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Paralympics: Warriors of India write history and victory

RISHABH MALIK ■ NEW DELHI

India has scripted history with its remarkable performance and determination to achieve glory at the 2024 Paris Paralympic Games, bringing home a record-breaking tally of medals and elevating the nation's stature on the global stage of para-sports. With a mix of grit, determination, and incredible athleticism, Indian Para-Athletes shattered personal and national records, creating an inspiring narrative for the country's sporting future and inspiring millions like them. India, this year secured an unprecedented total number of 29 medals on the board just one short of the 30 mark after Pooja Ojha fell short in the final at Women's Kayak Single

200m on Sunday after the heroics of Navdeep Singh in javelin where he achieved gold medal upgraded from silver followed by the disqualification of his opponent and Simran's bronze in the Women's 200 m T12 final on Saturday. The final tally includes 7 gold, 9 silver, and 13 bronze. India ranked 18th on the team's tally this was the country's best performance at the Paralympics event. This achievement showed a significant leap from the previous Paralympic event in Tokyo (2021), where India ranked 24th in the medal tally with 19 total medals in the bank. Paralympics is always known for its success stories behind every medal. It all started with India's first Para-Athlete



winner Muralikant Petkar bringing India's first gold medal in the Paralympics. This year's Paralympic event, starting from shooting saw many stellar performances by

Indian athletes. Avani Lekhara became the first Indian woman athlete to win two gold medals at the Paralympic Games. **Historic Wins:** Archer

Sheetal Devi despite not having arms targeted to get the medal with partner Rakesh in mixed team event. IAS officer Suhas Yathiraj got back to back silver medals in

Paralympics in Men's single SL4 (badminton), Sumit Antil became the first Indian athlete to defend his title of winning gold in this Paralympic by beating his previous record by clinching 70.59 meters, creating a new Paralympic record in javelin, in F-64, Harvinder Singh became the first athlete from India to win gold in archery (Men's individual recurve open). India, this year had medal winners in across many sports (Men's club throw51), where athlete Dharambir bagged gold and Parnav earned silver while Kapil achieved bronze, country's first in judo (Men's 60kg J1). In shotput, Hokato Sema, former army man from Nagaland set an example of courage and conviction and got bronze in Men's shot F57). India's success at the 2024

Paralympic event uplifts its global presence in the sports. The performance helped to motivate and inspire people with disabilities to come forward and participate in sports and accomplish their dreams. Indian athletes' historic performance received widespread support from the mainstream media, along with social media, creating a buzz among the youth during the Paris Paralympic 2024. Regular reporting and time to time to update have been the reason for the continued engagement of public towards the Paralympic event. All 84 Indian athletes representing India were supported by Government Schemes, received international exposure for

international competitions, and were guided by international officials. **Rehabilitation centre:** For the first time, a recovery centre was established in the Games Village specifically for Indian athletes to provide full support for injury rehabilitation during the competition. **Coaches and support staff:** India had a total of 77 coaches and support personnel in Paris, up from 45 at the Tokyo Paralympics in 2021 which created a huge difference in recovery and preparations. **Increased finances:** The Indian Government allocated Rs 74 crore for the Paris Paralympics (2021-2024), a significant increase from the Rs 26 crore spent during the Tokyo Paralympics.

India steps into the Theatre of War

NSA Ajit Doval lands in Moscow

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval will visit Moscow for two days starting September 10 to hold discussions focused on resolving the Russia-Ukraine conflict. This comes after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visits to Ukraine and Russia in the past few weeks. Favouring dialogue to end the conflict, the Prime Minister during his talks with Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on August 23 said both Ukraine and Russia should sit together without wasting time to end the ongoing war and that India was ready to play an "active role" to restore peace in the region. Prime Minister Modi also said he would even like to contribute personally for a peaceful resolution of the crisis. Moreover, Russian President Vladimir Putin on September 5 named India among the three countries he is constantly in touch over the conflict. He also said these countries are sincerely making efforts to resolve it. Other world leaders, too, are of the view that India can play a key role in finding a resolution to the Ukraine conflict. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni on Saturday held talks with Zelenskyy. "China and India have a role



to play in resolving the conflict. What must not happen is to think that the conflict can be resolved by abandoning Ukraine to its fate," she said, according to reports in Italian media. As regards Doval's upcoming visit, shortly after his trip to Ukraine, Prime Minister Modi spoke to President Putin over the phone on August 27. A Russian Embassy statement said during the phone call, Prime Minister Modi informed President Putin about his recent visit to Kiev and stressed India's commitment to bring about a settlement for Ukraine by political and diplomatic means.

According to sources, it was during this phone call that the leaders decided that NSA Doval would travel to Moscow for peace talks. During his visit, Doval will also take part in the Brazil, India, Russia, China and South Africa (BRICS)-NSA meeting, sources said. On the sidelines of the BRICS-NSA meeting, Doval will also hold bilateral meetings with the Russian and Chinese counterparts with the possibility of following up on the discussions from the July summit in Moscow. The last BRICS-NSA meeting was held in South Africa's Johannesburg in 2023, where Doval also represented India.

"Vladimir Putin shared his principled assessment of the destructive policies of the Kiev authorities and their Western patrons, and went on to highlight Russia's approaches to resolving this conflict," the Russian Embassy said about the phone call. The Prime Minister's Office said the two leaders exchanged views on the Russia-Ukraine conflict. "The PM shared insights from his recent visit to Ukraine. He underlined the importance of dialogue and diplomacy as well as sincere and practical engagement between all stakeholders to achieve an abiding and peaceful resolution of the conflict," a

PMO release said. The Prime Minister reiterated India's firm commitment to support an "early, abiding and peaceful resolution of the conflict" on his official social media handle. During parleys with Zelenskyy, Prime Minister Modi said, "India was never neutral, we have always been on the side of peace." President Putin has named India among the three countries Russia is in touch with over the Ukraine conflict. "We respect our friends and partners, who, I believe, sincerely seek to resolve all issues surrounding this conflict, primarily China, Brazil and India. I constantly keep in touch with our colleagues on this issue," Putin said. The Russia-Ukraine conflict has sharply divided the world and most global powers have taken sides. New Delhi, however, has constantly called for peace, with Prime Minister Modi stressing that "this is not an era of war". When Prime Minister Modi travelled to Russia in July and hugged President Putin, President Zelenskyy had referred to a Russian missile strike that killed 37 people, three of them children. He had said it is "a devastating blow to peace efforts to see the leader of the world's largest democracy hug the world's most bloody criminal in Moscow on such a day".

Resignation over Rape, West Bengal on the burn

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress on Sunday got its first major political shock amid the ongoing statewide movement post rape and murder of a lady doctor in Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College Hospital, with party Rajya Sabha Member Jawahar Sircar sending his resignation to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee with a request to take a "viable administrative step before it is too late." The former Indian Administrative Services officer who had raised his voice during the teachers' recruitment scam too on Sunday said that, it was too much for him not to speak up. "It is too much for me... I am increasingly disillusioned by the State Government's reaction to the incident... It looked quite unconcerned about corruption and the increasing strong arm tactics of a section of leaders," he said adding he was against some corrupt officers and doctors getting good postings. "The other day I had gone out (in a citizens' rally) not only to register my protest but also to gauge the mood of the public... The spontaneity of the participation showed that people are so angry that they will not stop without a proper administrative decision being taken by the Government... I will request the Chief Minister to take action before it is too late... I will request her not take it politically," Sircar said asking politicians



to stay away from the people's protest rallies on the RG Kar issue. Lakhs of people thorough out the State have been descending on street in demand of justice for the victim doctor and steps from the administration to stop repetition of similar incidents. "The public mood is belligerent... The political leaders should not venture near these rallies lest they get assaulted... The rulers must understand this and take visible step or else the communal forces will enter the scene and exploit the situation to suit their purpose," he said.

On whether he had received any communication from the Chief Minister he said he would not comment as "that is an inside issue." While Sircar received prompt support from the protesters, his own party leaders like Kunal Ghosh attacked him for taking a different stand. Another TMC spokesperson Debangshu Bhattacharjee said, "instead of standing by the party in time of problems there are some weather birds who are showing their true colours." Congress leader Adhir Chowdhury welcomed his decision saying all right thinking politicians should take similar decisions.

Traffic woes to end soon

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

In a move to decongest, and ensure maximum utilisation of its capacity, private as well as Government interstate buses will have to pay the same amount of parking fee for using the bus bays at inter-state bus terminals in the national capital. Buses will be provided with a parking time slot of 25 minutes at a fixed rate of Rs 500 (excluding Good and Services tax). After that, charges will be applied for every five-minute extra. It was also decided that only buses with Fastag be allowed to enter the terminals to ensure tracking. The new norms and rates will be soon notified and official, lower turnaround times will not only reduce the waiting period for passengers but also ensure that buses circulate at a faster pace,

Fee for total stay upto 25 minutes (entry to exit)			
Buses	Rate		
State Government buses	₹500+GST per single trip		
AITP Buses and other private buses (with valid permit)	₹500+GST per single trip		
Penalty for total stay exceeding 25 minutes (entry to exit)			
#	Timing	Stands Fee	Penalties Total
1.	0-25 minutes	₹500+GST	0 ₹500+GST
2.	Above 25 minutes upto 30 minutes	₹500+GST	₹ 50+GST ₹550+GST
3.	Above 30 minutes upto 35 minutes	₹500+GST	₹200+GST ₹700+GST
4.	Above 35 minutes upto 40 minutes	₹500+GST	₹250+GST ₹1000+GST
5.	Above 40 minutes upto 45 minutes	₹500+GST	₹300+GST ₹1300+GST
6.	Beyond 45 minutes for every 5 minutes	₹500+GST	₹350+GST per 5 minutes on incremental basis

speed up traffic-pedestrian and vehicle movement outside ISBTs, and generate more revenue for the transport department. "As of now private buses are charged more, which leads to a situation where they unauthorisedly park and pick passengers on roads outside the ISBT complex, resulting in huge traffic snarls apart from causing passenger/revenue loss to State run buses.

Lt Governor Vinai KumarSaxena inspected the Maharana Pratap ISBT at Kashmere Gate on August 31 and subsequently held a high-level meeting that was attended by Delhi Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot," a Raj Niwas official said. The transport department is set to notify the new rates and norms for to-and-fro interstate buses utilising the iconic terminals.

Bar brawl shocks Delhi

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

The national capital was left in shock after four men allegedly opened indiscriminate fire outside a nightclub in Delhi's Shahdara in the early hours of Saturday. According to the police on Sunday, the accused men know the owners of the club and had demanded a permanent seating there free of cost. On the night of the incident, they opened fire in a bid to exert their power. The Delhi Police said that they have arrested a 30-year-old man who was among the four men who pointed guns at about three to four bouncers, including a female one, standing outside the night club while hurling abuses at them and asking them to get on their knees. DCP Shahdara, Surendra Choudhary said, "On Saturday, at 12.59 am a telephonic call from Umar regarding firing at Kanch Club in Jhilmil Industrial area, Delhi was received at Seemapuri police station." A team from Seemapuri police station reached the spot and found two live



A 30-year-old man was arrested after four men allegedly opened fire outside a night club in Delhi's Shahdara Pioneer Photo

cartridges and eight empty shells on the road in front of the Kanch club. "There were two bullet marks at the door of Kanch club. The scene of crime has been inspected by the District Mobile crime team and cartridges seized," Choudhary added. Statement of complainant 25 year old Umar, who is a resident of Maujpur, was recorded. According to the complaint lodged by the club's bouncer, four men

arrived at the club around 11.45 am on Friday. Two of them aimed their guns and pointed towards him. In a viral video of the incident, a man comes and points his gun towards the bouncer while two of his friends join him later. Among the accused, one also enters the club and then comes out of it shortly after. "Thereafter they fired their pistols towards them with intention to kill him.

Thereafter all four accused persons have fled away from the spot towards Vivek Vihar," the DCP said. Based on the complaint, an FIR under section 109 and 3 (5) of BNS and 25 and 27 of the Arms Act was registered and one 30 years old Shahrukh, resident of Ghaziabad, was arrested. Two more accused have been identified and efforts are underway to nab them, the officer added.



Monkey Pox arrives in India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Amid rising Mpox (Monkeypox) cases globally, including in neighbouring Pakistan, India on Sunday reported its suspected first case at a designated hospital here. The Union Health Ministry said that there is no cause for any undue concern. The patient, a young male with recent travel history to an affected African nation, is stable and in isolation, said the Ministry in a statement here. Testing is underway to confirm the diagnosis, and contact tracing is being conducted to identify potential sources and assess the situation. "The patient has been isolated in a designated hospital and is currently stable," said the Ministry.



Recruitment to 4,405 posts in 11 departments to start this month

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

In a major boost to facilitating government jobs, the State government is going to undertake recruitments to 4,405 Group C posts in 11 departments. The Uttarakhand Subordinate Service Selection Commission (UKSSSC) has decided to release the schedule for the process starting with applications from September 15. The State government under chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhama has so far recruited successful candidates to more than 16,000 government jobs, officials said.



Along with other aspects, the Dhama government has been focusing on providing government jobs especially to the youth of the State. It has appointed more than 16,000 youth to government jobs in various departments in a period of three years. Officials state that this is the highest figure of youth securing government jobs during the tenure of any government in the State in the 23 years since creation of Uttarakhand. The CM himself has presided over functions for handing over appointment letters to the successful candidates in order to ensure transparency in service. At the same time, the government is involved in the process of facilitating further appointments through UKSSSC, Uttarakhand Public Service Commission, Medical Service Selection Board and other bodies. The recruitment process is currently underway for several positions of police sub inspectors

and teachers. Dhama has directed officials to ensure that recruitments are made in a time-bound and transparent manner to posts for which the requisition was approved by the UKSSSC. The commission's chairman GS Martolia informed that requisition for recruitments to 4,405 posts in 11 departments has been approved. The commission has completed its preparations for the recruitment process to these positions. The process of application will be started on September 15. The schedule of the examination and declaration of the result will also be declared shortly. He further said that the recruitments facilitated by the commission have been conducted in a record time. The UKSSSC aims to ensure that the process from conduct of the exam to declaration of the results is concluded on time. The authorities will continue to facilitate recruitments with transparency and on time, he added.

The positions for which the recruitments will start from September 15 include 2,000 posts of police constables, 2,000 posts of forest guards, 1,200 posts of supervisors and other positions including junior assistant, revenue assistant, mate, scientific assistant, assistant development officer, driver, library, primary teacher (ST) and positions for various trades in it is.

The CM said, "A record number of youth have been provided government jobs since Uttarakhand was created. Our government has introduced the nation's strictest anti-copying law. Earlier, the criminal elements used to deal in jobs due to which members of a single family would get four government jobs. However, we are committed to not spare anyone who plays with the interests and future of the State's youth."

Don't want to see a single child begging in my district: Dehradun DM Authorities to launch 24-hour patrolling and rescue operation to curb child beggary

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Authorities will launch a 24-hour patrolling and rescue operation to eradicate child beggary from Dehradun. Two dedicated vehicles will regularly patrol the streets, rescuing children engaged in begging and connecting them with proper care and educational opportunities. This was stated by the Dehradun district magistrate Savin Bansal during a meeting with officials of various departments and agencies concerned on Sunday. He stated that this initiative will be part of a broader campaign to break the cycle of child beggary and integrate these vulnerable children into mainstream education. Bansal emphasised on the importance of education, stating, "I do not want to see a single child begging in my district. Education -not begging- is essential." He said that the administration is committed to



ensuring that all children are given the opportunity to thrive in a supportive learning environment. The DM directed the chief education officer Rajiv Dixit to prepare a proposal for establishing an intensive care centre in Dehradun. He said that the plan involves enrolling rescued children in intensive care centres, where they will receive formal education in an

environment modeled after private schools to attract and retain their interest in schooling and personal development. Besides this, the administration will increase mobile education units with six such vehicles available to support rescue and rehabilitation efforts. The district probation officer Meena Bisht has been appointed as the nodal officer for the campaign,

with 12 home guards and PRD personnel assigned to ensure the operation's success. The DM also instructed daily rescue operation teams to identify and rehabilitate children involved in begging and labour. The rescued children will be brought to the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) and further steps will be taken to ensure they receive the necessary care and educational support.

Children begging along with adults or selling petty items and services like cleaning car windshields are a common sight in various intersections of the provisional State capital. The authorities have addressed the issue of beggary in the past but have not had a lasting impact so far.

Special secretary appoints investigation officer for alleged ritual initiation of PP in Almora jail

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Special secretary Riddhim Aggarwal has appointed additional inspector general Yashwant Chauhan as the investigating officer for the case concerning the alleged ritual initiation of notorious criminal Prakash Pandey, also known as PP, inside the Almora jail. The incident involves certain individuals within the prison bestowing a Mahant title upon Pandey purportedly after his ritual initiation. She has instructed Chauhan to conduct a thorough investigation into the matter and to submit a detailed report to the State government within one week. The investigation aims to clarify the circumstances surrounding the initiation ceremony and ensure appropriate actions are taken in accordance with the findings. It was reported that two ascetics, along with a mediator between a notorious gangster and the ascetic community, reportedly entered the jail premises to conduct a 'Diksha' ceremony on September 5. During the ritual, Pandey was presented with a Rudraksha Mala and a sacred beads necklace, while Vedic chants were whispered in his ears. The ascetic fraternity has also objected to this with the Akhada Parishad also directing its members to conduct a probe into the circumstances of the case.

It is pertinent to mention here that PP began his criminal journey in 1994 by associating with Chhota Rajan's associates, Farid Tanasha and Vicky Malhotra. His first murder was in 1995, targeting a local leader. PP is also reported to have travelled to Karachi in 1998 and 2000 in attempts to target Dawood Ibrahim.

Cyber fraud racket with Dubai links busted, duo arrested for Rs 53 lakh scam

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Uttarakhand Special Task Force (STF) arrested two cyber frauds with international ties who duped a resident of Rs 53 lakh in Rudrapur, Udham Singh Nagar. The accused, identified as Gurpreet Singh and Premshankar, were arrested for defrauding victims by luring them into online trading schemes through social media advertisements. The duo, apprehended in Rudrapur, is linked to cybercriminals in Dubai, where Singh had previously travelled and established connections, the deputy superintendent of police of cyber crime police station, STF, Ankush Mishra said. He informed that investigation was launched after a victim from Rudrapur filed a complaint in August 2024. The victim was enticed by an online trading advertisement on Facebook, which led him to join a WhatsApp group.

The victim was directed to deposit around Rs 53 lakh into various accounts under the pretext of trading through a group named Goldman Sachs India Pvt Ltd. Further investigation revealed that the accused used commission-based bank accounts to receive funds and manipulated victims by displaying fake profits through a fraudulent trading platform. Occasionally, the criminals would send small amounts back to victims to avoid raising suspicion. The money collected was then transferred to other accounts. Mishra said that the duo was arrested late on Saturday in Rudrapur. The team also recovered three mobile phones, nine debit cards from various banks, Aadhaar card, PAN card, voter ID card and other documents. The STF has begun coordinating with police in other States, as multiple cybercrime complaints have been registered against the accused across India. Bank statements show transactions amounting to crores of rupees.

The STF will also examine the extent of the accused's connections to cybercriminals in other regions to arrest more accused, he added.

उत्तराखण्ड शासन

“ युग-युग से है अपने पथ पर, देखो कैसा खड़ा हिमालय
डिगता कभी न अपने प्रण से, रहे प्रण पर अड़ा हिमालय ”

विकसित भारत, सशक्त
उत्तराखण्ड

नरेन्द्र मोदी
प्रधानमंत्री

उत्तराखण्ड, हिमालय व पर्यावरण एक दूसरे के पर्याय हैं। हिमालय सदा नीरा-नदियों, तालाबों व जैव विविधता से परिपूर्ण देवतुल्य एवं पूजनीय है। आइये, हम सब एकजुट होकर हिमालय बचाओ अभियान में भागीदार बनें और अपने जीवन को साकार करें।

पुष्कर सिंह धामी
मुख्यमंत्री, उत्तराखण्ड

आप सभी को
हिमालय दिवस
9 सितम्बर, 2024
की हार्दिक शुभकामनाएँ

हिमालय बचाओ
जीवन बचाओ

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Parliament breach sought to discredit India's democracy: Delhi Police chargesheet

Accused aimed to gain global fame, usurp power, planned attack for two years before executing gas attacks

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The December 13, 2023 Parliament security breach accused wanted to discredit India's democracy, gain instant global fame, usurp power and achieve "richness and glory" by targeting the "very symbol of democracy", according to the chargesheet filed in the court by Delhi Police.

The accused first met on social media and planned their move for nearly two years before executing it last year on the anniversary of the 2001 Parliament attack. According to the chargesheet, a source said, their first in-person meeting was held in February, 2022 at Mysuru.

Citing from the chargesheet, sources told PTI, that in total they held five meetings in Mysuru, Gurugram and Delhi to decide to finalise their plan and arrive at a modus operandi.

The chargesheet, spread over 1,000 pages, was filed before the Patiala House Court in June and the court took its cognisance last month. A supplementary was filed in July.

The chargesheet mentioned that the group of young people, led by Manoranjan D, a resident of Karnataka, met on social media.

Manoranjan is among the six accused arrested by the Delhi

Police Special Cell, sources said.

Manoranjan, according to the chargesheet, is suspected to be among the main conspirators of the parliament breach, who allegedly "instigated and motivated" the young people by promising them "richness, glory and wealth" and by targeting the "very symbol of democracy".

While citing the chargesheet, a source said that driven by his "ultra Maoist-inspired thinking" Manoranjan decided to target the Parliament building to gain immediate and lasting attention.

The source said the accused wanted to send out a wider message that the "Indian Democracy is ineffective and needs to be replaced".

The major security breach took place on the anniversary of the 2001 Parliament terror attack. The accused launched coordinated gas attack both inside and outside the parliament house during the Zero Hour on December 13, 2023. Two persons — Sagar Sharma and Manoranjan D — jumped into the Lok Sabha chamber from the public gallery and opened canisters that released yellow gas in the House. They also shouted slogans before parliamentarians overpowered them.

Outside the Parliament



premises around the same time, two other accused -- Amol Shinde and Neelam Azad -- also sprayed coloured gases from canisters while shouting "tanashahi nahi chalegi (dictatorship won't be allowed)".

Manoranjan, Sagar Sharma, Amol Shinde and Neelam

Azad were arrested on the same day as they were caught soon after their acts. Lalit Jha and Mahesh Kumawat were arrested on December 15 and 16, respectively. All the accused are lodged in the Tihar jail.

They have been booked under sections 16 and 18 of the

Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) and other sections of the Indian Penal Code by the Delhi Police's anti-terror unit, Special Cell.

Citing the chargesheet, a source said that Manoranjan dropped out of an engineering course and travelled to Cambodia in 2014 where he

stayed for eight months.

The source said that after coming back to India, he travelled to Ladakh on a motorcycle in 2015, which "mirrors" the famous "Motorcycle Diaries" penned by Che Guevara, a Cuban revolution communist icon.

During his trip to Ladakh, a

Chinese student, who was then studying at Hyderabad, also accompanied him as a pillion rider to Delhi, via Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

Citing the chargesheet, the source further said the first meeting of the accused was held in February, 2022 in Mysuru at a flat of Manoranjan's friend which was attended by 10 people including Manoranjan D, Sagar Sharma, Amol Shinde, Lalit Jha and Mahesh Kumawat.

In this meeting, Manoranjan showed some videos of violent protests to the participants, and floated the idea of building an organisation. They discussed the idea of using the "protective gel" while executing their design inside and outside the Parliament, the source said.

They also discussed usurping power using "tear gas previously used in March 2018 in Kosovo", the source added.

Their second meeting was held at a hotel in Gurugram in August, 2022, which was attended by seven people as some of the members had already "backed out" knowing their "nefarious" plan, another source said. He said that in this meeting, they decided to include a woman in their plan and that is how they inducted Neelam into their group.

In their third meeting held at

a hotel in Paharganj in central Delhi in August 2023, they decided to use the smoke canisters for their act in the Parliament. This meeting was attended by all the six accused arrested in the case, the source said.

They met again at the same Paharganj hotel in September, 2023 and discussed getting entry passes and the use of smoke canisters inside Parliament. They also decided to enter into the Parliament during the winter session, the source said. Their last meeting was held at Gurugram and subsequently, near the Delhi's India Gate on December 13, 2023, the final day of the execution of their plan.

The four accused -- Manoranjan D, Sagar Sharma, Amol Shinde and Neelam Azad -- broke their SIM cards and handed them over to Lalit Jha, who was tasked to destroy them all, the source said.

Jha was also given the task of recording Shinde and Neelam as they executed their plan at the Parliament gate and upload the video on social media. The police also said in the chargesheet that the accused were members of a social media page "Bhagat Singh Fan Club", and they mostly used the signal app to communicate, according to the source.



Security heightened in Manipur, anti-drone systems deployed

PTI ■ IMPHAL

Security was heightened in Manipur on Sunday following the fresh bout of violence that left several people dead, officials said. The situation was tense but under control, they said.

"No new incidents of violence have so far been reported on Sunday. SPs of various districts in coordination with security forces are continuously monitoring the situation," an official said.

The Assam Rifles has deployed anti-drone systems in the fringe areas of the Imphal Valley to repel any "rogue drones", he said.

The CRPF handed an anti-drone system to the state police for deployment, he

added.

The use of drones to mount attacks was new to the ethnic clashes in Manipur that left over 200 people dead since May last year.

The use of the remote-controlled small flying device as a weapon was first seen on September 1 in Koutruk village in the Imphal West district. In the attack, in which guns were also used, two persons were killed and nine others injured. Drones were used again in Senjam Chirang, around 3 km away, the next day, injuring three persons.

Meanwhile, prohibitory orders were imposed in Jiribam district on Saturday night, preventing the gathering of five or more persons, according to a notification.

SP, Congress criticise UP Government over wolf attacks; BJP promises stringent action

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

The Samajwadi Party and the Congress are gearing up for bypolls to 10 assembly seats in Uttar Pradesh, with the INDIA bloc partners targeting the State Government over its "undemocratic" working style, "collapse" of law and order and the recent spate of wolf attacks.

The bypolls, the schedule for which is yet to be announced, were necessitated by the election of the incumbent MLAs to the Lok Sabha and the disqualification of one legislator.

Leaders of the two parties, which contested the Lok Sabha elections in an alliance in Uttar Pradesh, have confirmed that they would contest the bypolls "unitedly".

Samajwadi Party chief spokesperson Rajendra Chaudhary told PTI, "The Government has failed on this front (stopping wolf attacks). It has made people of the entire State insecure. We are going to raise this (issue)." "The Government's style of working is not democratic. They have not done any development and they want to remain in Government," he said.

Echoing the Samajwadi Party leader, Ajay Rai -- the Congress' State unit chief -- told PTI that the Government failed to control the wolf-attack situation and the "terror" was moving towards the cities.

"The other issues plaguing the State are the collapse of law and order, fake encounters, rising inflation and unemployment," he said.

The BJP, on the other hand, said the State Government was making every effort to resolve the wolf-attack problem. Eight people, seven of them children, were killed and about three dozen injured in alleged wolf attacks in Bahraich district in the last two months, official figures show.

The district's Mahsi tehsil has recorded a series of wolf attacks since March. The frequency of attacks rose during the monsoon from July. Four wolves have been captured but the attacks still continue, leading to experts suggesting that the real "man eaters" had not been caught.

There were also reports of suspected animal attacks in neighbouring Sitapur district. On September 2, three women in a village were injured in attacks by unidentified animals. While locals claimed that the women were attacked by wolves, officials of the forest department, which collected animal samples and footprints, suspected that jackals were behind the attacks.

On Saturday, two children and five men were injured in alleged jackal attacks in two villages in the Jehanabad area of Pilibhit district. Thermal drones and cameras



have been installed to capture the wolves. The forest department has formed teams of officers and shooters for day-and-night search operations. Bhupendra Singh Chaudhary, the BJP's State chief, told PTI, "If needed, stringent actions will also be taken." However, he did not specify what he meant by "stringent action".

Responding to the Congress and the Samajwadi Party's attacks on the Government, the BJP's State spokesperson Aalok Verma told PTI, "Be it the wolves of the jungles or the wolves of society, dangerous animals cannot be allowed to roam freely." "Both the

Samajwadi Party and the Congress support the wolves of society (criminals). The Samajwadi Party supports them directly while the Congress supports them indirectly," Verma said.

Meanwhile, Bhupendra Singh Chaudhary said the BJP was yet to finalise the seat-share agreement with its allies. Of the 10 seats where the bypolls would need to be conducted, one was held by the Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) and one by the NISHAD party. Congress State chief Rai, confirming that it would contest the bypolls with the Samajwadi Party, said, "We will contest

the bypolls as part of the INDIA bloc. We have sought five seats held by the BJP and its allies.

The final seat-share pact is yet to be finalised." The Samajwadi Party's Rajendra Chaudhary said there was an understanding that "we will contest the bypolls together." "The party's national president (Akhilesh Yadav) will be generous in this issue (seat share). Wherever they (Congress) think they can win, those seats will be given to them," he said.

The seat-share formula is yet to be finalised but there is still time for the bypolls, he added.

The seats that will go to the bypolls are Karhal, Milkipur, Katehari, Kundarki, Ghaziabad, Khair, Meerapur, Phulpur, Majhawan and Sisamau.

The Sisamau seat fell vacant following the disqualification of Samajwadi Party MLA Irfan Solanki after he was sentenced to jail in a criminal case. The remaining seats were vacated after the election of the incumbent MLAs to the Lok Sabha. Of the 10 seats, the Samajwadi Party won Karhal, Milkipur, Katehari, Kundarki and Sisamau in the 2022 polls while Meerapur was bagged by the RLD, which had contested the elections in an alliance with the Akhilesh Yadav-led party.

The RLD is now a constituent of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA). The Ghaziabad, Khair and Phulpur seats were won by the BJP while Majhawan went to its ally the NISHAD party.

The BJP has 251 MLAs in the 403-member House while the opposition Samajwadi Party has 105. BJP allies Apna Dal (Sonela) and the NISHAD party have 13 and five MLAs, respectively.

The RLD and the Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party -- both NDA partners -- have eight and six MLAs, respectively. The Congress and the Jansatta Dal (Loktantrik) have two MLAs each while the Bahujan Samaj Party has one member in the House.

Will win each battle with people's blessings: Vinesh Phogat

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

Wrestler and Congress candidate Vinesh Phogat on Sunday said she expects to win each battle with the blessings of people as kicks off her campaign for the upcoming assembly election.

Phogat (30) has been fielded from the Julana assembly segment for the upcoming assembly poll. Polling in Haryana will take place on October 5 while the counting of votes for the elections to the 90-member assembly will take place on October 8.

Phogat was accorded a warm welcome when she reached Julana as her supporters, including elderly people and women and members of various 'Khaps', greeted her with garlands and gave their blessings.

The Congress had on Friday released its first list of 32 candidates for the Haryana Assembly polls, naming her among the party candidates. Olympians Vinesh Phogat and Bajrang Punia, who were at the forefront of the wrestlers' protest against then WFI chief and former BJP MP Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh,



entered the political arena on Friday by joining the Congress.

Standing atop a car, Phogat took the blessings of people who surrounded her four wheeler to get a glimpse of her. Amid beats of a 'dhol', her supporters chanted 'Vinesh Phogat zindabad.' Replying to a question on former BJP MP and then Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, Phogat said, "Brij

Bhushan is not the country. My country stands by me. My loved ones stand by me and they matter to me."

Brij Bhushan on Saturday alleged that Phogat and Bajrang Punia were used by the Congress as "pawns" in a "conspiracy" to take control of the WFI and attack the BJP. To a question, Phogat said, "My loved ones supported me. Like they ensured victory in wrestling (during her sports career), they will con-

tinue their blessings here (electoral contest) and with their blessings, we will win every battle."

Replying to another question, she said the pain of not getting an Olympic medal subsided that very day when the citizens of the country showered love on her after she landed at the airport.

"I have to reduce their (people) pain and it is my responsibility," she added. "I am 30 years old and I have come through many challenges. When people are with you, one can overcome any challenge," Phogat said. Replying to another question on contesting the elections, she said, "I am feeling happy and I will try to live up to their expectations." Phogat became the first Indian woman wrestler to reach the Olympics final, the stage where she was disqualified in Paris after being found overweight by about 100 grams in her 50-kilogramme category weigh-in.

She subsequently announced her retirement from the sport. While the wrestler hails from Balali in Charkhi Dadri district, her in-laws' home town is Julana.

Political power can be inherited, but wisdom can't: CM Adityanath slams Akhilesh Yadav

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Attacking Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav over dynastic politics, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday said political power can be inherited but wisdom cannot. Targeting the SP chief, CM Adityanath said those who previously viewed power as their 'bapauti' (family property) are now resorting to "conspiracies and creating chaos" to regain power.

Adityanath said that during the SP's rule, criminal elements ran parallel governments and law enforcement was under their control. Earlier goons used to chase police, but after the formation of the BJP Government in 2017, the situation has changed, he said, adding now swift action is taken against criminals and "unka 'Ram Naam Satya' ho jata hai (They are sent on their last journey)," he said.

Heart as well as brain is needed to run a Government, he said, adding "Satta virasat mein main sakti hai par buddhi nahin (Power can be inherited but wisdom cannot)." "Those who used to consider



power as their 'bapauti' (family property) have started realising that they will never return to Uttar Pradesh, that is why they are trying to conspire. They (SP) are trying to create anarchy. They have nothing to do with development and the safety of daughters and businessmen," he added. Adityanath was addressing a gathering after inaugurating and laying foundation stone of 6,778 development projects worth Rs 1,231 crore in Katehari.

Mafias used to run a "parallel Government" before 2017 (during SP rule) in the state, the chief minister said.

On SP chief terming the encounter of Mangesh Yadav, who was allegedly involved in loot at a jeweller's shop in

Sultanpur, Adityanath said, "You tell me, if a dacoit is killed in an encounter with the police then the Samajwadi Party feels bad. You ask these people what should have happened?" Akhilesh had alleged the encounter was fake.

On Ayodhya rape issue, in which an SP leader was arrested, Adityanath said, "They are shameless people. The SP is not ready for action against the criminal."

He also mentioned the Kannauj case, where Nawab Singh Yadav, a former SP leader was arrested in a rape case, alleging they (SP) are defending those who were involved in the rape of a minor. "This is real identity of the SP," he added.

He said, "You (people) all know where the mafias have gone one by one after 2017. Uttar Pradesh has become mafia free. Those who used to create hindrances in festivals and celebrations are all gone. "Now festivals are being celebrated peacefully.

Those who used to pose a threat to the safety of daughters and traders have all disappeared and those who are left, must also be preparing for their final journey," he said. Adityanath accused the SP, Congress and Bahujan Samaj Party Governments of doing nothing but appeasement during their regimes. "No event was allowed to be organised during the rule of these parties.

Neither Holi, nor Deepawali, nor Dussehra, nor Durga Puja, nor Nag Panchami, nor Krishna Janmashtami and Shivratri..."

You could not celebrate any festival peacefully," he said. The Chief Minister appealed to the people for their full support in the upcoming by-election for the Katehari Assembly seat, which has fallen vacant as sitting SP MLA Lalji Verma resigned after being elected to the Lok Sabha.

Former BJP MLA's wife, son join BJP just before Haryana Assembly polls



PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

Ahead of the Haryana assembly polls former BJP MLA Umesh Agarwal's wife Anita Agarwal and son Samarth Agarwal joined the BJP on Sunday.

joined the BJP in the presence of the party's Gurugram district President Kamal Yadav and State President of Mahila Morcha Usha Priyadarshi. Apart from this, Kamal Yadav also appointed Pawan Yadav as District Media Head at the party office Gurukamal in Gurugram on Sunday.

After joining the BJP, Anita Agarwal told The Pioneer that she "felt proud" and said she would work with other leaders to ensure the party back to power in Haryana for a third time. "It is my good luck that I am standing here today. I and my son was planning

to join the saffron party and that auspicious day finally has come today and we both inducted in the party. I like the ideology of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the saffron party which is constantly working in favour of people of the state," Anita Agarwal said. She pledged continuous contributions towards the party pledged to work for the party. "As the Haryana assembly elections scheduled on October 5 she will connect voter of the constituency to vote in favour of the BJP," she said. Welcoming the two to the party, the BJP's distinct president Kamal Yadav said there was a "wave in favour of the party" in Haryana and the people of the State were eager to form a BJP government for the third time in a row. "She was planning to the party for the past couple of months but today she finally joined the party," he said. Meanwhile, the former BJP MLA said he has no knowledge of his wife and son joining the BJP. He further said a divorce proceedings are underway between them. Agarwal, had won the 2014 election from the Gurugram seat with the highest margin in the State that year, but was denied a ticket by the BJP in 2019. Later in March 2022 Agarwal had joined the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). Agarwal told The Pioneer if the party give him ticket he will definitely fight the upcoming assembly elections from Gurgaon constituency on AAP's ticket.

Liquor shops near national highways to be relocated: Tripura CM



PTI ■ AGARTALA

In a bid to check fatal road accidents caused by drunken driving, Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Sunday directed law enforcement agencies to prepare a comprehensive report on liquor shops operating within 100 metres of national highways following which his government would take steps to relocate the outlets. In December 2017, the Supreme Court banned the sale of liquor within 500 metres of the outer edge of national and state highways and the limit was reduced to

220 metres for locations with a population of 20,000 or less. Tripura recorded 1,340 deaths and 3,724 injuries in 3,307 road accidents in the last six years. Although the number of road accidents seem less in the state compared to the number of vehicles (7,87,203), police and other law enforcement agencies must work to reduce fatal road mishaps," he said at a programme here on road safety. Saha said law enforcement agencies must prepare a list of liquor shops functioning within 100 metres of the outer edge of national highways as drunken driving also contributes to

fatal road accidents. The chief minister also asked the police to enforce the use of seat belts while driving cars, which he said was not being practiced in the state. "Prepare a comprehensive report on the liquor shops functioning within 100 metres of national highways and the government will take steps to shift these outlets," he told the senior officials present at the function. Transport Minister Sushanta Chowdhury, while voicing concern over road accidents, underlined the need for awareness to avoid such mishaps in the northeastern state.

Union Minister Kishan Reddy visits flood-hit areas in Telangana, assures Centre's help



PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana BJP president and Union Coal Minister G Kishan Reddy on Sunday visited flood-hit areas of Khammam district of the state and assured the people that the Narendra Modi government would fully support those affected in every possible way. He said the Centre has the Telangana government to first use the Rs 1,345 crore available in the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) to help the flood-hit people. The amount is available with the state as an advance from the Government of India, he said. "Soon after the havoc caused by heavy rains and flood, Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy. PM Modi asked him (Revanth Reddy) to utilise the advance of Rs 1,345 crore in the SDRF. There should be no politics over flood relief," Kishan Reddy said, after visiting the Munneru flood victims in Khammam district on Sunday. As many as 29 people lost their lives in the recent heavy rains and flooding in Telangana. The state government has urged the Centre to declare the recent spell of heavy rains and flood in the state as a national calamity and to release immediate assistance of Rs 2,000

crore. It has put the losses at Rs 5,438 crore as per preliminary estimates, due to the rains and floods. Kishan Reddy, who visited and assessed the flood-affected areas of Dhamsalapuram and Thirumalapalem in Khammam, said he interacted with people affected by the devastating floods and inquired about the flood relief and rehabilitation efforts. In a post on 'X' he said "Also learned that the victims were not receiving adequate support from the state government." Khammam witnessed unprecedented floods, rendering a lot of people homeless. Both the state and the Central governments would stand with the victims and render all assistance, the Union Minister assured. Kishan Reddy also promised to build a retaining wall along the Munneru stream in the surrounding area to prevent future flooding. He visited the relief camp at Agraharam Colony and interacted with the displaced people. He distributed relief material and blankets to them. Telangana Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy, BJP MPs Eatala Rajender, Konda Vishveshwar Reddy and other officials were present.

Couple spends two hours on roof of car swept away in river in Gujarat

PTI ■ SABARKANTHA (GUJARAT)

A man and his wife aperilously spent nearly two hours atop their nearly submerged car in a river after it was swept away while crossing an overflowing causeway in Gujarat's Sabarkantha district on Sunday, officials said. Local fire officials rescued the couple after the water level came down as strong currents initially hindered the operation at Idar town. The car got pushed away for around 1.5 km from the causeway it was attempting to cross, almost going under the water with only its roof visible, when the Karol river swelled to dangerous levels, fire officer Kamal Patel said. Meanwhile, the couple



managed to get out of the car and climb onto the roof. They sat there for about two hours before being rescued, the

official said. Crowds soon gathered on the river banks to witness the rescue, with many filming the car nearly

submerged by swirling waters. Initial attempts to bring them safely failed due to a strong

surge of water, and the fire department personnel had to wait for the water level to come down, Patel said. Meanwhile, a rescue team equipped with a boat was called for help and it was on its way when the couple was safely brought out of the water, he said. After he and his wife were rescued, Suresh Mistry said he attempted to navigate the inundated causeway because he was confident it was safe to cross, having seen a vehicle ahead of him successfully reach the other side. "As we were crossing, the water rose and the current became so strong that our car got swept away for about 1.5 km from the causeway," he said, adding that he called the fire brigade and police for help.

Principal arrested for deleting Ganesh Chaturthi post from Kota school's WhatsApp group

PTI ■ KOTA (RAJASTHAN)

A government school principal was arrested here after he allegedly deleted Ganesh Chaturthi greetings posted on the school WhatsApp group, which triggered protests by people of the village, officials said on Sunday. Villagers held demonstrations outside the school, demanding the removal of Shafi Mohammed Ansari, principal of government senior higher secondary school at Laturi village, they said. The principal allegedly removed posts that had a picture of Lord Ganesh from a school WhatsApp group. Parents and teachers are part of the group, DSP Narendra Nadar said. SHO at Bapawar Police Station Uttam Singh said Ansari was arrested for disturbing communal harmony. He



was granted bail and released later in the evening, the officer said. The situation in the village remained normal and peaceful, the SHO said.

According to police, a man posted a Ganesh Chaturthi greetings message on the WhatsApp group, which the principal deleted.

The group is named School Management Development Committee or SMDC, the SHO said. Around two hours later, a school teacher also uploaded a Ganesh Chaturthi greeting in the same group and Ansari allegedly deleted the post again, police said. After this, some villagers gathered outside the school, held demonstrations against the principal and demanded his removal. Police rushed to the spot on getting information about the incident, the SHO said. Police arrested the school principal for alleged breach of communal harmony and initiated proceedings under Section 127 of Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) against him, he said. He added that Ansari was granted bail and later released on the same day.

Vijayawada flood damage assessment to begin from Monday: Andhra Home Minister

PTI ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Home Minister Vangalapati Anitha said here on Sunday that the procedure of estimating flood losses in Vijayawada will begin from Monday. Addressing a press conference at the NTR district collectorate, the Home Minister said flood relief work is going on for the eighth day since the floods in the centrally located city. "From tomorrow (Monday), the procedure to start estimating flood losses will begin," said Anitha. Earlier, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu said the state government sent its first report regarding the floods to the Centre and sought a

relief of Rs 6,880 crore, and added that external enumerators are being roped in, who will be provided with training on Sunday. In flood-hit areas, the CM observed that out of 2 lakh houses, 1.4 lakh were single-floor residences, which suffered extensive damage due to the floods. Naidu said houses, shops and all others will be assessed for damage. Meanwhile, the number of deaths due to floods rose to 45 on Sunday morning, said an official press release. Mohammed Ilyas (50) from Ajit Singh Nagar mini stadium area, one of the worst-affected places, who is currently taking refuge at a relative's house in Tadigadapa told PTI that it



has been raining continuously in Vijayawada since Saturday night. Though the 100-metre Budameru breach has been plugged, Ilyas said water is seeping through it and flowing towards Vijayawada, parts of which are still waterlogged. He said the sand and mud between the boulders used to plug the breach got washed away, leading to seepage. Moreover, Budameru is also receiving inflows from swollen Pulivagu rivulet, along with inflows from Munneru rivulet in Telangana. "Waterlogging has reduced. Now there is about 2 ft water on the road and it is not reducing further due to continuous rain. Once it

stops raining it could reduce," said Ilyas. Home Minister Anitha said that three lakh food packets, milk, and biscuits would be distributed today while vegetables, whose prices have been regulated, also recorded brisk sales. The Home Minister noted that 5 lakh kg vegetables were sold through 163 stores. Further, 20,000 houses were cleaned using fire engines and 42 drones are also deployed for sanitation work. Meanwhile, the Chief Minister met Governor S Abdul Nazeer on Sunday and briefed him on the flood situation and the damage caused to Vijayawada city and other places in the state.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Admission of guilt

After being in a state of denial for 25-odd years, Pakistan admits its army's role in the Kargil war for the first time

Pakistan has, for the first time, officially acknowledged the role of its army in the Kargil War of 1999. Speaking at an event to commemorate Defence Day, Pakistan Army Chief General Asim Munir said several Pak soldiers died in the 1999 Kargil War against India. This is the first time that Pakistan acknowledged active role in the war in a surprising departure from its elusive stance. Previously, Pakistan had maintained that the Kargil operation was carried out by mujahedeen or "freedom fighters" and local insurgents, distancing its military establishment from the war. However, this newfound candor could potentially reshape not only the country's internal discourse but also its relations with India and the broader international community. Indeed, India and the world knew it all along and there was not an iota of doubt about the role the Pakistan army under General Musharraf played in the Kargil war. It was orchestrated by the then Pakistan army chief General Musharraf who went ahead with his machinations without even taking the then Prime Minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif.



The Kargil War, fought between India and Pakistan from May to July 1999, erupted after Pakistani soldiers and militants infiltrated the Indian side of the Line of Control (LoC) in the Kargil district of Jammu and Kashmir. Their goal was to seize strategic heights, from where they could disrupt supply routes to India's northern military outposts, including the Siachen Glacier. India was initially caught by surprise but responded with full-scale military operations to reclaim the territory. Indian forces mounted a determined counter-offensive, which eventually forced Pakistan

to retreat. Multiple independent sources, including captured Pakistani soldiers and intelligence reports, indicated that regular units of the Pakistani Army were deeply involved. But the big question is why now? This change is likely driven by internal and external factors, including evolving political dynamics, growing transparency within the military establishment, and changing geopolitical realities. By acknowledging its role, Pakistan may be seeking to rewrite its narrative, demonstrating a willingness to confront uncomfortable truths in its military history. This admission could have several important implications for Pakistan, India, and the region as a whole. The official acknowledgement could prompt a deeper examination of the internal decision-making processes that led to the Kargil War. By owning up to its role, Pakistan could potentially build trust in future diplomatic engagements. This admission could further influence Pakistan's military strategy, possibly encouraging more caution and restraint in future operations. Pakistan's recognition of its army's involvement could alter its approach to the Kashmir dispute, leading to more diplomatic, rather than military, efforts to resolve the issue. While the scars of Kargil will not heal overnight, this acknowledgement opens up the possibility for greater introspection and, potentially, reconciliation in the future.

PICTALK



Indian Air Force aerobatics team Surya Kiran performs at exercise 'Tarang Shakti,' in Jodhpur

PTI

Bihar's special land survey: A step towards resolving land disputes

This ambitious project aims to digitise and map land records, addressing long-standing issues of land disputes and enhancing transparency in land dealings

Bihar is undergoing a significant transition with the commencement of a Special Land Survey covering 45,000 villages across the state. To expedite this process, the government has deployed 10,000 officials, aiming to complete the survey by August 2025.

The Department of Revenue and Land Reforms has already digitized 64 million revenue documents. The digitisation of an additional 160 to 200 million documents is expected to be completed within the next year. These documents will be available to the public for a nominal fee.

The primary goal of the survey is to digitize and map the state's land data to enhance transparency in land dealings and address the persistent land disputes that overwhelm Bihar's courts. "Our main focus is to prepare accurate land records, including Kistwar (Plotting) and Khanapuri, to ensure legitimate land ownership," states Vinod Kumar Singh, Additional District Magistrate of Vaishali district.



Singh emphasizes the importance of this initiative, noting that 60% of land-related crimes in Bihar arise from missing or inaccessible Record of Rights (RoR) documents. Fraudulent claims on land titles have also contributed to the problem. Regarding the Vanshavali (Pedigree) Form, Singh clarifies that approval is not required from the Sarpanch (Panchayat Head). Individuals can certify and submit the form themselves along with Self-Declaration Form-2 (Prapatra 2). This form is particularly crucial for ancestral properties, regardless of the type of ownership, such as Khatiyani or Property Sale Deed. Vipin Kumar Yadav,

Settlement Officer (Bandobust Adhikari) of Vaishali, adds that if land is in the father's name and agricultural rent is being paid, a Vanshavali form is not necessary. However, if the father wishes to distribute the property among his children, the form must be completed along with Self-Declaration Form-2. Khatiyani is a legal document that records rights related to Khata (Account) number, Kheasara (Plot) number, Mouza (area), tenant's name, and land area. It specifically pertains to ancestral immovable property. The digitization and mapping efforts through the Special Land Survey are commendable. By reducing

land disputes, these measures will enable farmers to focus on enhancing agricultural productivity instead of engaging in protracted legal battles. Given that agriculture contributes 18% to India's GDP, improving land record management is crucial for the sector's growth. In conclusion, Bihar's Special Land Survey represents a crucial step towards modernizing land management and resolving persistent land disputes.

By digitizing and mapping extensive land records, the initiative aims to enhance transparency, reduce legal conflicts, and empower farmers to focus on agricultural productivity. With the goal of completing the survey by August 2025, this project underscores the state's commitment to improving land administration and supporting the agricultural sector, which is vital for Bihar's economy. As digitization progresses, stakeholders can look forward to a more efficient and equitable land management system. (The author is a columnist, views are personal)



GYAN BHADRA

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Indian economy thrives amid global challenges

While global powers struggle with economic slowdowns, India's strategic reforms, thriving startup ecosystem, and growing middle class continue to fuel its growth



SUDHIR HINDWAN

India's economic landscape remains one of remarkable resilience and potential, despite the challenges it faces. Although the recent GDP data for the last quarter of the current year indicates a decline from the anticipated 8% growth to 6.7%, the country continues to lead among the fastest-growing global economies. This achievement is an indicator of India's gradual economic aggrandizement, positioning it as a global player in economic growth and development. While major economies around the world experience slowdowns, India's economic growth has remained robust.

However, one of the key challenges facing the Indian government is the growing need to create more employment opportunities. The number of unemployed and underemployed citizens has increased over the years, and the problem has been exacerbated by rapid globalization. This has introduced a new era marked by the principle of "perform or perish," impacting public sector enterprises and businesses worldwide. India's public sector has not been immune to this trend, but the abundance of cheap labor and a proactive push towards Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) have given the country a promising future.

Despite India's initially cautious approach to economic reforms, the government has gradually implemented a range of confidence-building measures. These initiatives not only promote economic growth but also aim to ensure the equitable development of various societal sectors. The framework of socio-economic justice that India has developed has helped build trust within the country and abroad, as has its progress with export-oriented special economic zones (SEZs). The share of India's global trade was just 0.7% in the early stages, but efforts to strengthen the country's medium-term export strategy between 2002 and 2007 have yielded positive results.

Additionally, the economic reforms of 1991 gave India a significant boost, marking the beginning of its economic liberaliza-



tion. Although some East Asian economies and China receive higher levels of foreign direct investment, India's superior corporate governance and the high quality of its commercially driven companies have allowed it to achieve better returns on investment. India's success has also been driven by its business experts and investors, who have made their mark overseas, particularly in fields like information technology, biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, and healthcare. These sectors have become areas in which even advanced economies must catch up. Additionally, India's indigenous entrepreneurship and industries have provided the country with a significant advantage over other economies that rely heavily on foreign direct investment. A prime example of this is China, where the export-led manufacturing boom is largely fueled by FDI, which is not a substitute for home-grown entrepreneurship. India, on the other hand, has focused on building strong internal markets.

The complexities of financial dealings are another challenge that India has handled well. For instance, Japan has faced severe economic issues due to a malfunctioning financial system in recent years, highlighting the importance of constant monitoring by competent authorities. India's mature financial markets and the robust regulations govern-

ing them have provided investors with confidence and stability. Additionally, while China may lead in savings rates, infrastructure, and manufacturing, India's services-driven growth and institutional stability, rooted in democracy and pluralism, set it apart. A particularly promising development in India's economic landscape is the recent rise of startups. In the last five years, the country has seen more than 10,000 startups emerge, creating over 100,000 jobs, both directly and indirectly. This success has been attributed to a robust strategy that has expanded operational and support networks from rural to urban areas. The National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM) reported that these startups have significantly contributed to employment generation, further solidifying India's economic prospects. Foreign investors have also recognized India's potential. Over the past two decades, more than \$60 billion has been invested in Indian stock markets. Additionally, over 600 investors have been granted permission to trade on Indian stock exchanges. This influx of investment has resulted in a 125% growth in the Sensex and a 148% rise in the Bombay Stock Exchange. India's remarkable progress in the IT industry has opened



A PARTICULARLY PROMISING DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA'S ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE IS THE RECENT RISE OF STARTUPS. IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS, THE COUNTRY HAS SEEN MORE THAN 10,000 STARTUPS EMERGE, CREATING OVER 100,000 JOBS, BOTH DIRECTLY AND INDIRECTLY

new doors for Indian companies, which are now aggressively expanding into overseas markets. The country's compliance and regulatory authorities have ensured that foreign investments are secure and that economic transactions are monitored thoroughly. Despite the challenges posed by a tough global economic climate, India's G20 Presidency has provided an opportunity to position itself as a key player in global manufacturing and as a reliable partner in various sectors. The cooperation among G20 nations has also fostered the development of new strategies to meet the needs of vulnerable countries, fostering a more inclusive global society. This cooperation could lead to a positive shift in international relations, promoting greater harmony and collaboration.

India's impressive progress is largely attributed to its immense talent and strategic foresight. However, the country must continue to navigate social and political pressures to maintain its growth momentum. By addressing these challenges, India can further solidify its position as a global economic powerhouse, capable of driving growth not only within its borders but also across the world.

(The author, recipient of Bharat Gaurav award, is a professor and expert on strategic affairs; views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE US ELECTIONS

Madam — A section of media has reported Hindu groups support for Donald Trump against Kamala Harris which sends mixed signals as both Republicans and Democrats have sizable strength cadres of expats from India. How far does the support call for Donald Trump go, there is a distant possibility that Hindus will be benefitted by such a skewed political approach.

In earlier US elections also, Hindu Americans' support has never been so explicit publicly. US collaborations, trade and technology, defence ties and agreements and its support in geopolitical challenges from China in South Asia and the Indian Ocean are very crucial for India. Therefore, a restrictive narrative of Hindu support may turnaround the US policies for immigrants as Hindus or at large Indian expats in the US are entirely different community absolutely loyal to US or any other countries where they have settled.

The most powerful country US must be credited for giving opportunity to Indians to achieve the highest positions in their ruling, governance, business, corporate ladder and society. I hope wisdom will prevail on American Indians and particularly Hindus to play their significant role in the Presidential elections.

Vinod Johri | Delhi

COURTS AS THE LAST RESORT

Madam — There are two things which are to no one's liking, one is inflation and the other is litigation.

Indian courts are piling up with cases for reasons that one can state that every household has got a case or the other. The most complicated creatures are human beings and reason why there are two extremes as the behavioral scientist often recorded. No animals ending up in suicides than humans is an undisputed fact. When the top most court's advocacy from various legal luminaries is that there is nothing to substitute an out of the court settlement, the litigants never

Ambulance in traffic jam



I am writing in reference to the article, "When Golden Hour is Lost in a Stuck Ambulance" (September 7). The scenario of an ambulance caught in a traffic jam is a grave concern with potentially life-threatening consequences. Every minute of delay reduces a patient's chances of survival, highlighting the critical need for prompt medical intervention.

Urban traffic congestion, particularly in metro cities, often obstructs the swift movement of emergency vehicles. Compounding this issue is the lack of awareness and compliance from other drivers,

who frequently fail to yield the right of way. Inadequate road infrastructure, such as narrow lanes and poorly designed intersections, further intensifies the challenge.

To address this, dedicated ambulance lanes or corridors should be established to provide emergency vehicles with a clear path. Implementing intelligent traffic management systems, such as smart traffic signals and real-time monitoring, could optimize traffic flow during emergencies. Public awareness campaigns and driver education initiatives would also be instrumental in fostering a culture of giving priority to emergency vehicles. Additionally, modern technology like GPS tracking and intelligent traffic signal prioritization could ensure ambulances are directed along the fastest routes, minimizing delays at intersections. Such systems would allow for more efficient routing, taking real-time traffic conditions into account.

P Victor Selvaraj | Tirunelveli

THE REBEL TROUBLE

Madam — This refers to the news, Rebel trouble for the BJP in Haryana and BJP MLA in tears after being denied ticket (Sept 6/7). After the issuance of 67 BJP candidates in Haryana and Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini's clarification for not changing the tickets, the rebel leaders should now set aside their differences and work in the interest of the party. Instead they are adopting the Aya Ram Gaya Ram approach.

There can be many other reasons behind ticket denial viz low chances of winning, counter allegations against senior leaders, neglect of some areas development, condemning the internal matters of the party outside, lack of discipline within the party and decreasing popularity at the ground level. No party is untouched by casteism and nepotism. It is a tough task for the ruling and opposition parties to appease all communities.

Yugal Kishore Sharma | Faridabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai



FIRST COLUMN

GANESHA: THE MASTER OF RIDDHI AND SIDDHI

As the first deity, Ganesha guides the soul toward deeper spiritual experiences



ASHWINI GURUJI

Lord Ganesha is the swami of Riddhi and Siddhi. Riddhi is the force responsible for prosperity and abundance – material riches and luxury pertaining to the five senses. Siddhi refers to spiritual powers, like extra-sensory perception, clairvoyance, clairaudience, premonition, thought manifestation etc. Ganesh was born of the dirt of Mata Adi Shakti, as she took a bath indicating that all the riddhi and siddhi in creation are nothing but a spec of dirt of the phenomenal force of the Mother. Ganesha is the deity closest to physical creation, the swami of riddhi and siddhi, which are nothing but Maya, unreality. They are temporary and bound to leave. The majority spend their life chasing these forgetting the temporary nature of these forces and oblivious to what lies beyond. . . Ganesha is the first deity, pratham puja, just the first step to the phenomenalexperiences of the world of spirit. Ganesha manifested at a time when impurities started creeping into the society. In due course of time as worldly desires took precedence over spiritual pursuits in ordinary men, different mantras and sadhnas were prescribed to invoke different aspects of Ganesha, to fulfil specific desires in the realm of the physical, the grossest layer of creation. Uchchhishtha Ganapati is invoked through specific mantras as a giver of boons, as a protector of the motherland or to develop mastery over the five senses. Heramba is the five-headed form of Ganapati, golden in colour and riding a lion. This ten-armed deity is invoked for fearlessness and to defeat one's enemies. Mahaganapati form corresponds to wealth and pleasures, the bestower of bliss. The red-golden Balaganapati is called upon for good health and a bright future. Haridra Ganapati with his turmeric complexion and yellow vestments is the harbinger of prosperity and protection.



Shwetark Ganpati is white and is said to exist in the root of the madar plant, a rare variety of madar that bears white flowers instead of the common purple flowers of Madar. Shwetark Ganpati brings vitality, vigour, strength when kept in the bedroom, intelligence, and concentration in the study room, spiritual powers when worshipped in the puja room, bring luck and prosperity and free the house from evil influences all the time. These sadhnas are extremely potent. They are given according to one's requirement and capacity by the Guru, who is himself a Siddha and does not charge you a fee. They are a personal relationship between the guru and shisha, not to be discussed and never taught en masse. When the Guru gives the mantra, blessings follow but then it's imperative to balance out that karma, since every action has an equal and opposite reaction, every pleasure has a pain attached to it, for which the Guru shows the way. Guru guides the practitioner on which mantra to practise, for how long, the correct charan and bhava and practices to complement the sadna. After the mantra sadhna, a yagya is performed for the siddhi of the mantra. One of the safest mantras to practice for the manifestation of the shakti of Ganesha is 'gama ganpataye namah' but this too has to be channelized by the Guru for the desired effects. The success of the sadhna is indicated by the manifestation of the deity in the yagya agni. Sadhaks at Dhyan Ashram who have been seriously practising the various mantra siddhis have had physical manifestations of the multiple gods (see image). Ganesh Chaturthi is the night of Siddhi mantra and mantra diksha under the sandhya of a Guru. To experience the power of mantra sadhna and Vedic yagya for the manifestation of thought on Ganesh Chaturthi.

(The writer is a spiritual Guru, a guiding light of Dhyan Ashram; views are personal)

Soviet moves on the Afghan Chessboard



NILANTHA LANGAMUWA

The Soviet Union's botched attempt to poison Afghan leader Hafizullah Amin in 1979 set off a chain of events that reshaped the geopolitical landscape of Afghanistan

The failure of the poisoning attempt to kill Hafizullah Amin led Soviet officials to reconsider their strategy. Soviet doctors, unaware of the assassination plot, treated Hafizullah Amin for food poisoning at his palace. The KGB did not report this failed attempt in their confidential records, deeming it an ineffective method for removing Amin. Consequently, Soviet authorities concluded that a military operation was the only viable option. Karmal and his allies were forced to return to the Soviet Union as the plan was re-evaluated. Ultimately, a decision was made to execute Amin through a carefully planned military assault. The operation on December 25, 1979, saw Soviet special forces, disguised as Afghan soldiers, storm Darul Aman Palace, resulting in significant Soviet casualties, including over 100 special forces personnel and their commanding officer, Colonel Grigory Boyarinov. The KGB concealed the death toll to protect its reputation, but Vasili Mitrokhin, a senior KGB archivist who defected to the UK in 1992, later exposed the grim details of the operation. His defection, revealing extensive Soviet espionage activities, marked a pivotal moment in the Cold War. The interplay of internal espionage and foreign intervention in Afghanistan, with ineffective Afghan intelligence and CIA-supported Mujahideen, highlighted the geopolitical manoeuvring that exacerbated Afghanistan's instability, including the assassination of Hafizullah Amin and the rise of Babrak Karmal, setting the stage for prolonged conflict. Karmal's rise to power after Amin's assassination marked a period of intensified Soviet control in Afghanistan. He sought to justify his regime by denouncing Amin as a CIA agent and framing himself as the rightful defender of the Soviet-backed revolution. Karmal's administration, supported by Soviet intelligence and military aid, aimed to stabilize the country but instead deepened its social and economic problems.

This period underscored the broader geopolitical struggle and the impact of external powers on Afghanistan's turbulent history. Taraki's Stalinist purge of the Afghan political party led to widespread imprisonment and execution, with some members exiled or appointed to distant posts. Karmal, who had been made the Afghan ambassador to Czechoslovakia, used his position to plot against Taraki. Faced with the threat of arrest or death if he returned to Afghanistan, Karmal sought asylum from the Czechoslovakian government. The Czechoslovak authorities, concerned about the diplomatic repercussions, consulted with the Soviet Union, which advised granting Karmal asylum and preventing his return to Afghanistan. This marked the start of Karmal's complex political manoeuvring. After being granted asylum, Karmal and his family were relocated to a secret location near Kreislice, under constant surveillance by Czechoslovakia's StB. Despite a confirmed assassination plot against him, Karmal evaded capture by frequently relocating and maintaining Soviet contact. By December 1979, following Amin's assassination, Karmal became Afghanistan's leader with Soviet backing. His tenure, marked by increased instability and Soviet manipulation, saw him misinterpret domestic unrest as foreign interference and downplay Soviet military presence. Committed to Marxist ideologies, Karmal's conflicts with parliament over religious issues highlighted his dedication to communism. The Soviet intervention starting December



THIS POWER STRUGGLE CONTINUES TO HARM AFGHANISTAN. MAHMUD TARZI (1865-1933) NOTED THAT 'THE PROGRESS OF A NATION DEPENDS ON ITS ABILITY TO MOVE BEYOND IGNORANCE AND EMBRACE KNOWLEDGE AND REFORM'

28, 1979, under Karmal's regime, worsened Afghanistan's turmoil, leading to widespread devastation and secretive reporting of casualties, revealing internal KGB struggles. Karmal's leadership, heavily reliant on Soviet military support, ultimately proved ineffective in stabilising Afghanistan. The continuous conflict led to the rise of the Mujahideen, supported by the US and Pakistan, further destabilising the country. Karmal was replaced by Mohammad Najibullah in 1986, who continued to rule until 1992 when the Mujahideen took control of Kabul, marking the beginning of the first phase of Taliban rule. Karmal's life ended in 1996 in Moscow, and his tenure is remembered as a period of profound strife and political manipulation in Afghan history. This power struggle continues to harm Afghanistan. Mahmud Tarzi (1865-1933) noted that 'the progress of a nation depends on its ability to move beyond ignorance and embrace knowledge and reform.' He observed that while Europe advanced through education and modernization, the Muslim world remained entrenched in outdated traditions. Tarzi emphasized that intellectuals should guide their societies from darkness to modernity. This transition from enlightenment to darkness accentuates a deeper issue rooted in Afghanistan's turbulent political history. The events following the 1973 coup, which brought the foreign intelligence agencies of the KGB, CIA, and ISI into Afghanistan's political sphere, illustrate how external powers have long manipulated the country's fate, contributing to its ongoing strife. The overthrow of Mohammad Zahir Shah in 1973 marked the beginning of a period of significant destabilisation in

Afghanistan. Zahir Shah, who had a nuanced understanding of Afghanistan's needs and implemented substantial social reforms, was succeeded by Mohammad Daoud Khan. Despite Daoud Khan's attempts to seek American assistance, the refusal of support set the stage for Soviet intervention, exacerbating the country's instability. Zahir Shah's return to Afghanistan after the collapse of the Taliban in 2001 symbolised a nostalgic yearning for stability and unity. However, his exclusion from significant political decisions by Hamid Karzai highlights the challenges of integrating historical figures into contemporary politics without disrupting the prevailing power dynamics. The failure of both the Soviet Union's intervention and the subsequent U.S. involvement in Afghanistan underscores a profound lesson about the limitations of foreign military power in achieving lasting political stability. The Soviet Union's reliance on sheer military might and neglect of social and political trust is mirrored by the U.S. and its allies' inability to implement meaningful reforms. The eventual resurgence of the Taliban and the disgraceful withdrawal of foreign forces, leaving behind modern weapons, epitomises the failure to address Afghanistan's underlying issues. This pattern of short-term military solutions and inadequate attention to genuine structural reforms has led to repeated cycles of conflict and instability, reflecting a broader failure to understand and address the complex socio-political realities of Afghanistan. External influences, notably from China and powerful Arab states, crucially affected Afghan politics during the Soviet-Afghan War. Amid the China-Soviet ideological rift, Mujahideen groups led by

Ahmad Shah Massoud fiercely resisted both Soviet forces and the Pakistan-backed Taliban. Massoud's declaration, "We will not be pawns in someone else's game, we will always be Afghanists," underlined his commitment to Afghan sovereignty. Henry Kissinger's covert 1971 visit to China, aimed at undermining Soviet influence, marked a significant Cold War strategy shift. Despite massive Soviet and U.S. investments, Afghanistan's political instability persisted due to the lack of a coherent strategy to address its complex social and administrative issues. Ultimately, the failure of both superpowers to grasp Afghanistan's intricate social fabric and implement effective governance solutions led to prolonged instability. The U.S. and its allies' focus on aligning with extremist factions, coupled with the Soviet Union's pursuit of a monolithic socialist state, failed to address the real needs of the Afghan people. The resulting chaos not only perpetuated a cycle of conflict but also laid the groundwork for the rise of the Taliban. This historical narrative accentuates the profound consequences of using small nations as pawns in geopolitical games, raising pressing questions about the future of Afghanistan's over forty-one million people under continued turmoil and social repression. The Taliban, ultimately, are not the sole symptom of the decades that Afghanistan plunged into an abyss. As a South Asian nation, Afghanistan's future depends on proactive collaboration with neighbouring countries and strategic efforts to establish strong people-to-people connections, rather than succumbing to isolationism. (The writer is a journalist and author. Views expressed are personal. Concluded)

India ramps up preparedness against monkeypox amid global surge

WHO declares the outbreak of monkeypox as a public health emergency of global proportions, underscoring need for preparedness

India is enhancing its preparedness to tackle Monkeypox (Mpx) by raising awareness, strengthening surveillance, setting up isolated wards, and expanding diagnostic testing capacity. Although a pandemic-like situation has not emerged, all mechanisms are being put in place to curtail the spread of Mpx and its menace. Since January 2023, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has reported more than 27,000 suspect Mpx cases and more than 1,300 deaths. Clade I Mpx occurs regularly, or is endemic, in DRC. The current outbreak is more widespread than any previous DRC outbreak, and Clade I Mpx has spread to some neighbouring countries, including Burundi, the Central

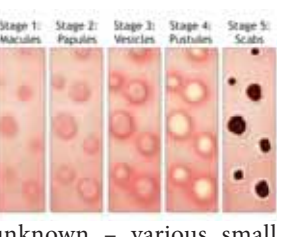


MANOJ VARGHESE

African Republic, the Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, and Uganda, and a travel-associated case in Kenya. On August 14, 2024, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). This is the WHO's highest level of global alert, and the decision recognizes the potential threat this virus poses to countries around the world.

The declaration focuses international attention on acute public health risks that require the coordinated mobilization of extraordinary resources by the international community for prevention and response. Monkeypox is a virus that transmits from animals to humans. Technically, it is known as a 'viral zoonosis'. Its symptoms are similar to smallpox and cowpox, but fortunately, Monkeypox is less severe. Cases have been emanated from Central Africa and are reported to be spreading fast across the globe. Common symptoms of Mpx are a skin rash or mucosal lesions which can last 2-4 weeks accompanied by fever, headache, muscle aches, back pain, low energy, and swollen lymph nodes.

So far, no cases have been reported from India. The Monkeypox virus was discovered in Denmark (1958) among monkeys kept for research. The first reported human case of Mpx was in a nine-month-old boy in the DRC in 1970. Following the eradication of smallpox in 1980, Mpx steadily emerged in central, east and west Africa. In 2003, an outbreak in the United States of America was linked to imported wild animals (Clade II). Since 2005, thousands of suspected cases have been reported in the DRC every year. In 2017, Mpx re-emerged in Nigeria and continues to spread among people across the country and travellers to other destinations. The natural reservoir of the virus is



unknown – various small mammals such as squirrels and monkeys are susceptible. In May 2022, an outbreak of Mpx appeared suddenly and rapidly spread across Europe, the Americas and then all six WHO regions, with 110 countries reporting about 87 thousand cases and 112 deaths. The global outbreak has affected primarily gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men and has spread person-to-person through sexual networks. The global Clade II

Monkeypox virus (MPXV) outbreak that began in 2022 demonstrated the pandemic potential of Mpx. Clade I MPXV is endemic in several Central African countries, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Clade I is generally associated with higher case fatality rates (CFRs) (1.4% to >10%) compared with Clade II MPXV (0.1% to 3.6%). MPXV can spread to persons from contact with infected wildlife, or through close, prolonged contact with persons infected with MPXV. During 2023-2024, DRC has reported an unprecedented number of suspected Clade I MPXV infections. Clade I MPXV transmission in DRC is more commonly reported among children. Widespread trans-

mission is reported because of zoonotic reservoirs, household occupants, and unhygienic resources. Diagnosis and reporting of Clade I MPXV infections to health officials are important for limiting onward transmission by aiding early containment measures, including contact tracing, isolating patients, offering the JYNNEOS vaccine to contacts, and strictly adhering to recommended infection prevention and control practices in health care settings. An additional benefit of vaccination is protection against Clade I MPXV infection. According to Dr A K Narula, Pharmacy expert of GGSIPU, Tecovirimat is typically the first therapeutic that should be considered for patients with Mpx other than supportive

care. In 2014, the West Africa Ebolavirus outbreak demonstrated the risks associated with a delayed global response to a serious pandemic threat. Identifying Mpx is a difficult task, as other infections and conditions look similar. It is important to distinguish Mpx from chickenpox, measles, bacterial skin infections, scabies, herpes, syphilis, other sexually transmissible infections, and medication-associated allergies. For these reasons, testing is key for people to get treatment as early as possible and prevent further spread. (The writer is former editor Free Press Journal and presently media advisor to GGSIPU; views are personal)

Reliance, TCS lead market value slump

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The combined market valuation of eight of the top-10 most valued firms got eroded by Rs 2,01,699.77 crore last week, with Reliance Industries and Tata Consultancy Services emerging as the biggest laggards, in line with weak trends in equities. Last week, the BSE benchmark dropped 1,181.84 points, or 1.43 per cent. The market valuation of Reliance Industries tumbled Rs 60,824.68 crore to Rs 19,82,282.42 crore. The valuation of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) slumped Rs 34,136.66 crore to Rs 16,12,762.51 crore. State Bank of India's valuation dropped Rs 29,495.84 crore to Rs 6,98,440.13 crore and that of Bharti Airtel diminished Rs 28,379.54 crore to Rs 8,76,207.58 crore. The market capitalisation (mcap) of Infosys tanked Rs 17,061.44 crore to Rs 7,89,819.06 crore and that of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) eroded by Rs 16,381.74 crore to Rs 6,57,009.14 crore. ICICI Bank's mcap declined Rs 15,169.76 crore to Rs 8,51,204.65 crore and that of ITC was down Rs 250.11 crore to Rs 6,27,337.65 crore.



However, Hindustan Unilever added Rs 14,179.78 crore, taking its market valuation to Rs 6,66,919.73 crore. The mcap of HDFC Bank climbed Rs 3,735.35 crore to Rs 12,47,941.78 crore. Reliance Industries remained the most-valued domestic firm followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, Airtel, ICICI Bank, Infosys, State Bank of India, Hindustan Unilever, LIC, and ITC.

IPO market booms with 13 upcoming offerings

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The IPO market will be bustling next week, with four companies, including Bajaj Housing Finance, set to launch their initial share-sale to raise a total of Rs 8,390 crore. Besides these four main-board IPOs, nine SMEs are preparing to debut with their maiden public issues next week, targeting to collect Rs 254 crore. Together, these 13 firms are looking to raise Rs 8,644 crore through IPO. Munish Aggarwal, Managing Director - Equity Capital Markets, Equirus, expects the next two weeks to be hectic in terms of issuance activity in IPO markets. "While this seems to indicate that the markets are overheating, we believe that this is more symptomatic of the attempt by most issuers who have valid Sebi observations and decent traction with investors to try and utilize their financials for Fiscal 2024 to launch IPOs," he said. According to Sebi, financial data in the Red Herring



Prospectus (RHP) must be less than six months old at the time of the IPO. Therefore, September is the last month when companies can use their FY24 financials to launch IPOs, he added. The four main-board IPOs include that of Bajaj Housing Finance, which is expected to mobilise around Rs 6,560 crore, P N Gadgil Jewellers (Rs 1,100 crore), Kross Ltd (Rs 500 crore), and Tolins Tyres (Rs 230 crore). Of these, the initial share-sales of Bajaj Housing Finance, Kross Ltd, and Tolins Tyres will open for subscription on September 9 and conclude on September 11, while that of P N Gadgil Jewellers will open on September 10 and close on September 12. Additionally, Arkade Developers is expected to float IPO on September 16 and Western Carriers India may also soon come out with its public issue. So far this year, more than 50 main-board IPOs have been launched, along with one Follow-on Public Offering (FPO) by Vodafone Idea. The public issue of Shree Tirupati Balajee Agro Trading Company is underway and IPOs of Baazar Style Retail and Gala Precision Engineering closed earlier this month. Before that, IPOs of 10 firms, including Ola Electric Mobility and Brainbees Solutions Ltd, the parent firm of online e-commerce

platform FirstCry, were concluded in August. Apart from the main-board, SMEs launching their IPOs next week are -- Aditya Ultra Steel, Shubhshree Biofuels Energy, Share Samadhan, Gajanand International, SPP Polymers, Trafiksol ITS Technologies, Excellent Wires and Packaging, Innomet Advanced Materials, and Envirotech Systems. These companies are aspiring to mobilize between Rs 12-45 crore each through public issue. The IPOs for Aditya Ultra Steel, Shubhshree Biofuels Energy, Share Samadhan, and Gajanand International will begin on September 9; SPP Polymers and Trafiksol ITS Technologies on September 10; Excellent Wires and Packaging and Innomet Advanced Materials on September 11; and Envirotech Systems on September 13. Recently, IPOs have garnered significant subscription levels. In August, main-board IPOs were subscribed on an average over 75 times, while the year-to-date average for 2024 is 66 times.

GST Council to deliberate on insurance premium, online gaming taxation

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The GST Council on Monday is expected to deliberate on a host of issues, including taxation of insurance premium, GoM's suggestions on rate rationalisation, and a status report on online gaming, sources said. Sources said the fitment committee, comprising Centre and state tax officials, will present a report on GST levied on life, health and reinsurance premiums and the revenue implications. The GST Council, chaired by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and comprising state ministers, will decide on whether to reduce the tax burden on health insurance from the current 18 per cent or exempt certain categories of individuals, like senior citizens. The deliberations will also happen with regard to the goods and services tax (GST) cut on life insurance

premium. In 2023-24, the Centre and states collected Rs 8,262.94 crore through GST on health insurance premium, while Rs 1,484.36 crore was collected on account of GST on health reinsurance premium. The issue of taxation on insurance premium figured in Parliament discussions with opposition members demanding that health and life insurance premiums be exempt from GST. Even Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari wrote to Sitharaman on the issue. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her reply to discussion on the Finance Bill had said 75 per cent of the GST collected goes to states and opposition members should ask their state finance ministers to bring the proposal at the GST Council. West Bengal Finance Minister Chandrima Bhattacharya had raised the issue in the meeting of the Group of Ministers (GoM) on rate rationalisation

last month and the matter was referred to the fitment committee for further data analysis. The GoM had opined against any tinkering of four-tier GST slab of 5, 12, 18, and 28 per cent for the time being. The panel, however, had asked the fitment committee to look into any scope for rationalisation of rates of goods and services. With regard to online gaming, Centre and state tax officers will present a "status report" before the GST Council. The report would include GST revenue collection from the online gaming sector before and after October 1, 2023. From October 1, 2023, entry-level bets placed on online gaming platforms and casinos were subject to 28 per cent GST. Prior to that, many online gaming companies were not paying 28 per cent GST, arguing that there were differential tax rates for games of skill and games of chance. The GST Council in its



meeting in August 2023 had clarified that online gaming platforms were required to pay 28 per cent tax and subsequently Central GST law was amended to make the taxation provision clear. Offshore gaming platforms were also mandated to

register with GST authorities and pay taxes, failing which the government would block those sites. The council had then decided that the taxation on online gaming sector would be reviewed after six months of its implementation.

Sources said the Council would deliberate on the status of taxation on the sector and any change in tax rates is unlikely. Besides, the Council is likely to be apprised about the ongoing drive against fake registration, the success of the

drive and action taken against such entities. The total amount of suspected GST evasion would also be presented before the Council. The drive, from August 16, 2023, to October 15, 2024, is aimed at detecting suspicious/fake GSTINs and to conduct requisite verification and further remedial action to weed out these fake billers. In the first drive between May 16, 2023 to July 15, 2023, against fake registration, 21,791 entities (11,392 pertaining to state tax jurisdiction and 10,399 pertaining to CBIC jurisdiction) having GST registration were discovered to be non-existent. An amount of Rs 24,010 crore (state - Rs 8,805 crore + Centre - Rs 15,205 crore) of suspected tax evasion was detected during the special drive. Also, the Council would approve notifications, including that of the amnesty

scheme, announced in the last council meeting. The various amendments to GST law decided by the council in its previous meeting on June 22 were passed by Parliament last month vide Finance Act, 2024. The council in June meeting took a host of taxpayer-friendly measures, including waiver of interest and penalty for demand notices issued in the first three years of GST -- 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20 -- if the full tax demanded is paid by March 31, 2025. To reduce litigation, a monetary limit for tax officers, to file appeals before the GST Appellate Tribunal, the High Court and the Supreme Court was fixed at Rs 20 lakh, Rs 1 crore and Rs 2 crore, respectively, by the Council. It also recommended a reduction of the quantum of pre-deposit required to be paid by taxpayers for filing of appeals under goods and services tax (GST).

Glenmark forecasts strong growth for domestic formulations

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The drug formulations market in India is expected to grow at a CAGR of 9-10 per cent over the next decade with Jan Aushadhi outlets anticipated to emerge as a much stronger player in the country, according to Glenmark Pharmaceuticals. The domestic formulations market is estimated to be at Rs 2 lakh crore, with a growth rate of 11 per cent over the past two decades. "It is projected that the domestic formulations market will maintain a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 9-10 per cent over the next decade," the Mumbai-based drug maker said in its Annual Report for 2023-24. As the Trade Generics and Jan Aushadhi channels expand, it is anticipated that these channels could collectively contribute 30 per cent to the market volume in ten years, it

stated. The Jan Aushadhi initiative aims to enhance access to cost-effective, unbranded generics by scaling up to 25,000 franchise pharmacies by 2026, it said. "It is estimated that Jan Aushadhi procurement could account for 3-5 per cent of the market share by volume and around Rs 40-50 billion (Rs 4,000-5,000 crore) in value over the next decade," it added. Glenmark stated that despite the increasing influence of Trade Generics and Jan Aushadhi, branded generics are expected to remain dominant, comprising 65-70 per cent of the market by value and anticipated to grow at a CAGR of over 8 per cent during this period. There are more than 10,000 functional Jan Aushadhi Kendras across the country. The government has set a target to open 25,000 such outlets across the country by



March 2026. The product basket of PMBJP (Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana) comprises 1,963 medicines and 293 surgical devices covering all major therapeutic groups. The company noted that facing challenges in competing with the robust sales and marketing strategies

of domestic firms, coupled with lower price realisations compared to their home markets, most multinational corporations have gradually scaled back their operations in the Indian market. Informing its shareholders, the company said it has 52 product applications pending for approval in North

Gujarat targets 48 MW solar rooftops on govt buildings

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD
Solar rooftop systems of 48 MW will be installed on various government buildings in Gujarat in the current financial year for which Rs 177 crore have been allocated, the state government said on Sunday. To tap into Gujarat's solar energy potential, the state Climate Change Department is actively installing such systems on government buildings, it said. "By March 2024, a total of 3,023 solar rooftop systems, generating a combined capacity of 56.8 MW, have been set up across various government departments in the state," the government said in a release. To advance this initiative, a 48 MW solar rooftop system will be installed on government buildings throughout the state



this year. The state government has allocated Rs 177.4 crore to support the project," it said. In 2023-24, Gujarat generated a total of 24,765.3 million units (MU) of renewable energy, including 9,637 MU from solar, 14,201 MU from wind, 885.325 MU from hydro, 69 MU from small hydro, and 42 MU from biomass and bagasse, it said. "The state's vast solar potential has been

effectively utilised through the establishment of solar parks and the deployment of rooftop solar installations for households. Projects such as Charanka Solar Park have positioned Gujarat as a leader in solar energy generation in India," the government said. Coastal wind farms have also played a crucial role in enhancing the state's renewable energy capacity, it said.

DICGC introduces Daava Sookhak for depositors

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) has launched an online tool Daava Sookhak for depositors to track their claim status. The DICGC's mandate since its inception has been the reimbursement of insured amounts to depositors of failed banks. Daava Sookhak, a user-friendly online tool, is part of DICGC's ongoing commitment to improving the services provided for depositors. "Depositors can now track the status of their claims by entering their mobile number (registered with their bank) on the DICGC website," said DICGC, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).



To begin with, depositors can view the status of their claims for banks placed under All Inclusive Directions (AID) post-April 01, 2024. The corporation ensures that all categories of deposits with banks except institutional deposits. The deposit insurance coverage limit has been enhanced six times since

1962, from Rs 1,500 per depositor held in the same right and same capacity at all the branches of the insured bank to Rs 5,00,000 on February 04, 2020. At present, 97.8 per cent of the total deposit accounts are fully protected. Of the remaining 2.2 per cent of accounts, deposits are insured up to the

limit of Rs 5 lakh. In terms of value, 43.1 per cent of the deposits were insured as of March 2024. In the case of liquidated banks and banks under the Reserve Bank's All-Inclusive Directions (AIDs), the DICGC settled claims amounting to Rs 1,432 crore during 2023-24. During the year, it received repayments of Rs 900.73 crore, of which Rs 760.83 crore was from liquidated/transferee banks and Rs 139.90 crore from banks under AID. All banks operating in India are registered with the corporation for deposit insurance. The number of banks registered with DICGC was 1,997 as of March 31, 2024, of which 140 were commercial banks and 1,857 were cooperative banks.

App-centric Gen Z reshaping consumer landscape

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The digitally-native, app-first Gen Z cohort is assuming the centre stage in India's consumer markets by scripting "big shifts" in consumption trends, including the rise of quick commerce delivery and direct-to-consumer brands, according to a report by Bernstein. Brands are seeking a deeper connection with this digitally-native, app-first generation that 'swipes up' for practically everything from social media to ride-hailing and food delivery. Indian Gen Zs are the world's largest, the report said about the cohort born into a digital age, that shops, works and eats online. Gen Z is the generation born between 1996 and 2010.

Indian Gen Zs make up 20 per cent of the world and about 27 per cent of India's population, it noted. Gen Zs have become the "Swipe Up" generation considering the amount of time they spend on social media. They swipe up for practically everything - social media, ride-hailing, and food delivery, according to Bernstein's report on 'India Internet'. Gen Zs are showing a preference for digital-first, new-age brands, it observed. "We see big shifts in consumption trends dominated by GenZs...Scale up of short-form content (Instagram, Youtube shorts)...Preference for quick commerce delivery, 15-20 minutes (Blinkit, Zepto)... The emergence of D2C brands...Discovering new

food choices through food delivery apps (Zomato, Swiggy)," the report said, adding this has led to brands building deeper connections with GenZs. Gen Zs have significant headroom in consumption, contributing to about 17 per cent of India's total consumption. "GenZ has been not only a 'mobile-first' generation but also an app-first 'Swipe Up' generation. Time on smartphones has gone up 60 per cent," according to Bernstein. Gen Z behaviour has helped scale up internet use cases driving monthly or daily active users (MAU/DAU) growth across app ecosystems. "D2C brands are scaling faster versus traditional FMCG (3-4 years vs 10 years) led by the

buying power of Gen Z customers. They have been able to target Gen Z customers through social media," the report said. India is the world's largest footprint for Meta across their app universe (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, FB messenger), it said, adding that quick commerce platforms like Blinkit and Zepto are enabling digital-first brands to reach GenZ customers, rapidly driving growth. These broad trends are seen benefiting certain companies, which are digital-first and focus on large consumption areas. The report highlighted that consumption behaviour, preferences and adoption differ between the three primary consumer cohorts 'Gen Zs, Millennials and Gen X.

WE DESERVE SAME RESPECT, SAYS NAVDEEP AFTER TURNING TAUNTS INTO TRIUMPH



At the Fazza International Championship in Dubai in 2021, he secured another gold medal. Amid high expectations, Navdeep also faced setbacks, finishing fourth at the Tokyo Paralympics three years ago and Asian Para Games last year. He finished with a bronze at the World Para Athletics Championship in 2024, and faced criticism. "I suffered a lot, so I wanted to achieve something for my country. My event was on the last day, but I came on the August 31, so I kept preserving myself. "I heard things like, 'He can't do this, he only performs well in India, but fails in competition'. I heard these from several quarters, but I just had to ignore all this. I just needed guidance and the right path. "I carried all my past baggage, the training, the hard work, the criticisms. I knew I had to unleash all of this on the September 7, and I did that and won." He also spent years away from home, training relentlessly with limited resources, often making do with basic meals and cooking alongside his roommate and friend Sumit Antil, who smashed his own record to win javelin gold in F64 category. "It has been a struggle for six years (2017-2024). I stayed away from my home, eating whatever was available. Sumit and I used to stay together; we are good friends and roommates. "Initially, we would eat outside but ended up with upset stomachs, so we started cooking for ourselves," Navdeep recalled. "I started with (a throw of) 11 metres initially and now reached 47; I never thought of it. The performance was better than what I expected. I will work harder from now on and will try to win more gold medals for India," he signed off.

PTI ■ PARIS
Navdeep Singh, who suffered from dwarfism, endured not just the usual rigours of training but cruel taunts from onlookers while growing up in his village in Haryana's Panipat district. On Saturday, having turned those taunts into his biggest triumph on sport's grandest stage, the four feet four inches tall para athlete expressed his concerns with the indignities visited upon people whose bodies don't fit the usual moulds, and demanded "same respect" for them. The 23-year-old Indian javelin thrower won an unparalleled gold in the F41 classification at the Paris

Paralympic Games. "Humein bhi utna darja milna chahiye, maine bhi desh ka naam roshan kiya hai (We deserve the same respect, I too have brought glory to the country)," Navdeep said, flashing his gold medal in a video shared by the Paralympic Committee of India (PCI). "My aim is to educate society that we also exist in this world and nobody should make fun of us, which is often the case. We also can make our country proud. "There were a lot of hurdles initially but I kept at it and strengthened myself, which led to good results. This is the biggest moment of my life, I feel proud to sign off with a gold medal," he added.

As the track and field competitions concluded at the Paris Games, Navdeep's golden throw in the final ensured the hallowed Stade de France echoed with the Indian national anthem. His personal best effort of 47.32m initially placed him in second position but it was upgraded to gold after the top finisher, Iran's Sadegh Beit Sayah, was disqualified for repeatedly displaying an objectionable flag. It was a defining moment for Navdeep who silenced all his doubters. Born prematurely in 2000, Navdeep's struggles began from the start. It wasn't until he was two years old that his parents realised their son had

dwarfism, setting the stage for a life filled with both struggles and triumphs. His father, Dalbir Singh, a national-level wrestler, kept motivating him and saw his son as an extension of his own aspirations. Navdeep started his athletic journey at the age of 10, dabbling in wrestling and sprinting before finding his true calling in javelin throw after being inspired by national icon Neeraj Chopra. "The first thing that comes to my mind is my dad (Dalbir Singh). I really miss my family now. Initially, it felt like a burden. I wondered why I couldn't enjoy life like others -- go to school and have fun. "But he (dad) kept me

motivated and on track. In this journey, I can't credit just one person. Champions are made with support, so my coach, my family, the government -- all contributed to our success, taking our medal tally beyond the expectation of 25, reaching 29 already."

EARLY SUCCESS
Navdeep made his international debut at the Asian Youth Para Games, clinching his first gold medal and setting the stage for a remarkable career. He continued to train tirelessly at the Sports Authority of India (SAI) centres in Gandhinagar and Bangalore, honing his skills and refining his technique.



France wins gold in blind football at Paralympics under Eiffel Tower lights

PARIS, (AP)
France defeated Argentina 3-2 on penalties under the lights of the Eiffel Tower for the gold medal in blind football at the Paralympic Games. Frederic Villeroux scored the decisive spot kick to get the partisan home fans' party underway after the teams drew 1-1 in normal time on Saturday. "It felt like the script of a film," said Villeroux, who also made the breakthrough in the 12th minute when he rifled a shot inside the left post. Argentine star forward Maximiliano Espinillo replied from close range straight away after the French defenders failed to clear the ball. "You have to take the good and accept the bad, but we are still very proud," Espinillo said. France is the first team other than Brazil to win blind football at a Paralympics. Brazil won all five previous golds since it was first played at the 2004 Athens Games. The five-time defending champion, which had never lost a match before Thursday's penalty loss to Argentina in the semifinals, was consoled by the bronze medal after a 1-0 win over Colombia thanks to a fierce strike from Jefinho in the 24th minute. Known as the "Paralympic Pelé" because of speed and skill, Jefinho scored in off the left post despite facing two defenders, setting off a roar of appreciation around the Eiffel Tower Stadium. "Today we left all disappointments behind and were able to win," Jefinho said. Blind football is an adaptation of soccer for teams of five players with an audible ball of rattles. The four outfield players must be classified as completely blind, while the goalkeeper is sighted and instructs his teammates where to go. A guide behind the opposition goal also instructs the attacking players. Though the four outfield Argentine players couldn't have seen the sea of French flags around the stadium, they would have heard the fevered rendition of the French anthem around them, and chants of "Allez les Bleus" from the home crowd. The fans were quiet when the ball was in play so the players could hear their guides' instructions. As fulltime approached, the supporters started a boisterous

More golds for the US
On another solid day for United States athletes, Jake Williams scored 26 points as the men won the wheelchair basketball gold by beating Britain 73-69. That made it three from three for the U.S. In Games basketball after the men and women won thrilling finals against France at the Olympics last month, also at Bercy Arena. Fans at Bercy are used to hearing "The Star-Spangled Banner" and they will listen to it again if the women's team wins its final against the Netherlands on Sunday. Earlier, Germany's men won the bronze-medal match against Canada 75-62. Meanwhile, the U.S. Sitting volleyball team made it three golds straight by defeating China 3-1 in the women's final. The Americans have won every title since 2016 in Rio de Janeiro. The U.S. Equestrian team won three more medals in Paralympics dressage, and Fiona Howard and Rebecca Hart clinched their third gold medals of the Paris Games. The Paralympic debutant Howard won the Grade II individual freestyle and the veteran Hart won it in Grade III. Earlier, teammate Kate Shoemaker claimed bronze in Grade IV. Riders compete in five grades, with Grade I for the most severely impaired riders. Howard and Hart previously won individual golds this week and helped the U.S. Win the team event on Friday.

Long may it continue
American swimmer Jessica Long extended her mammoth Paralympics medal collection to 31 with gold in the S8 100-meter butterfly. She won in 1 minute, 10.59 seconds at La Défense Arena, finishing one second clear of Viktoriia Ishchiulova. Britain's Alice Tai was third. The 32-year-old Long also won the women's 400 freestyle on Wednesday. Her Paralympic career started when she was 12 and won three golds at the 2004 Athens Games. S8 is for swimmers with the absence of limbs. Long is a double amputee.

Jessica Pegula not quite ready to assess her run at the US Open after losing to Aryna Sabalenka

PTI ■ NEW YORK
At some point, Jessica Pegula will take stock of what she accomplished over the past month, including the run at the U.S. Open that led to her first Grand Slam final. And, in all likelihood, she will be pleased. Proud, even. That sort of perspective was difficult, though, in the immediate aftermath of a 7-5, 7-5 loss to Aryna Sabalenka at Flushing Meadows on Saturday night with the championship on the line. "Everyone is like, Congrats! Amazing tournament! I'm like, 'Eh, whatever,'" said Pegula, a 30-year-old American who had never before been past the

quarterfinals at a major. "I think maybe once I decompress a little bit, I'm sure I will be a little bit more appreciative and see all of that." She will rise from No. 6 to No. 3 in the WTA rankings on Monday, equaling her career high, after this post-Olympics stretch on North American hard courts that included a title in Toronto and runner-up finishes at both the Cincinnati Open and U.S. Open. In all, boosted by improvements to her serve and her movement, Pegula went 15-2 in that time - with both defeats coming against No. 2 Sabalenka. "For sure, I will take a lot of confidence from this - in maybe like an hour or two --



because ... I'm kind of annoyed. Not even annoyed losing the tournament; it's more just I was looking at it at, like, I just wanted to win

the match," explained Pegula, whose parents own the NFL's Buffalo Bills and NHL's Buffalo Sabres. "Now there's things that are

just in my head that I feel I should have done better and stuff like that. But I think that will pass in a little bit." She had been 0-6 in major

quarterfinals before beating No. 1 Iga Swiatek at that stage this time around. That was followed by a semifinal victory in which Pegula came back from what she called an "embarrassing" first set to beat 2023 French Open runner-up Karolina Muchova in three. Then Pegula showed more mettle by pushing back in each set against Sabalenka, getting to 5-all in each after trailing 5-1 in the first and 3-0 in the second. But in the end, she couldn't quite do enough to keep up with Sabalenka's power. "You're showing some amazing tennis," Sabalenka told Pegula during the trophy ceremony, "and I'm more than sure that, one day, you're going to get one.

India face Syria, aim for successive Intercontinental Cup titles

PTI ■ HYDERABAD
Hosts India and Syria will go head to head in the winner-takes-it-all third and final game of the Intercontinental Cup trophy here on Monday. India, who began the competition with a goalless draw against Mauritius on Tuesday, are eyeing their second consecutive Intercontinental Cup triumph, and third overall. Syria beat Mauritius 2-0 on Friday, which means they hold a slight advantage heading into the final game as the Eagles of Qasioun require only a draw to claim the trophy. Syria have a long history of playing tournaments in India, but the title has always evaded them. The West Asians lost back-to-back Nehru Cup finals to India in 2007 and 2009 before finishing fourth in 2012. In their last trip to India in the 2019 Intercontinental Cup, Syria ended in third place. But for the Blue Tigers to deny them a first silverware on

Indian soil, they will need to end a winless streak stretching back to November last year. "It will be a difficult game for both sides. It's a friendly game, but the team who wins the game wins the trophy. We expect to play a good game and win the tournament," said India head coach Manolo Márquez, who celebrated his 56th birthday on Saturday. But the Spaniard also noted that the need of the hour for the national team is to play good football, and the results will follow. "If you ask me, I prefer to play a good game than to win the tournament. I don't want to win it 1-0, scoring with the hand. I want that, in this moment, the team understands our ideas and we play better because finally, it's not about winning or losing. "You need to arrive at a style of play and that's what we are focusing on. Obviously when you win, the confidence grows and then it's easier. But finally now it's about that we believe that we can compete against all

the teams. "When you have time to work, the possibilities for success are more," Márquez explained in the pre-match press conference. Defender Jay Gupta concurred with his coach's words. "Obviously, it's a game where we have to fight for the cup, but we're just focused on how we adapt to what the coach wants as soon as possible." Having completed a week's training in Hyderabad, the 22-year-old shared that the mood in the dressing room is positive after the arrival of Márquez at the helm. "I think a lot of players have already been under coach Manolo for a longer time (in the clubs), so they would know how to adapt to him. But I just wanted to say the atmosphere in the dressing room is really, really positive," said Gupta. Márquez shared that fitness-wise, there's still work to do for the players since the season is only getting started, but overall, he and his coaching staff are happy with the boys'



attitude in the training ground. "When you are in the pre-season, you are not in your best moment physically. In fact, some players finished the first game very tired. And this is normal. One good thing is that all 25 players are available for tomorrow. "We are satisfied with how they are working. We are very happy with the attitude they have in every training session," said Márquez. Like India, Syria are also in

their new era under new head coach José Lana. The Spaniard was satisfied with their opening-game display against Mauritius as goals from Mustafa Abdullatif and Mahmoud Al-Mawas sealed a 2-0 win. He hopes to keep progressing and do even better against India. "I think India are a great team. I like the way they play with this coach. They try to move the ball fast. I think it will be a difficult match for us. And our

only objective for tomorrow is to be better than our previous match," said Lana. Sharing more thoughts on the Indian team, the Syrian coach said, "I think they have good organisation. They know how to play when they don't have the ball. They try to press high. And when they have the ball, they try to play faster and move the ball from side to side." New England era off to winning start as Rice and Greish come back to haunt Ireland Dublin, Sep 8 (AP) After the pain of the European Championship, England kicked off a new era by beating Ireland 2-0 here. Some 55 days since the defeat to Spain in the Euros final, England began the UEFA Nations League under a new regime following the departure of Gareth Southgate. Interim coach Lee Carsley made an impressive start at Aviva Stadium after first half goals from Declan Rice and Jack Grealish.

The identity of those scorers would have been especially painful for the Irish fans who jeered Rice and Greish for their decision to switch to England after representing Ireland. Carsley, who has stepped up from coaching England's European champion under-21s, also represented Ireland as a player. "We've shown that we've got real talent. We can be really pleased with the clean sheet as well," he said. Rice, who made three appearances for Ireland, fired England ahead in the 11th minute. Greish represented Ireland at youth level up to the U21s and doubled the lead at the end of a slick passing move. Greish was a surprise omission from Southgate's Euro 2024 squad. "There's no better feeling than playing for England, especially in games like this," the winger said. "Honestly, it was probably one of the worst summers of my life because you can't not see

everything that's happening in front of you." New Ireland coach Heimir Hallgrímsson hoped to cause another upset against England after he was co-manager for Iceland's victory over the Three Lions at Euro 2016. But even though England failed to build on its first half superiority after the break, it was a routine win for Carsley's first game in charge. England is behind leader Greece on goal difference in Group B2. Greece beat Finland 3-0 with two goals from Fotis Ioannidis. After some positive performances at the Euros - following its group stage elimination from the 2022 World Cup - the Germans kept that feelgood feeling going by routing Hungary 5-0 in Dusseldorf. Niclas Füllkrug struck in the first half before Germany went on a scoring spree after the break with goals from Jamal Musiala, Florian Wirtz, Aleksandar Pavlovic and Kai Havertz.

NEW ZEALAND SEEKS TO EXPLOIT AFGHANISTAN'S RED-BALL INEXPERIENCE IN TEST

PTI ■ GREATER NOIDA

New Zealand will aim to exploit Afghanistan's relative inexperience in red-ball cricket, in the one-off Test starting here from Monday, and gather momentum ahead of their upcoming World Test Championship challenges in the sub continent. New Zealand's first-ever Test against Afghanistan will kick off a challenging couple of months for the Black Caps who play six long-format matches on the bounce in the subcontinent, something they haven't done in 40 years. With their underwhelming subcontinent record in mind (40 losses in 90 matches), New Zealand would want to hit the straps straightaway. Senior batter Kane Williamson has emphasised on the need to adapt to conditions and with three games under their belt, they would be well prepared for the marquee series against India next month. Spin is expected to dominate proceedings and New Zealand have come well prepared with five slow bowling options.

Left-arm spinner Ajaz Patel, who returns to India for the first time since his 10-wicket haul in Mumbai in 2021, is expected to make the playing XI.

Rachin Ravindra, who has been sweating it out in CSK High Performance Centre in Chennai, is expected to be handy with bat and ball while all-rounders Glenn Phillips, Mitchell Santner and Michael Bracewell are vying to fill the remaining spinners' spots. Matt Henry is New Zealand's best seamer at the moment but captain Tim Southee's dip in Test form will be a concern. Will O'Rourke, or express pacer Ben Sears may be given a go.

New Zealand will need to shake off the rust as they haven't played Test cricket since early March and the tenacious Afghanistan side is poised to pose a strong challenge.

For Afghanistan, who obtained Test status in 2017, this will be only their 10th ever outing in the traditional format. They head to the clash having



lost their last three Tests against Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Ireland. But in their brief Test journey they have managed to beat Ireland, Bangladesh and Zimbabwe. Afghanistan have made significant strides in white-ball cricket, but some players will now need to swiftly make the transition from T20 to Test format.

The disparity in Test experience between Afghanistan and New Zealand is substantial, but Hashmatullah Shahidi and his team will look to gain from familiarity with the Shahid Vijay Singh Pathik Sports Complex in Greater Noida, where they have previously played five ODIs and six T20Is.

Talismanic all-rounder Rashid Khan is not there to bowl his menacing leg-breaks, which is a huge blow for them, while T20 regulars Rahamnullah Gurbaz, Mohammad Nabi, Fazallaq Farooqi, Mujeer ur Rahman, Noor Ahmad and Naveen-ul-Haq are also not available. Ibrahim Zadran, Rahmat Shah and skipper Shahidi, who aver-

ages 44.09 in Tests, will burden the batting responsibilities. Seam-bowling all-rounder Azmatullah Omarzai is likely to make his Test debut, while Zia-ur-Rehman, Zahir Khan, Khalil Ahmed, Qais Ahmad, Shahidullah Kamal and Bahir Shah are the spin options. With rain and thunderstorms forecast throughout the week, the match is likely to be affected.

Teams (from): Afghanistan: Hashmatullah Shahidi (c), Ibrahim Zadran, Rahmat Shah, Abdul Malik, Riaz Hassan, Afsar Zazai (wk), Ikram Alikhil (wk), Bahir Shah, Shahidullah Kamal, Azmatullah Omarzai, Shams ur Rahman, Zia-ur-Rehman, Zahir Khan, Qais Ahmad, Khalil Ahmad and Nijat Masood.

New Zealand: Tim Southee (c), Tom Blundell (wk), Michael Bracewell, Devon Conway, Matt Henry, Tom Latham, Daryl Mitchell, Will O'Rourke, Ajaz Patel, Glenn Phillips, Rachin Ravindra, Mitchell Santner, Ben Sears, Kane Williamson, Will Young.

Shahidi calls for more Test cricket, dedicated home venue for Afghanistan



PTI ■ GREATER NOIDA

Greater Noida, (PTI) Afghanistan captain Hashmatullah Shahidi on Sunday called for more Test matches for his side and a dedicated home venue in India to improve training and gain a competitive edge over their opponents. Afghanistan cannot play in their home country due to ongoing security issues, instead they have hosted matches at three venues in India -- Greater Noida, Lucknow, Dehradun and the UAE. "India is our home, and when we host teams, other nations have played more cricket here," Shahidi said on the eve of the one-off Test against New Zealand.

"Hopefully, we will get a good venue here in India and if we restrict ourselves to one venue, it will be effective for us. Hopefully, the ACB and the BCCI will get us a good venue."

"If you see our records in first-class, it's good because we play at our home ground. We know those conditions. Hopefully, in the future, there will be a time when the teams will travel to Afghanistan and our average will be higher," he added.

Afghanistan have become a force to reckon with in the white-ball formats but since receiving the Test status in 2017, they have played just nine matches, most of them one-off fixtures.

"In six years, nine games is not more. We are new in this for-

mat. We need more experience. If we get more chances on a regular basis, we will improve a lot.

"It's in the hands of the ACB and ICC. When it comes to Test cricket, some players are different from those who play in the leagues."

Shahidi, who has a Test double century, feels a longer run of red ball fixtures will help the Afghans hone their skills in format.

"If we get three-four match series at a stretch, it will be helpful for us as a side. If you look at our past, we would prepare only 10 days ahead of a Test match.

"It's not easy to come to red-ball cricket, by just playing in the nets. Only if you play matches, will you get better at judging the ball."

The game against New Zealand is historic as it will be the first time these two side clash in the longest format.

"It's a good opportunity for us to play against New Zealand, given their rankings. Hopefully, the ACB will try harder to give us opportunities against bigger teams in the future." Their inexperience cost them a historic win against Sri Lanka earlier this year and Shahidi feels it could hurt them against a vastly experienced side like New Zealand.

"It will be a lack of experience, but when it comes to taking challenges, we are a nation that does not take a step backward." We have talented players and we can do well in every department - some of our players have hundreds in this format. It's tough, but if we play to our strength, we can beat any team," he said.

Moeen Ali retires from international cricket



AP ■ LONDON

England all-rounder Moeen Ali has announced his retirement from international cricket after being overlooked for the upcoming white-ball series against Australia.

The 37-year-old Ali said in an interview with British newspaper The Daily Mail that it was "time for the next generation." "It felt the time was right. I've done my part," Ali said.

Ali played 68 Tests, 138 One-Day Internationals and 92 Twenty20 Internationals for England, winning the World Cup in both the shorter forms. He said he still feels like he can compete at the highest level, but was "trying to be

realistic" about his international future. "I could hold on and try to play for England again, but I know in reality I won't," Ali told the Mail.

Matthew Mott was fired as head coach of England's limited-overs teams last month after disappointing title defences in the ODI and T20 World Cups and the appetite for change continued with the removal from the squad of Ali and Jonny Bairstow - two senior players sharing over 400 caps.

Moeen had been an influential vice-captain to Jos Buttler in recent years. England host Australia in an eight-game white-ball tour beginning on Wednesday with a T20 in Southampton.

Indian cricket powerful, talent comes from everywhere says Rahul Dravid

PTI ■ BENGALURU

The legendary Rahul Dravid on Sunday said that Indian cricket has evolved into an "extremely powerful" force, thanks to the growing talent pool that now extends to even the remotest corners of the country.

Dravid, who masterminded India's triumph in the T20 World Cup, said a strong club cricket culture has a lot to do with bucking the old trend of city cricketers dominating the passage to the national team.

"If you look at Indian cricket today, Indian cricket is extremely strong, it's extremely powerful. One of the big reasons for that is that talent comes from everywhere, from all over the country," said Dravid during the 50th year celebration of Mount Joy Cricket Club.

"I think if you go back to the time of say GR Vishwanath or even when I was starting out my career, most of the talent came from the big cities or from few other states.

"Even if they were talented boys in smaller places, they had to come to the big cities to play cricket. But today I think you see in Indian cricket that boys are coming from everywhere," he added.

Dravid said it's getting reflected in the standards of domestic cricket in India.

"You just look at the standard of the Ranji Trophy.

In the old days when you played in the South Zone, other than playing Hyderabad or Tamil Nadu, I think it is fair to say, without being disrespectful, that a lot of other



teams you could take it not for granted but you could certainly take it a little bit more lightly.

"I don't think there is any team in the South Zone today that you can walk in and say that you will comfortably beat," he added.

"Hailing the club cricket structure in the country, particularly in Karnataka, Dravid said the system has allowed the sport to remain accessible to all.

"We need clubs to be strong. We need cricket not to be concentrated in the hands of a few people. We need cricket to be egalitarian, we need it to be all over the place.

"You cannot have talent or you cannot have facilities concentrated only in one or two places.

To get the best out of talent,

we need to ensure that young boys and girls are getting access to good infrastructure in every part," he noted.

"The 51-year-old former Indian captain then briefly revisited his club career when he was young to underscore the need for that system to thrive.

"After the practice, HAL (Hindustan Aeronautics Limited) would give us two eggs and one small glass of milk.

I would always stay back for that glass of milk and those eggs. Not because I wanted the milk and eggs.

"But because I wanted to sit and listen to the likes of BK Kumar or Nandan talking about cricket. And it used to be great fun to listen to them and learn so much from them," said Dravid.

Pacers shine as India B beat India A by 76 runs

PTI ■ BENGALURU

KL Rahul's gumption, which helped him pile a patient fifty, found no resonance among his colleagues as India B pacers led by Yash Dayal pushed India A to a 76-run defeat on the fourth and final day of their Duleep Trophy match here on Sunday. Chasing 275, India A were bundled out for 198 in their second innings as left-arm seamer Dayal (3/50), with able support from his colleagues Mukesh Kumar (2/50) and Navdeep Saini (2/41), led the India B attack. Rahul top-scored for 'A' with a 51.

In the first session of the day, India B made 184 all out in their second essay to muster a handy overall lead of 274. The India A chase began on a shaky note as Mayank Agarwal departed in the second over itself, wafting Dayal away from his body to Nitish Kumar Reddy, who made a wonderful diving catch at second slip.

That brought Rihan Parag to the middle and the right-hander followed the path set on Saturday by Rishabh Pant and Sarfaraz Khan.

Parag took on the bowlers and pacer Mukesh bore the brunt of his aggression, getting



smoked for two sixes and the second maximum touched the roof of the Chinnaswamy Stadium over the mid-wicket region.

Parag added 48 runs for the second with a rather subdued Shubman Gill, who was

dropped by Nitish Reddy at slips off Mukesh on 16, and 31 came off the former's bat in just 18 balls.

But the approach was tough to sustain considering the kind of assistance the bowlers were getting here, and soon his

massive hoick off Dayal took an edge off Parag's bat en route to stumper Rishabh Pant.

Gill (21) departed soon, falling to Saini for the second time in the match and on this occasion, he edged the pacer

to Pant. Dhruv Jurel poked Dayal well outside off-stump to Yashvi Jaiswal at gully, as India batters perished to a combination

of bowlers' persistence on that channel and their own carelessness.

They took the lunch at a queasy 76 for four that soon transpired into 99 for six after the dismissal of Shivam Dube and Tanush Kotian, an hour into the lunch.

However, Rahul batted out 180 minutes 121 balls and

milked 42 runs for the seventh wicket with Kuldeep Yadav to delay the inevitable. The standout shot in an otherwise dull innings was a whistling on drive off Mukesh that fetched him a boundary.

But Mukesh had his revenge soon when Rahul feathered a cut off him to Pant, who completed five catches in this innings, soon after reaching his fifty with a single off Saini.

It effectively signalled the end of the road for India A, though Akash Deep (43, 42b, 3x4, 4x6) gave a few moments of fun with a cavalier innings. But beyond the entertainment value, it always was a case of when more than if.

Earlier, resuming from their overnight score of 150 for six India B could only 34 runs more to the total before getting bundled out.

Pacer Akash, whom Sarfaraz Khan carted around for five fours in a row the previous day, found his mojo to add the scalps of Washington Sundar and Saini to complete a five-wicket haul (5/56).

The spell will keep his name floating among the contenders when the selectors sit together soon to pick up squad for two-match Test series against Bangladesh.

India to bid for 2030 Youth Olympics: Minister Mandaviya

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Sunday said India is set to bid for the 2030 Youth Olympics, a precursor to the country's ambition to host the 2036 Olympics. The 2030 Youth Olympics will be the fifth edition of the international event.

"Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi we are going to bid for the 2030 Youth Olympics but our focus remain on hosting the 2036 Olympics," Mandaviya said on the sidelines of the Olympic Council of Asia's (OCA) 44th General Assembly here.

"Under Modi's leadership we have been able to host multiple international sporting events, including cricket World Cups, football U-17 World Cup," BJP president JP Nadda, who was the chief guest for the event, added.

"India will fight against Peru, Colombia, Mexico, Thailand, Mongolia, Russia, Ukraine, Bosnia and Herzegovina to get the hosting rights for the 2030 Youth Olympics.