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REAL MADRID COMEBACK WIN OVER ESPANYOL
12 SPORTS

INDIA LIFTS MAIDEN GOLD AT CHESS OLYMPIAD

RISHABH MALIK ■ NEW DELHI

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

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



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

AP/PTI

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

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

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

Kejriwal returns, attacks PM, RSS



AAP National Convener Arvind Kejriwal addresses as Delhi CM Atishi party leader Manish Sisodia and others at Janta Ki Adalat at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi, Sunday

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Days after stepping down from his chief ministerial post, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) chief Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday launched a scathing attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi saying that he had entered politics to change it and he resigned because he was hurt by the corruption allegations levelled against him by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Enforcement Directorate (ED) to intimidate or lure leaders. In his first 'Janta ki Adalat' public meeting at Jantar Mantar following his resignation as Delhi chief minister, Kejriwal adopted a new political strategy to counter PM Modi, poising

five questions to Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat, including if the BJP's rule on age of retirement also applied to Modi as it did for LK Advani. He asked whether the rule under which several BJP veteran leaders such as Lal Krishna Advani and Murli Manohar Joshi retired from active politics when they turned 75, would apply to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is turning 75 in September 2025. He questioned Bhagwat if he agreed with the BJP's politics of calling politicians "corrupt" and then inducting them into its fold. He demanded answers from the RSS for Prime Minister Modi's actions, in an apparent bid to diminish his

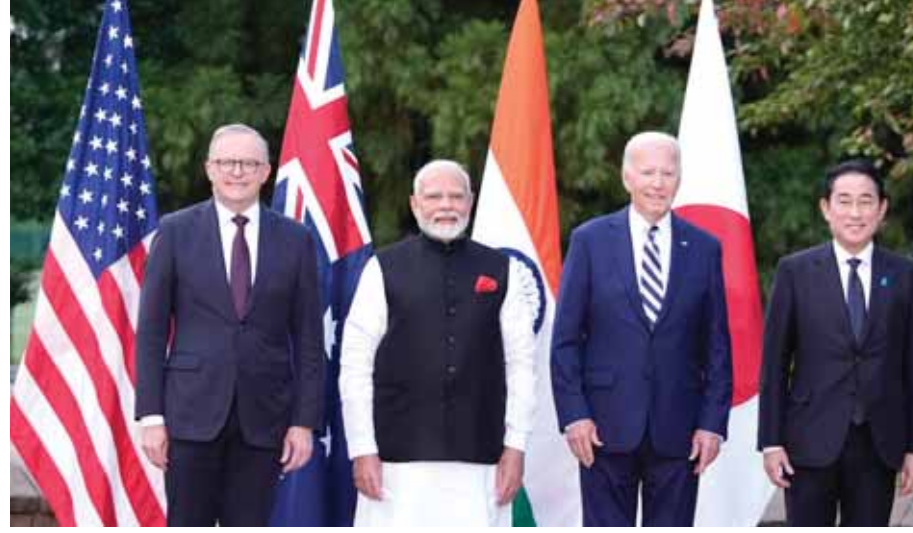
stature by implying that the parent Hindutva organisation was the master which should keep its child in control. "Has the son become so big now that it is showing attitude to his mother?" Kejriwal said at a rally where he demanded five answers from the RSS chief. The questions he asked were political softballs but the implication of bringing Bhagwat into his new political narrative is new and unusual. Kejriwal desired to know if the RSS agreed with the BJP's politics of using central agencies to break up parties and topple opposition governments, and inducting "corrupt" leaders into its fold. While Kejriwal was addressing the gathering, the

BJP held a protest against him and AAP on issues of corruption at Connaught Place, barely a kilometre away from Jantar Mantar. The BJP held another protest against Kejriwal at Rajghat on the same issue. On the other hand, was awash with AAP's signature blue and yellow colours as hundreds of supporters filled the site with banners that declared Kejriwal as "one of us", affirming their unwavering belief in his innocence. As Kejriwal took the stage, the site echoed with slogans of "Na rukega, na jhukega..." while some AAP supporters held up posters bearing messages such as "Hamare Kejriwal imaanदार hai". "I resigned because I did not come to do corruption or to earn money. I came to change the politics of the country..." Kejriwal said. The AAP convener said whether it was ethical for Modi to topple governments across the country by using investigating agencies like CBI and ED. He said he would leave the CM's bungalow in a few days. "I will leave my house soon and give up all the facilities. When I leave the CM house, I won't even have a place to live. I'm getting a lot of calls from people saying, 'Come to my house, live at my house for free,'" said Kejriwal at the Janta Adalat. Several AAP leaders attended the party event at Jantar Mantar. AAP leader Manish Sisodia, Delhi Chief Minister Atishi also joined the event named the 'Janta Ki Adalat'.

US, India agree on theatre of war

PTI ■ WILMINGTON (US)

US President Joe Biden commended Prime Minister Narendra Modi's historic visit to Ukraine last month and his message of peace, as the two leaders held wide-ranging talks that figured pressing global challenges including the situation in the war-ravaged country. The US President hosted Modi at his personal home in Wilmington, Delaware on Saturday afternoon hours after the prime minister arrived in the US on a three-day visit. Modi's bilateral meeting with President Joe Biden in Wilmington was an emotional one, marking their final meeting in an official capacity as the American leader is not seeking reelection. The US President hosted Modi at his personal residence in Wilmington, Delaware on Saturday and the two leaders held wide-ranging talks covering various key aspects of India-US ties. At a media briefing, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri, while answering a question on defusing the Ukraine crisis, said "very important" conversations are underway with multiple people on all sides of the conflict. In the talks, Biden conveyed to the Indian prime minister that the US supports initiatives to reform global institutions to reflect India's important voice, including permanent membership for New Delhi in a reformed UN Security Council, according to a joint fact-sheet on the meeting. Though the Modi-Biden talks primarily focused on bilateral ties, the two leaders also touched upon key global challenges including the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the situation in the Indo-Pacific that has witnessed increasing Chinese muscle-flexing.



President Joe Biden, joined by Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, and India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, stand for a group photo before speaking about a Quadrilateral Cancer Moonshot initiative on the sidelines of the Quad leaders summit at Archmere Academy in Claymont, Del., Saturday

The fact-sheet said President Biden expressed his "immense appreciation" for India's leading role on the world stage, particularly Modi's leadership in the G-20 and in the Global South and his commitment to strengthen the Quad to ensure a free, open, and prosperous Indo-Pacific. It said India is at the forefront of efforts to seek solutions to the most pressing challenges, from supporting the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic to addressing the devastating consequences of conflicts around the world. "President Biden commended Prime Minister Modi for his historic visits to Poland and Ukraine, the first by an Indian prime minister in decades, and for his message of peace and ongoing humanitarian support for Ukraine, including its energy sector, and on the importance of international law, including the UN charter," it said. It is understood that Modi briefed Biden on his visits to Moscow in July and to Kyiv last month.

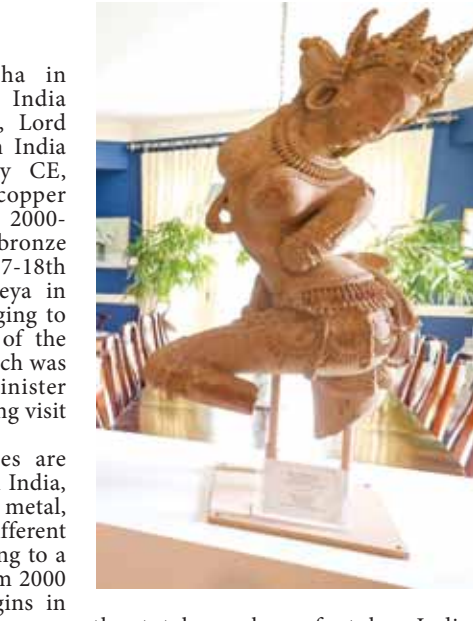
Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri, when asked at a media briefing on the extent of discussion on the Russia-Ukraine conflict between the two leaders and whether the Indian side mentioned any kind of peace proposal, only said New Delhi is involved in a set of negotiations. In their meeting, Modi and Biden reaffirmed their support for the freedom of navigation and the protection of commerce, including critical maritime routes in the Middle East where India will assume co-lead in 2025 of the Combined Task Force 150 to work with Combined Maritime Forces to secure sea lanes in the Arabian Sea, the document said. The leaders voiced their view that a closer US-India partnership is vital to the success of efforts to build a cleaner, inclusive, more secure, and more prosperous future for the planet, it added. Modi and Biden also deliberated on ways to further bolster India-US cooperation

in areas of semiconductors, clean energy and defence. In his meeting with Quad leaders both in multilateral and bilateral settings, Modi put forward India's views and commitments for global growth, development, peace and security. Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri made these remarks at a special briefing in New York on Sunday. Modi on Saturday had three separate bilateral meetings with Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and US President Joe Biden along with the Quad Leadership Summit in Wilmington, Delaware. Prime Minister Modi reached New York on Sunday after wrapping up the Quad Leaders' meeting in Wilmington, hosted by President Biden. In a rare gesture, Biden hosted Modi for a bilateral meeting in his home, and the Quad summit was held at the Archmere Academy in Wilmington.

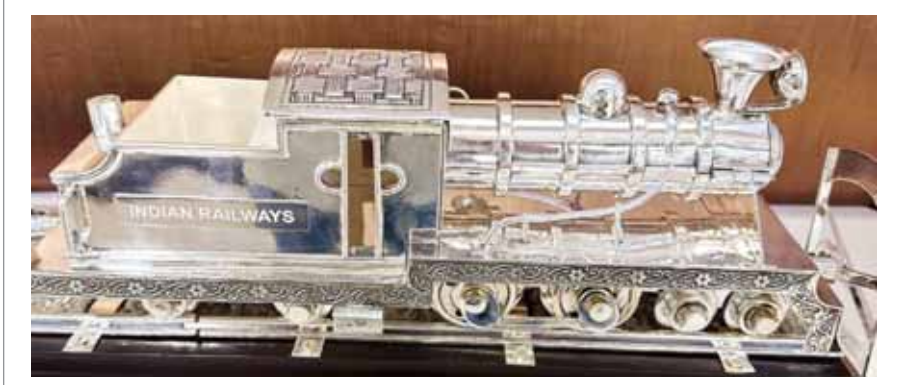
Antiquities of yore come back home

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

From standing Lord Buddha in sandstone from North India belonging 15-16th century CE, Lord Vishnu in Bronze from Eastern India belonging to 17-18th century CE, Anthropomorphic figure in copper from North India belonging to 2000-1800 BCE, Lord Krishna in bronze from South India belonging to 17-18th century CE and Lord Karthikeya in granite from South India belonging to 13-14th century CE are some of the stolen antiquities from India which was handed over to Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his ensuing visit to the United States. The majority of the antiquities are terracotta artefacts from Eastern India, while others are made of stone, metal, wood and ivory and belong to different parts of the country. These belong to a period of almost 4000 years, from 2000 BCE - 1900 CE and have origins in different parts of India.



According to MEA, the Apsara in sandstone from Central India belonging to the 10-11th century CE, Jain Tirthankar in bronze from Central India belonging to the 15-16th century CE, Terracotta vase from Eastern India belonging to the 3-4th century CE, Stone Sculpture from South India belonging to 1st-century BCE-1st century CE, Lord Ganesh in Bronze from South India belonging to 17-18th century CE were handed over. In previous years, PM Modi's trips to the US have also facilitated the return of numerous artifacts. In 2021, 157 antiquities were handed over, including a bronze Nataraja statue from the 12th century. Following the PM's 2023 US visit another 105 antiquities were returned. India has also successfully recovered artifacts from other countries, including 16 from the UK and 40 from Australia. Taking to social media platform Modi said "Deepening cultural connect and strengthening the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural properties. I am extremely grateful to President Biden and the US Government for ensuring the return of 297 invaluable antiquities to India."



Modi gifts antique train model to Joe Biden, pashmina shawl to Jill

PM Narendra Modi gifted an antique silver hand-engraved train model which is a stunning tribute to the steam locomotive era, to President Biden and a pashmina shawl to First Lady Jill Biden on the third day of his US visit for the Quad summit. This silver hand-engraved train model - a rare and extraordinary piece,

masterfully crafted by artisans from Maharashtra - is made of 92.5% silver and the model has been customised by inscribing "Delhi-Delaware" on the sides of the main carriage and "Indian Railways" on the sides of the engine in English and Hindi based on the standard format used on passenger trains in India, officials said.

The agreement aims to fulfil the commitments made by President Biden and Prime Minister Modi to enhance cooperation in protecting cultural heritage, as stated in the Joint Statement issued after their meeting in June 2023, according to the Ministry of External Affairs.

MEA said that the artefacts were returned "in keeping with close bilateral ties and to foster greater cultural understanding". The statement said the pieces will be "shortly repatriated to India." It added that a select few pieces were showcased to Modi and Biden during their bilateral meeting in Wilmington, Delaware. The US State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and the Archaeological Survey of India, under the Ministry of Culture, Union Government, signed a Cultural Property Agreement in July 2024 to strengthen cultural ties.

Employment, Agniveer, women & farmers' issues take centre stage in Haryana

MANOJ KUMAR ■ CHANDIGARH

With the Haryana Assembly elections approaching nearer, the leaders of all political parties are trying to employ every measure possible to woo the voters. Employment, Agniveer, women and farmers continue to be targets of all the parties including Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Congress, Jannayak Janata Party (JJP), Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Indian National Lok Dal (INLD), Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and others contesting for the 90-Assembly seats in the State, evident from their poll manifestos and public rally promises.

Though both the ruling BJP and the main opposition party, Congress, have made big promises to the people in their released manifestos; JJP, INLD, AAP and others are also expected to unveil their manifestos in the coming days. Additionally, in their rallies, leaders of AAP, JJP-Azad Samaj Party and INLD-BSP combine have promised a slew of freebies, and schemes to woo the agrarian electorate.

Opposition leaders looking to upstage BJP in the State after a decade in office are fiercely targeting the party on the state's unemployment rates, citing frustration of youths, farmers' distress, and increase in crime against women and deteriorating law and order situation in the campaign for the Assembly Election scheduled on October 5.

Moreover, while the BJP manifesto was unveiled by Union Minister JP Nadda on September 19 and includes 20 guarantees, the Congress list of promises was released by party's national president Mallikarjun Kharge on September 18 and includes, in contrast, seven guarantees.

Both the political rivals have released their poll manifestos for the election with a focus on the poor, women, youth, and farmers.

Interestingly, both political parties have made promises which are similar to each other. The BJP has made 20 election promises, of which five are similar to those made by the Congress.

As far as their manifestos are concerned, both have targeted the youth as the unemployment rate in the state is higher than the national average. As per Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) data, the unemployment rate in Haryana is 37.4 per cent.

The parties have promised to create two lakh government jobs, which will cost nearly Rs 900 crores to the state exchequer. BJP's poll manifesto says that their government will create additional job opportunities for five lakh youths. The national apprenticeship promotion scheme will also pay a monthly stipend to the unemployed.

Sources in the Government office said that vacancies were piling up across departments in the last many years. The State employs four lakh people, of which 2.75 lakh are in permanent positions and the remaining are contractual staffers. The rate at which state employees are retiring is far higher, and because of a significant gap in new hiring, many departments are understaffed.

Talking to reporters, the senior Congress leader and former Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda hit out at BJP for not filling two lakh vacancies across Government departments. "Instead of filling vacancies in government departments, BJP-led Government had promoted contractual hiring through the skill employment corporation, thereby denying job security to the youth," he added.

Asked about joblessness, a BJP leader said that the Government actively worked to create employment opportunities for the youth over the past decade.

An indication of BJP's per-

spective on this, however, came from the party's manifesto for the assembly polls released. The party, seeking a third consecutive term in the state, promised two lakh government jobs and creation of 10 industrial towns.

Furthermore, the BJP has shied away from announcing a legal guarantee on the MSP for crops in the manifesto but has assured the farmers that they will continue to get MSP on 24 crops which were announced

Haryana Assembly Elections

just before the elections. The party has also promised that the leaseholders will get permanent land ownership. In its poll manifesto, the Congress says it will legalize the MSP.

The BJP's 20-point poll manifesto also includes two Centre-sponsored schemes — including the KMP orbital rail corridor construction and extension of Vande Bharat trains — besides many rapid rail services and the inter-city connectivity of metro rail services between Faridabad and Gurugram.

In regards to women issue, under its Lado Lakshmi Yojana, the BJP has promised that 78 lakh female voters, aged between 18 and 60 years, will get Rs 2,100 monthly. On the other hand, the Congress pledged Rs 2,000 per month. If this promise is kept, the State Government would be spending Rs 20,000 crore per annum on this scheme.

The Congress has vowed to provide nearly 49 lakh homemakers with a subsidized LPG gas cylinder, costing Rs 500. The BJP has also made a similar promise. Implementing this will cost the government almost Rs 2,000 crore per annum, and a subsidy of Rs 334 will be required on each gas cylinder.

Congress has promised a monthly pension of up to Rs

6,000 to elderly women, and differently-abled persons. The BJP has said that it will provide a dearness allowance and pension based on a scientific formula.

Nearly 35 lakh such beneficiaries are already getting a social security pension in Haryana. The BJP Government was paying Rs 3,000 per month, which the Congress has doubled. The state is spending Rs 13,000 crores on social security pensions annually.

The two biggest parties in the state have also promised to launch a housing scheme for the poor. The BJP's poll manifesto promises houses for five lakh poor people whose annual income is below Rs 1.8 lakhs per annum. The implementation of the scheme will cost nearly Rs 1,400 crores per annum.

Interestingly, Congress has said that it will provide a plot and two-room houses to around 3.08 lakh people.

On health front, the BJP has promised each family free treatment up to Rs 10 lakh under the Chirayu Aayushman Yojana. Senior members of the family, over 70 years, will get free treatment of up to Rs seven lakh. The BJP government was already running this scheme, which had benefited 15.54 people over the past six years. Meanwhile, the Congress has also promised free medical treatment of up to Rs 25 lakh as per its poll manifesto.

Meanwhile, addressing the public rally, senior INLD leader and Ellenabad candidate Abhay Chautala said that the party will soon release its manifesto. "We promised that under an INLD government, the old-age pension given by Devi Lal will be increased to Rs 7500. The government will ensure that every educated child from a household will get a government job, fill two lakh vacant positions in the first six months, provide Rs 21,000 as unemployment allowance, give free gas cylinders to mothers and sisters, deposit Rs 1100 into every

housewife's account, ensure free drinking water, and provide relief on electricity bills," he added.

Chautala further said: "Our Government will also cover education expenses, reintroduce the old pension scheme, make Anganwadi and ASHA workers permanent, provide hundred-square-yard plots to the poor, and ensure houses under the Devi Lal Housing Scheme. Additionally, all government portals created by the BJP-led Manohar Lal Khattar government will be abolished, and new ration cards will be issued to provide all necessary facilities. A separate capital and High Court will be established, and every village will have a community center for women to participate in devotional activities."

Senior JJP leader and former Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala, talking to the reporters, said that the JJP-ASP alliance will soon release its manifesto. Every section will be taken care of in the manifesto. He said: "If JJP-ASP government is formed in the State, 50 percent reservation will be given to women in teaching jobs in all government educational institutions. Along with this, 33 percent participation of women will be ensured in many schemes of cooperative sectors. The honorarium of Anganwadi-ASHA workers will be increased to Rs 21,000 per month, he added.

Political observers opined that the number of jobs created in the past decade was not enough to absorb all the youngsters finishing their studies; and jobs will play a major role this election. In addition to this, women empowerment, steps to stop crime against women are being raised by the political leaders in this election. Legal guarantee of MSP on all crops is another important issue in this election. Voters will keep in mind all these issues while exercising their vote to the parties in the election, observers added.

Punjab Cabinet Reshuffle Today: 4 ministers step down; 5 new faces to be inducted

MONIKA MALIK ■ CHANDIGARH

As political speculation amounts, the Punjab Government is poised for a significant Cabinet reshuffle on Monday, with four Ministers putting in their papers paving way for induction of five new faces. Although there has been no official confirmation of this reshuffle either from the government or the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), sources suggested that the Governor's approval has been sought, and new Ministers will take oath at Punjab Raj Bhavan on Monday evening.

Among the Ministers who have stepped down are Local Government Minister Balkaur Singh, Revenue Minister Brahm Shankar Jimpa, Horticulture Minister Chetan Singh Jauramajra, and Labour and Tourism Minister Anmol Gagan Mann. Their exit will mark a pivotal moment in Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann's administration, which has already undergone several changes during its half term in the government.

The new faces likely to join the Cabinet include Jalandhar West MLA Mohinder Bhagat, Sahnewal MLA Hardeep Singh Mundian, Lehra MLA Barinder Kumar Goyal 'Vakeel', Sham Chaurasi MLA Dr Ravjot Singh, and Khanna MLA Tarunpreet Singh Sond.

The backdrop to this impending reshuffle stems from the recent political dynamics following the by-election victory in Jalandhar West, and vacant berth following two-time MLA Gurmeet Singh Meht Hayer's election to the member of the Lok Sabha from Sangrur in recently-held general Elections.

Bhagat, in particular, has risen in political stature after his resounding victory in the Jalandhar by-election, where he secured a margin of over 37,000 votes. His electoral success has not only strengthened AAP's position in Jalandhar and Doaba region but also enhanced the party's overall credibility in the state, making him a valuable asset for the government as it seeks to broaden its appeal.

Apart from Chief Minister Mann's promise to make Bhagat

| Likely inductees | Dropped |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Jalandhar West MLA Mohinder Bhagat ■ Sahnewal MLA Hardeep Singh Mundian ■ Lehra MLA Barinder Kumar Goyal 'Vakeel' ■ Sham Chaurasi MLA Dr Ravjot Singh ■ Khanna MLA Tarunpreet Singh Sond | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Local Government Minister Balkaur Singh ■ Revenue Minister Brahm Shankar Jimpa ■ Horticulture Minister Chetan Singh Jauramajra ■ Labour and Tourism Minister Anmol Gagan Mann |

— a former BJP leader and a Dalit face — a minister in his Cabinet in the run up to bypolls, his inclusion in the Council of Ministers is seen as recognition of his growing influence and strong performance in the recent electoral contest.

In addition to the new appointments, the reshuffle could also result in changes to the portfolios of existing ministers.

Rumours of a Cabinet reshuffle have circulated since early July, fueled by ongoing discussions within the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) regarding the optimal configuration of the Punjab Cabinet. AAP's national leadership, including Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, is believed to be closely monitoring the situation, aiming to enhance governance and address the challenges facing the state.

The possible removal of some of the ministers has raised questions about their future roles within the party. Reports indicated that while they may be removed from their current cabinet positions, they could be assigned other significant roles within the AAP. This shift reflected the party's strategic approach to maintain party unity and effectiveness as it navigates through political challenges.

The impending cabinet reshuffle is reportedly influenced by controversies surrounding four ministers. Chetan Singh Jauramajra, despite surviving scrutiny after his contentious visit to Baba Farid University and his interactions with then Vice-Chancellor Dr Raj Bahadur, has now been asked to resign. Similarly, Balkar Singh, a former cop turned politician, faced embarrassment

after an objectionable video of him went viral during the Lok Sabha elections, yet the Mann government did not take immediate action against him. Additionally, Anmol Gagan Mann has often been criticized for her lack of activity within her departments.

With the expected departure of Doaba ministers Balkar Singh and Brahm Shankar Jimpa, Mohinder Bhagat and Dr Ravjot Singh are anticipated to step into the cabinet, ensuring representation for the region.

The reshuffle marks the fourth such change in the State Government since the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) came to power in Punjab in Mach 2022, reflecting the dynamic nature of the political environment. In November the previous year, significant alterations were made, including the assignment of the mining portfolio to Chetan Singh Jauramajra and the sports ministry to Gurmeet Singh Meht Hayer, who recently resigned after being elected to the Lok Sabha.

Speculation about the new ministers is rife, with several candidates mentioned frequently in discussions. Hardeep Singh Mundia and Barinder Kumar Goyal are anticipated to bring fresh perspectives and energy to the cabinet. Dr Ravjot Singh and Tarunpreet Singh — both known for their respective expertise — are expected to contribute significantly to the governance framework.

As the reshuffle approaches, party leaders have refrained from making any official statements, maintaining an air of secrecy around the proceedings.

Kangana Ranaut accuses HP Govt of "diverting funds to Sonia Gandhi"

PNS ■ SHIMLA

Bollywood actor-cum-BJP MP Kangana Ranaut on Sunday accused the Himachal Pradesh Government of diverting state loans to former Congress president Sonia Gandhi, claiming that corruption is depleting the state's resources.

Kangna, speaking at a BJP membership drive in a village, alleged that funds intended for

disaster relief are being channelled into what she termed a "Sonia relief fund", instead of the official Chief Minister's Relief Fund. She criticized the Congress-led Government, under Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, for misusing financial resources while the state struggles with mounting debt. Kangna also questioned Congress' lavish election spending and called on voters to remove the current administration.

Selja's absence in Cong campaign catches rival's eye

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

At a time when the Congress' campaign for October 5 assembly polls in Haryana gathered momentum, the absence of its prominent Dalit face and Sirsa MP Kumari Selja has exposed the internal rift in the party. Selja, has been "conspicuously absent" from the party's campaign for over a week. Her silence after nominations ended has caught the eye of the Opposition parties with BJP's outgoing Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Sunday accusing the

Congress of being "anti-Dalit" for hesitating to declare her as the chief ministerial face.

Saini, talking to reporters, said: "The Congress is anti-Dalit and does not respect Dalits. If any Dalit leader wants to move forward, the Congress crushes that leader. Kumari Selja is a big leader...if she wants to become the Chief Minister, what crime did she commit?"

His assertion comes a day after Saini's predecessor Manohar Lal Khattar, now a Union Minister, invited her to join the BJP. "Our Dalit sister

is sitting at home. A large section of people are today thinking about what they should do. Many people were upset with them and we brought them into the party fold. We are ready with an offer and if she comes, we are ready to induct her," Khattar was quoted as saying.

Moreover, dismissing such reports as "speculations", the Congress candidate from Uchana Kalan assembly constituency, Brijendra Singh, said that the BJP is "facing frustration" in the state ahead of elections. "Kumari Selja is one of

the very senior leaders, there is no point in saying such things about her. She will contribute fully to Congress in this election. BJP is a shop of lies," he said.

Congress sources said that Selja was upset over the denial of tickets to leaders owing allegiance to her camp, and now chose to stay away from the electioneering. However, there is no official statement either by the Congress central leadership or senior-most leader and two-time Chief Minister Bhupinder Hooda, who is in the race for the post of the Chief Minister, about the reason for Kumari Selja's absence just ahead of polling despite being active on the ground before the candidature on all seats were cleared.

In the just-concluded Lok Sabha polls, Kumari Selja defeated BJP's Ashok Tanwar, Haryana Congress' former president, by 2,68,497 votes from Sirsa (reserve) seat.

Furthermore, the former Home Minister and BJP leader Anil Vij, who is in the fray from his stronghold Ambala Cantonment, said: "There is no respect for women in the Congress, and there is no respect for Dalits also. If someone can use casteist words about such a prominent leader (Kumari Selja), then what must the situation in Congress be? Everyone should be aware of

this."

Talking to reporters, Vij, the six-time legislator who last week demanded that he be made the Chief Minister of Haryana if his party wins the elections, said: "If Manohar Lal ji is saying something about the possibility of Kumari Selja joining the BJP, then there must be something in this regard."

All political parties are aiming to woo the Dalits, who constitute nearly 21 per cent of the state's population, with both prominent parties, the BJP and the Congress, having Dalits as state party chiefs. Out of 90 Assembly seats, 17 are reserved for the Dalits.

Azad Samaj Party leader and parliamentarian Chandra Shekhar Azad too condemned the abusive comment made on Kumari Selja and called upon the people to be cautious of the Congress. "The party which cannot give respect to a senior leader of our society, how will that Congress care for the common people of our society?" he said.

He added, "Kumari Selja has been strengthening the Congress for a long time but today she is being forced to sit at home due to repeated insults." The Azad Samaj Party is contesting the elections in alliance with the Jannayak Janta Party (JJP).

Haryana Poll Buzz

No development in Rohtak in last decade; BJP Govt to be out: Hooda

Rohtak: Former Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda on Sunday alleged that the BJP Government in the State has ignored Rohtak as no development work took place in the district during its tenure. "No major industry was set up in the past decade. People in the urban areas are grappling with lack of basic amenities like potable water, roads and drainage system," alleged the senior Congress leader, while addressing a poll meeting at Janta Colony in Rohtak. He claimed that the BJP led Haryana Government is on its way out and criminals and drug smugglers should leave the state before the Assembly poll results are declared or they have to face the heat.

Campaigning for Congress candidates in the four assembly seats of Sirsa district, he expressed concern over the drug menace, said: "Today, more deaths are taking place in Haryana due to drugs than in Punjab...The Congress Government will end this scourge." He also hit out at the BJP Government over alleged deteriorating law-and-order situation. "Criminals and drug smugglers should leave the state before October 8 — the day of election results," he said.

Hooda also claimed that the "hidden" alliance of the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD), Haryana Lokhit Party (HLP), and Jannayak Janta Party (JJP) with the BJP has now become public.

Khattar accuses Cong of

creating confusion, inciting divisions within society

Karnal: Union Power Minister and former Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Sunday accused the Congress party of creating confusion and inciting divisions within the society. Taking a dig at the Congress for not declaring its chief ministerial face ahead of assembly elections, Khattar said: "The Congress is so panicked internally that they have not even declared a chief minister face, fearing that it will lead to their party's collapse."

Khattar, addressing a gathering of Prabuddh Nagrik Sammelan of Nilokheri block in Taraori, claimed that the Congress is heading towards defeat as it has failed to fulfill the promises made earlier.

Cong's 'falsehood' won't work; BJP will win by heavy margin: CM Saini

Kaithal: Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Sunday said that the people know the fate of tall promises made by the Congress in Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, and Telangana, but their "falsehood" won't work in the State. Asserting that the BJP is set to return to power in Haryana with a full majority, he said that the party will accelerate the ongoing development works. "As you can see, there is tremendous enthusiasm among the people. BJP will form government for the third time and with full majority," said

Saini, addressing a poll rally in Siwan in Kaithal district.

Savitri Jindal unveils 'Sankalp Patra', vows to revive Hisar's development

Hisar: Savitri Jindal, an independent candidate contesting from Hisar segment, on Sunday released her "Sankalp Patra", expressing her commitment to the development of Hisar. On the social media platform X, Jindal wrote, "Today, I unveiled my manifesto for the development of Hisar with media colleagues. The dream that my father, OP Jindal, envisioned for Hisar will be realized over the next five years. We will first address the fundamental issues in Hisar, and then take the city to new heights of development."

A former minister and one of the richest women in India, Savitri Jindal emphasized that her father's vision must be fulfilled, starting with resolving the basic problems of Hisar before moving on to broader development initiatives. During the launch of the Sankalp Patra, she was accompanied by Madhusudan Agarwal, MD and Vice Chairman of Ajanta Pharma; Mahendra Arya, former president of the All India Transport Association; and Krishna Goralhpuriya, Chairman of Darsel.

In her Sankalp Patra, Savitri Jindal prioritized local development and basic amenities, stating that resolving fundamental issues would be her first task, followed by advancing Hisar's growth. For the

upcoming elections, the BJP has fielded Dr Kamal Gupta, while the Congress has nominated Ramniwas Rada for the Hisar seat.

12K complaints received on C-Vigil App related to MCC violation: CEO

Chandigarh: Haryana Chief Electoral Officer Pankaj Agarwal on Sunday said that a total of 12,011 complaints related to the violation of the Model Code of Conduct have been received on C-Vigil App in the State from August 16 to September 22, out of which 11,122 have been found valid.

Such complaints are resolved within 100 minutes on the C-Vigil app. This app allows users to upload audio, video, and photos as evidence. Providing district-wise details, he stated that 856 complaints were received from Ambala district, 75 from Bhiwani, 2,873 from Faridabad, 64 from Fatehabad, 1,585 from Gurugram, 220 from Hisar, 953 from Jhajjar, 76 from Jind, 194 from Kaithal, 48 from Karnal, 289 from Kurukshetra, 24 from Mahendragarh, 13 from Mewat, 206 from Palwal, 326 from Panchkula, 21 from Panipat, 186 from Rewari, 1,015 from Rohtak, 2,093 from Sirsa, 247 from Sonapat, and 647 from Yamunanagar. Out of the total complaints, 11,122 were found valid by the Returning Officers and Assistant Returning Officers, and appropriate actions were taken according as per the rules.

Many BJP leaders join Cong in Panchkula

Panchkula: Many BJP leaders on Sunday joined the Congress party in a programme organized by Uttarakhand Samaj at Sector 12 in Panchkula. Congress candidate Chandra Mohan and other Congress leaders were present on the occasion. Those who joined the Congress party include former BJP councillor Ramesh Barathwal and other leaders Vinod Kumar Bansal, Bhupesh Bansal, Councillor Sunit Singhla and hundreds of other leaders.

Cong wants to divide people by doing caste politics: Yogi Adityanath

Jind: Lashing out at the Congress, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday said that the grand old party's structure has become as "dilapidated" as the Babri in Ayodhya. Reiterating his call for unity during an election rally at Narwana in Jind, Adityanath said: "And I have come to make this appeal to you. They want to divide you by doing caste politics. I told you, didn't I say, 'batoge to katoge, ek rahoge toh nek rahoge, koi mai ka laal aapka baal banka nahi kar payega.'" The BJP leader said: "Despite the Congress ruling the country for a long time, they did not name even one airport after Maharishi Valmiki, Sant Ravidas or after B R Ambedkar. They used to name them after their family."

BRIEFS

UNIDENTIFIED MAN SNATCHES ASI'S PISTOL, KILLS SELF NEAR GOLDEN TEMPLE

Amritsar: In a shocking incident outside the Golden Temple on Sunday, an unidentified man managed to snatch the pistol from a Punjab Police ASI and subsequently shot himself. The ASI was present at the site accompanying a judge who had come to offer prayers at the revered shrine. Eyewitness accounts indicated that the incident unfolded suddenly, leaving bystanders in disbelief. "The bullets pierced into his head and he died on the spot. The police took the body to a hospital," said a police officer. The police suspect the deceased to be a migrant labourer. "No identity card or any other item required to ascertain the identity of the deceased was recovered from him. A probe is being conducted to ascertain his identity and the reason behind the suicide," the police officer added.

DECLARATION ABOUT CRIMINAL CASES FORMAT C-1

I declare that there is no pending criminal case against me.
Name and Address of Candidate: Mahender Bagri S/o Parbhu 1386/20 Bhagwan Colony Rohtak.
Name of Political Party: Mission Ekta Party
Name of Constituency: 62, Rohtak Constituency, Haryana

1, Mahender Bagri a candidate for the above mentioned election, declare for public information the following details about my criminal antecedents:

| A. PENDING CRIMINAL CASES | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sl No. | Name of Court | Case No. and Dated | Status of Case (s) | Section(s) Acts concerned and brief description of offence(s) & FIR |
| 1 | JM 1 ST CLASS ROHTAK | CHI/1923/2021/39 | PENDING | Disaster Management Act 2005, Section-51 Ipc 1860 Section 188 Fir 126/2021 Arya Nagar Police Station |
| 2 | JM 1 ST CLASS ROHTAK | CHI/284/2022 6-ACJM, ROHTAK | PENDING | Section 147, 149, 283, 341 S.P. Kothi Gherav During Lockdown Fir 209/2021 Arya Nagar, Police Station |
| B. DETAILS ABOUT CASES OF CONVICTION FOR CRIMINAL OFFENCES | | | | |
| Sl No. | Name of Court & date(s) to Order(s) | Description of offence(s) & punishment imposed | Maximum punishment imposed | |
| No | No | No | No | |

Union Bank of India PATTI BRANCH, DISTRICT TARN TARAN AUCTION SALE NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE Sub-transfer of House No 669 LIG, Housing Board Colony, Ambala Cantt., Haryana in the name of Sh. Ganpat Ram S/o Late Sh. Mohi Ram...

PUBLIC NOTICE Sub-transfer of House No 1039 LIG, Housing Board Colony, Ambala Cantt., Haryana in the name of Sh. Charanjit Goomber S/o Late Sh. Gian Chand...

Declaration about criminal cases Format C-1 (As per the judgement dated 25th September, 2018, of Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) No. 536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs. Union of India & Anr.)

Table with 5 columns: Sl. No., Name of Court, Case No. and dated, Status of case(s), Section(s) of Act concerned and brief description of offence(s)

Table with 4 columns: Sl. No., Name of Court & date(s) of order(s), Description of offence(s) & punishment imposed, Maximum punishment imposed

DECLARATION ABOUT CRIMINAL CASES FORMAT C-1

(As per the judgment dated 25th September, 2018, of Hon 'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) No. 536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs. Union of India & Anr.)

Table with 5 columns: SI No., Name of Court, Case No. and Dated, Status of Case (s), Section(s) Acts concerned and brief description of offence(s)

Table with 4 columns: SI No., Name of Court & date(s) fo Order(s), Description of office(s) & punishment imposed, Maximum punishment imposed

Declaration about criminal antecedents of candidates set up by the party format C-2 (As per the judgment dated 25th September, 2018 offHon 'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) No. 536 of 2011)

Table with 5 columns: SI No., Name of constituency, Name of candidate, (A) Pending criminal cases, (B) Details about cases of conviction for criminal offences

PUBLIC NOTICE It is for the information all that Pavitar Kaur W/o Gurcharan Singh is owner of One Property/Plot, measuring 750 Sq. yds. Comprising in khasra No. 1089/1, 1012, 1013, 1200/101, 1202/102, 1198/99, 1027/1, 1008, 1009, Khata No. 565/655, 566/656, 567/657, 574/604, as per jamabandi for the year 2009-10, situated at village Daba, Hadbast No. 260, Tehsil & Distt. Ludhiana...

सर्वजनिक सूचना (Public Notice in Hindi) regarding the property of Pavitar Kaur.

सर्वजनिक सूचना (Public Notice in Hindi) regarding the property of Pavitar Kaur.

सर्वजनिक सूचना (Public Notice in Hindi) regarding the property of Pavitar Kaur.

सर्वजनिक सूचना (Public Notice in Hindi) regarding the property of Pavitar Kaur.

सर्वजनिक सूचना (Public Notice in Hindi) regarding the property of Pavitar Kaur.

ESTATE OFFICE, U.T., CHANDIGARH PUBLIC NOTICE BEFORE SH. NAVEEN, DANICS ASSTT. ESTATE OFFICER, U.T., CHANDIGARH. Subject: Transfer of Ownership in respect of RESIDENTIAL Site No. 541, SECTOR 10-D Chandigarh (RP 8965)

पब्लिक नोटिस (Public Notice in Hindi) regarding the estate office notice.

PUBLIC NOTICE I, Raj Rani W/o Amarjit Singh have lost Original Title Deed No-5756 dated 29.12.2003 of my Shop No-734, Khewat No 77179 situated at main market Zirakpur, Distt. SAS Nagar Mohali on 18.09.2024 in VIP Road market Zirakpur, if found please contact at-9646881001.

Format C-1 Declaration about criminal cases (As per the judgment dated 25th September, 2018, of Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) No. 536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs. Union of India & Anr.)

FORMAT C-7 (for political parties to publish in the newspaper, Social media platforms & Website of the party) Information regarding individuals with pending criminal cases...

Table with 3 columns: SI.No., Criminal antecedents, Details

This may be published in Newspapers and TV from the day following the last date of withdrawal of candidature and upto two days before the date of poll

Declaration about criminal cases (As per the judgment dated 25th September, 2018, of Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) No. 536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs. Union of India and Anr.)

Table with 4 columns: SI No., Name of Court, Case No. and dated, Status of case(s), Section(s) of Acts concerned and brief description of offence(s)

BJP leaders campaign in Jammu ahead of second round of polling

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

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

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

the status quo and restore Article 370.

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

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

families who had 'biryani' with terrorists.

Shah said he would like to talk to the youths of Jammu and Kashmir whom he referred to as 'lions'.

"The BJP government is a must in J&K for peace, prosperity and development besides giving a befitting reply to terrorism and teaching a lesson to Pakistan," Shah said, urging them to vote for BJP candidates, especially Raina whom he praised for strengthening the party in the region.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh addressed three election meetings in Poonch, Rajouri and Sunderbani and one in the RS Pura area of Jammu. Addressing a rally in Poonch in support of BJP candidate



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

and People's Democratic Party (PDP) of misleading people by talking about the restoration of Article 370 of the Constitution in their manifestoes and said these parties should stop working as "proxies of Pakistan". "The NC, Congress and PDP are

making a lot of noise over Article 370 and have promised to restore it. How will you restore it as only a government at the Centre has the power to do so?" Singh asked.

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

"The BJP is clear in its stand that we will not allow restoration of Article 370 come what may," the defence minister asserted.

"The first phase of the Assembly election registered more than 61 per cent polling, surpassing the record-breaking 58 per cent polling in the Lok Sabha election. The message has gone to the world that Article 370 was abrogated

for the betterment of India.

Six election rallies were addressed by these leaders across different assembly segments of Poonch, Rajouri and Jammu on Sunday. JP Nadra also conducted a road show and addressed a meeting of intellectuals in Jammu.

Addressing an election rally in support of BJP candidate Sham Lal Sharma contesting from the Jammu North Assembly segment BJP chief JP Nadra labelled the Congress and the National Conference (NC) as "non-nationalist forces" and said Pakistan's defence minister himself "certified" the two parties for carrying out that country's agenda in Jammu and Kashmir.

He also highlighted the "wave

of change" in Jammu and Kashmir under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership and underscored BJP's "deep connection" with the Union Territory.

Nadra claimed terror attacks have significantly reduced and said the lifespan of terrorists under Prime Minister Modi's leadership is "only a few days", but these parties are trying to negotiate with them.

Accusing the Congress, NC, and PDP of "corruption" and "ruining" Jammu and Kashmir, Nadra said, "These three political dynasties - the Abdullah family, Mufti family, and Nehru-Gandhi family - have harmed Kashmir. They brought rampant corruption and destroyed this beautiful state."

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

PNS ■ KOLKATA

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



To register its protest against the DVC's "reckless act" Bengal which too is a member of the DVC withdrew its representative from its board making State Power Secretary Shantanu Basu and another Chief Executive Engineer on Sunday to resign from the Damodar Valley Reservoir Regulation Committee (DVRRC). Hours before Banerjee had threatened to snap her Government's ties with the DVC.

Referring to a reply letter from the Union Jal Shakti Minister CR Patil in which he reportedly said that the State level officials were informed by the DVC authorities about the release of water, Banerjee on Sunday wrote, "all the critical decisions are made unilaterally

by representatives of the Central Water Commission, Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India without arriving at a consensus," contrary to the claims made by the Union Minister that "release (of water) from DVC dams was carried out by consensus and collaboration with the Damodar Valley Reservoir Regulation Committee, including consultations with representatives of the government of West Bengal."

Banerjee told the media how Bengal was informed only little more than three hours before the release of water.

"They released more than 2.5 lakh cusecs of water" and overall more than 5 lakh cusecs of water released causing it the

worst flood" in the southern districts of Bengal since 2009, she said.

"Peak release from the reservoirs lasting for a prolonged period of nine hours were conducted with only 3.5 hours notice which proved insufficient for effective disaster management," she wrote.

Four major barrages including those at Panchet, Maithon, Konar and Tilaya are operated by the DVC. Apart from this Durgapur barrage and the canal networks which were originally part of the DVC were handed over to the Bengal Government in 1964. It remains as a part of the total system of water management. There are many minor dams also operated by the two States

in Bengal and Jharkhand.

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

In his previous letter to the Prime Minister she had said how 5 million people in the state were affected by the floods, requesting him to "immediately sanction and release central funds to address the widespread devastation."

However in his reply letter, Patil wrote that the whole affair is managed by the DVRRC, which had representatives from the Central Water Commission, Bengal, Jharkhand, and the DVC.

Meanwhile, the flood situation continued to remain grim in large parts of southern Bengal with several blocks of Hooghly, Howrah, East and West Midnapore districts remaining inundated often under neck-deep or even more water.

Not only the villages but urban areas had also been largely affected with the towns like Ghatol, Panshura, Purushura remaining under water for the past more than 60 hours or so.

Omar Abdullah leads Shikara rally on Dal lake ahead of polls

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

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

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

Omar himself is facing a tough challenge in the family bastion of the Ganderbal Assembly segment. His



grandfather Sheikh Mohd Abdullah and Dr Farooq Abdullah represented the seat. Omar tasted humiliating defeat at the hands of a PDP candidate in the 2002 Assembly polls. He later won the 2008 Assembly polls from Ganderbal but decided to move out to Beerwah in Budgam district in the 2014 Assembly polls.

This time Omar is being challenged by the PDP nominee Bashir Mir. Mir used to contest from the neighboring Kangan constituency but he was shifted from there after the seat was reserved for a Scheduled Tribe candidate. Former NC leader Ishaq Jabbar, who is also in the fray

as an Independent, is expected to dent Omar Abdullah's poll prospects.

Last-minute entry of jailed cleric Sarjan Wagay, popularly known as Sarjan Barkati, and Sheikh Ashiq, the candidate of Baramulla MP Engineer Rashid's Awami Ittehad Party, in the fray has turned the poll battle more interesting.

Other prominent candidates in the fray in the second round of polling include Pradesh Congress Committee chief Tariq Hamid Karra, Jammu and Kashmir BJP president Ravinder Raina from Nowshera, Pahari leaders including Mushtaq Ahmed Shah Bukhari, and Murtaza Khan from the Pir Panjal region.

Raj Babbar criticizes BJP's civic failures in Gurugram

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

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

The senior Congress leader was present in Gurgaon to support Congress Badshahpur candidate Vardhan Yadav and Gurgaon seat candidate Mohit Grover on Sunday.

While addressing a public meeting, Babbar scorched an attack on the BJP and said that only making a few flyovers is not called development. The BJP failed to fix the state of civic infrastructure in the constituency, which, despite contributing a hefty sum to Haryana's coffers, has been given a short shrift.

Babbar said this time, people want Congress to retain the power and correct the wrongdoing of the current state government.

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

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

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

The notable contender is Naveen Goel, a BJP rebel, whose participation as an independent candidate has heightened concerns for the ruling party.

Mukesh Sharma, the BJP candidate, faces the daunting task of securing victory this time.

In the assembly elections of 2014, the BJP candidate had secured 84,095 votes while the Congress candidate got just 19,094 votes.

In 2019, the winning margin of the BJP candidate was 33,315, while the



Independent candidate Mohit Grover managed to secure over 48,000 votes, and Congress secured third position with 23,126 votes.

The contest is primarily seen as a three-way battle between BJP leader Mukesh Sharma, Congress' Mohit Grover and Independent candidate Naveen Goel.

Naveen Goel, who was previously associated with the BJP has entered the race after he was denied a BJP ticket, making him a formidable challenger with a personal stake in avenging his

rejection.

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

With a total of 17 candidates in the fray, the real contest remains among Mukesh, Naveen and Mohit. However, Mohit's and Naveen's entries could siphon off crucial votes from the Punjabi and Vaishya communities traditionally aligned with the BJP.

In the Gurgaon constituency, voter demographics play a critical role in election outcomes. Approximately 50,000 Vaishya, 85,000 Punjabi, and 55,000 Brahmin voters reside in the area. Historically, the Vaishya and Punjabi community's support has been pivotal in determining the winner.

TMC-compatible Subhankar is new Bengal PCC President

PNS ■ KOLKATA

By appointing Subhankar Sarkar a new "Mamata Banerjee-friendly" president of the Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee the Congress may have begun to drop its aggressive line --- as was witnessed during the Adhir Chowdhury era --- against the Trinamool Congress, sources in the Bidhan Bhavan, the Pradesh Congress headquarters say.

When asked to comment on the Congress' future conduct vis a vis the TMC the new PCC president said that he had nothing personal against any outfit or their leaders and that the Congress Party would tow a democratic line commensurate and consistent with its democratic values and traditions. "The Congress is clear about its secular democratic values ... we have nothing personal against



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

On what he had to say about

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

Sarkar was named the PCC president late on Saturday evening. He has formerly been the All India Congress Committee (AICC) secretary in charge of northeastern states.

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

details of the ongoing investigation.

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

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

Triangular contest expected in Haryana Ateli Assembly constituency

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

A triangular contest is expected this time in Haryana's Ateli assembly constituency. Here political legacy and caste equations can affect the election result.

This time in Ateli, all eyes will be on BJP's candidate Aarti Rao, who is the daughter of six-time MP and Union Minister Rao Inderjit Singh. Aarti Rao is contesting her maiden election. This election is no less than a litmus test for her.

It remains to be seen whether she can carry forward the legacy of her father, who was the most prominent Ahirwal leader of this region.

Meanwhile, Congress has fielded former MLA Anita Yadav against Aarti Rao and another Ahir community leader. Anita Yadav won this seat on a Congress ticket in 2009, but she faced consecutive defeats in 2014 and 2019 from BJP candidates.

Political experts said that despite losing the last two elections, the Congress party has fielded Anita again. The reason for this is that the BJP is facing an anti-incumbency wave, and Anita Yadav can attract the votes of the Ahir community.

Meanwhile, the locals called Aarti Rao as an outsider. They alleged that Rao doesn't even know the village names of the

constituency. She is active here in Ateli just to woo voters.

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

Rajput voters are 8% in Ateli, but INLD's pre-poll alliance with BSP can give Atar Lal a

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ TIRUPATI/ NEW DELHI

Dubbing the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister as a "habitual liar," YSR Congress chief YS Jagan Mohan Reddy on Sunday sought Prime Minister Narendra Modi's intervention into the Tirupati laddu adulteration issue and that Chandrababu Naidu be reprimanded.

In a letter addressed to Modi, Jagan alleged that CM Naidu has stooped so low as to hurt the beliefs of crores of people purely for political objectives. Detailing the process undertaken at Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams



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

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu

Naidu's claim that animal fat was used in preparing Tirupati laddus during the previous YS Jagan Mohan Reddy-led government in the southern state has triggered a massive political row, with the YSR Congress Party accusing Naidu of indulging in "heinous allegations" for political gains and the ruling TDP in the state circulating a laboratory report to back its claim.

Amidst the furore over the adulterated Prasad, a public interest litigation (PIL) matter has been filed in the Supreme Court, seeking a probe by a Special Investigation Team (SIT) into the alleged use of animal fat in Tirupati laddus.

The petition filed by Surjit Singh Yadav, a farmer and the president of the Hindu Sena, has contended that Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD), by serving "laddu prasadam" prepared using animal fat instead of ghee to devotees at the Sri Venkateswara Swamy temple, has ridiculed the Hindu religion and outraged the sentiments of Hindus.

The controversy surrounding Tirupati laddus and the demand for "freeing" temples across the country from government control are among the key issues to be discussed at a meeting of the VHP's apex body in Andhra Pradesh on Monday.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Quad is here to stay

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

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



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

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PICTALK



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

Key reforms needed for unified electoral system

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



SUBHASH CHANDRA AGRAWAL

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



Another issue that remains unresolved by the Kovind Committee is the problem of mid-term elections, which arise when a State government or the Lok Sabha falls due to a hung house or the collapse of a coalition. This challenge can be addressed by electing Prime Ministers and Chief Ministers simultaneously with Speakers and Deputy Speakers through a secret ballot, utilising Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) equipped with Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trails (VVPATs).

Such elections should require nominations signed by at least 34 per cent of members. This system ensures stability, as a Prime Minister or Chief Minister could only be removed through a similar process, but with the mandatory nomination of an alternative leader in the same motion. Failure to vote in this process would result in the loss of voting rights in the House, though membership would remain intact. Implementing this system is crucial for the success of the "One Nation, One Election" initiative, as it would prevent the frequent dissolution of assemblies and the Lok Sabha. Current officeholders could also be re-elected using this method.

In terms of candidacy rules, a person should not be allowed to contest elections from more than one constituency or hold both Parliament and State Assembly memberships simultaneously.

Additionally, any sitting MP or MLA who seeks to contest for a different seat should first resign from their current position. This would prevent situations like the one that arose during Atal Bihari Vajpayee's government, which fell due to a single controversial vote cast by Odisha Chief Minister Giridhar Gomango, who remained an MP after assuming office as Chief Minister. Another important reform is the need to restore secret voting for Rajya Sabha elections, again using EVMs equipped with VVPATs. Additionally, the constitution should be amended to abolish legislative councils, which are often seen as redundant. Only those who have never contested any election should be nominated to the Rajya Sabha, ensuring that this house remains a body of experienced statespersons rather than active politicians. MPs and MLAs should also be barred from holding any party or social positions to avoid conflicts of interest.

Ministerial positions should be limited to 10 per cent of the strength of the lower house, and the post of Parliamentary Secretary should be abolished. Candidates who lose their security deposits in elections should be barred from contesting for the next six years. The "None of the Above" (NOTA) option, introduced to allow voters to reject all candidates, should be made more effective. Candidates who receive fewer



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

votes than NOTA should be barred from contesting future elections, even though the candidate with the next highest vote tally could be declared the winner for that particular term.

Furthermore, immunity for MPs and MLAs from legislative proceedings should be reconsidered. In the infamous JMM bribery case, the Supreme Court was unable to act against guilty individuals due to parliamentary immunity. Parliament's rules should be rewritten to introduce fixed penalties for members who violate norms, removing the discretionary powers of the Speaker. This would prevent lenient punishments like the one imposed on MP Rajesh Manjhi, who faced only a brief suspension for taking his lady friend, pretending she was his wife, on a foreign trip at government expense.

Abstending parliamentarians, if present in the House during sessions, should not be allowed to leave until legal authorities execute pending warrants against them. Additionally, MPs and MLAs with less than 75 per cent attendance should be barred from contesting elections for the next six years. Cases like that of George Fernandes, who was elected to the Rajya Sabha despite losing his memory, highlight the need for a minimum medical fitness certificate for candidates. Parliamentarians should also

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

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

RAHUL'S IRRESPONSIBLE REMARKS

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

Vinod Johri | Delhi

ADULTERATION IN LADDOOS

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

High voter turnout in J and K



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

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

Manoj Parashar | Ghaziabad

EXPLODING PAGERS

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

Anshu Bharti | Begusarai

standard ingredients animals fat oil were used in laddus based livestock laboratory. More than the laddus its the political wrangling between Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and his predecessor Jagan Mohan Reddy which has caused severe damage to the sanctity of prasadam and temple. Mr Reddy who is the member of TTD (Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam) cannot simply brush the issue under the carpet with an excuse of taking action against the supplier as it was going on since ages under the nose of the temple trust and management. Its good to know that Food Minister Prahlad Joshi has ordered for an investigation through FSSAI (Food Safety and Standing Authority of India) so that further action could be taken after the prasadam controversy came into surface. However, this entire controversy reflects that how devotees emotions are played with in the name of faith and religion.

Janga Bahadur Sunuwar | Jalpaiguri

Social media age limit: Will banning children be enough?

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



ASHA IYER KUMAR

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



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

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

On the one hand, it exposes children to unrealistic portrayals of life, leading to anxiety, depression, and a constant need to measure up to others. On the other hand, it provides a space for young people to connect, express themselves, and access educational resources. Banning it outright may remove the toxic aspects but also deny them these valuable opportunities. As parents and educators, our challenge is to strike a balance. Instead of rushing towards a ban, it might be more prudent to focus on equipping children with the skills they need to navigate the online world responsibly. Digital literacy, mental health education, and open conversations between parents and children can go a long way in protecting young minds from the pitfalls of social media. Rather than looking at social media as an enemy to be vanquished, we should view it as a tool that requires careful handling. Age restrictions, when implemented properly, can help shield younger users, but without holistic solutions—ranging from better parental support to more reliable age verification methods—their efficacy will be limited. (The author is a columnist and writing coach based in Dubai. Views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

HEALTHY SPINE AND WELLBEING

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



RAVI VALLURI

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

GST cess extension: Is it Justified Beyond 2026?



UTTAM GUPTA

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



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

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

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

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

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

crore; courtesy, of the devastating effect of Covid pandemic.

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

The necessary amendment was made to the GST Compensation Act (2018) to give effect to this decision. According to the Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, the entire loan of Rs 270,000 crore would be fully serviced by January 2026, two months ahead of the March 31, 2026 deadline.

As per estimates, the collections from GST compensation cess in February and March 2026 are expected to be about Rs 40,000 crore. How this surplus money would be apportioned between the Centre and States is a task the GoM will have to carry out. The States want the GST compensation cess to continue even beyond March 31, 2026.

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

In recent years, the rise of over-the-top (OTT) platforms has dramatically transformed the way we consume entertainment. These platforms have revived classic content and introduced regional gems into mainstream media, offering a broad spectrum of India's diverse cinematic landscape to a global audience. Moreover, OTT has changed the way we socialize, becoming a central part of conversations, from casual chats to virtual gatherings. Where once people exchanged pleasantries with questions like "Aur Batao" (What's up?), today, the perfect response is often about the latest series or film one is watching. Virtual watch parties have emerged as popular avenues for friends and families, separated by dis-



CHAITANYA K PRASAD

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Israel raids, shuts down Al Jazeera bureau in West Bank

AP ■ DUBAI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Al Jazeera's local bureau chief, Walid al-Omari, later told the AP that the Israeli military cited laws dating back to the British Mandate of Palestine to support its closure order.

The Palestinians secured limited self-rule in Gaza and parts of the occupied West Bank through the 1993 Oslo agreements. While Israel occupies and controls vast areas of the West Bank, Ramallah is under full Palestinian political and security control, making the Israeli raid on the Al Jazeera office that much more surprising. Journalists criticise raid and closure order.

The Palestinian Journalists Syndicate denounced the Israeli raid and closure order.

"This arbitrary military decision is a new aggression against journalistic work and media outlets," it said.

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

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

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

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

"Restricting foreign reporters and closing news channels, signals a shift away from demo-



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

cratic values," it said.

The Israel-Hamas war has been extensively covered by Al Jazeera

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

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

That has led to Israeli claims by officials, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, that the network has "harmed Israel's security and incited against soldiers".

Those claims have been vehemently denied by Al Jazeera, whose main funder, Qatar, has been key in negotiations between Israel and Hamas to

reach a cease-fire to end the war. An order closing Al Jazeera in Israel has been repeatedly renewed in the time since, but it hadn't as of yet ordered the Ramallah offices closed.

The Israeli government has taken action against individual reporters over the decades since its founding in 1948, but broadly allows for a media scene that includes foreign bureaus from around the world, even from Arab nations. It also blocked the foreign broadcasts of the Hezbollah-affiliated, Beirut-based Al Mayadeen news channel at the start of the war.

Criticism of Al Jazeera isn't new. Washington singled out the broadcaster during the US occupation of Iraq after its 2003 invasion toppled dictator Saddam Hussein and for airing videos of the late al-Qaida chief Osama bin Laden.

Al Jazeera has been closed or blocked by other governments in the Middle East.

Most notably in 2013, Egyptian authorities raided a luxury hotel used by Al Jazeera as an operating base after the mili-

tary takeover that followed mass protests against President Mohammed Morsi. Three Al Jazeera staff members received 10-year prison sentences, but were released in 2015 following widespread international criticism.

The Israel-Hamas war began when Hamas-led fighters killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, in an October 7 attack on southern Israel. They abducted another 250 people and are still holding around 100 hostages.

Israel's campaign in Gaza has killed at least 41,000 Palestinians, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, which doesn't differentiate between fighters and civilians.

The closure of Al Jazeera's Ramallah office also comes as tensions continue to rise over a possible expansion of the war to Lebanon, where electronic devices exploded last week in a likely sabotage campaign by Israel targeting the Shiite militia Hezbollah. The explosions Tuesday and Wednesday killed at least 37 people — including two children — and wounded around 3,000 others.

Hezbollah fires over 100 rockets across Israel

AP ■ NAHARIYA

Hezbollah launched more than 100 rockets early Sunday across a wider and deeper area of northern Israel, with some landing near the city of Haifa, as Israel launched hundreds of strikes on Lebanon. The sides appeared to be spiralling toward all-out war following months of escalating tensions.

The rocket barrage overnight set off air raid sirens across northern Israel, sending thousands of people scrambling into shelters. The Israeli military said that rockets had been fired "toward civilian areas," pointing to a possible escalation after previous barrages had mainly been aimed at military targets.

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

Hezbollah was already reeling from a sophisticated attack that caused thousands of personal devices to explode just days earlier.

The Israeli military said that it carried out a wave of strikes across southern Lebanon over the past 24 hours, hitting

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

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

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

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

Qatar have repeatedly bogged down.

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

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

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

Hezbollah said that it had launched dozens of Fadi 1 and Fadi 2 missiles - a new type of weapon the group hadn't used before - at the Ramat David airbase, southeast of Haifa, "in response to the repeated Israeli attacks that targeted various Lebanese regions and led to the fall of many civilian martyrs".

In July, the group released a video with what it said was footage it had filmed of the base with surveillance drones.

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

Britain's Labour Party gathers after rocky start in government

AP ■ LONDON

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

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

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

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

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

Starmer also had to deal with anti-immigrant unrest that

erupted after three children were stabbed to death in Southport, near Liverpool in July. Starmer responded firmly, pledging swift justice and tough sentences for rioters. But prison overcrowding, a legacy of the last government, meant hundreds of inmates had to be freed early to make way for the newly convicted rioters.

Then came the clothing scandal, dubbed "frockgate" after dresses gifted to the prime minister's wife, Victoria Starmer.

Keir Starmer is also facing grumbling among his own employees over the salary of his chief of staff, Sue Gray. The BBC disclosed that she is paid 170,000 pounds (\$225,000) a year — about 3,000 pounds more than the prime minister's salary. The government says it wasn't involved in setting the pay scale for political advisers.

Labour says that the criticism is being whipped up by the Conservatives and their media supporters. But polls suggest it has hurt. An Ipsos poll released Friday found 25% of respondents thought Starmer was doing a good job — down from 36% in July — while 42% thought he was doing a bad job, up from 14%. The firm interviewed 1,082 adults by telephone and the margin of error is plus or minus three percentage points. "He promised to be different, but he hasn't been," Conservative lawmaker Chris Philp told the BBC. "He is not running a government of service, he is running a government of self-service."

The diet of bad news has alarmed many Labour members, who worry worse is to come in the form of tax increases and spending cuts when the government announces its first budget on October 30.

Labour leaders will try to convey a more positive message when Treasury chief Rachel Reeves makes a televised conference speech on Monday, followed by Starmer on Tuesday. They're hoping to inject some cheer into the four-day conference, a blend of pep rally, policy forum and boozey bash that plays a key role in maintaining morale among party activists.

Dissanayake to become Sri Lanka President

PTI ■ COLOMBO

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

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

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

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

his promise of a change in political culture resonated strongly with young voters who have been demanding system change since the economic crisis.

The NPP's popularity has risen sharply since 2022 after securing only around three per cent of the vote in the last presidential election in 2019.

"In our country, only an uncorrupt force will take action against the corrupt. The slogan of punishing the corrupt has been echoed on stage since 1994 under Chandrika (Kumaratunga), Mahinda (Rajapaksa), Maithripala (Sirisena) and Gotabaya (Rajapaksa). The corrupt will never punish the corrupt. The corrupt always protect the corrupt. It is the NPP's priority to end corruption," he said in an interview with Daily Mail online in August.

Dissanayake, during another event in March, passionately asserted that the political struggle is not merely about a change of government but an endeavour to usher in political, economic, and social transfor-

mations of paramount importance in Sri Lanka's history. Dissanayake, who hails from rural Thambuttegama in the North Central province, is a science graduate from the Colombo suburban Kelaniya University.

He joined the JVP, the mother party of the NPP, in 1987 at the height of their anti-Indian rebellion. The JVP eliminated many activists of all democratic parties that supported the Indo-Lanka Accord of 1987.

The Rajiv Gandhi-J R Jayawardena pact was the direct Indian intervention to solve the Tamil demand for political autonomy in the country. The JVP dubbed the Indian intervention as a betrayal of Sri Lanka's sovereignty.

However, Dissanayake's visit to India in February this year is seen as a change in the NPP leadership's approach towards India, expressing alignment with foreign investment interests. With JVP's taking up democratic politics in the late 90s, Dissanayake got a place in the JVP central committee.

4 killed, many hurt in Birmingham late night shooting

AP ■ BIRMINGHAM

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

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

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

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

person was pronounced dead at University of Alabama at Birmingham Hospital, AL.COM reported.

Police said the victims found dead at the scene included two men and a woman, WBMA-TV reported.

Other victims were transported to hospitals in private vehicles, police told WBMA.

The Birmingham police did not immediately respond to an email from The Associated Press seeking additional information.

The Five Points South area of Birmingham has numerous entertainment venues, restaurants and bars and often is crowded on Saturday nights. Police said there were no immediate arrests.

"We will do everything we possibly can to make sure we uncover, identify and hunt down whoever is responsible for preying on our people this morning," Fitzgerald told WBMA.

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

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

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

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

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

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

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

The UN chief told reporters last week that the summit "was born out of a cold, hard fact: international challenges are moving faster than our ability to solve them." He pointed to "out-of-control geopolitical

divisions" and "runaway" conflicts, climate change, inequalities, debt and new technologies like artificial intelligence which have no guardrails.

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

Diplomats said Russia and a few others still had objections to the final text.

"Leaders must ask themselves whether this will be yet another meeting where they simply talk about greater cooperation and consensus, or whether they will show the imagination and conviction to actually forge it," said Agnès Callamard, the secretary-general of Amnesty International. "If they miss this opportunity, I shudder to think of the consequences. Our col-

lective future is at stake." This is the UN's biggest week of the year.

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

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

One notable moment at Tuesday's opening assembly meeting: U.S. President Joe Biden's likely final major

appearance on the world stage, a platform he has tread upon and reveled in for decades.

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

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

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

Iran supports both Hamas in Gaza and Lebanon's Hezbollah

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Donald Trump's goal of mass deportations falls short

AP ■ SAN DIEGO

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

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

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

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

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



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

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott has advanced a theory that illegal immigration amounts to an invasion to justify state enforcement measures, so far without success, but legal scholars say judges may be reluctant to second-guess what a president considers a foreign aggression. The sweeping Alien Enemies Act authority may sidestep a law that bans the military from civilian law enforcement.

Trump has said he would focus on deploying the National Guard, whose troops can be activated on orders of a governor. Miller says troops under sympathetic Republican governors would send troops to nearby states that refuse to participate. "The Alabama National Guard is going to arrest illegal aliens in Alabama and the Virginia National Guard in Virginia. And if you're going to go into an unfriendly state like Maryland, well, there would just be Virginia doing the arrest in Maryland, right, very close, very nearby," Miller said last year on "The Charlie Kirk Show."

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

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

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

Trump may also contend with rights afforded under immigration law and court rulings that took shape after 1798, including a right to seek asylum that became law in 1980. Under a 2001 Supreme Court ruling, people in the country illegally can't be detained indefinitely if there is no reasonable chance their countries will take them back. Cuba, Venezuela, Nicaragua and others are either slow to accept their citizens or refuse. US Immigration and Customs Enforcement is funded by Congress for 41,500 detention beds this year, raising questions about where Trump would house people before they board deportation flights and how long they could hold them if countries refuse to take them back. Miller floated the idea of "large-scale staging grounds near the border, most likely in Texas."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

US to return 297 Indian antiquities

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US President Joe Biden was testing them, thus reflecting upon the American seriousness of the emerging Chinese threat. Biden's remark came during the Quad Leaders' Summit on Saturday, which was attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida. "We believe Xi Jinping is looking to focus on domestic economic challenges and minimise the turbulence in China," Biden told the leaders at the Summit.

His opening remarks were caught on the hot mic as pool reporters were leaving the

Summit venue. Biden was heard saying that Chinese President Xi Jinping is "looking to buy himself some diplomatic space, in my view, to aggressively pursue China's interest."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US President Joe Biden was caught on a hot mic telling leaders of the Quad nations that China was testing them, thus reflecting upon the American seriousness of the emerging Chinese threat. Biden's remark came during the Quad Leaders' Summit on Saturday, which was attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida. "We believe Xi Jinping is looking to focus on domestic economic challenges and minimise the turbulence in China," Biden told the leaders at the Summit.

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Over 20 wounded after Russia strikes apartment blocks

AP ■ KYIV

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

one people were wounded, including an eight-year-old, two 17-year-olds and several older adults, according to Syniehubov and Kharkiv mayor Ihor Terekhov. The attack came after another late Friday that wounded 15 people, including a 10- and 12-year-old, as Russian airstrikes hit three Kharkiv neighbourhoods, Terekhov said.

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ WILMINGTON

US President Joe Biden welcomed the progress towards India concluding the procurement of 31 long-endurance MQ-9B armed drones from American defence major General Atomics as he and Prime Minister Narendra Modi vowed to boost two-way reciprocal supply of defence hardware amid common concerns over China's growing military might. The US President hosted Modi at his personal home in Wilmington, Delaware on Saturday afternoon and the two leaders held wide-ranging talks covering various key aspects of India-US ties including ways to further ramp up bilateral defence and military engagement.

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

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

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

India is procuring the 'hunter-killer' drones (16 Sky Guardian and 15 Sea Guardian) from US Defence major General Atomics at a

cost of over USD 3 billion primarily to crank up its surveillance apparatus along the frontier with China as well as in the Indian Ocean region. It is learnt that the price negotiations for the procurement have been sealed and both sides are likely to formally conclude the deal by next month.

The remotely piloted drones are capable of remaining airborne for around 35 hours and can be deployed on a range of missions. However, there was no specific mention of the ambitious plan to co-produce F-414 fighter jet engines in India.

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

AP ■ TEHRAN

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

"I spoke with the ministers of

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

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

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

Nepal to organise Yoga Retreat to enhance physical, spiritual health

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

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

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

NOTICE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Date: September 23, 2024
Place: Delhi and Gurgaon

Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

Number of rhinos is slightly up but poaching has increased too

AP ■ NAIROBI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Debt-ridden Vodafone Idea on Sunday said it has awarded contracts worth about Rs 30,000 crore to Nokia, Ericsson and Samsung for supply of 4G and 5G network equipment for three years.

It is the largest deal awarded by any Indian telecom operator during this year.

The deal also marks the first step towards the roll-out of the company's three-year capex (capital expenditure) plan of about USD 6.6 billion or Rs 55,000 crore announced earlier.

"Vodafone Idea (VIL) has concluded a mega, about USD 3.6 billion (around Rs 300 billion), deal with Nokia, Ericsson and Samsung for supply of network equipment over a period of three years. The capex programme is directed towards expanding the 4G population coverage from 1.03 billion to 1.2 billion, launching 5G in key markets and capacity expansion in line with data growth," the company said in a statement.



The supplies against these new long-term awards will start in the coming quarter. The top priority for the company is to expand the 4G coverage to 1.2 billion Indians, the statement said. VIL CEO Akshaya Moondra said that the company has started the investment cycle and it is on the journey of VIL 2.0. "From hereon, VIL will stage a smart turnaround to effectively participate in the industry growth opportunities. Nokia and Ericsson have been our partners since our inception and this marks another

milestone in that continuing partnership. We are pleased to start our new partnership with Samsung. We look forward to work closely with all our partners as we move into the 5G era," Moondra said. Vodafone Idea (VIL) was the biggest telecom operator formed with the merger of Vodafone India and Idea Cellular in August 2018 with a mobile subscriber base of 40.8 crore. With continuous decline in the subscriber, VIL is now left with 21.5 crore mobile services subscribers as per latest data released by telecom regulator Trai.

VIL had recently raised Rs 24,000 crore through sale of equity and will fund the capital expenditure from the latest capital.

The capex is currently being funded out of the equity raise. For the long-term capex, the company is in advanced stage of discussions with its existing and new lenders to tie up Rs 25,000 crore of funds and Rs 10,000 crore of non-funded facilities.

VIL said that it has completed techno economic evaluation of the company's long-term projections by an independent third party.

The report has been submitted to all the banks and financial institutions basis which the banks will now progress with their internal evaluation and approval processes. VIL in the last auction had acquired spectrum worth Rs 3,500 crore to increase its network capacity.

The company executed some quick-win capex for the deployment of more spectrum on existing sites and the roll-out of some new sites. VIL said that the small capex

roll-out boosted its network capacity by about 15 per cent and an increase in population coverage by 16 million by end September, 2024.

The company claimed that it has started witnessing an improvement in customer experience in select geographies where these roll-outs have been completed.

VIL holds a large spectrum portfolio including mid band 5G spectrum in 17 circles and millimetreWave 5G spectrum in 16 circles.

After the Rs 24,000 crore fundraise, including Rs 18,000 crore through a follow-on offer, the company was reeling under the debt of around Rs 2.14 lakh crore.

The company had payment obligations of Rs 2,09,520 crore towards the government as of June 30, 2024, which included the deferred spectrum payment obligations and adjusted gross revenue liability.

Post Rs 24,000 crore fundraise, VIL promoters Aditya Birla Group and Vodafone hold 37.3 per cent and the government 23.2 per cent stake in the company.

Luxury carmakers expect surge during festive season

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Luxury carmakers Mercedes-Benz, Audi and BMW are eyeing robust sales during the festive period this year with demand for high-end cars continuing to see an upward trend in India.

In an interaction with PTI, Mercedes-Benz India MD and CEO Santosh Iyer said the luxury car segment is set for its best-ever performance this year with festive season oftakes playing a major role in the overall performance.

He noted that the festive season generally gives high double-digit sales growth, helping the automaker to average out single-digit growth of the earlier quarter.

"So in that sense, on an average, then we are able to get a double-digit growth during the festive season," Iyer stated.

Elaborating on the overall industry, which still remains a very small part of the overall passenger vehicle market in the country, he said the segment is headed for record volumes this fiscal year but not all players are witnessing growth.

"Some (companies) are even degrowing, some are flat and they are facing headwinds, but because we are the primary player in the market, we still feel the luxury car market should cross 50,000-51,000 cars this year," Iyer said. The luxury car market in India currently remains very small accounting for less than 2 per cent of the overall passenger vehicle market in the country.

Audi India Head Balbir Singh Dhillon said the demand in the last few months has grown steadily and the company expects this to continue in the period ahead.



"We are working relentlessly with our HQ to get additional allocations for India, to fulfil this growing demand," he stated.

Having said that, one cannot disregard the fact that the waiting period for Audi cars has gone up owing to demand and supply mismatch, he added.

"It is also important to mention that the prevailing Global challenges are not only impacting the adequate supply of new cars, but also instilling pressure on the prices," Dhillon stated. With the upcoming festive season, Audi is expecting good growth on the back of sustained demand models like A4, A6, Q5, Q7 and Q8. BMW Group India President Vikram Pawah said the fundamentals of the Indian economy are sturdy and consumer confidence in the luxury segment is on the rise.

"For BMW Group India, the order book is solid and we are trying our best to speed up deliveries for our customers. Along with additional bookings around Diwali and Dussehra, we are confident of closing the year on a high note while clocking impressive growth," he stated.

India, EU to have new round of FTA talks

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Senior officials of India and the 27-nation European Union (EU) will commence the next round of talks for a proposed free trade agreement from Monday here, an official said.

The agreement is aimed at further boosting bilateral trade and investments between the two regions. The two sides are negotiating a free trade agreement, an investment protection agreement and an agreement on geographical indications (GIs).

"The five-day talks will start from September 23. It will be the ninth round of negotiations. Also, the concerns of Indian stakeholders regarding the EU's sustainability measures, such as CBAM, deforestation and others, will be discussed with the EU," the official said. During the ninth round, both sides will discuss core trade issues covering goods, services, investment and government procurement along with necessary rules such as rules of origin, SPS (sanitary and phytosanitary), and technical barriers to trade. The Carbon Border



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

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

wine, spirits, data security for Indian IT firms, and public procurement," it said.

It added that one of the major reasons for the delay is the differing aspirations between the two parties.

The EU seeks tariff elimination on over 95 per cent of its exports, including sensitive agricultural products and automobiles, while India is comfortable opening up only around 90 per cent of its market and is hesitant to lower tariffs on bulk agricultural products, the GTRI said.

GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said that major Indian goods exports to the EU, such as ready-made garments, pharmaceuticals, steel, petroleum products, and electrical machinery, will become more competitive, if the pact gets concluded successfully. Additionally, key services exports like telecommunications, other business services, and transportation services will also see substantial growth. On the other hand, the EU will benefit from increased exports of essential goods from India, including aircraft and parts, electrical machinery, diamonds, and chemicals.

President to inaugurate 16th ASOSAI

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

President of India Droupadi Murmu will inaugurate the Assembly of the Asian Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (ASOSAI) here on Tuesday.

The four-day conference will be followed by a series of discussions on the evolving role of Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) in fostering transparency and accountability.

"The President of India, Droupadi Murmu will inaugurate the prestigious 16th Assembly of the Asian Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions (ASOSAI) here on September 24th, 2024," Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) said in a release.

A key highlight of this year's assembly is the assumption of the chair of ASOSAI by the CAG of India Girish Chandra Murmu for the term 2024-2027.

"His leadership is expected to drive the association towards new frontiers in public audit, particularly in strengthening governance frameworks across Asia," CAG said.

As part of the programme, the delegates will also participate in a one-day symposium on Digital Public Infrastructure and Gender Divide Issues of Inclusion and Accessibility. The symposium aims to explore critical issues at the intersection of technology, governance, and social inclusion, addressing how digital advancements can bridge the gap between genders in accessing public services.

The assembly will witness participation from more than 200 delegates representing 42 countries and international organisations, underscoring the diverse and collaborative nature of ASOSAI. Delegates will engage in high-level discussions



to enhance the effectiveness of public audit, with a focus on improving accountability and promoting best practices in government operations.

CAG said the conference promises to be more than just a formal gathering -- it will serve as a platform for exchanging innovative ideas and forging stronger regional and global partnerships to fortify the pillars of good governance.

Founded in 1979 with 11 members, ASOSAI has grown to 48 Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs), an important regional group under the umbrella of the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI). ASOSAI plays a central role in promoting collaboration, sharing experiences, knowledge exchange, and capacity building in the field of public audit amongst its members, as per a statement.

The first ASOSAI Assembly and Governing Board meeting was held in New Delhi in May 1979.

Users threaten to quit UPI over fees: Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Around 75 per cent UPI users will stop using it if any transaction charge is levied on the service, a survey by LocalCircles said on Sunday.

The survey found that 38 per cent of users make over 50 per cent of their payment transactions via UPI instead of debit, credit or any other form of digital transaction.

"Only 22 per cent UPI users surveyed are willing to bear a transaction fee on payments, 75 per cent of respondents stated that they will stop using UPI if a transaction fee is introduced," the survey said. The survey comprising three broad areas claims to have received 42,000 responses from 308 districts but the number of replies on each question varied.

The questions regarding transaction fee on UPI received 15,598 responses.

The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) posted a record 57 per cent rise in the volume of transactions and 44 per cent rise in value in the 2023-24 fiscal year, compared to the previous fiscal year.

For the first time UPI transactions crossed 100 billion and closed at 131 billion in a financial year, compared to 84 billion in 2022-23.

In value terms, it touched Rs 199.89 trillion, compared to Rs 139.1 trillion, the report said.

The survey found 37 per cent of respondents shared UPI transaction accounts for more than 50 per cent of their total payment in value terms.

GST rate review meeting scheduled on September 25

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The ministerial panel on GST rate rationalisation will meet on September 25 and is expected to discuss tweaking of tax slabs and rates.

"The meeting of the GoM on rate rationalisation is scheduled for September 25 in Goa," an official told PTI. The six-member Group of Minister (GoM) under Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Chaudhary, last met on August 22 and had submitted a status report to the GST Council on September 9.

During the August meeting, the panel had tasked the fitment committee comprising tax officers from the Centre and states to analyse the implication of tax rate change on some items and gather more data.

Currently, goods and services tax (GST) is a four-tier tax structure with slabs at 5, 12, 18, and 28 per cent.

Under GST, essential items are either exempted or taxed at the lowest slab, while luxury and demerit items attract the highest slab. Luxury and sin goods attract 28 per cent of the highest 28 per cent slab.

There have been talks of merging the 12 and 18 per cent tax slabs, but nothing has been proposed so far.

Around 12 per cent, the average GST rate has fallen below the revenue neutral rate



of 15.3 per cent. This has prompted the need to start discussions on GST rate rationalisation.

States such as West Bengal and Karnataka were not in favour of tinkering with GST slabs for now.

West Bengal Finance Minister Chandrima Bhattacharya had said after the GoM meet in August, "I have said there should be no changes in the GST slab".

Karnataka Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda had said the GoM has to analyse whether there is need to "disturb" the GST system, which has now broadly stabilised.

"What do you achieve by disturbing it. We said in next meeting we will discuss it (reducing slabs)," Byre Gowda had said.

The six-member GoM also includes Uttar Pradesh Finance Minister Suresh Kumar Khanna, Rajasthan Health Services Minister Gajendra Singh, and Kerala Finance Minister K N Balagopal.

Government to start FY26 budget making exercise from next month

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The finance ministry will commence the exercise to prepare the annual budget for 2025-26 from the second week of next month in the backdrop of the Indian economy recording 7 per cent growth rate for the fourth consecutive year.

The budget for the next financial year would focus on reforms to be pushed to further accelerate growth momentum and measures to generate jobs and boost

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

Hard copies of the data in the specified formats should be submitted for cross-

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

wound up, should be explained," it said. The Budget Estimates for 2025-26 will be provisionally finalised after completion of pre-budget meetings, it said.

Pre-budget meeting shall commence from second week of October, 2024 and shall continue till around mid-November, 2024, it said. During the pre-Budget meetings requirement of funds for all categories of expenditures along with receipts of ministries/departments and

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

GCCI seeks review of SC's mineral taxation ruling

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Goa Chamber of Commerce and Industries (GCCI) has demanded an urgent review of the mineral taxation ruling by the Supreme Court, stating that the increased cost of mining will inevitably lead to higher prices for essential commodities, including steel, power, cement, etc. The Supreme Court last month allowed states to collect past dues on royalty on minerals bearing land from the Centre and mining companies from April 1, 2005 onwards.

"The imposition of further taxes/ cess/ levies, if any, as permitted by the ruling, will further impact the economics of mining operations possibly making it unviable with its natural consequences. It may adversely impact the



"Additionally, the increased cost of mining will inevitably lead to higher prices for essential commodities e.g., steel, power, cement, etc. Further fuelling inflation and consequential impact on the nation's economy," GCCCI said in a statement.

The possible impact would be a change of goalpost particularly when the auction regime is in vogue post enactment of MMDR (Amendment) Act in 2015, while creating an uncertainty in the mineral taxation regime of the country, it said.

downstream industries and lead to mining cost push inflation affecting the entire economy.

While GCCCI respects the apex court's decision, it believes that the decision could have devastating consequences in future, for the mining industry in the country as a whole including Goa which is yet to recover from the aftereffects of mining ban in 2018.

"The iron ore mining in Goa has just begun and/or looking forward to resume its operations after a long gap of 6 years - it is in everybody's

knowledge that after the change of mining regulations in 2015, the mining companies are required to pay a substantial amount in the form of auction premium for winning the bid, besides other statutory dues like Royalty, DMF/NMET contributions, etc," it said.

The imposition of further taxes/ cess/ levies, if any, as permitted by the ruling, will further impact the economics of mining operations possibly making it unviable with its natural consequences.

"We are compelled to request the authorities to review the verdict in light of the submissions from the industry to find a balanced solution that ensures revenue generation while ensuring the survival of the mining sector," GCCCI President Shrinivas Dempo said.

IN BRIEF

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

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

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

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

THE MAGIC OF MILLETS

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

BY DR AVULA LAXMAIAH

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

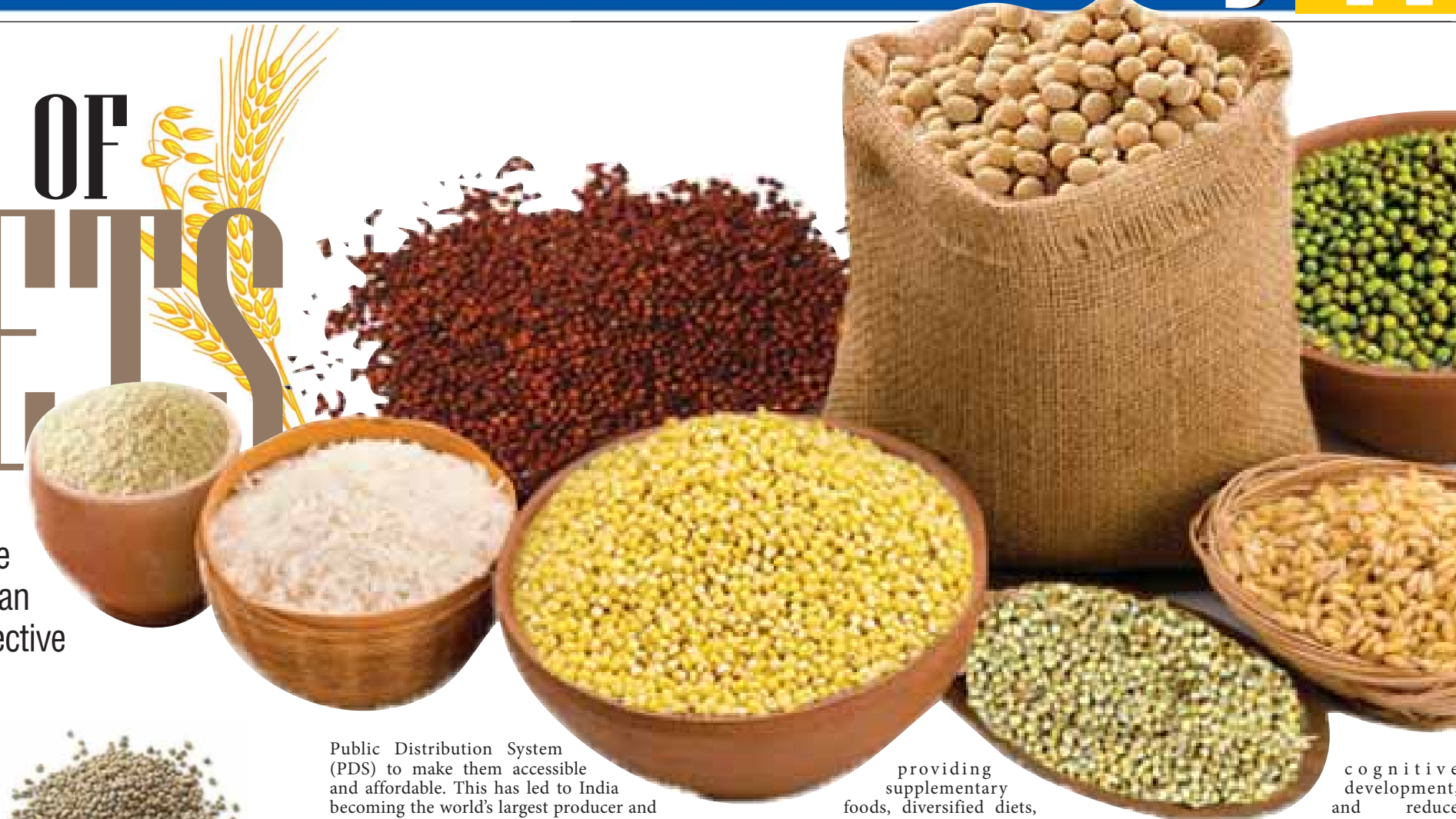
cognitive development, and reduce absenteeism while increasing enrolment in pre-schools.

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

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

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

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



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

TEAM VIVA

The Manbhavan Mitra Mandali, a Self-Advocacy Group of Manovikas Charitable Society on Saturday organised a training program to augment the well-being of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

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



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

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

STUDY REVEALS WHY AGING IMPAIRS IMMUNE RESPONSE

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

There is hope for old-age people suffering from certain ailments from which they had no route to escape hitherto. All treatments had failed to resuscitate them from the octopus-like shackles of the disease. A team of medical and bio-engineering researchers in the University Of Miami Miller School Of Medicine Immunology in the US have found out the reasons behind old men failing to respond to any treatments for a series of diseases. Nay, they have not invented any medicine for such diseases but have made a landmark invention about the reason behind the failure of drugs to cure the medical problems faced by the veterans. A research paper published in Nature Communications, a widely followed scientific publication after peer review lists the reasons for the failure of medicines among old people. What makes the findings distinct is the part played by Dhananjay Suresh, a 20-year-old bio-medical engineer, and a key team member.

Dhananjay is waiting for admission to a leading medical school in the US for his MBBS course after the four-and-a-half-year-long B Tech course when he joined the team. Suresh is the son of India-born medical microbiologist couple Dr. Suresh Pallikuthu and Dr Ranjini Valiathan. The researchers led by Dr. Daniela Frasca, principal investigator and associate professor of microbiology and immunology, have successfully proved for the first time in medical history that the aged fails to respond to medicines because of the "inability of immune cells to generate protective immunity". The metabolic abnormalities in immune cells lead to a reduced ability to generate protective immunity, according to Dr Frasca. Her team identified metabolic changes that decrease the body's



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



DHANANJAY SURESH

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

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

INDIA TRUMPS BANGLADESH WITH ASHWIN'S SIX WICKETS

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

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



boundary, also received a reprieve as Rishabh Pant missed a stumping chance off Jadeja when the batter was on 17. At the first drinks break of the day, Bangladesh were 194 for four and they might have hoped to further stretch the

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

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

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

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

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



in a match-saving effort, while his 89 not out at the Gabba in the decider is now part of Indian cricketing folklore. One of the most astute readers of the game, Chappell explained why Pant's keeping will also be key to India's fortunes on bouncy tracks. "If Pant can perform at his best, he's the ideal keeper for Australian conditions. If he's able to continue with his agile performance standing back, that is what is required in Australia. You need a keeper who capably covers a lot of territory to both sides of the wicket. Any keeper who fulfils those requirements not only

improves the team's fielding but also allows the slip fielders to spread wider to cover extra territory," he elaborated. Chappell believes that a stern warning from erstwhile head coach Ravi Shastri during his time at the helm might have helped Pant in raising the level of his glove work. "Pant's keeping standing up to the stumps drastically improved before his serious injury, following an ultimatum from coach Ravi Shastri. The fact that Pant progressed from being a dubious keeper against spinners to a very good gloveman standing up to the stumps, admirably displayed

his willingness to work hard." The other crucial aspect in Australia will be Bumrah's fitness and form. Since his comeback post lower back stress fracture surgery in August 2023, the star pacer has managed his workload beautifully across formats focussing on priority format at any given point in time. However, he has also been pretty regular in Test matches playing bulk of the red-ball games against South Africa away and England at home. "The good form and fitness of both Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj - the two most successful pace bowlers on the last Australian tour - is essential. Of those two,

Bumrah is the attack leader. "A critical part of India's build-up to the Australian tour will be ensuring Bumrah is in form but remains fit to play the bulk of the five Tests." He also cited how during his captaincy years, his lethal weapon Dennis Lillee would always want to play as many games when he was in form rather than being wrapped in "cotton wool". Chappell also hoped that Mohammed Shami can get fit by the time series starts. "It would be ideal if the mercurial Mohammed Shami is fit for Australia but the presence of a good left-arm paceman would also improve India's variety in attack. "The spin bowling is in good hands with Jadeja and Ashwin. Nevertheless I wouldn't discount the importance of Kuldeep Yadav on some Australian surfaces." For Chappell, Yashasvi Jaiswal has had a good start to his Test career but Australian tracks will demand different temperament from the Mumbai left-hander. "Of the young batters Yashasvi Jaiswal looks very talented but he needs to show good form in Australia. Both Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli should act as guiding lights for the younger batters on tour," Chappell wrote.



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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Umesh Vikram secured gold in the SL3 event, while the trio of Sukant Kadam, Sivarajan Solaimalai, and Mandeep Kaur claimed silver medals in their respective categories at the Indonesia Para-Badminton International on Sunday. Sukant bagged the silver in the men's singles SL4 event, while Sivarajan won the silver in men's singles SH6 category. Mandeep clinched the silver in women's singles SL3 category. India delivered a stellar performance in Sarakarta, Indonesia, winning as many as 34 medals in the International Level 2 tournament. In men's singles SL3, Umesh triumphed over compatriot and top seed Nehal Gupta, winning 12-21 21-8 21-19 in the final. Sukant, who had missed out on a bronze medal in Paris after losing to Indonesia's Fredy Setiawan in the play-off, fell short again in the SL4 final, losing 14-21 14-21 to the Indonesian. "I gave my best in the final, but Fredy played an exceptional game," Sukant said. "It was a great learning experience, and I'll keep pushing to aim for gold in future competitions." Sivarajan, who had lost to Great Britain's Krysten Coombs in Paris, faced a tough challenge from top-seeded Indonesian Subhan in the SH6 final, ultimately losing 19-21 15-21.

Mandeep, who had suffered a defeat to Nigeria's Mariam Eniola Bolaji in Paris, also finished with silver after losing 10-21 5-21 to Indonesia's top seed Qonitah Ikhtiar Syakuroh in the SL3 final. Despite the silver medal finishes, the Indian contingent's overall performance was strong, with Umesh claiming the lone gold in singles. Jagadeesh Dilli added to India's success by securing bronze in the same category, making it a sweep for India with seven players reaching the quarterfinals. In women's singles SL3, Mandeep's silver was complemented by Neeraj's bronze. In the men's singles SH6 category, Sudarsan Saravanakumar Muthusamy also earned bronze, while Sivarajan secured silver. Naveen Sivakumar won bronze in men's singles SL4 category, while Ruthick Ragupathi claimed silver in the men's singles SU5. Koshika Devda secured bronze in the women's singles SU5. In the mixed doubles SL3-SL4 category, Nehal and Naveen Sivakumar earned silver, while Umesh and Surya, along with Harshit and Kartik, claimed bronze. The men's doubles SU5 saw Hardik Makkar and Ruthick Ragupathi claim gold. In the women's wheelchair WH1 category, Pallavi Kuluvehalli secured gold, with Prema Vishwas and Anusha Chidananda taking bronze. Alpha James

clinched gold in the women's singles WH2 category, and Shabana took home bronze. The mixed doubles WH1-WH2 category saw Poorna Rao and Munna Khalid win bronze. In the men's WH1 category, Prem Kumar Ale secured bronze, while Neeraj and Arati Patil, along with Vaishali Nilesh and Germany's Irina Whalers, claimed bronze in the women's doubles SL3-SU5 category. Additionally, Alpha James and Pallavi Kuluvehalli, along with Anusha Chidananda and Shabana won bronze in the women's doubles WH1-WH2 category. Mohun Bagan Super Giant seeks first win of season in match against NorthEast United Kolkata, Sep 22 (PTI) Mohun Bagan Super Giant will aim to grab their first win of the season when they clash against NorthEast United in their second home game of the Indian Super League 2024-25 season here on Monday. The Mariners had shared the spoils with Mumbai City FC in their opening match. NorthEast United, meanwhile, earned a win in their first game, courtesy a late goal by Alaeddine Ajarai against debutants Mohammedan Sporting. They will now take on the Mariners whom they defeated a few weeks back in the Durand Cup 2024 final and will be upbeat to land their third successive win in Kolkata.

Super sub Vinicius leads to Real Madrid comeback win over Espanyol

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



Romero. "We made mistakes that maybe you can get away with in other games, but not here," Espanyol coach Manolo González said. Madrid pulled to one point behind leader Barcelona before it plays at Villarreal on Sunday. Bellingham had a scare when he fell awkwardly on his

right shoulder in the first half, but after briefly being seen by a doctor on the sideline he went back on. Ancelotti said it did not look like the England midfielder was fine. Unsurprisingly, Ancelotti said he was satisfied with the "well-rounded" performance. Garcia in goalAfter helping Spain win Olympic gold this

summer, Garcia was rumored to have been close to a move to Arsenal before finally staying put at the club he helped return to Spain's top flight last season. And he showed his quality at the Santiago Bernabeu. Garcia made at least eight saves before he turned playmaker with a booming kick from his box that

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

Arshdeep takes six in India D's consolation win

PTI ■ ANANTAPUR
Arshdeep Singh saved his best for the last game and returned career-best figures of 6 for 40 as India D thrashed India B by 257 runs to end their Duleep Trophy campaign with a consolation victory here on Sunday. Earlier, India D, who started the final day's play at 244 for 5, ended their second innings at 305, leaving India B with a target of 373 in little over 70 overs. Arshdeep and Aditya Thakare (4/59) then bowled unchanged for 22.2 overs to bundle out Abhimanyu Easwaran's team for a lowly 115. Arshdeep also recorded his best match figures of 9 for 90, with the distinction of getting out India's T20 skipper Suryakumar Yadav (16) twice in the same game. India B skipper Easwaran once again failed to deliver when it mattered in the larger context as Arshdeep had him caught by Akash Sengupta for 19. Thanks to Nitish Reddy, who swung his bat around for a quickfire 40 off 43 balls, India B managed to cross 100. Eight India B batters failed to log double digit score. India B thus ended the campaign with seven points from three

games, having won their opening match and then getting a point after conceding the first-innings lead. India D, who had lost the first two games outright, will finish last despite logging full six points. Arshdeep, who got pipped by Yash Dayal into the Test squad as the first-choice left-arm pacer, certainly made an impression as he got to move the ball away from the right-handers and bowled the ideal length to trouble the top-order. At the start of the day, Ricky Bhui (119) duly completed his second ton of the tournament and remained not out, having faced only 125 balls. He hit 15 fours and three maximums in the process. In the morning, India D batted for 14.3 overs to add another 61 runs to their total as Bhui scored his second successive hundred. With scores of 56 and 119, the former India U-19 skipper was named Player of the Match. Brief Scores: India D 349 and 305 in 58.3 overs (Ricky Bhui 119, Shreyas Iyer 50, Mukesh Kumar 4/98, Navdeep Saini 3/58). India B 282 and (target 373) 115 in 22.2 overs (Arshdeep Singh 6/40). India D won by 257 runs. Points: India D 6 India B.

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