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MANISHA IN SEMIS;
PALAK BOWS OUT OF
PARIS PARALYMPICS
12 SPORTS



Celebs march for justice

KOLKATA HORROR



Ramkrishna Mission alumni wearing black dresses blow conches during a protest rally demanding justice for the victim of R G Kar Medical College and Hospital incident, in Kolkata, on Sunday PTI

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Don't underestimate the power of the common man. That was the message from a renowned Bengali television actress as she participated in a massive procession of cine personalities and other celebrities, demanding justice for the RG Kar Medical College doctor who was raped and murdered on duty more than three weeks ago. Indeed, the City of Joy once again transformed into the

City of Rallies — a title Kolkata earned in the 1970s. The long marches, now not only growing in length but also in breadth, saw the apolitical "demand for justice" spreading like wildfire, drawing in people from all walks of life, from celebrities to students, veterans to shopkeepers. This movement continued even as reports of more rapes and molestations surfaced from various parts of the State, including hospitals. Over five thousand cine personalities, accompanied by women and

men from all walks of life, braved the hot and sultry weather to march more than three kilometres from College Square to Esplanade. They demanded justice "not only for Abhaya — the name by which the victim doctor is now known — but for the entire society that has fallen victim to this broken system. Expressing the "grit and determination" of the Swastika, a noted award winning Bengali actress said, "Those who are trying to shield the guilty and preserve

the system that is rotting all the medical colleges and the educational institutions thought things would die down automatically after people lose interest with time. However, just as the public is not going to give up... because this is not a political movement... this is the movement of the people who have descended on street... enough is enough... we want justice not only for the victim but for the whole society... the whole women folk."

Director and actress Aparna Sen, who had hit the street regularly during the Singur and Nandigram movements too participated in the march. "How long the woman will continue to be treated as a commodity... why always the powers that be try to brush the crime against women under the carpet all the time... this cannot go on... we need not only justice but also an answer," she said. Ten kilometres from South a rally of three thousand alumni of Ramkrishna Mission group of schools marched carrying the portraits of Ramkrishna Paramahansa Mother Sharada Devi and Swami Vivekananda demanding justice from Gol Park to Nandan Cine complex.



JD(U) leader KC Tyagi resigns as party's national spokesperson

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Senior Janata Dal (United) leader and former Member of Parliament (MP) KC Tyagi whose stand on various issues often highlighted his party's differences with all BJP, resigned from the party's national spokesperson on Sunday, saying there is "little to defend the party from". In his letter to Nitish Kumar, he cited "personal reasons" for his resignation. However, sources suggested that the resignation was due to the leadership's displeasure with his recent statements on various issues. What also worked against Tyagi was a recent joint statement he issued with Opposition leaders on the Israel-Hamas war. Rajiv Ranjan Prasad will be replacing Tyagi as the new national spokesperson of the party, which is in power in Bihar under the leadership of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar. This is the second time in two years he resigned or was dropped as national spokesperson of the party. He was previously dropped from the position in March 2023, although this decision was reversed within two months following Kumar's intervention.

Mammootty breaks silence over MeToo in Bollywood

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOCHI

As the Malayalam film industry continues to reel under the sexual harassment allegations, famous actor Mammootty on Sunday denied the presence of any 'power group' in the film industry and called upon everyone working in the field to be vigilant so that nothing untoward happens there. The veteran actor, in a Facebook post, praised the State Government's initiative to constitute the Justice Hema Committee and requested it to implement the recommendations of the panel by enacting necessary legislation if there were any legal hurdles.

Breaking his silence on the report and the subsequent allegations that rocked the cinema world, Mammootty said he wholeheartedly welcomes and supports the recommendations and solutions in the committee's report and urged all associations in the film industry to join hands in implementing them. He said the police was vigorously investigating the complaints of sexual harassment and abuse raised by several women, so let the agency carry on with its probe honestly. The actor also said as the full report of the committee is before the court, it can decide the punishment.

Mammootty, in his post, said his response was delayed as he was waiting for the organisation representing actors and its leadership to first respond to the committee report. He said cinema was the "epitome" of society and the good and the bad present among the general public are there in the films too.



He also said as society pays close attention to the film industry, anything that happens there becomes a major topic of discussion. "Therefore, those working in the film industry need to be careful and vigilant so that nothing untoward happens in this sector," the actor said, adding that "cinema must survive." His response comes a day after his colleague in the film industry, actor Mohanlal, broke his silence over the shocking revelations in the committee's report. Mohanlal too denied the existence of a power group in the industry and had said cinema was a part of society and what happens everywhere else is happening in the film world also. He too had welcomed the panel's report and said wrongdoers should be punished if there was evidence against them.



49 minority teachers forced to resign in Bangladesh since Sheikh Hasina ouster

PTI ■ DHAKA

At least 49 teachers belonging to minority communities were forced to resign in Bangladesh after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led Government on August 5, according to a minority organisation in the violence-hit nation. The Bangladesh Chhatra Oikya Parishad, the student wing of Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Oikya Parishad, said this at a Press conference on Saturday, The Daily Star newspaper reported. The organisation's coordinator, Sajib Sarkar, said in the students' violence that ensued for days following the ouster and fleeing of 76-year-old Prime Minister Hasina, minority teachers across the country faced physical assault, and at least 49 of them were forced to resign. However, 19 of them were reinstated later, the report quoted him as saying. Sarkar added that religious and ethnic minorities have also faced attacks, looting, assault on women, vandalism of temples, arson attacks on homes and businesses, and killings during this period. Bangladesh saw several incidents of violence against members of Hindu, Buddhist and Christian communities following the fall of the Hasina-led Awami League government last month. The Hasina resigned and fled to India on August 5 following unprecedented anti-Government student-led protests over a controversial quota system in Government

jobs. Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, 84, who is leading the interim Government as its Chief Advisor, met the country's Hindu community leaders at a reception he hosted for them last week. Yunus vowed to promote interfaith harmony and said he wanted to build a Bangladesh where everyone can practice their faith without any fear and where no temple needs to be guarded. According to the data compiled by the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council and the Bangladesh Puja Udjapan Parishad organisations, members of minority communities in the country faced at least 205 incidents of attacks in 52 districts since the fall of the Hasina-led Government. Over 230 people were killed in Bangladesh in the incidents of violence that erupted across the country following the fall of the Hasina Government, taking the death toll to more than 600 since the anti-quota protests first started in mid-July. Meanwhile, Bangladesh police on Sunday ordered citizens to return by September 3 all arms and ammunition looted from police stations during the recent violence which led to Hasina's ouster, according to media reports. The violence that hit the country during the massive quota reform protests saw widespread attacks and looting of police stations across the country, The Daily Star newspaper reported.

BJP denies AAP's charge of abducting its Councillor

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

The AAP on Sunday accused the BJP of "kidnapping" its Bawana Councillor Ram Chander, with the BJP vehemently denying the allegation even as the "abducted" member returned to his residence. These kidnapping charges came just some days before the crucial zonal ward committee elections of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), slated to be held on Wednesday. Upon his return, Chander, councillor from Ward no. 28, claimed that he was threatened on the pretext of being framed in ED-CBI cases by the opposition outfit. He along with four other AAP Councillors joined the BJP last Sunday albeit returning to AAP a few days later after he claimed seeing Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in his dream. Later, in a video message, he said that he was taken by some people to BJP headquarters.

Rain ravages Andhra, 17K people evacuated



Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu with others during a visit to a flood-hit area in Vijayawada PTI

PTI ■ AMARAVATI (ANDHRA PRADESH)

Unprecedented rainfall in the past two days paralysed life at several places in Andhra Pradesh, especially in Vijayawada and vicinity while 17,000 rain-affected people were evacuated across the State. Budameru, a rivulet on the outskirts of Vijayawada suffered a breach and overflowed at several points on Sunday, leading to flooding at many city localities such as Aji Singh Nagar, Swathi Theatre area, Police Nagar area and west and central constituencies. According to footage from vernacular news channels, several cars and vehicles were submerged in these areas and others also in Vijayawada due to the flooding.

At Rajarajeswari Peta in the city, people were seen wading through chest-deep water on a flooded street. Addressing a Press conference at the Andhra Pradesh State Disaster Management Authority (APSDMA) in Tadepalli, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu said massive amounts of rainfall rocked the State. "Due to the heavy rain, Vijayawada and Guntur cities have been completely marooned. Vijayawada-Guntur national highway at Kaza and Vijayawada-Hyderabad national highway at Jaggaiahpetta were totally marooned," said Naidu. According to the CM, Jaggaiahpetta received 26 cm rainfall in 24 hours while 14 mandals registered over 20 cm rainfall.

GANESHA CHATURTHI



Artists give final touches to an idol of Lord Ganesha ahead of Ganesh Chaturthi festival at a roadside stall in New Delhi on Sunday Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

IAS coaching centre fined ₹5L for misleading ads

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has imposed a penalty of ₹5 lakh on Shankar IAS Academy for issuing misleading advertisements related to the UPSC Civil Service Exam 2022. The CCPA probe found out that Shankar IAS Academy advertised various types of courses but the information with respect to the course opted by the advertised successful candidates in above

mentioned UPSC Civil Service exams results was deliberately concealed in the advertisement. This has the effect of consumers falsely believing that all the successful candidates so claimed by the institute had opted for the paid courses advertised by the institute on its website. In other words, this practice consequently attract consumers into buying paid courses advertised by the coaching institutes. During investigation, it was

also found that in 18 instances where candidates bought Preliminary course from Shankar IAS Academy, the commencement date of the course on the receipt is mentioned as 09.10.2022 but the prelims of UPSC CSE, 2022 exam had already been conducted on 05.06.2022 and result declared on 22.06.2022 which could only mean that these candidates bought Preliminary course for next UPSC CSE prelims exam i.e., 2023.

Wolves continue to terrorise villagers in UP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Wolves that have terrorised Bahraich district for the past month struck again early Sunday morning, injuring two people in separate incidents, including a nine-year-old boy. The first incident occurred on Saturday night in Nakahi village, where a wolf attacked Paras (9) as he slept outside his home. The second incident happened around 4 am in Darhiya Gram Sabha, where Punnilal (55), also sleeping outside, was presumably attacked by a wolf. DFO Bahraich, Ajit Singh, reported that both victims are

stable and have been discharged from the hospital. "We received information about the attack on the boy at 2 am on Sunday morning. The child's mother informed us that they were sleeping outside when the animal attempted to carry off the child. The family managed to save him after a struggle with the animal. The villagers were unable to recognise the wolf and were unaware of its presence," Singh said. He confirmed the first attack was by a wolf after personally inspecting the area and finding pug marks. However, he mentioned that he would visit the second site to verify if it was indeed a wolf attack. "The villagers reported that an animal attacked the man



while he was sleeping outside, but this needs verification," he said. Singh said the wolves have generally not repeated attacks in the same area, except for one case. However, the

incidents have been occurring within the area under drone surveillance. He admitted that locating and capturing the wolves is becoming increasingly difficult due to the challenging terrain, which includes waterlogged patches and sugarcane fields. "We often have to wade through water to reach the right spots," Singh explained. Regarding the drone monitoring, Singh said they form three grids near the Ghagra river and conduct daily drone surveillance. Of a pack of six wolves, four have already been captured by the forest team. The attacks began increasing on July 17 during the rainy season, resulting in seven deaths, including six children,

and about 30 injuries. It was hoped that the attacks would decrease after the capture of the fourth, and most aggressive, wolf on Thursday. Chief Wildlife Warden and PCCF Wildlife Sanjay Srivastava said wolves aim for children and small animals. "In the night they move out of their dens and place themselves close to the victim. They eye the neck of the child and in one attack they broke the spine of a boy. At times mothers remained unaware when the child was lifted by the animal," he added. Singh said although over fifty villages were impacted by these wolves yet the worst affected were Makkapurwa, Nakwa, Kulela, Purwibasti Gadariya and Diwanpurwa.



Emergency delayed

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As per reports put out by various media houses, the release of BJP MP Kangan Ranaut's film Emergency has been delayed beyond its scheduled date. This news came in late Sunday night. The Pioneer cannot verify the reasons thereof.

Only 6.7 per cent court infrastructure at district level female-friendly, says CJJ

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud on Sunday said the fact that only 6.7 per cent court infrastructure at the district level is female-friendly needs to be changed. Speaking at the National Conference of the District Judiciary, Chandrachud said it should be ensured that courts provide safe and accommodating environment for all members of society. "We must without any question, change the fact that only 6.7 per cent of our court infrastructure at the district level is female-friendly. Is this acceptable today in a nation where at the basic level of recruitment in some States over 60 or 70 per cent of the recruits are women? Our focus areas are on increasing accessibility measures which can be under-

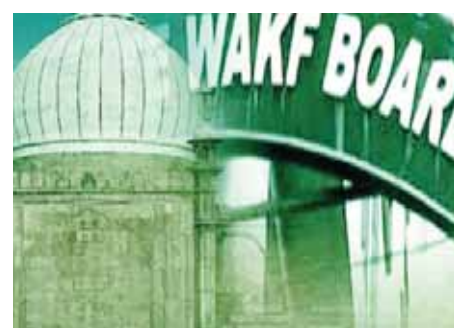


stood by carrying out infrastructural audits. "Opening in-court medical facilities, creches and technological projects like e-seva Kendras and video conferencing devices. These endeavours aim to increase access to justice. "Axiomatically, we must also

ensure that our courts provide a safe and accommodating environment for all members of our society, particularly for groups such as women and other vulnerable groups such as persons with disability, members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and people across the socio-

economic landscape," the CJJ said. Chandrachud said with the increasing number of women coming into the judiciary, the biases which we may unwittingly have towards our colleagues at the bar and the bench must be confronted. He also disclosed that at the recently concluded the first-ever National Lok Adalat, almost 1,000 cases were disposed of amicably within five working days. The two-day function was organised by the Supreme Court. President Droupadi Murmu delivered the valedictory address and also unveiled the flag and insignia of the Supreme Court, a statement issued by the apex Court said on Friday. Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal and Justice Surya Kant also addressed the gathering.

BJP's Minority Morcha to put counterviews in support of reforms in Waqf Boards



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Amid strident criticism of the Waqf (Amendment) Bill by some major Muslim bodies, the BJP's 'Minority Morcha' will rally counterviews in support of reforms in Waqf boards and seek suggestions on the law to present it to the parliamentary committee examining the Bill. Sources said a team of seven BJP members, including State Waqf Board chairpersons, will elicit views of the minority community across the country and assuage their concerns on a host of issues. "We will convey to the committee every point of view. If there is any concern on any aspect of the Bill, we will express it as well. But the

need for reforms in Waqf boards is felt by the community everywhere," a BJP leader claimed. They Minority Morcha will share the report with the BJP leadership and the parliamentary panel headed by veteran party MP Jagdambika Pal. The committee members include Shadab Shams, Sanwar Patel and Mohsin Lokhandwala, who head the boards in Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat, and Haryana Waqf Board administrator Zakir Hussain among others. The issue was also flagged in a last week meeting of the Minority Morcha at the BJP headquarters here. The party leadership, sources said, told the Morcha head Jamal Siddiqui to reach out to Muslims across the country to make a case for reforms in the Waqf Act so that Waqf boards functioning could be made more accountable and transparent. The Morcha was also asked to seek suggestions and assurance the community's concerns. Major Muslim bodies like Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind and All India Muslim Personal Law Board have been galvanising opinion against the proposed Bill, alleging that it is against their religious practices and violates the Constitution. BJP leaders said the government had started working on the bill during its second term and has spoken to a number of stakeholders.



MHA forms Central team to assess damage caused by floods in Gujarat

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Home Affairs has constituted an inter-ministerial team to assess the damage caused by rainfall and floods in Gujarat. The team will shortly visit the flood-affected districts of Gujarat, which was hit by heavy to extremely heavy rainfall between August 25 and 30 caused by a deep depression formed over Rajasthan and Gujarat, according to an official statement. At least 25 people have died in rain-related incidents across the State on August 26 and 27.

The statement said the MHA has constituted an inter-ministerial central team (IMCT) led by the executive director, the National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM), to assess the damage caused by rainfall and floods in Gujarat, the statement said. Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan were also affected by heavy to very heavy rainfall. Multiple spells of heavy rains, cloudbursts and landslides have caused extensive damage in Himachal Pradesh this year. The MHA is in touch with senior officers of these states, and will depute IMCT there as well, if the severe damages are reported by them, the statement said. During this monsoon, some other states have been affected by heavy rainfall, floods, cloudbursts and landslides. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Central Government is fully committed to providing all possible help to affected states, the statement said. As per the decision taken by the Union Home Minister Amit Shah, in August 2019, the MHA, this year, constituted IMCTs which have visited flood and landslides-affected States of Assam, Kerala, Mizoram, and Tripura in advance for on-spot assessment of the damage without waiting for their memorandum. The IMCT for Nagaland has also been constituted, which will visit the affected areas of the state shortly.



Air Marshal Tejinder Singh takes over as new DCAS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Air Marshal Tejinder Singh took over as Deputy Chief of the Air Staff (DCAS) of the Indian Air Force, at Air Headquarters (Vayu Bhawan), here on Sunday. After assumption of his new appointment, the Air Marshal paid homage to the brave hearts who gave the supreme sacrifice, by laying wreath at the National War Memorial, New Delhi. An alumnus of the National Defence Academy (NDA), Air Marshal Tejinder was commissioned in the fighter stream of the IAF on 13 June 1987. He is a Category 'A' Qualified Flying Instructor with over 4,500 hours of flying, an alumnus of Defence Service Staff College and National Defence College. He has commanded a Fighter Squadron, a Radar Station, a premier Fighter Base and was Air Officer Commanding, Jammu and Kashmir. His varied staff appointments include Operational Staff at a Command HQ, Air Commodore (Personnel Officers-1) at Air HQ, Deputy Assistant Chief of Integrated Defence Staff, Financial (Planning) at HQ IDS, Air Commodore (Aerospace Safety), Assistant Chief of Air Staff Operations (Offensive) and ACAS Ops (Strategy) at Air HQ. Prior to his present appointment, he was the Senior Air Staff Officer, Headquarter Eastern Air Command of IAF at Shillong, Meghalaya. In recognition of his meritorious services, he was awarded the Vayu Sena Medal in 2007 and Ati Vishist Seva Medal in 2022. In another appointment, Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit assumed the appointment of Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief of Central Air Command on Sunday.

Expect good Wayanad relief package from Centre, says CM

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Kerala Government has sought a Rs 2,000 crore relief package from the Centre for the unprecedented devastation that occurred in Wayanad recently and is hopeful of getting "good assistance", Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said here. He also dismissed as "not pragmatic" the recommendations made by the Madhav Gadgil and Kasturirangan committees on ecologically sensitive areas of the Western Ghats, saying the panels did not consider the societal expectations and ground realities in his state. Speaking to PTI this weekend during an interview on the Wayanad landslides, the chief minister said the State Government has decided to construct new townships for the families of the victims and the survivors of the unprecedented devastation "within a year" and these dwellings would be "climate-resilient and sustainable". Vijayan said the State sought a disaster relief package of about Rs 2,000 crore from the Centre when he recently met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Delhi. The PM was "very positive" on the issue and the state was hopeful of getting "good assistance" from the Union Government, he added. The Chief Minister said the funds were expected to be



released after a central team submitted a report to the Union Government. Vijayan added that categorising the Wayanad landslides as a "national or severe calamity" would enable all parliamentarians to donate Rs 1 crore each to the Kerala relief fund, otherwise only the local MPs will be able to do so. "If this disaster is included in that (national or severe calamity) category, we will get good assistance. It will create a good atmosphere for reconstruction," he told the news agency. The 79-year-old veteran Marxist politician said the July 30 disaster that wiped off large tracts of three villages -- Punchirimmattam, Chooralmala and Mundakkai -- apart from some areas of Attamala in Wayanad has "shaken the lives of our people, leaving those affected with unimaginable trauma and concerns about their future". "The recent landslide in Chooralmala village has caused unprecedented devastation. I would like to assure that our

Government's primary objective is to provide a comprehensive rehabilitation package to the survivors. "We are committed to providing the best possible rehabilitation package to the survivors, in line with the Kerala model of development with its people-centric approach," he said. Vijayan recently said during an all-party meeting that the Wayanad survivors would be housed in one or two townships which will have single-storey houses of about 1,000 square feet in size with the option to expand to two storeys in the future. "Our priority is to ensure that families who lost their homes in the landslides have a safe and secure place to reside. The construction of the townships is expected to be completed within a year," he told PTI. On the recommendations made by the Madhav Gadgil and Kasturirangan committees on handling the fragile and ecologically sensitive areas along the Western Ghats,

Vijayan said these reports were "not fully accepted by the entities that commissioned them." This highlights the fact, he said, that "much of the recommendations in these reports were not pragmatic and did not consider societal aspirations and ground realities". "At least some parts of the reports did not consider humans dwelling in ecologically fragile zones for centuries as part of the ecosystem," the chief minister added. He also underlined that "small and marginal" farmers cannot be equated with rich realtors, planters or miners occupying similar terrains. "There was no such differentiation in these reports, which is why many States were forced to completely disregard them," Vijayan said. He added that it was also "not desirable" for his Government to take a position in a "hasty manner" without "adequately" studying the draft Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA) notification issued by the Centre recently. The notification issued on July 31 seeks to declare over 56,800 square kilometres of the Western Ghats across six States, including 13 villages in Kerala's landslide-hit Wayanad, as an Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA). It invited suggestions and objections within 60 days. "We have to wait to hear from the local self-Governments and eventually take an informed decision on it.

Govt mulling to extend security for gig workers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Labour and Employment move comes close

Months after the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) issued a notice to the Centre regarding allegations of "anti-labour practices" at an Amazon India warehouse in Manesar, Haryana, Union Labour and Employment Minister Dr Mansukh Mandaviya has announced that the Government is exploring ways to extend social security coverage for those serving in the sector. Gig workers, who take on short-term or project-based jobs often for multiple clients rather than being employed by a single company, will be registered on the eShram Portal to facilitate the implementation of these social security measures, said the Minister at a review meeting here. Dr Mandaviya emphasised the development of a comprehensive strategy to ensure these workers receive the social security benefits they are entitled to. The Minister also highlighted that companies employing gig and platform workers will be encouraged to lead this registration effort. An online window will be provided for aggregators to streamline the registration process. He underscored the significance of the Code on Social Security, which marks the first formal recognition of gig and platform workers in India. This step aims to acknowledge and formalise their roles within the economy.



on the heels of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) suo moto cognizance taken in June when it launched an investigation into human rights violations of the gig workers at an Amazon warehouse in Haryana, where even basic amenities like restrooms were reportedly missing. The NHRC also demanded answers from the Central Labour Ministry. Labour associations have accused five warehouses in and around Manesar of violating regulations under the Factories Act, 1948. These cases highlight the broader issue of gig workers' exploitation by the companies that employ them. According to NITI Aayog, the number of gig workers could expand to 23.5 million by 2029-30 from the 7.7 million they are at now. The lack of robust legislation addressing new forms of labor, particularly gig and platform work, affects workers, especially women, who often struggle to maintain a living wage and stay in the workforce.

India sets ambitious goal of hosting 10 cr foreign tourists by 2047: Tourism Ministry

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India currently hosts around 110 million foreign tourists annually, the ambitious goal is to increase this number to 100 million during the 'Amrit Kaal' period, said Mugdha Sinha, Director General of the Tourism Ministry here. In this regard she enlisted various measures being implemented to attract more international visitors and boost the inbound tourism sector. Amrit Kaal is the Prime Minister's vision 2047 for 'New India'. Majorly, the focus is on how the tourism industry, private and the Government sector can collaborate effectively. Efforts are also being made to



encourage repeat visits by foreign tourists, said the new DG of the Tourism Ministry while talking to reporters here at the conclusion of the three-day BLTM 2024 event. On the occasion, Uttarakhanda's Tourism Minister Satpal Maharaj stated that tourism in India is expanding rapidly. "The world is opening its doors to Indian travelers and that increased

tourism will generate more employment opportunities for locals." He emphasised the connection between local crafts and travel-tourism. Sanjeev Agarwal, founder and CEO of Fairfest Media Limited, the organizers of the expo, pointed out that to further strengthen the tourism sector, the country's railway network needs to be improved. He pointed out that India has a vast railway network that requires enhancement. According to estimates, India's MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) tourism market is expected to grow at a CAGR of 6 per cent between 2024 and 2029, reflecting the increasing significance of MICE in the

tourism industry. The Indian Exhibition Industry Association noted that the value of this industry was USD709 million in 2019 and is projected to reach USD1,283 billion by 2025, growing at a CAGR of 10.25 per cent. On the occasion, Jyoti Mayal, President of the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI), emphasised the pivotal role of India's travel and tourism industry in the Nation's economy. "The industry contributes 10 per cent to the GDP and generates approximately USD 78 billion annually. By 2029, it is expected to create 53 million jobs and attract 30.5 million travelers, highlighting its substantial growth potential.

Bishnoi community welcomes EC's decision to defer Haryana polls

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI/CHANDIGARH

The Bishnoi community has thanked the Election Commission for deferring the Haryana Assembly poll date to October 5 from October 1 in view of the centuries-old festival of the community. The ruling BJP has also welcomed the Election Commission's decision. The EC on Saturday deferred the Haryana Assembly poll date, saying the decision was taken keeping in mind the Bishnoi community's festival. Som Prakash Bishnoi, Akhil Bhartiya Bishnoi Mahasabha's Vice President, said the entire community thanks the Election Commission for its decision to defer the poll date.



Lakhs of members of the Bishnoi community take part in the festival and it takes 15-20 days to organise it, he said. "Earlier, we were worried what if people (Bishnoi community) cannot vote as they would be travelling or if they are not able to take part in the event too. Now, with the new poll date, our problem has been solved and we thank the EC for this," he said. Before the revision of the date, the Haryana polls were to be held along with the third and last phase of the Jammu and

Kashmir elections. The decision to postpone the Haryana elections has been taken to honour both the voting rights and traditions of the Bishnoi community which has upheld a 300-400-year-old practice in remembrance of their Guru Jambheshwar, the EC said on Saturday. It said it had received a representation from the National President of the All India Bishnoi Mahasabha, Bikaner, Rajasthan for rescheduling the Haryana Assembly polls. Generations of families from Punjab, Rajasthan and Haryana visit their native village Mukam in Rajasthan on 'amavas' in the month of 'Asoj' for the annual festival in Bikaner in memory of Guru Jambheshwar, according to the EC.

Ex-ISRO scientist's wind technology poised to support India's targets for Carbon Net Zero by 2070

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

A team led by a former ISRO scientist Rakesh Aggarwal has developed cost-effective green efficient GARV (Guided Airflow Rotational Vortex) technology in wind sector, offering a promising solution to support India's ambitious targets for Carbon Net Zero by 2070. Validated by BITS, Goa, this groundbreaking technology based on 'drag cum lift wind turbine' concept is patented in several major jurisdictions, including India, the US, Australia, Russia, New Zealand,

and European countries. Talking about its key features, Aggarwal explained the technology utilises a unique design that creates a rotational vortex effect, which significantly increases the amount of wind energy captured by the turbine blades. This results in a higher conversion rate of wind energy into electrical power when compared to the conventional turbines. "It achieves this by optimising airflow and reducing the wear and tear on turbine components, leading to lower maintenance costs and a longer lifespan," said the senior scientist, an expert in electric and con-

trol designs. Aggarwal noted that it took him 3-4 years to develop the technology, which he feels can be a game changer in the green sector as it can adapt to various wind speeds. "These GARV turbines are capable of operating efficiently across a wide range of wind speeds, from low to very high. This adaptability ensures consistent energy generation even in areas with fluctuating wind conditions." Similar to other innovations in green technology, GARV wind turbines developed under the umbrella of TDR Foundation, a non-prof-



it organisation can be fabricated and installed locally, reducing transportation costs and supporting local manufacturing industries. "A unique feature of this wind turbine technology is its adaptability—it can be fabricated and installed directly at the site and can handle a range of capacities from a few kilowatts to several megawatts. The system optimises drag force into torque, enabling it to generate electricity from very low wind speeds to speeds exceeding 200 km/h," said Aggarwal. He said the turbines can generate electricity from wind speeds of a

few kilometres per hour to above 200 kilometres per hour and has the capacity to meet the energy needs of India and other countries with cheap green energy making fossil fuels irrelevant. Its innovative approach and cost advantages make it a potential game-changer in the wind energy sector, offering economically viable alternative to conventional energy sources, said Aggarwal, reflecting on his childhood dream of developing an indigenous concept, which also aligns with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of 'Make in India' and 'Go local Go Vocal'.

Violence against health warrior on Aug 9 barbarity expressed in extremity: Dhankhar

PTI ■ DEHRADUN



Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Sunday termed the violence committed against a "health warrior" at Kolkata's RG Kar Hospital on August 9 as "barbarity expressed in extremity".

Addressing students and faculty members at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in Rishikesh, the vice president said such barbaric incidents put the entire civilisation to shame and shreds what Bharat stands for. Lamenting the use of the term 'symptomatic malaise' by some stray voices, Dhankhar said such statements "aggravate our excruciating pain and add salt to our injured conscience".

are not given the treatment they deserve... Security of the doctors, nurses, health compounders, health warriors must be impenetrably protected," he added. Criticising the "selective silence" of NGOs, Dhankhar said, "Certain NGOs on road for... Drop of a hat are in silence mode. We have to question them. Their silence is much worse than the culpable act of perpetrators of this heinous crime on August 9, 2024. Those who seek to play politics and earn brownie points, are not responding to the call of their conscience".

Crime, rising debt likely to dominate 3-day Punjab Assembly Session

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

The three-day session of the Punjab Assembly slated to begin on Monday is going to be anything but calm with the opposition parties set to seek accountability from the AAP-led government on law and order and rising state debt. The session of the Vidhan Sabha will start with obituary references and wind up on September 4. Congress leader and MLA Aruna Chaudhary said her party will raise the issue of deteriorating law and order in the state. "Deteriorating law and order is one of the biggest issues. Everyday incidents related to snatching, theft and extortion are taking place in the state," alleged the Dinanagar MLA. Chaudhary also accused the government of failing to fulfil its promise of giving Rs 1,000 per month to every woman.



BJP MLA Jaggi Lal Mahajan said he will raise the issue of alleged illegal sand mining going on in the state. Kotli said the duration of the session should be increased as the three-day session is too short. The AAP, when it was not in power, used to demand longer sessions to discuss peoples issues in the House, he said. Congress MLA Sukhpal Singh Khaira accused the AAP government of ruining the importance of the assembly by limiting it to only three days. "The AAP government deceived women in Punjab," Congress MLA Sukhwinder Singh Kotli said, "The AAP government had promised to set up 18 colleges in the state. Two and half years of the AAP regime have passed but they could not procure land

Assam TMC president Ripun Bora quits party

PTI ■ GUWAHATI



Assam Trinamool Congress president Ripun Bora on Sunday resigned from the party, claiming that the people of the northeastern state consider it as a "regional party" of West Bengal and are not willing to accept it as their own. In a letter to All India Trinamool Congress general secretary Abhishek Banerjee, Bora, the former Rajya Sabha member, said he had offered many suggestions to party supremo and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to make TMC acceptable in Assam, but those were "not implemented". "Assam TMC has great potential, but several recurring issues have hindered our progress, including the perception of TMC as a regional party of West Bengal. To counter this perception, we made several suggestions," Bora said in his resignation letter. He claimed that he had suggested the need for an Assamese leader at the national level of TMC, declaring the residence of Bharat Ratna Dr Bhupen Hazarika at Tollygunge in Kolkata as a heritage site and converting the Madhupur

No financial crisis in Himachal, State Govt carrying multiple reforms: Sukhu

PTI ■ SHIMLA



There is no financial crisis in Himachal Pradesh rather, the State Government has been carrying out reforms from day one, and the positive outcome is now visible, said Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Sunday. While talking to the media on the sidelines, Sukhu said that the state government is clearing the arrears of 27,000 pensioners above the age of 70 this year and seven per cent Dearness Allowance has been granted to all government employees. "Additionally, the government is working for the welfare of all sections, including farmers, labourers, orchardists, women, and small shopkeepers. The state government aims to make Himachal Pradesh self-reliant by 2027 and the richest state in the country by 2032" he said. He said that there is no financial crisis in the state. The government has been carrying out reforms from day one and the positive outcome is now visible. He inaugurated the "Master's

cultural heritage and his commitment to promoting the rich traditions of the Kullu Valley were particularly noteworthy. Spending nearly 20 years in Himachal Pradesh, he deeply immersed himself in the study of Himalayan culture and emerged as one of the earliest advocates for safeguarding the cultural legacy of the Kullu Valley" Sukhu said. The chief minister further stated that Roerich's global influence was profound, particularly through the 'Roerich Pact', an international treaty signed on April 15, 1935, by 21 countries to safeguard cultural heritage. He said that Roerich was a staunch advocate for peace and believed in resolving global conflicts by promoting cultural values that foster respect and understanding among younger generations. While interacting with journalists, he said that India and Russia have centuries-old relations because our cultures and thinking are similar and Russia has always supported India during difficult times.

Wages of Assam tea workers meagre, shortcomings in welfare scheme implementation: CAG report

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

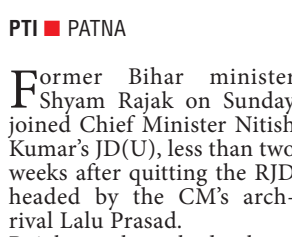


Wages of tea garden workers in Assam are "meagre", with "several shortcomings and areas of concern" in implementation of labour laws and worker welfare provisions, a recent Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report has said. It also found the state government's intervention in fixing wages as per the Minimum Wage Act (MW Act) "insufficient", noting that efforts to improve the lives of the workers have "fallen short" of making any substantial change. The performance audit on 'Implementation of Schemes for Welfare of Tea Tribes' for the period 2015-16 to 2020-21 maintained that low income and lack of education have been major barriers to the overall development of the workers in the state. The audit was performed in four zones - Cachar, Dibrugarh, Nagaon and Sonitpur. There are 390 tea estates in the four sampled

zones, of which 40 estates (10 per cent) were selected based on the size of the plantations and number of workers employed. Apart from scrutiny of records, the exercise included interviews of 590 workers in the selected estates. The report said the Tea Tribes Welfare Department (TTWD) tried to address the issues of the workers, but without basic socio-economic data, and their initiatives were implemented "haphazardly". "The wages the workers received in the tea estates were meagre," the report said, pointing out that the Assam government did not fix the minimum pay as per the MW Act, 1948. It also said that workers were not a part of scheduled employments notified by the state government, as a result of which they do not get benefits of minimum wage standard and variable dearness allowance. The secretary, Labour and Welfare Department, informed the CAG that when the state government came out with initiatives to increase pay as per the MW Act, it got challenged in the court and hence, the wages could not be increased as desired.

Ex-Bihar Minister Shyam Rajak returns to JD(U)

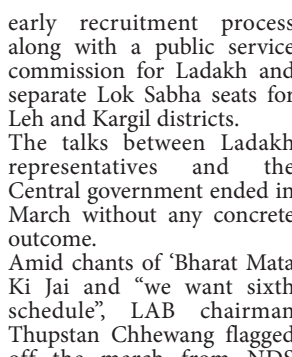
PTI ■ PATNA



Former Bihar minister Shyam Rajak on Sunday joined Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's JD(U), less than two weeks after quitting the RJD headed by the CM's arch-rival Lalu Prasad. Rajak, who had been expelled from the state cabinet as well as the JD(U) in 2020, got re-inducted into the party here by national working president Sanjay Kumar Jha, in presence of a number of top leaders. Jha said the entry of Rajak, "a leader with grassroots-level support" will strengthen the party, "especially among the state's 'Mahadalits' who were recognised as a separate category by Nitish Kumar". "Sub-categorisation of Dalits may have become a buzzword in the backdrop of the recent Supreme Court judgement, but our leader was the veritable pioneer. The presence of Rajak in our party will send across this message more forcefully," he said.

Sonam Wangchuk led 'Delhi Chalo Padyatra' starts from Leh in support of 4-point agenda

PTI ■ LEH



More than 100 volunteers led by renowned innovator and climate activist Sonam Wangchuk started a foot march from here to the national capital on Sunday to urge the Centre to resume the stalled dialogue with the leadership of Ladakh on their four-point agenda. The 'Delhi Chalo Padyatra' was organised by the Leh Apex Body (LAB), which along with Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA), are jointly spearheading an agitation over the past four years in support of statehood, extension of the Constitution's sixth schedule,

early recruitment process along with a public service commission for Ladakh and separate Lok Sabha seats for Leh and Kargil districts. The talks between Ladakh representatives and the Central government ended in March without any concrete outcome. Amid chants of 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' and "we want sixth schedule", LAB chairman Thupstan Chhewang flagged off the march from NDS Memorial park with Wangchuk expressing hope that the Government will greet them with a good news on reaching Delhi on Gandhi Jayanti, marking the birth anniversary of father of the

March held a 21-day long hunger strike in support of the demands. He said this is a people's movement and the Government should fulfill the demands of the Ladakhis without a second thought. "We are sharing borders with Pakistan and China who may be boasting of their technology but I want to tell my country that Indians should be proud of the people of Ladakh who are ready to sacrifice their lives for the nation," he said. Expressing confidence that more people will join the march enroute to Delhi via Himachal Pradesh, he said the people are enthusiastic

which is evident that even a 90-year-old Ladakh citizen, who lives in Switzerland, is ready to join them in Delhi. "This is another phase of our struggle and the KDA is not joining this march at the initial stage but will definitely give a positive response as the march moves to Delhi," Chhewang said. Tsering Dorjee, an elderly participant, said though his health will not allow him to cover the full distance of around 1,000 km by foot but "I will try to be part of the march as long as I can". "By this march, we want to convey a message that we are very serious with regard to our four demands," he said.

Tripura BJP to launch membership drive on Sept 3

PTI ■ AGARTALA



Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha will kick start the one-and-a-half month-long membership drive of BJP in the northeastern state on September 3, a senior party leader on Sunday. The BJP Tripura unit has set a target of 12 lakh members this time, state BJP general secretary Amit Rakshit told PTI. "We will kick start the one-and-a-half month-long membership drive of BJP in Tripura from September 3. Chief Minister Manik Saha will inaugurate the process in the presence of party's state president, Rajib Bhattacharjee," he said. In the membership the focus will be on online members, Rakshit said.

Couple held for killing, decapitating woman, dumping body in Pune river

PTI ■ PUNE



A couple has been arrested in connection with the death of a woman, whose headless body was found on the banks of a river in Pune city earlier this week, police said on Sunday. The police on Saturday arrested Ashfaq Khan and his wife Hamida for allegedly killing his 48-year-old sister in a dispute over ownership of a room in a slum, an official said. Joint Commissioner of Police Ranjankumar Sharma said, "The Pune city police recovered a woman's torso from the banks of the Mutha River. There were no clothes on the body, and the accused had dismembered it to destroy evidence before throwing it in the river." Investigations revealed that

the victim, Sakina, had a dispute with her brother over the ownership of a room in a slum in the Shivaji Nagar area, he said. Sakina had been reported missing, and her brother Ashfaq and sister-in-law Hamida were detained in connection with her disappearance, the official said. The duo allegedly strangled the victim, decapitated her and dismembered the body to destroy the evidence, he said. The couple has been arrested under sections 103 (murder) and 238 (causing the disappearance of evidence) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), the official said.

FIR lodged against three persons for threatening BJP MLA Rajesh Chaudhary

PTI ■ MATHURA

An FIR has been lodged against three persons at the city police station here for allegedly threatening BJP MLA Rajesh Chaudhary, police said on Sunday. The FIR was lodged against three people, including Ravindra Jatav, Azad Ansari and one unidentified person on Saturday under BNS sections 351 (4) (criminal intimidation by an anonymous communication), 352 (intentional insult with intention to provoke a breach of peace) and section 67 of the IT act, they said.

Chaudhary, who is the MLA from Mant seat of Mathura, alleged that someone called him up on August 25 night and threatened to kill him and his son. The MLA said that someone also called him up on August 30 and threatened him using abusive and casteist slurs and said "you give a lot of statements on TV. We will see you. Our leader has ordered us to kill you". Chaudhary also said in his complaint that some people have announced a reward of Rs 10 lakh on the social media platform 'X' for the person who brings his tongue.

K-RIDE needs technical strength to execute Bengaluru Suburban Railway Project: Ashwini Vaishnav

PTI ■ BENGALURU



Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav on Sunday said the Karnataka Rail Infrastructure Development Company Limited requires more technical strength to execute the Bengaluru Suburban Railway Project. The Minister said he would visit Bengaluru after a few weeks and review the Bengaluru Suburban Railway Project (BSRP). "The major issue last time when I reviewed it was the requirement of the technical strength in the organisation (K-RIDE) because it's (BSRP) a very complex project. So Karnataka Rail Infrastructure Development Company (K-

everything is in place. "It's not just unilateral. It is a joint venture of the state and the Centre, and the state has the control of 51 per cent," he explained. The Minister said last time when he was in Bengaluru he had requested to the State government to increase the technical strength. Regarding the bullet train project from Mumbai to Ahmedabad, Vaishnav said the progress was good. "Already 327 kilometres of viaduct has been completed and it is progressing practically very rapidly. The undersea tunnel work has also started. The first section should start in 2026," Vaishnav said.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

On a sound footing

PM Modi emphasises India's 90% economic growth in the past decade, outpacing the global average of 35%

India's resilience shines through in its remarkable economic growth, a testament to its enduring strength in the face of global challenges. It was recently reiterated in a recent statement by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He highlighted the impressive growth of the Indian economy, stating that while the global economy expanded by 35% over the past decade, India's economy surged by 90%. This bold claim not only underscores India's economic resilience and rapid development but also invites a closer examination of the factors driving this growth and what it means for the future. PM Modi's claim reflects a period of substantial economic transformation in India, marked by key reforms, increased foreign investment, and a burgeoning middle class. India has implemented significant structural reforms in the past decade, including the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), and digital financial inclusion initiatives. These reforms have streamlined business processes, improved tax compliance, and enhanced the overall ease of doing business in India, making the economy more attractive to investors. India's young and growing population has been a crucial driver of its economic expansion. This demographic advantage, has fuelled domestic demand and boosted economic growth.



The digital revolution in India has transformed various sectors, including finance, retail, and services. The rise of digital payments, e-commerce, and fintech has created new economic opportunities and driven growth in the formal economy. Juxtaposed to it the global economy's 35% growth over the same period reflects a more subdued pace, influenced by various challenges, including geopolitical tensions, trade wars, and the impact of the pandemic. The disparity between India's growth and the global average highlights the country's relative resilience and potential as an emerging economic powerhouse. However, it's important to note that global economic growth has been uneven, with advanced economies experiencing slower growth rates, while emerging markets, including India, have driven much of the expansion. Despite the optimistic growth figures, India faces several challenges that could impact its future economic trajectory. High unemployment rates, income inequality, and a struggling agricultural sector remain pressing issues. Additionally, the global economic environment is becoming increasingly uncertain, with rising protectionism and geopolitical instability posing risks to sustained growth. The Indian government will need to continue implementing reforms and addressing structural challenges to maintain its growth momentum. Ensuring inclusive growth, enhancing job creation, and investing in infrastructure and education will be critical to sustaining long-term economic development. India's impressive growth over the past decade suggests a bright future, but the path forward is not without obstacles which must be addressed in the right earnest.

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PICTALK



People walk down a road during rain, in Shimla.

PTI

Paswan family power struggle may split the LJP

The recent meetings of the BJP leader with former LJP MPs Pashupati Paras and Prince Paswan, have intensified tensions within the Paswan family and the LJP

The recent meeting between former LJP MPs Pashupati Paras and Prince Paswan with Amit Shah has significantly elevated Chirag Paswan's political profile. Despite this boost, Chirag Paswan's statements during the last parliamentary session have left many observers puzzled, as he voiced positions that often contradicted those of the BJP. Issues such as the creamy layer in reservations, lateral appointments, and the Waqf Board Amendment Act 2024 saw Chirag taking stances that directly opposed the BJP's views.

In response, Pashupati Paras and Prince Paswan met with BJP leader Amit Shah. During these discussions, Chirag Paswan reportedly expressed concerns about his party's struggles to his uncle, Pashupati Paras. Political insiders suggest that this interaction was part of a broader BJP strategy, with Amit Shah subtly indicating that neither Pashupati Paras nor Prince Paswan are beyond his influence. Additionally, MPs affiliated with the LJP family have begun issuing clarifications, while RJD MLA



Mukesh Roshan has alleged that the BJP is targeting LJP R MPs. Furthermore, three MPs from Chirag Paswan's party are reportedly in communication with senior BJP leaders. The BJP is known for its strategic patience, gradually consolidating its position. This approach saw Pashupati Paras receiving assurances during the Lok Sabha elections, and the Rajya Sabha seat was subsequently occupied by Upendra Kushwaha. Pashupati Paras is now banking on the upcoming 2025 assembly elections, understanding that neither the BJP nor the JDU are likely to allocate him separate seat shares. Consequently, both Pashupati Paras and Chirag Paswan may need to share assembly seats within the NDA's seat-sharing framework, potentially alleviating BJP's concerns.

However, the emergence of the Rashtriya Lok Janshakti Party (RLP) poses a threat to the NDA, particularly as it fields candidates against NDA allies like Chirag Paswan's party. This increases the likelihood of vote splitting, whether it results in a reduction or redistribution of votes. Within the RJD, Ram Vilas Paswan's son-in-law, Anil Kumar Sadhu, has been vocally critical of Chirag Paswan. Should Pashupati Paras align with the India Alliance, internal conflicts could escalate, with figures like Sunny Paswan from Congress already preparing to oppose Chirag. Former Samastipur MP Prince Paswan could also emerge as a significant political challenger to Chirag Paswan. Despite these tensions, Pashupati Paras has publicly expressed a willingness to mend relations with his nephew, stating that familial bonds could overcome political differences. In media statements, he emphasized that "blood is blood," indicating his desire to reconcile with Chirag Paswan. Pashupati has communicated his intentions to the NDA

leadership, aiming to thaw the strained relationship. Nevertheless, Chirag Paswan has accused Pashupati Paras of previously undermining the LJP by breaking away MPs and seizing party offices established by their father, Ram Vilas Paswan, thereby betraying the family. Despite these accusations, Pashupati Paras now appears to be seeking reconciliation. This scenario may reflect the BJP's damage control efforts or a strategic policy shift aimed at balancing the factions within the LJP. The BJP aims to prevent the LJP from splitting into the Rashtriya Lok Janshakti and LJP (R) factions. During the Lok Sabha elections, Pashupati Paras was a target of BJP's strategies. The Paras faction suffered losses during the Lok Sabha elections, losing both MPs and Union Minister positions. When they sought a seat allocation for Sunil Pandey in a by-election, the BJP appropriated their candidate. LJP remains caught in a predicament of political uncertainty. (The writer is a senior journalist; views are personal)



RAJESH KUMAR SINGH

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The saying parliament is the temple of democracy has become a cliché phrase. Still, it is heard across the world where democracy is in vogue. In India, even the Communists, Dravidians and even Maoists use this term despite their nationalist views. The functioning of a nation's parliament symbolizes its civility. No doubt, the names of Benjamin Disraeli, who served twice as Prime Minister of Britain and William Gladstone, who had a 12-year term as Prime Minister (spread over four non-consecutive terms) are two names students of political science would never forget.

Disraeli was premier during 1868 and 1874-1880 and served as leader of the opposition. Gladstone was his contemporary and both were known for their tongue-in-the-cheek retorts. Though the verbal duels at times crossed all levels of parliamentary decorum, both the parties they headed (Conservatives and Labor Party) never had any issues with their style of exchange of words. "If Gladstone fell into the Thames, that would be a misfortune. But if anyone pulled him out, that I suppose would be a calamity," Disraeli reportedly told the Parliament once.

Similarly, Gladstone was named as GOM (Grand Old Man) of British politics and Disraeli said that GOM stood for God's Only Mistake. India, described as the world's biggest democracy has its colourful past. The likes of Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, Mahavir Tyagi and Pilloo Modi are some of the names that come to mind while thinking of the Indian parliament. The debates and discussions featuring them remain eternal classics in the annals of the country's parliamentary democracy. Those were the days when Television and live telecasting of proceedings of the House were unheard of. Not any more. The proceedings of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha are being aired live by the LSTV and RSTV.

After watching the Lok Sabha debate on the motion of thanks to the President's address to the joint session of the Houses, what

struck my mind was the scarcity of good leaders or speakers in the Opposition benches. K C Venugopal, as of date, the strongest leader in the Congress after the Gandhi clan, made a "bloomer" when he charged that the last ten years of Modi rule saw 2.5 lakh persons getting killed in train accidents across the country. Though Jagadambika Pal, a Congress turncoat occupying the chair asked him to check the facts, the Kerala Chanakya (as KC is addressed by his followers) stood his ground and reiterated that more than 2.5 lakh had perished in train mishaps during the last ten years. A senior railway official had a hearty laugh when asked about the charge made by the Congress leader. Many members of the Lok Sabha are not competent to occupy the treasury or opposition benches. Thol Thirumavalavan, of the VCK, a Dalit outfit, blamed the Center for the recent hooch tragedy in Tamil Nadu's Kallakurichi which claimed 63 innocent lives. Had Thirumavalavan spent at least 15 minutes of his time reading the Constitution of India presented to him by Rahul Gandhi, he would not have made this blunder. The

The decline of Parliamentary decorum

Recent debates in the Lok Sabha, marked by factual blunders and misguided accusations, underscore the pressing need for well-prepared and knowledgeable representatives



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN



THERE ARE THREE KINDS OF PEOPLE IN THE WORLD, ACCORDING TO SHIV KHERA, A MANAGEMENT GURU— THOSE WHO MAKE THINGS HAPPEN, THOSE WHO WATCH THINGS HAPPEN AND THOSE WHO WONDER WHAT HAPPENED

manufacture, distribution and sale of liquor is the exclusive prerogative of the State governments under the seventh schedule of the Constitution. When one comes to the House to deliver an important speech like thanking the president for the address to the joint session of both Houses, one has to do some homework. Gumma Tanuja Rani, a tribal leader representing Araku constituency in Andhra Pradesh was a major relief. She spoke from the bottom of her heart about the inadequacies in the education system for tribal students quality education. India, which has dozens of communication satellites of its own could dedicate one or two transponders for educating the tribal teachers making use of the quality teachers available in the country. The words of representatives like Tanuja Rani should not be confined in the records of the House. The ministers of science and technology and human resources development should sit with the ISRO chairman and work out an action program to launch tribal schools through our satellites. Amrinder Singh Raja Warring, a Congress MP from Punjab,

spoke about the eternal pain of farmers in his State as well as the rest of the country. This is proof of how our ministers in charge of agriculture failed to resolve the hardship faced by the farming community. Wherever one goes in India, the farmers wait over their difficulties in getting water for irrigation, bank loans and of course the lack of marketing facilities. A research scholar may be able to get a PhD for his thesis on how the politicians succeed in keeping the farmers in perpetual poverty and how they are forced to resort to extreme steps. Period. Discussing an inconsequential comment made by the Leader of the Opposition about Sanatan Dharma is a waste of time. The ruling party should understand that he has to make some statements to stay relevant. There are three kinds of people in the world, according to Shiv Khera, a management guru. Those who make things happen, those who watch things happen and those who wonder what happened. Our LOP does not belong to the first two categories! (The writer is special correspondent with The Pioneer; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE ROT RUNS DEEP

Madam — It was Prajwal Revanna (EX PM Deve Gowda's grand son) a few months back in the news for exploiting women in his home town in Karnataka for satisfying his sexual needs and it is now the Senior artistes and technicians of Malayalam Film industry exploiting the weaker sex. Several such news involving netas from other parts of India are frequent. When such leaders take law in to their hands and involve in crimes the law administration agencies are also silenced by the power acquired through position, money and family influence. The victims are forced into silence to protect themselves. In rare cases the matter reaches the court also despite all their influence very rarely the perpetrator gets conviction as the witnesses as required by the law turn hostile for fear of their lives. As the saying reads "Yatha raja thatha praja" (Artha sastra-267) (Subjects follow their King) individuals consider women as soft targets and involves in acts of crime and in cases only where the victim acts boldly and complains the perpetrator gets the punishment and in rest of the cases victims remain so. It is incumbent upon on the leaders of the political party or the head of the institution to ensure strict moral conduct is maintained by their members. The wrong doers must be kicked out immediately and ostracized. Other considerations should not blunt their decision in matters such as these.

Gopalaswamy J | Chennai

IMPORTANCE OF BALANCED DIET

Madam — A healthy mind cannot exist without a healthy body, and the reverse, too, holds true. People from different walks of life are oblivious to the thin line of differentiation between overeating and healthy eating. Intake of essential nutrients in adequate proportion is an art. Everyone should know that both undernutrition and overnutrition can be an individual's death knell. Fruits, veg-

The golden girl



The game of shooting had been a piece of cake for the Indian Continentals no matter the game is Olympics or Paralympics. Just a few days back, star Indian shooters Manu Bhaker and Sarvjit Singh managed to lift medals in the Olympic event, and now it's just the beginning

of Paralympics that Avani Lekhara clinched the gold medal alongwith Mona Agarwal in the 10 m air rifle. This victory of Paralympics players in the initial events, is a clear indication of the fact that our para players are equally eager to made podium finish done once again this time at Paris. Avani's gold is a cherishful moment for all the Indian back home. She improved her own records, become first Indian women to win two Paralympics gold in the 10 m category and initiate the medal tally at Paris for India. Nation wishes her and all the players, heartfelt congratulations on their hard efforts and success. We hope that more and more medals and more podium finishes will be ensured this time. With Indian flag and India's national anthem keep on mesmerising maximum time in the podium zone of Paris Paralympics 2024.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

etables, grains, meat, fish and skimmed milk are invariable components of a healthy food intake for supply of energy, protein, vitamin and minerals among others. Right from childhood, the significance of balanced nutrition has been unequivocally underscored by doctors and nutritionists. Plenty of crippling diseases and lifestyle disorders may be prevented by a balanced, nutritious diet. Smart eating from the start can act as immunity booster. It is more important to know what not to eat than what to eat. It is said that junk food can satisfy for an hour but good food can do so for life. However, poor economic status can turn all nutrition plans topsy turvy. The governments should encompass all sections to foster a healthy society. The "National Nutrition Week" is observed annually from September 1 to 7 since 1982.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

THE COLLAPSE OF SHIVAJI'S STATUE

Madam — The apology expressed by the PM Narendra Modi over the collapse

of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj statue in Maharashtra suggests the lapses by the authorities in ensuring the quality of the construction. The 35-foot statue, unveiled with fanfare by Modi himself less than a year ago, lies in ruins, a victim of rusted nuts and bolts. This monumental blunder is not merely a case of shoddy workmanship; it is emblematic of the rot that has set in at the core of the government's projects. The contractor, conveniently linked to those in power, stands accused of collusion, fraud and endangering public safety, while the government scrambles to shift the blame onto anything but its own negligence. The steel used in the statue had already begun to rust; yet, despite repeated warnings, no action was taken. The bigger issue beneath the surface lies a pattern of cutting corners, favouritism and a blatant disregard for quality and accountability.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

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FIRST COLUMN

CULTIVATING INNER STRENGTH

It often begins with cultivating a calm, unclouded mind



RAVI VALLURI

AEONS ago a neophyte Zen student was an apprentice at a temple of knowledge. Regrettably, his mind was not robust enough and kept vacillating; so much so his mind and soul were not satisfied with "mere" breathing practices and meditation techniques imparted at the monastery. Petals of knowledge revealed. In a state of haughtiness, the Zen student arrived at another temple of knowledge where he remarked, rather dramatically that, "The human mind, Sakya Muni Buddha and other sentient beings, in reality do not exist." The pontiff of the monastery was silently listening to the outburst but uttered nothing for a while.

And then abruptly and quite unexpectedly he whacked the tutee with his prized bamboo pipe which angered the student. The Zen Master compassionately inquired of the tutee that if nothing existed, from where did his bout of anger and arrogance emerge? The mentee was momentarily nonplussed and then fell at the feet of the Zen Master, begging for forgiveness.

A hollow and empty mind

The percipient Master agreed to admit the whippersnapper but with a few stipulations. It was incumbent upon the greenhorn to remember the cardinal principle of trying to keep the mind hollow and empty. Lord Krishna's flute There is an interesting parable about Lord Krishna and his flute. It is believed that he used to visit a garden and whisper, "I love you" to all the flora and fauna. In unison, the flora and fauna reciprocated their unalloyed and unadulterated affection



towards Lord Krishna. It so transpired that one day, an animated Lord Krishna approached a bamboo tree in the garden. The Lord broke the cataclysmic news that he would have to snuff out the life of the bamboo plant. The entire garden was aghast as the news spread; several plants and trees were however secretly joyous that they were spared of the torture. The bamboo mulled upon the news for a while and then languidly responded, "Lord, you and I have no choice."

At the altar of the Master of the Universe, I am willing to sacrifice my life." Hearing this, Lord Krishna beamed. With surgical precision, he struck the bamboo plant. Soon the bamboo was fashioned into a flute for Lord Krishna himself. The flora and fauna, all the gopis and gopikas were now covetous of the bamboo, that in its new avatar it would always be inseparable, constantly in the hands of Lord Krishna.

The exultant bamboo flute was to become a triumphant possession of Lord Krishna. "What was so noteworthy about you, that you were the chosen one?" was an incessant refrain faced by the flute. "Nothing but my singular capitulation to will of the Master; willing to be an instrument of the Lord," was the refrain of the flute. The classical epic Mahabharata is populated with numerous valorous characters. But the ace archer Arjuna stands out prominently. Why is that so?

Arjuna is the Sakha, the Nara through whom Narayana revealed the divine celestial song - The Bhagavad Gita. It was Arjuna's unflinching devotion to the Lord that made the character so robust and aerobicized. He faithfully carried out all the commandments of the Lord. Only inner strength and a mature mind transfigure an individual to establish contact with the source of our inner energy. This is possible through the process of authentic surrender. Breathing techniques like Sudarshan Kriya help to make the mind hollow and empty. "A mature mind is one who understands the impossibility of knowing the ultimate, and with this understanding there is a new dimension, the dimension of the being," said the philosopher, Osho.

(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)

Diplomacy: India's neighborhood quandary



PARUL CHANDRA

Despite its vigorous 'Neighbourhood First' policy, India has struggled to maintain stable and lasting relationships with neighboring countries



IRONICAL as it might seem, despite a vigorous pursuit of a 'Neighbourhood First' policy in tune with its strategic imperatives, India has floundered to build lasting and steady bilateral relations with countries in its backyard. The pendulum of India's fortunes continues to swing up and down with regime changes in the neighbourhood.

Despite intense diplomatic engagements and regular outreach at the highest political levels in its neighbourhood, India often finds itself out in the cold each time a party or leadership not so inclined towards it sweeps to power. Nepal, Sri Lanka, the Maldives and even Afghanistan are cases in point. And now, with the ignominious exit of the Awami League's Sheikh Hasina as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, India has lost the only loyal and steadfast friend it had in the neighbourhood for over a decade. Indeed, so heavily was New Delhi invested in Sheikh Hasina's prime ministership that it was even accused of interfering in the country's elections to favour her when she won a fourth consecutive term this January.

If her ouster took Sheikh Hasina by surprise, it also caught New Delhi completely unawares. India has lost the only loyal and steadfast friend it had in the neighbourhood for over a decade. Indeed, so heavily was New Delhi invested in Sheikh Hasina's prime ministership that it was even accused of interfering in the country's elections to favour her when she won a fourth consecutive term this January. If her ouster took Sheikh Hasina by surprise, it also caught New Delhi completely unawares. India has lost the only loyal and steadfast friend it had in the neighbourhood for over a decade. Indeed, so heavily was New Delhi invested in Sheikh Hasina's prime ministership that it was even accused of interfering in the country's elections to favour her when she won a fourth consecutive term this January.



IN BANGLADESH WHERE THE OPPOSITION HAD BRIEFLY INITIATED AN 'INDIA OUT' CAMPAIGN, INDIA WILL FACE AN UPHILL TASK IN BUILDING TIES WITH THE NEW GOVERNMENT ONCE ELECTIONS ARE HELD

non-Muslim minorities from neighbouring countries, though it created considerable disquiet in Bangladesh.

Likewise, she chose not to make a fuss over the controversial National Register of Citizens in Assam, which was seen as targeting illegal Bangladeshi immigrants. For sure, India's ruling party's hyper-nationalism does not help the country's cause in its neighbourhood either, especially in Muslim-majority Bangladesh and the Maldives. Moreover, India's propensity to openly back a particular regime often works to its detriment. It leaves not only the government of the day open to charges of being India's lackey but equally helps the Opposition there fuel anti-India sentiments. In Bangladesh where the Opposition had briefly initiated an 'India Out' campaign, India will face an uphill task in building ties with the new government once elections are held. Likewise in the Maldives, the Opposition had launched an 'India Out' campaign, which helped propel current President Mohamed Muizzu and his party to power.

Along with its required development initiatives, India threw its entire weight behind Muizzu's predecessor, Ibu Solih and his Maldivian Democratic Party, but failed to see him win a second term. Given these experiences, it's time India extended support to its neighbours in a more discreet and calibrated manner instead of being seen as an emperor doling out largesse to subjects. India may like to be seen as a close friend, benefactor and net security provider in the

Subcontinent and the Indian Ocean Region, and it does do a lot for all this, but there is a marked shift in how it is now perceived.

For one, neither the polity nor the people of these nations want to be seen as mere appendages of a big neighbour even though their countries seem inevitably tied with India owing to their geographical location.

Second, small as they may be, there is a growing assertion of national identity and sovereignty among them. Third, they know that India isn't the only big power they can turn to for financial and other assistance.

China, with far greater financial muscle, after all, is only too happy to step in. Indeed, with China's expanding footprint in the Subcontinent and beyond, India has considerably stepped up its financial assistance for infrastructure projects and sought to forge strong economic linkages and trading ties with its neighbours, among other things. It has also sought to be the 'first responder' when they require humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. Even so, those days when India was seen as the sole provider for its smaller neighbours are long gone. In Nepal, the Kalapani border dispute was drummed up as a sovereignty issue by then Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli to rally public support for his government. Oli even altered Nepal's map to show the disputed area as part of Nepal. New Delhi could have simply prevented matters from escalating by holding a meeting at the foreign secretary level as was demanded

by Kathmandu to discuss the territorial dispute. But India looked the other way instead of addressing Nepal's concerns. Consequently, Kalapani remains a major irritant in the relationship. India did something similar with the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) report prepared jointly by a team of experts from the two countries, with one of its mandates being to review the Nepal-India Friendship Treaty of 1950 that Kathmandu wants revised in keeping with present times.

It's been ready since 2018 but has been given a quiet burial by New Delhi even though Kathmandu had been pressing that its findings be made public. In Sri Lanka too, India's fortunes change with the change of guard. The going was difficult with the Rajapaksa in power, though India now appears to have regained some lost ground after it provided the island nation with loans after its economy was badly hit during the pandemic.

However, this does not mean that India will enjoy the goodwill of all political parties there for all times to come, given that relationships in the neighbourhood appear to have acquired a transactional character. Going forward, India will do well to not put all its eggs in one basket and seek to engage more vigorously with parties across the political spectrum in its neighbourhood, while continuing to help the countries with financial and other assistance. It should come across as a benevolent friend, not be perceived as an overbearing bully.

(The writer is a senior journalist; views are personal)

Transforming the India Islamic Cultural Centre: A vision for progress and reform

With a new leadership poised to take charge, the Centre faces the challenge of dispelling stereotypes and promoting a progressive vision of Islam

WHILE showcasing the rich heritage of Islamic literature, culture, art, and traditions, the India Islamic Cultural Centre (IICC) must also foster a culture of debate, discussion, and dialogue. This can be achieved by organizing conferences and seminars on crucial issues such as democracy, human rights, justice, peace, and global affairs. The Centre should present a gentle and progressive face of Islam to our fellow citizens, countering media-generated stereotypes through engagement and cross-cultural interactions. This can be facilitated by hosting lectures and seminars led by renowned Islamic scholars.



TARIQ ASHRAF

In this context, I offer a few suggestions for the consideration of the new IICC leadership. While maintaining an apolitical stance, the IICC could engage in research and documentation on contemporary issues through fellowships. Additionally, it should enhance its modest library into a comprehensive resource center for reference, research, and docu-

mentation.

The IICC must also regularly publish reports and monographs on current issues affecting the community. There is an urgent need to add a small academic block to the building, providing a co-working space for authors and writers to interact.

A significant issue within the Muslim community has been the breakdown of communication with other communities. The Centre should actively engage with civil society groups and the media to cultivate healthy relationships and dispel misconceptions. Special emphasis should be placed on involving women from the community in the Centre's



activities, exposing them to an open, liberal, and progressive environment.

The Centre can also advocate for much-needed reforms in Muslim society through dialogue and discussion, involving the Muslim clergy. By doing so, the IICC can become a serious hub for advocacy,

reform, and the promotion of moderation and cultural exchange. It should broaden its scope by involving a larger section of the community, not relying solely on financially resourceful members.

The IICC is not intended to be a center for coaching and career counseling, but

rather a space for intellectual discussions, cultural and artistic events, akin to its neighboring institutions like the India International Centre (IIC) and the India Habitat Centre (IHC).

There is no better person than Mr. Salman Khurshid to lay the foundation for this transformation during his tenure. With his visionary leadership and persuasive skills, he is expected to leave a lasting impact by establishing a strong visionary and regulatory institutional framework for future generations.

There will undoubtedly be resistance from influential members who have treated the IICC as a social club for networking. However, Mr.

Khurshid, a charismatic and widely respected figure, has the capacity to lead effectively and develop the Centre into a progressive, representative, and responsible space that showcases the rich and ever-evolving Islamic culture—especially in a rapidly changing geopolitical environment, both locally and globally. We will see how things unfold for the Centre in the coming days. In conclusion, the India Islamic Cultural Centre (IICC) stands at a pivotal juncture, poised to redefine its role as a beacon of intellectual discourse, cultural exchange, and societal reform. Under the leadership of Mr. Salman Khurshid, the Centre has

the potential to transform into a progressive and inclusive institution that not only preserves the rich heritage of Islamic culture but also fosters a spirit of dialogue and engagement. As the IICC embraces this visionary path, it could become a model for moderation, diversity, and meaningful community interaction, impacting both the Muslim community and the broader society positively.

(The author is an alumnus of Hindu College, Delhi University and has been associated with the Centre for Policy Research, IIM Lucknow, University of Delhi South Campus, and Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi; views are personal)

Israel recovers bodies of 6 hostages in Gaza

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Israel on Sunday said it had recovered the bodies of six hostages in Gaza, including a young Israeli-American man who became one of the most well-known captives held by Hamas as his parents met with world leaders and pressed for his release. The military said all six had been killed shortly before the arrival of Israeli forces trying to rescue them. Their recovery sparked calls for mass protests against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whom many families of hostages and much of the wider Israeli public blame for failing to bring them back alive in a deal with Hamas to end the 10-month-old war. Negotiations over such a deal have dragged on for months. Netanyahu expressed sorrow over the deaths and said Israel would hold Hamas accountable for killing them in "cold blood." He said the killings prove that the militant group does not want a cease-fire agreement. "Whoever murders hostages doesn't want a deal," he said. Militants seized Hersh Goldberg-Polin, 23, and four of the other hostages at a music festival in southern Israel during Hamas' October 7 attack, which triggered the war. The native of Berkeley, California, lost part of his left arm to a grenade in the attack. In April, a Hamas-issued video showed him, his left hand missing and clearly speaking under duress, sparking new protests in Israel urging the government to do more to secure his

'Anyone who murders hostages doesn't want ceasefire deal'

Jerusalem: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has expressed sorrow over the deaths of six hostages, saying the killings prove that Hamas does not want a cease-fire deal. Netanyahu said Sunday that he was heartbroken to hear the news of the hostages' deaths. He accused Hamas of killing them in "cold blood" and said Israel would hold the group accountable. He also accused the group of scuttling ongoing cease-fire efforts. "Whoever murders hostages



doesn't want a deal," he said. Critics in Israel have accused Netanyahu of dragging his feet in cease-fire talks — a charge he denies.

and others' freedom. The army identified the other dead hostages as Ori Danino, 25; Eden Yerushalmi, 24; Almog Sarusi, 27; and Alexander Lobanov, 33; who were also taken from the music festival. The sixth, Carmel Gat, 40, was abducted from the nearby farming community of Be'eri. It said the bodies were recovered from a tunnel in the southern Gaza city of Rafah, around a kilometer (half a mile) from where another hostage, Qaid Farhan Alkadi, 52, was rescued alive last week. "According to preliminary information, they were cruelly murdered by Hamas terrorists shortly before we reached them," Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, the Israeli military spokesperson, told reporters. Hamas has offered to

release the hostages in return for an end to the war, the withdrawal of Israeli forces and the release of a large number of Palestinian prisoners, including high-profile militants. Izzat al-Rishq, a senior Hamas official, blamed the hostages' deaths on Israel and the United States, saying they would still be alive if Israel had accepted a cease-fire proposal that Hamas said it had agreed to back in July. He did not mention the hostages by name. Netanyahu has vowed to continue the war until Hamas is destroyed and says military pressure is needed to bring home the hostages. Israel's Channel 12 reported that he got into a shouting match at a security Cabinet meeting late Thursday with his defense min-

ister, Yoav Gallant, who accused him of prioritising control of a strategic corridor along the Gaza-Egypt border — a major sticking point in the talks — over the lives of the hostages. The Cabinet reportedly voted in favour of remaining in the corridor over the objections of Gallant, who said it would prevent a hostage deal. An Israeli official confirmed the report and said three of the hostages — Goldberg-Polin, Yerushalmi and Gat — had been slated to be released in the first phase of a cease-fire proposal discussed back in July. The official was not authorized to brief media about the negotiations and spoke on condition of anonymity. "In the name of the state of Israel, I hold their families close to my heart and ask forgiveness," Gallant said Sunday after the remains were recovered. He later called for the Cabinet to reverse its decision. A forum of hostage families called for a massive protest on Sunday, demanding a "complete halt of the country" to push for the implementation of a cease-fire and hostage release. "A deal for the return of the hostages has been on the table for over two months. Were it not for the delays, sabotage, and excuses those whose deaths we learned about this morning would likely still be alive," it said in a statement. US President Joe Biden, who has met with Goldberg-Polin's parents, said he was "devastated and outraged." "It is as tragic as it is reprehensible," he said. "Make no mistake,

Hamas leaders will pay for these crimes. And we will keep working around the clock for a deal to secure the release of the remaining hostages." Vice President Kamala Harris said her prayers were with the Goldberg-Polin family and condemned Hamas. Goldberg-Polin's parents, US-born immigrants to Israel, became perhaps the most high-profile relatives of hostages on the international stage. They met with Biden, Pope Francis and others and addressed the United Nations, urging the release of all hostages. On August 21, his parents addressed a hushed hall at the Democratic National Convention — after sustained applause and chants of "bring him home." "This is a political convention. But needing our only son — and all of the cherished hostages — home is not a political issue. It is a humanitarian issue," said his father, Jon Polin. His mother, Rachel, who bowed her head during the ovation and touched her chest, said "Hersh, if you can hear us, we love you, stay strong, survive." She and her husband sought to keep their son and the others held from being reduced to numbers, describing Hersh as a musician and soccer lover and traveller with plans to attend university since his military service had ended. At events she often addressed her son directly in the hope he could hear her, urging him to live another day. Some 250 hostages were taken on October 7. Before the military's announcement of the latest discovery of bodies, Israel said it

believed 108 hostages were still held in Gaza, of which about one-third were dead. In late August, the Israeli military recovered the bodies of six hostages in southern Gaza. Eight hostages have been rescued by Israeli forces, the most recent found on Tuesday. More than 100 were freed during a weeklong cease-fire in November in exchange for the release of Palestinians imprisoned by Israel. Two previous Israeli operations to free hostages killed scores of Palestinians. Hamas says several hostages have been killed in Israeli airstrikes and failed rescue attempts. Israeli troops mistakenly killed three Israelis who escaped captivity in December. Hamas-led militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, when they stormed into southern Israel on October 7, attacking army bases and several farming communities. Israel's retaliatory offensive in Gaza has killed over 40,000 Palestinians, according to local health officials, who do not say how many were fighters and how many civilians. It has displaced the vast majority of Gaza's 2.3 million people, often multiple times, and plunged the besieged territory into a humanitarian catastrophe. In a separate development Sunday, Palestinian militants killed three Israeli police officers when they opened fire on their vehicle in the West Bank, according to Israeli officials. Israel has been carrying out large-scale military raids across the occupied territory in recent days.

Large-scale polio vaccinations begin in Gaza

AP ■ DEIR-AL-BALAH

Palestinian health authorities and United Nations agencies on Sunday began a large-scale campaign of vaccinations against polio in the Gaza Strip, hoping to prevent an outbreak in the territory that has been ravaged by the ongoing Israel-Hamas war. Authorities plan to vaccinate children in central Gaza until Wednesday before moving on to the more devastated northern and southern parts of the strip. The campaign began with a small number of vaccinations on Saturday and aims to reach about 640,000 children. The World Health Organisation said Thursday that Israel has agreed to limited pauses in the fighting to facilitate the campaign. There were initial reports of Israeli strikes in central Gaza early Sunday, but it was not immediately known if anyone was killed or wounded. Hospitals in Deir al-Balah and Nuseirat confirmed that the campaign had begun early Sunday. Israel said Saturday that the vaccination programme would continue through September 9 and last eight hours a day. Gaza recently reported its first polio case in 25 years — a 10-month-old boy, now paralysed in the leg. The World Health Organisation says the presence of a paralysis case indicates there could be hundreds more who have been infected but aren't showing symptoms. Most people who have polio do not experience symptoms, and those who do usually recover in a week or so. But there is no cure, and when polio causes paralysis, it is usually permanent. If the paralysis affects breathing muscles, the disease can be fatal. The vaccination campaign faces a host of challenges, from ongoing fighting to devastated roads and hospitals shut down by the war. Around 90 per cent of Gaza's population of 2.3 million people have been displaced within the besieged territory, with hundreds of thousands crammed into squalid tent camps. Health officials have expressed alarm about disease outbreaks as uncollected garbage has piled up and the bombing of critical infrastruc-

ture has sent putrid water flowing through the streets. Widespread hunger has left people even more vulnerable to illness. "We escaped death with our children, and fled from place to place for the sake of our children, and now we have these diseases," said Wafaa Obaid, who brought her three children to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al-Balah to get the vaccinations. Ammar Ammar, a spokesperson for the UN children's agency, said it hopes both parties adhere to a temporary truce in designated areas to enable families to reach health facilities. "This is a first step," he told The Associated Press. "But there is no alternative to a cease-fire because it's not only polio that threatens children in Gaza, but also other factors, including malnutrition and the inhuman conditions they are living in." The vaccinations will be administered at roughly 160 sites across the territory, including medical centres and schools. Children under 10 will receive two drops of oral polio vaccine in two rounds, the second to be administered four weeks after the first. Israel allowed around 1.3 million doses to be brought into the territory last month, which are now being held in refrigerated storage in a warehouse in Deir al-Balah. Another shipment of 400,000 doses is set to be delivered to Gaza soon. The polio virus that triggered this latest outbreak is a mutated virus from an oral polio vaccine. The oral polio vaccine contains weakened live virus and in very rare cases, that virus is shed by those who are vaccinated and can evolve into a new form capable of starting new epidemics. The war in Gaza began when Hamas-led militants stormed into Israel on October 7, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting around 250 hostages. Around 100 remain in captivity, about a third of whom are believed to be dead. Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed over 40,000 Palestinians, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, which does not say whether those killed were fighters or civilians.

'3 dead after small plane crashes in Oregon'

Portland (US) (AP):

Three people were dead after a small plane crashed into a row of townhouses Saturday morning in a neighbourhood east of Portland, setting the homes ablaze, authorities told KATU-TV. Officials earlier in the day had said the plane was carrying two people and that at least one resident had been unaccounted for.

Photos and videos published by KGW-TV in Portland showed one of the townhomes engulfed in flames while black smoke poured out of the adjoining houses. Gresham Fire Chief Scott Lewis said the fire had spread to at least four of the homes, displacing up to six families. He said two people were treated at the scene, but he didn't describe the type or severity of injuries. The Federal Aviation Administration identified the aircraft as a twin-engine Cessna 421C, which it says went down around 10:30 am near Troutdale Airport, about a 30-minute drive east of Portland. As the plane went down, it knocked over a pole and power lines, causing a separate brush fire in a nearby field, according to the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office. The plane was split into multiple parts as it crashed in the residential area in the city of Fairview, which is home to about 10,000 people. Lewis said the first call about the fire came from staff at the Troutdale Airport's control tower, who saw a thick plume of smoke rising in the air. But Lewis said that initial reports indicated "there was no may-day, no call for emergency" from the aircraft itself before it crashed. The National Transportation Safety Board is leading the investigation into the crash.

Harris calls Trump's appearance a 'political stunt'

AP ■ WASHINGTON

US Vice President Kamala Harris said former President Donald Trump "disrespected sacred ground" in his recent appearance at Arlington National Cemetery, where the Republican nominee took and distributed images despite a federal prohibition on campaign activity on the grounds.

Harris, in a statement posted Saturday on the social media platform X, cited reports that Trump's campaign aides created an altercation with a cemetery staffer and proceeded to take photographs and film the former president, including at the graves of Afghanistan war veterans, after being warned about rules at the site. "Let me



be clear: the former president disrespected sacred ground, all for the sake of a political stunt," Harris said, calling Arlington a "solemn place where we come together to honour American heroes ...

not a place for politics." The original incident stemmed from Trump's and Republicans' continued criticism of President Joe Biden and now Harris for the chaotic US withdrawal from Afghanistan. At the invitation of some family members of service members killed during the withdrawal, Trump laid wreaths last Monday in honour of Sgt Nicole Gee, Staff Sgt Darin Hoover and Staff Sgt Ryan Knauss. They were among 13 US service members and more than 100 Afghans who died in an Aug 26, 2021, bombing at Hamid Karzai International Airport. Trump's campaign was warned about not taking photographs before an altercation at the cemetery, according to defense officials. Officials have said since that

an Arlington employee whom two Trump campaign staff members allegedly "verbally abused and pushed" aside has declined to press charges. The Trump campaign has since lashed out at Pentagon officials, with a top campaign adviser, Chris LaCivita, referring to military spokespersons as "hacks". Trump campaign officials say it had permission to bring someone to take video. Since Biden ended his reelection bid, Trump has been zeroing in on Harris and her roles in foreign policy decisions. He has specifically highlighted the vice president's statements that she was the last person in the room before Biden made the decision on Afghanistan. Biden's administration was following a withdrawal com-

mitment and timeline that the Trump administration had negotiated with the Taliban in 2020. A 2022 review by a government-appointed special investigator concluded decisions made by both Trump and Biden were the key factors leading to the rapid collapse of Afghanistan's military and the Taliban takeover. Harris on Saturday alluded to Trump's history of picking fights with veterans and repeated allegations that he has "called our fallen service members suckers' and losers" and disparaged Medal of Honour recipients. "This is a man who is unable to comprehend anything other than service to himself," Harris said. "I will always honour the service and sacrifice of all of America's fallen heroes... And I will never politicise them."

On the first day without X, Brazilians feel disconnected from world

AP ■ SAO PAULO

The blocking of social media platform X in Brazil divided users and politicians over the legitimacy of the ban, and many Brazilians had difficulty and doubts over navigating other social media in its absence. The shutdown of Elon Musk's platform started early Saturday, making it largely inaccessible on both the web and through mobile apps after the billionaire refused to name a legal representative to the company, missing a deadline imposed by Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes. The blockade marks an escalation in a months-long feud between Musk and de Moraes over free speech, far-right accounts and misinformation. Brazil is one of the biggest

markets for X, with tens of millions of users. "I've got the feeling that I have no idea what's happening in the world right now. Bizarre," entertainment writer and heavy X user Chico Barney wrote on Threads on Saturday. Threads is a text-based app developed by Instagram that Barney was using as an alternative. "This Threads algorithm is like an all-you-can-eat restaurant where the waiter keeps serving things I would never order." Bluesky, a social media platform that was launched last year as an alternative to X and other more established sites, has seen a large influx of Brazilians in the past couple of days. The company said Friday it has seen about 200,000 new users from Brazil sign up dur-

ing that time, and the number "continues to grow by the minute". Brazilian users are also setting records for activities such as follows and likes, Bluesky said. Previous users of other platforms welcomed Brazilians to their ranks. "Hello literally everyone in Brazil," a user wrote on Threads. "We're a lot nicer than Twitter here," said another. Platform migration isn't new for Brazilians. They were huge adopters of Orkut and, when Orkut went kaput, they very gladly moved to other platforms. X is not as popular in Brazil as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube or TikTok. However, it remains an important platform on which Brazilians engage in political debates and is highly influential among politicians, journalists and other opinion makers.

It's also where they share their sense of humour. Many of the country's most famous memes originate from posts on X before spreading to other social networks. Last week, for instance, Brazilians collaboratively crafted an absurd storyline for a fictional telenovela, complete with a theme song created using artificial intelligence tools. Pop stars and their fan-bases were also hit by Brazilians being left off the platform. "Wait a lot of my fan pages are Brazilian!!! Come back hold up!!!" Cardi B said Friday on X. A fan page dedicated to Timothée Chalamet, known by the handle TimotheeUpdates, said it would temporarily cease updating as all of its administrators are Brazilian.

Far-right party looking for wins in two state elections

Berlin (AP):

Two state elections in eastern Germany offer the far-right Alternative for Germany the chance to become the strongest party for the first time and could produce painful results for the unpopular national government. A new party founded by a prominent leftist also hopes to make an immediate impact. About 3.3 million people are eligible to vote in Saxony and nearly 1.7 million in Thuringia. Sunday's elections are being watched nervously in Berlin: While the three parties in Chancellor Olaf Scholz's governing coalition were weak there already, they risk dropping under the 5 per cent support threshold needed to stay in the state legislatures at all.

German leaders pay tribute to knife attack victims

AP ■ BERLIN

German leaders paid tribute on Sunday to the three people killed in the August 23 knife attack by a suspected Islamic extremist, which has pushed immigration back to the top of the country's political agenda. Eight people also were wounded in the attack at a "Festival of Diversity" marking the 650th anniversary of the city of Solingen in western Germany. President Frank-Walter Steinmeier said at a memorial event in a city theatre that he was "relieved and thankful" that none of them is now in serious danger. The 26-year-old Syrian suspect, who was arrested a day after the attack, was supposed to be deported to Bulgaria last year but reportedly disappeared for a time



and avoided deportation. In recent days, Chancellor Olaf Scholz's government has announced new restrictions on knives and new measures to ease deportations. On Friday, it deported Afghan nationals to their homeland for the first time since the

Taliban returned to power in 2021, following up on a pledge made in June after a previous attack. "It is a horrifying crime that brings us together today, carried out by a man who, according to everything we know, sought and found protection here, and abused this protection so terribly," Steinmeier said at the memorial, also attended by Scholz and other top officials. "That is also intolerable." Steinmeier said that "we are for good reason a country that takes in people who seek protection from political persecution and war". He added that "we want to remain that country, but ultimately we can only do so if the number of those who are not entitled to this special protection does not overburden us".

Norwegian princess Martha marries American self-styled shaman

AP ■ HELSINKI

Social media influencers, reality stars and TV personalities were among the guests at the Norwegian king's eldest child, Princess Martha Louise, married an American self-professed shaman on Saturday in a wedding ceremony following three days of festivities. The 52-year-old Martha Louise and Durek Verrett, who claims to be a sixth-generation shaman from California, tied the knot in the picturesque small town of Geiranger, one of Norway's major tourist attractions located on a fjord with stunning views. Following festivities that started on Thursday, the actual wedding ceremony took place in a large white tent set up on a lush lawn. Guests told



Harald Ronneberg described the colorful ceremony to public broadcaster NRK. "It was gospel and love. We laughed, we clapped, and we were touched. It was absolutely beautiful." The couple has sold the wedding photo rights to British

celebrity magazine Hello! and the film rights to Netflix. The deals prompted protests from Norwegian media, which say the arrangement goes against local practices. The couple have often lashed out against the press while promoting themselves on social media. The 87-year-old King Harald, who has been in fragile health the past few years, attended his daughter's wedding together with Queen Sonja and other member of the Norwegian royal house. Crown Princess Victoria and her husband Prince Daniel represented the Swedish royal house together with her brother, Prince Carl Philip, and his wife Princess Sofia. No other European royals attended the wedding.

MCap of top firms surges by Rs 1.53 lakh crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The combined market valuation of eight of the top-10 most valued firms surged Rs 1,53,019.32 crore last week, with Bharti Airtel and IT majors Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services emerging as the biggest gainers, in line with a record rally in equities. Last week, the BSE benchmark jumped 1,279.56 points or 1.57 per cent. Rallying for the ninth straight session on Friday, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 231.16 points or 0.28 per cent to settle at an all-time closing high of 82,365.77. During the day, it jumped 502.42 points or 0.61 per cent to hit a record intra-day peak of 82,637.03. The market valuation of Bharti Airtel soared Rs 47,194.86 crore to Rs 9,04,587.12 crore. Infosys added Rs 33,611.37 crore taking its valuation to Rs 8,06,880.50 crore. The valuation of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) jumped Rs 31,784.9 crore to



Rs 16,46,899.17 crore and that of ICICI Bank surged Rs 18,734.3 crore to Rs 8,66,374.41 crore. The market capitalisation (mcap) of Reliance Industries climbed Rs 13,396.42 crore to Rs 20,43,107.10 crore and that of HDFC Bank rallied Rs 5,600.24 crore to Rs 12,44,206.43 crore.

The valuation of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) went up by Rs 2,340.25 crore to Rs 6,73,390.88 crore and that of State Bank of India advanced Rs 356.98 crore to Rs 7,27,935.97 crore. However, the mcap of Hindustan Unilever slumped Rs 8,411.54 crore to Rs

6,52,739.95 crore and that of ITC declined by Rs 4,776.48 crore to Rs 6,27,587.76 crore. Reliance Industries continued to retain the title of the most valued firm followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, Infosys, State Bank, LIC, Hindustan Unilever and ITC.

Global factors, macroeconomic data, and FPI activity to shape market sentiments

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Movement in the stock market this week will largely be driven by global trends, macroeconomic data announcements and trading activity of foreign investors, analysts said. Equity benchmark indices, which are on a dream run for the past several days, will also track trading in global oil benchmark Brent crude and movement of rupee against the US dollar. "The next FOMC (Federal Open Market Committee) meeting is scheduled for mid-September, but before that, the market will be closely watching upcoming US economic data. Key indicators like manufacturing PMI, non-farm payrolls, and unemployment rate will be released this week, all of which could significantly influence market sentiment. "Institutional flows will play a critical role," said Santosh Meena, Head of Research, Swastika Investmart Ltd. The primary driver behind the bullish momentum in the domestic market is the growing anticipation of a rate cut in the United States and buying support from domestic investors. Auto stocks would remain in the limelight amid sales data



announcement. "We expect the market to continue its northbound journey with stock-specific action. Global macro data which will be released during the week will continue to provide cues to domestic equities," Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Research, Wealth Management, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said. Last week, the BSE benchmark jumped 1,279.56 points or 1.57 per cent, and the Nifty soared 412.75 points

or 1.66 per cent. In nine days of rally, the BSE benchmark surged 1,941.09 points or 2.41 per cent. The Nifty zoomed 1,096.9 points or 4.54 per cent in 12 sessions. "Benchmark indices scaled new highs in a positive trading session on the back of broad-based buying support, as hopes of a rate cut by the US Fed next month after last week's Jackson Hole meeting has made investors more confident. However, caution may prevail and profit-taking could make a comeback as the

market has been on an upward march for the last 12 trading sessions," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said. On Friday, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 231.16 points or 0.28 per cent to settle at an all-time closing high of 82,365.77. During the day, it jumped 502.42 points or 0.61 per cent to hit a record intra-day peak of 82,637.03. In its best winning streak since its launch in 1996, the Nifty soared 83.95 points or 0.33 per cent to hit a new lifetime closing high of 25,235.90, taking its victorious run to the 12th day in a row. During the day, it surged 116.4 points or 0.46 per cent to hit a new record intra-day peak of 25,268.35. "Nifty ended higher on Friday for the twelfth consecutive session, its best winning streak since its launch in 1996. Global shares mostly rose Friday as markets continued to be moderately optimistic about the prospects of technology companies helped by the prospect of lower interest rates amid signs of moderating inflation across the developed world," said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities.



Govt to amend CPSE capital restructuring guidelines

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government is working to amend its 2016 guidelines with regard to dividend payment, bonus issues and share buyback by CPSEs, officials said. The finance ministry had in May 2016, issued a comprehensive guidelines on 'Capital Restructuring of Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) in 2016 for efficient management of government investment in CPSEs. "With the CPSEs now more strong in terms of balance sheet and having improved on their market capitalisation, it is now time for a relook of the capital restructuring guidelines," an official told PTI. The amended guidelines are expected to be issued by the finance ministry this month, another official said. As per the capital

restructuring guidelines issued, CPSEs that do not have plans to deploy their capital optimally for business purposes should have a professional look at the surplus funds available to them. As per the guidelines issued by the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) in May 2016, every CPSE is required to pay a minimum annual dividend of 30 per cent of PAT or 5 per cent of the net worth. Also, every CPSE having net worth of at least Rs 2,000 crore and cash and bank balance of over Rs 1,000 crore were required to opt for share buyback. Also, bonus shares are to be issued if the defined reserves and surplus of CPSEs is equal to or more than 10 times of its paid up equity share capital. A CPSE where market price or book value of its share

exceeds 50 times of its face value will split-off its shares appropriately. The intention behind the guidelines is that CPSEs sitting on cash piles are required to pay dividends, which will, in turn, help keep investors interested in the stock. The combined market capitalisation of CPSEs, banks and insurance companies has grown over 500 per cent in the past three years from Rs 15 lakh crore to over Rs 58 lakh crore. Also, the government's equity holding has risen four times to Rs 38 lakh crore from Rs 9.5 lakh crore in January 2021. So far in 2024-25, Rs 10,604.74 crore has been obtained through dividend from the CPSEs. In the current fiscal year, the government has budgeted to collect Rs 56,260 crore as dividend from public sector.

Commercial LPG gets hike, ATF price down

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Jet fuel, or ATF, price was on Sunday reduced by 4.6 per cent while the rate of commercial LPG used in hotels and restaurants was hiked by Rs 39 per 19-kg cylinder in the monthly revision done in line with international oil price trends. Aviation turbine fuel (ATF) price was cut by Rs 4,495.5 per kilolitre, or 4.58 per cent, to Rs 93,480.22 per kl in the national capital, according to state-owned fuel retailers. The price reduction will help ease the burden on airlines for whom fuel makes up for almost 40 per cent of the operating cost. The reduction follows two rounds of monthly price increases. Jet fuel prices were on August 1 raised by 2 per cent or Rs 1,827.34 per kl and by 1.2 per cent (Rs 1,179.37 per kl). These hikes followed a steep 6.5 per cent (Rs 6,673.87 per kl) reduction effected on June 1. The ATF rate in Mumbai was reduced to Rs 87,432.78 per kl on Sunday from Rs 91,650.34 previously. Prices differ from state to state depending on the



incidence of local taxes. Alongside, oil firms increased the price of commercial LPG by Rs 39 to Rs 1,691.50 per 19-kg cylinder. This is the second straight monthly increase. Prices were hiked by Rs 6.5 per cylinder on August 1. The two rounds of increase follow four monthly price reductions. In four price reductions, rates were cut by Rs 148 per 19-kg cylinder.

Commercial LPG now costs Rs 1,644 per 19-kg cylinder in Mumbai, Rs 1,802.50 in Kolkata and Rs 1,855 in Chennai. Rate of cooking gas used in domestic households, however, remained unchanged at Rs 803 per 14.2-kg cylinder. State-owned Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL), and Hindustan

Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) revise prices of ATF and cooking gas on the first of every month based on the average price of benchmark international fuel and foreign exchange rate. Prices of petrol and diesel continue to remain frozen. Rates had been cut Rs 2 per litre in mid-March. Petrol costs Rs 94.72 a litre in Delhi while diesel is priced at Rs 87.62.

V Satish Kumar takes over as IOC chairman

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

V Satish Kumar on Sunday took over as the chairman of the Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), the nation's largest oil firm. Kumar, who is director (marketing) at IOC, was given additional charge of chairman following delays in finding a full-time chairman. "He will concurrently serve as chairman while continuing in his role as Director (Marketing), a position he has held since October 2021," the company said in a statement. He also held the additional charge of Director (Finance) for one year from October 2022, a period characterised by geopolitical tensions due to the Ukraine-Russia conflict. With a career spanning 35 years, Kumar has served in various regions across the country and held key positions, leading IOC's efforts to maintain its leadership in the marketing of petroleum products. He has also gained extensive experience in engaging with multinational oil companies, serving as non-executive chairman of Indian Oil Petronas Pvt Ltd, a joint venture between IOC and Petronas (Malaysia), and as non-executive chairman of Indian Oil Mauritius Ltd, a subsidiary of IOC. "In his capacity as Director (Marketing), he ensured uninterrupted supplies of petroleum products across the various geographies even during the times of natural calamities or other disruptions, exemplifying the spirit of 'Nation First' and 'On Duty Always,'" the statement said. IOC's marketing division under his leadership ensured the highest ever physical performance year upon year in the last three years. During his tenure, the company embarked upon large scale modernisation of its retail outlets with new retail visual identity and setting up of new bottling plants, terminals and large retail outlets with wayside amenities on highways. During this period, IOC emerged as a leader in sales of high octane and energy efficient fuels, green combo lubricants, composite LPG cylinders and 25 kg bitumen packs in the market for making products affordable and customer conveniences. He led the marketing division in making aggressive forays and took leadership positions in marketing alternate and clean energy solutions like e-mobility, bio-fuel blends. IOC is the only oil company to market ethanol 100, AVGas 100 LL, and methanol blend diesel. Prior to his appointment as Director (Marketing), Kumar held the position of State Head for Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

INBRIEF

- AMRIT STATIONS WORKS PROGRESSING AT RAPID PACE OVER N.F. RAILWAY**
MALIGAON: Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) is carrying out redevelopment works across 91 stations within its network under the prestigious Amrit Bharat Station Scheme (ABSS). This initiative as part of the Indian Railways' broader vision to transform the passenger experience.
- SATPAL SINGH SOKHI APPOINTED AS CO-ORDINATOR**
AMRITSAR: Satpal Singh Sokhi has been appointed as the Co-ordinator for North India by the Rashtriya OBC Mahasangh. This appointment was announced in an official letter signed by Dr. Baban Taywade, the President of the organization.
- CANCELLATION, DIVERSIONS & AMP; RESCHEDULING OF TRAINS**
MALIGAON: To increase the efficiency of train operations and reduce traffic congestions in New Bongaigaon - Rangiya - Kamakhya section, N.F. Railway has undertaken various capacity augmentation works apart from doubling of that section. In this connection, Pre Non-Interlocking works from 31st August till 3rd September, 2024 and Non-Interlocking works from 2nd September till 3rd September, 2024 for commissioning of double line between Barpeta Road & Sorbhog railway stations under Rangiya division will be executed.
- HMSI HOSTS ROAD SAFETY CONVENTION IN DELHI**
NEW DELHI: In a significant move towards advocating traffic safety awareness, Honda Motorcycle and Scooter India (HMSI) today held a pivotal Road Safety Convention in Delhi. This event of HMSI's project - Mindset Development for Our Future Generation, underscores the dedication to cultivate road safety consciousness.
- RECPDCL HANDS OVER 2 SPVS VIZ. KHAVDA IV**
GURUGRAM: RECPDCL, handed over 2 project specific SPVs viz, Khavda IV A Power Transmission Limited to M/s Adani Energy Solutions Limited and Khavda IV C Power Transmission Limited to M/s Sterlite Grid 38 Limited.

Indian realty giants sell properties worth Rs 35,000 Crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's 21 major listed real estate developers have together sold properties worth nearly Rs 35,000 crore during the latest June quarter with Godrej Properties reporting highest sale bookings. Except few, all major listed real estate developers have shown annual growth in sale bookings in the April-June quarter driven by strong consumer demand for residential properties, especially of luxury homes. According to the data compiled from regulatory filings, India's 21 major listed realty firms have reported combined sale bookings of Rs 34,927.5 crore in the first quarter of 2024-25 fiscal. Out of these combined sale bookings, bulk of pre-sales came from residential segment. In terms of sale bookings, Godrej Properties emerged as the largest listed player in the June quarter with pre-sales of Rs 8,637 crore. DLF Ltd, the country's largest realty firm in terms of market capitalisation, reported more than three-fold jump in its sale bookings at Rs 6,404 crore in the first quarter of this fiscal. Mumbai-based Macrotech Developers, which sells properties under 'Lodha' brand, clocked pre-sales of Rs



4,030 crore. Gurugram-based Signature Global, which recently got listed, achieved sale bookings of Rs 3,120 crore in June quarter, more than three times from the year-ago period. Bengaluru-based Prestige Estates Projects clocked sale bookings of Rs 3,029.5 crore in June quarter, down from the corresponding period of the previous year. Bengaluru-based firms Sobha Ltd and Brigade Enterprises sold properties worth Rs 1,874 crore and Rs 1,086 crore, respectively, during the April-June period of this fiscal. Bengaluru-based Puravankara Ltd achieved sale bookings of Rs 1,128 crore, almost flat compared to the year-ago period.

Mumbai-based Oberoi Realty, which is into luxury housing segment, sold properties worth Rs 1,067 crore last fiscal. Mumbai-based builders Mahindra Lifespace Developers Ltd and Keystone Realtors (Rustomjee) clocked sale bookings of Rs 1,019 crore and Rs 611 crore, respectively. Pune-based Kolte-Patil sold properties worth Rs 711 crore while Mumbai-based Sunteck Realty sold properties worth Rs 502 crore. Bengaluru-based Shriram Properties achieved sale bookings of Rs 376 crore. Delhi-based TARC Ltd and Ashiana Housing achieved sale bookings of Rs 310 crore and Rs 235 crore, respectively.

Ahmedabad-based Arvind Smartspaces Ltd sold properties worth Rs 201 crore, while Mumbai-based Ajmera Realty & Infrastructure Ltd reported pre-sales of Rs 306 crore. Lucknow-based Eldeco Housing & Industries Ltd sold properties worth Rs 59 crore while Mumbai-based Equinox India Developments Ltd (earlier Indiabulls Real Estate Ltd) achieved pre-sales of Rs 82 crore. Mumbai-based Suraj Estate Developers Ltd has reported a sale bookings of Rs 140 crore in the first quarter of this fiscal year. Sale bookings data of many listed players was not available. Industry experts attribute this increase in sale bookings of major listed players to strong housing demand after the COVID pandemic. Housing market is also witnessing a shift in consumer demand towards those realty companies and brands which have better track record of executing real estate projects. Real estate developers, which are not listed on stock exchanges, generally do not report their quarterly and annual sale bookings. Tata Realty & Infrastructure Ltd, Adani Realty, Piramal Realty, Hiranandani Group, Embassy Group and K Raheja Group are major players in

unlisted space. Post-COVID pandemic, Indian real estate market, especially housing segment, has bounced back sharply on pent up demand and growing desire to have home ownership. Branded and reputed players, including listed and unlisted ones, have benefited most in this revival cycle as homebuyers do not want to take risk of getting stuck in real estate projects after making payments. Thousands of buyers are still stuck in housing projects of builders like Unitech and Jaypee Infratech Ltd which defaulted in delivering projects. Homebuyers of Amrapali Group are getting possession of their flats after intervention from the Supreme Court. Suraksha Group has won a bid to acquire Jaypee Infratech Ltd (JIL) through insolvency process. The Group has infused capital and is awarding construction contracts to complete around 20,000 unfinished flats in Delhi-NCR. Thousands of buyers of many NCR-based builders such as Unitech, Ansal API, Supertech Ajanara, The 3C Group, and Today Homes are stuck and fighting legal cases in real estate regulatory authorities at state level, tribunals and courts.

EPL: Haaland hat trick gives Man city edge over Arsenal

AP ■ LONDON

At the rate Erling Haaland is scoring, keeping up with Manchester City is going to be a difficult task in the English Premier League. So while it's still only three games into the season, it felt significant when title rival Arsenal dropped points on Saturday and then saw City take full advantage thanks to another hat trick from Haaland. The Norway striker netted his second treble in two games as City beat West Ham 3-1 to maintain its perfect start and move two points ahead of Arsenal, which was held 1-1 by Brighton after Declan Rice was sent off early in the second half. "No words for him," City manager Pep Guardiola said about Haaland, who has seven goals in three games to start the season and 70 in total in the 69 league games he has played for the club. With eight Premier League hat tricks, Haaland has as many as Thierry Henry (258 games), Harry Kane (320) and Michael Owen (326) managed in their careers. This was his first away from Etihad Stadium, though, and showed his wide range of finishing skills. The opener came when he ran onto a pass from Bernardo Silva and beat goalkeeper



Alphonse Areola with a low shot. After an own goal from Ruben Dias, Haaland made it 2-1 when he received a pass inside the area and hit a thumping strike into the roof of the net in the 30th minute. The hat trick was complete in the 83rd when he went clear

through on goal and lifted the ball past Lukasz Fabianski, who replaced Areola at halftime. "I really liked the second goal, I have to be honest," Haaland said. "The second one was lovely. ... I like to shoot a bit hard sometimes, as well. Not

only easy shots. So it's good to get a little bit of power out of my body." While there's another 35 games left, Haaland's prolific form makes any small gap to City look tough to overcome. So perhaps it's no wonder Arsenal manager Mikel

Arteta was so frustrated after what he felt was a decisive refereeing decision. In the early kickoff, Arsenal was 1-0 up at Emirates Stadium and looked in control when Rice was shown a second yellow card in the 49th minute, apparently for nudging the ball

to the side as Joel Veltman tried to take a quick free kick near the sideline deep in Brighton's half. Veltman kicked Rice from the process and the home crowd was screaming for the Brighton player to get sanctioned, only for referee

Chris Kavanagh to show Rice a red card instead. "I was amazed. Amazed, amazed, because of how inconsistent decisions can be," Arteta said, arguing that similar offenses went unpunished earlier in the game. "It was a really, really hard one to take." That decision turned the game completely and Joao Pedro equalized from a rebound in the 58th after David Raya saved a shot from Yankuba Minteh. Kai Havertz put Arsenal ahead in the 38th with a lob over goalkeeper Bart Verbruggen and had a chance to restore Arsenal's lead when he ran through on goal again in the 74th but his low shot was saved that time. Last-placed Everton could only lament its own inconsistencies - and inability to defend crosses - after giving up a 2-0 lead in the final minutes to lose 3-2 at home against Bournemouth, while Brentford showed again that it can cope just fine without Ivan Toney by beating Southampton 3-1. Everton and Southampton were without a point at the bottom of the table, while Arsenal and Brighton saw their perfect starts to the league come to an end. Liverpool also has six points from two games and plays at Manchester United on Sunday.

EVERTON COLLAPSE
A bad start to Everton's last season at Goodison Park got worse on Saturday, with frustrated home fans flooding out of the stadium at the final whistle. Everton looked set to earn its first points of the season after Michael Keane and Dominic Calvert-Lewin gave it a 2-0 lead that stood until the 87th minute. But as soon as Antoine Semenyo pulled one back, nerves seemed to set in among the Everton players and home fans, and Lewis Cook took advantage by heading home an equalizer in the second minute of injury time. With Goodison Park shell-shocked, Bournemouth kept pouring forward and found a winner in similar fashion, as Luis Sinisterra was left unmarked to head home another cross at the far post three minutes later. "Just threw the game away," Everton manager Sean Dyche said. "We were in control, complete control." Bournemouth moved to five points after opening the season with two draws. Toney watches as Mbuemo shines. Toney was on hand to watch Brentford from the stands after completing a deadline-day move to Saudi Arabian club Al-Ahli on Friday, and watched as Bryan Mbuemo took up his role as goalscorer instead.

Minority athletes hope their Olympic journeys will sway hearts and minds

AP ■ PARIS

Before she cut the air on the world's biggest sporting stage with head-spinning, gravity-defying moves, Logan Edra, aka B-Girl Logistix, held herself with a razor-sharp focus. Brows furrowed and hands anchored at her hips, Team USA's youngest breaker this year seemed more serious than some of her competitors at the Paris Olympics. This was not just a contest for the 21-year-old daughter of Filipino immigrants, but a pressure-packed chance to bring her cultural heritage into a traditionally American art form for all to see. Representing both Filipinos and immigrant families more broadly was "the most overwhelming part" of breaking on the Olympic stage, Edra said, calling it "a different layer of love." As the spotlight now shifts to the Paralympics, athletes like Edra shoulder not only their countries' hopes for gold, but the responsibility of representing their identities and cultures, which spectators increasingly scrutinize. Edra did not advance past the quarterfinals in the Paris b-girl competition, but her Olympic journey and current No. 10 world ranking clearly showcase her skill. When an athlete excels at this level, she said, stigma and judgment often give way to respect. "If someone's doing a crazy move on their elbows, and they spin on their head -



clearly it takes so much human strength. You can't deny that," Edra said. However, this effect of positive exposure can unravel if a minority athlete becomes politically outspoken. It's a real dilemma: Voicing opinions on a sensitive topic can jeopardize the breadth of their influence, yet remaining silent can feel like betraying their true selves. Navigating this balance between embracing authenticity and preserving respect is a constant challenge. Social scientists call this dynamic the "arasocial contact hypothesis," which

suggests prejudice can be reduced through positive exposure to athletes or other members of marginalized or stigmatized groups. Researchers tested the theory by exploring soccer's influence on Islamophobia in British culture. After Egyptian striker Mohamed Salah, known for his prayers on the pitch, was instrumental in a decisive Liverpool win, viral videos showed British fans celebrating with chants like "If he scores another few, then I'll be Muslim, too," and "Mohamed Salah, a gift from Allah. He's always scoring; it's almost boring." Researchers analyzed 15

million tweets and hate-crime data from 25 police departments, finding a 16% drop in Liverpool-area hate crimes and a halving of anti-Muslim tweets by Liverpool fans after Salah joined the team. Surveys showed Salah's Muslim identity increased belief in Islam's compatibility with British values. Salma Mousa, a political scientist at University of California, Los Angeles, who specializes in prejudice reduction and who co-authored the 2021 study, pointed out the limitations of this influence - she said Salah maintained a "completely apolitical" stance on controversial issues at the

time. "Practically this does place a burden on minority players," said Ala Alrababah, another co-author of the study and a political scientist at Bocconi University. "As a Muslim player, as a Black player, as an LGBTQ player, or as any other minority, knowing that playing well can improve attitudes or playing badly can worsen attitudes - This is adding pressure. This is tough." Whether it's their intention or not, minority Olympians become emblematic figures for entire ethnicities or religions. Gabby Douglas and Simone Biles have ignited waves of Black participation in gymnastics. Sunisa Lee, who in Tokyo became the first Hmong-American and first Asian American to win women's all-around gold, sparked surges in Google searches for "Hmong" and "What is Hmong descent?" And when Lee began battling an incurable kidney condition after her 2021 win, she raised awareness about high rates of kidney disease among the Hmong American population. Biles waited until after she had won a sixth gold medal at Paris before posting an apparent reference to the U.S. Presidential campaign on X, writing "I love my black job." "All sports go way beyond what happens on the field of play, but that is true to a factor of 10 for the Olympic Games," USA Gymnastics spokesperson Jill Geer said.

Serena Williams visits US Open the first time after 2022

AP ■ NEW YORK

Welcome back to the U.S. Open, Serena Williams. Williams, a 23-time Grand Slam singles champion, returned to Flushing Meadows on Saturday - but she was watching tennis, not playing it. And she brought back an old look, wearing a denim skirt similar to the one she sported while competing in New York in 2004. This was the first visit to the U.S. Open by Williams since 2022, when she played there in the final tournament of her career. She made it to the third round then before losing to Ajla Tomljanovic in her last match, although Williams was careful not to say she was retiring, but rather described it as "evolving" away from professional tennis. She's been plenty busy ever since, pursuing her business interests, signing a book deal, putting out a documentary series currently airing on ESPN and, in July, hosting the ESPYS. Williams gave birth to her second daughter a year ago. The 42-year-old American won six singles championships at the U.S. Open - tied with Chris Evert for the most - during her decades of dominance with a racket in her hands. This time Williams was sitting in a suite in Arthur Ashe Stadium while Jannik Sinner, the No. 1-ranked man, earned a straight-set victory in the third round against Chris O'Connell.



Williams made her way around the grounds, checking out American Tommy Paul's win at Louis Armstrong Stadium and stopping by the players' gym at one point for a chat with the current women's No. 1, Iga Swiatek, who was scheduled to play on Saturday night. One of Williams' good friends, 2018 Australian

Open champion and former No. 1 Caroline Wozniacki, joked after winning Saturday to get to the fourth round that she was disappointed not to have spotted Williams in the spectator seats on the Grandstand. "I'm going to text her," Wozniacki said with a laugh. "I'm pretty mad at her for not showing up at my match."

Jannik Sinner never gives US Open opponent hope of an upset like those against Djokovic and Alcaraz

AP ■ NEW YORK

Jannik Sinner never gave his third-round opponent at the U.S. Open on Saturday, Chris O'Connell, even a moment to contemplate pulling off the sort of monumental upset that eliminated Novak Djokovic and Carlos Alcaraz. "It shows that this sport is unpredictable. Whenever you drop a little bit of your level - if it's mental, if it's tennis-wise or physical - at the end, it has a huge impact on the result," Sinner said. "Both opponents who they lost against, they played some incredible tennis. And it happens." Not to the No. 1-ranked Sinner, who is suddenly the favorite to win the men's championship at Flushing Meadows. He won the first five games and 21 of the first 29 points to make quite clear how things would go at Arthur Ashe Stadium and wrapped up a 6-1, 6-4, 6-2 victory over O'Connell in under two hours. "I felt like he was on from the get-go," O'Connell said. "I felt a little bit clueless, to be honest. ... Every

single shot, I just felt like I had to do something with it, because he was just on me. He was suffocating me." Stepping on court less than 15 hours after Djokovic's loss to Alexei Popyrin, and two days after Alcaraz's loss to Botanic de Zandschulp, Sinner was as dominant as can be in every facet of the sport. With 23-time major champion Serena Williams watching from an Ashe suite, Sinner struck 15 aces. He never faced a break point. He won five of O'Connell's 12 service games. He finished with more than twice as many winners, 46, as unforced errors, 22. "The best tennis player I've ever played, for sure," the 30-year-old O'Connell said. The only past men's champion at the U.S. Open still in the bracket is 2021 winner Daniil Medvedev. "For sure didn't expect to have this in the fourth round when Novak and Carlos are here," Medvedev said after beating No. 31 Flavio Cobolli 6-3, 6-4, 6-3. "So it's a fun feeling from one side, but from the other side it's a



new tournament. I need to play my best to try to win it again." The No. 5 seed will next face Nuno Borges, who was a point away from elimination at 6-3 in a fourth-set tiebreaker, then rallied to beat Jakub Mensik 6-7 (5), 6-1, 3-6, 7-6 (6), 6-0. Top-ranked Iga

Swiatek, who counts the 2022 title at Flushing Meadows among her five Grand Slam trophies, beat No. 25 seed Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova 6-4, 6-2 to reach the fourth round of the U.S. Open for the fourth straight year. Earlier Saturday, Jasmine Paolini

joined Coco Gauff as the only women to reach at least the fourth round at every major in 2024, getting that far at the U.S. Open for the first time with a 6-3, 6-4 victory over No. 30 seed Yulia Putintseva. The fifth-seeded Paolini was the runner-up at the French Open in June and Wimbledon in July and next meets 2023 French Open finalist Karolina Muchova. Also advancing were No. 6 Jessica Pegula, No. 16 Liudmila Samsonova, No. 18 Diana Shnaider and 2018 Australian Open champion Caroline Wozniacki. Since losing the first set he played in New York, against Mackie McDonald - which also was the first set Sinner had played since news emerged of a doping case that involved two positive tests in March for trace amounts of a banned anabolic steroid - the 23-year-old from Italy has performed impeccably, dropping a total of 18 games across nine sets. Trying to collect his second Grand Slam title of the year after gaining the first of his career at

the Australian Open in January, Sinner will face No. 14 Tommy Paul of the United States in the fourth round on Monday. Paul defeated Canadian qualifier Gabriel Diallo 6-7 (5), 6-3, 6-1, 7-6 (3). "He's a great mover. He has improved a lot in the last period of time. It's going to be a tough challenge," Sinner said about facing Paul, a 2023 Australian Open semifinalist. "He plays some great tennis, especially here in America." Perhaps there was some wariness on Sinner's part heading into Saturday, given recent events. This is, after all, only the third time in the Open era (the others were in 1973 and 2000) that two of the top three seeded men were gone before the fourth round. So Sinner woke up as the man considered likeliest to win the U.S. Open, a status that belonged to No. 3 Alcaraz - the champion at the French Open and Wimbledon this season - before the tournament began. No. 2 Djokovic - the defending champ

and owner of a men's-record 24 major trophies - moved atop the odds when Alcaraz was sent home Thursday night, only to relinquish that after his own early exit Friday night. The 87th-ranked O'Connell harbored hope of producing yet another surprise, even if he's never beaten a member of the top 10 or been past the third round at a Slam. What van de Zandschulp and Popyrin did allowed O'Connell to dream of producing something similar against Sinner. "I mean, yeah, I've got to believe," O'Connell said, "but I just felt that he was really on fire." There is something quite difficult about trying to follow up one career-best win with another, and van de Zandschulp didn't really show up on Saturday, eliminated by No. 25 Jack Draper 6-3, 6-4, 6-2. Draper, a 22-year-old left-hander from Britain, never has been past the fourth round at a major, and neither has his next opponent, unseeded Tomas Machac, a 6-3, 6-1, 6-2 winner against David Goffin.

Badoni: Never thought of hitting record 19 sixes; focus on timing the ball

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

South Delhi Superstar skipper Ayush Badoni, who hit a record 19 sixes, believes his ability to time the ball is the reason behind a record-smashing 55-ball 165 runs effort in the Delhi Premier League match against North Delhi Strikers. The 24-year-old right-hander's superb effort guided his team to a 112-run win on Saturday. Ayush, who also shared a 286-run partnership with

opener Priyansh Arya for the second wicket, bettered the record for most sixes by a batter in an innings which stood in the name of West Indian great Chris Gayle and Estonia's Sahil Chauhan. They had both hit 18 maximums in T20 games. "I was just looking to time the ball well, I never thought I would end up hitting 19 sixes in an innings. I just focus on timing the ball and not trying to hit the ball hard," Badoni told PTI Videos.



Badoni, who plays for Lucknow Super Giants in the IPL, has had a decent run with the bat in the lucrative league in his short cricketing career. After his heroics in the ongoing DPL, the batter would be on the radar of several franchises. "I am not thinking about the (IPL) mega auction yet; my focus is on winning the Delhi Premier League right now as a skipper," he said. "Playing in the IPL has made life a lot easier for me as a batter here (DPL). We face

world-class bowlers there, and then coming here and playing becomes relatively easy." LSG assistant coach Jonty Rhodes compared Badoni to former Proteas hard-hitting batter Herschelle Gibbs. "Jonty and I have a great relationship. I want to thank him for his kind words and just want to say that 'see you soon, Jonty'." Badoni has led South Delhi Superstarz from the front. He along with Priyansh Arya have amassed 1,091 runs in

the inaugural edition of the DPL. The skipper conceded that good partnerships take the pressure off batters coming down the order. "I know that Priyansh and I have done well and our batting does help take the pressure off the team. But they come and tell me after the game that they too are eager to contribute with the bat. There are a few youngsters who have impressed and now it is our turn to groom them well," he said.

Mandhana and five other Indian cricketers picked up WBBL teams

PTI ■ MELBOURNE, (PTI)

Six Indian cricketers, including vice-captain Smriti Mandhana, will be part of the upcoming Women's Big Bash League (WBBL), starting October 27, after being picked by different teams. While Mandhana was pre-signed by Adelaide Strikers, Dayalan Hemalatha will play the league for the first time after the top-order batter was drafted by the Perth Scorchers, where she will add firepower to their line-up. Wicketkeeper-batter Yastika Bhatia will also make her WBBL debut after being picked up by the Melbourne Stars, where she'll join national



teammate Deepti Sharma. India all-rounder Shikha Pandey has been picked up by Brisbane Heat, where she is expected to inject much-needed pace into the squad and add plenty as a powerful middle-to-lower-order batter. Pandey will be available

for the entire season as she is not part of India's T20 World Cup squad. She joins Jemimah Rodrigues in Brisbane Heat's squad. The WBBL will start on October 27 in Adelaide with a match between Adelaide Strikers and Brisbane Heat.

Gambhir makes an impact wherever he goes: Rhodes

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

South Africa cricket legend Jonty Rhodes believes the Indian team will only become stronger under new head coach Gautam Gambhir, and said the former opener has the ability to make an instant impact in any side. "Wherever GG (Gautam Gambhir) goes he makes an impact, we saw this when he left the Lucknow Super Giants and went to the Kolkata Knight Riders the impact that he had," Rhodes told PTI videos at the Pro Cricket League launch event on Saturday. "He is very much a hands-on guy and is certainly somebody who knows what he

wants and speaks his own mind. "Gambhir leaves no stone unturned, and now that he has taken over the reins of the Indian team, they will go from strength to strength," he added. Rhodes, who is the fielding coach of Lucknow Super Giants, also lauded Zaheer Khan's appointment as mentor of the IPL side. He said Zaheer's calm head will help the side get through tense situations during a game. "A calm cricketing mind is what you need at the IPL level, especially in the dugout scenario. You need people with calm heads because it gets very tense. "If emotions start to get the better of you it



impacts everybody sitting in the dug-out or on the field. In such situations, it is great to have someone like Zak (Zaheer), because he brings the skills and the knowledge, and he also brings the mojo," he said. "We have worked together at Mumbai Indians and he is

technically very sound indeed." Rumours are doing rounds that Rohit Sharma is set to replace KL Rahul in LSG. "I spent a lot of time with Rohit Sharma at the Mumbai Indians and I am just so grateful that had I had an opportunity to watch him play there. The

changes, if there are, will not be my decision and I am not worried about them right now," Rhodes said. Rhodes also compared young LSG batter Ayush Badoni with former Proteas batting great Herschelle Gibbs after the latter broke the record for smashing most number of sixes

Bopanna-Sutjiadi pair enters mixed doubles quarterfinals of US Open

PTI ■ NEW YORK

India's Rohan Bopanna and his Indonesian partner Aldila Sutjiadi moved into the mixed doubles quarterfinals of the US Open here. Bopanna and Sutjiadi, seeded eighth, beat the Australian duo of John Peers and Katerina Siniakova of the Czech Republic 0-6 7-6(5) 10-7 in a second-round match that lasted one hour and 13 minutes. Bopanna and Sutjiadi will next play fourth seeds Matthew Ebden and Barbora Krejckikova.



Manisha advances to semifinals; Palak, Mandeep bow out of Paris Paralympics

PTI ■ PARIS

Shuttler Manisha Ramdass kept India's medal hopes alive by progressing to the women's single semifinals in SU5 category but Mandeep Kaur and Palak Kohli were eliminated from the Paris Paralympics following contrasting defeats in their respective quarterfinals here on Sunday. The 19-year-old Manisha, who was born with Erb's palsy which affected her right arm, had no trouble in dispatching Japan's Mamiko Toyoda 21-13 21-16 in the quarterfinal. The second seed Indian left-hander needed 30 minutes to down her unseeded rival. In SU5 category, the players have impairment of the upper limbs. The impairment could be on the playing or non-playing hand. Competing in SL3 category, Mandeep hardly posed a challenge to Nigeria's third seed Bolaji Mariam Eniola, losing the contest 8-21 9-21 in

23 minutes. It was the second consecutive defeat for Mandeep against Eniola, having lost to the Nigerian in the Group stage as well. SL3 category is for players with severe lower-limb disability competing on a half-width court. In SL4 category, para world champion bronze medalist Palak went down fighting 19-21 15-21 to Indonesia's Khalimatus Sadiyah in 28 minutes. SL4 is a class for athletes competing standing with less severe impairment than in SL3. Later in the day, Nithya Sivan Sumathy will compete in the last-eight stage in SH6 category against Poland's Oliwia Szmigiel. The men's singles semifinal in SL4 category will be an all-Indian affair with Suhas Yathiraj and Sukant Kadam clashing against each other. Nitesh Kumar will fight it out with Japan's Daisuke Fujihara in the men's singles semifinal in SL3 category.

Odisha FC secure AFC Women's Champions League group stage berth

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Odisha FC have secured AFC Women's Champions League Group Stage berth, by topping their preliminary round in Zarqa, Jordan. Making their international debut, the Indian Women's League champions first defeated Lion City Sailors FC (Singapore) 4-1 before notching a hard-fought 2-1 win over hosts Etihad Club on Saturday to qualify for the Group Stage of Asia's elite women's club competition. A brace from 19-year-old Lynda Kom Serto and two own goals paved the way for Odisha FC's 4-1 win over the Singapore outfit. With Etihad Club winning 5-0 against Lion City Sailors in the next match, Odisha FC required nothing less than three points against the Jordanian champions to qualify from the group. Expectedly, it started as a close contest but the Juggernauts managed to take a 1-0 lead at half-time thanks to Jennifer Kankam Yeboah's 27th-minute goal after she was released in space by Neha. However, Etihad Club found the equaliser in the 57th minute via Jordan's all-time top-scorer Maysa Jbarah, who scored with a left-footed strike into the bottom corner.



But Odisha FC were not to be denied. They found their second goal in the 70th minute, with Lynda picking out Yeboah, who took advantage of an error in judgement by the Etihad goalkeeper, before slotting it into the back of an empty net. The Juggernauts defended in numbers for the remaining 20 minutes. India custodian Shreya Hooda also made a couple of remarkable saves in the dying minutes to ensure the win and cap off a historic night in Indian women's football. In the Group Stage of the AFC Women's Champions League, Odisha FC will travel to Vietnam to face Urawa Red Diamonds Ladies (Japan), Taichung Blue Whale Women's Football Team (Chinese Taipei), and hosts Ho Chi Minh City Women's FC (Vietnam). The Group Stage comprises three groups of four teams and will also be contested in a centralised league format from October 6-12. The top two finishers of each group and the two best third-placed sides will progress to the quarters to be played on March 22 and 23, 2025. A knockout stage draw will be conducted prior to the quarterfinals to determine the four pairings, which will be contested in a single-leg format, with the higher-ranked team of each tie to serve as the home side. This will be followed by a centralised finals, which will see the semi-finals and final -- all single-leg ties -- being played out from May 21-24, 2025, to determine the first ever champions of the AFC Women's Champions League.

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PTI ■ AL AIN (UAE)

Boxing's future hangs in balance after Asian body votes in favour of IBA

Boxing's already uncertain Olympic future was thrown into further jeopardy after the sport's Asian governing body voted against leaving the suspended International Boxing Association (IBA) to join the rival association. The polling was held via a secret ballot with 21 countries voting in favour of continuing with IBA, while 14 cast their ballot in favour of joining World Boxing, the new body constituted to run the affairs of the sport. There was one invalid vote. Besides India, which participated as an observer, the other countries whose names figured on the roll call included, Bahrain, Bhutan, Brunei, Cambodia, China, Chinese Taipei, Timor Leste, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Lebanon, Macau, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Palestine, Philippines, Qatar, Saudi

Arabia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Vietnam and Yemen. The IBA has been at loggerheads with the IOC, with the latter managing the Olympics qualification process for the Tokyo and Paris Games. With the Asian Boxing Confederation (ASBC) refusing to join World Boxing, which is being pushed as an alternate to IBA, the future of the sport in the 2028 Los Angeles Games hangs in a balance. Following the voting, IBA hit out at World Boxing, saying the new body lacked the wherewithal to organise major international events.

"World Boxing, to tell the truth, has no finances, expertise and support to organise any proper major events, no means to support their members and no intention to develop boxing," said IBA in a statement. "They (World Boxing) claim that they want to keep boxing at the heart of the Olympics, fair enough; that said, they do not care about the development of the sport in the countries, grassroots boxing, performance path of the athletes. They have no program, no vision -- just a standalone idea of boxing being at the Olympics," the statement added. IBA also asked the national federations to think twice before leaving as that could



mean a dead end for them. "The IBA calls (upon) National Federations to make decisions carefully, as there

will be no way for a U-turn, should a federation decide to leave. The IBA remains committed to supporting its

athletes, coaches and National Federations. "World Boxing can guarantee nothing; the IBA in turn can

show actions supporting every word said. We work hard in support of grassroots boxing, while giving elite boxers opportunities to excel as amateurs and professionals both," the statement added. Welcoming the support from the Asian body, IBA added that it was an affirmation of the good work done by it over the years. "This decision (by ASBC) reflects the years of IBA's hard work invested in boxing development worldwide and true unity of the IBA Boxing Family," the statement added. IBA also hit out at some of the national federations that had voted against it during the secret ballot.

"Politically motivated intentions to join World Boxing backed by some members are reckless. There is no rationale in joining an organization that has no intention for boxing to thrive but only pursues personal ambitions of their leadership. "A move towards World Boxing will undoubtedly damage the sport in those respective countries, the thesis confirmed by the performance of World Boxing nations in Paris 2024," it said. "Where does India stand vis-a-vis World Boxing? The Boxing Federation of India had in May agreed to become a member of World Boxing. The membership application was approved by the BFI's General Assembly. Senior BFI office-bearers had also met with World Boxing president and secretary-general to discuss ways in which India could support the international federation in growing its membership base in Asia.