cells and keeps you body healthy. To avoid catching any viral fevers or infections you should maintain a good sleep cycle. Staying healthy, and maintaining good habits is the crux to staying away from all kinds of fevers, infections, and flu during monsoons. Some habits should be well inculcated like wearing dry clothes and maintaining a safe distance from crowds during the monsoons to stay healthy and safe. *The author is the Additional Director of Internal Medicine at Fortis Hospital, Greater Noida.*

# Sri Lanka crushes New Zealand to clinch historic series win

AP ■ GALLE (SRI LANKA)

Sri Lanka stormed to a series victory over New Zealand, securing the two-match test series with a resounding innings and 154-run triumph on the fourth day in Galle on Sunday. This victory, Sri Lanka's most dominant over the Kiwis, also marks their first win against New Zealand in 15 years. The hero of the games, left-arm spinner Prabath Jayasuriya, was named Player of the Series after a masterful performance, claiming 18 wickets across the two matches. Meanwhile, Kamindu Mendis took home Man of the Match honours for his unbeaten 182, anchoring Sri Lanka's colossal total of 602-5 declared. With this knock, Mendis etched his name in history, joining the great Sir Don Bradman as the third joint-fastest player to reach 1,000 test runs. Jayasuriya, who took nine wickets in the first test, was at his best again, snaring



another nine wickets in the second test as New Zealand's batters struggled to cope with Sri Lanka's spin-heavy attack. Debutant Nishan Peiris was the perfect foil, chipping in with nine wickets of his own, including a five-wicket haul in the second innings. "We discussed the need to score big in the first innings. That has been something that has been worrying us for a while. Glad we rectified that this innings," said Sri Lanka captain Dananjaya de Silva. "The spinners were superb. They kept creating pressure and didn't allow New Zealand to get away with things. It was

a superb display. That's how we want to compete in home conditions, dominate the opposition from ball one," he added. New Zealand's woes began early, bundled out for a paltry 88 in their first innings. Forced to follow on, the Kiwis showed more fight in their second innings, posting 360 - their highest total of the tour and in Galle - but it was too little, too late. Tom Blundell, Glenn Phillips and Mitchell Santner all contributed half-centuries in the second innings, but the tourists needed far more to challenge Sri Lanka's

dominance. Resuming at 199-5, New Zealand lost three wickets before lunch on the fourth day. Despite Sri Lanka's fielding lapses, which saw three catches dropped, they eventually cleaned up after lunch. Jayasuriya removed Ajaz Patel and Peiris took the final scalp of Santner, stumped by Kusal Mendis, sealing the series win for Sri Lanka. "We had our moments in the series, but disappointed with the end result," said New Zealand captain Tim Southee. "That morning session on day three when we lost nine wickets was very disappointing. "There were dropped catches and missed stumpings as well in the Sri Lankan innings and in these conditions when you don't hold onto those chances it is very difficult." With this victory, Sri Lanka has now won three consecutive test matches and bolstered their hopes of qualifying for the ICC World Test Championship final at Lord's next June.

# Indian shooters win two gold medals in Peru

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian shooters began their ISSF Junior World Championship (Rifle/Pistol/Shotgun) campaign in Peru on a good note, winning team gold in men's and women's 10m air pistol events, though a potential top-podium finish was lost in the individual category after a marksman was docked two points for reporting late for the final. The junior men's trio of Umesh Choudhary, Pradhyumn Singh and Mukesh Nelavalli topped the men's team competition in 10m air pistol with a tally of 1726 points. They finished 10 points ahead of second-placed Romania, while Italy took bronze with a score of 1707. Choudhary though missed a potential individual gold after being penalised two points for reporting late for the final. Choudhary and Singh had earlier made it to the individual finals placed third and fourth respectively in the qualification round. Choudhary shot 580 and



Singh 578 but missed out on individual medals, ending up sixth and eighth respectively. Luca Joldea of Romania won the gold medal, while Chinese Taipei's Hsieh Hsiang-Chen clinched the silver. Nelavalli was ninth in qualification with a score of 574. The combination of Kanishka Dagar, Lakshita and Anjali Chaudhary tallied 1708 to clinch the junior women's 10m air pistol team gold. They

pipped Azerbaijan by a point and Ukraine by four points. Dagar also made the individual final in third place with a score of 573 along with Kanak who also shot the same score but with lesser inner 10s, to bag the fifth qualifying spot. In the final, Kanak won bronze with a score of 217.6, while Dagar finished eighth. Chinese Taipei's Chen Yuchun won gold, while Slovakia's Manja Slak bagged the silver.

# Wet outfield wipes out play for second day

PTI ■ KANPUR

No play was possible for the second consecutive day in the second Test between India and Bangladesh due to a wet outfield at the Green Park Stadium here. Overnight rain had caused a delay to the start of action but even as the sun was shining bright around 2:00pm and there were no soggy patches on the ground, the officials decided to call off the play. Almost eight sessions have been lost in the game due to persistent rain that has played havoc with the final match of the two-game series. Questions on the drainage system used at the venue have been duly raised. Bangladesh had ended the rain-shortened opening day at 107 for 3. The entire second day was washed out without a ball being bowled, and only 35 overs were bowled on the opening day. India pacer Akash Deep (2/34) and Ravichandran Ashwin (1/22) were among the wickets.

# Champions League returns missing Mbappé, Rodri, Barella as injury wave hits European soccer

AP ■ PARIS

Key players will be sidelined when the Champions League resumes on Tuesday after a wave of injuries within a week of the new-look competition starting. Kylian Mbappé's sore hamstring is likely to sideline him beyond Wednesday when he was due to return to France with defending champion Real Madrid to face Lille. Serious knee injuries mean Manchester City midfielder Rodri is out for the season and Barcelona goalkeeper Marc-André ter Stegen will miss at least most of it. The injuries to four players who were involved at the European Championship into the knockout phase have sharpened the debate about player workload in a calendar made more congested by the bigger Champions League. The extended program is what influential clubs all-but forced UEFA to create and the 18 games this week, split between Tuesday and Wednesday, still

leaves each of them with six more to play through January. Another final rematch There were two repeats of past finals in the first week of games that relaunched the Champions League in a single-standings format. Man City and Inter drew 0-0 and Liverpool won 3-1 at AC Milan. The next rematch comes Wednesday when Aston Villa hosts Bayern Munich, a giant of the European Cup era that was shocked 1-0 in the 1982 final. Villa Park will host a first game in the competition since March 1983 when the English side's title defense was ended by Juventus. Both eased to winning starts two weeks ago. Villa won 3-0 at Young Boys and Bayern's nine goals against Dinamo Zagreb was a record for any team in the 33-season Champions League era. Harry Kane scored four in Bayern's 9-2 win and has a good record visiting Villa, with five goals there in five Premier League games for Tottenham. He faces a late check on an ankle injury. Kane edges Haaland Kane's fast start to the season with 10 goals in seven games for Bayern has outpaced even Erling Haaland's 10 in eight games for Man City. Haaland was kept quiet by Inter for the



second time in 16 months, a fact he was reminded of in a post-game talk with the Italian champion's center back Francesco Acerbi, who smiled and held up two fingers. Haaland should find it easier on

Tuesday in Slovakia when Man City faces Slovan Bratislava, which took the second biggest beating in the opening round, 5-1 at Celtic. Crowd size and fan fervour The pulsating atmosphere at Celtic Park

for a rare European win by the Scottish champion stood out in an opening week where anticipation was not universal. Pundits including former Man City goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel noted a quietness about the stadium for the Inter game. The attendance was nearly 2,000 higher five days later when Man City met Arsenal in a tempestuous Premier League clash where title ambitions were already in play. Milan-Liverpool was a heavyweight European fixture yet far from sold out, with fewer than 60,000 at San Siro. The crowd topped 70,000 at each of Milan's first two Serie A home games this season, and 66,000 on the equivalent Champions League opening night last season to see another English club, Newcastle. Paris Saint-Germain drew at least 46,000 fans for each home game in Ligue 1 this season - and all three Champions League group-stage games last season - yet fewer than 40,000 were at Parc des Princes to see European debutant Girona two weeks ago. Sporting Lisbon also had 40,000 fans for a Champions League opener against Lille that was 6,000 down on the crowd for a domestic league game against Porto. The attendance and atmosphere trends

will be watched as fans respond to the longer and more expensive program of four Champions League home games. The 36-team standings is set to be more dynamic for the final two rounds in January. Tuesday's games The raucous atmosphere should follow Celtic to Borussia Dortmund whose fans in the Yellow Wall tribune are among the noisiest in Europe. Bundesliga champion Bayer Leverkusen hosts Milan after making a fast start in a 4-0 rout at Feyenoord. San Siro now reverts to Inter to host Red Star Belgrade. Arsenal hosts PSG in a meeting of two teams chasing a trophy they never won. Each was a beaten finalist once. Also, Barcelona hosts Young Boys. Wednesday's games Even without Mbappé, Madrid should have too much for Lille playing in the stadium that hosted basketball group-stage games at the Paris Olympics. Premier League leader Liverpool hosts Bologna, and Girona's first European visitor to the Montilivi stadium is Feyenoord. Dinamo Zagreb fired its coach, Sergej Jakirovic, after the drubbing at Bayern and brought back Nenad Bjelica for a second spell.

# Osasuna stuns Barcelona 4-2 record for best start



AP ■ BARCELONA

Bryan Zaragoza scored one goal and set up another to spark Osasuna's stunning 4-2 win over Barcelona, dealing the Spanish league leader its first loss.

The lightning-fast forward on loan from Bayern Munich crossed for Ante Budimir to open the scoring in the 17th minute. Zaragoza then showed some fancy high-speed dribbling to round goalkeeper Iñaki Peña on the break for 2-0 in the 28th on Saturday. Barcelona youth player Pau Víctor pulled one back for the visitors in the 53rd, but Budimir earned and converted a penalty to put the result beyond doubt in the 72nd. Abel Bretones made it 4-1 in the 85th and substitute Lamine Yamal scored Barcelona's second goal. Barcelona recorded wins in the first seven rounds of the league. An eighth victory would have equaled a club record established in 2013. Barcelona remained atop the league standings at four points ahead of Real Madrid before the defending champion visits Atletico Madrid in a derby on Sunday. Osasuna moved into sixth place and stayed unbeaten in Pamplona in this campaign with four wins and a draw.

# India U17 look to maintain dominance against Bangladesh in final

PTI ■ THIMPHU

India will fancy their chances of maintaining their stranglehold on Bangladesh when the two sides meet in the final of the SAFF U17 Championship here on Monday. India began their tournament nine days ago with a last-gasp 1-0 victory over Bangladesh in the group stage. The same script unfolded last year as well, when the India U16 boys beat their eastern neighbours 1-0 in the first game and then 2-0 in the final. Head coach Ishfaq Ahmed and his boys will hope for a repeat of that on Monday for a successful title defence. For the record, the two teams have met four times in the finals of SAFF men's age-group tournaments, with India winning thrice (U18 in



2019, U20 in 2022 and U16 in 2023) and Bangladesh emerging victorious once (U16 in 2015). "We know Bangladesh are a good side. They did well to come from behind in the

semi-final. They had some hiccups but they've been more stable as compared to the other teams. Our win against them is in the past. A final is a different game," said Ahmed in the pre-match

press conference. India beat Nepal 4-2 in a frenetic semi-final on Saturday, which saw four goals scored in the last 10 minutes. Vishal Yadav's second-half

brace put India in control but Nepal didn't go down easily as they kept reducing the Blue Colts' lead. In the end, goals from substitutes Singthoukhongjam Rishi Singh and Hemneichung Lunlun sealed the Indian win. Set-pieces are something India have been excellent with so far. They've scored four goals from dead ball situations so far and Ahmed has been delighted with that. In the second semi-final, Bangladesh showed indomitable spirit as they came from two goals down to level it at 2-2 against Pakistan thanks to Md Manik's 74th and 94th minute goals. They then converted all eight of their penalties to cap off a memorable comeback and enter the final.

# Messi scores, Inter Miami moves closer to No. 1 seed with 1-1 draw

AP ■ FORT LAUDERDALE (US)

Lionel Messi moved Inter Miami another step closer to the No. 1 seed for the MLS Cup playoffs. And the MLS single-season points record remains in the club's reach as well. Messi scored in the 67th minute and Inter Miami pushed its unbeaten streak to eight straight Major League Soccer matches with a 1-1 tie against Charlotte FC on Saturday night. It was Messi's 15th goal in 16 league matches this season. Messi became the sixth player in MLS history with at least 15 goals and 15 assists in a single season - and he's done that while missing 15 of Inter Miami's league contests. The tie, combined with

Columbus' 2-2 draw with D.C. United on Saturday, left Inter Miami eight points clear of the Crew for the No. 1 seed in the Eastern Conference. Inter Miami is also seven points up on the LA Galaxy for the No. 1 overall seed in the MLS playoffs. Inter Miami plays at Columbus on Wednesday, and a win would wrap up the No. 1 overall seed - not just the East, but the Supporters Shield as the regular-season winners as well. Inter Miami (19-4-8) has 65 points with three matches left; Columbus (16-5-9) has 57 points with four matches remaining. "We are playing a great team that is chasing us in the Supporters' Shield," Inter Miami coach Gerardo "Tata"



Martino said. "It is a very important game

but so are the games against Toronto and New England.

We will be ready for these remaining dates."

But first, the Columbus match looms and Inter Miami knows exactly what's at stake. "It's very important," defender Jordi Alba said. The Supporters' Shield would give Inter Miami home-field edge throughout the playoffs, including for a potential MLS Cup final December 7. And if Inter Miami wins out, it will finish with 74 points - one more than the MLS record of 73 set by New England in 2021. DC United helped Inter Miami a bit on Saturday. Columbus led 2-1 late in the second half but surrendered the tying goal in the 81st minute; otherwise, the Crew could have been two points closer to Inter Miami in the standings and made

Wednesday's match far more interesting. Messi's goal was his typical brilliance. He took a pass near the top of the penalty box, dribbling once and threading his natural left-footed shot between four defenders and into the net to tie the match. It came 10 minutes after Charlotte (11-11-9, 42 points, seventh in the East) struck first, with Karol Swiderski deflecting a shot into the net. But Messi answered, and Inter Miami settled for its third consecutive draw. The team is 5-0-3 in its last eight league matches and 9-1-3 in MLS play since June 1. "Obviously, we are frustrated with the three consecutive ties," Martino said. "But the story continues." There were

two great chances for Inter Miami in the final moments. Messi lobbied for a shot at the gamewinner in the 10th minute of stoppage time, after getting taken down near the top of the penalty area. No foul was called - one almost certainly would have led to a penalty shot opportunity - and about two minutes later, Luis Suarez somehow missed from point-blank range on the final play of the match. The match was the next-to-last of the home regular season slate for Inter Miami. After the showdown at Columbus on Wednesday, the club goes to Toronto on October 5 and then wraps up the 34-match schedule at home against New England on October 19.