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Published From DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

Late City Vol. 18 Issue 263 *Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

DEHRADUN, MONDAY SEPTEMBER 23, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹3

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REAL MADRID COMEBACK WIN OVER ESPANYOL 12 SPORTS

6 crore Senior Citizens to Benefit from Ayushman Bharat



Free Medical Treatment upto ₹5 lakh for Senior Citizens Aged 70+

100 Days of Modi 3.0 Paving the Path to Viksit Bharat

INDIA LIFTS MAIDEN GOLD AT CHESS OLYMPIAD

RISHABH MALIK ■ NEW DELHI

In the battle of black and white India rose to the crown, the country's men's and women's contingent both have made the country proud by creating history, clinching the gold medal at the Chess Olympiad 2024 on Sunday.

India's chess grandmaster D Gukesh beats Vladimir Fedoseev from Slovenia and Arjun Erigaisi, who has also had a outstanding feat in Budapest picked up a win over Serbian Jan Subelj on the final

day of the event.

The Indian team for the open category included Gukesh, Erigaisi, Praggnanandhaa R, Vidit Gujrathi, Pentala Harikrishna and Srinath Narayanan(Captain). The team who had a unbeaten streak in the tournament with incredible performances against Fabiano Caruana of United States(2.5-1.5) on Saturday day before the final round of the event which gave confirmation of gold medal.

India despite having 19 points on the tally(table topper) only China is right after the India in points tally with 17 points which gave the medal confirmation, if somehow



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

AP/PTI

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

Gukesh personify a character who knows how to control his nerves in the tense situation in

the crucial moments which helps him during the tournaments. International Chess Federation Congratulated the team's success on platform X Congratulations to Gukesh D, Praggnanandhaa R, Arjun Erigaisi, Vidit Gujrathi, Pentala Harikrishna and Srinath Narayanan (Captain), anand Mahindra gave his wishes on X Indian Women and Men.. Both WORLD CHAMPIONS

An extraordinary feat May this inspire future generations of Indians to always keep the crown in the place where Chess Began. Welcome home, Chess. Swagatam.

The legendary Viswanathan Anand, held the FIDE(The International Chess Federation)title from 2000 to 2002, and the unified title from 2007 to 2013.

Gukesh D (challenger) and Ding will face each other again in the FIDE World Championship Match 2024, which is going to happen between November 20 and December 15 this year in Singapore.

This victorious moment has opened the doors for young minds for increased participation all across the nation and will work as the baton for the future generation.

Kejriwal returns, attacks PM, RSS

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Days after stepping down from his chief ministerial post, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) chief Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday launched a scathing attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi saying that he had entered politics to change it and he resigned because he was hurt by the corruption allegations levelled against him by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Enforcement Directorate (ED) to intimidate or lure leaders.

In his first 'Janta Ki Adalat' public meeting at Jantar Mantar following his resignation as Delhi chief minister, Kejriwal adopted a new political strategy to question PM Modi, posing five questions to Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat, including if the BJP's rule on age of retirement also applied to Modi as it did for LK Advani.

He asked whether the rule under which several BJP veteran leaders such as Lal Krishna Advani and Murli Manohar Joshi retired from active politics when they



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

Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

turned 75, would apply to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is turning 75 in September 2025. He questioned Bhagwat if he agreed with the BJP's politics of calling politicians 'corrupt' and then inducting them into its fold.

He demanded answers from the RSS for Prime Minister Modi's actions, in an apparent bid to diminish his stature by implying that the parent Hindutva organisation was the master which should keep its child in control.

"Has the son become so big

now that it is showing attitude to his mother?" Kejriwal said at a rally where he demanded five answers from the RSS chief. The questions he asked were political softball but the implication of bringing Bhagwat into his new political narrative is new and unusual. Kejriwal desired to know if the RSS agreed with the BJP's politics of using central agencies to break up parties and topple opposition governments, and inducting "corrupt" leaders into its fold. While Kejriwal was addressing the gathering, the

BJP held a protest against him and AAP on issues of corruption at Connaught Place, barely a kilometre away from Jantar Mantar. The BJP held another protest against Kejriwal at Rajghat on the same issue.

Jantar Mantar, on the other hand, was awash with AAP's signature blue and yellow colours as hundreds of supporters filled the site with banners that declared Kejriwal as "one of us", affirming their unwavering belief in his innocence.

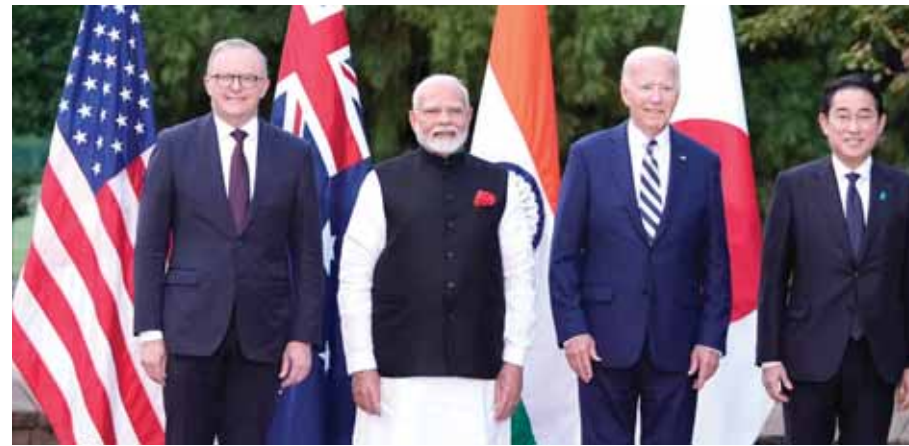
As Kejriwal took the stage, the site echoed with slogans of "Na rukega, na jhukega..." while some AAP supporters held up posters bearing messages such as "Hamare Kejriwal imaanand hai". "I resigned because I did not come to do corruption or to earn money. I came to change the politics of the country..." Kejriwal said. The AAP convener said whether it was ethical for Modi to topple governments across the country by using investigating agencies like CBI and ED. He said he would leave the CM's bungalow in a few days.

US, India agree on theatre of war

PTI ■ WILMINGTON (US)

US President Joe Biden commended Prime Minister Narendra Modi's historic visit to Ukraine last month and his message of peace, as the two leaders held wide-ranging talks that figured pressing global challenges including the situation in the war-ravaged country. The US President hosted Modi at his personal home in Wilmington, Delaware on Saturday afternoon hours after the prime minister arrived in the US on a three-day visit. Modi's bilateral meeting with President Joe Biden in Wilmington was an emotional one, marking their final meeting in an official capacity as the American leader is not seeking reelection. The US President hosted Modi at his personal residence in Wilmington, Delaware on Saturday and the two leaders held wide-ranging talks covering various key aspects of India-US ties.

At a media briefing, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri, while answering a question on defusing the Ukraine crisis, said "very important" conversations are underway with multiple people on all sides of the conflict. In the talks, Biden conveyed to the Indian prime minister that the US supports initiatives to reform global institutions to



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

AP/PTI

reflect India's important voice, including permanent membership for New Delhi in a reformed UN Security Council, according to a joint fact-sheet on the meeting.

Though the Modi-Biden talks primarily focused on bilateral ties, the two leaders also touched upon key global challenges including the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the situation in the Indo-Pacific that has witnessed increasing Chinese muscle-flexing.

The fact-sheet said President Biden expressed his "immense appreciation" for India's

leading role on the world stage, particularly Modi's leadership in the G-20 and in the Global South and his commitment to strengthen the Quad to ensure a free, open, and prosperous Indo-Pacific.

It said India is at the forefront of efforts to seek solutions to the most pressing challenges, from supporting the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic to addressing the devastating consequences of conflicts around the world. "President Biden commended Prime Minister Modi for his historic visits to Poland and Ukraine, the first by an Indian prime minister in decades,

and for his message of peace and ongoing humanitarian support for Ukraine, including its energy sector, and on the importance of international law, including the UN charter," it said. It is understood that Modi briefed Biden on his visits to Moscow in July and to Kyiv last month. Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri, when asked at a media briefing on the extent of discussion on the Russia-Ukraine conflict between the two leaders and whether the Indian side mentioned any kind of peace proposal, only said New Delhi is involved in a set of negotiations.

Antiquities of yore come back home

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

From standing Lord Buddha in sandstone from North India belonging 15-16th century CE, Lord Vishnu in Bronze from Eastern India belonging to 17-18th century CE, Anthropomorphic figure in copper from North India belonging to 2000-1800 BCE, Lord Krishna in bronze from South India belonging to 17-18th century CE and Lord Karthikeya in granite from South India belonging to 13-14th century CE are some of the stolen antiquities from India which was handed over to Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his ensuing visit to the United States.

The majority of the antiquities are terracotta artefacts from Eastern India, while others are made of stone, metal, wood and ivory and belong to different parts of the country. These belong to a period of almost 4000 years, from 2000 BCE - 1900 CE and have origins in different parts of India.

According to Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) a total of 297 antiquities stolen from India were returned to the Prime Minister on Saturday. With this,



According to MEA, the Apsara in sandstone from Central India belonging to the 10-11th century CE, Jain Tirthankar in bronze from Central India belonging to the 15-16th century CE, Terracotta vase from Eastern India belonging to the 3-4th century CE, Stone Sculpture from South India belonging to 1st-century BCE-1st century CE, Lord Ganesh in Bronze from South India belonging to 17-18th century CE were handed over.

In previous years, PM Modi's trips to the US have also facilitated the return of numerous artifacts. In 2021, 157 antiquities were handed over, including a bronze Nataraja statue from the 12th century. Following the PM's 2023 US visit, another 105 antiquities were returned. India has also successfully recovered artifacts from other countries, including 16 from the UK and 40 from Australia.

Taking to social media platform Modi said "Deepening cultural connect and strengthening the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural properties. I am extremely grateful to President Biden and the US Government for ensuring the return of 297 invaluable antiquities to India."



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

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

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

MEA said that the artefacts were returned "in keeping with close bilateral ties and to foster greater cultural understanding".

The statement said the pieces will be "shortly repatriated to India." It added that a select few pieces were showcased to Modi and Biden during their bilateral meeting in Wilmington, Delaware.

The US State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and the Archaeological Survey of India, under the Ministry of Culture, Union Government, signed a Cultural Property Agreement in July 2024 to strengthen cultural ties.

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



GUEST COLUMN

Ayushman Bharat: A milestone in India's healthcare journey



Jagat Prakash Nadda

As we celebrate the sixth anniversary of Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY), it is a moment of immense pride and reflection. Launched in September 2018, under the visionary leadership of our Prime Minister Narendra Modi, AB-PMJAY has grown to become one of the largest healthcare initiatives in the world. It represents the commitment of this government to provide equitable healthcare access for all citizens, especially the most vulnerable.

Over the last six years, this ambitious scheme has touched millions of lives, offering hope, healing, and, in many cases, life-saving treatment. The journey of AB-PMJAY has been a testament to what can be achieved when a nation comes together with the shared goal of improving the health and well-being of its people.

Transforming healthcare access

The core mission of Ayushman Bharat is simple but profound: to ensure that no Indian is denied healthcare because of their financial status. With an annual coverage of Rs five lakh per family to cover secondary and tertiary hospital care, AB-PMJAY has provided the means for economically disadvantaged families to receive quality medical care at some of the best hospitals in

the country, free of cost. The recent decision of Government of India to expand the benefits of AB-PMJAY to all the senior citizens of the age 70 years and above irrespective of their socio-economic status is a nuanced step to account for the changing demographic situation in our country. Earlier, families of our community health workers- Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA), Anganwadi Workers, and Anganwadi Helpers were brought under the cover of the scheme. As of today, more than 55 crore people are eligible for healthcare services under the scheme, and over 7.5 crore treatments of over worth Rs one lakh crore have been successfully provided. This is a remarkable achievement. Families that were once



pushed into poverty due to catastrophic health expenses now have a financial shield that protects them from such crises. For families facing catastrophic health expenses, the scheme has been a lifeline. Testimonials from beneficiaries - from farmers to daily wage labourers - are abundant, with many describing how the scheme saved them from financial ruin. In this sense, Ayushman Bharat has indeed delivered on its promise.

The scope of the scheme is

comprehensive, covering over 1900 medical procedures, from complex surgeries like heart bypasses and joint replacements to treatments for diseases like cancer and kidney ailments. These are treatments that previously seemed out of reach for many, but AB-PMJAY has made them accessible, affordable, and available to all.

Expanding the network, strengthening the system

One of the hallmarks of AB-PMJAY has been its ability to create a robust network of healthcare providers. Today, more than 29,000 hospitals across India, including over 13,000 private hospitals, are empanelled under the scheme. This network spans rural and urban areas alike, ensuring that even those living in the most remote parts of the country can access quality healthcare services. The unique portability feature of the scheme has ensured that beneficiaries can avail treatment in hospitals across the country in addition to the state they belong to.

This vast network is supported by a robust IT infrastructure that ensures transparency, efficiency, and speed in claim settlements. The implementation of Aadhaar based biometric verification and paperless claim processing has drastically reduced fraud and inefficiency, which are often challenges in such large-scale public welfare schemes.

The success of Ayushman Bharat has also catalysed im-

provements in other parts of the healthcare ecosystem. The scheme's emphasis on quality healthcare has pushed hospitals, both public and private, to upgrade their infrastructure and services. Additionally, it has fostered an environment of healthy competition, encouraging providers to enhance patient care.

Focus on holistic healthcare

Ayushman Bharat is not just about hospital care. Alongside AB-PMJAY, the government has also been working to strengthen primary healthcare services through the creation of Ayushman Arogya Mandir (AAM). These healthcare centres are focused on preventive and promotive healthcare, aiming to reduce the overall burden of disease in the population. So far, over 1.73 lakh AAMs have been established across India, providing free screening, diagnostics, and medicines for common ailments and chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, and cancer. These centres are at the heart of our effort to move towards a more comprehensive and holistic healthcare model. By promoting wellness and early diagnosis, we hope to reduce the need for hospitalisation and make healthcare more sustainable in the long run.

Overcoming challenges and moving forward

As we celebrate the achievements of Ayushman Bharat, we must also acknowledge the challenges that lie ahead. The scale of the scheme is enormous, and with that comes the responsibility to continually adapt, refine, and improve it. We are constantly working to expand the reach of the scheme, ensure timely payments to hospitals, and en-

hance the quality of care provided to every beneficiary.

Going forward, we will continue to strengthen Ayushman Bharat, ensuring that it remains at the forefront of India's journey towards holistic, affordable and quality healthcare. We are committed to expanding the list of treatments covered under the scheme, further increasing the number of empanelled hospitals, and continuing to build on the success of the Ayushman Arogya Mandirs.

A vision for a healthier India

As the Union Health Minister, I firmly believe that the health of a nation is the foundation of its prosperity. A healthy population is better equipped to contribute to the country's growth, productivity, and innovation. Ayushman Bharat is central to this vision of a healthier, stronger and Viksit Bharat. The success of the scheme thus far reflects the hard work, dedication, and collaboration between the government, healthcare providers, and the people. We remain committed to the vision of the well-being and health of every citizen.

On this sixth anniversary of Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, let us reaffirm our dedication to creating a healthcare system that is inclusive, accessible, and compassionate. Together, we will continue to build a healthier India for generations to come.

(The author is the Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare; views expressed are personal)

Replace outdated chalkboards in government schools with digital screens: Dehradun DM

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Dehradun district magistrate Savin Bansal has directed the Education department to replace outdated chalkboards in government schools with digital screens. He stated this in a review meeting with the officials concerned of the department on Sunday. He emphasised that no child should be seen sitting on the ground in schools and outdated chalkboards must be replaced with digital screens. Every classroom must be equipped with at least two LED bulbs to ensure proper lighting. He said that libraries in schools must be upgraded and each of them must have newspapers, magazines, dictionaries and biographies of prominent figures to encourage reading and broaden students' knowledge base. He stated that all classrooms should be equipped with whiteboards and LED screens to facilitate virtual learning. Besides this, classrooms should also feature educational and visually appealing paintings as part of the beautification drive, which aims to create a more engaging learning environment. The DM also outlined plans to provide at least one outdoor sports facility in each school, with a focus on developing volleyball and basketball courts to promote physical well-being alongside academics. He di-



rected the chief education officer Pradeep Rawat to prepare proposals for the same. He said that special facilities will be developed for different age groups like playground equipment like swings, and slides will be installed for students of class I to V. Besides this, older students will also have access to more advanced sports infrastructure. The DM also stressed the importance of basic amenities, instructing education officials to ensure that all schools are equipped with clean drinking water and functional toilets. He directed the department to ensure repairing and thorough cleaning of water tanks, along with provisions for safety measures such as monkey nets. He said that in a comprehensive effort

to enhance the quality of education across the district, these key reforms aim at improving school infrastructure and ensuring the holistic development of students. He assured that no financial constraints will hinder the implementation of these reforms. He stated that the budget for these improvements will be thoroughly reviewed under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, with the DM personally taking responsibility for addressing any funding gaps. These initiatives are part of a broader mission to make Dehradun's schools not just centres for academic excellence but hubs for the overall development of students, combining intellectual growth with physical and social engagement, he added.

Ramleela to start in Doon on October 3

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Ramakrishna Leela Samiti Tehri, 1952, will organise the Ramleela in Dehradun which will commence on October 3 and continue until October 13, the samiti president, Abhinav Thapar said. Informing about the event, he said that the historic Ramleela of Tehri, which had been held in Azad Maidan from 1952 till Old Tehri was submerged in 2002, was revived in Dehradun in 2023 after 21 years. He highlighted that in 2023, the Ramleela in Dehradun attracted a record 10 lakh people through various mediums, featuring a laser show and digital live telecast for the first time in the history of Uttarakhand.



In view of the last year's result of Ramleela, Thapar em-

phasised that the upcoming Ramleela will also include a special attraction: the broadcast of Ramleela staging through the digital live telecast system, which is expected to be watched by more than 50 lakh viewers this year. The event will incorporate digital screen and other digital technology for staging, while maintaining the traditional elements like Chaupai, Katha, dialogue and staging similar to the famous and ancient Ramleela of Garhwal. He said that this performance also plays an important role in preserving the history and traditions of Sanatan Dharma and connecting future generations with their heritage.

Corporates should raise awareness & act to create happy work culture: Experts

MANSI BHAMBRI ■ DEHRADUN

Corporates should raise awareness and take steps to ensure the satisfaction among their employees and create a positive work culture, the experts said. This recommendation comes in the wake of a recent incident wherein a 26-year-old woman died in Pune and her parents re-

portedly attributed her demise to the stressful work of the culture of the company she was working in. Regarding this, experts emphasised the importance of individuals, especially the younger generation, learning how to manage work stress effectively.

Notably, this incident has sparked numerous discussions on social media, with some contending that the younger generation lacks the skills to handle work stress, while others argue



load. She noted that stress has become ubiquitous in today's generation and identified that initial stress (eustress) can be beneficial for achieving future goals. However, if stress progresses to distress, it can pose risks to individuals. Recognising the symptoms of distress in a timely manner is crucial to prevent negative consequences, she added.

and seek timely counselling. Additionally, individuals should cultivate an assertive nature to confidently refuse things that make them uncomfortable in order to avoid negative consequences of severe stress. To prevent similar incidents in the future, she stressed on the importance of the corporates organising workshops for employees to increase awareness about cultivating a positive work culture. Additionally, individuals should be equipped with problem-solving skills, she added. Clinical psychologist Pratibha Sharma said that the younger generation lacks patience and struggles to manage workloads effectively, leading to increased anxiety. It is crucial for the younger generation to build their patience levels. To achieve this, individuals should follow the SMART goal method, which emphasises Skill development, Measurability, Achievability, Reasonableness and Time-bound goals in life. In addition, corporate bodies should avoid overwhelming individuals with excessive workloads and instead provide necessary breaks at regular intervals. Additionally, they should understand the importance of not overburdening individuals. They must also organise awareness programmes to satisfy and support their employees, she said.

She further emphasised that it is important for parents to also identify stress symptoms in their children

CM addresses public grievances at his residence

Dhama directs officials to act promptly to resolve issues

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhama met members of the public at his private residence in Nagla Terai, Khatima in Udham Singh Nagar district on Sunday. The members of the general public communicated their grievances and issues to him, following which the chief minister directed the officials concerned to take necessary steps to resolve the issues. After meeting the citizens



magistrate Udai Raj Singh, senior superintendent of police Manikant Mishra, chief development officer Manish Kumar and others were also present on the occasion. Earlier, the chief minister visited Nanakmata Gurudwara and paid obeisance at the shrine. After praying for the prosperity of the State's residents, Dhama visited Dera Kar

at his residence, Dhama visited the residence of former district Panchayat member Krishna Pal in Melaghat to convey his condolences on his demise to his family members. Position holder Anil Kapoor Dabhu, district

Seva to pay homage to the late Baba Tarsem Singh. The Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee head Joginder Singh, director Gurwant Singh, position holders and government officials were also present on the occasion.

GRIHUM HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED (FORMERLY KNOWN AS POONAWALLA HOUSING FINANCE) LIMITED		DEMAND NOTICE UNDER SECTION 13(2) OF THE SARFAESI ACT, 2002		
<p>You the below mentioned Borrowers/Co-borrowers/Guarantors have availed Home loans/Loans against Property facility (ies) by mortgaging your immovable properties from Grih Housing Finance Limited (formerly known as Poonawalla Housing Finance Limited) as the name Poonawalla Housing Finance Limited changed to Grih Housing Finance Limited with effect from 17 Nov 2023 (Previously known as Magma Housing Finance Limited and originally incorporated with name of GE Money Housing Finance Public Unlimited Company) herein after referred as Secured Creditor. You defaulted in repayment and therefore, your loan/s was classified as Non-Performing Assets. A Demand Notice under Section 13(2) of Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Asset and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 for the recovery of the outstanding dues sent on last known addresses however the same have returned un-served. Hence the contents of which are being published herewith as per Section 13(2) of the Act read with Rule 3(1) of The Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 as and by way of Alternate Service upon you.</p> <p>Details of the Borrowers, Co-borrowers, Guarantors, Securities, Outstanding Dues, Demand Notice sent under Section 13(2) and Amount claimed there under are given as under</p>				
SR. NO.	NAME OF THE BORROWER, CO-BORROWER, GUARANTOR AND LOAN AMOUNT	DETAILS OF THE SECURED ASSET	DEMAND NOTICE DATE	AMOUNT DUE IN RS.
1.	RAJEEV PANDEY, SEEMA PANDEY LOAN AMOUNT: RS.2000000/- LOAN NO: LAP0034200000005019829	All That Property Bearing Wing No. 3, House No. 200 F And 200 F/1 (Old No. 192-G), Premnagar, Dehradun, Area Measuring 50.72 Sq. Mtrs, With Total Built Up Area On Ground Floor And First Floor Measuring 101.44 Sq. Mtrs. Particularly Mentioned In Sale Deed Executed, Which Is Bounded As Under:- East 4 Ft. Wide Lane West : Property Of Smt. Geeta Pandey North: 7 Ft. Wide Lane South House No. 192 H, Wing No. 3	08.09.2024	Rs.2211916 (Rupees Twenty Two Lakh Eleven Thousand Nine Hundred Sixteen Only) together with further interest @ 16% p.a till repayment.
2.	SOHNU SOHNU, SOMTI SOMTI LOAN AMOUNT: RS.1294884/-WHICH INCLUDES RS.444684/- VIDE LOAN ACCOUNT BEARING LAP0173200000005044242 AND RS.1850000/-VIDE A LOAN ACCOUNT BEARING NO. H100173200000005042991	All That Piece And Parcel Of A Constructed Residential Property/House Constructed Bearing Plot No. 452 Land Measuring In East- 26 Feet, West- 26 Feet, North- 20 Feet & South- 20 Feet, Having Total Land Area Of 520 Square Feet, Bounded In East- Plot No. 451, West- Plot No. 453, North- Way 16 Feet Wide & South- Plot No. 445, Belonging To Kharsara No. 16m, Situated In Trunpati Enclave Village Daulpur Govindpur Pargana Pookhee Tehsil & Distt. Haridwar. Particularly Mentioned In Sale Deed Executed. Boundaries Of The Property Are East- Plot No. 451, West- Plot No. 453 North- Way 16 Feet Wide, South- Plot No. 445	08.09.2024	Loan No: LAP0173200000005044242 Rs.503359 (Rupees Five Lakh Three Thousand Three Hundred Fifty Nine Only) together with further interest @ 18% p.a till repayment. And Loan No: H100173200000005042991 Rs.906231 (Rupees Nine Lakh Six Thousand Two Hundred Thirty One Only) together with further interest @ 14.25% p.a till repayment.
3.	GULNEWJAH SHAH, SHABNAM PARVEEN LOAN AMOUNT: RS. 2200000/-WHICH INCLUDES RS.550000/- VIDE LOAN ACCOUNT BEARING LAP0634200000005046113 AND RS. 1850000/-VIDE A LOAN ACCOUNT BEARING NO. HL00034200000005044019	All That Part Of Land Bearing Khata No. 232 (Fasli Year 1416 To 1421), Kharsara No. 3487, Area Measuring 79.73 Sq. Mtr. In Which Covered Area 51.09 Sq. Mtrs., Situated At Mauza-Navabgarh, Pargana Pachwadon, Tehsil Vikasnagar & Distt. Dehradun, Uttarakhand, Particularly Mentioned In Sale Deed Executed Which Is Bounded And Butted As Under:- East- Land Of Jakir, Side Measuring 39 Ft. West- Land Of Shamim, Side Measuring 39 Ft. North- 15 Ft. Wide Graveyard Road, Side Measuring 22 Ft. South- 13 Ft. Wide Road, Side Measuring 22 Ft.	08.09.2024	Loan No: LAP0034200000005046113 Rs.384969 (Rupees Three Lakh Eighty Four Thousand Nine Hundred Sixty Nine Only) together with further interest @ 16.01% p.a till repayment & Loan No: H100034200000005044019 Rs.1950779 (Rupees Nineteen Lakh Fifty Thousand Seven Hundred Seventy Nine Only) together with further interest @ 12.5% p.a till repayment.
<p>You the Borrowers/ and Co-Borrowers/Guarantors are therefore called upon to make payment of the above-mentioned demanded amount with further interest as mentioned hereinabove in full within 60 Days of this Notice failing which the undersigned shall be constrained to take action under the act to enforce the above mentioned Securitisation. Please Note that as per Section 13(13) of The Said Act, You are in the meanwhile, restrained from transferring the above-referred securities by way of sale, lease or otherwise without our consent.</p> <p>PLACE :-DEHRADUN, HARIDWAR DATE:- 23.09.2024</p> <p>Authorized Office For Grih Housing Finance Ltd (Formerly Known As Poonawalla Housing Finance Ltd)</p>				



Authorities to step up action to check fraud by hospitals under Ayushman Yojana

SHA chairman directs anti-fraud unit to become more active & vigilant

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The State Health Authority (SHA) will take steps to put a check on hospitals indulging in fraud under the Ayushman Yojana in the State. The SHA chairman Arvind Singh Hyanki has directed the anti-fraud unit of the State to be active to check such irregularities. Chairing a review meeting with officials concerned, the SHA chairman directed the anti-fraud unit of the State to remain alert regarding frauds by hospitals under the Ayushman Yojana. He also directed the officials to conduct the audit more carefully and with a focus on quality. The SHA chairman said that in special audits, the beneficiary audit should also be conducted before and after the treatment. Feedback of the patients will also be taken



especially in claims rejected by the team, particularly in instances related to monetary demands submitted by the

hospitals. The officials will also check if beneficiaries of the schemes are getting access to cashless and better treat-

ment in hospitals under the scheme, he said.

In order to avoid discrep-

ancies in details of beneficiaries under the scheme, all the hospitals will have to fill detailed information about the beneficiaries properly in the manifesto. Stressing on the need for training employees in the call centre, the SHA chairman said that this will also help in ensuring a prompt probe. If any fraud is ascertained following the inquiry, strict action will be taken against the hospital concerned according to the guidelines issued by the National Health Authority, he said. The director (Medical Quality) Dr Vinod Tolia said that action is being taken in accordance with the instructions issued. The probe teams have been directed to be more alert and more active, he added.

Transport department to start monitoring school vans for safety compliance

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Transport department will begin an initiative on Monday to monitor and check if school van drivers are adhering to the recently issued safety guidelines for transporting students. This is not a full-fledged campaign, but the department aims to ensure that the instructions are being followed on the ground. The focus, for now, is on spreading awareness and instilling a sense of responsibility among the drivers, the regional transport officer (Enforcement) Shailesh Tiwari said. He informed that a meeting with school vehicle owners and van drivers was held about 10 days ago, where critical aspects of ensuring safe transportation for school children were discussed. Key

points addressed included the conduct of drivers while interacting with students, with specific instructions issued to avoid seating female students in the driver's cabin. Besides this, if the vehicle carries only female students, a partition or grill must be installed between the driver and the seating area for added safety.

Tiwari said that it was mandated that the names of the vehicle owner and driver, along with a mobile number, be clearly displayed on the exterior of the vehicle. A list containing the names of students, their parents, addresses and contact information should also be kept in the vehicle for inspection purposes by the authorities when

required. "The enforcement team will monitor compliance with these guidelines on the ground by van drivers. At this stage, we do not plan to impose penalties, as the focus is on raising awareness and fostering a sense of responsibility and care among them," he said. He also revealed plans for a large-scale counselling and training session for school transport operators in October. These sessions will cover a wide range of topics, including safety protocols, child psychology, effective communication with children and sensitive issues such as distinguishing between appropriate and inappropriate physical contact, guided by experts.

Two men arrested for sexually assaulting minor in Vikasnagar

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The police arrested two young men, Rashid (20) and Sakir (20) on charges of sexually assaulting a minor girl in Vikasnagar in Dehradun district on Sunday. The officials informed that a complaint was filed at Vikasnagar police station on Saturday about a minor being sexually assaulted. According to the complainant, Rashid and Sakir, both residents of Vikasnagar, forcibly took the

girl into their car, recorded obscene videos and coerced her into physical relations. They also allegedly threatened to kill her if she disclosed the incident, as per the complainant, the officials

said. The police registered a case under relevant sections including the POCSO Act. Considering the sensitivity of the situation, the Dehradun senior superintendent of police Ajai Singh formed a team to arrest the accused. The police team, with the help of local informants and surveillance, identified the possible locations of the accused and started raids on Saturday. Acting on a tip-off,



girl into their car, recorded obscene videos and coerced her into physical relations.

They also allegedly threatened to kill her if she disclosed the incident, as per the complainant, the officials

the police started checking near a bridge in Vikasnagar on Sunday and eventually apprehended both accused. They will be presented before the court soon, the officials said.

Delhi duo swept away in Ganga near Shivpuri

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Two young men from Delhi were swept away by the strong currents of the Ganga river while bathing near Shivpuri in Tehri district in the wee hours on Sunday. The officials said that the police received information that five men reached Shivpuri at about 2 AM on Sunday. Out of these, two

gear, reached to the incident site. The SDRF's deep diving team, along with the Water police and local authorities, launched a search operation to find the missing youths. The teams looked for the missing men for hours at all the possible spots but could not find them, as per the officials. They said that the team



men Akash and Sandeep, each 23-years-old, reportedly went down the river near a hotel for a late night dip. However, they were caught in the river's strong currents and swept away, as stated by their friends, Sachin, Rajeev Chaudhary and Mahesh, the officials said. After receiving information about the incident, the search and rescue team of the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), equipped with necessary

will resume the search operation on Monday. Besides this, the officials stated that the police are investigating the case from all angles and will take further action after the SDRF gund the bodies of missing men. The SDRF has also urged the public to avoid approaching water bodies during the rainy season, especially in isolated areas and during odd hours, when help may not be readily available in case of an emergency.

HEALTHCARE AND BEYOND

EVER EXPANDING FOOTPRINT OF AYUSHMAN BHARAT

Massive saving of ₹1.25 lakh crore
out-of-pocket expenditure for the poor

Costly high-frequency life-saving procedures like dialysis **within reach of the poor now**

Families saved from falling into debt trap;
Significant reduction in NPA rates in microfinance loans enhancing economic stability

Timely primary healthcare strengthened through **a strong network of lakhs of Ayushman Arogya Mandirs,** preventing many primary and secondary diseases

35 crore
Ayushman cards

7.8 crore
treatments worth
₹1.07 lakh crore

30 thousand
empanelled hospitals

1.7 lakh
Ayushman Arogya Mandirs

"Ayushman Bharat is not only playing an important role in saving the lives of the poor, but it is also a symbol of the collective resolve and strength of 140 crore Indians."

Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

TMC alleges no Parliamentary Committees formed after 100 days of 18th Lok Sabha

Warns Parliament being turned into a deep, dark chamber

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

TMC leader Derek O'Brien on Sunday alleged Parliamentary Standing Committees had not been formed despite the 18th Lok Sabha completing 100 days since its constitution and said Parliament was being turned into a "deep, dark chamber". In a social media post, the Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader in the Rajya Sabha said seven out of 10 Bills were sent to department-related standing committees of Parliament in the 15th Lok Sabha while only two out of 10 Bills were sent to the panels in the last Lok Sabha. "Parliamentary standing committees have not yet been formed. In the 15th Lok Sabha, seven out of 10 Bills were sent to committees for scrutiny. In the last Lok Sabha, only two out of 10



Bills got scrutinised," O'Brien said. "Parliament is being turned into a deep, dark chamber," he added. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said on September 11 that

cent of Bills were referred to standing committees in the 17th Lok Sabha. About 50 per cent of reports on the Bills were presented within 115 days. On an average, standing committees held nine meetings to finalise reports on the Bills. Apart from the Data Protection Bill, only the Biological Diversity (Amendment) Bill, 2021, was discussed for at least 15 meetings. The three Bills to reform the country's criminal laws were examined together over 12 meetings. In the 16th Lok Sabha, 28 per cent of Bills were sent to parliamentary committees while 71 per cent of Bills were sent to the panels in the 15th Lok Sabha. While a majority of the standing committees come under the Lok Sabha Secretariat, some are serviced by the Rajya Sabha.

department-related standing committees and consultative committees of Parliament would be constituted shortly. According to data compiled by think-tank PRS Legislative Research, 16 per

Environment Ministry approves 111 urban forests in first 100 days of new Government



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

In the first 100 days of the Modi 3.0 Government, the Union Environment Ministry has sanctioned 111 urban forests in six states and one Union Territory against the target of 100 urban forests during the period. The initiative is part of the Ministry's revised Nagar Van Yojana in 2020 which was

launched to enhance urban greenery, improve the quality of life, and increase social cohesion in cities. The scheme provides financial assistance of Rs 4 lakh per hectare for the creation and maintenance of urban forests, encouraging the involvement of citizens, students and other stakeholders in managing these green spaces. The size of the urban forests ranges between 10 and 50

hectares. Each urban forest must have at least two-thirds of its area under tree cover and include components such as biodiversity parks, Smriti Vans, butterfly conservatories, and herbal gardens and Matri Vans created under the Ek Ped Ma Ke Naam campaign. Under this mass tree plantation special campaign, it is targeted to plant 80 crore trees this year by September

end and 140 crores by next year March end. Provision has been made on MeriLiFE portal for uploading details of plantation done by any individual or institution or organization private or government and tracking plantation efforts. More than 75 crore saplings have been planted by now under this campaign and detailed information has been uploaded on MeriLiFE portal, said the Ministry. The Nagar Van Yojana aims to develop 1,000 urban forests by 2027 with financial support from the National Fund of the National Compensatory Afforestation Management and Planning Authority. This initiative will help protect forest land within and around urban centres from degradation and encroachment and also address environmental concerns such as air pollution, urban heat islands, loss of biodiversity, and habitat degradation, said the Ministry.



SC to deliver verdict on watching child porn not POCSO offence

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court is scheduled to deliver on Monday its judgment on a plea challenging a Madras High Court ruling that has said mere downloading and watching child pornography is not an offence under the POCSO Act and the information technology law. A bench of Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra is likely to pronounce the verdict. Terming atrocious, the apex court had earlier agreed to hear the plea challenging the high court ruling that has said mere downloading and watching child pornography is not an offence under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and Information Technology (IT) Act. On January 11, the Madras High Court quashed the criminal proceedings against a 28-year-old man charged with downloading pornographic content involving children on his mobile phone. The high court had also said that children these days are grappling with the serious issue of watching pornography and instead of punishing them, the society must be "mature enough" to educate them. The Supreme Court had taken note of the submissions made in the matter by senior advocate H S Phoolka, who represented two petitioner organisations, that the high court verdict was contrary to the laws in this regard. The senior lawyer appeared in the court on behalf of NGOs

Just Rights for Children Alliance, based in Faridabad, and the New Delhi-based Bachpan Bachao Andolan. The organisations work for the welfare of children. The high court had quashed the criminal case against S Harish under the POCSO Act, 2012 and IT Act, 2000. In order to constitute an offence under section 67B of the IT Act, an accused must have published, transmitted or created material depicting children in a sexually-explicit act or conduct, it had said. "A careful reading of this provision does not make watching child pornography, per se, an offence under section 67B of the Information Technology Act, 2000," the high court had added. Even though the said section of the IT Act has been widely worded, it does not cover a case where a person has merely downloaded child pornography in an electronic gadget and watched the same, without doing anything more, it had said. Admittedly, two videos involving boys were downloaded and were available on the petitioner's mobile phone, and those were neither published nor transmitted to others and were within the petitioner's private domain, it had said. The Madras High Court had, however, expressed concern over children watching pornography. Viewing pornography can have negative consequences on teenagers down the line, affecting both their psychological and physical well-being, it had said.

Parliamentary Panel examines Waqf Bill amid 1.2 crore email responses

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

A parliamentary panel examining the Waqf (Amendment) Bill has received a staggering 1.2 crore email responses amid campaigns launched by rival groups to ratchet up support for their respective viewpoints regarding the draft law. Parliamentary sources said the Joint Committee on the Waqf Amendment Bill, chaired by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Jagadambika Pal, has also received 75,000 responses with documents to support the respective views, prompting the panel to seek additional staff from the Lok Sabha Secretariat. "We have deployed 15



additional personnel to go through the email responses and categorise and document those," one of the sources said. Radical Islamic preacher Zakir Naik has appealed to his supporters to oppose the Waqf (Amendment) Bill by sending responses to the parliamentary panel examining the draft law. The appeal from Naik has triggered a counter-reaction

and several Hindu groups too have urged their supporters to write emails to the committee in support of the Bill. Last month, the committee sought written suggestions from the general public, NGOs, experts, stakeholders and institutions on the Bill. In a statement, the committee asked people to send their comments to the joint secretary, Lok Sabha Secretariat, Room No. 440, Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi-110001 or mail those to jpcwaqf-lss@sansad.Nic.In. The committee is also embarking on a five-city tour to seek feedback from government officials, legal experts, Waqf Board members and community representatives.

Railway Ministry launches ticket-checking drive around festive season

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Railway Ministry has decided to launch a special ticket-checking drive around the festive seasons to keep a check on ticketless travellers, including policemen as they are among the top violators, officials said. The Ministry, on September 20, wrote a letter to the General Managers of 17 Zones asking them to start a special drive against ticketless and unauthorised travellers "for the period October 1 to 15 and October 25 to November 10" and take suitable action as per the provisions of the Railway Act of 1989. Railway commercial officers, who are part of the ongoing regular drive in various rail



divisions, say that along with common people, policemen will also be on their radar during the festive rush as they are among the top violators. "In our recent surprise check between Ghaziabad and Kanpur, we found hundreds of policemen travelling in AC coaches of various Express and Mail trains without any ticket. When we imposed a

fine on them, initially they refused to pay and threatened us with dire consequences. We remained undaunted and made them pay. The response of the passengers was very encouraging as they were happy and surprised to see action being taken against police personnel," railway official said.

First tri-services Future Warfare course to be conducted in New Delhi



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

First of its kind, a tri services "Future Warfare" course is scheduled to be conducted in New Delhi from September 23 - 27 here under the aegis of Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff, defence ministry said here on Sunday. A pioneering initiative by Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan, this will be a rank agnostic course for Major Generals to Majors and their equivalent level officers from other services. The course intends to acquaint the

officers with the operational and technological aspects of modern warfare. The course will focus on key areas related to future warfare to develop an understanding on the manner in which future wars will manifest in terms of being contact, non-contact, kinetic, non-kinetic, psychological or informational as also the domains where they will be fought, be it cyber, space or electromagnetic spectrum. It will also throw light on how emerging and disruptive technologies like Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, robotics and

hypersonics will impact the conduct of warfare. The need for a Future Warfare Course for Tri Services officers arises from the rapidly evolving nature of modern warfare, driven by technological advancements, changing global dynamics, and emerging threats. Officers must be equipped to navigate this complex landscape, leveraging new technologies, and adapting to innovative tactics. The course will foster jointness, and facilitate the development of a cohesive, futuristic, and tech-savvy force, capable of securing national interests in an increasingly uncertain and competitive environment. The course has been curated by Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff with the help of veteran and serving subject matter experts. Subsequent courses will build upon the curriculum of this course and be of longer duration with the larger objective of making the Indian Armed Forces "FUTURE READY".

Indian Navy to host fifth edition of Goa Maritime Symposium



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Indian Navy will host the fifth edition of Goa Maritime Symposium (GMS-24) at Naval War College, Goa for two days starting Monday, navy said here on Sunday. Giving details, officials said conceptualised and instituted by the Indian Navy in 2016, the GMS is a forum for fostering collaborative thinking, cooperation and

mutual understanding between India and key maritime nations of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). The theme for the event is "Common Maritime Security Challenges in the Indian Ocean Region - Progressing Lines of Efforts to Mitigate Dynamic Threats such as Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing and other Illegal Maritime Activities". The discussions will dwell on collaborative efforts towards enhancing maritime security in the region. The symposium will see participation of Naval representatives from 12 Indian Ocean Littoral countries - Bangladesh, Comoros, Indonesia, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Myanmar, Seychelles, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Thailand. Observers from Kenya and Tanzania will also attend the event.



Congress appoints Uday Bhanu Chib as President of Indian Youth Congress

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress on Sunday appointed Uday Bhanu Chib as the president of the Indian Youth Congress (IYC), replacing Srinivas B V. Chib was currently serving as the general secretary of IYC and is a former president of the Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Youth Congress. Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge has appointed Uday Bhanu Chib as the president of the Indian Youth Congress with immediate effect, a party statement said. The party appreciates the contributions of the outgoing president Srinivas BV, it added. Congress also appointed M K Bhardwaj and Bhanu Mahajan as acting working presidents of its Jammu and Kashmir unit. The appointments come amid the ongoing assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir. The party in August appointed Tariq Hameed Karra as president of its Jammu and Kashmir unit. He had replaced Vikar Rasool Wani. Kharge had also appointed two working presidents for Jammu and Kashmir — Tara Chand and Raman Bhalla. Elections in Jammu and Kashmir are being held in three phases. Voting for 24 seats was held in the first phase on September 18. The next phase of polling for 26 seats will be held on September 25. Voting for the third phase would be held on October 1 while results would declared on October 8.

Rhino numbers surge in India amidst climate threats: Report

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

On World Rhino Day on Sunday, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged citizens to visit Assam's Kaziranga National Park, home to one-horned rhinos, a government report has flagged climate change threats, including prolonged monsoons that flood critical grasslands and the spread of invasive plant species eating away the native flora essential for rhinos' survival. The report 'Assam's Role in Protecting the Greater One-Horned Rhino' indicated that while the increase in rhino numbers is encouraging, it necessitates the urgent expansion of habitats to ensure their long-term survival and prevent overcrowding.



"With over 70% of its population residing in Assam's Kaziranga, this species stands as a testament to India's commitment to wildlife preservation," it said while enlisting several measures

taken to protect this iconic species whose number stood at 3,262 at the end of 2021. The majestic animal remains classified as Vulnerable by the IUCN. Yet, the greater one-horned

rhino in India has made a remarkable comeback, thanks to India's proactive conservation policies and the dedicated efforts of Assam's authorities. The report prepared by the

research unit of the PIB said that besides climate change threats exacerbating flooding in the region and the proliferation of invasive species, human-wildlife conflict is a pressing concern, especially as rhino habitats are increasingly adjacent to densely populated agricultural areas. As rhinos venture into these regions seeking food or territory, they can damage crops and create risks for local communities. Effective management strategies that incorporate community engagement and education are essential to mitigate these conflicts and foster coexistence. According to the report, the conservation efforts must prioritize habitat

restoration, the creation of wildlife corridors, and the involvement of local communities in protection initiatives. "Combining traditional knowledge with modern conservation techniques will be crucial for ensuring that both rhinos and humans can thrive together," it said about the conservation measures for these animals that usually weigh around 2,800 kg and live for 45-50 years. The Prime Minister posted on X: "Today, on World Rhino Day, let us reiterate our commitment to protect one of our planet's most iconic species—rhinos. Compliments to all those involved in rhino conservation efforts over the last many years.

"It is a matter of immense pride that India is home to a large number of one horned rhinos. I also fondly recall my visit to Kaziranga in Assam and urge you all to visit there as well." The Indian rhino is the largest of the three Asian species and shares its single horn characteristic with the Javan rhino. The Sumatran rhino, in contrast, has two horns, a trait linking Asian and African rhinos. Rhinos play a crucial role in maintaining ecosystems. As mega-herbivores, they shape grasslands by grazing, creating open spaces that benefit other wildlife. Their wallowing behavior also creates waterholes, supporting various species.

BJP leaders campaign in Jammu ahead of second round of polling

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

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

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

the status quo and restore Article 370.

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

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

families who had 'biryani' with terrorists.

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

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

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



Choudhary Abdul Gani Rajnath Singh said, Pakistan is feeling "pain in its belly" watching democracy flourishing in the Union Territory after the abrogation of Article 370. Singh also accused the National Conference (NC), Congress and People's Democratic Party (PDP) of misleading people by talking about the restoration of Article 370 of the Constitution in their manifestoes and said these parties should stop working as "proxies of Pakistan". "The NC, Congress and PDP are

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

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

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

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

for the betterment of India.

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

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

He also highlighted the "wave

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ KOLKATA

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In his previous letter to the Prime Minister she had said how 5 million people in the state were affected by the floods," requesting him to "immediately sanction and release central funds to address the widespread devastation." However in his reply letter, Patil wrote that the whole affair is managed by the DVRRC, which had representatives from the Central Water Commission, Bengal, Jharkhand, and the DVC.

Meanwhile, the flood situation continued to remain grim in large parts of southern Bengal with several blocks of Hooghly, Howrah, East and West Midnapore districts remaining inundated often under neck-deep or even more water. Not only the villages but urban areas had also been largely affected with the towns like Ghatol, Panshura, Purushura remaining under water for the past more than 60 hours or so.

Omar Abdullah leads Shikara rally on Dal lake ahead of polls

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Raj Babbar criticizes BJP's civic failures in Gurugram

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

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

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

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

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

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

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

rejection.

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

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

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

TMC-compatible Subhankar is new Bengal PCC President

PNS ■ KOLKATA

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

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



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

On what he had to say about

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

details of the ongoing investigation.

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

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

Triangular contest expected in Haryana Ateli Assembly constituency

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ TIRUPATI/ NEW DELHI

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

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



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

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu

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

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

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

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



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Quad is here to stay

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

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



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

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PICTALK



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

Key reforms needed for unified electoral system

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



SUBHASH CHANDRA AGRAWAL

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



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

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

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

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

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

votes than NOTA should be barred from contesting future elections, even though the candidate with the next highest vote tally could be declared the winner for that particular term. Furthermore, immunity for MPs and MLAs from legislative proceedings should be reconsidered. In the infamous JMM bribery case, the Supreme Court was unable to act against guilty individuals due to parliamentary immunity. Parliament's rules should be rewritten to introduce fixed penalties for members who violate norms, removing the discretionary powers of the Speaker. This would prevent lenient punishments like the one imposed on MP Rajesh Manjhi, who faced only a brief suspension for taking his lady friend, pretending she was his wife, on a foreign trip at government expense. Absconding parliamentarians, if present in the House during sessions, should not be allowed to leave until legal authorities execute pending warrants against them. Additionally, MPs and MLAs with less than 75 per cent attendance should be barred from contesting elections for the next six years. Cases like that of George Fernandes, who was elected to the Rajya Sabha despite losing his memory, highlight the need for a minimum medical fitness certificate for candidates. Parliamentarians should also

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

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

RAHUL'S IRRESPONSIBLE REMARKS

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

Vinod Johri | Delhi

ADULTERATION IN LADDOOS

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

High voter turnout in J and K



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

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

Manoj Parashar | Ghaziabad

EXPLODING PAGERS

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

Anshu Bharti | Begusarai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Social media age limit: Will banning children be enough?

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

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

In theory, setting an age limit seems like a straightforward solution to mitigate the risks associated with social media. However, the reality is far more complex. One of the most significant challenges in enforcing an age limit on social media is the sheer difficulty of verifying users' ages reliably. Most platforms already have minimum age requirements. Yet, we all know that younger children are active on these platforms, often bypassing age restrictions by simply entering a false birth date during registration.



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

open. When discussing social media and its impact on children, parental oversight inevitably comes into play. Parents are expected to monitor and control their children's access to these platforms, but can they realistically do so in this hyper-connected world? The answer, unfortunately, is no. Even the most diligent parents cannot be expected to oversee every minute of their children's online activity. A well-meaning ban on social media might give parents a false sense of security, but it doesn't change the reality that children will find ways to access these platforms.

If we push them off regulated, mainstream platforms, they may seek refuge in the darker, unregulated corners of the internet—spaces where risks of cyberbullying, exposure to harmful content, and even predatory behaviour are even greater. Social media is, undeniably, a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it exposes children to unrealistic portrayals of life, leading to anxiety, depression, and a constant need to measure up to others. On the other hand, it

provides a space for young people to connect, express themselves, and access educational resources. Banning it outright may remove the toxic aspects but also deny them these valuable opportunities.

As parents and educators, our challenge is to strike a balance. Instead of rushing towards a ban, it might be more prudent to focus on equipping children with the skills they need to navigate the online world responsibly. Digital literacy, mental health education, and open conversations between parents and children can go a long way in protecting young minds from the pitfalls of social media. Rather than looking at social media as an enemy to be vanquished, we should view it as a tool that requires careful handling. Age restrictions, when implemented properly, can help shield younger users, but without holistic solutions—ranging from better parental support to more reliable age verification methods—their efficacy will be limited.

(The author is a columnist and writing coach based in Dubai. Views are personal)



ASHA IYER KUMAR



FIRST COLUMN

HEALTHY SPINE AND WELLBEING

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



RAVI VALLURI

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

GST cess extension: Is it Justified Beyond 2026?



UTTAM GUPTA

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



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

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

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

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

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

crore; courtesy, of the devastating effect of Covid pandemic. Against this, cess proceeds were only Rs 65,000 crore, leading to an unmet deficit of Rs 235,000 crore. During FY 2021-22 also, the collections in the Cesspool couldn't fully meet the shortfall in tax collection though the deficit was much less.

To make up for the deficit, the Centre, in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) set up a special window for borrowings at a "low" rate of interest and transferred the funds to states as back-to-back loans. Under this window, it borrowed a total of Rs 270,000 crore including Rs 110,000 crore during 2020-21 and Rs 160,000 crore during 2021-22. To generate the required money to repay the loan and interest, the GST Council decided to extend the cess till March 2026.

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

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

Naturally, its continuation can't be justified in terms of the need to service loan liabilities from the past; those would have already been extinguished before that.

Do they have any logical argument? To say that they require more revenue to meet the development needs, as

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

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

In fact, during FY 2023-24, the average monthly GST collection was even higher at Rs 168,000 crore. Therefore, Cess's continuation on the basis that there could be a shortfall in tax collection is untenable.

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



CHAITANYA K PRASAD

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

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

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

ences to the past, making the stories richer and more captivating.

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Israel raids, shuts down Al Jazeera bureau in West Bank

Hezbollah fires over 100 rockets across Israel

AP ■ DUBAI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

AP ■ NAHARIYA

Hezbollah launched more than 100 rockets early Sunday across a wider and deeper area of northern Israel, with some landing near the city of Haifa, as Israel launched hundreds of strikes on Lebanon. The sides appeared to be spiralling toward all-out war following months of escalating tensions. The rocket barrage overnight set off air raid sirens across northern Israel, sending thousands of people scrambling into shelters. The Israeli military said that rockets had been fired "toward civilian areas," pointing to a possible escalation after previous barrages had mainly been aimed at military targets.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Qatar have repeatedly bogged down.

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

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

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

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

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

Britain's Labour Party gathers after rocky start in government

AP ■ LONDON

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Keir Starmer is also facing grumbling among his own employees over the salary of his chief of staff, Sue Gray. The BBC disclosed that she is paid 170,000 pounds (\$225,000) a year — about 3,000 pounds more than the prime minister's salary. The government says it wasn't involved in setting the pay scale for political advisers. Labour says that the criticism is being whipped up by the Conservatives and their media supporters. But polls suggest it has hurt. An Ipsos poll released Friday found 25% of respondents thought Starmer was doing a good job — down from 36% in July — while 42% thought he was doing a bad job, up from 14%. The firm interviewed 1,082 adults by telephone and the margin of error is plus or minus three percentage points. "He promised to be different, but he hasn't been," Conservative lawmaker Chris Philp told the BBC. "He is not running a government of service, he is running a government of self-service."

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

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

Dissanayake to become Sri Lanka President

PTI ■ COLOMBO

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4 killed, many hurt in Birmingham late night shooting

AP ■ BIRMINGHAM

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Iran supports both Hamas in Gaza and Lebanon's Hezbollah

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Donald Trump's goal of mass deportations falls short

AP ■ SAN DIEGO

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

US to return 297 Indian antiquities

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

China is engaged in hotly contested territorial disputes in both the South China Sea and the East China Sea. It claims sovereignty over all of the South China Sea. Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, Brunei and Taiwan have counterclaims. The four-member Quad, or the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, advocates upholding a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific. China claims that the grouping aims to contain its rise.

Over 20 wounded after Russia strikes apartment blocks

AP ■ KYIV

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

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

PTI ■ WILMINGTON

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

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

Nepal to organise Yoga Retreat to enhance physical, spiritual health

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

In an attempt to promote spiritual tourism, the Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN) is organising a yoga retreat in western Nepal's Pokhara where renowned yoga enthusiasts from across the world will train in theoretical and practical aspects of the ancient wisdom. The event to be organised in collaboration with Purna Yoga Centre between October 16 and 19 will see the participation of more than 100 yoga enthusiasts in the retreat in the tourist hub Pokhara, according to the organisers. Vegetarian and organic foods will be served and devotional songs as well as relaxing music will be played during the four-day retreat. By organising this event, Nepal aspires to position itself as one of the favourite yoga and spiritual destinations in the global travel market, said Binayak Shah, HAN president. The retreat will be organised annually to promote spiritual tourism, he said. "The art and science of yoga originated from the Himalayas and lord Shiva is the first yogi who taught the ancient wisdom to the humans," he pointed out. "Now we want to cash on this ancient wisdom which is believed to have originated from the Himalayas, the abode of lord Shiva."

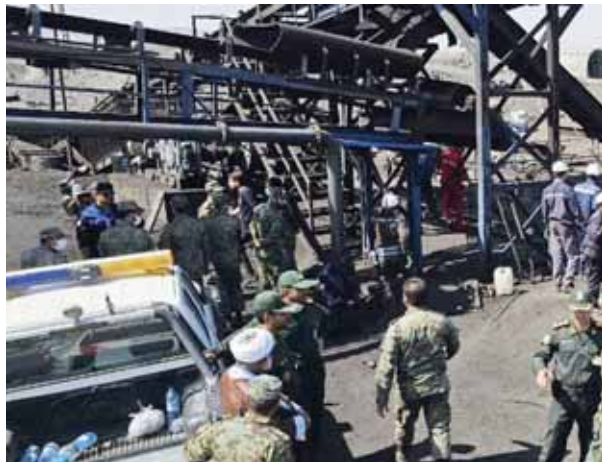
Explosion at coal mine in eastern Iran kills at least 34 workers

AP ■ TEHRAN

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

Number of rhinos is slightly up but poaching has increased too

AP ■ NAIROBI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the Public at large that Smt. Neha Kawara Madan W/o. Sh. Karan Madan and Sh. Umesh Kawara S/o. Late Sh. Krishna Chandra Kawara are the 'Title Holders' in possession of 'Entire Ground Floor of Freehold Built up Residential Property Bearing Plot No. 111, Block No. B (Commonly Known as B-111), Malviya Nagar, New Delhi-110017' measuring 289.00 sq. yards, hereinafter referred to as 'Secured Property', vide Sale Deed dated 9th August, 2023 duly registered as Regn. No. 6802, Book No. 1, Vol. No. 5571, pp. 112-130 of 28.23 in the office of the Sub-Registrar, District Hazrat Nizamuddin, New Delhi. The original documents (i.e. i) Lease Deed dated 31.10.64, (ii) Deed of Conveyance dated 31.10.64, (iii) Death Certificate of Mrs. Ram Rakhia, (iv) Death Certificate of Mrs. Raj Kumari Nanda, (v) Death Certificate of Mr. Ram Prakash Nanda, (vi) Substitution Letter (L & CO) dated 24.05.04, (vii) Substitution Letter (L & CO) dated 15.07.04 and (viii) Substitution Letter dated 02.03.12 w.r.t. the Schedule Plot have been lost/misplaced and are untraceable as on date. In lieu of which Information Report dated 22.08.24 bearing LR No. 2140399/2024 has been filed with Delhi Police. This notice is thus issued to the Public at large, (i.e. any Person(s), Company(s), Author(s), Societies (ies), Organisation(s), Financial Institution(s), Bank(s), HUF(s) etc. having any knowledge, custody or possession of the above mentioned lost/misplaced/untraceable original documents or otherwise having any claims, rights, title, interests, possession etc. in the Schedule Property, by way of Ownership, Succession, Interference, Sale, Mortgage, Exchange, Charge, Lien, Gift, Trust, Encumbrance etc., may come forward with supporting documents, to be delivered to the undersigned within 15 days from the date of this Publication, post expiration of which, any claim(s) or objection(s), if raised or received, shall be treated as null & void and as waived.

Joint Kashtyaa Advocate
Address: Chamber No. 6, Block-F, Karkardooma Court
New Delhi-110032, Contact No. +91 99716 26467

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

PUBLIC NOTICE-TENDER CUM E-AUCTION FOR SALE OF SECURED ASSET

[See proviso to Rule 8(i)]
[Notice for sale of immovable asset(s)]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Date: September 23, 2024
Place: Delhi and Gurgaon

Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Debt-ridden Vodafone Idea on Sunday said it has awarded contracts worth about Rs 30,000 crore to Nokia, Ericsson and Samsung for supply of 4G and 5G network equipment for three years. It is the largest deal awarded by any Indian telecom operator during this year. The deal also marks the first step towards the roll-out of the company's three-year capex (capital expenditure) plan of about USD 6.6 billion or Rs 55,000 crore announced earlier. "Vodafone Idea (VIL) has concluded a mega, about USD 3.6 billion (around Rs 300 billion), deal with Nokia, Ericsson and Samsung for supply of network equipment over a period of three years. The capex programme is directed towards expanding the 4G population coverage from 1.03 billion to 1.2 billion, launching 5G in key markets and capacity expansion in line with data growth," the company said in a statement.



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

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

VIL had recently raised Rs 24,000 crore through sale of equity and will fund the capital expenditure from the latest capital. The capex is currently being funded out of the equity raise. For the long-term capex, the company is in advanced stage of discussions with its existing and new lenders to tie up Rs 25,000 crore of funds and Rs 10,000 crore of non-funded facilities. VIL said that it has completed techno economic evaluation of the company's long-term projections by an independent third party. The report has been submitted to all the banks and financial institutions basis which the banks will now progress with their internal evaluation and approval processes. VIL in the last auction had acquired spectrum worth Rs 3,500 crore to increase its network capacity. The company executed some quick-win capex for the deployment of more spectrum on existing sites and the roll-out of some new sites. VIL said that the small capex

roll-out boosted its network capacity by about 15 per cent and an increase in population coverage by 16 million by end September, 2024. The company claimed that it has started witnessing an improvement in customer experience in select geographies where these roll-outs have been completed. VIL holds a large spectrum portfolio including mid band 5G spectrum in 17 circles and millimetreWave 5G spectrum in 16 circles. After the Rs 24,000 crore fundraise, including Rs 18,000 crore through a follow-on offer, the company was reeling under the debt of around Rs 2.14 lakh crore. The company had payment obligations of Rs 2,09,520 crore towards the government as of June 30, 2024, which included the deferred spectrum payment obligations and adjusted gross revenue liability. Post Rs 24,000 crore fundraise, VIL promoters Aditya Birla Group and Vodafone hold 37.3 per cent and the government 23.2 per cent stake in the company.

Luxury carmakers expect surge during festive season

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Luxury carmakers Mercedes-Benz, Audi and BMW are eyeing robust sales during the festive period this year with demand for high-end cars continuing to see an upward trend in India. In an interaction with PTI, Mercedes-Benz India MD and CEO Santosh Iyer said the luxury car segment is set for its best-ever performance this year with festive season oftakes playing a major role in the overall performance. He noted that the festive season generally gives high double-digit sales growth, helping the automaker to average out single-digit growth of the earlier quarter. "So in that sense, on an average, then we are able to get a double-digit growth during the festive season," Iyer stated. Elaborating on the overall industry, which still remains a very small part of the overall passenger vehicle market in the country, he said the segment is headed for record volumes this fiscal year but not all players are witnessing growth. "Some (companies) are even degrowing, some are flat and they are facing headwinds, but because we are the primary player in the market, we still feel the luxury car market should cross 50,000-51,000 cars this year," Iyer said. The luxury car market in India currently remains very small accounting for less than 2 per cent of the overall passenger vehicle market in the country. Audi India Head Balbir Singh Dhillon said the demand in the last few months has grown steadily and the company expects this to continue in the period ahead.



"We are working relentlessly with our HQ to get additional allocations for India, to fulfil this growing demand," he stated. Having said that, one cannot disregard the fact that the waiting period for Audi cars has gone up owing to demand and supply mismatch, he added. "It is also important to mention that the prevailing Global challenges are not only impacting the adequate supply of new cars, but also instilling pressure on the prices," Dhillon stated. With the upcoming festive season, Audi is expecting good growth on the back of sustained demand models like A4, A6, Q5, Q7 and Q8. BMW Group India President Vikram Pawah said the fundamentals of the Indian economy are sturdy and consumer confidence in the luxury segment is on the rise. "For BMW Group India, the order book is solid and we are trying our best to speed up deliveries for our customers. Along with additional bookings around Diwali and Dussehra, we are confident of closing the year on a high note while clocking impressive growth," he stated.

India, EU to have new round of FTA talks

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Senior officials of India and the 27-nation European Union (EU) will commence the next round of talks for a proposed free trade agreement from Monday here, an official said. The agreement is aimed at further boosting bilateral trade and investments between the two regions. The two sides are negotiating a free trade agreement, an investment protection agreement and an agreement on geographical indications (GIs). "The five-day talks will start from September 23. It will be the ninth round of negotiations. Also, the concerns of Indian stakeholders regarding the EU's sustainability measures, such as CBAM, deforestation and others, will be discussed with the EU," the official said. During the ninth round, both sides will discuss core trade issues covering goods, services, investment and government procurement along with necessary rules such as rules of origin, SPS (sanitary and phytosanitary), and technical barriers to trade. The Carbon Border



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

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

wine, spirits, data security for Indian IT firms, and public procurement," it said. It added that one of the major reasons for the delay is the differing aspirations between the two parties. The EU seeks tariff elimination on over 95 per cent of its exports, including sensitive agricultural products and automobiles, while India is comfortable opening up only around 90 per cent of its market and is hesitant to lower tariffs on bulk agricultural products, the GTRI said. GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said that major Indian goods exports to the EU, such as ready-made garments, pharmaceuticals, steel, petroleum products, and electrical machinery, will become more competitive, if the pact gets concluded successfully. Additionally, key services exports like telecommunications, other business services, and transportation services will also see substantial growth. On the other hand, the EU will benefit from increased exports of essential goods from India, including aircraft and parts, electrical machinery, diamonds, and chemicals.

President to inaugurate 16th ASOSAI

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

President of India Droupadi Murmu will inaugurate the Assembly of the Asian Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (ASOSAI) here on Tuesday. The four-day conference will be followed by a series of discussions on the evolving role of Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) in fostering transparency and accountability. "The President of India, Droupadi Murmu will inaugurate the prestigious 16th Assembly of the Asian Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions (ASOSAI) here on September 24th, 2024," Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) said in a release. A key highlight of this year's assembly is the assumption of the chair of ASOSAI by the CAG of India Girish Chandra Murmu for the term 2024-2027. "His leadership is expected to drive the association towards new frontiers in public audit, particularly in strengthening governance frameworks across Asia," CAG said. As part of the programme, the delegates will also participate in a one-day symposium on Digital Public Infrastructure and Gender Divide Issues of Inclusion and Accessibility. The symposium aims to explore critical issues at the intersection of technology, governance, and social inclusion, addressing how digital advancements can bridge the gap between genders in accessing public services. The assembly will witness participation from more than 200 delegates representing 42 countries and international organisations, underscoring the diverse and collaborative nature of ASOSAI. Delegates will engage in high-level discussions



to enhance the effectiveness of public audit, with a focus on improving accountability and promoting best practices in government operations. CAG said the conference promises to be more than just a formal gathering -- it will serve as a platform for exchanging innovative ideas and forging stronger regional and global partnerships to fortify the pillars of good governance. Founded in 1979 with 11 members, ASOSAI has grown to 48 Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs), an important regional group under the umbrella of the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI). ASOSAI plays a central role in promoting collaboration, sharing experiences, knowledge exchange, and capacity building in the field of public audit amongst its members, as per a statement. The first ASOSAI Assembly and Governing Board meeting was held in New Delhi in May 1979.

Users threaten to quit UPI over fees: Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Around 75 per cent UPI users will stop using it if any transaction charge is levied on the service, a survey by LocalCircles said on Sunday. The survey found that 38 per cent of users make over 50 per cent of their payment transactions via UPI instead of debit, credit or any other form of digital transaction. "Only 22 per cent UPI users surveyed are willing to bear a transaction fee on payments, 75 per cent of respondents stated that they will stop using UPI if a transaction fee is introduced," the survey said. The survey comprising three broad areas claims to have received 42,000 responses from 308 districts but the number of replies on each question varied. The questions regarding transaction fee on UPI received 15,598 responses. The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) posted a record 57 per cent rise in the volume of transactions and 44 per cent rise in value in the 2023-24 fiscal year, compared to the previous fiscal year. For the first time UPI transactions crossed 100 billion and closed at 131 billion in a financial year, compared to 84 billion in 2022-23. In value terms, it touched Rs 199.89 trillion, compared to Rs 139.1 trillion, the report said. The survey found 37 per cent of respondents shared UPI transaction accounts for more than 50 per cent of their total payment in value terms.

GST rate review meeting scheduled on September 25

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The ministerial panel on GST rate rationalisation will meet on September 25 and is expected to discuss tweaking of tax slabs and rates. "The meeting of the GoM on rate rationalisation is scheduled for September 25 in Goa," an official told PTI. The six-member Group of Minister (GoM) under Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Chaudhary, last met on August 22 and had submitted a status report to the GST Council on September 9. During the August meeting, the panel had tasked the fitment committee comprising tax officers from the Centre and states to analyse the implication of tax rate change on some items and gather more data. Currently, goods and services tax (GST) is a four-tier tax structure with slabs at 5, 12, 18, and 28 per cent. Under GST, essential items are either exempted or taxed at the lowest slab, while luxury and demerit items attract the highest slab. Luxury and sin goods attract cess on top of the highest 28 per cent slab. There have been talks of merging the 12 and 18 per cent tax slabs, but nothing has been proposed so far. Around 12 per cent, the average GST rate has fallen below the revenue neutral rate



of 15.3 per cent. This has prompted the need to start discussions on GST rate rationalisation. States such as West Bengal and Karnataka were not in favour of tinkering with GST slabs for now. West Bengal Finance Minister Chandrima Bhattacharya had said after the GoM meet in August, "I have said there should be no changes in the GST slab". Karnataka Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda had said the GoM has to analyse whether there is need to "disturb" the GST system, which has now broadly stabilised. "What do you achieve by disturbing it. We said in next meeting we will discuss it (reducing slabs)," Byre Gowda had said. The six-member GoM also includes Uttar Pradesh Finance Minister Suresh Kumar Khanna, Rajasthan Health Services Minister Gajendra Singh, and Kerala Finance Minister K N Balagopal.

Government to start FY26 budget making exercise from next month

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The finance ministry will commence the exercise to prepare the annual budget for 2025-26 from the second week of next month in the backdrop of the Indian economy recording 7 per cent growth rate for the fourth consecutive year. The budget for the next financial year would focus on reforms to be pushed to further accelerate growth momentum and measures to generate jobs and boost

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

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

wound up, should be explained," it said. The Budget Estimates for 2025-26 will be provisionally finalised after completion of pre-budget meetings, it said. Pre-budget meeting shall commence from second week of October, 2024 and shall continue till around mid-November, 2024, it said. During the pre-Budget meetings requirement of funds for all categories of expenditures along with receipts of ministries/departments and

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

GCCI seeks review of SC's mineral taxation ruling

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Goa Chamber of Commerce and Industries (GCCI) has demanded an urgent review of the mineral taxation ruling by the Supreme Court, stating that the increased cost of mining will inevitably lead to higher prices for essential commodities, including steel, power, cement, etc. The Supreme Court last month allowed states to collect past dues on royalty on minerals bearing land from the Centre and mining companies from April 1, 2005 onwards. "The imposition of further taxes/cess/levies, if any, as permitted by the ruling, will further impact the economics of mining operations possibly making it unviable with its natural consequences.



"Additionally, the increased cost of mining will inevitably lead to higher prices for essential commodities e.g., steel, power, cement, etc. Further fuelling inflation and consequential impact on the nation's economy," GCCCI said in a statement. The possible impact would be a change of goalpost particularly when the auction regime is in vogue post enactment of MMDR (Amendment) Act in 2015, while creating an uncertainty in the mineral taxation regime of the country, it said. It may adversely impact the

knowledge that after the change of mining regulations in 2015, the mining companies are required to pay a substantial amount in the form of auction premium for winning the bid, besides other statutory dues like Royalty, DMF/NMET contributions, etc," it said. The imposition of further taxes/cess/levies, if any, as permitted by the ruling, will further impact the economics of mining operations possibly making it unviable with its natural consequences. "We are compelled to request the authorities to review the verdict in light of the submissions from the industry to find a balanced solution that ensures revenue generation while ensuring the survival of the mining sector," GCCCI President Shrinivas Dempo said.

IN BRIEF

- LIC INDIA CONFERENCE OF CEO AND FOREIGN HEADS**
MUMBAI: LIC of India organised a conference of its CEO's & Heads of foreign units from UK, Singapore, Bahrain, Kenya, Fiji, Mauritius, Nepal, Sri Lanka & Bangladesh at GIFT city, Gandhinagar on 20.09.2024. LIC of India got an approval from IFSCA, the regulator of GIFT city to open an insurance office.
- RPF RECOVERED SMUGGLED GOODS**
MALIGAON: On 2nd September, 2024 RPF & GRP of Lumding jointly conducted checking in train no. 01666 (Agartala - Rani Kamalapati Express) at Lumding railway station. During checking, they apprehended four persons and recovered 19.7 grams of Brown Sugar worth Rs. 3.94 lakhs (approx.) and 18.10 kgs of Ganja worth Rs. 1.81 lakhs (approx.) from them. Later, the apprehended persons along with the recovered items were handed over to OC/GRP/Lumding for necessary legal action.
- NFR TAKING STEPS TO ENHANCE SAFETY MEASURES IN TRAINS**
MALIGAON: N. F. Railway to prioritize the safety and well-being of its passengers during their journey they are continuing the effort of modernizing and upgrading its infrastructure to meet the highest standard of safety and convenience.
- SIGNING OF GAS DEAL IN ACG, AZERBAIJAN**
NEW DELHI: ONGC Videsh, together with the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan (SOCAR), bp, MOL, INPEX, Equinor, ExxonMobil, TPAO, and ITOCHU, have signed an addendum to the existing Production Sharing Agreement (PSA) for ACG Field in the Azerbaijan sector of the Caspian Sea.

THE MAGIC OF MILLETS

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

BY DR AVULA LAXMAIAH

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

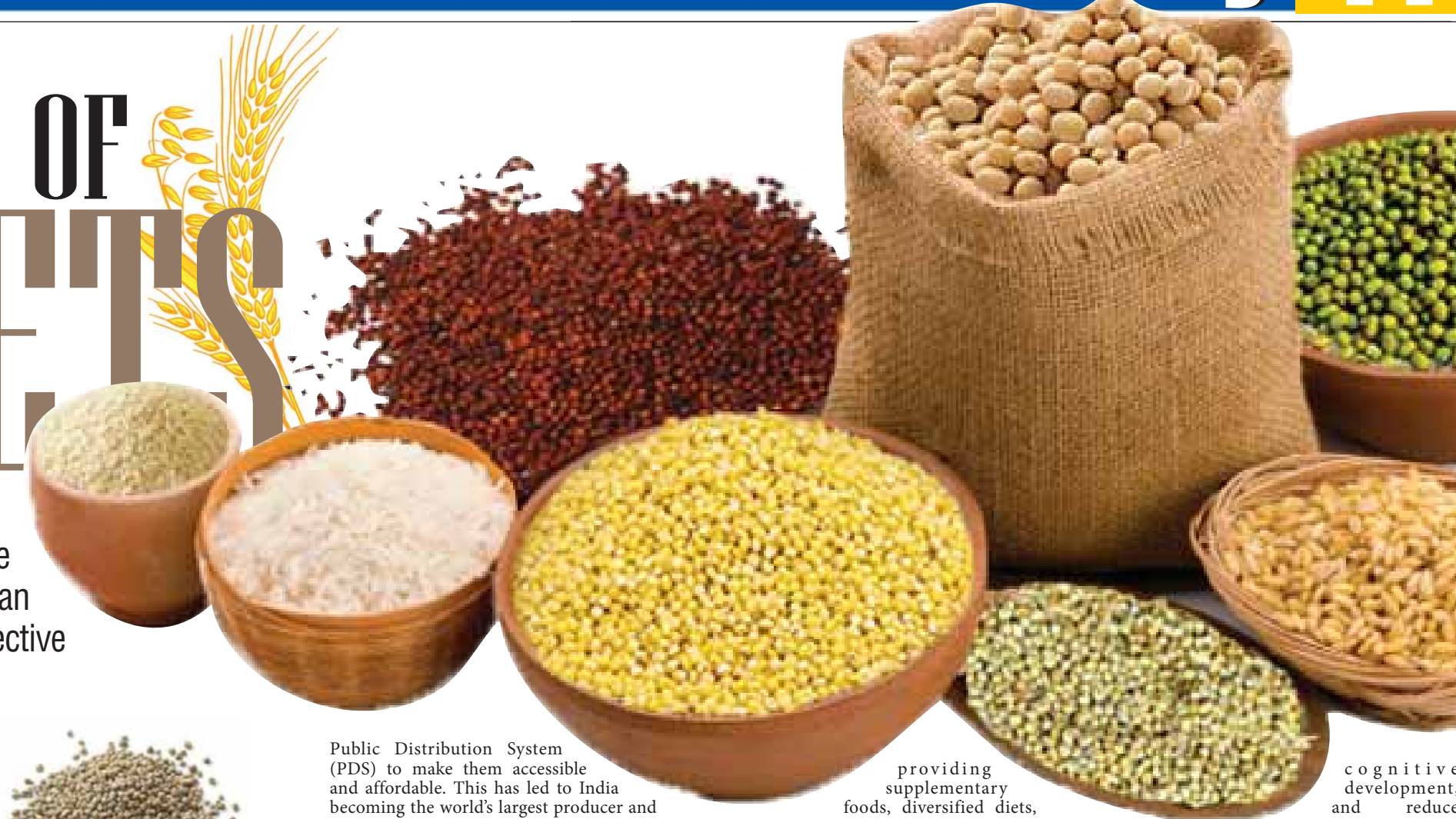
cognitive development, and reduce absenteeism while increasing enrolment in pre-schools.

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

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

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

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



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

TEAM VIVA

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



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

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

STUDY REVEALS WHY AGING IMPAIRS IMMUNE RESPONSE

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

There is hope for old-age people suffering from certain ailments from which they had no route to escape hitherto. All treatments had failed to resuscitate them from the octopus-like shackles of the disease. A team of medical and bio-engineering researchers in the University Of Miami Miller School Of Medicine Immunology in the US have found out the reasons behind old men failing to respond to any treatments for a series of diseases. Nay, they have not invented any medicine for such diseases but have made a landmark invention about the reason behind the failure of drugs to cure the medical problems faced by the veterans. A research paper published in Nature Communications, a widely followed scientific publication after peer review lists the reasons for the failure of medicines among old people. What makes the findings distinct is the part played by Dhananjay Suresh, a 20-year-old bio-medical engineer, and a key team member. Dhananjay is waiting for admission to a leading medical school in the US for his MBBS course after the four-and-a-half-year-long B Tech course when he joined the team. Suresh is the son of India-born medical microbiologist couple Dr. Suresh Pallikuthu and Dr Ranjini Valiathan. The researchers led by Dr. Daniela Frasca, principal investigator and associate professor of microbiology and immunology, have successfully proved for the first time in medical history that the aged fails to respond to medicines because of the "inability of immune cells to generate protective immunity". The metabolic abnormalities in immune cells lead to a reduced ability to generate protective immunity, according to Dr Frasca. Her team identified metabolic changes that decrease the body's



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



DHANANJAY SURESH

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

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

INDIA TRUMPS BANGLADESH WITH ASHWIN'S SIX WICKETS

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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



in a match-saving effort, while his 89 not out at the Gabba in the decider is now part of Indian cricketing folklore. One of the most astute readers of the game, Chappell explained why Pant's keeping will also be key to India's fortunes on bouncy tracks. "If Pant can perform at his best, he's the ideal keeper for Australian conditions. If he's able to continue with his agile performance standing back, that is what is required in Australia. You need a keeper who capably covers a lot of territory to both sides of the wicket. "Any keeper who fulfils those requirements not only improves the team's fielding but also allows the slip fielders to spread wider to cover extra territory," he elaborated. Chappell believes that a stern warning from erstwhile head coach Ravi Shastri during his time at the helm might have helped Pant in raising the level of his glove work. "Pant's keeping standing up to the stumps drastically improved before his serious injury, following an ultimatum from coach Ravi Shastri. The fact that Pant progressed from being a dubious keeper against spinners to a very good gloveman standing up to the stumps, admirably displayed

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



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

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

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

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

Super sub Vinicius leads to Real Madrid comeback win over Espanyol

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



Romero. "We made mistakes that maybe you can get away with in other games, but not here," Espanyol coach Manolo González said. Madrid pulled to one point behind leader Barcelona before it plays at Villarreal on Sunday. Bellingham had a scare when he fell awkwardly on his right shoulder in the first half, but after briefly being seen by a doctor on the sideline he went back on. Ancelotti said it did not look like the England midfielder was fine. Unsurprisingly, Ancelotti said he was satisfied with the "well-rounded" performance. Garcia in goalAfter helping Spain win Olympic gold this

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

Arshdeep takes six in India D's consolation win

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

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

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