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# KEJRIWAL OFFERS TO QUIT AS DELHI CM

RAJESH KUMAR/ SAUMYA SHUKLA ■  
NEW DELHI

In an unexpected move that shook the political circles here, AAP convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday announced that he would resign after two days and would demand early polls in Delhi while vowing not to sit in Chief Minister's chair till people give him a "certificate of honesty".

According to Kejriwal, he will hold a meeting of AAP MLAs in the next couple of days, and a party Leader will take over as the Chief Minister. The AAP convener also ruled out the possibility of former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia being named Chief Minister. The announcement came two days after the Supreme Court granted him bail in the corruption case linked to Delhi's now-scrapped liquor policy. The BJP hit back at the AAP supremo, terming his move a "PR exercise" and a "drama".

The AAP national convener, who reached the party headquarters here on Sunday along with his wife Sunita to address party workers, demanded that the Delhi elections be held in November 2024 with Maharashtra, instead of February 2025. I will only sit on Chief Minister's chair after people give me a certificate of honesty. Want to give 'agnipariksha' after coming out of jail," he said. He also requested all the non-BJP State CMs to "not resign in any situation. And run the Government from jail".

Insiders say his resignation caught many by surprise, but the decision may not be as unexpected as it



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal with other AAP leaders wave during a party workers' meeting, in New Delhi on Sunday

Ranjana Dimri/Pioneer

seems because the Supreme Court granted him bail on Friday, but with several conditions which gives more powers to the Lieutenant Governor. The most significant of these is a restriction barring him from entering the Chief Minister's office or signing official documents "unless absolutely necessary to obtain the Lieutenant Governor's sanctions." He has also been barred

from entering the Delhi secretariat. The surprising decision has left everyone wondering who will be the next Chief Minister of Delhi. Party insiders say Sunita Kejriwal, Rakhi Birlan, Atishi, Gopal Rai and Sandeep Pathak are among the top contenders for the CM post if he resigns. The shock announcement may reap poll benefits for the AAP as

Kejriwal framed his recent announcement as a moral stand, suggesting that he will not occupy the CM chair until he receives a "certificate of honesty" from the electorate. Experts said the move is likely aimed at addressing corruption and governance under Kejriwal's leadership and also serves to rally AAP and its supporters around a

narrative of integrity and accountability. Meanwhile, choosing a CM for just a few months has often led to a power tussle and big exits later, as was witnessed in Jharkhand recently between JMM's Hemant Soren and Champai Soren, and in Bihar in 2014 after JD(U) chief Nitish Kumar reclaimed the top seat from Jitan Ram Manjhi.

Terming it as PR stunt, BJP national spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari claimed that Kejriwal has understood that his image among the people of Delhi is not of an honest leader. BJP leader Manjinder Singh Sirsa said that Kejriwal has no option but to resign because of the bail conditions on him by the Supreme Court. Sirsa claimed that Kejriwal sought two days' time to resign from CM's post to convince the party MLAs to make his wife, Sunita Kejriwal the Chief Minister of Delhi. BJP leader Kapil Mishra termed Kejriwal's announcement as the "victory for the people" of Delhi. "In the end, the corrupt Kejriwal will have to resign. This resignation is being forced due to the Supreme Court's strict action. The man who was adamant about running the Government from jail had to announce his resignation today. This is a major victory for the people of Delhi against corruption," he said. BJP's Harish Khurana questioned why the AAP Leader is creating a drama. "Why after 48 hours? He should resign today. In the past too, he has done this. People of Delhi are asking, he can't go to the secretariat, can't sign documents? What is the point then?"

This is not the first time he resigned. The last time Kejriwal resigned, his Government had worked only for 49 days and the decision was hailed as a masterstroke as the AAP returned with mammoth numbers nearly sweeping the polls by winning 67 of the 70 assembly seats in 2015. The BJP won only 3.

"You people might be thinking I have just come out of jail, why is he going to resign. They have raised allegations against me... They are saying that SC has put conditions on bail. After I resign, AAP will hold a high level meeting and decide a name for CM post," Kejriwal said while addressing party workers at his new headquarters. He said, "Despite the court giving us bail, the case will continue. I spoke to my lawyers. Till the case does not end, I will not sit on the CMs seat. After two days, I am going to resign from the post of CM. I will not sit on the CM's seat till the people elect me and send me to the seat again." Kejriwal alleged that the probe agencies sent him to jail to break his spirits, and the party. "Why did they send me to jail? It was not like I had committed any crime. They also know this. They just want to break my spirit, break my party, poach our Leaders, Ministers... send ED, CBI to torture our Leaders. But our Leaders and workers did not break. But I want to tell you today that they strengthened me by sending me to jail," he said. AAP convener added, "Both Sisodia and I were also stressing about this. He will also not hold any charge. We both will assume our seats when people will reelect us." The AAP national convener said, "I will become Chief Minister and Manish Sisodia deputy CM only when people say we are honest. Kejriwal said he would hold a meeting of AAP MLAs in the next couple of days and a party Leader would take over as Chief Minister.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi flags-off Tatanagar-Patna Vande Bharat train in Jamshedpur, through Video conferencing, Sunday

PTI

## Vande Bharat on Voters' Platter

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■  
JAMSHEDPUR/RANCHI

With Assembly polls in few States round the corner, fresh spice of Vande Bharat train series are back on the platter of the voters as Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday flagged off six Vande Bharat Trains and also launched various projects worth Rs 660 crore. The PM's schedule to flag off the trains and other projects from the Tatanagar Railway Station had to be modified in the morning due to inclement weather which was not feasible for helicopter service from

Ranchi to Tata. Modi landed at Ranchi and the programme had to be scheduled virtually. PM apologised to the people for not being able to reach Tatanagar as "my chopper could not take off from Ranchi due to bad weather". Later during the day PM reached Jamshedpur by road to attend the political programmes and a Parivartan Maha Rally as per schedule. Modi is on a three-day visit to Jharkhand, Gujarat and Odisha where he will flag off several trains, lay the foundation stones and launch projects worth more than Rs

12,460 crore. Jharkhand goes to polls this November. He flagged off six Vande Bharat trains for Jharkhand, Odisha, Bihar and UP at Ranchi. Union Ministers Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Annappurna Devi and Sanjay Seth and Jharkhand Governor Santosh Kumar Gangwar were present at Tatanagar station. Sources said some of the rail projects for poll bound Maharashtra and Jammu and Kashmir are also in pipeline. "The work of laying railway lines, doubling of these and developing modern facilities at railway stations are

underway at a fast pace in Jharkhand," Modi said. Jharkhand, which was lagging in development, will also see rapid growth with the launch of these projects, he said. "The Centre has increased its investment for the development of Jharkhand. This year, Jharkhand has been given an allocation of Rs 7,000 crore for the development of railway infrastructure. If we compare the budget of the past 10 years, it is 16 times higher. Jharkhand has joined the list of States where 100 per cent electrification of the railway network has been achieved," he said.

## Road to justice in Kolkata

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■  
KOLKATA

The Central Bureau of Investigation on Sunday alleged a "larger conspiracy" and "deep nexus" between the hospital authorities and a section of the police in the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital rape and murder case.

A day after arresting Abhijit Mondal the officer-in-charge of the Tala Police Station and re-arresting former RG Kar principal Sandip Ghosh — who is already in jail in custody on charges of corruption — the CBI advocates told the Sealdah Court that the two sides had conspired to destroy evidence and hush up the case. Both Mondal and Ghosh were given three-day CBI remand by the designated court.

Terming the incident an "institutional murder" the CBI pointed out in point 8 of the remand letter how the officer-in-charge showed extra hurry in allowing the cremation of the victim's body. The police "allowed cremation in a hurried manner when the family members demanded second autopsy," the remand letter said questioning the gap of more than 14 hours between the timing when the report



Tala police station officer-in-charge Abhijit Mondal, accused in the doctor rape and murder case, comes out of the Sealdah court after the court sent him to CBI custody till September 17, in Kolkata, Sunday

was beyond his authority, sources quoting the CBI lawyer said. A postgraduate lady doctor of the RGKMCH was raped and murdered in the wee hours of August 8 explaining the "deep nexus" between a section of the police and the hospital authorities, the CBI said. CBI added that there was evidence to show that on the day of the incident Ghosh and Mondal had multiple telephonic conversations. Besides, "Mondal allowed the entire crime scene to be crowded by hospital people and outsiders for hours... people came and went and evidence was allowed to be tampered," lawyers said, adding this took place in front of some of the topmost officers of Kolkata Police. The CBI sources also said that apart from Mondal there were four more police officers who were under their scanner. Among them, there was an Indian Police Services officer. "Notices would soon be served to some of these officers for interrogation," sources in the central agency said adding however, that there was "nothing between the CBI and the police" and that "all the steps that are being taken are taken in the interest of the investigation."

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI/KOLKATA

## Nature's fury engulfs India

Heavy rains have wreaked havoc across India, flooding streets, widespread destruction, disrupting traffic, triggering landslides and chaos in multiple states. From north to south and east to west, the monsoon's relentless downpour has left cities grappling with submerged roads, rescue operations, and widespread chaos.

Gangetic West Bengal. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) data showed India, this monsoon has received 857.5 mm rainfall as against the normal of 795.9 mm so far. Notably, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Punjab and Chandigarh are among the rain deficit States and two weeks left for departure of monsoon this year. Data showed East and North-East sub division has received 1047 mm rainfall as against the normal of 1233.9 mm, a deficit of 15 per cent so far; North-West India including Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, has received rainfall of 590.9 mm as against the normal of 552.5 mm, around 7 per cent more this season.



Central India received 1068.5 mm as against normal of 906.8 mm rainfall, which is 18 per cent more so far. South Peninsula received 759.8 mm

rainfall as against the normal of 631.5 mm, around 20 per cent more this year. The torrential downpour across Delhi for the past few

days has surpassed both annual and seasonal average rainfall in September in the national Capital. According to the India

Meteorological Department (IMD) data, the city has already exceeded the 1,000 mm rainfall mark this month, the highest since 2021 and the second highest in at least the last decade, as against the usual 650 mm of rainfall that it receives during the monsoon season. The month has recorded 125.8 mm of rainfall, which is also 55 per cent higher than normal. Moreover, this continuous spell has brought the city to a halt as rain results in severe waterlogging, closure of underpasses, and traffic snarls, along with occasional reductions in visibility in the city. It has also led to the loss of lives due to drowning and electrocution with reportedly about 40 people dying in

Delhi so far. South Peninsula received 759.8 mm rainfall as against the normal of 631.5 mm, around 20 per cent more this year. The IMD has also issued a fishermen warning, advising against venturing into the northern Bay of Bengal and the coasts of Bangladesh, West Bengal, and Odisha until the morning of September 16 due to expected rough sea conditions. Squally winds with speeds of 45-55 km/h, gusting up to 50 km/h, are anticipated over Gangetic West Bengal (including Kolkata) and nearby areas in North Odisha and Jharkhand. Residents and travelers in the affected areas are advised to stay updated on weather

alerts and take necessary precautions to ensure safety during the severe weather conditions. As many as 200 people died this monsoon so far. Water leakage has been reported at the Taj Mahal after incessant rain in Agra. The death toll in the collapse of a three-storey house in Zakir Nagar in Meerut has risen to 10 while the rescue work at the site is still underway. The local meteorological department issued a "yellow" alert for thunderstorm and lightning at isolated places in six districts of Himachal Pradesh on Sunday and Wednesday. It also predicted a wet spell in the State till September 21. Over 40 roads were closed in the State and 53 power supply schemes were disrupted on Saturday evening as per the State Emergency Operation Centre (SEOC).



# GUEST COLUMN

## Gross Environment Product: Nature's contributions to economy and welfare



Vir Singh

In our contemporary world, most nations assess their economic progress using Gross Domestic Product (GDP). However, Bhutan stands out by adopting Gross National Happiness (GNH) as the cornerstone of its socio-economic development and national pride. Not long ago, the State of Uttarakhand introduced a distinctive economic assessment method—Gross Environment Product (GEP). This makes Uttarakhand the first state in India to adopt GEP as a measure of its economic health, setting a precedent for the nation and the world. Although partially implemented in Costa Rica and a few other regions, this initiative, championed by botanist and environmentalist Anil Prakash Joshi along with the Uttarakhand administration, has yet to gain widespread attention despite its significance.

As global challenges of economic growth and environmental sustainability intensify, there's a rising acknowledgment of the need to reconsider traditional economic metrics that often overlook environmental impacts. While GDP remains a prevalent measure of economic performance, it fails to account for the environmental costs and benefits linked to economic activities. In contrast, GEP offers a meaningful alternative by quantifying the contributions of natural ecosystems to the economy and overall welfare, including human well-being.

Mahatma Gandhi advocated for an "economy of need rather than of greed," and Sunderlal Bahuguna emphasised that "ecology is sustainable economy."

Whether Uttarakhand's focus on GEP can inspire a new philosophy for the socio-economic progress of the state and country remains to be seen. Unlike GDP, which solely focuses on economic output, GEP offers a comprehensive assessment by incorporating environmental factors. This concept recognises that healthy ecosystems are vital for attaining sustainability in socioeconomic development. By valuing ecosystem services, GEP provides a holistic view of a country or region's wealth and sustainability.

Adopting GEP in alignment with natural laws can promote sustainable national development practices. By highlighting the economic value of maintaining healthy ecosystems, policymakers and businesses are encouraged to prioritise conservation and sustainable resource management. This shift could foster more bal-

anced and long-term development strategies that harmonise economic growth with environmental stewardship. GEP serves as a vital tool for policymakers by providing concrete measures of the sustainable benefits derived from ecosystems. This information can guide decisions on land use, con-

servation efforts, and infrastructure development. For instance, GEP can justify investments in green infrastructure, such as afforestation projects, by demonstrating their economic value in flood mitigation and water purification. While GEP's concept may vary by region and cultural context, its calculation generally involves multiple steps and methods reflecting the complexity and diversity of ecosystem services. Common valuation approaches include market-based valuation, replacement cost method, contingent valuation, and benefit transfer. The goal remains eco-centric, sustainable socio-economic development. In Uttarakhand, the GEP encompasses indices related to water, air, forest and soil quality, reflecting the administration's commitment to environmental ethics.

Some countries are ex-

hai province, GEP assessments have valued water supply, carbon sequestration and soil conservation in the Sanjiangyuan region, known as the "Water Tower" of Asia. Costa Rica, in its traditional approach to biodiversity conservation, has integrated ecosystem service valuation into its national accounting framework. By valuing services like tourism, water resources and carbon sequestration, Costa Rica has bolstered its sustainable tourism policies and payment for ecosystem services (PES) programmes.

In the United States, states and municipalities have explored GEP to aid in environmental protection and policymaking. For example, New York City used GEP to evaluate its urban forest's benefits, such as improved air quality, stormwater management, and energy savings, justifying investments in tree planting and maintenance programmes.

Dharm has announced constituting a GEP cell to monitor and ascertain GEP implementation. There is a need to integrate GEP with NITI Aayog and apply it nationwide. The fragile Himalayan ecosystem is crucial for India's sustainable progress, and all Himalayan states should adopt strong political will to implement GEP policies. The Uttarakhand State of the Indian Union is nestled in the centre of the Himalayas, the youngest, the highest and the most fragile mountain range on planet Earth extended into the boundaries of eight Asian countries - Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Tibet (China), Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar. What could be the best in the Himalayas is there in Uttarakhand, the exceptionally rich geographical entity endowed with nature's bounty. The entire Himalayan region, in fact, badly needs entirely distinctive eco-centric, conservation-oriented, and biodiversity-enhancing development intervention. A GEP-centric development intervention and socioeconomic valuation is certainly a promising path to an ecologically sound, environmentally safe and economically vibrant future of the Himalayan Region. How well the Uttarakhand State nourishes its policy and how the other Himalayan states follow the suit is yet to be seen.

Gross Environment Product provides a revolutionary method for balancing economic growth with sustainability. By valuing the diverse benefits provided by natural ecosystems, GEP bridges the gap between economic development and environmental protection. It has the capacity to reform policies, steer sustainable practices, and foster a more balanced relationship between humans and nature. Adopting GEP is not only an economic imperative but also a moral obligation to protect the planet for future generations.

(The author is professor emeritus, environmental science, GB Pant University of Agriculture and Technology. Views expressed are personal)



ploring the use of GEP to enhance their efforts in natural resource management. China, Costa Rica and the United States are notable examples. China, a pioneer in GEP adoption, has implemented pilot projects in various provinces to measure the economic value of ecosystem services. In Qing-

Implementing GEP as actionable policies requires political will and institutional capacity. Governments and organisations must commit to integrating GEP into their planning processes and aligning economic incentives with environmental sustainability. Uttarakhand chief minister Pushkar Singh

could reach him, the officials informed. In a dramatic chase from Harrawala to Jogiwala, the policemen followed the young man until they could ensure his safety. They said that upon questioning, Vibhor revealed that he was under severe mental stress due to personal issues and had chosen suicide as a way out. Following the rescue, Vibhor's friend was called to the scene, who provided information about his family living in the Nehru Colony area. The police then contacted the family and escorted Vibhor home, handing him over to his relatives. The Dehradun senior superintendent of police Ajai Singh also appreciated the police personnel for their approach to the incident. He said that the prompt decision and quick response of the police officers were also highly praised by eyewitnesses and locals at the scene. Thanks to their quick thinking and brave actions, a life was saved and a young man was given another chance to seek help, he said. He also urged people to talk to someone about their issues or seek necessary help regrading their problems rather than resorting to severe measures like suicide that destroys many lives at once.

## Dehradun DM & SSP ride around city, announce women's safety assistance centre in Paltan Bazaar

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

A women's safety assistance centre will be established at CNI Chowk to ensure the safety of women visiting the Paltan Bazaar area in Dehradun. Female police officers will also be stationed at the centre from the opening until the closing of the market. The Dehradun district magistrate Savin Bansal and senior superintendent of police con-

ducted an on-ground inspection of the Dehradun city's traffic management on Sunday. They toured the main roads on a motorcycle along with other officials, visiting areas like Ghantaghar, Kishan Nagar Chowk, Ballupur Chowk and Balliwala to assess

directions were given to prevent any temporary encroachments on the city's main roads, ensuring smooth traffic flow. Bansal and Singh also made a surprise visit to Paltan Bazaar to review women's safety measures. They interacted with women in the mar-

ket to gather their feedback on security concerns. Based on their observations and the feedback, the authorities identified sensitive areas within the market that required additional surveillance. They directed the installation of more CCTV cameras to enhance safety for women visiting the bazaar. They also announced the establishment of a women's safety assistance centre at CNI Chowk, which will operate during market hours with female police officers and Gaura Cheetah personnel for regular patrolling.

The SSP said that this initiative is part of a broader effort to make public spaces in Dehradun safer for women, with regular patrols and security measures to prevent any unfortunate incidents. Besides this, the DM said that he also inspected areas where poor drainage systems have been causing waterlogging. They also discussed locations that need to be designated as Chowks to facilitate necessary improvements and better management.



## Police save man attempting suicide by jumping in front of train in Doon

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Dehradun police personnel saved the life of a young man attempting to commit suicide by jumping in front of an oncoming train on Saturday. The officials informed that the police control room had received a distress call on Saturday informing them that a man was about to take his own life on the railway tracks in Harrawala. The information was relayed by the man's friend, who alerted the authorities about his suicidal intentions. Acting quickly, the officer in charge of Doiwala police station immediately traced the man's mobile location through surveillance. A police team from Harrawala outpost was dispatched to the scene without delay, as per the officials. As the police approached the railway tracks behind the GTM flats, the young man, identified as a 22-year-old Vibhor (name changed), panicked upon seeing the officers. The officials said that in a desperate attempt, he began running toward an oncoming train from the Jogiwala side. Sensing the urgency, the police constables Dinesh Rawat and Tarun Kumar pursued him on foot and managed to grab him and pull him off the tracks, just moments before the train

could reach him, the officials informed. In a dramatic chase from Harrawala to Jogiwala, the policemen followed the young man until they could ensure his safety. They said that upon questioning, Vibhor revealed that he was under severe mental stress due to personal issues and had chosen suicide as a way out. Following the rescue, Vibhor's friend was called to the scene, who provided information about his family living in the Nehru Colony area. The police then contacted the family and escorted Vibhor home, handing him over to his relatives. The Dehradun senior superintendent of police Ajai Singh also appreciated the police personnel for their approach to the incident. He said that the prompt decision and quick response of the police officers were also highly praised by eyewitnesses and locals at the scene. Thanks to their quick thinking and brave actions, a life was saved and a young man was given another chance to seek help, he said. He also urged people to talk to someone about their issues or seek necessary help regrading their problems rather than resorting to severe measures like suicide that destroys many lives at once.

## U'kashi mosque- mismatch between RTI information and land documents

SURENDRA PAL SINGH ■ UTTARKASHI

Differences in the information received under the Right to Information Act and the land documents submitted to the local administration have raised questions at the alleged role of local officials and politicians in facilitating encroachments in Uttarkashi. Locals point out that the Indira Colony area, at the foot of the landslide affected Varunavat mountain is a hub of encroachments and illegal constructions, including the said mosque.

Local residents and activists in Uttarkashi allege that the local government employees and politicians have facilitated various illegal constructions. They have questioned the function of the municipal and departmental officials while stating that the chief minister Pushkar Singh Dharm has been stressing on zero tolerance for corruption. It is pertinent to mention here that various Hindu organisations and local residents had recently taken out a protest rally against the mosque they alleged had been constructed illegally in Uttarkashi. The locals have also expressed concern about considerable demographic change in the region. The State government has also repeatedly claimed that it is concerned about demographic changes, but locals point out the authorities have not taken necessary action to prevent aspects like demographic changes and illegal



constructions. Recent incidents in various parts of the State have further elicited strong opposition from the public to demographic changes, which they state are altering the very character of the State and also resulting in a rise in crimes. The locals here point out that following High Court orders, the State government had demolished encroachments on government land before the Lok Sabha election. This affected the livelihoods of many people but the public in general had supported the anti-encroachment drive. It remains to be seen whether the authorities act against encroachments in Uttarkashi effectively.

Information received from the district administration in reply to an RTI application recently stated that the said mosque has been built illegally on government land. However, members of the Muslim community recently submitted land documents to the district administration, contending that the construction is legal. Citing the documents, they have contended that the mosque has been built without violation of the rules. Locals have questioned the contradiction in the information received under the RTI Act and the documentation provided by those supporting

the mosque. Local residents and activists in Uttarkashi allege that the local government employees and politicians have facilitated various illegal constructions. They have questioned the function of the municipal and departmental officials while stating that the chief minister Pushkar Singh Dharm has been stressing on zero tolerance for corruption. It is pertinent to mention here that various Hindu organisations and local residents had recently taken out a protest rally against the mosque they alleged had been constructed illegally in Uttarkashi. The locals have also expressed concern about considerable demographic change in the region. The State government has also repeatedly claimed that it is concerned about demographic changes, but locals point out the authorities have not taken necessary action to prevent aspects like demographic changes and illegal

## 122nd Ma Nanda Devi Mahotsav concludes in Nainital

PNS ■ NAINITAL

Multitudes thronged the conclusion of eight-day 122nd Ma Nanda Devi Mahotsav here on Sunday. The representations of goddesses Nanda and Sunanda were taken out in a procession from the Naina Devi temple at 12 PM. Thousands of devotees hailed the goddesses as the procession passed through Mallital Bazaar, Pant Park, Lower Mall Road, Tallital Bazaar and Bada Bazaar before returning to Naina Devi Mandir. Musical bands from various places and folk dancers also performed during the procession. Residents of Nainital, villagers from nearby, devotees from Haldwani, Ramnagar, Kashipur, Rudrapur and other cities arrived here to participate in the occasion. The Mahotsav organisers Sri Ram Sevak Sabha distributed Prasad to all the people on the occasion even as various local business fraternity members also offered refreshments to



Multitudes participate in procession on conclusion of Ma Nanda Devi Mahotsav in Nainital on Sunday

Afzal Hussain Fauji/Pioneer photo

the public. The police had also stepped up security arrangements for the occasion. Leader of opposition in the Vidhan Sabha, Yashpal Arya, Nainital MLA Sarita Arya, senior superintendent of police Prahlad Narayan Meena, Sri Ram Sevak Sabha chairman Manoj Sah and others were also

present on the occasion. Meanwhile, devotees who had come from outside Nainital had to struggle to find seats in buses due to crowding.

## Multitudes attend Mata Murti Mandir Utsav in Badrinath

PNS ■ JYOTIRMATH

Thousands of devotees attended the Mata Murti Utsav held in Badrinath on the occasion of Bhadrpad Baman Dwadashi on Sunday. After rain and light snowfall in recent days, clear skies and sunny weather prevailed in Badrinath on Sunday. After the Bal Bhog early in the morning in Badrinath temple, Lord Badrinath's representative Uddhav and the seat of Adi Shankaracharya were carried in a procession to the Mata Murti Mandir accompanied by a band of the Garhwal Rifles and thou-

sands of devotees hailing the lord. The Badrinath Rawal, Amarnath Nambodari also reached the Mata Murti Mandir along with the Dolis and devotees. Upon reaching the temple, Uddhav is believed to have asked Mata Murti about her wellbeing while also informing her devotees. The Doli of Uddhav and seat of Shankaracharya returned to Badrinath temple at about 3 PM. While Uddhav was seated in the Shri Badrish Panchayat, the seat of Adi Shankaracharya was placed in the temple premises.



devotees. The Doli of Uddhav and seat of Shankaracharya returned to Badrinath temple at about 3 PM. While Uddhav was seated in the Shri Badrish Panchayat, the seat of Adi Shankaracharya was placed in the temple premises.

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## 40 stranded pilgrims rescued by air from Adi Kailash route

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Most of the travellers stranded at various locations on the Adi Kailash route due to roads being blocked by landslides, have been rescued by helicopter. The pilgrims remaining in Narayan Ashram will be rescued by

priority of the government. The government is committed to ensuring that people are able to undertake their journeys in a secure environment. Meanwhile, Disaster Management secretary Vinod Kumar Suman also reached

Delhi were stranded at Khela while 30 from Tamil Nadu got stranded at Budi. On learning about this, Dhama directed Suman to rescue the stranded pilgrims by helicopter. On Sunday, 10 pilgrims were taken by helicopter from Khela to the army's helipad in Dharchula. One pilgrim identified as Swadesh Nandchahal had died due to health reasons. His body was brought to Dharchula. The 30 pilgrims stranded in Budi were also brought to the army helipad in Dharchula. Some pilgrims are presently staying in Narayan Ashram and will be rescued by helicopter on Monday, officials said. The local administration has stated that the route will be reopened within two to three days. The CM has directed officials of the departments concerned to ensure that the blocked roads are reopened at the earliest, adding that strict action will be taken against those found negligent.

## SDRF rescues 400 people stranded in Pithoragarh

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) rescued 400 people stranded near Delhi Bend in Pithoragarh in the wee hours of Sunday. The officials informed that the Pithoragarh District Disaster Management Officer (DDMO) informed the SDRF team about 400 people stranded in the area due to road blockage caused due to heavy rain late on Saturday. Responding promptly to the call, the rescue team, led by sub inspector Ram Singh Bora reached the site. Upon arrival, the team found that all the passengers were stuck near Delhi Bend, two kilometres uphill from Pithoragarh. The officials said that the team started the rescue operation and safely evacuated all the stranded individuals within a few hours. During the operation, a sick person had to be rescued via stretcher and was immediately transported to the hospital in another vehicle. They said that the blockage on the main route, caused by debris, had disrupted traffic but was quickly

cleared with the help of excavators, restoring normalcy. The SDRF's commandant Arpan Yaduvanshi said that the SDRF rescue team's timely and effective response not only ensured the safe evacuation of the 400 stranded people but also stood as a testament to their readiness and efficiency in critical situations.



## Damage to Gaula bridge & international stadium result of official negligence: Hridayesh

PNS ■ HALDWANI

Haldwani MLA Sumit Hridayesh has alleged that a portion of the bridge on Gaula river being damaged for the second time is a result of the incompetence of the local administration which is putting the existence of the bridge and the international stadium at risk. Inspecting the affected areas on Sunday along with local public representatives, he talked in detail to officials concerned while also asking them to take immediate steps for the safety of flood affected areas. The MLA said that the Sports Minister Rekha Arya who is also the minister in-charge of Nainital district has not yet inspected the flood affected Gaula bridge and the international stadium. This shows her apathy towards sports and the region which has resulted in disappointment in the public.

The national games are proposed to be held in this international stadium, he added. At the international sports stadium, local public representatives informed the MLA that the

now put this stadium at risk, they alleged. Hridayesh also expressed his dissatisfaction to the officials concerned regarding the damage caused to Gaula bridge. He said that a



damage caused by Gaula to the stadium could have been prevented. However, inefficiency of the local administration has

high level probe should be conducted into the works undertaken in recent years for the safety of the bridge.

helicopter on Monday, officials said. Chief minister Pushkar Singh monitored the rescue operation while directing officials to conduct it on a war footing. The Pithoragarh administration, NDRF, SSB, Uttarakhand Police and Chipsan Aviation company were involved in the rescue mission. Commending all those involved in the operation, Dhama said that the safety of pilgrims is the top

the State Emergency Operations Centre on Sunday to monitor the rescue operation.

Officials informed that pilgrims from Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Delhi had recently left for Adi Kailash. Heavy rains on September 13 caused landslides near Tawaghat and other locations on the Adi Kailash route. Ten pilgrims from Punjab and one from

## Constructions in Kedarnath Dham affecting sanctity, damaging environment: Mahara

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president Karan Mahara has said that construction of multi-story buildings is being done near Kedarnath Dham which is damaging the aesthetic beauty of the Dham and is causing environmental damage to the area located in the high Himalaya. Interacting with the media persons at Congress Bhawan on Sunday, he said that heavy machines are being used in the construction activities in the highly sensitive area. Mahara said that as per the rules only two storey (one ground plus one floor) buildings can be constructed in Kedarnath but the norms are openly being flouted by the contractors most of whom are from Gujarat.

has paid no heed. He claimed that no doctor or health worker was seen on the bridge path to Kedarnath. The PCC president said that the administration had given licenses to small vendors for a sum of Rs 5,900 but when they set up their tents the Forest department imposed a penalty of Rs 10,000 on them.

He said there is no coordination between government departments in Kedarnath due to which small vendors and locals who were dependent on the Yatra for a living are facing problems. He averred that the Kedarnath Pratishtha Raksha Yatra of the Congress was highly successful. After the protest by Congress, Teerth Purohiths and locals, the plan to construct a replica of Kedarnath dham in Buradi of New Delhi has been shelved, he said. Mahara demanded that the sacred stone (Shila) should be returned and the money collected by the Buradi trust for construction of the temple should be deposited in the bank account of the Badrinath Kedarnath Temple Committee. He also demanded that the Prime Minister Narendra Modi should seek apology for violating the sanctity of the Garbh Grah of Kedarnath.

He said that the Congress party is seeking legal opinion on the issue. The PCC president was interacting with the journalists after completing his Kedarnath Pratishtha Raksha Yatra. He alleged that the entire stretch of all-weather road from Rishikesh to Sonprayag is in very bad shape and that the lives of pilgrims and travelers are at risk. Mahara said that the Congress had demanded that oxygen parlours should be opened on the bridge path for the pilgrims but the government

## Two teenagers drown in Ganga river in Pauri

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Two teenagers died by drowning in Ganga river near Kunau village in Pauri district on Sunday morning. The police called the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) to conduct a search and rescue operation for victims, Ishaan Bijlwan and Dipesh Rawat, both aged 15, who were swept away in the river. The SDRF team con-

continued efforts till late evening, the team did not get any clues about Rawat. The officials informed that both teenagers were residents of Bees Bigha, Rishikesh. They expressed uncertainty over how the boys drowned but speculate they were possibly present near the river or bathing in the river when the strong current, common dur-



ducted a search operation for hours in all possible areas where the boys could have been carried by the current. They eventually recovered the body of Ishaan Bijlwan, son of Sunil Datt Bijlwan, and handed it over to the district police. However, despite

ing the monsoon, swept them away. Authorities have urged the public to avoid venturing near rivers and water bodies during heavy rains due to the increased risk of sudden water surges. The search for Rawat will be continued on Monday, the officials added.



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# PM Modi flags off Vande Metro, inaugurates four Vande Bharat trains in Bihar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India's first Vande Metro, which will be virtually flagged off by Prime Minister Narendra Modi today in Gujarat is poised to transform inter-city travel with its advanced medium-distance capabilities. According to Railway Ministry, PM Modi will be in Ahmedabad, the train will start from Bhuj and reach Ahmedabad covering 359 km of distance in 5.45 hours.



Metro was conceptualised by incorporating numerous advancements. Giving a comprehensive overview of the Vande Metro and other Metros being operated in the country, the ministry said, "Vande Metro operates at a maximum speed of 110 km/h, offering faster acceleration and deceleration to passengers. This speed

advantage ensures quicker commutes and improved efficiency." It added, "With ergonomically designed seats, fully air-conditioned cabins and modular interiors, Vande Metro definitely proves to be superior than the other metros." Highlighting its safety aspects, the Railway Ministry

said that Vande Metro is equipped with advanced safety systems like KAVACH for collision avoidance, fire detection, and aerosol-based fire suppression, along with emergency lights. So far it's accessibility is concerned, according to the Ministry, it has been designed with inclusivity in features such as Divyangian-friendly

toilets, a fully sealed flexible gangway and meal service among others. Emphasising its superior technology, the Ministry said that Vande Metro incorporates cutting-edge technology, including under slung propulsion and advanced braking systems, offering a smoother ride. "Featuring 12 coaches with seating for 1,150 passengers, the Vande Metro offers a host of innovative features. It boasts double-leaf automatic sliding doors, similar to those in urban metro trains, and a fully sealed flexible gangway that ensures a dust-free, quiet, and rain-proof interior," the ministry said. A significant upgrade, according to the ministry, from traditional suburban trains and metro coaches is the Vande Metro's modular design that includes ejector-based vacuum evacuation toilets. It stated that the Vande Metro

is designed to connect cities within a 150 km radius, providing efficient and comfortable journeys of approximately 3 to 4 hours. "Vande Metro facilitates smooth end-to-end passenger movement and reduces crowding in individual coaches. The semi-permanent couplers, similar to those on Vande Bharat trains, provide a jerk-free travel experience," the Ministry said. It added, "The train offers faster journeys between mid-distance cities. Its rapid acceleration and deceleration contribute to efficient travel, while driving cabs at both ends eliminates turnaround time." Talking about features that will benefit passengers, it said that Vande Metro has modern amenities, including mobile charging sockets with both type-C and type-A outlets, CCTV surveillance for added security, and route-map indicators above the doors.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Bihar got four more Vande Bharat Express trains on Sunday with Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually flagging them off. These trains would operate on the Tatanagar-Patna, Bhagalpur-Howrah and Gaya-Howrah routes, besides the Deogarh-Varanasi Vande Bharat that would pass through Bihar. These were among six Vande Bharat trains flagged off by the PM from Ranchi. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar attended the programme virtually from his official residence at 1, Anne Marg in Patna, a statement issued by his office said. Deputy CMs Samrat Choudhary and Vijay Kumar Sinha, and senior railway officials were present at Kumar's residence during



the programme, it said. MoS for Railway Raveet Singh Bittu was present at the Bhagalpur station when the trains were flagged off. "It's a new chapter in modern rail travel for Bihar... It will provide faster, more comfortable, and efficient connectivity. This state-of-the-art train is a testament to India's growing infrastructure and commitment to enhancing passenger experience," he posted on X.



## Amit Shah releases expanded Hindi Kahavat Kosh on Hindi Diwas

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah has released the second edition of 'Hindi Kahavat Kosh', authored by Sharad Agrawal, a renowned physician from Uttar Pradesh's Bareilly. The book is a comprehensive compilation of over 10,000 Hindi proverbs and more than 200 stories explaining their origins, aimed at preserving and promoting Hindi linguistic heritage. The book was released here on Saturday at the fourth Akhil Bharatiya Rajbhasha Sammelan held on the occasion of Hindi Diwas. Addressing the programme, Shah said reading Agrawal's book will greatly improve his speaking abilities in the language. Agrawal, with a passion for language preservation, said the idea for the book came from his grandmother, and it took him 20 years to collect these proverbs from various sources, including books and the internet. The first edition of the book, containing 5,400 proverbs, was released in 2021 by Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel. Agrawal said this expanded edition not only increased the collection but also enriched it with stories and pictures, illustrating the objects and origins of the proverbs. "The main objective of this was to preserve these proverbs for the coming generation. I believe that increased awareness of these sayings will further enrich the Hindi language and the vocabulary of the people," he said. In addition to his literary con-

tributions, Agrawal runs the website 'healthhindi.in', which provides valuable information about common diseases and their prevention in simple Hindi, promoting health awareness. Looking ahead, Agrawal said he plans to include folk songs in future editions of the book, continuing his efforts to preserve India's cultural and linguistic heritage. "In Hindi literature, apart from the work done by well known writers, there is a vast area of folk literature contributed by unknown people of society through ages. This was transferred verbally and has accumulated through the generations. This includes proverbs, idioms folklores, folk music and puzzles etc. Due to massive impact of social media, people are forgetting all this legacy of Hindi literature. These invaluable creations are now on the verge of being extinct," Agrawal said. He said to preserve Hindi proverbs and to make them available for the common people, he has authored this book. This book also includes pictures of many things which are mentioned in proverbs but are unknown to the new generations. "This definitely is the largest collection of Hindi proverbs and the stories related to them," he said. The writer said to preserve other precious creations of folk literature, he has also collected a large number of lyrics of folk music, proverbs recited by children, Sanskrit proverbs, common proverbs written on transport vehicles and so many good old puzzles told to "us by our grandparents".

## BJP-led NDA to implement one nation, one election

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP-led NDA Government will implement 'one nation, one election' within its current tenure, sources said, exuding confidence that the reform measure would receive support across party lines. As the third term of the NDA government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi completes 100 days in office, the sources said the cohesion within the ruling alliance will continue for the rest of the tenure. "Definitely, it will be implemented in this tenure itself. It will be a reality," one source said, speaking on condition of anonymity. In his Independence Day address last month, the prime minister made a strong pitch for 'one nation, one election', contending that frequent polls were creating hurdles in the country's progress. "The nation has to come forward for 'one nation, one elec-



tion," Modi had said in his address from the ramparts of the Red Fort. The prime minister urged the political parties "from the Red Fort and with the national tricolour as a witness to ensure the nation's progress". He also asked the parties to ensure that national resources are used for the common person and said, "We have to come forward to realise the dream of 'one nation, one election'." "One nation, one election' is one of the key promises made by the BJP in its manifesto for the Lok Sabha elections. A high-level panel headed by

former president Ram Nath Kovind in March this year recommended simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha and state assemblies as the first step followed by synchronised local body polls within 100 days. Separately, the Law Commission is likely to recommend holding simultaneous polls for all three tiers of government -- Lok Sabha, state assemblies and local bodies like municipalities and panchayats -- starting with 2029 and a provision for unity government in cases like hung house or no-confidence motion.

## Panchayati Raj Ministry to hold national conference on PESA Act implementation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Panchayati Raj Ministry has come up with specialized training modules for effective implementation of the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act and is likely to hold a national conference later this month to discuss and advance the implementation of the law. The PESA Act of 1996 gives special powers to gram sabhas in a state's scheduled areas, especially for the management of natural resources. It is aimed at recognising, empowering and promoting the social, economic, cultural and political way of life of the Scheduled Tribes. The ministry is likely to hold a national conference in Delhi on September 26 that will bring together policymakers, senior officers, panchayat representatives and other key stakeholders from the 10 PESA states to discuss and advance the implementation of the Act, an official said. The 10 states under the PESA



Act are Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan and Telangana. The fundamental spirit of the legislation for tribal areas under the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution is to devolve rather than delegate power and authority to gram sabhas and panchayats, paving the way for participatory democracy. To strengthen the ground-level institutions in these areas, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, in partnership with the PESA States and various NGOs, has

developed seven specialized training modules for the Fifth Schedule areas, an official said. With land alienation being one of the major issues faced by tribals living in these areas, the training programme provides a special focus on the matter, the official said. Land disputes and inadequate implementation of land reform policies are persistent issues in scheduled areas. Due to the lack of awareness about land rights, communities often struggle to assert their rights, thus being deprived of their traditional means of livelihood.

## Government begins decadal census preparations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The government has started preparations for conducting the decadal census, but a decision is yet to be taken on including a column on caste as part of the exercise, sources said on Sunday. Speaking on condition of anonymity, one source said that the decadal census will be conducted soon. India has conducted the census every 10 years since 1881. The first phase of this decade's census was expected to begin on April 1, 2020 but had to be postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The implementation of the Women's Reservation Act, enacted by Parliament last year, too is linked to the conduct of the decadal census. The law reserving one-third of seats for women in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies shall come into effect after an exercise of delimitation is undertaken based on the relevant figures of the first census recorded after the Act has come into force. "This is yet to be decided," the source said when asked about inclusion of a column on caste in the decadal census.

The political parties have been making vociferous demands for conducting a caste census. In the absence of fresh data, the government agencies are still formulating policies and allocating subsidies based on the data of the 2011 census. The house listing phase of the census and the exercise to update the National Population Register (NPR) were scheduled to be carried out across the country from April 1 to September 30, 2020 but it was postponed due to the Covid-19 outbreak. The entire census and the NPR exercise is likely to cost the government more than Rs 12,000 crore, the officials said.

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## SC expresses displeasure over false statements in convict release petitions

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Expressing displeasure over the lawyers repeatedly making false statements before the court as well as in the petitions to secure premature release of the convicts, the Supreme Court has said when it comes across cases like this, "our faith is shaken". A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Augustine George Masih in its recent order recorded its anguish and said that it has come across several cases in the last three weeks where false statements have been made in the pleading. "A large number of petitions are

being filed in this court where in a grievance is made about non grant of permanent remission. During the last three weeks, this is the 6th or 7th case which we have come across where blatantly false statements have been made in the pleadings," the bench said in its September 10 order uploaded recently. It pointed out that on a miscellaneous cases hearing day in the apex court, there are 60 to 80 matters listed before every bench and it is not possible for the judges to go through each and every page of each and every case listed before the court, though an endeavour to go through every case very meticulously.



## Two Navy women officers to embark on global voyage

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Two Indian Navy women officers — Lt Commander Roopa A and Lt Commander Dilna K — would be embarking on an arduous blue-water voyage around the world soon. The duo will be undertaking the expedition of circumnavigating the globe on board Indian naval sailing vessel (INSV) Tarini, Navy spokesperson Commander Vivek Madhwal said on Sunday. The two women officers have been preparing for the 'Sagar Parikrama' expedition for the last three years, he said. "Sagar Parikrama would be a gruelling voyage requiring extreme skills, physical fitness and mental alertness. The officers have been training rigorously and gained thousands of miles of experience under their belt," Commander Madhwal said. "The two officers are undergoing training under the mentorship of ace circumnavigator, and 'Golden Globe Race' hero, Commander Abhilash Tomy (Retired). The officers, as part of a six member crew, had participated in trans-oceanic expedition from Goa to Rio de Janeiro via Cape Town and back last year. Thereafter, they undertook a sailing expedition from Goa to Port Blair and back in double-handed mode. Further, the duo successfully undertook a sortie from Goa to Port Louis, Mauritius again in dual handed mode early this year.

## ICMR formalises MoAs with multiple sponsors under phase one clinical trials network

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Marking a ground-breaking entry into first-in-human clinical trials for four promising molecules, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has formalised Memorandum of Agreements (MoAs) with multiple sponsors under its Network of phase 1 clinical trials. These include collaborative research over a small molecule for multiple myeloma with Aurigene Oncology Limited, partnering for Zika vaccine development with Indian Immunologicals Limited, coordinating seasonal influenza virus vaccine trial with Mynvax Private Limited, and CAR-T cell therapy advancement study for a new indication of chronic lymphocytic leukaemia with ImmunoACT. The initiative is a crucial step towards establishing India as

a leader in the clinical development of pharmaceutical agents, announced the Union health ministry. Union health and family welfare minister, J P Nadda, said that the strategic collaboration between ICMR and prominent industry and academic partners, is a key milestone in the pursuit of affordable and accessible cutting-edge treatments for all citizens. Dr. Rajiv Bahl, secretary, department of health research & director general, ICMR, commented, "This collaboration reflects our commitment to advancing clinical research in India through strategic public-private partnerships. Establishing phase 1 clinical trial infrastructure is

a key component in fostering the development of indigenous molecules and cutting-edge treatments. Our vision is to expand this network further, ensuring that India continues to lead in the development of innovative and affordable healthcare solutions." Dr. Bahl also highlighted the broader impact of ICMR's initiatives, such as the Network for phase 1 clinical trials, INTENT Network, and MedTech Mitra, aligning with the government's vision of a "Viksit Bharat" (Developed India). He cited ICMR's pivotal role in development of Covaxin in collaboration with Bharat Biotech as a testament to the organization's commitment to affordable and accessible healthcare for all.

Navi Mumbai; SRM MCH&RC, Kattankulathur; and PGIMER, Chandigarh—supported by a Central Coordinating Unit at ICMR headquarters, New Delhi. This network is designed to build and enhance India's capacity to conduct early-phase clinical trials, supported by robust infrastructure and dedicated manpower at each trial site, ensuring smooth and effective operations. The signing of these agreements reinforces the strong partnerships ICMR has cultivated with key industry players, said the Ministry. Marking a ground-breaking entry into first-in-human clinical trials for four promising molecules, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has formalised Memorandum of Agreements (MoAs) with multiple sponsors under its Network of phase 1 clinical trials.

## Rahul Gandhi congratulates AIMC leaders on 40th anniversary

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Sunday said the Women's Reservation Act is an opportunity for the Congress to nurture and support both established and aspiring women leaders. In his message on the 40th anniversary of the All India Mahila Congress (AIMC), Rahul said that during the Bharat Jodo Yatra and Bharat Jodo Nyaya Yatra, he met remarkable women across India determined to make a difference. "Many had the passion, perseverance and commitment to drive far reaching changes in society. Some of the fiercest and most fearless voices against injustice were of women," the former Congress chief said. In this day and age, there is no reason whatsoever to deny women meaningful opportunities in public life, he asserted.



Rahul congratulated Mahila Congress leaders and members, both past and present, who built this organisation brick by brick. AIMC has come a long way since the 1984 Bangalore Convention, he said, adding that over the last four decades, the AIMC has been a fearless voice for justice and has firmly established itself as one of the most active front organisations in the Congress party. "On this occasion, I would like to congratulate the AIMC on the launch of the nationwide online membership drive for

the first time," he said. "In a system often stacked against women, it is critical for each one of you to fight for and claim your rightful share of social, economic and political power. I am happy to know that the membership drive will be followed by a pan-India leadership training program," Rahul said. The Women's Reservation Act is an opportunity for the Congress to identify, nurture and support both established and aspiring women leaders, he said. "We have witnessed the radical change ushered in by the 73rd and 74th Amendment. This must inspire us to do more," he said. "I hope the AIMC continues to work towards ensuring greater political participation of women across caste, class and religious lines. Lastly, I salute your dedication to a cause greater than yourself, and wish the AIMC the very best in its future endeavours," Rahul said.

# Will stake claim for CM post if BJP returns to power in Haryana: Anil Vij

**PTI ■**  
AMBALA/CHANDIGARH

Senior BJP leader and former Minister Anil Vij on Sunday said he will stake claim for the chief minister's post if the party returns to power in Haryana after the October 5 Assembly polls.

The six-time MLA's remarks come at a time when the party has already made it clear that Nayab Singh Saini will be the chief minister if the BJP returns to power.

Saini is also the party's chief ministerial face in the polls.

"I never sought anything from the party till today... People from Haryana are coming to meet me. Even in Ambala, people tell me that I am senior-most why I did not become CM. On demand of the people, and on the basis of seniority, this time I will stake claim to become chief minister," Vij said.

Whether the party makes me or not, it is up to them. But if they make me CM, I will take Haryana's 'takdeer and tasveer' (destiny and face of Haryana), the Ambala Cantt MLA said.

When asked to clarify the remarks he made while interacting with reporters in Ambala, Vij later told PTI over phone, "I am the party's senior-most MLA and have won six elections and am contesting my seventh one. I have never sought anything from my party so far."

"But people from across Haryana and people of my own constituency have been meeting me... I will stake claim for the chief minister's post," the 71-year-old Vij said.

"It is up to the party high command to take a call," he said.

When pointed out the Saini has already been declared chief



ministerial candidate, Vij said, "There is no bar on staking the claim. I will make my claim, let the party take a call."

Asked about the timing of his decision with polls only a couple of weeks away, Vij said he took the decision after people came to meet him.

"People have been regularly meeting me and asking me about this (that he is senior most and yet not become CM)," Vij said.

Notably, in March, Manohar Lal Khattar was replaced by Saini as chief minister. Polling for the 90 assembly seats in Haryana will be held on October 5 and the votes will be counted on October 8.

When BJP came to power in Haryana for the first time on its own strength in 2014, Vij along with few other BJP leaders including Ram Bilas Sharma, was frontrunner for the CM's post, but the party

went with Manohar Lal Khattar, a first-time MLA then, as its choice.

Recently, BJP has faced resentment from some of its leaders who were denied tickets.

BJP leaders including Ranjit Singh Chautala, Laxman Napa, Karan Dev Kamboj and few others quit the party.

Former Minister Ram Bilas Sharma was also denied ticket from Mahendragarh this time. In March, Vij was said to be upset with the BJP for not keeping him in the loop when the party decided to replace Manohar Lal Khattar as the chief minister and bring Nayab Singh Saini in his place.

He had then said he came to know about it only in the BJP MLAs' meeting here in which Saini's name was announced. Vij later also did not find a place in the cabinet led by Saini. The senior BJP leader had also kept away from Saini's

swearing-in ceremony in March.

In April, while addressing a public gathering in Ambala, Vij, without taking any names, had said, some people have made him a stranger in his party.

"Mana kuch logo ne mujhe meri party mein he begana bana diya hai, parantu kayee baar begane apno say bhi zyada kaam kar jaate hai, (It may be true that some people have made me a stranger in my party, but sometimes strangers do more work than own people)," Vij had then said.

Vij, who held the home portfolio in the Manohar Lal Khattar government, was often at loggerheads with Khattar when he was the CM.

Vij, has in the past maintained, that he is a dedicated worker of the Bharatiya Janata Party, but whatever he has to say he says it clearly.

## PM Modi accuses JMM-led coalition of patronising Bangladeshi, Rohingya infiltration

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
JAMSHEDPUR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday accused the ruling JMM-led coalition in Jharkhand of patronising Bangladeshi and Rohingya infiltration for vote bank politics.

He said infiltrators from the neighbouring country are a major threat to Jharkhand as they are changing the demography of the Santhal Parganas and Kolhan regions of the state.

"Bangladeshi and Rohingya infiltrators have become a major threat to Santhal Parganas and Kolhan regions. The demography of these regions is changing fast. The tribal population is on the decline. The infiltrators are establishing control of the panchayat system, grabbing land, indulging in atrocities on daughters of the state... Each Jharkhand resident is feeling unsafe," the prime minister said while addressing the 'Parivartan Maharally' of the BJP at Gopal Maidan.

He also alleged that the JMM was "supporting infiltrators" and the fact was that "illegal immigrants from the neigh-



bouring country managed to establish influence" over the ruling party in the state.

Modi termed the JMM, RJD and the Congress as the "biggest enemies of Jharkhand", asserting that these parties were "power-hungry" and "indulged in vote bank politics".

The PM also alleged, "The JMM-led government has been trained by Congress' school of corruption. It is time to bid farewell to the JMM that looted mines, minerals and Army land."

Modi, who was scheduled to reach Jamshedpur via a chopper, had to travel to the steel city on the road as his heli-

## 62 candidates in fray for four Assembly seats in Gurugram

**PARVESH SHARMA ■**  
GURUGRAM

Gurugram district is set to witness a crucial political contest as 62 candidates are in the fray for 4 assembly seats in the upcoming assembly elections.

District Election Officer and Deputy Commissioner Gurugram Nishant Kumar Yadav said that election symbols will be allotted to the candidates who have filed nominations in all four assembly constituencies of the district namely Pataudi, Badshahpur, Gurgaon and Sohna on Sunday.

He said candidates who are willing to withdraw their nomination papers. They can withdraw their nomination papers by September 16 after that the nomination papers will not be considered.

Yadav said that to withdraw the nomination, it is very important for the concerned candidate to fill and submit Form 5. If the candidate is not there, then it is mandatory for the candidate, agent and proposer to take written permission from the candidate to fill Form 5.

He informed that in the district, 8 candidates have filed their nomination papers in



Pataudi assembly, 15 in Badshahpur, 20 in Gurgaon assembly and 19 in Sohna assembly.

The District Election Officer called upon all the candidates to ensure that they follow the instructions issued by the Election Commission.

It is mandatory for the candidate to take permission from the administration for rallies, road shows and other programs. If any candidate violates norms, then necessary action will be taken against them under the rules laid down by the Election Commission.

He informed that voting for the assembly elections will be held on October 5 and counting will be held on October 8, the result will be declared along with the counting.

Meanwhile, Haryana, is known for its politically charged environment, is expected to see intense competition, with various regional and national parties fielding strong candidates.

The two major national parties BJP and the Congress are leaving no stone unturned in its quest to win the elections and cement its influence in the state.

The BJP's campaign is led by top national leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

The BJP's strategy centres on highlighting development projects, promising better governance, and focusing on national security to appeal to voters in Haryana.

## Modi lays foundation stones of road over bridges at Chhota Govindpur, Barigora level crossings

**DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■**  
JAMSHEDPUR

Falling under the Chakradharpur (CKP) Division of the South Eastern Railway zone, Modi laid the foundation stones of road over bridge (ROB) at Chhota Govindpur and Barigora level crossings and an underpass at the Salgajhari level crossing on February 26, 2024 and all the projects are within three kilometres range of the Tatanagar station.

"For years residents waited for the ROB at Barigora, Govindpur and Salgajhari. This would have certainly given much relief to people, particularly the motorists of surrounding areas who take the route to reach the main city. But it was that elections and now this assembly polls ahead not an inch of work you can see. Now we feel all these projects are a poll jumla," said Sanjay Singh, a resident adjacent to Salgajhari Halt when The Pioneer visited to check status of the projects announced PM six months ago.

Social and political outfits besides students' groups have been demanding ROB at the



three level crossings for around past one decade as these are crucial for further socio-economic activities as these projects fall on the main Howrah Tata Mumbai railway line that also bifurcates the rural and urban Jamshedpur industrial town.

Mahendra Jha, a resident near the Govindpur Halt, also rued the fact that the project was limited only to the Lok Sabha sops announcement and it has remained only on the media clippings. "Even today we laugh when we see the foundation stone laying video clips on YouTube," Jha said.

Interestingly after the projects were announced a lot of development activities took place ever since these projects were announced and thereafter foundation stone by PM.

## Kerala Me Too allegations has roots in turf war

**PNS ■** KOCHI

The Me Too controversy plaguing Malayalam film industry with the disclosures made by a report prepared by the K Hema Committee that probed the professional difficulties of women artists and technicians had its roots in the turf war between various power groups in the Kerala Motion Picture Academy (Kerala Chalachitra Academy), a State Government undertaking.

A war of nerves was brewing up in the Academy between the groups led by Ranjit and Bina Paul, the director of International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK), according to sources in the Academy. Ranjit, who was appointed by the Pinarayi Vijayan dispensation quit as chairman following an allegation made by Sreelekha Mitra, Bengali film actress that the former had misbehaved with her in 2009.

The grapevine is that Ranjit, a graduate of the School of Drama in Calicut University tried to usher in changes in the film festivals which was not liked by the cartel controlling the Academy. Ranjit was appointed immediately after the resignation of Kamaluddeen, a controversial character who allegedly molested and abused wannabe artists. But till date no action has been taken against Kamaluddeen, known by his screen name Kamal.

Irked by their sidelining from important positions, the group opposed to Ranjit devised a strategy to oust him from the Academy. It all began during the last IFFK held at Thiruvananthapuram when Ranjit, a hardcore SFI and CPI(M) activist despite his roots in a feudal Nair zamindar family, was booed down by a



section of the audience. Interestingly most of them were CPI(M) activists.

"A thorough probe into the phone calls made by two persons (including a documentary film maker) to Mitra in the recent past. There were no justification behind the telephone contacts between these persons and Mitra at this juncture," said a film professional with Doordarshan Kendra, Thiruvananthapuram. He is of the view that the unprecedented increase in the number of calls between the actress and Chalachitra Academy officials has no other justification.

He also pointed out that though Ranjit was in the industry since 1985 and had his first directorial venture in 2001, this is the first time an accusation of this kind has been made against him. Though Ranjit is known for his arrogance, this scion of a feudal zamindar Nair family despite working with some of the divas have remained aloof from casting couch controversies till Mitra made her allegations. Mitra's allegations prompted many junior artists to come out with "Me Too" charges against many senior artists and they all quit their elected positions in AMMA, an industry body.

The Investigation Team probing the a la Mitra issue has been left clueless over the timing of Mitra's charges.

## HM Shah to wrap up first round of high voltage campaign in Jammu

**PNS ■** JAMMU

To wrap up the first round of the high-voltage election campaign Union Home Minister Amit Shah will be arriving in Jammu on Monday to address three back-to-back election rallies in Ramban and Kishtwar districts on the last day of the campaigning.

The voting is scheduled to take place across 24 Assembly segments on September 18.

A total number of sixteen (16) Assembly Constituencies of four southern districts of Anantnag, Kulgam, Shopian, and Pulwama districts and eight (8) assembly segments of three districts of Doda, Ramban, and Kishtwar will go to polls in the first phase.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Saturday generated momentum in support of the BJP by addressing an impressive rally in Doda. On the occasion, Modi reiterated his government's promise of restoring statehood to Jammu and Kashmir and cautioned



people against bringing the NC, Congress, and the PDP back to power.

"Amit Shah will address 3 rallies at Ramban, Kishtwar, and Padder," BJP Spokesperson & Media Centre Incharge Arun Kumar Gupta said and added, "BJP is getting overwhelming response from the people across J&K and will form a government with the majority". This will be Amit Shah's second visit. Earlier, he made a two-day visit to Jammu, where he not only released the party's

## Rashid springs surprise by allying with banned Jel

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
JAMMU

Awami Ittehad Party (AIP) Supreme and parliamentary Sheikh Abdul Rashid Sunday sprang a surprise by allying with the banned Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) ahead of the first round of polling on September 18.

The alliance was announced by Engineer Rashid during a rally in the Tral area of South Kashmir.

According to the agreement reached between the two, AIP would support banned JeI-backed candidates in Kulgam and Pulwama, and similarly, JeI will throw its support behind AIP candidates across Kashmir. In areas where both AIP and banned JeI have fielded candidates, the alliance has agreed to a "friendly contest," particularly in constituencies like Langate, Devsar and Zainapora.



Before making the formal announcement thorough deliberations were held between the two groups.

AIP was represented in the joint meeting by Member of Parliament Er Rashid, and AIP Chief Spokesperson Inam Un Nabi, while the banned JeI delegation was led by Ghulam Qadir Wani. Prominent former JeI members were also present in the discussions, AIP spokesperson said.

Under the terms of the alliance, in other constituen-

cies, mutual support will be extended to ensure a unified approach to the elections, AIP spokesperson said.

He added both parties underscored the importance of unity in resolving the Kashmir issue and promoting a lasting and dignified peace in the region. They highlighted the rapidly evolving political landscape, both regionally and internationally, and stressed that neither the banned JeI nor AIP can afford to remain passive observers.

## IAF provides aid to Cambodia, Vietnam

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

The Indian Air Force (IAF) has deployed its C-17 Globemaster transport aircraft to provide Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations in Cambodia (Vientiane, Laos) and Vietnam (Hanoi) following the severe flooding caused by Typhoon Yagi, officials said here on Sunday.

Giving details, they said swift and efficient Loading and coordination was carried out by C-17 team at Hindan, Ghaziabad.

Nearly 35 tons of aid comprising of water purification items, water containers, blan-



kets, kitchen utensils, solar lanterns is for Vietnam.

Ten tons of aid comprising genset, water purification items, hygiene supplies, mosquito nets, blankets and sleeping bags for Cambodia.

These aircraft, known for their large cargo capacity and long-range capabilities, are typically used to transport relief materials, essential supplies, and personnel to disaster-affected areas.

## Three including father, son drown during Ganesh idol immersion in Karnataka

**PTI ■**  
TUMAKURU

Three persons including a father and son drowned during immersion of Lord Ganesh idol at Ranganahatti lake in Turuvekere taluk here on Sunday, police said.

The deceased have been identified as Revanna (aged about 50), his son Sharath (26), and Dayanand (22).

The incident took place when Sharath and Dayanand entered the water body to immerse the Lord Ganesh idol after the procession. They were allegedly unable to swim as their legs were caught in sludge, and



called those on the banks of the lake for help. Revanna immediately jumped into the water, but he too couldn't swim and all the three drowned, police said.

Police and Fire department personnel have reached the spot and a search is on to recover the bodies, officials said, adding that a case has been registered.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## India inundated

The unprecedented rains have wreaked havoc across the country, serving as a stark wake-up call for urban planning

India's major cities, including Mumbai, Delhi, and Bengaluru, are reeling from the aftermath of unprecedented rainfall, leading to widespread flooding, loss of life, property damage, and severe disruptions to daily life. As heavy monsoon showers continue to batter these urban hubs, residents are grappling with submerged streets, gridlocked traffic, and power outages, exposing critical flaws in the country's urban infrastructure. This year's torrential downpour has been particularly devastating. In Mumbai, water levels have risen to waist height in low-lying areas, while Bengaluru's once-bustling tech corridors resemble rivers. Over 100 lives have been lost in flood-related incidents across the country, with thousands displaced from their homes. Many families have seen their life savings washed away in a matter of hours as homes and vehicles succumb to rising waters. Besides, the northern cities like Meerut, which hardly ever reported water-logging, have been partially submerged. The economic toll is equally staggering. Shops, offices, and industries have faced forced shutdowns. Public infrastructure has borne the brunt of the floods.



Urban centres in India are no strangers to traffic congestion, but the flooding has exacerbated an already dire situation. In Delhi, where rainwater has clogged major arterial roads, commute times has increased manifold.

The inconvenience is compounded for those who rely on daily wages for their livelihood, as the disruptions prevent them from working. The scale and intensity of these floods underscore the urgent need for India to rethink its urban planning. Many problems are rooted in poor drainage systems, encroachment on natural water bodies, and unregulated urban sprawl. In cities like Mumbai and Chennai, where floods have become an annual menace, experts have long warned of the consequences of unchecked development in flood-prone areas. Indeed the rains have been unprecedented but they have exposed the slackness of urban planning which is ill-equipped to deal with heavy downpours in the monsoon season. Drainage are clogged, necessary equipment is either unavailable or non-functional, and poor planning in executing operations only exacerbates the situation. City drainage across the country are either outdated or inadequate to handle the massive volumes of rainwater. Local governments must invest in upgrading this critical infrastructure, ensuring that water can be efficiently channelled away from residential and commercial areas. Besides the builder-bureaucrat nexus has stolen away the water bodies. Many lakes, rivers, and wetlands that once absorbed rainwater have been lost to unplanned illegal development. It goes without saying that urban planning should incorporate green spaces, permeable surfaces, and sustainable construction practices that allow water to seep into the ground rather than accumulate on the surface. This includes promoting rainwater harvesting and stormwater management solutions. Cities must build climate resilience into their long-term plans.

## PICTALK



Caparisoned elephants participate in the 'pooram' festival as part of the Onam celebration, in Kochi

PTI

## Life's unplanned pathways: A journey through coincidences

Sometimes life unfolds in ways that we cannot foresee, shaped by a mix of choices, opportunities, and coincidences

I joined a premier engineering and science institute after my schooling. I quit two years later as I failed to secure an engineering seat. I joined another engineering college and then the prestigious railway services. My entry into the railways could also be attributed to good fortune as the organization increased the number to be inducted. My inability to join the civil services was a sore point with my parents. I would often tease them that I might have done much better had I continued to pursue science. They would retort that I might have been working as a clerk in some obscure government department. Who knows! I might have worked harder to clear the civil services examinations had I continued to pursue science in the premier institute or had I not been selected for the railways. My father often narrates the story of his friend, a civil engineering graduate from his college, who joined the state services.

He was afraid that the



bridge that he had designed might collapse. He followed my father's advice to join academics. He is now an internationally recognized geotechnical engineer in America. My father is an electrical engineer who joined the engineering college a year into postgraduation. He had wanted to pursue his MSc and then enter academics if he could not join the prestigious IAS. My father does not regret his choices. He does have one memory that he regrets whenever he remembers about it. This is also from his college days. A few of them decided to indulge themselves with an evening out. My father went to the friend's room to take him along. This young boy appeared cheerful but refused to accompany

them. He had committed suicide by the time they returned. My father still ruminates, "Maybe, we could have saved him had we stayed back or pushed him to accompany us." I know an engineer who joined a famous engineering college.

The branch that he had joined was not considered well-placed. He was offered the branch of choice in another college a year later. He left the overnight without consulting anyone. He is extremely successful in his chosen profession. However, he has pangs of regret that his life would have taken a different trajectory had he not taken the impulsive decision and waited the night out to reconsider. The two of us recently bumped into another well-known engineer at Mumbai airport.

This gentleman almost quit the structured and disciplined life of the engineering college which was in stark contrast to the relaxed environs of the science graduate course he had completed. He went to his friend's hostel room with

the admission forms for the postgraduate course, to realise that the studies were as structured and disciplined as his engineering course. He completed his engineering, joined the railway services, and successfully headed a leading metro rail organization in India at the time of his retirement.

We were walking to our car after a beautiful laser show in Connaught Place in Delhi a few years back. I was approached by a lady requesting if she could use my mobile phone to contact her husband. They had got separated in the crowd. The husband spoke to me to thank me for the courtesy. It turned out that we were together during training in my first job. Douglas Coupland, Canadian novelist and designer, said, "Every single moment is a coincidence." It is up to us to use this joker in the pack to play this game of life.

(The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)



SANJAY CHANDRA

Problem-solving is more than an art. It is a matter of resources, teamwork, and timing. Behavioral interventions in problem-solving need to keep this in mind. This applies equally to training programs on problem-solving. Many training programs tend to believe that if their techniques are right the results will surely follow. This is a palpably comforting approach but with limited truth in reality. Amongst the foremost requirements of problem-solving is the need for all the people involved in the process to have the necessary skills to handle the job. The job itself has to be neatly reduced to manageable levels of skill clusters, and the persons allotted the responsibility for it must have the necessary attitude, skills, and approaches to handle the job. Unfortunately, not all in key decision-making situations have the competence to embrace this simple truth.

They seem to have arrived in that position either through regular promotion, seniority, hierarchy, or indeed, simply by chance. While the logic that brought them there is understandable, it does not meet the requirements for getting the tasks done. The result is therefore all to see. Not only do accidents take place, but delays and ineptness also become the hallmarks of a situation. It is important to remember this while planning an activity. It is important to build this into training programs, and above all, it is important to remind those who control the resources to be conscious of this requirement. Even when all the skill columns and more are regularly accounted for, it stands to reason that the resources of the supply chain must be intact and in position. As it happens in organizational setups, the supply chain side and the engineering side need effective dialogue, communication, or exchanges with the human resources side, the skill formation side, and control and monitoring methodologies.

Thus, it is that ineptness becomes an inevitable part of the scene in organizations not so well linked together on these dimensions. It



is therefore necessary to create a culture of effectiveness and an appreciation of the requirements to deliver. To deliver requires, to the extent possible, objective and manageable resource mobilization, skill availability, sensitive monitoring, and linking up with the results in the time set. If this is not done, effectiveness is impaired, and others who can organize themselves will surge forward, and then the institutional returns of the defaulting group will continue to diminish. It may ultimately reach a point where there may be no surpluses to distribute even for salaries or to administer. This is a point of view to which no exceptions can be made. Considering this in the current and growing crescendo on reservations is something that can be avoided only at the grave risk of creating further problems for oneself.

Struggle for the decision-making process is often termed as 'politics' and political processes in a country like India are often determined by numbers. Hence, the push to enhance the numbers of one's following and pander to political rising waves, even though it may not be sustainable in the long run. This is such an obvious warning and caution that it cannot be over-emphasized. The tragedy is, not only that so many people seem to

GRADUALLY, THROUGH POLITICAL COMPULSIONS AND OTHERWISE, THE FOCUS OF RESERVATION-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES WAS EXPANDED TILL THE SUPREME COURT HAD TO STEP IN AND SAY THAT NOT MORE THAN 50% OF POSITIONS COULD BE MADE IN THE RESERVED CATEGORY.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## BAIL IS THE RULE, NOT EXCEPTION

Madam — It is indeed a welcome move on the part of the SC to quote Article 21 of the Indian Constitution which enables an Indian citizen protection of life and personal liberty and orders bail to the leaders with the often quoted words of SC "bail is a rule and jail is an exception. While one would not disagree with this ruling the SC may be reminded of the pending cases where several political leader's cases have been pending for more than two or three decades.

These leaders use the powers they wield and resources in their command and with the aid of the top most lawyers frustrate the system and ensure the trial is delayed for some decades. The pending DA cases of TN ministers and the verdict in the case of Jagdish tytler will vouch for this fact. SC should also lay guide lines for speedy trial in cases such as these while ordering bail.

Gopalaswamy J | Chennai

## PORT BLAIR IS NOW SRI VIJAYA PURAM

Madam — Reference: "Centre renames Port Blair as Sri Vijaya Puram" (the pioneer September, 14). Centre's decision to change the name of Port Blair to Sri Vijaya Puram showcases an indication that they want to acknowledge and celebrate the rich historical and cultural past of India. With reference to the former waterborne empire of Sri Vijaya, this plan is meant to laud the maritime heritage as well as regional pride within India. Nonetheless, such a name change trend would evoke some discussions that are wider in scope regarding modifying names with regard to more contemporary backgrounds. Some people would see it as a bidding to claim back lost histories while others think it disturbs ancestral practices and community memory too much. It is therefore important for the government world to balance them so as to keep themselves including everybody in their stories.

Garima Singh | Kanpur

## CAGED PARROTS

Madam — The Supreme Court's scathing

## India's booming bioeconomy



In reference to 'Indian bioeconomy hits US \$151 billion, contributes 4.25% to GDP' (14 Sept), the remarkable growth in key sectors like biopharma, bio-fuel, and biotechnology could be further accelerated through enhanced government support in the form of funding, tax incentives, and mandatory policies on ethanol-blended petrol and biofuels in agriculture.

Tier-II and Tier-III cities offer significant

comment on the CBI might as well apply to nearly all of the government's institutions (Ref: Supreme Court again compares CBI to caged parrot, p3, Sept. 14). The "caged parrot" remark, now made by Justice Bhuyan, was first made by the Supreme Court way back in 2013, during the investigation of the "Coalgate" scam. A lot of water has flown down the Ganges, but nothing seems to have changed on the ground.

The reiteration of this sarcastic and stinging remark affirms that even the highest investigating agency in the country is beholden to the powers that be. The same remark may be extrapolated to other institutions to a greater or lesser degree. Take the police department as just one example. Cases are doctored, expedited, closed, or hushed up, depending on signals that originate from the political leadership in a particular state.

The recent RGK hospital crime in Kolkata bears shameful testimony to this. No Investigating Officer dares to rub his political masters the wrong way by insisting upon following the rule book. Justice

opportunities for biofuels in the agricultural sector, reducing costs, creating jobs, and fostering local entrepreneurship through dealership networks.

A strategic approach could also be applied to biofuel exports, particularly to neighboring countries. Additionally, there is vast potential for bio-based household products, such as cosmetics, provided there is proper standardization. Universities and research institutions should be encouraged to pursue innovative research in areas like marine biology, space, and vaccines.

The growth of the bioeconomy is a result of joint efforts by the corporate sector, industry, research institutions, and the government. This progress also aligns with India's goals for COP 28.

Vinod Johri | Delhi

is given a short shrift because the department in question, in this case the police department, is a "caged parrot", much like the CBI. Sports and Education are no exceptions. The Brij Bhushan Saran Singh saga bears ample testimony to the fact that political bigwigs run their departments much like their fiefdoms. If sportsmen and sportswomen of repute have to resort to "dharmas" in the country's capital for the redressal of their grievances, the lot of the common man seeking justice can well be imagined. There is nobody to red flag the minister for higher education, M.P. when he rubbishes well established historical facts and claims that we had trade relations with America in the eighth century, even before Columbus discovered America in the fifteenth. The saddest part is, even the fourth estate is playing along, instead of questioning our elected representatives on our behalf. Sad and shameful, to say the least.

Avinash Godbole | Dewas

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

## The art of problem solving

Those in decision-making roles must be equipped with the necessary skills, attitudes, and awareness to meet the demands of their tasks



## FIRST COLUMN

## SPORTS BOOST MENTAL HEALTH

Engaging in sports strengthens emotional stability and cognitive growth



SAKSHI SETHI

Sports have since long been celebrated for their physical benefits, but their impact on mental health is equally profound. Engaging in sports activities is more than just a means to maintain physical fitness. It is one of the powerful tools to enhance mental well-being. In an age where mental health challenges are increasingly common, the role of sports in fostering a healthier mind is more relevant than ever. One of the most significant mental health benefits of sports is their ability to reduce stress and anxiety.

Engaging in various physical activities increases the production of neurotransmitters like serotonin and dopamine, which play a crucial role in regulating the mood and emotions of an individual and being consistent in sports routine can lead them to a more stable mood, thereby helping them in reducing symptoms of depression and promoting overall emotional well-being. Furthermore, achieving personal goals in sports, such as running a faster mile or mastering a new skill, provides a sense of accomplishment that boosts not only self-esteem but also confidence to a large extent. Sports such as basketball, soccer or tennis that involve strategy, coordination as well as decision-making require quick thinking and concentration can help improve cognitive skills over time.

Studies too have shown that regular physical activity can enhance memory, problem-solving abilities as well as attention span, which are all critical components of mental health. By keeping the brain active and engaged, sports help in maintaining cognitive function and prevent age-related decline. Moreover, they also teach individuals how to handle failures, manage stress and push through adversity—skills that are invaluable in everyday life. Whether it is dealing with a loss, overcoming an injury or working hard to achieve a goal, sports challenge individuals to grow stronger



and mentally. This process of overcoming obstacles builds resilience and equips individuals with the mental fortitude to face life's challenges more effectively. Not only this, engaging in team sports, cycling and aerobic activities are particularly effective in reducing anxiety symptoms caused likely due to the combination of physical exertion and social interaction.

When talking about different stages of life, there is no denying the fact that sports play a crucial role in enhancing mental health across various stages of life—whether in school, college or professional settings. Schools can be a stressful environment for children due to academic pressures, social dynamics and extracurricular demands so engaging in sports offers an effective outlet for releasing stress and pent-up energy. Regular participation in the same helps manage stress by releasing endorphins and promoting relaxation, which leads to better focus and productivity in academic pursuits. Sports not only improve physical health but also boost mental acuity. This improved cognitive function can translate into higher productivity and better problem-solving abilities at work. Regardless of age or stage, engaging in sports provides a holistic approach to maintaining and enhancing mental health, making it an invaluable tool for personal well-being and development. Thus, the benefits of sports extend beyond physical fitness thereby contributing significantly to emotional well-being, cognitive development and social integration. By fostering resilience, enhancing emotional regulation and encouraging positive social interactions, sports provide a comprehensive approach to mental health care. In a world where mental health challenges are increasingly prevalent, the importance of sports as a tool for mental well-being cannot be overstated. Encouraging participation in sports at all levels, from casual play to competitive athletics, can be a powerful strategy for improving mental health across all age groups.

*(The writer is an educator; views are personal)*

## Nothing undemocratic about PM's visit to CJI's pooja

In a nation where governance and justice work in tandem to uphold the Constitution, such an event signifies the harmony necessary for collective effort



GOURAV VALLABH



The Prime Minister of India attending a Ganesh Pooja at the residence of the Chief Justice of India (CJI) is an act that should be seen as a symbol of respect and unity rather than an event warranting criticism. In the complex structure of Indian governance, where the judiciary and the executive function as distinct but interdependent pillars, such gestures are appropriate and reflective of the harmony essential for the nation's progress. To criticise this act would be to adopt a narrow-minded approach, ignoring the more profound significance of the occasion. The judiciary and the executive are two of the most important pillars of Indian democracy. While they are distinct in their functions, they share a common purpose: the preservation of the Constitution and the welfare of the people. The Prime Minister, as the head of the executive, and the Chief Justice of India, as the head of the judiciary, embody the leadership of two vital branches of government.

Their personal or religious event participation reflects mutual respect and understanding of their respective roles in the country's governance. The Ganesh Pooja, a significant religious event in India, represents the invocation of wisdom, prosperity, and the removal of obstacles. By attending such an event together, the two leaders are sending a message that they are united in their goals for the nation, seeking divine blessings for the common good. To view this act as inappropriate would be to overlook the fact that it is not merely a personal gathering but a reflection of shared responsibility in upholding the constitutional fabric of India. Critics of the Prime Minister's participation in the Ganesh Pooja at the Chief Justice of India's residence should remember that performing the Ganapati Pooja is not a crime, but a deeply ingrained part of India's cultural and historical heritage. The significance of Ganesh Pooja, especially when viewed through the lens of its revival by the great freedom fighter Bal Gangadhar Tilak, is a reminder of its deeper objectives—unity, nationalism, and collective strength. In this context, the Ganesh Pooja is not just a religious ceremony but a powerful cultural symbol that has historically promoted social



BY COMING TOGETHER AT A RELIGIOUS EVENT, THEY DEMONSTRATE THAT DESPITE THEIR INSTITUTIONAL SEPARATION, THEY WORK TOWARDS THE SAME LARGER AND GREATER GOAL—THE WELFARE OF THE PEOPLE AND THE STRENGTHENING OF INDIAN DEMOCRACY

cohesion, unity, and nationalism. By criticizing such an event, the critics undermine the values that Tilak sought to instil through this festival. In Indian tradition, the term "Karta" refers to the head or manager of a family, responsible for the well-being of the entire household. Similarly, the Prime Minister and the Chief Justice act as the 'Kartas' of their respective domains: the executive and the judiciary. While their roles are different, their objectives often align, especially concerning matters of national interest, law, and justice.

By coming together at a religious event, they demonstrate that despite their institutional separation, they work towards the same larger and greater goal—the welfare of the people and the strengthening of Indian democracy. As the Karta of the executive, the Prime Minister is responsible for running the government, implementing laws, and ensuring the country's development. The Chief Justice, as the Karta of the judiciary, ensures that justice is upheld and that the laws are interpreted and applied in a fair and just manner. These roles complement each other, and public gestures of respect and unity, such as attending a religious event together, only strengthen the understanding and coordination between these two pillars of governance. Only a narrow-minded perspective would find fault in the Prime Minister's attendance at the Ganesh Pooja. Such criticism is often rooted in a limited understanding of the executive and judiciary's roles in the country's broader governance. Criticizing such gestures of goodwill and unity overlooks the significance of collaboration between these branches, which is essential for a well-functioning democracy. By attending the Ganesh Pooja, the Prime Minister and the CJI are reinforcing their commitment to work together for

the nation's greater good. It is well-known that Congress, during its tenure in power, had multiple instances where it was accused of attempting to influence or interfere with the independence of the judiciary. One such example that comes to the mind of every informed citizen is when Chief Justice S.M. Sikri retired on April 25, 1973, the day after the Supreme Court's landmark Kesavananda Bharati judgment, which ruled that Parliament could not alter the "basic structure" of the Constitution. Displeased by this limitation on her plans for constitutional amendments, Indira Gandhi swiftly responded by superseding three senior judges—Justices K.S. Hegde, J.M. Shelat, and A.N. Grover—on April 26.

Justice A.N. Ray, who was less critical of the government's stance, was appointed Chief Justice. This supersession sent a clear message, influencing the Supreme Court's subsequent ruling in the ADM Jabalpur case (also known as the Habeas Corpus case). During the Emergency declared on June 25, 1975, which suspended fundamental rights including the right to life and personal liberty, a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court heard challenges to the presidential order. Attorney General Niren De argued that no judicial remedy could be sought during the Emergency. Justice Khanna questioned the Attorney General about remedies for severe abuses, like police killings, during the Emergency. The Attorney General admitted there would be no judicial recourse during this period. Despite this troubling admission, the majority ruled that citizens had no right to life or personal liberty during the Emergency. Justice Khanna dissented but was later superseded by Justice M.H. Beg as Chief Justice in January 1977. In November 1976, Congress passed the 42nd

Amendment, aiming to undermine judicial independence and establish a more authoritarian regime. The Prime Minister's participation in Ganesh Pooja at the Chief Justice of India's residence underscores mutual respect and recognition of each other's roles and powers.

Unlike Congress, which historically attempted to undermine judicial independence, this gesture reflects a healthy relationship between the executive and judiciary. It demonstrates that both leaders acknowledge and uphold the boundaries of their respective roles, ensuring a collaborative rather than confrontational dynamic in governance and judicial matters. The Prime Minister's attendance at a religious function does not imply interference in the judiciary's functioning or decision-making. There is a significant difference between engaging in respectful cultural or religious participation and attempting to subvert judicial independence for political gains, as seen during the Congress era. To equate the two is to distort history and misrepresent the present.

The Prime Minister performing Ganesh Pooja at the Chief Justice's residence is an act that reflects India's values of cultural unity, mutual respect, and inclusiveness. Only those with a narrow-minded view or divisive political motives would criticize such a gesture. This event represents the healthy relationship between the judiciary and executive, reaffirming their shared commitment to upholding the Constitution and promoting the welfare of the nation. Rather than being a cause for criticism, it should be seen as a celebration of the harmony and unity at the heart of India's democratic and cultural ethos.

*(The writer is professor at XLRI and a BJP Leader; views are personal)*

## The hidden toll of climate change: India's struggle with eco-anxiety and mental health

Rising temperatures and erratic weather patterns are not only threatening the nation's economy but also fueling anxiety, depression and trauma

India's diverse landscape is one of its greatest assets, but it also makes the country highly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. The consequences are increasingly evident in events like wildfires, violent storms, unseasonal rainfall, melting glaciers, air pollution, and heatwaves. These phenomena not only damage the environment but also have serious implications for public health. Heatwaves, for instance, have led to a 53.7% increase in heat-related deaths among people aged 65 and above between 2000 and 2017. Additionally, the growing heat stress could result in an estimated 34 million job losses, while air pollution is expected to cause 6.6 million premature deaths by 2050.



VARADA MADGE

Climate change poses a significant threat to India's economic stability as well. Implementing adaptation strategies will come at a staggering cost of ₹85.6 lakh crore (approximately \$1.065 trillion). While these economic challenges are daunting, the mental health implications of climate change are often overlooked. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth

Assessment Report, shifts in economic, social, and food systems triggered by climate change will lead to long-term mental health impacts, including rising levels of anxiety, depression, and stress.

One of the most alarming consequences of climate change on mental health is the rise of "eco-anxiety." Defined as a persistent worry about the current environmental crisis and the bleak future it suggests, eco-anxiety is affecting millions globally, especially the younger generation. A study by The Lancet across ten countries, including India, surveyed 10,000 young adults aged 16-25 years. The results were sobering: over half of the participants reported feeling 'sad', 'anxious', 'angry', 'powerless', 'helpless', 'insecure', and

'guilty' about climate change. Furthermore, 45% admitted that these emotions disrupted their daily lives, while 75% expressed serious concerns about their future. Most disturbingly, 83% believed that humanity had failed to take adequate steps to protect the planet. The Lancet Countdown report of 2022 further highlighted the mental health consequences for younger people, including increased levels of phobias, drug dependency, sleep disturbances, emotional dysregulation, and cognitive impairment. Children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable to eco-anxiety, as they are growing up in an era where the effects of climate change are becoming more apparent with each pass-



ing year. India has already witnessed numerous climate-induced disasters that have exacerbated mental health issues. According to the National Institute of Disaster Management, India experienced 1,058 climate-related events, including floods, cyclones, droughts, cold waves, and heatwaves between 1995 and 2020. These disasters often

result in severe psychological consequences. For example, the prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in flood-affected populations is estimated to be around 50%. Frequent droughts, for instance, have been linked to high suicide rates among farmers. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reported over 10,000 farmer suicides in 2019. A study also found that when temperatures rise above 20°C, a 1°C increase in a single day's temperature is linked to approximately 70 additional suicides. Over the past three decades, rising temperatures and droughts have contributed to the suicides of around 59,000 farmers in India, accounting for 6.8% of the overall upward trend in suicides.

The future also appears bleak in terms of water security. A 2018 report by Niti Aayog predicts that 21 Indian cities will run out of water by 2030, affecting 100 million people. By that time, 40% of India's population may lack access to clean drinking water, leaving communities stressed and insecure. The mental health impact of such crises is particularly severe for indigenous communities, whose lives and livelihoods are closely tied to their natural surroundings. Sadly, these communities and their experiences remain underrepresented in mainstream discussions about climate change, calling for more focused research to understand their specific vulnerabilities. Addressing these challenges

will require coordinated efforts across sectors. Communities, climate activists, organizations, policymakers, and mental health professionals must collaborate to develop solutions. Initiatives like planting trees, reforestation, and recycling can empower communities and provide a sense of agency, helping alleviate the psychological burden of eco-anxiety.

Policymakers must prioritise the environment by enforcing carbon emission reductions and investing in renewable energy. Mental health surveillance should be integrated into climate policies at every level of governance.

*(The writer is Fellow Environment and Health Assessment, TERI; views are personal)*

# Yemen missile hits Israel, triggers airport sirens

AP ■ JERUSALEM

A missile fired by Yemen's Iran-backed rebels landed in an open area in central Israel early Sunday and triggered air raid sirens at its international airport, in the latest reverberation from the nearly yearlong war in Gaza. There were no reports of casualties or major damage, but Israeli media aired footage showing people racing to shelters in Ben Gurion International Airport. The airport authority said it resumed normal operations shortly thereafter. A fire could be seen in a rural area of central Israel, and local media showed images of what appeared to be a fragment from an interceptor that landed on an escalator in a train station in the central town of Modiin. The Israeli military said it made several attempts to intercept the missile using its multitiered air defences but had not yet determined whether any had been successful. It said the missile appeared to have fragmented midair, and that the incident is still under review. The military said the sound of explosions in the area came from interceptors.



The Yemeni rebels, known as Houthis, have repeatedly fired drones and missiles toward Israel since the start of the war in Gaza between Israel and the Palestinian militant group Hamas, but nearly all of them have been intercepted over the Red Sea. In July, an Iranian-made drone launched by the Houthis struck Tel Aviv, killing one person and wounding 10 others. Israel responded with a wave of airstrikes on Houthi-held areas of Yemen, including the port

city of Hodeidah, a Houthi stronghold. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hinted at a similar response in remarks at a Cabinet meeting after Sunday's attack. "The Houthis should have known by now that we exact a heavy price for any attempt to harm us," he said. "Anyone who needs a reminder is invited to visit the port of Hodeidah." Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree, a military spokesman for the rebels, said they fired a ballistic missile tar-

## '3 hostages recovered months ago were likely killed in Nov airstrike'

Jerusalem (AP): The Israeli military says there is a "high probability" that three hostages found dead months ago were killed in an Israeli airstrike. The army on Sunday announced the conclusions of its investigation into the deaths of Cpl. Nik Beizer, Sgt. Ron Sherman and Elia Toledano. It said investigations had determined that the three were likely killed in a November airstrike that also killed a senior Hamas militant, Ahmed Ghandour. All three of the hostages were kidnapped in Hamas' October 7 attack. Their bodies were

recovered in December, but the cause of death was only recently determined. In its report, the army said there was a "high probability" they were killed in the strike, based on where the bodies were recovered, pathological reports and other intelligence. But it said, "it is not possible to definitely determine the circumstances of their deaths." The conclusions could add pressure on the government to strike a deal to bring home the remaining hostages held by Hamas. Critics say it is too difficult and dangerous to try to rescue them.

getting "a military target" in Jaffa, which is part of Tel Aviv. Hashim Sharaf al-Din, a spokesperson for the Houthi-run government, said Yemenis will celebrate the birthday of Islam's Prophet Muhammad while "the Israelis will have to

be in shelters." Another senior Houthi official, Hezam al-Asad, posted a taunting message in Hebrew on the social media platform X. The Houthis have also repeatedly attacked commercial shipping in the Red Sea, in what

the rebels portray as a blockade on Israel in support of the Palestinians. Most of the targeted ships have no connection to Israel.

The war in Gaza, which began with Hamas' October 7 attack into southern Israel, has rippled across the region, with Iran and allied militant groups attacking Israeli and US targets and drawing retaliatory strikes from Israel and its Western allies. On several occasions, the strikes and counterstrikes have threatened to trigger a wider conflict.

International carriers have cancelled flights into and out of Israel on a number of occasions since the start of the war, adding to the war's economic toll on the country. Iran supports militant groups across the region, including Hamas, the Houthis and Lebanon's Hezbollah, its most powerful ally, which has traded fire with Israel on a near-daily basis since the war in Gaza began. Iran and its allies say they are acting in solidarity with the Palestinians.

The military said around 40 projectiles were fired from Lebanon early Sunday, with most intercepted or falling in open areas. The strikes along

the Israel-Lebanon border have displaced tens of thousands of people on both sides. Israel has repeatedly threatened to launch a wider military operation against Hezbollah to ensure its citizens can return to their homes. "The status quo will not continue," Netanyahu said at the Cabinet meeting. "This requires a change in the balance of power on our northern border. We will do everything necessary to return our residents safely to their homes." Hezbollah has said it would halt its attacks if there is a cease-fire in Gaza.

The United States and Arab mediators Egypt and Qatar have spent much of this year trying to broker a truce and the release of scores of hostages held by Hamas, but the talks have repeatedly bogged down. In recent weeks, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has insisted on lasting Israeli control over the Gaza side of the border with Egypt, which Israeli forces captured in May. He has said Hamas used a network of tunnels beneath the border to import arms, allegations denied by Egypt, which along with Hamas is opposed to any lasting Israeli presence there.

## US-China military leaders discuss SCS tensions

Bangkok (AP): Military leaders from the US and China met in Beijing for routine talks that only resumed in January after being suspended for two years as ties between the two countries soured. The meetings ended on Sunday and officials discussed ongoing issues such as Taiwan, the Russia-Ukraine war and clashes in the South China Sea. Michael Chase, deputy assistant secretary of defence for China, Taiwan and Mongolia led a delegation to engage in the bilateral Defence Policy Coordination Talks, which were last held in January. While the talks weren't expected to resolve long-standing differences in stances over issues ranging from South China Sea claims to Taiwan, the US has continued to push for the discussions as a way to avoid conflict. The meetings were held after Chase attended the Xiangshan forum in Beijing, a defence forum that is China's answer to the Shangri-La Dialogue. Communication between the two militaries broke off in 2021, as US-China tensions ratcheted up over widening differences on issues such as Taiwan's sovereignty, the origin of COVID-19 and economic issues. Beijing has ignored US requests to engage in the past, especially over intercepts between US and Chinese aircraft and ships. While communications resumed after US President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping met in San Francisco last November, it is unclear whether the talks could continue as the US is poised for a presidential election. In the bilateral talks, the two sides discussed China's support for Russia during the ongoing Ukraine war, as well as China's actions in the South China Sea, said a US senior defence official briefing reporters on the meetings. On Sunday, the Philippine ship at a disputed shoal, BRP Teresa Magbanua, had left in order to resupply and provide medical care to its crew members. The defence official said that they were "watching further developments there very closely."



The United States Air Force Air Demonstration Squadron, the Thunderbirds, fly in formation at the Sound of Speed Airshow in St. Joseph, Mo., on Saturday. AP/PTI

# A least 8 die trying to cross English Channel, French authorities say

AP ■ NICE

At least eight people died during a failed attempt to cross the English Channel from northern France, French maritime authorities said on Sunday. The incident occurred Saturday just before midnight when authorities spotted a boat, carrying dozens, in distress near a beach in the northern town of Ambleteuse. A French rescue ship was deployed to the area and rescue services offered medical assistance to 53 migrants on the beach, a statement from the French maritime authorities in charge of the Channel and the North Sea said. "Despite the emergency care provided, eight people have died," the statement said. No people were discovered during the search at sea, it added. Six people were taken to hos-

pital "in relative emergency," including a 10-month-old baby with hypothermia, Jacques Billant, the Pas-de-Calais prefect, told French media on Sunday. He said survivors of the accident come from Eritrea, Sudan, Syria, Afghanistan, Egypt and Iran. Survivors of the tragedy have been taken to the sports hall in Ambleteuse, according to a statement from the prefecture of Pas-de-Calais region. Prosecutor's office in Boulogne-sur-mer has opened an investigation into the accident. The incident Saturday occurred nearly two weeks after a boat carrying migrants ripped apart in the English Channel as they attempted to reach Britain from northern France, plunging dozens into the treacherous waterway and leaving 13 dead, officials said. British officials were quick to

express sadness over another English Channel incident. "It's awful," Foreign Secretary David Lammy told the BBC. "It's a further loss of life." The new Labour Party government has pledged to crack down on criminal gangs plying the channel trade and had discussed with European partners "how we go after those gangs, in co-operation upstream." UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer will be in Italy on Monday for talks with counterpart Giorgia Meloni about her efforts to tackle the problem "and the work they have done, particularly, with Albania." Starmer is interested in the policy, under which Tirana will accept asylum seekers on Italy's behalf while their claims are processed. On Saturday, French coast guard and navy vessels rescued 200 people from the

treacherous waters in the Pas-de-Calais area, according to a report sent by French maritime authorities in charge of the Channel and the North Sea. They said they observed 18 attempts of boat departures from France to Britain on Saturday. Before Saturday's accident, at least 43 migrants had died or gone missing while trying to cross to the UK this year, according to the International Organisation for Migration. In July, four migrants died while attempting the crossing on an inflatable boat that capsized and punctured. Five others, including a child, died in another attempt in April. Five dead were recovered from the sea or found washed up along a beach after a migrant boat ran into difficulties in the dark and winter cold of January.

# Venezuela arrests 6 in alleged Maduro assassination plot

AP ■ BOGOTA

Three Americans, two Spaniards and a Czech citizen were arrested Saturday after Venezuelan officials accused them of coming to the South American country to assassinate President Nicolas Maduro. The arrests were announced on state television by Diosdado Cabello, the nation's powerful interior minister. Cabello said the foreign citizens were part of a CIA-led plot to overthrow the Venezuelan government and kill several members of its leadership. In the television program, Cabello showed images of rifles that he said were confiscated from some of the plotters of the alleged plan. The arrest of the American citizens included a member of the Navy, who Cabello identified as Wilbert Joseph Castañeda Gomez. Cabello said that Gomez

was a navy seal who had served in Afghanistan, Iraq and Colombia. Spain's embassy in Venezuela did not reply to a request for comment on the arrests of its citizens. The US State Department late Saturday confirmed the detention of a US military member and said it was aware of "unconfirmed reports of two additional US citizens detained in Venezuela." Any claims of US involvement in a plot to overthrow Maduro are categorically false. The United States continues to support a democratic solution to the political crisis in Venezuela," the statement said. The announcement of the arrests comes just two days after the US Treasury imposed sanctions on 16 allies of Maduro who were accused by the U.S. government of obstructing voting during the disputed July 28 Venezuelan presidential election, and carrying out

human rights abuses. Earlier this week, Spain's parliament recognized opposition candidate Edmundo Gonzalez as the winner of the election, angering Maduro allies who called on the Venezuelan government to suspend commercial and diplomatic relations with Spain. Tensions between Venezuela's government and the US have increased as well following the election, whose result sparked protests within Venezuela in which hundreds of opposition activists were arrested. Venezuela's Electoral Council, which is closely aligned with the Maduro administration, said Maduro won the election with 52 per cent of the vote, but did not provide a detailed breakdown of the results. Opposition activists, however, surprised the government by collecting tally sheets from 80 per cent of the nation's voting

machines. The tally sheets collected by the opposition were published online, and they indicate that Gonzalez won the election with twice as many votes as Maduro. Despite international condemnation over the election's lack of transparency, Venezuela's supreme court, which has long backed Maduro, confirmed his victory in August. Venezuela's attorney general then filed conspiracy charges against Gonzalez, who fled to Spain last week after it became clear he would be arrested. Maduro has dismissed requests from several countries, including the leftist governments of Colombia and Brazil, to provide tally sheets that prove he won the election. Maduro, who has been in power since 2013, has long claimed the US is trying to overthrow him through sanctions and covert operations.

# Rising floodwaters trigger evacuations in Czech Republic and Poland

AP ■ PRAGUE

Another night of torrential rains pounded Central Europe forced massive evacuations in the hardest hit areas in the Czech Republic, where floods reached extreme levels on Sunday. Meteorologists have warned the situation still might get worse as waters in most rivers are rising, the flood wave made its way through the country and more heavy rains could return overnight. Authorities declared the highest flood warnings in almost 90 places across the country and in two northeastern regions that recorded the biggest rainfall in recent days, including the Jeseniky mountains near the Polish border. In the city of Opava, up to 10,000 people out of a population of some 56,000 have been asked to leave their homes for higher ground. Rescuers used boats to transport people to safety in a neighbourhood flooded by the raging Opava River. "There's no reason to wait," Mayor Tomas Navratil told the Czech public radio. He said the situation was worse than during

the last devastating floods in 1997, known as the "flood of the century." "We have to focus on saving lives," Prime Minister Petr Fiala told the Czech public television Sunday. His government was to possibly meet Monday to assess the damages. Thousands of others also were evacuated in the towns of Krnov and Cesky Tesin. The Oder River that flows to Poland was expected to reach extreme levels in the city of Ostrava and later in Bohumín. Towns and villages in the Jeseniky mountains, including the local center of Jesenik, were inundated and isolated by raging waters that turned roads into rivers. The military sent a helicopter to help with evacuations. Four people who were swept away by waters were missing, police said. About 260,000 households were without power Sunday morning in the entire country while traffic was halted on many roads, including the major D1 highway. A firefighter dies as Lower Austria declared a disaster zone A firefighter died after "slipping on stairs" while pumping out a flooded basement in the town of

Tulln, the head of the fire department of Lower Austria Dietmar Fahrafellner told reporters on Sunday. Authorities declared the entire state of Lower Austria a disaster zone. The situation remains tense, especially at the water reservoir of Ottenstein, which is expected to reach its maximum capacity on Sunday. Romanian reports another flooding victim Romanian authorities said Sunday that another person had died in the hard-hit eastern county of Galati after four were reported dead there a day before following unprecedented rain. In Poland, one person was presumed dead in floods in the southwest, Prime Minister Donald Tusk said Sunday. Tusk said the situation was "dramatic" around the town of Klodzko, with some 25,000 residents, located in a valley in the Sudetes mountains near the border with the Czech Republic. In Glucholazy, rising waters overflowed a river embankment and flooded streets and houses. Mayor Pawel Szymkowicz said, "we are drowning" and appealed to residents to evacuate to high ground.

# Air Canada and pilots union reach tentative pact to avoid shutdown

AP ■ OTTAWA

Air Canada and the union representing its pilots have come to terms on a labor agreement that is likely to prevent a shutdown of Canada's largest airline. Talks between the company and the Air Line Pilots Association produced a tentative, four-year collective agreement, the airline announced in a statement early Sunday. The prospective deal recognises the contributions of the pilots flying for Air Canada and Air Canada Rouge while setting a new framework for company growth. The terms will remain confidential until ratification by union members and approval by the airline's board of directors over the next month, the airline said. The pilots association said

its Air Canada Master Executive Council voted to approve the tentative agreement on behalf of more than 5,400 Air Canada pilots. After review and ratification by a majority of members, the deal is expected to generate an additional \$1.9 billion for the pilots over the period of the agreement, the union said in a statement. "While it has been an exceptionally long road to this agreement, the consistent engagement and unified determination of our pilots have been the catalyst for achieving this contract," Charlene Hudry, the executive council's chair, said in the statement. "After several consecutive weeks of intense round-the-clock negotiations, progress was made on several key issues including compensation, retirement, and work rules." Federal Labor

Minister Steven MacKinnon confirmed the agreement on Sunday and lauded the company and the union. "Thanks to the hard work of the parties and federal mediators, disruptions have been prevented for Canadians," MacKinnon said in a statement. "Negotiated agreements are always the best way forward and yield positive results for companies and workers." The airline and its pilots have been in contract talks for more than a year. The pilots have sought wages competitive with their U.S. counterparts, but Air Canada continues to post record profits while expecting pilots to accept below-market compensation, the union said. The two sides could have issued a 72-hour notice of a strike or lockout beginning Sunday.

# UK royal social media accounts offer b'day wishes to Prince Harry

London (AP): Britain's royal social media accounts posted 40th birthday wishes Sunday for Prince Harry, marking the milestone celebration despite longstanding strains following the publication of his explosive memoir, "Spare." The Royal Family site shared an image of a beaming Harry with a birthday cake emoji and the caption "Wishing The Duke of Sussex a very happy 40th birthday today! The Prince and Princess of Wales shared the image, adding their own birthday wishes. The post from the royal family account marked the first public birthday message for Harry since 2021. The Duke and Duchess of Sussex



announced they were giving up royal duties in January, 2020. They moved to America and said they hoped to become financially independent, signing lucrative deals with Netflix and Spotify. Harry famously shared his story in the memoir, "Spare."

# Tech billionaire back on Earth after first private spacewalk

Cape Canaveral (AP): A billionaire spacewalker returned to Earth with his crew on Sunday, ending a five-day trip that lifted them higher than anyone has travelled since NASA's moonwalkers. SpaceX's capsule splashed down in the Gulf of Mexico near Florida's Dry Tortugas in the pre-dawn darkness, carrying tech entrepreneur Jared Isaacman, two SpaceX engineers and a former Air Force Thunderbird pilot. They pulled off the first private spacewalk while orbiting nearly 460 miles (740 kilometres) above Earth, higher than the International Space Station and Hubble Space Telescope. Their spacecraft hit a peak altitude of 875 miles (1,408 kilometres) following Tuesday's liftoff. Isaacman became only the 264th person to perform a spacewalk

since the former Soviet Union scored the first in 1965, and SpaceX's Sarah Gillis the 265th. Until now, all spacewalks were done by professional astronauts. During Thursday's commercial spacewalk, the Dragon capsule's hatch was open barely a half-hour. Isaacman emerged only up to his waist to briefly test SpaceX's brand new spacesuit followed by Gillis, who was knee high as she flexed her arms and legs for several minutes. Gillis, a classically trained violinist, also held a performance in orbit earlier in the week. The spacewalk lasted less than two hours, considerably shorter than those at the International Space Station. Most of that time was needed to depressurise the entire capsule and then restore the cabin air. Even SpaceX's Anna Menon and Scott "Kidd"

Poteet, who remained strapped in, wore spacesuits. SpaceX considers the brief exercise a starting point to test spacesuit technology for future, longer missions to Mars. This was Isaacman's second chartered flight with SpaceX, with two more still ahead under his personally financed space exploration program named Polaris after the North Star. He paid an undisclosed sum for his first spaceflight in 2021, taking along contest winners and a pediatric cancer survivor while raising more than USD 250 million for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. For the just completed so-called Polaris Dawn mission, the founder and CEO of the Shift4 credit card-processing company shared the cost with SpaceX.



# US to give \$202.25 mn in aid to B'desh

AP ■ DHAKA

The United States will provide USD 202.25 million in aid to Bangladesh to advance development, empower youth, strengthen democracy, improve health and expand trade and economic opportunities to people in the South Asian country, authorities said on Sunday. AKM Shahabuddin, additional secretary of the Economic Relations Division, and Reed J Aeschliman, mission director of USAID, signed the 6th amendment of "The Development Objective Grant Agreement (DOAG)" in Dhaka on behalf of their respective governments, according to a press release from the Ministry of Finance. Under the agreement, USAID will provide a USD 202.25 million grant to Bangladesh for its three sectors namely good governance, social, human and economic opportunity and resilience, the state-owned BSS news agency reported. "Driving greater prosperity: @USAID signed an agreement worth over \$200 million with the Bangladesh interim government to advance development, empower youth, strengthen democracy & governance, improve health and expand trade & economic opportunities to people across the country," the US Agency for International Development (USAID)-Bangladesh said in a post on X. On September 27, 2021, a new DOAG was signed between Bangladesh and USAID for the period of 2021-2026. By implementing the DOAG, USAID is committed to contributing a total of \$954 million. So far up to the 5th amendment, USAID has provided USD 425 million to Bangladesh, the BSS news agency reported. The US provides most of its development assistance through USAID, the United States Department of Agriculture and some other government and non-government organizations, it added. On Sunday, the interim government's Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus met a high-powered American delegation and sought support from the US to rebuild Bangladesh, carry out vital reforms and bring back stolen assets. He described the challenges that the interim government is facing and said his administration has moved quickly to "reset, reform, and

restart" the economy, initiate reforms in financial sectors, and fix institutions such as the judiciary and police. The US delegation assured him of expanding economic and political ties to create a more equitable and inclusive future for its citizens. The multi-agency US delegation was led by Assistant Secretary for International Finance at the US Department of the Treasury Brent Neiman. Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, Donald Lu, who arrived in Dhaka on Saturday from India, also joined the delegation. The meeting came over a month after Yunus, known for his deep relations with Washington, was installed Bangladesh's Chief Advisor following the resignation of Sheikh Hasina who fled the country on August 5 amidst student-led mass protests. "Our (US) delegation met with the Chief Adviser, Professor Muhammad Yunus, affirming our dedication to fostering inclusive growth, institution building and development to benefit the people of Bangladesh," the US embassy in Dhaka said in a statement after the meeting. The statement added that the United States stood ready to support Dhaka's efforts as "Bangladesh looks to chart a more equitable and inclusive future". Earlier in the day, the US delegation met Foreign Adviser Md Touhid Hossain at the state guest house Padma. "We are committed to helping expand economic opportunities, build institutional capacity, uphold human rights, and mitigate climate risks with our partner, Bangladesh," the US Embassy in Dhaka posted on X after the meeting. "Great to meet the foreign affairs adviser at Padma House," said the embassy said. "We support Bangladesh's path towards renewed dynamism and growth. Our engagement with top economic policymakers centred on the authorities' efforts to propel economic growth, job creation, and sustainability, including through engaging with international financial institutions."

## Attempt to murder case filed against Hasina, 58 others

**Dhaka (PTI):** A fresh case has been filed against Bangladesh's ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina and 58 others on the charges of attempting to murder a student during the violent clashes that led to the fall of her government last month, a media report said on Sunday. It was the latest in the slew of cases filed against the 76-year-old former premier, who resigned and fled to India on August 5 following a massive protest by students against a controversial quota system in government jobs. The case was filed on Friday by 22-year-old Fahim Faisal, who claimed he was shot and injured during an anti-government protest in Dinajpur on August 4, a day before the fall of the Hasina-led



Awami League government, The Daily Star newspaper reported. With this, the tally of cases against Hasina has reached 155, including 136 for murder, seven for crimes against humanity and genocide, three for abduction, eight for attempted murder and one for

the attack on a Bangladesh Nationalist Party procession, the report said. According to the case statement, protesters were assaulted with firearms and local weapons, resulting in multiple injuries to Faisal, who was treated at Dinajpur Medical College Hospital and recovered partially. The case accuses 59 people, including Hasina, former whip Iqbalur Rahim and Dinajpur Sadar Upazila Chairman Imdad Sarkar. Over 230 people were killed in the incidents of violence that erupted across the country following the fall of the Hasina-led government, taking the death toll to more than 600 since the massive protest by students first started in mid-July.

## US pledges support for equitable future

**Dhaka (PTI):** The US on Sunday assured Bangladesh of expanding economic and political ties to create a more equitable and inclusive future for its citizens, as the head of the interim government Muhammad Yunus sought support from Washington to rebuild the country and implement key reforms. The multi-agency US delegation was led by Assistant Secretary for International Finance at the US Department of the Treasury Brent Neiman. Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, Donald Lu, who arrived in Dhaka on Saturday from India, also joined the delegation. The meeting came over a month after Yunus, known for his deep relations with Washington, was installed Bangladesh's Chief Advisor following the resignation of Sheikh Hasina who fled the country on August 5 amidst student-led mass protests. "Our (US) delegation met with the Chief Adviser, Professor Muhammad Yunus, affirming our dedication to fostering inclusive growth, institution building and development to benefit the people of Bangladesh," the US embassy in Dhaka said in a statement after the meeting. The statement added that the United States stood ready to support Dhaka's efforts as "Bangladesh looks to chart a more equitable and inclusive future". Yunus outlined the urgent challenges his interim government faces, stressing the need to "reset, reform, and restart" the economy, The Daily Star newspaper reported. "This is a very important time for us and a significant moment in our history," Yunus said, referring to the student-led revolution that culminated in the toppling of the Awami League government. He said his government was committed to getting back

the stolen assets siphoned off by corrupt individuals linked with the previous autocratic regime. He described ongoing reforms in the financial sector, judiciary, and police, which have been initiated to strengthen national institutions and address systemic corruption. Officials familiar with the meeting said the chief adviser's special envoy on International Affairs Lutfey Siddique also joined the talks. Earlier in the day, the US delegation met Foreign Adviser Md Touhid Hossain at the state guest house Padma. "We are committed to helping expand economic opportunities, build institutional capacity, uphold human rights, and mitigate climate risks with our partner, Bangladesh," the US Embassy in Dhaka posted on X after the meeting. "Great to meet the foreign affairs adviser at Padma House," said the embassy. Neiman also met Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed. After the meeting, the embassy said: "We support Bangladesh's path towards renewed dynamism and growth. Our engagement with top economic policymakers centred on the authorities' efforts to propel economic growth, job creation, and sustainability, including through engaging with international financial institutions." The six-member delegation reached Dhaka on Saturday. The US was one of the first countries to welcome Yunus's installation while this is the first delegation from Washington to visit Bangladesh following the formation of his interim government on August 8. The US-Bangladesh ties deteriorated and saw its lowest ebb in recent months when Hasina in public alleged that the US was out to see her ouster as she declined to serve its strategic interest compromising Bangladesh's sovereignty.

## Iran launches satellite amid western fears

**Tehran (AP):** Iran launched a satellite into space Saturday with a rocket built by the country's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, state-run media reported, the latest for a program the West fears helps Tehran advance its ballistic missile program. Iran described the launch as the second such launch to put a satellite into orbit with the rocket. Independent scientists later confirmed the launch and that the satellite reached orbit. Footage later released by Iranian media showed the rocket blast off from a mobile launcher. An Associated Press analysis of the video and other imagery later released suggested the launch happened at the Guard's launch pad on the outskirts of the city of Shahroud, some 350 kilometres (215 miles) east of the capital, Tehran. The launch comes amid heightened tensions gripping the wider Middle East over the ongoing Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip, during which Tehran launched an unprecedented direct missile-and-drone attack on Israel. Meanwhile, Iran continues to enrich uranium to nearly weapons-grade levels, raising concerns among nonproliferation experts about Tehran's programme. Iran identified the satellite-carrying rocket as the Qaem-100, which the Guard used in January for another suc-

cessful launch. Qaem means "upright" in Iran's Farsi language. The solid-fuel, three-stage rocket put the Chamran-1 satellite, weighing 60 kilograms (132 pounds), into a 550-kilometer (340-mile) orbit, state media reported. The rocket bore a Quranic verse: "That which is left by Allah is better for you, if you are believers." A state-owned subsidiary of Iran's Defense Ministry and experts at the Aerospace Research Institute built the satellite with others to "test hardware and software systems for orbital maneuver technology validation," state media said, without elaborating. Gen. Hossein Salami, the head of the Guard, praised the launch in a statement and said scientists successfully overcame "the atmosphere of extensive and oppressive international sanctions." Responding to questions from The Associated Press, the US State Department said it has "long made clear our concern that Iran's space launch vehicle programmes provide a pathway to expand its longer-range missile systems." "We continue to use a variety of nonproliferation tools, in coordination with our allies and partners, to counter the further advancement of Iran's ballistic missile programme and its ability to proliferate missiles and related technology," it added.

## Shanghai cancels flights as Typhoon Bebinca draws near

**Bangkok (AP):** Shanghai's airports are cancelling hundreds of flights Sunday as they brace for impact from Typhoon Bebinca, which is due to make landfall in the early hours of Monday morning, the authorities said. Flights past 8 pm local time will be cancelled at Hongqiao and Pudong airports in the city, the airport officials said in a statement, affecting more than six hundred flights. The city also announced that it was suspending travel on some bridges while restricting that on other highways. Typhoon Bebinca is currently a few hundred kilometers away from the coast. The typhoon's winds are expected to reach 151 km per hour by Sunday night, according to the China Meteorological Administration, which has categorised it as a strong typhoon. State media reported that 9,318 people had been evacuated from one district in Shanghai. Meanwhile, in the nearby city of Zhoushan, restaurants, supermarkets and shops shut down early for the day, and public transportation services were halted.

## ADB asks Pakistan to adopt Indian plan on education

**Islamabad (PTI):** The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has advised Pakistan to adopt India's scheme ULLAS to fix its dysfunctional education system and impart quality training to its citizens, according to a media report. The Manila-based lender's recommendation came in response to Pakistan's request for financial support to improve its education system and impart education to all out-of-school children, The Express Tribune newspaper said. The Understanding of Lifelong Learning for All in Society (ULLAS) was launched by the Government of India in July last year to help non-literates and adults who missed out on formal schooling. The ADB recommends that the government adopt a strategic and multi-stakeholder consultative approach, drawing on international best practices, such as the government of India's new centrally sponsored scheme "ULLAS", according to the lender. The ADB emphasised that the ULLAS scheme emphasises the need for both federal and provincial governments to collaborate urgently to enhance access to quality

education and can offer insightful lessons of success and challenges when considering a similar vertical scheme in Pakistan. Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved the new centrally-sponsored scheme ULLAS for the five-year period to cover all the aspects of "Education for All". The objective of the Indian scheme is to impart not only foundational literacy and numeracy but also to cover other components which are necessary for a citizen of the 21st century such as critical life skills including financial literacy, digital literacy, commercial skills, health care and awareness, child care and education and family welfare. The ADB's recommendation came just days before a scheduled visit of ADB President Masatsugu Asakawa to Pakistan. The ADB president will meet with Pakistani stakeholders on Monday. A Planning Commission's report revealed that Pakistan's education delivery system had become dysfunctional and all the 134 districts, barring Islamabad, were lagging on indicators ranging from learning outcomes to public financing.

## Two die in Ukraine's Odesa after drone, missile attacks

**Kyiv (AP):** Two people died in a missile attack on the Ukrainian Black Sea port city of Odesa, local officials said, as Moscow and Kyiv exchanged drone and missile attacks. The Ukrainian air force said Sunday it shot down 10 of the 14 drones and one of the three missiles Russia launched overnight, while the rest hit the suburbs of Odesa. Oleh Kiper, Odesa's regional governor, said the two who died Saturday night were a married couple, and that another person was wounded in the attack. Meanwhile, the Russian Defence Ministry said it downed 29 Ukrainian drones overnight into Sunday over western and southwestern regions, with no damage caused by the falling debris. It also said another Ukrainian drone was shot down Sunday morning over the western Ryzan region. While Ukraine and Russia regularly launch



overnight drone raids on each other's territory, Ukrainian officials generally do not confirm or deny attacks within Russia's borders. The latest attacks came after Ukraine made a new call Saturday on the West to allow it to use the long-range missiles they have provided to strike targets deep inside Russia, as Ukrainian forces

struggle to hold back Russian advances in eastern Ukraine. So far, the US has allowed Kyiv to use American-provided weapons only in a limited area inside Russia's border with Ukraine. Kyiv officials argue the weapons are vital to weaken Russia's ability to strike Ukraine and force it to move its strike capabilities further from the border.

## Lebanese novelist Elias Khoury dies at 76

**Beirut (AP):** Lebanese novelist Elias Khoury who dedicated much of his writings to the Palestinian cause and taught at universities around the world, making him one of Lebanon's most prominent intellectuals, has died. He was 76. Khoury, a leading voice of Arab literature, had been ill for months and admitted and discharged from hospital several times over the past year until his death early Sunday, Al-Quds Al-Arabi daily that he worked for said. The Lebanese writer, born and raised in Beirut, was outspoken in defense of freedom of speech and harsh criticism of dictatorships in the Middle East. In addition to his novels, Khoury wrote articles in different Arab media outlets over the past five decades making him well known throughout the Arab world. Two days after the Israel-Hamas war broke out on October 7, Khoury wrote an article in Al-Quds A-Arab daily titled "It's Palestine." Khoury wrote then that "the biggest open-air prison, the besieged Ghetto of Gaza, has launched a war against Israel, occupied settlements and forced settlers to flee." Born in Beirut on July 12, 1948, Khoury had been known for his political stances from his support of Palestinians to his harsh criticism of Israel and what he called its "brutal" settling policy in Palestinian territories. He studied at the Lebanese University and later at the University of Paris, where he received a PhD in social history. "The Catastrophe began in 1948 and it is still going on," he once wrote referring to Israel's settlement policies in occupied Palestinian territories. The "nakba," or "catastrophe" is a term used by many Arabs to describe the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians when Israel was created in 1948.

## Imran Khan criticises opponents day after his questioning in jail

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

A day after he was grilled for a provocative social media post, Pakistan's jailed former prime minister Imran Khan on Sunday launched a scathing attack on his opponents, including the chief justice, the establishment and his rival politicians. The 71-year-old Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder in a message from Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail posted on his X account that the government was reportedly going to introduce a constitutional amendment to rewrite the rules about the top judiciary. The former cricketer-turned-politician lashed out at the government for trying to tweak the laws in order to allegedly control the judiciary. "The occupying mafia and its handlers are fighting only for their survival, regardless of the national interest. The attack on the independence of the judiciary is also a link in this chain. All institutions in the country have been destroyed. There remains a Supreme Court which is the last hope and support of the nation," he said. Khan alleged that an "attempt is being made to destroy this last hope of the nation through constitutional amendment and once again the whole institution and system of the country is being put at stake to grant extension to the person of choice." He said "efforts are being made to bring (Chief Justice) Qazi Faiz Isa through the new constitutional amendments to avoid a transparent investigation into human rights violations and electoral fraud." Khan alleged that the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) won less than 20 seats but it was preparing to attack the judiciary in exactly the same way the PML-N government attacked the Supreme Court with batons in 1997. "The only difference is that this time the attack is being carried out by removing the powers of the judiciary. But I want to make one thing clear today that the entire nation stands behind the judiciary," he said. "If they



think that we will sit quietly, then it is their mistake, we will not accept it under any circumstances. Let me make it clear that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf will stand with the country's judiciary in any case. We will call for massive protests across the country," he said. Khan also talked about the case registered by the Federal Investigation Agency against him for targeting the judiciary and the army in a tweet on Friday. He said that a case was registered against him for highlighting the Hamud-ur-Rehman Commission report, which probed the debacle of 1971. "If the Hamud-ur-Rehman Commission report had been implemented, there would have been no martial laws in the country," he said and then added that even now, undeclared martial law is in force in the country. PML-N and its coalition partner Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) are not parliamentary parties, but like puppets, they are dancing on the cues of a few individuals. "The boot is being respected by saying that the vote should be respected," he said in a taunt to Nawaz Sharif who had demanded respect for vote after being thrown out of government in 2017. He said that the government and its backers were going to completely

enslave the nation and asked how can people be arrested from Parliament without the will of the speaker. The PTI leader said, "What is happening to us today can happen to them tomorrow. No one has been forcibly removed from Parliament till date." Khan also said that Prime Minister Shabbaz Sharif was going to be punished in the money laundering case during his government and alleged that the then army chief Qamar Javed Bajwa saved him. He said apart from the money laundering case, all the cases against Shabbaz Sharif, Nawaz Sharif and Ishaq Dar were old. Khan also talked about the case of possession of drugs registered against PML-N leader Rana Sanaullah during his government by the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), which is controlled by the army. "The head of ANF was a Major General. I called the head of ANF and asked him about the case. He had come and briefed the cabinet and presented the evidence related to the case of Rana Sanaullah. He told us that drugs have been seized from Sanaullah. Before us, no one had the courage to call him and ask the question about his own opponents in front of the cabinet. Why did you make this drug case against them," he asked. Khan also said that

when journalist Matiullah Jan was picked up, he got him released. The former premier also spoke about the planned rally by his party at Lahore on September 21. "Political gathering is our democratic and constitutional right. Whether we get permission or not, we will hold a rally in Lahore on September 21," he said. Khan said barricades were erected in Islamabad for the September 8 rally but his supporters came to attend it. "Has Punjab become a police state that we will not be allowed to hold a rally? We are preparing the party for street movement. I am telling my nation and party to prepare. Whatever happens, the present regime will be responsible," he said. He concluded the message by saying: "When there is a war of freedom, sacrifices have to be made. I have been unjustly imprisoned for one and a quarter year. Is this not a sacrifice? I believe in 'La ilaha illa Allah'. I am ready to sacrifice my life but I will not accept anyone's slavery. I also tell the nation not to accept their slavery." The contents of Khan's statement are not much different from the previous social media posts, as he targeted the head of judiciary, the army and his political opponents, mainly from the PML-N.

## China testing stealth fighter jet for its 3rd aircraft carrier: Report

**Beijing (PTI):** China is testing a new stealth fighter jet called J-35 to be deployed on its third aircraft carrier, the Fujian, which is equipped with an electromagnetic catapult unlike the other two fitted with ski-jump take-off ramps, official media reported on Sunday. A new type of warplane was tested earlier this year on the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy's first aircraft carrier, the Liaoning, state-run Global Times quoted official broadcaster CCTV as saying. It added that the new aircraft could be the long-expected J-35 - China's next-generation carrier-borne stealth fighter jet. China currently has two aircraft carriers, Liaoning, a refit of the Soviet-era ship, and Shandong, an indigenously built 2nd aircraft carrier commissioned in 2019. China's third aircraft carrier, Fujian, is larger than the two carriers, with a displacement of 80,000, and is currently undergo-

ing trials. It is the "first fully domestically developed and constructed" aircraft carrier with an electromagnetic aircraft launch system (EMALS) similar to that of the American aircraft carrier, USS Gerald R. Ford, official media reports said. China's other two aircraft carriers are equipped with ski-jump take-off ramps, while the Fujian features a flat-top flight deck. China operates its indigenously built J-15 aircraft for its carriers. Global Times quoted experts as saying that the CCTV report is an official confirmation that China now has a new-type carrier-borne aircraft ready for service. The report also confirmed that the new warplane is operational not only on China's third aircraft carrier, the Fujian, which is equipped with electromagnetic catapults but also on the previous two carriers, the ramp-

equipped Liaoning and Shandong, experts said, noting that this will significantly boost the capabilities of Chinese aircraft carriers. Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post newspaper reported that the J-35 is being developed by Shenyang Aircraft Corporation as China's second fifth-generation fighter jet, following the J-20. The jet is designed for use on aircraft carriers and is still in the development and prototype phase, but it is touted as the Chinese equivalent of Lockheed Martin's fifth-generation fighter jet, the F-35. Collin Koh, a senior fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore, told the Post that "one most straightforward assessment is that the Liaoning, which has long been designated as a test bed for PLA carrier capabilities, is conducting experiments on the J-35 as a viable carrier-borne fighter jet."

# Bharti Airtel leads the market rally

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Nine of the top-10 most valued firms together added Rs 2,01,552.69 crore in market valuation last week, with Bharti Airtel stealing the show, amid bullish investors' sentiment in equities. Last week, the BSE benchmark jumped 1,707.01 points or 2.10 per cent. The 30-share BSE Sensex hit its lifetime high of 83,116.19 on Thursday. Bharti Airtel's valuation jumped Rs 54,282.62 crore to Rs 9,30,490.20 crore, becoming the biggest gainer among the top-10 firms. The market capitalisation (mcap) of ICICI Bank surged Rs 29,662.44 crore to Rs 8,80,867.09 crore. Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) added Rs 23,427.12 crore taking its valuation to Rs 16,36,189.63 crore. The mcap of Hindustan



Unilever soared Rs 22,438.6 crore to Rs 6,89,358.33 crore and that of HDFC Bank zoomed Rs 22,093.99 crore to Rs 12,70,035.77 crore. The market valuation of Infosys climbed Rs 17,480.49 crore to Rs 8,07,299.55 crore and that of ITC rallied Rs 15,194.17 crore to Rs 6,42,531.82 crore. The valuation of Reliance Industries jumped Rs 9,878.19 crore to Rs 19,92,160.61 crore and that of State Bank of India went up by Rs 7,095.07 crore to Rs 7,05,535.20 crore. However, the mcap of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) declined by Rs 3,004.38 crore to Rs 6,54,004.76 crore. Reliance Industries was leading the chart of the top-10 most valued firms followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, Infosys, State Bank of India, Hindustan Unilever, LIC and ITC.

# 90 per cent of financial firms embrace AI, GenAI: Report

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Ninety per cent of Indian financial institutions are focusing on artificial intelligence (AI) and GenAI (Generative Artificial Intelligence) as the primary technology enablers of innovation, according to a PwC India report. As per the PwC India report titled, 'Mapping the FinTech innovation landscape in India' data analytics also continues to emerge prominently across nearly 74 per cent responses, underscoring its integral role in driving insights and decision-making within the financial services (FS) sector. It said that 31 financial institutions consisting of banks, insurance firms and fintechs participated in the



survey. "Artificial Intelligence (AI) and GenAI (Generative Artificial Intelligence) emerged as the focus area for innovation for Indian financial institutions, with 90 per cent of the respondents citing them as the primary technology enablers of innovation," it said. Further, 84 per cent of respondents stated that customer experience and engagement - acquisition, onboarding and servicing was the key area of focus for innovation initiatives. Additionally, over 50 per cent of the participants highlighted product distribution as a key area of innovation.

It can also be noted that the frequent references to risk management, operations and regulatory compliance across several responses highlight the sector's diligence in maintaining robust governance frameworks amidst ongoing technological advancements, the report said. As the fintech industry continues to evolve, it's clear that growth must be balanced with the critical challenges of digital security and regulatory compliance, Mihir Gandhi, Partner and Payments Transformation Leader, PwC India, said. "Fintech companies need to navigate an ever-changing regulatory landscape while building compliant partnerships to ensure sustainable success.

# HDFC Bank to double income of marginal farmers as CSR initiative

**PTI ■ VARANASI**  
The country's biggest private sector lender HDFC Bank looks to increase the income of 5 lakh marginal farmers earning less than Rs 60,000 annually by 2025, as part of its corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative, Parivartan. "The bank's focus on rural development reflects our continued commitment to fostering sustainable growth and uplifting vulnerable communities. Since its inception in 2014, Parivartan has grown into one of India's largest CSR programmes, active in 28 states and 8 Union Territories," HDFC Bank Deputy Managing Director Kaizad M Bharucha said. Launched in 2014, HDFC Bank 'Parivartan' was established with the vision to contribute to the socio-economic development of communities across India. With a CSR expenditure of over Rs 5,100 crore over the last decade, Parivartan has



consistently aimed to empower individuals by creating sustainable livelihoods, fostering sustainable development, and creating real-life change. Besides, he said, the bank under its CSR initiative, plans to impart skill training for nearly 2 lakh individuals to equip them with capabilities that drive self-sufficiency. Bringing 2 lakh acres of unirrigated land under irrigation, fostering agricultural productivity and scholarships for 25,000 meritorious underprivileged students to improve access to

education are some other initiatives that the bank intends to undertake. Parivartan has made significant strides in key areas such as education, skill development, healthcare, and financial inclusion, aligning its efforts with nine of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), he said. "Economic and financial well-being of society is what every responsible lender should aspire for. Our commitment to this principle is underscored in our CSR programme. Unequivocally, the business of banking is underpinned by trust and as a responsible lender, and the bank stands committed to contributing to nation-building," he added. HDFC Bank has reported a CSR spend of Rs 945.31 crore for the financial year 2023-24, an increase of nearly Rs 125 crore from the previous year. As per the Companies Act 2013, every company for which the CSR provisions apply must ensure that the firm spends in every financial year at least 2 per cent of its average net profits made during the immediately preceding three financial years as per its CSR policy. The bank's net profit increased by 38 per cent to Rs 60,812 crore on FY'24 from Rs 44,109 crore in the previous fiscal. Average net profit of the company for the CSR calculation comes out to Rs 47,294 crore taking into account net profit of Rs 36,961 crore for FY'22. So, the bank should be spending around Rs 950 crore during the current fiscal. "With over 65 per cent of India's population residing in rural areas, we strongly believe that inclusive development can only be attained when the prosperity and livelihood in villages keeps pace with the growth. We prioritise rural areas for our programme and currently 70 per cent of our programmes are being implemented in such areas," said Nusrat Pathan, Head CSR, HDFC Bank. Bharucha further said that the bank is working towards becoming carbon neutral by 2031-32. As part of this initiative, he said, the bank is looking at reducing its emissions, energy, and water consumption. The bank will continue to incorporate and scale up the use of renewable energy in its operations. As part of the green initiative, he said, the bank has raised USD 300 million through its first ever sustainable finance bond issue in February this year.

# Tata Power Solar installs rooftop solar systems in Chhattisgarh

**PTI ■ RAIPUR**  
The rooftop solar systems installations by Tata Power Solar Systems Ltd (TPSSL) have reached 600 in Chhattisgarh under an initiative, a company official said on Sunday. The company, which is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Tata Power Renewable Energy Ltd (TPREL), launched its rooftop solar system installation initiative after its success in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Kerala, the official said. Though the installation of rooftop solar systems under the initiative, 'GharGharSolar, Tata Power ke Sang', started in mid-this year in the state, it was officially launched by Tata Power Company Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director Praveer Sinha and TPREL CEO and MD Deepesh Nanda this week, the official said. The initiative intends to make



clean energy available to all households in the state, building on the commitment to promoting sustainable energy solutions throughout India, he said. Chhattisgarh has become a significant hub for TPSSL's activities and initiatives, with a catered portfolio of over 600 installations, equivalent to more than 250 MW capacity across residential, commercial, industrial, and direct projects. The initiative will cover all 33 districts of the state, he said. In line with the PM Surya Ghar Yojana, residents can receive a central government subsidy of Rs 30,000 for 1kW, Rs 60,000 for 2kW, and Rs 78,000 for a 3-10kW system, he said. These subsidies aimed at making solar energy installations more accessible and affordable, enabling every household to shift to renewable energy without financial burden, he said.

# CEA urges banks to adapt changing customer preferences

**PTI ■ CHENNAI**  
Chief Economic Advisor to the Centre, V Anantha Nageswaran has said banks should adapt to changing customer preferences and market dynamics in order to remain competitive. He highlighted the crucial role of agriculture in driving economic growth at an event organised by public sector Indian Bank here on Saturday. In his remarks on the topic 'Indian Economy and Trends', Nageswaran stressed on the importance of technological advancements in driving growth and innovation in the industry. The CEA, in a press release issued by the Bank, emphasised the need for



banks to adapt to changing customer preferences and market dynamics to remain competitive. He hailed the Indian Bank for its efforts to invest in knowledge sharing and excellence and lauded its initiative under the MSME Prerana programme which is aimed at training the entrepreneurs. In his address, Indian Bank

# India seeks investments from South Korea, Japan for shipbuilding, repair clusters

**PTI ■ GOA**  
India is seeking investments and technology transfer from South Korea and Japan to establish shipbuilding and ship repair clusters to promote the domestic shipping supply chain in the country, according to a senior government official. Currently, India holds less than 1 per cent of the global shipbuilding market, dominated by China, South Korea, and Japan. "We are looking at South Korea and Japan for investments and technology transfer for establishing shipbuilding and ship repair clusters in India," TK Ramachandran, Secretary in



Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW), told a group of journalists here. Ramachandran was in Goa to participate in the 20th Maritime State Development Council (MSDC), where plans for a mega shipbuilding park, spanning multiple

states, were discussed. "We have communicated to them (South Korea and Japan) that you come with your technology and investments, we will provide you land for setting up shipbuilding and ship repair clusters," he said. Ramachandran also said that

# Indian Overseas Bank bags Rajbhasha Kirti Puraskar



**PTI ■ CHENNAI**  
Public sector Indian Overseas Bank has secured the Rajbhasha Kirti Pratham Puraskar first prize for the second consecutive year in the Official Language Implementation category for 2023-24 by the Ministry of Home Affairs. The recognition underscores the commitment of the city-headquartered bank in promoting the use of Hindi language and enhancing the implementation of official language policies across its operations. Union Home Minister Amit Shah presented the award to the bank's Managing Director and CEO Ajay Kumar

Srivastava in New Delhi at a function to mark the Hindi Day Celebrations and the Diamond Jubilee of Official Languages, a press release from the Bank said. Indian Overseas Bank currently has 3,264 branches, 3,500 ATM network and 7,251 business correspondents. It also offers its service in Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand and Sri Lanka. The Ministry of Home Affairs introduced the Rajbhasha Kirti Puraskar award scheme to encourage the implementation of the official language policy among ministries, departments, public sector undertakings, nationalised banks, among others.

# Inter-departmental panel to combat online gaming tax evasion

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
An inter-departmental committee with representatives from ED, RBI, tax and consumer affairs departments may be set up to combat the proliferation of online gaming platforms and ensure regulatory compliance, a DGGI report said. The GST intelligence wing of the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has initiated action against 118 domestic online gaming entities, and Show Cause Notices have been issued to 34 taxpayers involving tax amount of Rs 1,10,531.91 crore. The notices were issued to these gaming companies as they were not paying GST at 28 per cent rate. Furthermore, 658 offshore entities have been identified as non-registered/non-compliant entities and are being investigated by the DGGI. Also, 167 URL/websites have been recommended for blocking.

The Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI) annual report 2023-24 flagged that online money gaming is a "high-risk" industry for tax evasion, money laundering, cyber frauds, juvenile delinquency and various socio-economic evils. Despite the legal clarity with effect from October 1, 2023, bringing the gaming entities under the tax net continues to be an uphill task. Many such firms are set up in offshore tax havens (i.e. Malta, Curacao Islands, British Virgin Islands, Cyprus etc.) known for their opacity, thus making it difficult to ascertain their ultimate ownership. There are online gaming platforms which keep on changing their URL/website/apps to avoid tax compliance. Use of dark web or VPN based platforms for such supply further accentuates the difficulties in tax law enforcement, the DGGI said. "Therefore, a multi-



prolonged approach to deal with this sector is need of the hour. An Inter-department committee comprising CBIC, CBDT, ED, MeITY, MCA, MIB, RBI, Department of Consumer Affairs, and the like along with industry bodies may be

set up to develop comprehensive strategies and regulations to combat the proliferation of such platforms, ensuring regulatory compliance, consumer protection and national security," the DGGI said in its report released on Saturday. In October 2023, the government clarified in the GST law that online gaming attracts a 28 per cent tax on the total sum deposited by the players with the entity. The online gaming industry has grown exponentially in the last few years, at a CAGR of 28 per cent, reaching Rs 16,428 crore in FY23-24 as per an estimate. This boost is largely attributed to factors like widespread smartphone penetration, improved internet connectivity, a growing youth population and the development of local gaming content. Several of show cause notice recipients have approached the court filing Writ Petition against the notices, and the matter is sub-judice before the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India. The notices have essentially contended that games like rummy, poker and others are games of skill and, therefore, cannot be classified as betting/gambling. The terms 'betting' and 'gambling' are not defined in GST law. "Sir William Raynell Anson, a renowned British jurist, has defined a wager or bet as 'a promise to give money or money's worth upon the determination or ascertainment of an uncertain event'. The Hon'ble Supreme Court's verdict on the matter shall have a significant impact on how the concept of online money gaming is understood," the DGGI said. Creating awareness and education among digital nagriks about safe and responsible gaming practices, promoting the use of legitimate platforms registered with MeITY or verified as permissible Real Money Gaming Platforms under the IT Rules, 2021, and entering into reciprocal arrangements with foreign governments for information sharing and tax enforcement may go a long way in effecting regulatory compliance in this industry, the DGGI said.

# Chopra finishes second in DL final, misses crown by 1cm

PTI ■ BRUSSELS

Star Indian javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra agonisingly missed the Diamond League crown by just one centimeter as he finished second for the second consecutive year with a throw of 87.86m in the season finale here on Saturday.

The 26-year-old Chopra, who had won the DL trophy in 2022 before finishing second last year, achieved his best throw of the day in his third attempt but that was 1cm short of eventual winner Anderson Peters' 87.87m effort.

Grenada's Peters, a two-time world champion, produced his best throw of the day in his opening attempt. Julian Weber of Germany was third with 85.97m.

Chopra, who added a silver to his Olympic medal tally in Paris following a historic gold at the Tokyo Games, thus ended his season on a high. The Indian javelin throw superstar, who has a personal



best of 89.94m and season's best of 89.49m, had a series of 86.82m, 83.49m, 87.86m, 82.04m, 83.30m and 86.46m. The top three led the seven-

man field in the same order for the whole competition. Peters will collect a Diamond League trophy and USD 30,000 for emerging as the DL

champion this season. Chopra will pocket USD 12,000 for his second-place finish in the grand finale which marked the end of the

prestigious Diamond League series after 14 legs, as well as the end of international athletics season. The Haryana lad remained

consistent throughout the season, though he won just one international event this season -- Paavo Nurmi Games in Turku, Finland on June 18.

He had made the Diamond League final cut after finishing fourth in the overall standings with 14 points from his two second-place finishes in DL one-day meets in Doha and Lausanne on May 10 and August 22.

Chopra has been struggling with his fitness this season and is expected to meet a doctor to rectify a groin injury that has affected him all season and came in the way of his quest to hit the 90m mark.

On Friday, national record-holding 3000m steeplechaser Sable had finished ninth in a 10-man field in his maiden DL final with a mediocre time of 8 minute and 17.09 seconds to end a largely disappointing season. He had finished 11th in the Olympic Games.

It was for the first time that a DL finale featured two Indians.



## In-form India clear favourites against Korea in ACT hockey semifinal

PTI ■ DFASFDHULUNBUIR (CHINA)

Maintaining a clean slate, favourites India will fancy their chances when they take on a below-par but unpredictable Korea in the semifinals of the Asian Champions Trophy hockey tournament here on Monday.

Paris Olympics bronze medalist India have been in rollicking form in the tournament so far, registering five wins out of five league matches. The Harmanpreet Singh-led side started their campaign with a 3-0 win over hosts China and then trounced Japan and Malaysia 5-1 and 8-1 respectively.

India then beat Korea 3-1 before eking out a narrow 2-1 win over arch-rivals Pakistan.

It has been a commanding performance from the Indians as they excelled in every department be it forwardline, midfield or defence.

The most promising part of India's performance in the league stages has been the form of the strikers. Scoring field goals was a major concern in Paris but here the young forwardline comprising Sukhjeet Singh, Abhishek, Uttam Singh, Gurjot Singh, Arajjeet Singh Hundal and others have exceeded expectations.

Young midfielder Raj Kumar Pal, too, has shone bright, scoring some fine field goals. Besides, veteran Manpreet Singh, vice-captain Vivek Sagar Prasad and Nilakanta Sharma has excelled in the midfield.

The Indian defence too has performed stoutly, conceding just four goals with goalkeepers Krishan Bahadur Pathak and Suraj Karkera not letting the team feel the void left the retirement of the talismanic PR Sreejesh.

Harmanpreet, one of the best dragflickers in the world currently, has led from the front and has continued his good form of Paris, converting as many as five penalty corners. When India struggled for

field goals, Harmanpreet stood up with his penalty corner conversions.

Harmanpreet also has an able understudy in young Jugraj Singh, who is right now the fastest dragflicker in the world.

But a knockout game is a new beginning for any side and the Indians can ill afford to take Korea lightly as they can spring a surprise on their day, evidence of which was their last-gasp equaliser to draw 3-3 against Malaysia and keep their semifinal hopes alive.

The Indian defence will also have to be cautious about not conceding too many penalty corners as in Jihun Yang, the tournament's leading scorer with seven goals, Korea possesses a potent dragflicker.

In the other semifinal of the day, Pakistan will take on hosts China. FIFA coach capacity building workshop to be held at AIFF NCE in Kolkata

## Argentina reaches Davis Cup Final after tense win over Finland

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Argentina clinched a berth in the eight-team Davis Cup Final with a tense 3-0 win over Finland.

The Argentines have reached the quarterfinals in Malaga, Spain, in November for the first time in five years.

They had to battle in Group D in Manchester after an opening loss to 2022 champion Canada. They beat host Britain on Friday and overcame a gritty Finland, a semifinalist last year but without its best player on Saturday.

Tomas Martin Etcheverry beat 703rd-ranked Ero Vasa 7-6(5) 6-3, then Francisco Cerundolo outlasted Otto Virtanen 6-7(4) 6-1 6-0. Argentina needed the doubles, and Maximo Gonzalez and Andres Molteni delivered against Patrick Kaukovalta and Harri Heliövaara 6-7(3) 6-4 6-3.

The result forces Britain to have to beat Canada 3-0 on Sunday to advance at Canada's expense. In Bologna, Brazil beat Belgium 2-1 after losses to Italy and the Netherlands in Group A.

Three-set wins by Joao Fonseca and Thiago Monteiro followed by a doubles loss took more than six hours to complete on the indoor hard-court. Brazil has a shot at advancing; the Netherlands must lose to unbeaten defending champion Italy 3-0 on Sunday. In Zhuhai, the United States earned a seeding in the Final by beating Germany 2-1 and topping Group C unbeaten.



Both teams were already qualified for the Final but the US grabbed a seeding awarded to the group winners.

Reilly Opelka saved two match points to beat Henri Squire 6-7(4) 7-6(9) 6-3 and Brandon Nakashima eased past Maximilian Marterer 6-4 6-2.

The Americans dropped their first point in nine matches when Austin Krajicek and Rajeev Ram lost to Kevin Krawietz and Tim Puetz 6-1 7-6(4).

"We have a good chance against any team there (in Malaga)," Nakashima said. "There's a bunch of talented Americans playing really well right now."

In Group B in Spain, a tie between teams already out of contention saw 10-time champion France beat three-time champion the Czech Republic 2-1 sealed by a doubles win.

## Messi returns and scores twice as Inter Miami defeats Union 3-1

AP ■ FORT LAUDERDALE (US)

Lionel Messi made a successful return after a lengthy absence, scoring two goals and assisting on the third to lead Inter Miami to a 3-1 victory over the Philadelphia Union.

The Argentine star winger and eight-time Ballon d'Or winner had not played with Inter Miami since June 1 because of national team commitments and a right ankle injury sustained in a 1-0 victory over Colombia in the Copa America final on July 14.

"A little bit tired because of the heat and humidity of Miami but I wanted to return so much after such a long time away," Messi said in Spanish on the Apple TV broadcast after the game.

"I started training with the group and began to feel better."

Messi, who resumed practicing three weeks ago, showed no rust or ill-effects from the injury with his performance. He scored twice in a four-minute span midway through the first half that negated an early goal by Philadelphia.

"What he did was more typical than other things that happened tonight," Inter Miami coach coach Gerardo "Tata" Martino said in Spanish. "I am happy that he finished the game and completed the 90 minutes. He felt fine."

Without Messi, Miami went



8-2 and clinched an MLS playoff spot. Miami (19-4-5) also took the lead in the Supporters Shield table with 62 points.

"It's nice to see that his injury has healed and that he's as effective as he was before," Inter Miami midfielder Julian Gressel said.

Luis Suárez had one assist and clinched Miami's win with a strike on Messi's assist during second half stoppage time. It was Suárez's 17th goal of the season.

Messi's first goal in the 26th minute evened it at 1-1. Suárez sent a short pass near the large area, where Messi retrieved it, outmaneuvered Union defender Kai Whittaker into the box and converted a

shot that landed inside the left post. Four minutes later, Messi received a crossing pass inside the box and beat Philadelphia goalkeeper Andrew Rick with a 15-yard shot.

Suárez had a goal in the 44th minute overturned after a video review ruled an offside infraction.

"As the game progressed we ran the risk of not controlling the ball," Martino said. "From the last 30 minutes of the first half we managed to handle the ball better."

Messi's mended ankle absorbed a kick by Philadelphia midfielder Quinn Sullivan in the 67th minute as both battled for a loose ball. Messi fell to the

ground and favored the ankle but quickly stood and continued playing. Match referee Sergii Boiko assessed yellow cards to Sullivan and Martino, who argued for a stiffer infraction against Sullivan.

Seeking the equalizer, Philadelphia (7-12-9) pressed repeatedly throughout the second half before Messi centered a pass to Suárez and he converted from 18 yards.

Before his absence, the 37-year-old Messi had 12 goals and 13 assists in 12 league matches this season.

Fans barely settled in when Union forward Mikael Uhre stunned the home crowd with a goal two minutes into the match.

Messi had his first scoring opportunity in the seventh minute with a free kick near the half circle that was cleared by a wall of Philadelphia defenders. For Inter Miami, the victory came with a price. Defender David Martinez left early in the first half because of a groin injury and his replacement Noah Allen was removed after what Martino said was a blow to the head.

"We have to take it day by day and see how they recover and how they feel," Martino said. Both clubs continue league play with road matches on Wednesday. Inter Miami will visit Atlanta on Tuesday while the Union visit New York City FC on Tuesday.

## Champions League starts bigger new era with Mbappe at Madrid and rematches of past finals

AP ■ GENEVA

The new Champions League format kicks off Tuesday after more than six years of planning, one failed proposal and one Super League launch fiasco.

In the end, storied clubs who pushed for change from UEFA and created turmoil in European soccer got most of what they wanted: More teams, more games and more of them against strong opponents, more money.

Now there are 36 teams instead of 32, each playing eight games instead of six, against eight different opponents instead of three.

Kylian Mbappe starts his quest for a first title with his third club, the record 15-time European champion Real Madrid that hosts Stuttgart. Mbappe reached the semifinals in 2017 with Monaco and was a beaten finalist in 2020 with Paris Saint-Germain.

Ultimately, all 36 teams will be ranked from top to bottom in a single league standings that finishes in January instead of traditional four-team groups that would end in December.

UEFA has cleared its midweek schedule to relaunch the marquee club event over back-to-back-to-back nights - six games each through Thursday.

The league phase through January

is quite simple. Each team plays a balanced schedule of eight games - four at home, four on the road - earning three points for a win and one for a draw.

Eight different opponents were allocated in the draw last month by a software program picking two teams from each of four seeding pots. Seeding was based on a team's UEFA ranking over five years of results in European competitions.

Recent champions Madrid, Manchester City and Bayern Munich were among the top seeds. Low-ranked pot four included debutants Girona and Brest, and long-time absentees Aston Villa, Bologna and Stuttgart. Advancing to the knockout phase is more complex, and UEFA suggested teams will need eight points from eight games to stay involved.

The top eight in the standings on January 29 go direct to the round of 16 in March seeded Nos. 1-8. Teams placed ninth to 24th in the standings enter a knockout playoffs round in February. Teams 9-16 will be seeded in the draw and play second legs at home against teams who placed from 17-24. The bottom 12 teams in the standings are eliminated.

The eight playoff winners advance as unseeded teams in the round of 16, which will be drawn into a set



bracket like a tennis tournament. That replaces the old system of separate draws for the quarterfinals and semifinals.

The new era starts with two early kickoffs featuring three European Cup winners from the 1980s - Juventus (1985) hosts PSV Eindhoven (1988) and Aston Villa (1982) travels to Young Boys. Both are first-time fixtures between the teams.

Also playing are the four teams with the most European Cup and Champions League titles in their 70-season history.

While Madrid plays Stuttgart, six-time winner Bayern hosts Dinamo Zagreb.

The standout pairing is AC Milan against Liverpool at San Siro. Milan won the last of its seven European titles in the 2007 final against Liverpool.

**Man City-Inter meet**

A more recent rematch of another Istanbul final features the current champions of England and Italy. Manchester City, riding Erling Haaland's hot start to the season, hosts an Inter Milan it beat 1-0 in the 2023 final and is unbeaten in Champions League home games for six years. It is also a night for fresh faces. Girona, which is in the same Abu

Dhabi-backed ownership group as Man City, will make its European debut at Paris Saint-Germain.

Bologna hosts Shakhtar Donetsk in its first game in the competition since a preliminary round exit 60 years ago. Bologna still plays in the Stadio Renato Dall'Ara that has been its home since 1927 and staged games at the 1934 World Cup.

Leverkusen and Atalanta, the Europa League finalists last season, now rise together to the bigger stage.

Bayer Leverkusen's only loss in a remarkable first full season under coach Xabi Alonso was that Europa final against Atalanta. Now Leverkusen returns to the Champions League at Feyenoord, whose coach last season Arne Slot took the job at Liverpool that was first offered to Alonso.

Atalanta hosts Arsenal which has lost captain Martin Odegaard to an ankle injury suffered playing for Norway on Monday.

La Liga leader Barcelona with 17-year-old star Lamine Yamal goes to Monaco and the most unlikely fixture of all 18 this week is Brest vs. Sturm Graz.

Brest, founded 121 years ago, has never played a European game and Sturm last played in the

Champions League 23 years ago. The game is being played at Guingamp, 110 kilometers east of Atlantic port city Brest, whose home stadium is not modern enough.

UEFA has put at least 2.5 billion euros (\$2.8 billion) into the prize money fund for the 36 clubs, a 25% raise on last season. The title winner in Munich on May 31 can expect to get more than 160 million euros (\$177 million).

Each team gets a basic 18.6 million euros (\$20.6 million), then 2.1 million euros (\$2.3 million) for each league-phase game won and 700,000 euros (\$780,000) per draw.

Each place in the standings is worth more money with shares of 275,000 euros (\$305,000) per place: 36 shares, or 9.9 million euros (\$11 million), goes to the team finishing top in January and a single share to the last-place team.

Bonuses escalate from 11 million euros (\$12.3 million) per team for advancing to each knockout round.

Another prize fund of 853 million euros (\$950 million) is allocated based on teams' historical record in UEFA competitions and the value of national and global broadcast deals.

# Khawaja relishes his on-field battles with Ashwin

**PTI ■ MELBOURNE,**  
Australian opener Usman Khawaja has over the years relished his on-field battles with star Indian spinner Ravichandran Ashwin, who according to the southpaw is a man who always has a plan up his sleeve.  
Ashwin (39 wickets) is the third-highest wicket-taker among Indian bowlers in Test matches in Australia, only behind Anil Kumble (49) and Kapil Dev (51) apart from topping the charts across all bilateral series (home and away) with 114 scalps which also includes seven five-for.  
"Ravi is a very good bowler. He is very strategic. He always has a plan," Khawaja told Star Sports.  
"He tries to figure it out and stay ahead of the game, which I respect. I respect his cricketing brain. It's always cool to play against him, and I look forward to the challenge," he was all praise for Ashwin's tactical nous.  
This will be Ashwin's fifth Test tour of Australia, having been part of the sides that



played in 2011-12, 2014-15, 2018-19 and 2020-21 although on last two tours, he had injury issues.  
Don't think India are favourites: Travis Head  
Meanwhile, India's current nemesis Travis Head had asserted that despite visiting team's dominance during last two Test series, he does not feel the visitors will be the 'favourites' this time around. "I don't feel like they're my favourite. I just feel like we play them enough, play them

(a) lot," he told Star Sports. "And, I guess the last couple of years I've been in nice form. So yeah, being able to play well, it's always nice. It's not hard to get up for the contest. It's hugely competitive. Yeah, it's easier to get up for the game. So, I wouldn't say they're my favourite."  
However, the 30-year-old warned that Rohit Sharma and Co. Will be a difficult lot to compete against and the Aussies need to be at their best, especially 'in a couple of games'.  
"They're extremely difficult but it's been nice to play well in a couple of games and looking forward to preparing well and being ready to go. And hopefully, I can contribute to what's a successful summer for us," he added.  
The two teams will lock horns in the upcoming five-Test series in Australia starting November 22, as India defends the Border-Gavaskar Trophy it has won over past four bilateral engagements (home and away).



## Ramkumar-Balaji pair loses must win doubles

**PTI ■ STOCKHOLM**  
Ramkumar Ramanathan and N Sriram Balaji could play well only in patches to lose the do-or-die doubles against Andre Goransson and Filip Bergevi as India succumbed to Sweden in the Davis Cup World Group I tie after conceding an unassailable 0-3 lead, here Sunday.  
After losing both the singles on Saturday, India needed to win the third rubber to stay alive in the tie but Ramkumar and Balaji went down 3-6 4-6 in one hour and 19 minutes.  
India's dismal record against Sweden in the Davis Cup continued as it was the team's sixth defeat in as many ties. The reverse singles have been rendered inconsequential. India will now compete next year in Play-offs to keep place in World Group I.  
The Indian pair had its first chance in game three in the opening set on Goransson's serve. Balaji and Ramkumar pocketed four straight points to earn a breakpoint but the home team averted the danger.  
Ramkumar was, however, broken in the next game and Bergevi held his own to zoom to a commanding 5-2 lead. Balaji served to stay in the set and managed to hold. The home team comfortably sealed the opening set with Bergevi holding at love.  
In the second set, Ramkumar had a fiery start, holding at love.  
Bergevi though surprisingly struggled with his first serve as he committed two double faults to be at 30-all. Sensing a chance, Ramkumar attacked Bergevi's second serve but could respond only with a feeble shot on the Swede's wishy cross court return. Standing at the net, it was an easy put away for Goransson.  
Balaji was under pressure in the next game. Serving at deuce, he fired an ace but Goransson hit a backhand volley winner on the next point to again make it deuce. The Indians soaked the pressure and eventually saved the game.  
Balaji faced the heat again in the seventh game with both Swedish players finding service return winners with attacking shots.  
Goransson earned a break chance with a volley winner from the net. Ramkumar hit a powerful forehand return following an exciting rally on that breakpoint and later the Indians saved one more but on the third breakpoint Balaji netted a return. The lead stayed with the home team that served out the match in the 10th game. Ramkumar's causal forehand return landed outside the lines on the match point.

## Duleep Trophy: Bhui makes hundred in defeat against India A

**PTI ■ ANANTAPUR**  
Ricky Bhui delayed the inevitable with a stubborn hundred, but spinners Shams Mulani and Tanush Kotian eventually brought India D to their knees as India A walked away with a 186-run win in the Duleep Trophy match here on Sunday.  
Bhui, starting from overnight 44, made 113 (195b, 14x4, 3x6) but India D, overnight 62, were bundled out for 301, chasing 488.  
The victory enabled India A to stay in contention for the title with 6 points. But they will have to get a favourable result against table-toppers India C (9 points) in their next match here from September 19.  
India D, out of title race after two successive defeats, will be up against second-placed India B, who have 7 points. On a pitch that gave copious assistance to the spinners, the 'D' batters needed to show tremendous application to hang around. But apart from Bhui none really showed the stomach for a fight.  
Bhui's second-wicket stand with Yash Dubey (37) was worth 100 runs but Dubey got run out, and in his next over Mulani castled Devdutt Padikkal to push India D to 105 for three.  
They managed to stitch two useful stands for two subsequent wickets - a 53 between Bhui and skipper Shreyas Iyer (41, 55b, 8x4) and a 62 between Bhui and Sanju Samson (40, 45b, 3x4, 3x6).  
But their stands were more about aggression, and the approach was fraught with danger on a pitch where spinners called the shots.  
Both Shreyas and Samson were cleaned up by Mulani, who was later adjudged player of the match. A sharply turned one accounted for Shreyas while Samson failed to connect a pull as the ball disturbed the timber.

## Bangladesh arrive in Chennai, Shanto confident of good show

**PTI ■ CHENNAI**  
A confident Bangladesh team arrived in India on Sunday for two Test matches and three T20s with visiting skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto hoping that their historic 2-0 series win in Pakistan recently would hold them in good stead against the formidable hosts in the coming weeks.  
The Bangladesh squad landed in Chennai, the venue for the opening Test beginning on September 19, on Sunday afternoon.  
"It's definitely going to be a very challenging series for us," Shanto was quoted as saying at the pre-departure press briefing at the Dhaka airport.  
"After a good series (vs Pakistan) there is definitely an extra confidence in the team, in the people of the country. Every series is an opportunity.  
"We will play to win both matches.



The things that matter to win, the process matters... Our aim will be to do the work properly. Good results are possible if we do our job properly," the Bangladesh captain added.  
While India is on top of the World Test Championship (WTC) table, the Bangladesh skipper believed that it will all boil down to how they perform during those five days and the result can come even in the last session.  
"If you see the ranking, they are much ahead of us," Shanto noted. "We have been playing well lately. We have had a good series. Our aim will be to play well for five days. "The result comes in the last session on the last day. If we play good cricket for five days, there is a chance for either team to win in the

last session," the skipper said just before boarding the flight to Chennai.  
Adequate security cover for the visitors in Chennai  
Usual security protocol was in place for Bangladesh team like it happens for all international teams with two police vans accompanying the team bus to the hotel.  
Upon arrival at the hotel, the players were given a warm welcome as staff showered them with rose petals.  
The entire team will be put on one of the floors, while armed security personnel will be present on the floor, which is a regular protocol.  
The Tigers are visiting India after the tiny neighbours witnessed civil unrest for over a month. Following the students' protests last month that led to the ouster of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, there have been reports of communal clashes, with attacks on minorities, especially Hindus.

## Lahiri slips to tied 12th at LIV Golf Individual Championship

**PTI ■ CHICAGO**  
India's Anirban Lahiri went 1-Under 71 in the second round and slipped to tied 12th in the 2024 LIV Golf Individual Championship here.  
Lahiri carded two birdies but he also had three bogeys on the second day, and now he has a total of 2-under for 36 holes.  
Lahiri began the tournament with a fine 3-under 67 that placed

him inside the top-5. He had four birdies against one bogey in the opening round.  
Jon Rahm entered this week's regular-season finale with a slim points margin over Joaquin Niemann.  
The Legion XIII captain increased that advantage with a brilliant bogey-free 6-under 64 that now has him in position to claim two trophies after Sunday's final round at Bolingbrook Golf

Club. Rahm is at 7 under and owns a one-shot lead over Fireballs GC Captain Sergio Garcia on the leaderboard and a three-shot lead over Niemann, the Torque GC captain.  
Rahm can still become Individual Champion even if he doesn't win the tournament.  
Bryson DeChambeau's Crushers GC, winners last year in Chicago, have already clinched one of the three available seeds along with



Rahm's Legion XIII.  
The Crushers entered the final round tied for the tournament lead with Cleeks GC at 10 under and would clinch the No. 1 overall seed with a victory.  
Niemann's one-shot advantage entering the day was erased in their first eight holes.  
Playing in the same group for the second consecutive day, Rahm was 3 under while Niemann was 2 over.

At one point late in the round, Rahm was five strokes ahead of Niemann.  
But Niemann fought back down the stretch with birdies in three of the final four holes to shoot a 2-under 68 and stay within striking distance.  
Hatton was on the verge of falling out of contention, opening with a 3-over 73 and then playing the first 11 holes on Saturday at even par.



## Haryana, Karnataka, Punjab win in men National Junior Hockey Championship

**PTI ■ JALANDHAR**  
Haryana, Karnataka and Punjab secured wins on day six of the 14th Hockey India Junior Men's National Championship here on Sunday.  
Andhra Pradesh and Delhi played out a 5-5 draw. In the first match, Haryana thrashed Rajasthan 6-1. Rohit Rana (2nd minute), Sunil Maan (11th), Sahil Ruhel (17th) and Ami Khasa (60th) scored one goal each, while Navraj Singh (7th, 37th) struck a brace for Haryana.  
Anurag Suthar (50th) scored the consolation goal for Rajasthan.  
In the second match, Karnataka also notched up a 6-1 win over Kerala with

Aryan Uthappa Mt (6th, 35th) and Sunil P B (8th, 45th) scoring a couple of goals each.  
Vivek Ravi Bagade (22nd) and Dhanush Kaveriappa Ma (32nd) too scored one goal each, while in response, Anujith P (47th) scored the only goal for Kerala.  
In the last match of the day, Punjab trounced Mizoram 7-1. For Punjab, captain Ujwal Singh (10th) opened the account before Harshdeep Singh (12th), Rajnit Singh (15th), Om Rajnesh Saini (36th), Lovenoor Singh (40th), Jarman Singh (48th) and Abhishek Gorkhi (59th) joined him with a goal each.  
In response, Akash Yadav (48th) scored the only goal for Mizoram.



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