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'BOKO HARAM MILITANTS KILL OVER 100 IN NIGERIAN VILLAGE'

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SENSEX, NIFTY TUMBLE ON GLOBAL DOWNTURN

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WORLD CHAMPION SACHIN WINS SILVER IN MEN'S SHOT PUT 11 SPORTS

Kejriwal bail plea hearing in SC today



FILE PHOTO

and gave two days to Kejriwal to file a rejoinder. Kejriwal has filed two separate petitions challenging the denial of bail and his arrest by the CBI in the case. He has challenged the August 5 order of the Delhi High Court upholding his arrest. He was arrested by the CBI on June 26. On August 14, the top court refused to grant interim bail to Kejriwal in the case and sought a response from the probe agency on his plea challenging his arrest. The Delhi High Court had on August 5 upheld the arrest of the Chief Minister as legal, and said there was no malafide intention in CBI's action which was able to demonstrate how the AAP supremo could influence witnesses who could muster the courage to depose only after his arrest. The HC had asked him to move the trial court for regular bail in the CBI case. It had noted that the loop of evidence against the chief minister closed after the collection of relevant evidence following his arrest by the CBI and it cannot be said that it was without any justifiable reason or illegal.

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PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Thursday Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's pleas seeking bail and challenging his arrest by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the alleged excise policy scam. According to the cause list, a bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan is likely to hear the matter. The top court had on August 23 allowed the CBI to file its counter affidavit in the matter

Phogat, Punia likely to contest Haryana polls on Congress ticket

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

Wrestlers Vinesh Phogat and Bajrang Punia are all set to join the Congress, amid speculation that they are likely to contest the upcoming Haryana Assembly elections scheduled for October 5. Phogat, is expected to mount challenge for the Julana seat held by the Jannayak Janta Party's Amarjeet Dhandra while Punia is likely to contest from Badli seat. Both Phogat and Punia met Rahul Gandhi, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday. They also met Congress general secretary (organisation) KC Venugopal. Phogat and Punia joining the Congress at this time is significant because it is both nominating election candidates and is engaged in seat-sharing talks with the Aam Aadmi Party. Punia is a Tokyo Games bronze medallist, while Phogat became the first woman wrestler to reach the Olympics final, the stage where she was disqualified after being found overweight by about 100 gm in her 50-kg category weigh-in. She subsequently announced her retirement from the sport. The Congress' X handle shared the picture of Phogat and Punia with Rahul. The party as well as the duo have remained tight-lipped



Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi with wrestlers Vinesh Phogat and Bajrang Punia in New Delhi

about the speculations. However, a clearer picture could emerge in a day or two. Sources said that Phogat wanted to fight from the Julana seat, but the Congress had initially wanted her to contest from another seat near Gurugram. Sources said deliberations are on to finalise the seats for the two wrestlers with Julana and Badli seats under consideration for Phogat and Punia respectively. The Congress put out a photograph of Gandhi with Phogat and Punia on its official X handle. Asked whether Phogat and Punia could contest on a Congress ticket, AICC

general secretary in-charge of Haryana Deepak Babaria said there is a possibility and it would become clear by Thursday or Friday. Punia is a Tokyo Games bronze medallist, while Phogat became the first woman wrestler to reach the Olympics final, the stage where she was disqualified after being found overweight by about 100 gm in her 50-kg category weigh-in. She subsequently announced her retirement from the sport. The Congress' Central Election Committee (CEC) cleared the names of candidates for 66 seats out of 90 till Tuesday.

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BJP releases first list of 67 candidates

RAJESH KUMAR NEW DELHI

Looking to get the first-mover advantage in the Haryana Assembly polls, the BJP on Wednesday released its first list of 67 candidates for the 90 Assembly seats for the upcoming Assembly elections, with Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini to contest the Ladwa seat while former Haryana BJP president Om Prakash Dhankar has been fielded from Badli and veteran party leader and former home minister Anil Vij from Ambala Cantonment. The party has dropped nine sitting MLAs. Saini, who was an MP from Kurukshetra until he replaced Manohar Lal Khattar as the Haryana Chief Minister in March this year, currently represents the Karnal Assembly seat, which he won in a bypoll in June. Vij will be the BJP's candidate from the Ambala Cantonment constituency, a seat he has won three successive times since 2009.

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BJP trounces AAP in MCD ward elections



The Pioneer photo

SAUMYA SHUKLA NEW DELHI

The BJP on Wednesday won the crucial Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) zonal ward elections by defeating the AAP in a close contest with the former bagging the posts of chairman, deputy chairman of the zonal-level ward committees, and one member each for standing committee in seven of 12 zones. The AAP managed to win five zones in the elections which took place amid heavy security arrangements. The Standing Committee of the MCD is considered the most powerful body in the civic body. BJP bagged Narela, Civil Lines, Keshav Puram, Shahdara North, Najafgarh, Shahdara South, and Central Zones, while AAP won Karol

Bagh, West, South, City SP and Rohini zones. Voting in Karol Bagh and City SP did not take place as BJP did not field a candidate, while in Keshav Puram, BJP's was the sole candidate in fray. The elections were conducted smoothly under a heavy security. With the win in the much awaited elections which is taking place after a delay of 18 months due to clashes between AAP and BJP. The BJP will be seen dominating the highest decision making body of the civic agency and MCD's financial backbone - the standing committee. With the elections, the committee has nine councillors from the BJP and eight from AAP. The standing committee is important for giving approval to proposals involving expenditures of ₹5 crore and above.

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SC snub for Uttarakhand Chief Minister

PTI NEW DELHI

Heads of Governments cannot be expected to be "old days' kings" and we are not in a "feudal era", the Supreme Court said on Wednesday, questioning Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami for appointing an IFS officer as the director of the Rajaji Tiger Reserve, disregarding the opinions of the State's Forest Minister and others. However, the State Government told a bench headed by Justice B R Gavai that the order posting the Indian Forest Service (IFS) officer as the director of the tiger reserve was withdrawn on September 3. The bench, also comprising Justices P K Mishra and K V Viswanathan, was hearing a matter concerning the appointment of IFS officer Rahul, a former director of the Corbett Tiger Reserve, as the director of the Rajaji Tiger Reserve. The court observed that there was a specific noting right from the first officer, which was endorsed by the deputy secretary, the principal secretary and also by the state's forest minister that Rahul should not be posted as the director of the Rajaji Tiger Reserve. "There is something like a public trust doctrine in this country. The heads of the executive cannot be expected to be old days' kings that whatever they have said, they will do," the bench observed, adding, "We are not in a feudal era." "Why should the chief minister have special affection for him (the officer)?" the bench asked, adding, "Just because he is the chief minister, can he do anything?"

It also observed that a departmental proceeding was pending against the officer concerned. Pointing out that the noting said the officer should not be posted at the Rajaji Tiger Reserve, the court said the chief minister "just ignores it".

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Military top brass deliberates on joint command, control centres

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

India's top military commanders on Wednesday held extensive deliberations in Lucknow on the Government's ambitious plans to create 'Integrated Theatre Commands' and assessed overall national security challenges including the ones along the frontiers with China and Pakistan. Chaired by the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), General Anil Chauhan, with chiefs of the Army, Navy and the Air Force and other top military officers in attendance, the deliberations primarily focused on setting up of joint command and control centres and logistics nodes, on the inaugural day of the two-day maiden joint commanders conference, being held in Lucknow, officials said. In his opening address, General Chauhan stressed the need for operational preparedness to meet emerging challenges, underscoring the need of modernisation to stay combat-ready and relevant and achieve strategic autonomy. The theme of the maiden joint commanders' conference is 'Sashakt and Surakshit Bharat: Transforming Armed Forces'. The deliberations on ensuring synergy among the armed forces on various aspects including financial planning, joint logistics infrastructure are taking place amid the Government's ambitious plans to roll out theatre commands. Under the theatrisation model, the



The Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan attends First Joint Commanders' Conference, in Lucknow

Government seeks to integrate the capabilities of the Army, the Air Force and the Navy and optimally utilise their resources for wars and operations. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will address the apex-level military leadership at the conference on Thursday. "The conference is focused on shaping the future of India's military to adapt to the changing operational milieu," the Defence Ministry said. Reviewing the current security situation and the defence preparedness of the armed forces, General Chauhan emphasised the importance of integration and future planning for enhancing integration across various domains.

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Rain chokes Delhi-NCR, traffic hit

SAUMYA SHUKLA NEW DELHI

Heavy rain lashed parts of Delhi-NCR, including Gurugram and Noida, on Wednesday afternoon leading to severe waterlogging on streets, roads and traffic congestion in several places in the Capital city. Huge traffic snarls were seen in parts of Delhi, including in South, Central, North, New Delhi and parts of Noida and Gurugram. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a yellow alert for the city. A yellow alert denotes bad weather and the possibility of the weather conditions worsening and disrupting daily life. Heavy waterlogging in various parts of Delhi left arterial junctions choked amid the traffic police issuing advisory to the commuters who were caught in prolonged traffic jams. In the past 24 hours till 8 am on Wednesday, city's primary weather station Safdarjung received 0.8 mm of rainfall, Lodi road 1.4 mm of rainfall, Narela 16 mm of rainfall, Palam 0.3 mm of rainfall, Ridge 0.8 mm of rainfall, Pitampura one mm of rainfall, Pusa 0.5 mm of rainfall and Mayur Vihar's Salwan public school 0.5 mm of rainfall.



Traffic jam at ITO in New Delhi on Wednesday after rain

Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

Mundka, Dhaura Kuan, Moti Bagh, Mehrauli-Badarpur road, Lajpat Nagar, Karol Bagh, Punjabi Bagh, Khanpur, ITO, Jahangirpuri, Safdarjung, Kashmere Gate ISBT and Okhla Estate were among other areas flooded after the rain causing slowdown of traffic movement with vehicles wading through knees deep water. In a series of posts, the Delhi Traffic Police advised commuters to avoid certain routes including a traffic advisory due to severe waterlogging at Mundka,

which significantly impacted traffic flow on Rohtak Road. "Traffic is affected on Rohtak Road in the carriageway from Nangloi towards Tikri Border and vice versa due to potholes and water logging. Kindly avoid Mundka and take alternate route accordingly," it said. Earlier, traffic was also affected on the GTK Road due to water logging as well as on Ring Road in the carriageway from Safdarjung Hospital towards Dhaura Kuan due to heavy water logging near Satya Niketan Bus Stand. Irked by the complete collapse

of civic infrastructure amid the rainy season, a commuters said, "Today, we are very frustrated with the traffic jam, and we have been stuck in a jam for over an hour while traveling from Noida to Delhi. This jam is approximately 1.5 to 2 kilometres long. Due to the jam, our fuel is burning, and pollution is increasing, but the government is not paying attention to this issue." Another one added that it took her approximately two hours to travel through a 14 kilometre stretch.

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India ideal investment destination, says Modi in Singapore

PTI SINGAPORE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday arrived here for his fifth official visit to Singapore aimed at boosting bilateral friendship, deepening 'strategic partnership' and attracting investment from the Southeast Asian country. During his visit at the invitation of his Singaporean counterpart Lawrence Wong, the prime minister will connect with three generations of Singapore's leadership, officials in New Delhi said. The Prime Minister was warmly hosted by his Singapore counterpart at the iconic Sri Temasek bungalow for dinner. "Welcome PM @narendramodi to Singapore! Delighted to have the chance to catch up over a meal at the Istana, before the official meetings tomorrow," Wong posted on X along with his

photograph with Modi. Fortifying India-Singapore bonds of friendship. PM @narendramodi warmly hosted by PM @LawrenceWongST at the iconic Sri Temasek in Singapore. An evening cherishing the deep and long-standing India-Singapore ties awaits," Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said in a post on X. Modi flew to Singapore after wrapping his visit to Brunei, the first bilateral visit there by an Indian prime minister. "Landed in Singapore. Looking forward to the various meetings aimed at boosting the India-Singapore friendship, India's reforms and the talent of our Yuva Shakti makes our nation an ideal investment destination. We also look forward to closer cultural ties," Modi posted on X soon after his arrival here. "PM @narendramodi lands in the



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a meeting with Prime Minister of Singapore Lawrence Wong, in Singapore, on Wednesday

Lion city, Singapore today. Warmly received by Minister of Home Affairs and Law K Shanmugam of Singapore. An

action-packed agenda lies ahead," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in a post on X. Modi, who last visited Singapore

in 2018, was accorded a warm welcome by the Indian community members when he arrived at the hotel. He interacted with the community members and witnessed a traditional dance performance. He also tried his hand at dhol. "Thank you Singapore! The welcome was truly vibrant," he said in another post. Modi will hold bilateral talks with Wong on Thursday and witness the exchange of several memorandums of understanding. The Prime Minister will receive an official welcome at the Parliament House on Thursday and call on President Tharman Shanmugaratnam. This visit comes days after Wong took over and Modi began his third term as prime minister. "I look forward to my discussions to deepen our Strategic Partnership with Singapore, particularly in new and emerging

areas of advanced manufacturing, digitalization, and sustainable development," Modi said ahead of his departure from New Delhi. "The leaders will review the progress of India-Singapore Strategic Partnership and exchange views on regional and global issues of mutual interest," a Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) statement said ahead of his departure for Brunei and Singapore. Modi is accompanied by Minister of External Affairs S Jaishankar, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and other government officials. He would call on Senior Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong. Lee will host a lunch for Modi. Modi will also meet with Singaporean business leaders and interact with those in the country's semiconductor ecosystem.

RG Kar: Bengal switches off lights for justice

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Reminiscent of the "Reclaim the Night" gatherings on August 14 when people, more so the women from all walks of life and layers of the society collected on the boulevards of Kolkata and elsewhere and remained "awake and vigilant" through the night to protest against the brutal rape and murder of the junior lady doctor of RG Kar Medical College Hospital the citizenry of Bengal once again responded overwhelmingly to the call of the doctors' community by switching off the lights of their respective

houses from 9 pm to 10 pm on Wednesday and taking out candle marches.

In fact in many areas like Patuli, Anandapur, New Town, Maniktalla, Shyambazar the programme including the candle light marches started a well-nigh one hour before schedule.

This, even as the neighbourhoods were rented with the cry of "we want justice." In New Town several thousand professionals of the Information Technology sector joined in an evening march with their mobile lights on demanding justice for Abhaya, the victim doctor who was found raped and murdered



inside the seminar hall of the Hospital in the morning of August 9. The members of the State Junior Doctors' Forum had earlier called for a "switch-off-your-lights" programme. "We thank the people for giving us such overwhelming support for all these days in our fight for

justice and appeal to them to switch off their lights at homes for an hour from 9 pm to 10 pm and light up candles as a symbol of our journey to Justice with light," said Dr Mahato one of the leaders of the Junior Doctors' Forum. The same Forum of doctors had on Tuesday led a long procession to the Lal Bazar Police headquarters and handed over along with a replica of an "Erect Spine," a list of demands to the Kolkata Police Commissioner Vineet Goyal. Incidentally the list contained a demand for his resignation as he had failed to perform his public duty by ensuring an

impartial investigation into the case which was subsequently transferred to the Central Bureau of Investigation by the Calcutta High Court. The Commissioner however said that he was satisfied with his performance but said that he was ready to step down if his higher authorities would ask him to do so. Cut to Wednesday. People including the members of the civil society, professionals, lawyers, workers tea vendors, taxi drivers and even the shanty men joined the Wednesday's call not only switching off their lights but also taking out small candle light rallies in groups of hundreds.

Rahul promises restoration of Statehood in poll rallies in Jammu and Kashmir

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Hitting the campaign trail for the upcoming Assembly polls, star campaigner of the Congress party and leader of the opposition, Rahul Gandhi Wednesday tried to strike an emotional chord with the people of Jammu and Kashmir while promising to restore statehood immediately after the formation of the government. Launching a scathing attack on the Prime Minister, Rahul said Modi has lost his



confidence after the recently held Lok Sabha elections and the time is not far when his government will be removed. "We have finished Modi psychologically. I sit in front of him in Parliament and I know his confidence is gone... Now a little time has

left, we will remove Modi and BJP from government," the leader of the opposition said. Setting the poll pitch during his back-to-back election campaign meetings at Sangaldan in the Ramban district and Dooru Assembly constituency in Anantnag, Rahul announced, "I am here to tell you that BJP and RSS might tell you anything, we are going to give back statehood to the people of J&K. We wanted statehood to be restored before elections but BJP didn't want this, they wanted elections first".

Kejriwal bail plea hearing...

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It said Kejriwal is not an ordinary citizen but a distinguished recipient of the Magsaysay Award and the convener of the Aam Aadmi Party.

The high court had dismissed Kejriwal's plea challenging his arrest, saying it was only after sufficient evidence was collected and sanction was obtained in April 2024 that the agency proceeded with further probe against him.

It was noted that the links to the crime extended even to Punjab but material witnesses were not coming forward due to the influence exercised by Kejriwal by virtue of his position. It was only after he got arrested that the witnesses came forward to record their statements, the high court had said.

The chief minister, who was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on March 21, was granted bail by the trial court in the money laundering case on June 20. However, the trial court's order was stayed by the high court. On July 12, the top court granted him interim bail in the money laundering case.

The excise policy was scrapped in 2022 after the Delhi lieutenant governor ordered a CBI probe into alleged irregularities and corruption involving its formulation and execution.

According to the CBI and the ED, irregularities were committed while modifying the excise policy and undue favours extended to licence holders.

Dissenting voices in TMC over Kolkata tragedy

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Post RG Kar Medical College rape and murder voices of dissent continued to rumble within the ruling Trinamool Congress with senior Rajya Sabha MP Sukhendushekar Roy on Wednesday posting an appeal to the people to wrest back the right to live with dignity enshrined in Article 21 of the Constitution.

Roy who had earlier shared a photograph depicting the fall of Bastille Fort — that marked the beginning of the French Revolution and fall of Emperor Louis XVI — and followed it up with another post showing an uprooted middle stump soon after the arrest of former RG Kar principal

Sandip Ghosh said that he indeed meant what he said. "A time has come when the people should seize their right to live and live with dignity given in our Constitution," Roy a veteran TMC leader said. "If this incident in RG Kar Medical College would not shiver you with dread then nothing will ... I am not a robot ... I too am a human being who has feelings, emotions and who has a duty to speak up when need be ... this is one such occasion to stand up and make your voice heard... In addition to reclaiming the nights a time has come when all should make the big effort to reclaim the Right to Live with Dignity given to us by the Constitution."

Injured bird rescued in Pune

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI:

A badly injured heron, which was rescued from Junnar in Pune district of Western Maharashtra, has got a fresh lease of life, following the timely intervention by the Maharashtra (MGF) Forest Department and Wildlife SOS. The long-legged, long-necked, freshwater and coastal bird was rescued from Junnar more than a fortnight ago. The bird was treated by the Wildlife SOS veterinary team at the Manikdoh Leopard Rescue Centre (MLRC) at Junnar. The bird was under care for 15 days at the multi-speciality hospital in MLRC and after a remarkable recovery, the heron was released back into the wild. After its admission to the multi-speciality hospital in

MLRC, the injured heron was sedated. After that the bird underwent a thorough medical examination which included heartbeat detection and fracture assessment through palpation. During the examination, an x-ray revealed a fracture in the bird's right wing, prompting the veterinary doctors to initiate the treatment process. The avian was kept in isolation in a warm and safe enclosure where it was nursed and provided multivitamins by the veterinary team, a treatment that allowed the fracture to heal undisturbed. Amit Bhise, Assistant Conservator of Forests, Junnar Division said: "After we found the bird injured, we brought it to the multi-speciality hospital for treatment. The heron's encouraging recovery was a

positive sign, and we were thrilled to oversee the bird's eventual release back into the wild." "We provided a nutritious diet of fish to support and strengthen the heron's recovery. A follow-up X-ray showed remarkable improvement of the bone structure. After 15 days of thoughtful attention and care, the bird's wing had recovered," Dr Avinash Visalkar, Veterinary Officer, Wildlife SOS said. Kartick Satyanarayan, Co-founder and CEO, Wildlife SOS: "When keeping an animal in care, we try to mimic their natural surroundings so that they feel comfortable. Ensuring a safe environment, along with nursing, treatment and nutrition, is also important in the recovery process."

Gangster arrested in Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police's Crime Branch arrested a 46 year old dreaded gang member of a notorious gang involved in a double murder case of two members of a rival gang. According to the police on Wednesday, the accused who has been identified as Kaptan alias Tanu, a resident of Delhi's Narela, is found to be previously involved in more 15 cases including murder, attempt to murder, armed robbery, Arms Act cases among others in Delhi. He had been sentenced to Life Imprisonment in one murder case of Narela police station and seven years in another case of armed robbery.

"The accused has close proximity with dreaded and

jailed gangsters. He was also declared "Proclaimed Absconder" in a case and a reward of Rs 50,000 had been declared on the accused by worthy CP/Delhi in 2018," a senior police official said.

Upon receiving inputs about his whereabouts, a police team was sent to Bihar and a trap was laid and the above-mentioned accused was apprehended from Village Bishunpur, Jalalpur police station, District Saran, Bihar.

"The accused tried to escape from the spot and ran towards the fields but the team showed alertness and presence of mind and the accused was successfully chased and overpowered. The accused was subsequently arrested and brought to Delhi," he said.

Phogat...

From Page 1

Punia and Phogat were part of the protest over sexual harassment allegations against former BJP MP and then Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh in 2023.

Both Phogat and Punia have backed the farmers' protest. When farmers launched an agitation against the Central government's three farm laws in 2020, Phogat showed solidarity with the protesters. In one of her tweets at the time, she said that farmers just want respect for their hard work. The Olympian wrestler had also participated in the protests. Phogat recently joined farmers at the Shambhu border as their protest for a legal guarantee of the MSP marked its 200th day on August 31.

BJP...

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Some of the other key figures that have been given an opportunity to represent the BJP in the Haryana Assembly election include, former BJP MP Sunita Duggal from Ratia, former BJP Lok Sabha MP Kuldeep Bishnoi's son Bhavya Bishnoi from Adampur and Aarti Singh, daughter of Union Minister of Planning, Statistics and Programme Implementation Rao Inderjit Singh, from Ateli.

The other candidates include Ambala Mayor and former Union Minister Vinod Sharma's wife Shakti Rani Sharma, who will be contesting from the Kalka assembly constituency. Shakti Rani Sharma is the mother of Manu Sharma, a convict in the

BJP...

From Page 1

Jessica Lal murder case. Shruti Choudhry who left the Congress and joined the BJP with her mother - Rajya Sabha MP Kiran Choudhry - in June has been given a ticket from Tosham. Also, Rao Narbir Singh, who met Union Home Minister Amit Shah over his future in the party recently and had reportedly threatened to rebel if not approached by the party high-command, has been fielded from Badshahpur. The names of Capt Abhimanyu, Bhavya Bishnoi, the son of Kuldeep Bishnoi, and former MP Sunita Duggal are also on the list. The assembly polls are scheduled to be held on October 5, and the counting of votes will take place on October 8.

Devender Singh Babi, Sanjay Kablana and Shruti Choudhry, who joined the BJP recently, will contest from the Tohana, Beri and Tosham seats, respectively. However, former

captain of the Indian national hockey team, Sandeep Singh, has been dropped from Pehowa seat. Instead of Singh, Sardar Kamaljeet Singh Ajrana would contest on the BJP ticket from the constituency. Additionally, Kabbadi player Deepak Hooda has been given a ticket from Meham. Haryana Assembly Speaker Gian Chand Gupta has been fielded from Panchkula, former Speaker Kanwar Pal Gurjar from Jagadhri, Captain Abhimanyu from Narnaund, former Lok Sabha member Sunita Duggal from Ratia. The BJP high-command dropped nine sitting MLAs from the first list while the seats of two MLAs were also changed. Palwal MLA Deepak Mangla, Faridabad MLA Narendra Gupta, Gurugram MLA Sudhir Singla, Bhawani Khera MLA Vishambhar Malik, Cabinet Minister Ranjit Chautala from Rania, Sitaram

Yadav from Ateli, former minister Sandeep Singh from Pehwa, Sanjay Singh from Sohna and Laxman Napa from Ratia have missed the bus. MP Naveen Jindal's mother, Savitri Jindal, who was widely expected to get a ticket from Hisar, has not made the cut and the party has decided to stick with the incumbent, Kamal Gupta, who is also a state minister.

While Aseem Goel has been fielded from Ambala City, Santosh Sarwan from Mulana (SC), Balwant Singh from Sadhaura (SC), Kanwar Pal Gurjar from Jagadhri, Ghanishyam Dass Arora from Yamunanagar, Shyam Singh Rana from Radaur, Subhash Kalsana from Shahbad (SC), Subhash Sudha from Thanesar, Sardar Kamaljeet Singh Ajrana from Pehowa, Kulwant Bazigar from Guhla (SC), Kamlesh Dhandra from Kalayat, Leela Ram Gurjar

from Kaithal, Bhagwan Dass Kabirpanthi from Nilokheri (SC), Ram Kumar Kashyap from Indr, Jagmohan Anand from Karnal, Harvinder Kalia from Gharaunda, Mahipal Dhandra from Panipat rural, Pramod Kumar Vij from Panipat City, Krishna Lal Panwar from Irawa (SC), Manmohan Bhandana from Samalkha, Mukesh Sharma from Gurgaon, Gaurav Gautam from Palwal, Tel Chand Sharma from Prithla, Mool Chand Sharma from Ballabgarh, Vipul Goel from Faridabad and Rajesh Nagar from Tigoan seat.

The names of the candidates were discussed and finalised in a BJP meeting that was chaired by the party's national president, JP Nadra on August 29. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and other members of the BJP's Central Election Committee were also present.

The major political parties in the fray include the BJP, Congress, AAP, the JJP-ASP alliance, and the BSP-INLD alliance. In the last elections in 2019, BJP won 40 seats in Haryana Assembly polls, Congress logged victory on 31 seats, while JJP got 10 seats. BJP formed a coalition government with the JJP but earlier this year, they broke the alliance. The current term of the Haryana Assembly ends on November 3, 2024.

The BJP's list comes hours after Jannayak Janta Party (JJP) released its first list of 19 party candidates in alliance with Azad Samaj Party. Former deputy chief minister Dushyant Chautala will contest from Uchana Kalan, from where he is a sitting MLA. While 15 candidates on the list were from the JJP, four were from the Chandra Shekhar Azad-led ASP.

SC snub for Uttarakhand Chief Minister

From Page 1

Reserve where several officers were served show-cause notices.

"He is a good officer. In fact, somebody else is targeting him," Nadkarni said, adding, "You cannot sacrifice a good officer against whom there is nothing."

"If there is nothing, then why are you holding departmental proceedings against him?" the court asked the lawyer, adding that unless there is some prima facie material, departmental proceedings are not initiated against anyone.

"The chief minister has gone against the advice of everyone," it observed.

Nadkarni said neither police nor probe agencies like the CBI and the ED nor the Central Empowered

Committee (CEC) has blamed the officer. "Only thing which is against him is the disciplinary proceeding where chargesheet is issued to everybody (other officers)," he said.

The bench said, "Unless he is exonerated in the departmental proceeding, you cannot give him a certificate of a good officer." During the hearing, the bench also referred to a newspaper report, which said Uttarakhand's forest minister and chief secretary had objected to the appointment of the officer as the director of the Rajaji Tiger Reserve.

"You gave an impression that the newspaper reporting is not correct. When we saw

the noting, there is no error in the newspaper reporting. Whatever is reported in the newspaper is factually correct," the bench observed.

"The newspaper report says the chief secretary and the minister for forest both objected and in spite of that objection, the chief minister overruled. So nothing wrong in that reporting," it said.

The bench noted that Nadkarni has placed on record a copy of the September 3 order issued by the state government by which the order posting Rahul as the field director of the Rajaji Tiger Reserve was withdrawn.

"In that view of the matter, no orders are necessary. The proceedings are closed," the apex court said.

Military top brass deliberates on joint command...

From Page 1

The Chief of Defence Staff said integration of the three services is crucial for adapting to the contours of future warfare and conduct of "effect-based operations", the Ministry said in a statement.

General Chauhan complimented the three services for initiating numerous measures along the roadmap for integration. He stressed that it was a step by step process, beginning with cross-service co-operation leading to a 'joint culture' and finally achieving integration of forces for conduct of joint operations." The deliberations also focused on establishment of command and control centres with the requisite infrastructure to facilitate decision making.

As per the theatreisation plan, each of the theatre commands will have units of the

Army, the Navy and the Air Force and all of them will work as a single entity looking after security challenges in a specified geographical territory.

The top military brass also reviewed the security situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China, especially in eastern Ladakh sector where troops of India and China have been locked in an over four-year standoff, it was learnt.

Separately, General Chauhan is scheduled to chair an apex level tri-service financial conference on Thursday in Delhi. The conference is aimed at enhancing cohesion and synergy on financial issues of the armed forces and will see the participation of senior officials from the Defence Ministry, Controller General Defence Accounts, integrated financial advisers of the three services and Indian Coast Guard.

Rain chokes Delhi-NCR, traffic hit

From Page 1

A commuter travelling from Haryana to Delhi said that while returning there was no traffic as such but as soon as rainfall started, huge jams were witnessed. "There was bad traffic jam in the city specially near the Kashmir Gate ISBT due to heavy waterlogging. This is an everyday affair now. To see the city's infrastructure collapse even if light rainfall happens," he said.

According to IMD's 10-day forecast for Delhi, the capital will continue to witness cloudy skies and the possibility of rains and thunderstorms till September 14. The weather agency has not issued any colour alert for the rest of the week yet.

BJP trounces AAP in MCD ward elections

From Page 1

After Wednesday's election, the equation in the MCD standing committee now stands at 9 members from the BJP, 8 from the AAP and one seat remaining vacant. The election for the vacant seat remains pending. If the BJP manages to win this seat as well, it could wield significant influence over financial and administrative decisions, challenging the authority of the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). Such a shift could potentially spark a new power struggle within Delhi's political landscape. At the same time, if the AAP manages to secure the seat, a 9-9 stalemate would ensue,

requiring the drawing of lots to elect the committee's chairman. The Committee's role is pivotal as it is responsible for the initial scrutiny and approval of proposals. Only those proposals that pass through the Standing Committee can be presented to the MCD House for further consideration. This gives the Standing Committee considerable power, often surpassing that of the MCD Mayor. The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, elected from among its members, holds extensive powers and often has more functional influence than the Mayor, despite the latter being the official head of the MCD.

The all-important Standing Committee is made up of 18 members, 12 elected from each of the 12 zones and six directly elected by the House. No project costing more than Rs 5 crore can proceed without the standing committee's approval making the significance of the body important.

Pawan Shehrawat and Sugandha, the councillors who recently switched sides from the AAP to BJP, won the post of chairman for the ward committees from Narela and Central Zones respectively. The Civil Lines Zone saw a keen contest between the AAP and BJP with the saffron party winning all three posts by a margin of one vote each.

Further, Anil Kumar Tyagi defeated Ajeet Singh Yadav by polling 10 votes, while Rekha triumphed over her rival Gagan Chaudhary in a similar fashion. Former North Delhi mayor and BJP leader of opposition in MCD Raja Iqbal Singh defeated Promila Gupta of AAP by polling 10 votes as against nine by her. In the Karol Bagh Zone, AAP councillor Rakesh Joshi was elected unopposed as chairman of the ward committee, while Jyoti Gautam and Ankush Narang bagged the posts of deputy chairman and member of the standing committee in absence of any BJP candidate. AAP candidates Mohd Sadiq, Kiran Bala, and Punardeep

Singh Sawhney were elected unopposed as chairman, deputy chairman of the ward committee, and member of the standing committee from City SP Zone in the absence of any candidates from the BJP. BJP candidates were elected unopposed from the Keshav Puram Zone.

In South Zone, cross voting led to a tie between the BJP and AAP. Through lottery, AAP won the zonal chairman post. The party's candidates also won the posts of chairman and standing committee member.

In Rohini, AAP's Suman Anil Rana won the president's post by defeating her BJP rival. Dharam Rakshak and Daulat bagged the posts of deputy

chairman and standing committee member after the BJP candidates withdrew nominations for the two posts. In the West Zone, the BJP candidates withdrew their nominations for the three posts.

The Shahdara North zone saw BJP candidates emerging victorious after defeating their Congress rivals. The voting for the ward committee polls in the zone went on for the longest time. The Congress, which has nine councillors, had fielded candidates from the Shahdara North zone. The AAP candidates withdrew their nomination for the post of chairman and deputy chairman, while Congress

candidate withdrew her nomination from the standing committee member. Former East Delhi mayor Neema Bhagat was elected as a standing committee member from Shahdara South Zone. The elections were carried out smoothly under a heavy security deployment.

Celebrating the win, Northwest BJP MP Yogendra Chandolia said, "If these elections had happened after the mayor elections, then too, the same results would have come. They (AAP) thought we wouldn't get a majority in the standing committee and wanted to have all control. They tried their best to do so from 2022 till today."

The result comes a day after Delhi lieutenant governor V K Saxena ordered the MCD commissioner to notify the appointment of deputy commissioners as presiding officers for the polls. The voting was held in two clusters of all MCD zones, held simultaneously with councillors of five zones casting their votes together, while the remaining zones will go to polls separately. The long pending elections were held for the first time since the unification of the trifurcated MCD in 2022. Due to a political deadlock between the ruling AAP and the opposition BJP, the polls could not take place and the matter became sub-judice.

LG uses special powers for holding MCD ward committee polls

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Amid confusion over whether the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) ward committee polls would take place on time on Wednesday after Mayor Shelly Oberoi refused to appoint presiding officers, Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena late on Tuesday night used his "special powers" under the Delhi Municipal Corporation (DMC) Act, and in the "larger public interest", asked the Municipal Commissioner to appoint presiding officers to conduct the polls. Saxena issued an order appointing all MCD Zone Deputy Commissioners to act as presiding officers and directing for elections be conducted as per the schedule.

This came soon after the Ministry of Home Affairs issued a gazette notification expanding the powers of the Delhi Lt Governor, giving him the authority to constitute any board, commission, authority, or statutory body, which lay exclusively under the President's jurisdiction earlier. The notification was issued under clause (1) of article 239 of the Constitution and section 45D of the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991 (1 of 1992). The Lt Governor said in a letter that "after waiting for Mayor" to take a decision till 8:00 pm on Tuesday, the MCD Commissioner approached him seeking his directions to appoint. After that, he decided to use his constitutional and statutory



Winners of MCD ward committee polls after declaration of results in New Delhi, on Wednesday

Photo by RANJAN DIMRI/THE PIONEER

powers and nominate the pre-ordained officers. Based on his orders, the MCD commissioner passed an order notifying deputy commissioners as the presiding officers for the polls. "The President hereby directs that the Lieutenant Governor of the National Capital Territory of

Delhi shall, subject to the control of the President and until further orders, exercise the powers of the President under clause (a) of section 45D of the said Act for constitution of any authority, board, commission or any statutory body by whatever name it may be called, or for

appointment of any Government officer or ex-officio member to such authority, board, commission or any statutory body," the notification said. Ideally, the appointment of the presiding officer should be done at least one day prior to the elections.

Following the LG's directions, the MCD commissioner passed an order notifying deputy commissioners as the presiding officers for the polls. The commissioner directed the Municipal Secretary to take necessary steps to hold the elections as per the schedule. "The Mayor has...not nominated the Presiding Officers for the said election even while the elections are scheduled tomorrow i.e. 04/09/2024. Now, therefore in larger public interest and in order to preserve the democratic spirit of the Municipal Body and in exercise of power conferred under Section 487 of DMC Act, 1957... Lt Governor has directed that the aforesaid elections be conducted as per the schedule notified by the Commissioner, MCD," the order by the com-

missioner read. It added the deputy commissioner of the zones concerned will perform the functions and duties of the presiding officer. The entire process of elections will be recorded to ensure a smooth, fair and transparent process, it noted. The long-pending polls for the ward committees and standing committee has affected several civic services and financial matters in the corporation. The Supreme Court's August 5 verdict, which held that the Centre-appointed Lieutenant Governor could solely nominate the 10 aldermen without consulting the Delhi government, had initially cleared the path for the elections. The election announcement was made on August 28. Nominations were to be filed by August 30. In her letter to Kumar, Oberoi had argued that the election schedule was designed in a way that deprived many eligible councillors of their legal right to file nominations, while others were entirely excluded from participating in the process. "Given that the nomination period began on a Friday, just one clear day after the election announcement, and was set to close that evening, their request was not at all unreasonable," she wrote. According to the DMC Act, the Municipal Secretary notifies the appointment of the presiding officers after the mayor sends the file carrying their names. According to the Act, the mayor is the sole authority to make the appointments for the post. The file is required to be sent to the Municipal Secretary for the purpose of notifying the appointment.

LG Secretariat to hire agency to handle its social media accounts for outreach

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In an effort to keep citizens of the national Capital updated about various issues, the Lieutenant Governor Secretariat is in the process of hiring a social media agency for managing its social media outreach. "It is ironical that such statements come from a Minister of a Government that spends Rs 30 lakh per month (one lakh per day) to an agency for issuing Press releases alone, Rs 14 crore annually to an agency for live streaming of its political programmes, Rs four crore annually to a PR Agency and Rs two crore annually to a social media agency," Raj Niwas officials said. The Secretariat deals with extremely important people oriented subjects that inter-alia include Housing, Infrastructure Development and upgradation of the city and law and order, security and policing, officials said here on Wednesday. Underlining the need of toning up its social media reach, they also said several projects like development of green spaces, restoration of heritage, cleaning of drains, traffic/parking management and pollution mitiga-



tion, village development, that require public participation and feedback, are being carried out directly under the supervision of the Lt Governor. The Secretariat also serves as a forum for seamless coordination between various Urban Local Bodies, GNCTD, other agencies in the NCT of Delhi and the residents at large. All of these require continuous interface and interaction with the people of Delhi. At the same time, in the prevailing days of fake news, misinformation and false propaganda, the Secretariat is also required to put out factual and correct information so as to counter misinformation, often played up on Social Media Platforms by people with vested interests.

The tender to this effect, amounting to Rs 1.5 crores annually has been transparently posted on relevant platforms and the above mentioned objectives and reasons for doing the same have also been outlined in the tender document. This Secretariat has taken grave objection and exception to the statement issued by Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj in this regard and the language used by him therein. To say the least, his choice of words is abusive, defamatory, misleading and patently false and the Secretariat will take legal recourse in the matter. It is underlined here, that such statements coming from the Minister of a government that

has spent Rs 1,900 crores of public money in advertising during 2019-2023, which included two years of severe financial distress due to the pandemic, is laughably atrocious. The publicity budget for the year 2023-2024, stood at Rs 557.24 crores. It would not be out of place to mention here that the total Ads spent during five years of Sheila Dikshit regime during 2009-2010 to 2013-2014, amounted to a meagre Rs 87.5 crores in comparison to the Rs 1,900 crores of his Government. This Government has spent at an average of Rs 36 crores per month and Rs 1.2 crores per day on advertising for personal glorification of its leader and its political party (AAP), even as Delhi has become a living hell in terms of pollution, health and civic infrastructure for its people. Delhi Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj on Tuesday accused the Lt Governor that he was planning to "waste" taxpayers' money to boost his image through social media and called it a "conspiracy" to influence voters before assembly elections in the national capital.

Protest in Govindpuri after minor boy sexually assaulted by neighbour

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A six-year-old boy was allegedly sexually assaulted by his 35-year-old neighbour in southeast Delhi's Govindpuri area. According to the police on Wednesday, the matter surfaced on Tuesday when the boy told some people that he was touched in an inappropriate manner by the neighbour on Sunday. However, no such allegations were made by him and his family before that. The accused has been identified as Balram Dass alias Kalu. The family of the boy had approached the local police stating that the six-year-old was missing on September 1 and a case under section 137(2) BNS was registered in respect of missing/kidnapping of a boy on the statement of his mother Radha, a senior police officer said while giving details of the case. He added that however, the boy was traced by his family after a few hours and taken to the police station. "On Sunday at about 12:30 pm, the boy was traced by her family and brought him to the police station. The boy got medically examined at AIIMS

Hospital at 4:51 pm on the same day. Related interrogation and statements were also recorded. After medical examination the boy was sent to the Boys Care Home Lajpat Nagar, Delhi by the Inspecting Officer. During this time, the family had not alleged any sexual assault till Monday," another officer stated. On Tuesday, the statement of the boy was recorded before a magistrate and nothing incriminating was stated by him. However, when he was taken before the Child Welfare Committee, he alleged that the accused inappropriately touched him. A case was registered under section 8 of POCSO Act and the accused Balram Dass alias Kalu was arrested on Tuesday night. "While the accused was brought, the public gathered in large numbers as the area is densely populated with slums and multi storey flats and crowd including ladies tried to attack the accused and the staff. The local police however managed to bring the accused to the police station safely despite the huge crowd and their efforts to attack police staff and the accused," he said.

App-based bus aggregator scheme giant leap towards pollution-free Delhi: Minister



Delhi Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot during inspection of Uber premium bus at Rajghat Depot, in New Delhi, Wednesday

Photo by RANJAN DIMRI/THE PIONEER

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot on Wednesday said the Government's app-based premium bus aggregator scheme is a "giant leap towards a pollution-free Delhi" after he inspected the first lot of buses launched under the initiative. The Delhi Motor Vehicles Licensing of Aggregator (Premium Buses) Scheme, which aims to reduce intra-city usage of private vehicles and pollution in the national capital, was notified last year. The scheme introduces the nation's first-ever aggregator scheme exclusively tailored for premium buses. Gahlot inspected the first lot of buses of Uber at Rajghat Depot. "I inspected the first lot of Premium Buses, set to be launched under the Delhi Premium Bus Aggregator Scheme. With zero-emission, electric buses leading the way, under the leadership of @arvindkejriwal, we're taking a giant leap towards a pollution-free Delhi!" he posted on X. Under the scheme, licence holders will be permitted to determine bus routes, fares charged would be dynamic but no lower than the peak fare of Delhi Transport Corporation AC buses. Only pre-booked digital ticketing will be permissible in these buses.

Desilt, clean INA drain, officials told



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lt Governor (LG) Vinai Kumar Saxena has instructed officials to immediately desilt and clean INA drain located in the middle of several residential and commercial localities. It suffers from heavy encroachments and unscientifically laid pillar beams in its right of way. Once cleaned, this will lead to relief in neighbourhood areas like Sewa Nagar, South Extension, Ansari Nagar, AIIMS flyover and Dilli Haat, Raj Niwas officials said here on Wednesday. Giving details of Saxena's orders, they said that the LG visited the site on Tuesday, adding it was the first visit to the area by any high ranking dignitary during the last 10 years. This Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) drain, not cleaned and desilted for several years, is filled with thousands of tonnes of garbage and construction debris. Following Saxena's inspection, the de-silting operation commenced with use of heavy machinery at three different spots of the drain in the area on Tuesday. MCD officials estimated that the drain contained over 50,000 tonnes of waste, which included garbage and construction and demolition (C&D) waste. Despite the significant challenge, over a thousand tonnes of debris were removed on the first day alone and will continue till the drain is totally cleaned. This 6.5-km-long drain, which feeds into the Kushak Drain

and eventually enters the Yamuna River is heavily clogged with garbage, over flowing sewage and monsoon rainwater. Apart from heavy encroachment of its embankment, legacy structural fault by way of closely placed pillars in the drains right of way, not only affect the flow of water but also makes de-silting difficult. In turn, this clogged drain causes heavy water logging, back flow and over flow in areas like INA Market, Sewa Nagar, Sadiq Nagar, Ansari Nagar, South Ex I and AIIMS crossing on Ring Road amongst others. Heavy machinery was also deployed after breaking portions of the side walls of the INA drain to access it. The LG instructed officials to create a permanent ramp alongside the drain to facilitate future cleaning operations. Saxena was informed that informal settlements (Jhuggis) located at the banks of the MCD's INA Drain were contributing to the significant pollution of the drain by dumping large quantities of garbage and sewage directly into it. Some Jhuggis had extended right into the way of the drain as well. He instructed the MCD officials to construct a fence around the drain to prevent people from dumping waste into it. It may be noted that desilting of the Kushak Drain, into which the INA drain feeds, had begun on August 4 following a previous visit by the LG. This project marks the fifth drain after Shahadra, Kushak, Sunehri Nallah and Barapulla Drains that the LG has inspected and instructed for cleaning. By addressing the desilting and cleaning of these drains, the LG aims to mitigate the chronic problem of water logging and sewer over flow in neighbouring areas that house lakhs of Delhi residents, apart from housing many a commercial hubs and hospitals.



HC seeks Tihar jail's response on barring AAP MP from visiting Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court sought a response from the Tihar Jail authorities on Wednesday after AAP MP Sanjay Singh challenged their decision to bar him from visiting Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who has been lodged in the prison in the excise policy case. Singh moved the court stating that he had been "arbitrarily refused" an opportunity to meet Kejriwal on June 4 and June 6. According to Singh, the jail authorities cited rule 588 of the Delhi Prison Rules 2018 and stated that he was an "ex-prisoner". Justice Neena Bansal Krishna granted three days to the jail authorities to file their response to the petition, and listed the matter for hearing on September 9. Kejriwal is lodged in Tihar jail under judicial custody in the alleged excise policy scam. During the hearing, senior advocate Rahul Mehra, representing Singh, submitted that his client was a Rajya Sabha Member of Parliament and he was denied physical meeting on the ground that he was an ex-prisoner. He claimed that Kejriwal has serious medical health conditions and his family wishes to meet him to check on his health. "The way the jail superintendent was dealing with things shows the shocking state of affairs. I am an under-trial and a sitting MP and I am giving an undertaking which I

will not violate," he submitted. He said while denying physical meeting to Singh, the jail authorities have cited Rule 588 of the Delhi Prison Rules which states "ex-prisoners and habitual offenders, who apply to see their friends lodged in a prison, may not be permitted such interview by the superintendent unless and until there exist a genuine reason for such interview". He said the intent of this rule is that bad elements should not come in contact with the inmates and this rule is being misused by the jail authorities. The counsel for the authorities sought a week's time to file response to the petition and the court granted him three days to place his stand on record. Singh, who is also facing prosecution in the excise policy and scam case lodged by the Enforcement Directorate, was granted bail by the Supreme Court on April 2. Earlier, AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sandeep Kumar Pathak approached the high court seeking a direction to the jail authorities to allow him a physical meeting with Kejriwal in prison. The jail authorities had permitted Pathak to meet Kejriwal twice in April but refused to give him permission the next time, claiming that certain statements made by him after meeting the chief minister were in contravention of prison rules and mostly politically motivated. The court has already reserved its order on Pathak's plea.

LG launches 22 projects in 18 villages

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Lieutenant Governor and Chairman of Delhi Development Authority Vinai Kumar Saxena on Wednesday inaugurated 22 developmental projects in 18 villages of South West Delhi under Dilli Gramoday Abhiyan. Speaking on the occasion, Saxena said, "Dilli Gramoday Abhiyan was aligned with the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of developing the villages and creating amenities at par with those in the cities." Further, an official from Raj Niwas said, "The development works include installation of street lights on several dark stretches, improvement of roads, renovation of community hall, cremation ground and other such facilities that were planned and executed in consultation with the local residents." Apart from these development projects, NamoDrone Didi Programme was also launched in the Capital. West Delhi BJP MP Kamaljeet Sehrawat and Vice Chairman DDA



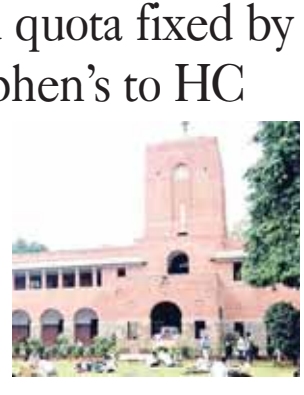
Subhashish Panda, were also present on the occasion. "My endeavour is to develop all the villages of the capital in the same way as other areas of Delhi have been developed," Saxena said, while lauding the concerned agencies for promptly responding to the needs of the village residents. "Almost all the unauthorized colonies of Delhi are situated near villages. With the development of facilities in villages, lakhs of people living in these colonies will also benefit. We will soon take appropriate steps to eliminate the problems of roads, drains, sewers and water in Unauthorized Colonies as well," the Lt Governor said. Another official said that till date, 552 works worth Rs 508

crore have been sanctioned under this Abhiyan, including 78 by DDA. Out of these, 35 works have already been completed, which include provision of lighting arrangement, renovation of community halls, development of roads and development of existing cremation ground. "DilliGramodayAbhiyan' was launched in December 2023 to improve living conditions in villages by extending civic amenities. For development of these villages, the Gram Sabha Area Fund to the tune of Rs 960 crore that was lying unused with Delhi Government, was transferred to DDA for undertaking various developmental works in villages of Delhi," he said.

Single girl child quota fixed by DU unfair: Stephen's to HC

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

St Stephen's College on Wednesday contended before the Delhi High Court that admitting a student under 'single girl child quota', fixed by the Delhi University (DU), is violative of the right to equality before law. The counsel for the college argued that the quota for girl child is ultra vires Article 14, 15(3) and 15(5) and 30 of the Constitution and allocation of seats under this quota goes against these four articles. The high court asked if the college raised this objection anywhere before. "Did you raise this objection anywhere earlier at any stage? Did you challenge this policy ever or write to them or filed any case ever?" asked Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma. To this, senior advocate Romy Chacko said, "This year they agreed that they will only allocate 5 per cent excess of the seats and will allocate one candidate for each program. But today we are actually forced to challenge it on the ground that instead of one candidate they are actually allocating 13 can-



didates." "We would have no problem if we were asked to admit one girl child. However, today DU argued that if BA (prog) has 13 combinations, 13 girl child students would have to be admitted," he said, adding the state cannot deny to any person equality before law. The submission was opposed by the counsel for petitioner students and the Delhi University who said this objection was never raised before. "Why did the college not challenge the varsity's bulletin of information for admission if they are aggrieved by this provision?" said the counsel for DU. The judge orally observed, "for this I think you (college) will have to challenge it separately".

Delhi Metro service extension to make travel between Delhi and Haryana hassle-free

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot on Wednesday announced that the Delhi Metro's Rithala-Narela corridor will be extended to Kundli-Nathupur in Haryana, stating that the development is aimed at easing the daily commute for thousands of residents traveling between Delhi and Haryana. Delhi Metro line will now be extended to Kundli-Nathupur in Haryana under Phase-4 of the Delhi Metro project. Commenting on the project, Gahlot stated, "This extension marks a significant step towards improving the daily commute for residents of both Delhi and Haryana. Under the leadership of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, by expanding the metro network, we aim to reduce travel time, ease congestion on roads, and promote the use of public transportation, which will also contribute to our ongoing efforts to combat pollution." The Delhi government has given a principal approval for the extension and will send the proposal to the Centre so that the proposal can move to the tendering stage. The extended project, which will be completed at an estimated cost of Rs 6230.99 crores, is expected to be finished within four years. The total length of the Delhi portion has been extended from 22.91 km to 23.737 km, while the Haryana portion will cover 2.726 km, making the combined stretch from Narela to Nathupur 26.463 km long. The extension will feature 19 stations between Rithala and Narela, with an additional two stations in Haryana. The minister said the corridor will connect the rural areas of the Delhi-Haryana border to the main city, as buses are the sole public transport there. "Commuters from these areas will now be able to reach the heart of Delhi within one and a half hours," he said.

Centre, Tripura Government, two insurgent groups sign peace pact

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Government is committed to all-round development of the Northeastern region, especially tribals, while preserving their culture, language and identity, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Wednesday. He made this assertion here while addressing an event where a peace agreement was signed between the Central and Tripura Governments and two insurgent groups of the State aiming to end violence and bring peace in the north-eastern State. Shah also said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has not only bridged the gap between the Northeast and Delhi by connecting them through roads, railways and flights, but has also bridged the gap between hearts. He said a new milestone is set today in Tripura's ongoing journey towards peace and progress with the signing of the agreement. Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha and senior officials of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and the State Government were also present during the signing of the Memorandum of Settlement with the representatives of National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) and All Tripura



Tiger Force (ATTF). The NLFT and the ATTF have agreed to end a 35-year-long conflict and return to the mainstream, renouncing violence and committing to building a prosperous and developed Tripura, reposing their trust in the Modi Government, Shah said. "The Modi Government is committed for the overall development of the Northeast, especially the tribal groups, through development while preserving their culture, language and identity," he said. Shah said the Government has given highest priority to peace and development in the north-eastern region. "All peace agreements signed in the Northeast has been implemented by the Government," he

said. The home minister said the Central Government has been working tirelessly to fulfil Modi's vision of a developed Northeast, free from extremism, violence and conflict. He said under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, the Government has signed 12 important agreements to bring peace and prosperity in the Northeast, of which, three relate to Tripura. Around 10,000 people have given up arms and joined the mainstream due to these agreements, the Home Minister said. Shah said over 328 insurgents will give up arms and join the mainstream and Rs 250 crore has been approved for development of area of operation of the two insurgent groups, par-

ticularly pockets dominated by the tribals. "The signing of this agreement is a major milestone in fulfilling the resolve taken by the Modi Government to develop the entire Northeast by combining the 'Ashtalakshmi' concept and 'Purvodaya,'" he said. He said wherever a peace agreement is signed, the Modi Government is working to develop those areas and remove the reasons for taking up arms. "In the Modi Government, agreement is not just a piece of paper but a feeling of the heart and we have demonstrated this on the ground," Shah said adding, the NLFT and ATTF agreement will be implemented in letter and spirit, fulfilling all the expectations.

Centre seeks report from States, UTs on safety steps taken for doctors, healthcare workers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Health Secretary Apurva Chandra on Wednesday issued a directive to all States and Union Territories (UTs) demanding an action-taken report by September 10 on the implementation of safety and security measures for doctors and healthcare workers. The move comes in the wake of a recent Supreme Court order calling for urgent actions to ensure the safety of medical professionals nationwide. In a letter written to chief secretaries and directors general of police of all States and UTs, the Secretary outlined several key measures to be prioritised by States and UTs, including the identification of high-risk establishments, security audits, CCTV surveillance, background checks, and bereavement protocols, among others. States and UTs have been urged to identify hospitals with high patient foot-fall and categorise them as high-priority establishments for security enhancements. The Health Secretary recommended regular security audits, conducted in consultation with local health and police authorities, to assess and improve existing security measures in hospitals. Special attention should be given to areas within hospitals that are prone to security breaches, such as emergency rooms, triage areas, intensive care units (ICUs), and labour rooms, according to Chandra. "Proper training and establishment of bereavement protocols for all doctors and healthcare workers to handle



intense and emotional grief situations," the top official said. Chandra noted that several states have already initiated actions in line with the suggestions provided in a previous communication dated August 23. He also acknowledged that some states have gone beyond the ministry of health and family welfare's (MOHFW) recommendations, implementing additional measures to enhance security in healthcare settings. The conference, held on August 28, deliberated on the provision of a safe working environment in all medical institutions in the wake of recent violent incidents, including the horrific rape and murder of a trainee doctor in Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College and Hospital.

The heinous act had triggered nationwide protests among resident doctors across the country seeking a safe environment for the medical professionals in the hospitals. Dr Rohan Krishnan and Dr Manish Jhangra, President and co-Founder respectively of Federation of All India Medical Association (FAIMA) have sought implementation of the Central Protection Act for the Health professional. The bill was introduced in Parliament in 2022 to prevent violence against healthcare professionals and clinical establishments. The Bill's provisions include defining acts of violence against doctors, mandatory reporting of acts of violence, and a grievance redressal mechanism among others.



Indian Army to host drone event in Leh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In an effort to harness drone technology for operations in high altitude areas including Siachen glacier and Line of Actual Control (LAC) facing China, the Army HIM-DRONE-ATHON 2 will take place at Wari La, near Leh on September 17-18, officials said here on Wednesday. This will be followed by HIMTECH-2024 on September 20-21, an event conceptualised to discuss, demonstrate and discover new avenues for development, incorporation and cross-pollination of technology, ideas and innovations with focus on harnessing military technologies for high altitude areas. Major General C S Mann, Additional Director General of the Army Design Bureau highlighted that the Indian Army is deployed from icy heights of the Siachen Glacier to the rugged Himalayas where its soldiers face unparalleled adversities daily. For drone operations, rarified atmosphere results in reduced lift and degraded engine performance which are further accentuated by extreme cold temperatures and high wind speeds. These conditions are unique for Indian Army and demand systems that can adequately perform in these conditions. Since such altitude battlefields are not prevalent anywhere else, tailor-made, indigenous solutions are the way forward.

Had stainless steel been used in Shivaji statue it would not have collapsed: Gadkari

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/PUNE

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari has said if stainless steel had been used for construction of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's statue at Rajkot fort in Maharashtra's Sindhudurg district, it would not have collapsed. Gadkari also pitched for use of rust-resistant products in coastal areas. The collapse of the statue of the iconic Founder of the Maratha State on August 26 triggered a political row ahead of assembly elections in Maharashtra. The road transport and Highways Minister said here at an event he has been pressing for the last three years that stainless steel should be used in the construction of bridges built close to sea. Recalling his days as PWD Minister of Maharashtra, he said he was constructing 55 flyovers in Mumbai and one person fooled him. "He put some powder coating on iron rods and said those were rust-proof. But there was rusting. I believe that stainless steel should be used within 30 km of sea. "If stainless steel had been used for the statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji, it would have never collapsed," Gadkari said at an event here.



Police in Maharashtra's Sindhudurg district has issued a look out circular (LOC) against contractor Jaydeep Apte in connection with the collapse of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's statue at Rajkot fort. An LOC is issued to airports and all other exit points to stop Apte from fleeing the country. Apte, a Thane-based sculptor, had executed the contract to make the statue. Following its collapse on August 26, less than nine months after Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated it on the coastal fort, Malvan police registered a case against Apte and structural consultant Chetan Patil for negligence and other offences. Patil was arrested from Kolhapur, where a search was on for Apte, a police offi-

cial said, adding that Malvan police has now issued an LOC for him. Meanwhile, the Congress on Wednesday alleged in Pune that a meagre amount of Rs 1.5 crore was spent on the construction of the Shivaji Maharaj statue that had collapsed in coastal Sindhudurg even though a sum of "Rs 236 crore" was taken for this work from the State coffers. Maharashtra Congress president Nana Patole also hit back at Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and other leaders of the Mahayuti who have accused the Opposition of politicising the statue incident. Speaking to reporters in Pune ahead of the party's constituency review meeting for assembly elections, AICC in-charge for Maharashtra, Ramesh Chennithala, alleged spike in crimes against women and children, and murders, which is testimony to the worsening law and order situation under the Mahayuti Government. "Every day, cases of murders, and sexual assaults on women and children are being reported. In Pune, two murders were reported. It shows that the law and order situation has crumbled completely," Chennithala told reporters. He alleged the State Government was insensitive towards people and engrossed in perpetrating "scams and means to collect money". Patole claimed approximately Rs 236 crore was taken from the State

Government's coffers in the name of the construction of Shivaji Maharaj's statue at Rajkot fort in Sindhudurg district. "But as per our information, the statue construction work was completed with Rs 1 crore to Rs 1.5 crore," the Congress leader alleged. The statue collapsed on August 26, more than eight months after it was unveiled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, triggering a political firestorm. Responding to Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's charge that the opposition was politicising the statue incident, Patole said venting anger against the "insult" of Shivaji Maharaj and the Badlapur incident cannot be termed as politicising the matter. Two four-year-old girls were allegedly sexually abused by a male sweeper at a school in Badlapur in Thane district. The opposition had alleged that the police delayed the registration of FIR in the case. "These issues are beyond the realm of politics," Patole said, alleging the Government was not taking the opposition into confidence and instead the ruling parties are organising counter protests. Chennithala said the MPCC will hold deliberations with the party workers and functionaries from Pune, Solapur, Kolhapur and Satara districts for the upcoming assembly elections. He added that the party had held review meetings for 122 constituencies so far.

NMC reintroduces controversial topics in medical curriculum

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Omitted in 2022 following a Madras High Court directive, the National Medical Commission (NMC) has reintroduced controversial topics such as 'sodomy and lesbianism' as unnatural sexual offences in the forensic medicine and toxicology curriculum for undergraduate medical students. It has also brought back topics such as the hymen and its type, and its medico-legal importance besides defining virginity and defloration, legitimacy and its medico-legal importance. The updated curriculum also covers legal competencies related to new laws, such as the Bharatiya Nagarika Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA), alongside existing laws like the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO). It includes discussions on various sexual perversions, such as fetishism, voyeurism, and necrophilia, however, distinctions between consensual sex between queer individuals have been removed, a source said. Notably, the revised curriculum omits the previous seven-hour training on disability. The NMC's Competency-Based Medical Education Curriculum (CBME) Guidelines for 2024 emphasize a curriculum that integrates subject areas while aligning with global educational trends. The goal is to create an "Indian

Medical Graduate" (IMG) who is equipped with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for effective primary care and global relevance, it said. At the end of teaching-learning in forensic medicine and toxicology, the student should be able to understand the medico-legal framework of medical practice, codes of conduct, medical ethics, professional misconduct and medical negligence, conducting medico-legal examination and documentation of various medico-legal cases and understand latest Acts and laws related to medical professional including related court judgements, the NMC said in its document. "It was time to have a relook at all aspects of the various components in the existing regulations and guidelines, and adapt them to the changing demography, socio-economic context, perceptions, values, advancements in medical education and expectations of stakeholders," the NMC said in its Competency-Based Medical Education Curriculum (CBME) Guidelines, 2024. "To achieve this, the following national and institutional goals for the learner of the Indian Medical Graduate training program are hereby prescribed. "The first contact physician needs to be skilful to perform duties of primary care physician and have requisite skills for promotive, preventative, rehabilitative, palliative care and referral services," the document said.



Indian, South African Navies sign rescue agreement

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a significant milestone to develop bilateral naval cooperation, the Indian Navy and the South African Navy have signed an Implementing Agreement that ensures the safety of the South African Navy's submarine crew in times of distress or accident, navy said here on Wednesday. Giving details, officials said the agreement was signed by Navy chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi and Vice Admiral Monde Lobese, Chief of the South African Navy. The Implementing Agreement underscores a shared commitment to maritime safety and mutual support. Under this agreement, the Indian Navy will provide assistance by deploying its Deep Submergence Rescue Vehicle (DSRV) when required, further strengthening the collaborative ties between the two navies. This partnership reinforces the longstanding maritime relationship between India and South Africa.

Rising temperatures disrupting age-long weather patterns in Kashmir valley over last century: Study

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Researchers analysing weather data spanning over the past century in all the ten districts of the Kashmir Valley in the northwestern Himalayas, have flagged the region is experiencing increased temperatures, particularly in winter, pre-monsoon, and post-monsoon seasons. This warming trend is disrupting traditional weather patterns, thus the region's ecosystem. Similarly, less precipitation is being reported during winter months while in contrast, spring and summer months are seeing increased rainfall. "In Kashmir, accelerated glacier melting is a result of higher temperatures, which also impacts ecosystems and access to freshwater resources. Water scarcity, decreased agricultural water supply, and disruptions in the hydropower industry can



all result from this. "The risk of flooding and landslides might increase with higher precipitation and more severe rainstorm events. Flash floods and debris, caused by a combination of high rainfall and steep topography, can pose serious threats to communities, infrastructure, and ecosystems," said the study "Unveiling Precipitation and Temperature Patterns in Kashmir Valley, India". The authors have called for understanding these climatic trends which are crucial for managing water resources and preparing for the impacts of climate change in the fragile Himalayan region to address the potential impacts on biodiversity, ecological services, and local livelihoods. Published in Springer and ResearchGate, the research covered monthly, seasonal, and annual trends from 1901 to 2018 across the districts of

Srinagar, Kulgam, Shupian, Ganderbal, Budgam, Bandipore, Anantnag, Pulwama, Baramulla, and Kupwara. As per the authors Sana Rafi and Raghupathi Balasani respectively from Delhi-based Jamia Millia Islamia and JNTU, Hyderabad, significant warming was noted in winter, pre-monsoon, and post-monsoon seasons, although Kupwara and a few other districts were some exceptions. Annual precipitation is increasing significantly in all districts. February and March show rising trends in most areas, with significant increases observed in April through June. By July, all districts except Anantnag experienced significant increases in precipitation, said the study. Monthly weather patterns are also changing. February, March, and April show signif-

icant increases in precipitation in various districts and in most months except for a few districts in certain months like August and December. Temperature trends are also rising, with some variations between districts, the study said, noting that it can accelerate glacier melting, impacting water resources and ecosystems while increasing and changing precipitation patterns can lead to water scarcity, reduced agricultural water supply, and disruptions in hydropower. "This study is therefore an attempt to detect trends and variability in precipitation and temperature for the period 1901-2018 in Kashmir Valley. For studies on climate change and the management of water resources, especially in the vulnerable Himalayan region, it is essential to comprehend these trends and variability," said the authors.

Kharge accuses PM Modi of failing to protect Manipur people hit by violence

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Wednesday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of "miserably failing" to protect the people of Manipur and said the turmoil in the State is another stark addition to the long list of his "betrayals" of the people of India. Kharge alleged that it has been 16 months since Manipur has been engulfed in violence, but the BJP's "double engine" Government has done nothing to mitigate it. No measure has been taken which instils confidence among the people of all the communities to ensure peace and normalcy, he claimed. "Why has the Manipur CM (N Biren Singh) made to brazen it out and has not been sacked by you? Is he not culpable in virtually paralysing the State



machinery, and making obnoxious statements, now recorded in public domain? A resignation drama was enacted to shamelessly dodge that bullet," he said. "Modi ji, why have you been so remorseless? Why have you not bothered to set foot in the State? It is because of your ego that people of all communities are suffering. Your Government's rank incompetency and shamelessness has not been able to start even a fundamental peace process!" Kharge said in his social media post.

BJP plans to intensify fight against Karnataka Government

PTI ■ BENGALURU

BJP seems to be planning to intensify its fight against the Congress Government in Karnataka, with its senior leader and Union Minister Pralhad Joshi on Wednesday stating that the party will decide on the next phase of agitation, in consultation with its national leadership.

A group of BJP leaders under the leadership of senior legislators Basanagouda Patil Yatnal and Ramesh Jarkiholi is planning to take out a 'padayatra' (foot march) to highlight 'Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribe Development Corporation' scam, and diversion of funds meant for the welfare of the SC/STs to guarantee schemes, by the Congress Government.

Last month, the combined opposition of BJP and JD(S) had held a week-long protest march from Bengaluru to Mysuru, demanding the resignation of the Chief Minister Siddaramaiah over the alleged Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) site allotment 'scam'. "There is no question of first



and second padayatra, everyone together, after discussion with party national President (J P Nadda) and Union Home Minister (Amit Shah) the party will decide on the next phase of the fight (against the state Government). So everyone will sit together, discuss and decide," Joshi told reporters in New Delhi in response to a question.

On some differences within the party regarding holding another padayatra, he said: "...Those who are of the opinion to hold another round of padayatra have said that they will do it within the party forum and after getting approval from the party's national President." The march planned by a

section of BJP led by Yatnal and Jarkiholi, who are said to be disgruntled against state BJP chief B Y Vijayendra and his father and veteran leader B S Yedyurappa "controlling the state unit", is being seen as a counter to the march to Mysuru, which was led by Vijayendra.

Vijayendra had recently said that he has no objections for another 'padayatra', adding that they can go ahead with their programme if the party's central leadership gives its nod. Asked about BJP's complaints to the Governor Thaaarachand Gehlot against Minister Priyank Kharge in connection with allotment of a land to a trust run by his family, Joshi said: "two-three petitions

have been submitted to the Governor, and he will decide on it. It is too early to comment on them." As for Congress party's demand that the Governor accord sanction for prosecution of JD(S) leader and Union Minister H D Kumaraswamy, he said: "...The Chief Minister and Congress leaders are raising questions regarding Kumaraswamy. The case against Kumaraswamy is of 2005-06 (timeline), after that from 2013-18... Congress Government was there, under Siddaramaiah. Why were they silent then?"

Claiming that after the 2018 Assembly polls, Congress pleaded with JD(S) chief H D Deve Gowda and Kumaraswamy and made latter the Chief Minister, he asked: "were Congress leaders not aware of the case against him then? Do they remember things only after the MUDA case and Valmiki Corporation scam against Siddaramaiah and Congress government come to light?... Are you playing this drama after the Governor accorded sanction against you (CM), people are aware of your drama."

Manipur villagers flee homes after drone drops bombs

PTI ■ IMPHAL

A section of villagers of Senjam Chirang in Manipur have been forced to abandon their homes and seek refuge in a nearby community hall after bombs dropped from a drone injured three members of a local resident's family two days ago. The first bomb smashed through the roof of a 65-year-old farmer's house, injuring his daughter. Minutes later, another bomb fell from the sky and injured him and his son.

Watham Gambhir said the explosive that broke the roof of his house was the second of the three bombs that were dropped from a drone on Monday evening in his house. The first one damaged his cowshed, which was empty, and the third explosive injured him and his son who took shelter under a tree after fleeing home in Imphal West district.

Drones are a new technology added recently to the weapons used in the violence between the two large ethnic groups - Meitei and Kuki - in the northeastern state, which left over 200 people dead since May last year.



The use of the remote-controlled small flying device as a weapon is first noticed in Manipur on Sunday in Koutruk village in Imphal West district. In the attack in which guns were also used, two persons were killed and nine others were injured. Drones were employed again in Senjam Chirang, around three km away, the next day. Chief Minister N Biren Singh has described the dropping of bombs on the civilian population and security forces using drones as an act of terrorism.

The state government has imposed restrictions on the import of drones or their components. "We became concerned when

we heard the buzzing sound of drones on Sunday. We also heard that bombs were dropped at Koutruk. Our village became the target the next day," said Gambhir. The elderly farmer told PTI that he initially thought the buzz was coming from random drones checking residential localities as Senjam Chirang has witnessed several gunfights before. "However, within seconds, we heard a loud explosion. I along with my son rushed outside in the courtyard and saw smoke billowing from the cow shed. The second bomb broke the CI roof of our bedroom where my daughter was and she was injured," he

said. "We ran towards a tree, some 50 metres from the courtyard, to take cover but the drone followed us there and dropped an explosive. We started running again but we were thrown forward under the impact of the blast and were injured after hitting the ground," Gambhir said. Naoba Singh, a villager volunteer, suspected that hi-tech drones that can be used at night were brought from outside the country.

Both Meiteis and Kukis formed armed volunteer groups to protect their villages from attack by the other community. Singh said, "If sophisticated weapons can be sourced (from outside the country), why can't sophisticated drones that can be used in the dark be procured by those operating it?" The three persons injured in the bombings in Senjam Chirang were undergoing treatment in a private hospital in Imphal. "We are scared now and not staying at home even during the daytime. Around 10 families have taken refuge in a nearby community hall," said another villager W Inao.

AP Government provides ₹5 lakh ex gratia to kin of 20 flood victims

PTI ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday provided an ex gratia of Rs 5 lakh to the kin of 20 people who perished in rain-related incidents in the state, even as rescue and relief operations continued in parts of Vijayawada.

So far, 20 people have died in the rains and floods which caused damage in several parts of the southern state, especially Vijayawada. In a teleconference with officials, the Chief Minister instructed them to identify families of the deceased persons to hand over their bodies, or perform last rites on behalf of the Government.

"Extend Rs 5 lakh compensation to the families of the deceased persons on behalf of the Government," said Naidu in an official press release, adding that there is a chance now to go door-to-door for relief as flood has receded.

Heavy rain in Rajasthan to continue for next few days; trains cancelled, diverted

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Heavy rains lashed parts of Rajasthan leading to the cancellation or diversion of trains due to damage to a railway track, officials said Wednesday.

The meteorological department has predicted that the period of heavy rain will continue in the state for the next few days.

A North Western Railway official said five trains were cancelled, two were partially cancelled and the route of another was changed due to damage to the Jodhpur-Jaisalmer railway track.

According to the Jaipur Met Centre, in the last 24 hours till 8.30 am on Wednesday, rains were recorded with thunder at most places in the state.

Heavy rain was recorded at some places in Jaipur, Dausa, Sawai Madhopur, Chittorgarh, Pratapgarh, Banswara, Kota, Bundi, Baran, Tonk, Jodhpur, Jalore and Pali districts and heavy to very heavy rain was recorded at some places in Udaipur, Bhilwara and Barmer districts.

Rishabhdev in Udaipur, with



167 mm, recorded the highest rainfall. In Gudha Malani of Barmer, 147 mm of rain was recorded and Kotdi of Bhilwara saw 119 mm rainfall.

In the 24 hour-period, 93 mm rain was also recorded in Nainwa of Bundi, 86 mm in Banswara, 84 mm in Nokhda of Barmer, 84 mm in Bassi of Jaipur, 80 mm in Lavan of Dausa, 80 mm in Sanchore of Jalore, 75 mm in Pipalada of Kota, 77 mm in Mangrol of Baran and 73 mm in Badi Sadri of Chittorgarh.

A met official said that a low-pressure area that formed over Madhya Pradesh has weakened today and has turned into a cyclonic circulation and is currently

located over the southwestern Rajasthan region. A new low-pressure area is likely to form in the Bay of Bengal in the next 24 hours, the official said.

As a result of the weather conditions, there is a possibility of heavy and very heavy rains at some places in Jodhpur, Udaipur, Kota and Ajmer divisions on Wednesday.

Moderate to heavy rains can also occur in some parts of Jaipur, Bharatpur and Bikaner divisions.

The monsoon will remain active in most parts of eastern Rajasthan for the next four to five days and heavy rain activities will be continuing at some places, according to the weather department.

Flooding in Gujarat worsened by extensive urban development, altered elevations: IIT-GN study

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

An analysis of recent flooding in parts of Gujarat showed that it was caused by severe weather conditions and exacerbated by extensive urban development, altered elevations and compromised drainage patterns, researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar (IIT-GN) have said.

Parts of Gujarat witnessed flooding due to heavy rains between August 20 and 29. During this period, 15 out of the 33 districts in the state recorded three-day rainfall totals exceeding their 10-year return period - a statistical measure indicating the average interval between such intense events - with Jamnagar, Morbi, Devbhumi Dwarka, and Rajkot experiencing levels above their 50-year thresholds, the analysis showed.

The recurrence of "unusual weather events along India's western coast", such as the one witnessed last week, highlights the urgent need to reassess urban planning and



infrastructure resilience. This scenario underscores the need for robust and scalable emergency response strategies that can handle the complexities of concurrent extreme events, researchers at IIT Gandhinagar's Machine Intelligence and Resilience Laboratory (MIR Lab) said.

"As rapid urbanisation continues to modify regional and local hydrology, placing greater strain on drainage systems, it is crucial to keep hydrology at the core of urban development strategies," the researchers observed. Vadodra, which grappled with severe flooding after

heavy rains last week, suffered from the situation despite rains not being unprecedented in magnitude, the IIT-GN research said. "However, the flooding was likely exacerbated by extensive urban development in flood-prone areas, altered elevations, and drainage patterns compromised due to rapid urbanisation and clogged drainage systems," it said.

"This situation is a classic example of concurrent extreme events, where multiple regions experience severe weather simultaneously.

Such concurrence complicates emergency response and evacuation efforts as resources become stretched across multiple affected areas," the study said. Demands for rescue, relief, and evacuation operations in such a scenario can overwhelm emergency services, making it more challenging to respond effectively and efficiently to the needs of those impacted by the floods, it said.

"This underscores the need for robust and scalable emergency response strategies that can handle the complexities of concurrent extreme events," it added. The analysis of maximum rainfall during this period revealed that Gujarat's Devbhumi Dwarka and Morbi in the state's Saurashtra region experienced rainfall over a one-day period last week that surpassed their 50-year "return period" (with Dwarka exceeding 100-year period). Twelve of the state's 33 districts experienced one-day rainfall totals that exceeded the 10-year return period, it said.

Watertight chargesheet filed against Darshan

PTI ■ BENGALURU

The Bengaluru Police on Wednesday filed a chargesheet against 17 accused in the Renukaswamy murder case, including Kannada actor Darshan Thoogudeepa. A "watertight" chargesheet was prepared after investigating the case from all aspects, Bengaluru Police Commissioner B Dayananda told reporters here.

The chargesheet comprises 231 witness statements and technical and electronic evidence, the police said, adding, it was a massive investigation. The 3991-page chargesheet (with seven volumes and 10

files) was submitted to the 24th Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate court.

"We have arrested 17 people in this case who are in judicial custody. There are three direct eye witnesses; 27 witnesses have given their statements before the court and other witnesses have recorded their statements before the police," Dayananda said.

"We had sent several materials pertaining to the investigation to FSL (Forensic Science Laboratory) here and CFSL (Central Forensic Science Laboratory, Hyderabad). We have received their reports but some reports from CFSL are yet to come," he said.

Renukaswamy murder case



As many as 56 police officers are among the witnesses in the case, Dayananda added. In a statement, the police said that the chargesheet against the 17 accused has been filed on the basis of the accounts of

eye-witnesses, circumstantial, technical, scientific and other evidence collected by the investigators.

The evidence collected has been submitted to the court under section 173 (8) of CrPC (Code of Criminal Procedure), which gives unrestrained right to the investigating agency for further probe, it said.

Darshan along with his friend Pavithra Gowda and 15 others, who are accused in the case, are currently under judicial custody in different prisons in the state.

According to police sources, 33-year-old Renukaswamy, a fan of the actor, had sent obscene messages to Gowda, which enraged Darshan,

allegedly leading to his murder. His body was found near a stormwater drain next to an apartment in Sumanahalli here on June nine.

Raghavendra, one of the accused who is part of Darshan's fan club in Chitradurga, had brought Renukaswamy to a shed in R R Nagar here, on the pretext that the actor wanted to meet him. It was in this shed that he was allegedly tortured and murdered.

According to the post-mortem report, Renukaswamy, a native of Chitradurga, died due to shock and haemorrhage as a result of multiple blunt injuries.

Two from Hyderabad among four Indians burnt alive as car catches fire in US road accident

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Two people from Hyderabad were among four Indians who died in a multi-vehicle road accident in the US, according to information received by their family members here.

The victims were identified as Aryan Raghunath Orampatti from Kukatpally here and his friend Farooq Sheikh, Lokesh Palacharla, another Telugu student, and Darshini Vasudev from Tamil Nadu.

According to the Collin County Sheriff's Office, the accident involving five vehicles occurred on the northbound US 75 just past White Street at Anna near Dallas on Friday afternoon. A truck travelling at a high speed failed to slow down and struck the rear of the SUV. The force of the collision was such that the SUV caught fire and the four occupants were trapped inside which resulted in their deaths.

Aryan Orampatti and Farooq Sheikh were returning after visiting a (Aryan's) cousin in Dallas while Palacharla was heading to Bentonville to reunite with his wife. Darshini Vasudev, a postgraduate from the University of Texas, was on her way to visit her uncle in Arkansas.

A friend of Aryan's father on Wednesday said here that four people including Aryan and his friend Farooq had joined in the vehicle using a



carpooling app. After getting to know about the accident from a relative staying in the US on Saturday, Aryan's parents already left for the US, he told PTI.

Aryan after completing his engineering degree had left for the US to pursue MS and his parents had attended his convocation in May, he said adding Aryan wanted to work in the US for two years and then return to India.

Farooq's father Mastan Wali, who stays in Hyderabad told PTI that he was informed on Saturday that an over speeding truck hit the vehicle in which his son and three other Indians including Aryan were travelling, from the rear side.

"Some friends of Farooq had informed my daughter, who lives in the US about the accident. She informed me about it on Saturday. My daughter is following up with authorities there," Mastan Wali said, adding they were planning to bring Farooq's mortal remains to Hyderabad. Farooq had left for the US in August 2021 from here and after completing his MS there he was now working, his father said.

Tripura House witnesses uproarious scenes Over Minister's social media post

PTI ■ AGARTALA

Tripura Assembly on Wednesday witnessed uproarious scenes as the opposition Congress protested against minister Sudhangshu Das's statement on a controversial post on Facebook. Congress MLAs demonstrated in the well of the House and staged a walkout after Das described the party as "anti-Hindu".

In the September 1 post which he deleted later, the minister said, "In my view, the Hindus have no right to offer prayers to gods and goddesses because those people who can't protect



their temples and gods, don't deserve to organise prayer or puja." Though he did not mention any context for the statement, it was posted days after an idol of the Goddess Kali was found defaced in a temple in the Durganagar area in West Tripura district. Following the incident, several houses were

set on fire by unidentified miscreants on the night of August 25. Soon after question hour on Wednesday, Congress MLA Birajit Sinha raised the issue in the House and sought a statement from Das.

Party legislator Sudip Roy Barman while condemning the post said, "A minister took oath swearing the Constitution cannot make such a post on the social media. India is guided by the Constitution. I exhort him to apologise for that."

Food and Civil Supplies Minister Sushanta Chowdhury, who came to the rescue of Das from the

opposition's attack, said the people have seen the post on Facebook.

"Following repentance, he (Sudhangshu) withdrew the post. The members of the House must understand the feelings of the minister who made the post.

"There has been no instance in Tripura where minority people are subjected to face oppression. The government is working for 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas'. But it is Congress which had made a member of 'tukde tukde' gang candidate from New Delhi constituency," he said, without naming Kanhaiya Kumar.

CM Yogi slams Opposition for cowering before criminals, rioters

PNS ■ PHULPUR/PRAYAGRAJ

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Wednesday, issued a stern warning to mafias, criminals and rioters while launching a scathing attack on the Opposition parties for cowering before such elements for petty political gains.

Yogi said the Opposition parties do not have the guts to run a bulldozer and will have a heart attack even at the sight of it. He distributed appointment letters to over 5,000 youths, and loans exceeding Rs 510 crore to 7,138 beneficiaries.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

A boost to 'Act East'

Prime Minister Modi's visit to Singapore, marks a crucial step in fortifying India's 'Act East' policy

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Singapore marks a significant milestone in India's 'Act East' policy, reinforcing the strategic importance of the Southeast Asian region in India's foreign relations. Modi's Singapore visit enhanced bilateral cooperation in key areas, reflecting India's broader goals in the Indo-Pacific. Singapore occupies a pivotal position in India's 'Act East' policy, serving as a gateway to Southeast Asia and a key partner in advancing India's Indo-Pacific strategy. As the coordinator of ASEAN-India relations from 2021 to 2024, Singapore plays an instrumental role in shaping the regional dynamics between India and ASEAN, a bloc crucial for maintaining peace, stability, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific. Prime Minister Modi's visit underscores the deepening of ties between the two nations, particularly in areas such as trade, digitalisation, and sustainable development. With a trade volume reaching \$36.6 billion in 2023, Singapore is India's largest trade partner in Asia.



PM Modi's agenda during the visit included discussions with Singapore's senior leadership, including President Tharman Shanmugaratnam and Prime Minister Lawrence Wong, aimed at exploring new avenues for collaboration in advanced manufacturing, logistics, and commercial real estate.

The visit is expected to yield significant economic benefits, particularly in attracting foreign direct investment from Singaporean companies into India's emerging sectors. The focus on advanced manufacturing and digitalisation aligns with India's broader goal of transforming into a global manufacturing hub. Additionally, the emphasis on sustainable development highlights India's commitment to addressing global challenges such as climate change, a priority for both nations.

Strategically, Singapore's role as a crucial partner in the Indo-Pacific region cannot be overstated. India's '5 S' approach—Sammaan (respect), Samvad (dialogue), Sahyog (cooperation), Shanti (peace), and Samridhi (prosperity)—forms the foundation of its Indo-Pacific engagement, with Singapore and Brunei being key players. The visit reinforces India's commitment to maintaining a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific, where ASEAN plays a central role. Indeed, Prime Minister Modi's visit to Singapore is more than a bilateral engagement; it is a reaffirmation of India's commitment to strengthening ties with Southeast Asia as part of its 'Act East' policy. The discussions held during this visit are likely to pave the way for deeper economic and strategic cooperation, not just with Singapore, but across the Indo-Pacific region. As India continues to assert its role as a key player in the region, Singapore remains an indispensable partner in this endeavor, embodying the principles of dialogue, cooperation, and shared prosperity.

PICTALK



An aerial view of the illuminated Chennai Street Circuit during the Formula 4 Street Car Race, in Chennai

BJP's recruitment drive to solidify power



KALYANI SHANKAR

As the BJP aims to recruit 100 million new members, it continues to strengthen its dominance, despite facing criticism and internal challenges

The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party is working to expand on a two-track basis. The first is by recruiting influential leaders from other parties, particularly Congress. Although this may involve a small number of leaders, their influence is significant.

Second, the party is focusing on enrolling a large number of new members. Former Jharkhand Mukti Morcha Chief Minister Champai Soren joined the BJP after current CM Hemant Soren, allegedly involved in a scam, was released last week and resumed his post. This move adds to the trend of influential chief ministers joining the BJP, highlighting the party's strategic success. The BJP embraces well-known leaders from other parties as they bring their influence and workers along. — Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, imported from Congress, is a classic example. Sarma has become the go-to man in the northeast. According to the National Election Watch-ADR, the main reasons for defections and party switching are the absence of value-based politics, greed for money and power, rewarding political positions, and lack of efficient, honest, and credible leaders. BJP has plans to recruit 100 million new members on a parallel track.

At last week's meeting, the BJP leadership decided that the drive would be in two phases: September 2 to 25 and October 1 to 15. Over the last decade, the BJP has seen significant growth. In the 1980s, upper-middle-class, urban, and Hindus primarily supported the BJP. It has since built a broader political base, showing its increasing influence. The BJP has overtaken Congress and is already the world's largest party, with 180 million members. The Grand Old Party, Congress, has 130 million members. Between 2014 and 2019, around 180 million people joined the BJP nationwide. Eighty thousand leaders and workers from various parties have joined the BJP, which aims to recruit about 100,000 leaders at national and district levels.



Through this drive, the BJP collects data about its members, including their caste, gender, age, residence, and other details. In the last decade, many influential Congress leaders, including former chief ministers and ministers, shifted to the BJP, revealing their frustration, greed and lust for power. The BJP has rewarded some of them with good positions. Notable leaders among them include Himanta Biswa Sarma, Gulam Nabi Azad, Captain Amarendra Singh, Kapil Sibal, Jitin Prasada, R.P.N. Singh, Milind Deora, and Jyotiraditya Scindia. Former Maharashtra chief minister Ashok Chavan, Ritesh Pandey, Sangita Azad, and others have recently joined the BJP.

They come from various political parties such as Congress, Bahujan Samaj Party, All India Trinamool Congress, and YSRCP. The BJP has benefited the most from members switching sides, while the Congress has suffered the most since 2014. Even after winning, the Opposition parties are concerned that the BJP will try to persuade their legislators to switch—many defectors at crucial moments, such as during government majority voting. Why do they defect? If there is



EIGHTY THOUSAND LEADERS AND WORKERS FROM VARIOUS PARTIES HAVE JOINED THE BJP, WHICH AIMS TO RECRUIT ABOUT 100,000 LEADERS AT NATIONAL AND DISTRICT LEVELS

a reason for the defectors to leave their respective parties, the BJP also embraces them without hesitating. These leaders fear becoming politically irrelevant when their party loses power. By aligning with the dominant BJP, they hope to gain control and secure a political future for their children. The BJP's successful strategy of attracting leaders from other parties is evident in the ADR analysis. It shows that 22% of re-contesting candidates who switched parties joined the BJP, followed by 10% joining the Congress and 6% joining the BSP. Over the past decade, the BJP has attracted several leaders from other parties, contributing to the rise of leaders like Himanta Biswa Sarma in the northeastern region. Why does the BJP welcome these defectors? There are three key reasons: First, it weakens the party from which the defection occurs. Second, it allows the BJP to absorb known leaders from established parties, strengthening its ranks. Third, given the BJP's lack of second-rung leaders, it is easier to absorb the defectors. It is not as if dissenters have not left the BJP. Some, like Kalyan Singh, Shankar Singh Vaghela, and Yediyurappa (all chief ministers), launched their par-

ties but returned to the BJP when they failed. The BJP's deeply ideological glue holds it together. The BJP's long-time loyal members are unhappy when newcomers get good positions while they have been faithful to the party. This has happened in the past. During Vajpayee's leadership, the party could only accommodate some, and others left. While the party has been expanding, its leadership is still dominated by the Upper caste. The BJP has strengths but receives criticism for its limited ideology, aggressive attitude, complacency, and arrogance. The BJP's upcoming membership drive will test its strength in the post-2024 poll period. Though it emerged as the single largest party, it got only 240 seats in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, 32 short of the majority. Prime Minister Narendra Modi wants to achieve a "Congress-Free India," but it may be challenging. You cannot eliminate a 140-year-old party in a day, as the Congress showed revival instincts. The BJP must refrain from repeating the mistakes of the Congress to stay in power. (The writer is a popular columnist; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ACTOR VIJAY ENTERS POLITICS

Madam — Environment prevailing, political narratives set, leadership space available and the ability to convert the mass created in the film industry determine the success of a film star who turns into a political leader. Though many film stars have entered into politics only few have succeeded. While M G Ramachandran (MGR) and N T Rama Rao (NTR) can be said to have had superlative successes the both the stars have had in the 1970/80s are in no way comparable to any. For both MGR and NTR carefully built their image as a mass leader over two decades before plunging into politics. While Jayalalitha was successful she had the advantage MGR's backing and her cleverly capitalizing on MGR's image. One more leader who came very close to success was Vijaykumar who set an anti-corruption narrative and it took nearly a decade for him to become the LOP after which he died due to poor health. Superstar Rajinikanth backtracked after announcing his entry in politics citing health reasons. Seeman also from Kollywood though has his own vote bank he is yet to prove himself as a successful leader. Pawan Kalyan from Tollywood has tasted some success thanks to the alliance with BJP and TDP in AP. We will have to wait to see Vijay who has been successful as a hero in Kollywood and has a youth following, entering into TN politics when the towering leaders like Jayalalitha and Karunanidhi are absent the political narrative he sets and his ability to convert the mass following into his vote bank. Despite all these strengths the political party possesses in the state, to fight the elections on its own without an alliance and form the government on its own is difficult and hence we will have to see the partners with whom he forges alliance in the 2026 TN assembly elections which he has announced to fight.

Gopalaswamy J | Chennai

SC ADDRESSES FARMERS' CONCERNS. Madam — The recent Supreme Court

Improve ties with neighbours



The editorial on SOSA details the need for India to be in this forum. Equally important for India is to improve its ties with its neighbours. As of now India is an island

decision to form a panel to address the farmers' concerns at the Shambhu border marks a critical step in resolving the ongoing crisis. It is essential that this panel operates with the utmost transparency and fairness, ensuring that the voices of the farmers are genuinely heard and their grievances adequately addressed. Farmers, the backbone of the nation, have been protesting for their rights and livelihood. Their demands are not just about immediate relief but also about securing the future of agriculture in the country. The formation of this panel must not be seen as a mere formality. Concrete actions must follow, with clear timelines and accountability. Moreover, this issue transcends regional boundaries and affects the entire nation. The agricultural sector's stability is crucial for food security and economic growth. A balanced and empathetic approach is necessary, where the government and the judiciary work in unison to safeguard the interests of both the farmers and the nation.

Priya Gupta | Kushinagar

in the ocean of hostile neighbouring countries. Such a situation is a lurking danger to nullify all the enviable achievements the country is boasting of. On priority India needs to ensure friendly relations with all its neighbours. Another fact to be kept in mind is that all the countries forming groups against China are too cautious in their steps as every country has its stake in China in terms of investment or imports. India's dependability on China is more. 70% of Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients imported from China are inevitable to maintain the position of India as a global Pharma hub. Even Solar cells need to come from China. Therefore the so called arrangements and agreements against China are to push more weapons in the name of security. India needs to be careful not to fall in the trap of weapon mafia.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

INDIA'S NAVAL PROWESS

Madam — With the successful induction of its second indigenous nuclear ballistic missile submarine, the I.N.S. Arighat, India has once again showcased her naval prowess to the world. However, unlike I.N.S. Arighat, the recently commissioned submarine is more advanced and operational focused. In the realm of maritime security India with 172 warheads still has to cover a long distance as Russia and US with 1700 each, China (500) are way ahead of us in terms of operational warheads. Indian Ocean is being considered as a breeding ground for developing arms race as China, US, Russia and even Pakistan are flexing their muscles, should India reconsider its age old age No First Use (NFC) doctrine? India must decide whether to modernise its nuclear deterrent capabilities or remain committed to its traditional policy of minimum deterrence.

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Nainital

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

A green tribute to mothers and the environment

Inspired by PM Modi's "Ek Ped Ma Ke Naam" initiative, the Chhattisgarh Government has launched the ambitious "People for Peepal" plantation drive in Nava Raipur



O P CHOUDHARY

When Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the "Ek Ped Ma Ke Naam" (a tree in the name of the mother) initiative, a deep thought process went behind it. One, to cherish the memory of our mothers; and two, to environmental conservation.



The Chhattisgarh government took it as a unique opportunity to give Nava Raipur a new identity. The Nava Raipur Atal Nagar Development Authority launched the "People for Peepal" plantation drive to transform the city into the first "Peepal Tree" city in India. We also saw it as an opportunity to address the pressing issue of climate change by establishing Nava Raipur as a "Peepal Tree" City in the coming years. This drive reflects a strong commitment to environmental sustainability and aims to set a new benchmark for urban green spaces. We envision a city where extensive tree planting and green infrastructure contribute significantly to improving the urban environment and combatting climate

change. Echoing the Prime Minister's commitment to Mother Earth, the Chhattisgarh government is together with Modi's vision of nurturing our planet the way our mothers take care of us.

The campaign, kick-started by Narendra Modi this World Environment Day on June 5, will help in reversing land degradation, recharge groundwater, prevent desertification and bring in drought resilience. The "People for Peepal" campaign aims to plant over 20,000 Peepal trees apart from 80,000 trees of other varieties throughout the city. Peepal or Ficus Religiosa, a large and fast-growing deciduous tree unique to

India that is a revered symbol of eternal life, wisdom and spirituality, has been chosen for its significant ecological benefits and cultural importance.

The massive plantation will ensure that Peepal trees become a prominent and recognizable feature across Nava Raipur. In addition to Peepal trees, which are one of the most oxygen-producing trees, the drive will include planting other key species such as Neem, Banyan, and Jamun. These trees are integral to the city's green infrastructure, enhancing biodiversity and providing additional environmental benefits. To boost community involvement, the campaign includes a "virtu-

al adoption programme". This initiative allows individuals and organizations to adopt trees virtually, fostering widespread engagement and support for the drive. This approach encourages collective responsibility towards environmental conservation and helps ensure the campaign's success.

The ultimate goal of this extensive plantation drive is to position Nava Raipur as a model city for environmental preservation and to earn recognition as the first "Peepal Tree" City of India. By expanding green spaces and promoting biodiversity, the city aims to inspire other urban areas and set a global example for sustainable urban development. Through this initiative, Nava Raipur seeks not only to address climate change but also to enhance the quality of life for its residents, establishing itself as a leading example of environmental stewardship and green urban planning.

(The writer is the Minister of Finance of Government of Chhattisgarh; views are personal)

FIRST COLUMN

BEYOND SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

We must reconcile modern progress with sustainability by shifting to spiritually



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

The competitive world in which we are living believes in the theory of "Survival of the Fittest," meaning that the strongest one is the one who survives. However, humanity in the 21st century has perceived this in a rather different manner because, in the actual sense, the strongest people are those who are most ethical and helpful, not those who gain strength by hurting others and exploiting nature. Today, educated people all over the world are well aware of the fact that the environment across the globe has deteriorated menacingly to its lowest ebb, and if this deterioration continues further for some more time at this rate, then the very existence of the human race will be in grave danger. But today, when economic progress takes precedence even over politics, many governments are under great pressure to increase production substantially and to take major strides towards high economic evolution and growth by undertaking developmental activities on a large scale for a quick turnaround. Therefore, every government increasingly engages itself in fulfilling the goals of modernisation through rapid industrialisation and technological advancement to create more jobs and thriving economies. But the real dilemma is that if the governments accelerate developmental activities and industrialisation, then the quality of the environment will be badly affected. If they do not take visible steps towards economic growth, then they cannot compete with other nations and may face criticism from their people and ultimately have to step down. So, the challenge faced by all countries is: "How to improve or sustain the quality of the environment while ensuring a high level of economic activity and growth?"



The solution that is generally suggested is that there should be sustainable development. But is this practically feasible without affecting the social domain? There is bound to be more and more strain on the environment and the depleting of mineral and natural resources. It is, therefore, urgent and important that we realize at the earliest that it will simply be impossible for the earth to sustain us if the strain on it increases. So, for our survival in a clean and healthy environment, it is of the utmost necessity to reduce our consumption and wastage by changing our lifestyle.

With massive industrialization and economic growth, the gains of some sectors of the society inevitably create pressures on the social fabric of an erratic developing society creating a great imbalance in the consumption levels of a small number of rich and an ever-increasing downtrodden. Hence to overcome all these issues, the need of the hour is to have a simple lifestyle, which is not possible through the virtues of the capitalistic or the socialist system of economy but only through the spiritual orientation of our economic thought because survivors aren't always the strongest; sometimes they're the smartest, but more often simply the luckiest.

Hence it is better to change ourselves before time devastates us. Indeed, we can cultivate a society that prioritizes the health of the planet over short-term gains. Schools, colleges, and universities should integrate environmental education into their curriculums, teaching students not only about the challenges we face but also about the solutions that can lead us to a more sustainable future. In conclusion, the path to true survival does not lie in the outdated notion of 'survival of the fittest,' understood as domination and exploitation. Instead, it lies in our ability to live in harmony with nature and each other, fostering a world where progress is measured not by the wealth we accumulate but by the health of our environment and the well-being of all living beings. If we fail to recognize this and continue on our current path, we risk not only our future but the very survival of the planet itself.

(Writer is a spiritual educator and a columnist; views are personal)

Reviving the legacy of quality in teacher education



J S RAJPUT

This year's Teacher's Day celebrations carry a special resonance as they align with the enduring concerns of Dr S Radhakrishnan, who passionately advocated for quality in education

Teacher's Day celebrations this year are indeed special in the context of quality, which was the major concern expressed on several occasions by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, whose contributions are recalled with gratitude on this day every year. Necessary academic and professional preparations have been made and the Integrated Teacher Education Programme - ITEP - has already been launched in 64 institutions. This initiative is based on the recommendations of the National Education Policy -NEP-2020 - that after 2030 all of the pre-service teacher preparation programmes would be only of four-year duration and all others shall be scrapped. It would be prudent to recall an earlier experiment in quality teacher preparation which was initiated in 1965 by the then-newly established organization, the National Council of Educational Research and Training - NCERT - in its four Regional Colleges (now Institutes) of Education, located in Ajmer, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, and Mysore.

It was acknowledged at the level of experts and accepted by national decision-makers that the one-year teacher preparation programmes were inadequate in preparing quality teachers and must be replaced by the four-year integrated programmes after senior secondary. The products of these four-year integrated courses established a distinct reputation for themselves in the education sector, and also in other professions as well, which they preferred to join. It is indeed heartening to note that the NEP-2020 made the recommendation on ITEP based upon the solid evidence offered by the NCERT institutions. One is convinced that the growth, development and progress of any nation would be a direct consequence of the quality of education it achieves.

This quality is invariably a product of the level of excellence achieved by the Teacher Education Institutes - TEIs - of the nation. It is the work culture of the TEIs that mandates - without ever saying so formally - the work culture of the schools. The level of competence, commitment and performance witnessed in the TEIs by the student-teachers flows directly to schools and creates practically a comparable environment for school children. It is possible to achieve comprehensive personality evolution over four years and this is well-established in India, courtesy of the NCERT.

One must hasten to add that the proposed ITEP version of the earlier four-year programmes of the NCERT must be handled with great caution and care. Any inadequacy of academic, professional physical and financial resources could inflict irreversible damage to the great initiative. The future of the planet Earth and humanity depends on how education deals with man-nature mutuality. India decided in 2020 that 'The rich heritage of ancient and eternal Indian knowledge and thought' would be a guiding light for the NEP-2020.

It has, thus, accepted that education in India must be 'rooted in a culture committed to new knowledge.' In every alert and active culture, the tradition of knowledge quest has to remain dynamic in word and deed. It is because of this inherent strength, that Indian culture and its tradition of knowledge quest with its



ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS NEED TO POSE AN INTERNAL QUERY: ARE WE FUNCTIONING AT A LEVEL OF SELF-CONFIDENCE, CONVICTION, DETERMINATION AND PASSION THAT COULD BRING CREDIBILITY TO EACH ONE OF US AND OUR INSTITUTION?

unique objectives and vision are now receiving global attention in the world. Yes, the knowledgeable and concerned persons of the world must come together and realize that the wanton destruction of natural resources without caring for their replenishment has forced scientists to calculate how long the planet Earth could survive.

They must inspire everyone to wake up and realize the dreadful magnitude of the devastation being inflicted on nature must stop, and much more, present big plans before people, but there it all ends. There is a solution that Indians are aware of from 'ancient times: 'Aparigraha'. It was put up before the world in very simple terms in his indomitable style by Mahatma Gandhi: Nature has a sufficient resource to meet the needs of everyone but not the greed of anyone."

This is the only alternative. "To me, hope lies in the Teacher! The Teacher can do it if they resolve to do it and the 'Teachers of the world' unite! A new chapter has to be written in every discipline and an emphasis on multidisciplinary concerns of the human knowledge quest, the process of transfer and acquisition of knowledge.

Towards this, teachers shall have to realize, accept and internalize that they are makers of the future of human existence on planet Earth! It is their responsibility to shape every learner coming to them as an unaware and uninitiated person into a personality! That would shape the future generations, would prepare citizens committed to their nation, and their people but fully conscious of their role as international cit-

izens as well. The legendary philosopher, revered statesman and worthy teacher Dr. S. Radhakrishnan was one of the finest intellectual brains of the 20th century. He was a matchless interpreter of Eastern and Western thought, philosophy and the 'concept of a man'. We recall his greatness, and his multifarious contributions, but allow his philosophy and guiding principles for teachers to remain confined to a few shelves of some reputed libraries.

He pleads particularly to institutions of higher learning: "The ideal of the university is the promotion of liberty of mind and or freedom of thought. It has little to do with the protection of privilege or a call to conformity. It contests privilege which is something other than that excellence which follows on intellectual eminence or spiritual greatness. It contests conformity, for each individual has a right to develop his own convictions." Once this is accepted at each appropriate level by all those dealing with higher education, it becomes clear that the seeds for creating such an environment in institutions of higher learning have to be sown in schools!

Schools in the present context just cannot become the nourishing and nurturing grounds for the flowering of new ideas unless school teachers are well-equipped and well-endowed with the determination that every child, every learner is to be encouraged to express himself in whichever way he chooses to; may be in music, sports, mathematics, painting, imagination, creativity, and the like! In India right from the Ministry of Education to primary schools is just forgotten after

every discussion and deliberation! One is referring to the most distinct role of teacher education institutions; TEIs. Quality, ideas, innovations, and imagination are nurtured in schools and universities but how to do so is learnt, internalized and tested in TEIs. To universalize this comprehension, one must be ready with a reality test! We are proud of India of ancient times because of the universality of its culture and acceptance of the essential unity of mankind despite all the apparent diversities.

Academic institutions need to pose an internal query: are we functioning at a level of self-confidence, conviction, determination and passion that could bring credibility to each one of us and our institution? As academics 'have we accepted and succumbed to being 'teachers less original, to ambitions less exalted and to tame compliance with old forms! We were warned over seven-eight decades ago by Dr Radhakrishnan on this count: "There was a dread of venturing outside the safe limits of guaranteed ideas. The country seems to suffer from exhaustion." The future belongs to those equipped with learning that encourages ideas, imagination, curiosity and creativity. The fittest and finest tribute to Dr. Radhakrishnan and in fact to the great Indian tradition of teaching, learning and knowledge quest would be to respect teachers, and treat them as the creators of the future of not only the individual learner but of the society, community and the nation.

(Professor Rajput works in education, social cohesion and religious amity, views are personal)

The true power and purpose of teaching in a changing world

On this Teacher's Day, let us reflect on the challenges and triumphs of this noble profession

Born into a family of accomplished women, I've often faced a question that has puzzled me for years: "Why did you choose to be a teacher?" This question, posed by family, friends, and even strangers, stems from two assumptions. First, that teaching is a lesser profession, inferior to careers like medicine or bureaucracy, which my sisters have pursued. Second, and more disheartening, is the belief held by some that only those who fail in other "proper" professions resort to teaching. The underlying notion is that teaching is easy and requires no special skills—a perception I find not just ironic but profoundly misguided. The irony lies in the fact that we all remember teachers



SWATI PAL

who profoundly impacted our lives. We recall the teachers whose classes we eagerly attended, whose kindness and encouragement shaped who we are today. Conversely, we also remember those whose classes were dull, who seemed to take pleasure in demeaning students, or who treated teaching as nothing more than a paycheck. The truth is, teaching is easy only for those who see it as mere-

ly a job—a means to an end, rather than a calling. For those who aspire to be remembered as "good" teachers, the profession is far from easy. It requires dedication, empathy, and a genuine desire to make a difference in students' lives.

Unfortunately, there has been a shift in attitudes towards teaching, influenced by a growing corporate mentality and consumer culture. Many teachers today seem more concerned with holidays, salary increments, and perks than with the students they are supposed to nurture. While it's not wrong to seek these benefits, when they become the sole focus, teaching is reduced to a transactional relationship. This attitude contributes to the neg-

ative perception of teachers in society, where they are often seen as nothing more than paid servants in an "easy" profession.

Yet, the disillusionment among teachers is not entirely self-inflicted. The idealism that once characterized the profession has been eroded by systemic issues that go beyond individual attitudes. Over the three-plus decades I've spent in education, I've witnessed changes that have not always benefited teachers or students. One of the most significant changes has been the shift from an annual examination system to a semester system at the undergraduate level. While the intention of aligning with global patterns is understandable, the semester system has

reduced teaching to a race to complete syllabi, leaving little room for individualized attention or meaningful engagement with students.

This shift is particularly ironic in an era when "quality education" is a buzzword. The question we must ask is whether the semester system truly enhances quality or merely ensures that all the boxes are ticked on time. Teachers who feel they cannot do justice to the curriculum or their students are bound to feel frustrated. Even the most resilient educators may eventually succumb to the pressures of the system, abandoning the high ideals that initially drew them to the profession. The space that the annual system once provided for exploring innovative

teaching methods has been replaced by a relentless focus on deadlines, leading to a sense of exhaustion and apathy among teachers.

The accreditation system, though well-intentioned, has also added to the burden. While it has encouraged institutions to improve infrastructure, training, and community outreach, the process itself is cumbersome. Hours are spent documenting activities and ensuring they conform to prescribed criteria for a good grade. This bureaucratic approach to education often detracts from the unique qualities of individual institutions, fostering a spirit of competition that can be more self-defeating than motivating. Another challenge is the rapid

succession of educational reforms—CBCS, LOCF, NEP, and others. While each reform is introduced with the intention of improving education, the pace of change has led to confusion, inadequate curriculum revision, and a lack of clarity about the objectives of these reforms among both teachers and students.

The result is a situation where "a little learning," as Alexander Pope warned, becomes a "dangerous thing." Instead of fostering deep understanding, these rapid changes have led to superficial learning and a sense of disillusionment among educators.

Despite these challenges, I remain steadfast in my belief that teaching is one of the

most powerful professions in the world. A teacher has the potential to drive away the clouds of ignorance to teach empathy and integrity, and to guide students toward a brighter future. Rabindranath Tagore, captured this sentiment beautifully in his poem "Where the Mind is Without Fear," envisioning a world led by reason, truth, and freedom. On this Teacher's Day, I urge my fellow educators to remember the profound role we play in shaping the future. Despite the odds, we must strive to create a better world by becoming more humane and resilient, even if we are the last ones standing.

(The writer is Professor and Principal, Janki Devi Memorial College, DU; views are personal)

Grenfell tower fire: Inquiry blames UK government, industry failures

AP ■ LONDON A damning report on a deadly London high-rise fire said Wednesday that decades of failures by government, regulators and industry turned Grenfell Tower into a "death trap" where 72 people lost their lives.

but in some cases through dishonesty and greed," he said. Prime Minister Keir Starmer apologised on behalf of British state, saying the tragedy "should never have happened" and promising the victims justice.

institutional indifference and neglect." The fire broke out in the early hours of June 14, 2017, in a fourth-floor apartment and spread up the 25-story building like a lit fuse, fuelled by flammable cladding panels on the tower's exterior walls.

a layer of polyethylene, a combustible plastic polymer that melts and drips on exposure to heat. The report was highly critical of companies that made the building's cladding. It said they engaged in "systematic dishonesty", manipulating safety tests and misrepresenting the results to claim the material was safe.

Egyptian President makes his first visit to Turkey as relations thaw

AP ■ ANKARA

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi on Wednesday is making his first official visit to Turkey since assuming power, after the two regional powers ended years of tensions. El-Sissi and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan are set to discuss bilateral relations, the conflict in Gaza and escalating tensions in the Middle East, among other topics.



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, left, and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi, second left, review an honour guard during a welcome ceremony prior to their meeting at the Presidential palace in Ankara, Wednesday. AP

In February, Erdogan made his first visit to Egypt in more than a decade after the two countries agreed to mend ties and reappointed ambassadors. Erdogan declared that the two countries wanted to boost bilateral trade to \$15 billion from the current \$10 billion.

against his divisive one year of rule. Morsi was from the Muslim Brotherhood group, which has been outlawed as a terrorist organisation in Egypt. In recent years, Ankara has stopped its criticism of el-Sissi's government, aiming to repair strained relations with Egypt and other Arab nations while seeking investments during an economic downturn. In

November 2022, Erdogan and el-Sissi were photographed shaking hands at the World Cup in Qatar. Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry then travelled to Turkey in 2023 to show solidarity with the country after a deadly earthquake struck parts of southern Turkey and Syria. It is el-Sissi's first visit to Turkey since he was elected president in 2014, a year after

he led the military's overthrow of Morsi. El-Sissi will be accompanied by a large delegation of officials and businessmen, Egyptian media reported. Egypt, together with Qatar and the United States, a key Israeli ally, has been working for months to try and broker a cease-fire and the return of the remaining 100 hostages held by Hamas. The negotiations have been dragged out since Israel introduced new demands, including lasting Israeli control over the Philadelphi corridor between Gaza and Egypt and a second corridor running across the Palestinian enclave.

Egypt has accused the Israeli prime minister of obstructing the negotiations. It is opposed to any Israeli presence along the Gaza side of its border and says it would threaten the decades-old peace treaty between the two countries, a cornerstone of regional stability. Hamas has tried unsuccessfully to have Turkey added as a guarantor in the cease-fire talks. The war began with Hamas' assault into Israel on Oct 7, in which the militants killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducted around 250.

Indian Bank Zonal Office: Delhi South 17, Parliament Street, 2nd Floor, Allahabad Bank Building, New Delhi-110001. Corporate Office: 254-260, Avvai Shanmugam Salai, Royapettah Chennai-600014. APPENDIX - IV - A [See proviso to rule 8 (6)] Sale notice for sale of immovable properties. E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets 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.

Emhoff says he's 'gutted' after hostage killings in Gaza

Washington (AP) — Doug Emhoff, the husband of Vice President Kamala Harris — and the first Jewish person married to a nationally elected US leader — said he is "gutted" after the killing of American Hersh Goldberg-Polin and five other Israeli hostages taken by Hamas.

Speaking Tuesday at a vigil for the hostages at his synagogue in Washington, Emhoff said, "I haven't been able to stop thinking about Hersh and his parents, or about the five others and their families." He added: "This is hard. I feel raw. I'm gutted." Emhoff, who stands to become the nation's "first gentleman" if Harris is elected president

in November, has emerged as a prominent administration liaison to the Jewish community and a voice in countering antisemitism, particularly in the wake of Hamas' October 7 attack on Israel. About 1,200 people, including at least 40 Americans, were killed in the assault, and about 250 more were taken hostage. "How you feel right now is how I feel," Emhoff said at the event at the Adas Israel Congregation organised by local and national Jewish groups. "And how we all feel is something Kamala hears directly from me."

until every hostage is reunited with their family," Emhoff added that Harris and President Joe Biden are working "around the clock to get a hostage and cease-fire deal done." He said, "The time to bring them home is now." Goldberg-Polin and Polin spoke at last month's Democratic National Convention in Chicago as part of their family's global tour to raise awareness about the hostages and their plight. Emhoff said they understood "that unless we tell the story again and again, we have no hope of never again," and said the Jewish community must continue to tell the stories of the hostages.

'Boko Haram militants kill over 100 in Nigerian village'

AP ■ MAIDUGURI

At least 100 villagers were killed in northeastern Nigeria when suspected Boko Haram Islamic extremists opened fire on a market, on worshippers and in people's homes, residents said Wednesday, the latest killings in Africa's longest struggle with militancy.

motorcycles rode into the Tarmuwa council area of Yobe state on Sunday evening and began firing before setting buildings ablaze, according to Yobe police spokesperson Dungus Abdulkarim. The police blamed the attack on Boko Haram, which since 2009 has launched an insurgency to establish its radical interpretation of Islamic law, or Sharia, in the region. Boko Haram has

since splintered into different factions, together accounting for the direct deaths of at least 35,000 people and the displacement of more than 2 million, as well as a humanitarian crisis with millions of people in dire need of foreign aid. At least 1,500 people have so far been killed in the region this year in attacks by armed groups, according to the US-based Armed Conflict Location

& Event Data Project, or ACLED. Yobe Deputy Gov. Idi Barde Gubana gave a much lower death toll of 34 from Sunday's attack. Contradictory statistics are a common trend in the security crisis, with the death toll from survivors' count often higher than the official figure. The 34 dead cited by the deputy governor were the ones buried in a single village, said a community leader.

Indian Bank ZONAL OFFICE : Delhi South 17, Parliament Street, 2nd Floor, Allahabad Bank Building, New Delhi-110 001. Corporate Office : 254-260, Avvai Shanmugam Salai, Royapettah Chennai - 600 014. APPENDIX - IV - A [See proviso to rule 8 (6)] SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES. E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets 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.

EU chief pushes for gender parity

AP ■ BRUSSELS

European Union chief Ursula von der Leyen said Wednesday she is doubling down and pushing full steam ahead to achieve gender parity in her executive Commission team that runs the day-to-day affairs of the massive bloc — despite stubborn resistance from some of the 27 member states. The German, who is setting up the college for her second five-year mandate, may be beholden to the candidates that each member state chooses to provide.



But she has been twisting arms in capitals to make sure that the original tally of 21 men and 6 women changes to at least a semblance of balance. In her first term, she achieved near gender parity among EU commissioners. "I have throughout my whole political life been fighting for women having access to decision-making positions and leading positions," von der Leyen told reporters. "My experience is that if you don't ask for it, you don't get it. It does not come naturally." She sent the member states a letter insisting she should have a choice between at least one man and a woman, giving her some leverage though legally she has no right to insist on such a gender constraint.

Without the letter, she said she would have faced a fait accompli of having the most lopsided male-dominated Commission in over two decades. Now, at least she is continuing the fight. "It is absolutely worth it. The process is ongoing. By now we are at two digits — women — but I haven't seen all potential candidates, she said. When it comes to gender issues, the 27-nation EU is often seen as perhaps the most progressive grouping of countries in the world, leaving behind other nations and continents where the dominance of men in political institutions is still the order of the day. She acknowledged that government leaders are often restricted in their choice by national politics giving one party the right one year, and another the next time. If not governments, parliaments can also get involved — making life even more difficult. And quality is equally important, she said. "The Commission needs competence," she said, calling it "the first and most important criterion." So far though, the EU will have several women — there is the president of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola of Malta, and foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas from Estonia, along with von der Leyen's top posting. Once von der Leyen completes the mix and match of political group, nation and post, the full list goes to the European Parliament for approval. Each prospective commissioner can still be rejected by lawmakers. There is no set date for when a vote will happen, but debate will continue for most of September.

Ukraine's Foreign Minister Kuleba resigns

Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, one of Ukraine's most recognisable faces on the international stage, submitted his resignation Wednesday ahead of an expected major government reshuffle. Russian strikes, meanwhile, killed seven people in a western Ukraine city, a day after one of the deadliest missile attacks since the war began. Kuleba, 43, didn't give a reason for stepping down. His resignation will be discussed by lawmakers at their next session, parliamentary Speaker Ruslan Stefanchuk said on his Facebook page. Four other Cabinet ministers tendered their resignations late Tuesday, making the Cabinet reshuffle likely the biggest since Russia's February 2022 invasion. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy indicat-

ed last week that a reshuffle was imminent, with the war poised to enter a critical stage and as its 1,000-day mark looms in November. Zelenskyy needs to keep up Ukraine's morale amid the grinding war of attrition with its bigger neighbour and steel the country's resolve for what will be another hard winter. Russia has been smashing Ukraine's power grid, knocking out some 70% of generation capacity and rupturing heat and water supplies. And Wednesday's deadly attack on Lviv — a city near the border with NATO member Poland and far from the front lines — underscored how all of Ukraine is at the mercy of Moscow's long-range capabilities. The Ukrainian army's risky incursion almost a month ago into Russia's Kursk border region raised Ukrainian spirits and

countered months of grim news from the front line in eastern Ukraine. The incursions' ultimate goals are unclear, though Zelenskyy says Ukraine wants to create a buffer zone there that would prevent cross-border Russian attacks. Russian President Vladimir Putin remains bent on pushing his army deeper into eastern Ukraine, meanwhile. Russia's onslaught in Donetsk, where Ukraine is short of troops and air defences, and long-range missile strikes that repeatedly hit civilian areas of Ukraine signal that Putin will remain uncompromising and unrelenting in his efforts to crush Ukrainian resistance. The Institute for the Study of War, a Washington think tank, said late Tuesday that Putin believes Russia "can slowly and indefinitely subsume Ukraine through grinding advances and



that Russia can achieve its goals through a war of attrition against Ukrainian forces and by outlasting Western support" for Kyiv. Zelenskyy is also keeping in mind the US presidential election in November, which could bring a shift in key

US military support for his country. During the war Kuleba has been second only to Zelenskyy in carrying Ukraine's message and needs to an international audience, whether through social media posts or meetings with foreign dignitaries. In July, Kuleba became the highest-ranking Ukrainian official to visit China since Russia's invasion. He has been foreign minister since March 2020. Kuleba's successor is not yet known but is expected to be announced on Thursday. Several Ukrainian media outlets, citing unnamed sources, said Kuleba's deputy, Andrii Sybiha, would become the country's chief diplomat. The new foreign minister will likely accompany Zelenskyy to the UN General Assembly in New York next week, which is an opportunity to lobby global leaders for

their support. More than half the current Cabinet will undergo changes, said Davyd Arakhamaia, a leader of Zelenskyy's party in the Ukrainian parliament. Ministers will be resigning on Wednesday and new appointments will be made Thursday, he said. Zelenskyy's five-year mandate expired in May. He remains in power under the provisions of martial law. Meantime, the nighttime strike on Lviv injured 52 people as well as killing seven, Ukraine's Rescue Service said. The strike was carried out with a Kinzhal missile and drones and targeted defence industry enterprises, Russian news agency Tass said, citing the Russian Defence Ministry. Local officials disputed the targeting claim. Lviv Mayor Andrii Sadovyi and the Ukrainian Catholic University published a photo of a family

whose mother and three daughters were killed in the attack that struck their home. The father survived but was in critical condition, Sadovyi said. The eldest daughter, 21-year-old Yaryna, was a programme manager at the European Youth Forum, a platform of the continent's youth organisations, her colleagues wrote on Facebook. "We will neither forget nor forgive" the attack, they said in the post. Another Russian attack injured five people in Kryvyi Rih, Zelenskyy's hometown, regional head Serhiy Lysak said. Kuleba said the Lviv and Kryvyi Rih attacks showed Ukraine's need for more Western support. "To put an end to this terror, Ukraine's partners must promptly deliver the promised air defence systems and ammunition, as well as strengthen Ukraine's defence capabilities

and allow us to launch long-range strikes on all legitimate military targets in Russia," he wrote on X. Zelenskyy reacted to the attacks by urging Ukraine's allies to give Kyiv "more range" to use Western weapons to strike deeper into Russian territory. The attack happened a day after two ballistic missiles blasted a military academy and nearby hospital in Poltava in eastern-central Ukraine, killing 53 people and wounding almost 300 others, Ukrainian officials said. The missiles tore into the heart of the Poltava Military Institute of Communications's main building, causing several stories to collapse. Poltava is about 350 km (200 miles) southeast of Kyiv, on the main highway and rail route between Kyiv and Ukraine's second-largest city, Kharkiv, which is close to the Russian border.

US-sanctioned Serbia official meets Putin

Serbia is a Russian ally and will Snever impose sanctions against Moscow or join NATO, the Balkan nation's deputy prime minister said Wednesday as he met with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The remarks by Aleksandar Vulin, a former intelligence chief who is under US sanctions, reflect persistent close relations between Belgrade and Moscow despite Serbia's proclaimed bid to join the European Union. "It's a great honour for me to have the privilege to talk to you," Vulin told Putin. "Please believe me when I say it is a great encouragement for all Serbs, wherever they may live." Serbia has refused to join Western sanctions against Russia over the war in Ukraine though it has condemned Moscow's aggression. Populist President Aleksandar Vucic has said that imposing the sanctions wasn't in Serbia's national interest. "Serbia is not only a strategic partner of Russia, Serbia is also Russia's ally," Vulin said. "This is why pressure on us by the West is huge." Vulin's meeting with Putin in Russia's far-eastern city of Vladivostok came just days after French President Emmanuel Macron visited Serbia when Belgrade signed an agreement to buy French Rafale fighter jets, a move that was seen as possible a shift away from Moscow. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz earlier also visited Belgrade for the signing of a tentative EU deal with Serbia on raw materials needed in green transition. The two met in Vladivostok on the sidelines of an economic forum designed to attract foreign investment and showcase Russia to them. Greeting Vulin as the two sat

down for talks, Putin expressed hope that Serbia's deputy prime minister will be able to "take a close look and evaluate the possibilities of cooperation with such a large and promising region" as Russia's far east. Vulin told Putin that Serbia's close ties with Russia will continue in the future. "Serbia led by Aleksandar Vucic is a Serbia that will never become a member of NATO, which will never impose sanctions against the Russian Federation and which will never allow its territory to be used for any anti-Russian actions," he said. "Serbia has not become and will not become part of anti-Russian hysteria," Vulin said. The US imposed sanctions on Vulin last July, accusing him of involvement in illegal arms shipments, drug trafficking and misuse of public office and aiding Russia's influence in the volatile Balkans. Vulin has received two medals of honour from Russia. The US sanctions against individuals and companies in the Balkans are designed to counter attempts to undermine peace and stability in the volatile region and Russia's "malign" influence. The West has stepped up efforts to lure the troubled region into its fold, fearing that Russia could stir unrest to avert attention from the war in Ukraine. The Balkans went through multiple wars in the 1990s, and tensions still persist.

Houston (PTI): Four Indian nationals, including a woman, lost their lives and several others were injured in a tragic multi-vehicle road accident in the US state of Texas during the Labour Day weekend. According to the Collin County Sheriff's Office, the accident involving five vehicles occurred on the north-bound US 75 just past White Street at Anna near Dallas. Consul General of India in Houston D C Manjunath confirmed the identities and shared that the Consulate General of India (CGI) is in touch with the families and community organisations, providing full support during

this tragic moment. According to witnesses and preliminary reports, traffic was at a standstill on the highway and an SUV was among those vehicles that were halted when the accident took place on Friday afternoon. A truck travelling at a high speed failed to slow down and struck the rear of the SUV. The force of the collision was

such that the SUV caught fire and the four occupants were trapped inside which resulted in their deaths. It took days to officially identify the victims as the bodies were charred beyond recognition. Several others sustained non-life-threatening injuries though the exact number remains unclear. The victims were identified as Aryan Raghunath Orampatti from Kukatpally suburb of

Hyderabad, his friend Farooq Sheikh, Lokesh Palacharla, another Telugu student, and Darshini Vasudev from Tamil Nadu. Orampatti and Sheikh were returning after visiting a cousin

in Dallas while Palacharla was heading to Bentonville to reunite with his wife. Darshini Vasudev, a postgraduate from the University of Texas, was on her way to visit her uncle in Arkansas.

AP ■ MOSCOW



Vladimir Putin and Aleksandar Vulin, deputy prime minister of Serbia, in conversation.

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Public Notice: NOTICE is hereby given to public at large that our Client Mr. Shrikant Pandit is purchasing Plot No. 1, area measuring 50 sq. yards, out of Kh. No. 89/1/1, situated at Village-Palam, abadi known as Mangla Puri Road, New Delhi from Mr. Umesh Sharma who is the owner of the above said property vide GPA. Agreement to Sale & Will dated 12.05.2003. That our client Mr. Shrikant Pandit intend to get the financial assistance from SPMF India Home Finance Co. Ltd. if any person(s)/Institution has/have any objection(s) or claim(s) with respect to the right, title or interest in the said property may please contact us within 07 days from the date of this notice on the address mentioned herein below, failing which my client(s) shall not be held responsible in any manner whatsoever. Khatan & Khatan A-38 Kailash Colony, New Delhi-110048, Ph. No: 011-49774545

Public Notice: General Public is hereby informed that my client Smt. Geeta Khurana W/o Shri Praveen Khurana R/o 94, Manak Vihar Delhi-110092 have requested the undersigned to issue a title search report in respect of property situated in Third Floor, with roof terrace flights, with further construction right up to the last permissible story with a common entrance, passage, staircase and lift, having its plinth covered area measuring 187.50 Sq. Mtrs., along with 1448 unoccupied individual and impartable ownership rights in the land with two car parking spaces in the basement floor with all fittings, fixtures, connections, structure, facilities and amenities provided therein, in freehold residential Property No C-265, an area measuring 250.83 Sq. mtrs. & 300 Sq. Yds. situated in the layout plan of Jhalra Tahirpur Residential Scheme, Colony Known as Vivek Vihar, Phase I Delhi 110095. The general public is informed that persons and entities having of asserting any right, title, claim or interest by way of self, exchange, mortgage, ten charge, possession or otherwise of any nature whatsoever or any portions thereof, and are having any objections of any manner whatsoever to the mortgage of the above-mentioned properties are hereby called upon to notify the undersigned within 3 days from the date of publication of this notice and afterwards no claim of any persons whatsoever in respect of the above properties will be entertained afterwards and the undersigned will issue title search report accordingly. Date: 31.08.2024

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AP ■ JAKARTA



Pope Francis urged Indonesia to live up to its promise of "harmony in diversity" and fight religious intolerance on Wednesday, as he set a rigorous pace for an 11-day, four-nation trip through tropical Southeast Asia and Oceania that will test his stamina and health. Despite the gruelling itinerary, an energetic Francis joked and laughed his way through a packed first full day in Indonesia, meeting with outgoing President Joko Widodo and other Indonesian officials at the presidential palace and then greeting Catholic priests, nuns and seminarians at Jakarta's main cathedral in the afternoon. Cannons boomed as Francis joined Widodo on the veranda of the palace along with President-elect Prabowo Subianto. A marching band, stiff-legged troops and children in traditional Indonesian dress welcomed the first pope to visit in 35 years. In his remarks to officials, Francis compared Indonesia's human diversity to the archipelago's 17,000 islands. He said each one contributes something specific to form "a magnificent mosaic, in which each tile is an irreplaceable element in creating a great and original and precious work". And yet, Francis warned that such diversity in a country with the world's largest Muslim population can also become a source of conflict — an apparent reference to episodes of intolerance that have flared in recent years in Indonesia as well as a broader concern about conflicts raging around the world.

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Sensex, Nifty tumble on global downturn

PTI ■ MUMBAI
Stock markets closed lower on Wednesday with Nifty taking a breather after a 14-day winning run and Sensex dropping by 202 points due to weak global trends on worries of potential slowdown in the US market.
The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 202.80 points or 0.25 per cent to settle at 82,352.64. During the day, it tumbled 721.75 points or 0.87 per cent to 81,833.69.
Snapping its 14-day rally, the NSE Nifty declined 81.15 points or 0.32 per cent to 25,198.70. Intra-day, it tanked 196.05 points or 0.77 per cent to 25,083.80.
Nifty has surged nearly 1,141 points or 4.59 per cent in 14 straight days.
Among the 30 Sensex firms, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, Axis Bank, Mahindra &



Mahindra, Infosys, Larsen & Toubro, Tata Steel, Tata Consultancy Services, Bajaj Finance and Adani Ports were the major laggards. Asian Paints, Hindustan Unilever, UltraTech Cement, Sun Pharma and Reliance Industries were among the

gainers.
In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai, and Hong Kong ended sharply lower. European markets were also trading in the red.
The US markets ended significantly lower on Tuesday.
‘The warning signals from weak US manufacturing data added concerns about a potential slowdown in the US economy, which dragged the domestic indices.
Due to a lack of major domestic triggers, the indices will take direction based on global cues,’ said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services.
Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 1,029.25 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data.
Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.14 per cent to USD 73.65 a barrel.

Rupee falls four paise against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI
The rupee fell 4 paise to close at 84.02 (provisional) on Wednesday amid a sharp decline in the domestic equity markets as investors stayed away from riskier assets.
However, a weak dollar against major currencies overseas and a drop in crude oil prices capped further losses in the local unit, forex traders said.
At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 83.96 and traded in the range of 83.95-84.01 during the day.
The unit moved in a tight range of 83.95-83.97 for most part of the session. However, it slipped at the fag-end of the trading hours to settle at 84.02 (provisional), 4 paise below its previous close of 83.98.
‘Weak domestic markets and risk aversion in the global

markets pressurised the rupee. However, a decline in crude oil prices and FII inflows cushioned the downside. India’s services PMI expanded to 60.9 in August vs forecast of 60.4 and a reading of 60.3 in July,’ Anuj Choudhary – Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said. At the domestic equity markets, Sensex dropped 202.80 points to settle at 82,352.64, while Nifty slipped 81.15 points to 25,198.70. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback’s strength against a basket of six currencies, was down 0.17 per cent to 101.65. Brent crude, the international oil benchmark, declined 0.46 per cent to 73.41 in futures trade.
Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net buyers in the capital markets on Tuesday, as they purchased shares worth Rs 1,029.25 crore, according to exchange data.



Interest equalisation scheme for exporters extended for another month



PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The government has extended the interest equalisation scheme on pre- and post-shipment rupee export credit for one more month till September 30 to promote the country’s outbound shipments.
The scheme, which provides exporters interest benefits, ended on August 31. In June, it was extended for two months.
In a trade notice, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) said, ‘Trade and industry is hereby informed that the Interest Equalization Scheme for Pre and Post Shipment Rupee Export Credit, which had

earlier been extended up to August 31 as a fund limited scheme, has been further extended for one month i.e., up to September 30, 2024.’
It said, however, this extension is applicable only for MSME manufacturing exporters.
On December 8, 2023, the Union Cabinet approved an additional allocation of Rs 2,500 crore for the continuation of the scheme up to June 30.
The scheme helps exporters from identified sectors and all MSME manufacturer exporters to avail of rupee export credit at competitive rates at a time when the global economy is facing headwinds. Exporters get subsidies under

Half of gen Z prefer solar energy: Survey



PTI ■ NEW DELHI
A recent survey conducted to gauge awareness about clean energy sources revealed about 50 per cent of Gen Z respondents prefer solar solutions, followed by Millennials at 46 per cent.
The report is based on a survey of 4,318 respondents among four age cohorts across 5 metros -- Bangalore, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai, and 8 non-metros -- Ahmedabad, Chandigarh, Gurugram, Guwahati, Jaipur, Kochi, Lucknow, Patna, conducted between February 2024 to March 2024.
Gen Z refers to those who are in the age group of 18-22 years, Millennials 23-38 years, Gen X 39-54 years and baby boomers 55-76.
Power Technologies MD and CEO Preeti Bajaj in a statement, said, ‘Owing to this shift in needs and demand trends, the Solar spectrum of New India gave us a clear picture to understand the changing consumer perceptions, limitations and opportunities that remain unaddressed



Retirement mutual funds AMC jumps 256 per cent in 5 yrs

PTI ■ KOLKATA
Rising awareness of financial planning has fueled a 256 per cent increase in retirement mutual fund AUM in the last five years, according to a report.
Factors such as rising healthcare costs, increasing nuclear families, and higher life expectancy are likely to fuel further growth in this sector, an ICRA Analytics report said.
‘Assets under Management (AUM) of these funds have

grown by over 256 per cent in the last five years, reaching Rs 29,903 crore in July 2024, compared to Rs 8395 crore in July 2019,’ it said. ICRA said the growing awareness has led to a surge in the number of folios, which has increased by 17.44 per cent in the last five years to 29.36 lakh in July 2024, up from 25 lakh in July 2019. The number of schemes has also increased from 21 in 2019 to 29 in 2024.
A retirement mutual fund is a specialized investment vehicle designed to provide a secure and comfortable post-retirement life.
These funds invest in both equity and debt, aiming to balance wealth appreciation and preservation offering a regular income stream during retirement and typically, these funds have a lock-in period of five years or until retirement.
The average compound annualised returns on these funds stood at 26.21 per cent, 12.97 per cent and 14.09 per cent for a one-year, three-year and five-year period, the analysis found.

Govt to set up special purpose vehicle to back aircraft manufacturing: Naidu

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The government will set up a special purpose vehicle to push ahead with plans to start manufacturing commercial aircraft in India, Civil Aviation Minister K Rammoan Naidu said on Wednesday as he highlighted the potential of the country’s fast-growing aviation sector.
The Bhartiya Vayuyan Vidhyak Bill 2024, which

was passed by the Lok Sabha in August, includes provisions to regulate the design and manufacturing of aircraft, supporting the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative for self-reliance.
‘The government is strongly pushing the idea of India manufacturing its own planes,’ Naidu said, adding that a special purpose vehicle will be set up with industry stakeholders and others.



According to him, efforts are being to ensure that aircraft manufacturing activities can start in the next five years, he said.
‘We want to be a big player for manufacturing planes and also export them,’ Naidu said. India is a key market for aircraft manufacturers - Boeing and Airbus.
State-owned Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) is already into manufacturing small civilian planes but on a smaller scale.
India is one of the world’s fastest growing civil aviation markets.
Speaking at a conference organised by industry body PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Naidu also said there is a lot of potential in the country for MRO (maintenance, overhaul and repair) activities.
Noting that the Indian aviation sector is at the ‘transformative crossroads,’ the minister also said the aim is to make the country a hub for aviation, air cargo, and MRO activities.
Meanwhile, the Bill seeks to remove redundancies and replace the Aircraft Act, 1934 that has been amended 21 times at a time when India is one of the fastest growing civil aviation markets in the world.

INBRIEF

GNDU NSS UNIT LEADS SUCCESSFUL PLANTATION DRIVE
AMRITSAR: The NSS unit of Guru Nanak Dev University conducted a plantation drive today, planting over 20 saplings across the campus. The event, held under the leadership of Vice-Chancellor Dr. Jaspal Singh Sandhu.

A DELEGATION FROM TEMASEK POLYTECHNIC, SINGAPORE, VISITED DWARKA CAMPUS OF GGSIPU
NEW DELHI: A delegation of 6 members from Temasek Polytechnic, Singapore, visited Dwarka campus of GGSIPU. They explored the possible collaboration in the area of Robotics, Informatics, IT, Bio Technology, Industrial Safety, Sustainability etc.

DOUBLE LINE SECTION BETWEEN SORBHOG AND BARPETA ROAD STATIONS GETS COMMISSIONED
MALIGAON: The Commissioner of Railway Safety has completed the statutory inspection of the newly laid double line section between Sorbhog & Barpeta Road stations on 03rd of September, 2024.

POWERGRID PUTS UP INDIA PAVILION AT CIGRE PARIS EXHIBITION 2024
PARIS: Power Grid Corporation of India Limited showcased its prowess and rapid strides in the power sector at the India Pavilion put up by POWERGRID at the prestigious CIGRE Paris Exhibition 2024.

LIC CELEBRATES MILESTONE OF 68TH ANNIVERSARY
NEW DELHI: LIC celebrated its 68th Anniversary on 1st September, 2024. This milestone is a testament to the dedication and hard work of the team, the loyalty of customers and has consistently demonstrated a commitment to excellence, innovation, and customer satisfaction. LIC reflects on the journey of growth, innovation, and unwavering commitment to excellence.



Flipkart expects to create 1 lakh new jobs ahead of festival season

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
E-commerce major Flipkart is expecting to create 1 lakh new jobs for the upcoming festival season sale, The Big Billion Days 2024, across India, the company said on Wednesday.
Ahead of The Big Billion Days (TBBDD) 2024, Flipkart has launched 11 new fulfilment centres (FCs) across nine cities, bringing their total number in the country to 83, the Walmart group firm said in a statement.
‘With its commitment to socio-economic development, Flipkart remains focused on enabling employment opportunities, creating over 1 lakh new jobs within its supply chain across the

country. This aims to strengthen Flipkart’s operational capabilities while empowering local communities and driving economic growth during this year’s festive season,’ the statement said.
Flipkart said the new job roles will be spread across various supply chain verticals, including inventory managers, warehouse associates, logistics coordinators, kirana partners and delivery drivers.
Most of the jobs created by e-commerce companies during the festival season sale are seasonal in nature.
Flipkart said it will organise comprehensive skilling and training programmes that

India targets 1 billion dollar liquor exports

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
With the global demand for Indian spirits growing at a healthy rate, the government is planning to promote both Indian alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages in the international markets and is eyeing USD one billion (about Rs 8,000 crore) exports in the next few years.
The commerce ministry’s arm APEDA (Agricultural & Processed Food Products Export Development Authority) said that India currently ranks 40th in the world for alcoholic beverage exports. As per estimates, the country has huge unrealised export potential.
The authority, as part of the ‘Make in India’ initiative, has been targeting to increase exports of Indian spirits to major foreign destinations.
‘It is potentially eyeing USD 1 billion in export revenue over the next few years,’ it said in a statement on Wednesday.
The country’s alcoholic beverages exports stood at over Rs 2,200 crore in 2023-24. The major destinations include UAE, Singapore, Netherlands, Tanzania, Angola, Kenya and Rwanda.
APEDA also said that Diageo India (United Spirits Ltd.) is set to launch ‘Godawan,’ in



the United Kingdom. It is a single-malt whiskey made in Rajasthan.
Commenting on the USD one billion target, Vinod Giri, Director General, the Brewers Association of India said that huge potential is there in the different countries for Indian products.
‘While the single-malt will play a greater role in making India’s reputation as a high-quality whiskey producer, the volumes will come from beverages which are more palatable taste-wise and price-wise such as premium Indian whiskeys and premium rum,’ he said. Price-wise Giri added that huge export potential is there in the US, Africa and Europe.
He suggested the government to urge states to include the element of export promotion in state excise policies.

World champion Sachin Khilari wins silver in men's shot put (F46) in Paralympics

PTI ■ PARIS

World champion Sachin Sarjerao Khilari clinched a silver in men's shot put F46 event with an Asian record distance of 16.32m as the country's track-and-field athletes continued their unprecedented medal-winning run in the Paralympic Games here on Wednesday. The 34-year-old Khilari achieved his best throw of the day in his second attempt to better his own Asian record of 16.30m which he set while winning gold in the World Paralympic Championships in Japan in May. However, the effort, which was also his personal best, was not enough for the top honour as Greg Stewart of Canada defended his Tokyo Paralympics gold with a throw of 16.38m. Luka Bakovic of Croatia took the bronze with 16.27m. Khilari's silver is the 11th medal from para-athletics in the ongoing Games and took India's overall tally to 21, including three gold.

a standing position. "I had wanted to win the gold medal, but it did not happen. It's my best distance but I am not satisfied. I feel I could have done better. It was not my day," Khilari said after winning the silver medal. "It was a tough competition and Greg Stewart is a great player. I made small mistakes in my technique. I will work harder and I hope to beat him next time." Late on Tuesday night, Indians won silver and bronze in both men's high jump T63 and javelin throw F46 after Deepthi Jeevanji's bronze in the women's 400m T20 category. Sharan Kumar and Mariyappan Thangavelu won silver and bronze respectively in the men's high jump T63 while Ajeet Singh and Sundar Singh Gurjar took the second and third spots in the javelin throw F46 final. On Wednesday, Khilari was leading at the end of the second round but Stewart surged ahead with his third throw of 16.34m before improving further in his fifth and penultimate attempt of 16.38m. Other Indians in the fray, Mohd Yasser (14.21m) and Rohit Kumar (14.10m) finished eighth and ninth respectively. American Joshua Cinnamo, who holds the world record of 16.80m, was fourth with 15.66m. A mechanical engineering degree holder, Khilari, who had



also won a gold in last year's Asian Para Games in China, has an impaired left hand. Hailing from a farming family at Karangani village in Maharashtra's Sangli district, Khilari met with an accident during his school days. The injury resulted in gangrene of the skin on his elbow and muscle atrophy. Even after several surgeries, his arm never recovered. He also lost his mother when he was young. Despite all these setbacks, he took up javelin while he was studying to become an engineer. A shoulder injury during competition forced him to switch to shot put. Khilari was introduced to para sports in 2015 and later met well-known coach Satyanarayana who supported him in improving his game. He also worked as a visiting faculty member at various institutions, assisting students in their UPSC and Maharashtra Public Service examination preparations. The previous best show by India's track and field contingent in a single Paralympics was in Tokyo when it won one gold, five silver and two bronze medals. With 11 medals, including a gold from star javelin thrower Sumit Antil, the para athletes have bagged more than half of the country's total medals. The number of gold is, however, set to be lower than what the officials had hoped to win this time.

India achieves best ever medal haul in Paralympics

PTI ■ PARIS

India achieved its best ever medal haul in the Paralympics as it went past last edition's number of podium finishes on the back of a superlative performance by the country's track and field athletes here on Tuesday. A late evening rush of medals swelled India's tally to 20 (3 gold, 7 silver, 10 bronze) to surpass its earlier best haul of 19 medals at the Tokyo Paralympic Games three years ago. On a red-letter day for Indian para sports, the track and field athletes showcased their might for the second consecutive day at the iconic Stade de France, bagging five medals — two silver and three bronze — as the country ended day six of the quadrennial showpiece at 17th place.



Earlier, world champion sprinter Deepthi Jeevanji ensured another bronze for India in the women's 400m (T20) event with the 20-year-old clocking 55.82sec to secure a podium finish in her debut Games appearance. She finished behind Yulia Shuliar (55.16sec) of Ukraine and world record holder Aysel Onder (55.23sec) of Turkey. Daughter of farm labourers from Kalledda Village in Telangana's Warangal district, Jeevanji was diagnosed with intellectual impairment after being spotted at a school level athletics meet by one of her teachers. Growing up, she and her parents were subjected to taunts by natives of her village due to her disability. However, the same village has been celebrating her ever since she won a gold at last year's

Asian Para Games before breaking the world record at the Para World Championships in May this year to fetch another gold. The youngster was also assisted by national badminton coach Pullela Gopichand after she began training with her formative coach Nagpuri Ramesh. The T20 category is meant for athletes who have intellectual impairment. LEKHARA'S CAMPAIGN ENDS: However, ace Indian shooter Avani Lekhara missed out on a second medal at the Games as she finished fifth in the final of the women's 50m rifle 3 positions SH1 competition in Chateauroux. The 22-year-old, paralysed waist-down at 11 years of age owing to a car accident, shot a total of 420.6 across the three stages of kneeling, prone and

standing in a world-class eight-woman field. However, she has lots to celebrate after becoming first Indian woman to win consecutive gold medals at Paralympics following a top finish in the 10m air rifle competition last week. Germany's Natascha Hiltrop won the gold with a total of 456.5, Slovakian Veronika Vadovicova claimed silver with 456.1, and China's Zhang shot 446.0 to bag the bronze. The SH1 class is designated for athletes with lower-limb impairment for competition in rifle shooting events. Here shooters are able to hold their gun without difficulty and shoot from a standing or sitting position (in a wheelchair or chair). JADHAV ENDS 5TH IN SHOT PUT: Bhagyashri Jadhav finished fifth in the

women's shot put (F34). Jadhav, making her second appearance at the Paralympics, produced a throw of 7.28m but it was not enough for a podium finish. China's Lijuan Zou won the gold with a season's best of 9.14m while Poland's Lucyna Kornobys secured the silver with an effort of 8.33m. The 39-year-old Indian, who hails from Nanded district in Maharashtra, is an inspiring story of resilience. She slipped into depression after losing the use of her legs due to an accident in 2006. But she fought back to reclaim her life as a para-athlete with help from friends and family. ARCHER POOJA'S CAMPAIGN ENDS IN QUARTERS: World Para Championship silver medalist Pooja Jatyan beat Yagmur Sengul of Turkey in straight sets to storm into the quarterfinals of recurve women's open archery competition. However, the 27-year-old could not sustain the momentum and lost to Tokyo Paralympics bronze-medallist Wu Chunyan of China in the last-eight stage. It was a particularly painful loss to Chunyan given that Pooja led 4-0 at one stage. A winner of four Paralympics medals, including a team gold in 2016 Rio Games, the 34-year-old Chinese archer was nowhere in the picture after a disastrous opening set in which she shot twice in the 7-point red ring to aggregate 23 points. But perhaps pressure got the better of Pooja, who fumbled her chance by allowing Chunyan to make a comeback in the third set, following which the match turned on its head.



Roger Federer is back at the US Open as a fan after speaking about Sinner's "tricky" doping case

AP ■ NEW YORK

Roger Federer thinks Jannik Sinner's doping case raises questions about whether the current No. 1-ranked tennis player should have been allowed to continue competing until he was absolved of intentionally using an anabolic steroid he tested positive for twice in March. "It's not something we want to see in our sport, these types of news, regardless if he did something or not. Or any player did. It's just noise that we don't want. I understand the frustration of: Has he been treated the same as others? And I think this is where it comes down to. We all trust pretty much at the end, he didn't do anything," Federer said Tuesday in an appearance on the "Today" show to promote a book of photos of him. "But the inconsistency, potentially, that he didn't have to sit out while they were not 100 percent sure what was going on - I think that's the question here that needs to be answered." Hours later Tuesday night, Federer received a warm ovation from spectators in

Arthur Ashe Stadium when he was introduced to the crowd during the second set of the U.S. Open quarterfinal between Aryna Sabalenka and Zheng Qinwen. Federer smiled and waved as he was shown on the videoboard in the arena. It was the 20-time Grand Slam champion's first visit to the venue since he stopped competing. Federer announced his retirement in 2022; he played his last official match at Wimbledon the year before. He is the last man to win consecutive titles at the U.S. Open, collecting five in a row from 2004 to 2008. Several top players have been asked about Sinner, who is scheduled to face 2021 U.S. Open champion Daniil Medvedev in the Grand Slam tournament's quarterfinals on Wednesday. Rafael Nadal told a Spanish television show on Monday he doesn't think Sinner received preferential treatment. The International Tennis Integrity Agency said on Aug. 20 that it was determined that the banned performance-enhancer inadvertently

entered Sinner's system through a massage from his physiotherapist, and that is why the player was not suspended. Asked about the matter in New York before the U.S. Open began, Novak Djokovic said he gets why some tennis players question whether there's a double standard in the sport. "It's a tricky situation and it's the nightmare of every athlete and team, to have these allegations and these problems," Federer said, adding: "We need to trust the process as well of everyone involved." Federer said he spoke recently with Nadal, his longtime on-court rival and off-court friend, who is 38 and has played sparingly the last two seasons because of injuries, including a hip operation last year. He is sitting out the U.S. Open. There are questions about whether Nadal, who has won 22 Grand Slam trophies, will return to the tour. "He can do whatever he wants," Federer said. "He's been one of the most iconic tennis players we've ever had in our sport."

Taylor Fritz gets past Alexander Zverev to reach his first Grand Slam semifinal

AP ■ NEW YORK

As he watched one last errant forehand from his higher-ranked, more-accomplished U.S. Open opponent land wide, Taylor Fritz dropped his neon-colored racket, clenched both fists and screamed, "Come on!" Fritz gathered himself and his equipment, walked to the net for a hug with No. 4 Alexander Zverev, who twice was a Grand Slam runner-up, then stepped to the center of Arthur Ashe Stadium, spread his arms wide and yelled again, "Come on!" After years of climbing the rankings, of becoming the top American man in tennis, of coming close to making a breakthrough at one of his sport's four most important events, Fritz finally came through at home, beating Zverev 7-6 (2), 3-6, 6-4, 7-6 (3) on Tuesday at Flushing Meadows to reach a major semifinal for the first time. The 12th-seeded Fritz, a 26-

year-old from California, entered the day with an 0-4 record in Slam quarterfinals. "I've had a lot of looks at the quarterfinals over the last couple of years, and today just felt different," Fritz told the crowd that supported him throughout the win, including with frowned-upon applause after some of Zverev's first-serve faults. "I really felt like it was my time to take it a step further." Now he is headed to the final four at the U.S. Open, where he will meet either No. 9 Grigor Dimitrov of Bulgaria or No. 20 Frances Tiafoe of the United States. Those two were scheduled to play each other on Tuesday night. "It's cool I'm in the semis. But I've got much to do. I'm not sure I have the mindset of the job's not done," Fritz said. "A question I got asked pretty much every time I lost in my quarterfinals was, 'What's it going to take to go further?' And the answer I gave was always: Just keep putting myself in these situations, and I'll become

more comfortable in these situations and get better. That's definitely what happened now. The quarterfinals didn't feel like, I don't know, this big thing to me like it has been, I guess, in the past." A Fritz-Tiafoe semifinal - "That could be crazy," Fritz said - would be the first between a pair of American men at any major since 2005, when Andre Agassi defeated Robby Ginepri in New York. No American man has won a Grand Slam singles trophy since Andy Roddick triumphed at the U.S. Open in 2003. The other men's quarterfinals will be played Wednesday: No. 1 Jannik Sinner vs. No. 5 Daniil Medvedev, and No. 10 Alex de Minaur vs. No. 25 Jack Draper. In the women's bracket, No. 13 Emma Navarro of the U.S. Reached her first Grand Slam semifinal by taking the last six games in a 6-2, 7-5 victory over No. 26 Paula Badosa and next faces No. 2 Aryna



Sabalenka or No. 7 Zheng Qinwen. Fritz used his usual blend of big serving, winning 20 of 21 points when his first serves landed in during the fourth set, and big forehands, but he also was effective at the net - winning 16 of 24 points when he pushed forward - and returned well enough to

accumulate 10 break points. "There's still work to be done, but his transition game is getting better. The fact he's seeing it pay off, especially here at the U.S. Open in some big points ... He's starting to buy into it and believe it," said Fritz's coach, Michael Russell, specifically mentioning a volley that won a 24-stroke

exchange to make it 5-2 in the concluding tiebreaker. "It's good to see. That's a big step that we've been really emphasizing for him to win (at) these bigger stages. You can't just serve and be on the baseline." Even though Fritz only converted two of those break chances, it meant he

constantly put pressure on Zverev, a German who made it to the finals of the U.S. Open in 2020 and the French Open this year. "My backhand, I don't remember, since being on tour, hitting my backhand this badly. I just don't. I mean, I was missing shots which were in the middle of the court with no pace, and (they landed in the) bottom of the net. Terrible. Just absolutely terrible by me," Zverev said, shutting his eyes and shaking his head. "My forehand was OK, actually. My serve was OK. But my most reliable shot, the shot that I'm most known for, the shot that you normally wake me up at 3 a.m. And I would not miss, was absolutely not there today," added Zverev, who also lost to Fritz at Wimbledon in July, "and I have no words for it, to be honest." He described himself as "angry." Fritz's latest quarterfinal loss came at the All England Club

against Lorenzo Musetti. The other three? Two came against 24-time Slam champion Novak Djokovic; the other against 22-time Slam champion Rafael Nadal. One was at last year's U.S. Open against Djokovic, who went on to win the title. Djokovic was eliminated this time in the third round last week; Nadal sat out the tournament. Russell said those past stumbles were not a topic of conversation before this quarterfinal. "We would never talk about, Hey, you haven't been to the semifinals of a Slam before," because you're not really breeding the positivity factor to it," Fritz's coach said. "It's more about, 'You've been in this position before and come out here and use your weapons that you have, and use the new weapons that we're trying to create, and just go out there and play your game, use the crowd, love the excitement and the actual competition and battle, which he does, and just go feed off it."

PANT IN FOCUS ON RED BALL RETURN; SELECTORS EYE BACKUP OPTIONS

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Rishabh Pant's red-ball return will be closely monitored but the national selectors will also trace suitable backup options to frontline stars when Duleep Trophy, which preludes an important Test season, begins across Bengaluru and Anantapur on Thursday. Pant, who returned to white-ball formats after that horrific car crash, is yet to play in a longer-duration match. His last red-ball outing was against Bangladesh in December 2022. Now, he will turn out for Abhimanyu Easwaran-led Team B against Shubman Gill-captained Team A at the Chinnaswamy Stadium. Satisfying his outings in the shorter versions were, but this four-day tournament offers him a unique challenge - batting and "keeping for an undefined number of overs. Pant is the designated stumper in Team B, and it is evident that the Ajit Agarkar-led selection panel is intending to take a deep look into his role as the wicketkeeper-batter in a season that will culminate with the World Test Championship Final at the Lord's next June. But that is just one piece of the puzzle as other worthy

contenders are there for the wicketkeeper-batter's slot. The front-runner is Dhruv Jurel (Team A), who was impressive in his debut series against England earlier this year. Then there's Ishan Kishan, who will play for Team D which is marshalled by Shreyas Iyer at Anantapur. Kishan, though a long shot, will be eager to use Duleep Trophy as a platform to stake his claim for an India return after an unsavoury train of incidents saw him losing the BCCI central contract in the current cycle. The return of veterans Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma for the Bangladesh series will gobble up two batting slots along with Gill at No. 3. Hence, there will be a jostle between KL Rahul, Shreyas Iyer, Sarfaraz Khan, who impressed all with an excellent Test debut against England, for settling into the available middle-order space. It's imperative for Rahul, who is in Team A as a pure batter, and Shreyas to come good in Duleep Trophy as they missed a large chunk of the home matches against England - the former with an injury and the latter was dropped after the second Test at Visakhapatnam.



BOWLING BACK-UP: India have been well-served by the troika of Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj and Mohammed Shami in Tests for a while now, but it's unwise to enter a long Test season without sufficient alternates. More so because Siraj will miss the first round of Duleep

Trophy with an illness and Shami, whose last competitive outing was the 2023 50-over World Cup final, is still recuperating after a surgery. The selectors will keep a close eye on Bengal duo of Mukesh Kumar and Akash Deep, both of whom had bright initiations into traditional format, along

with Arshdeep Singh, Avesh Khan, Khaleel Ahmed, Vidwath Kaverappa, Vysakh Vijayakumar and Harshit Rana. While the pace department needs some urgent solutions, the spin has a slightly different landscape. Ravichandran Ashwin,

Ravindra Jadeja, who was released from Team B, Kuldeep Yadav and Axar Patel form a formidable Indian spin unit. While there is no pressing demand for the support cast, the selectors would like to be ready with instant supply in case of an eventuality.

In that context, spinners such as Washington Sundar, also a capable batter, R Sai Kishore, top wicket-taker in the previous Ranji season with 53 scalps, Manav Suthar and Saurabh Kumar will be hoping to be in the range of the five wisemen's radar. **DARK HORSES:** There is a litany of fringe players who would want to give a further fillip to their career after showcasing talent at various levels. Karnataka's Devdutt Padikkal had a roaring Ranji season in 2023-24, which earned him a Test debut against England at Dharamsala. Baba Indrajith of Tamil Nadu is a consistent domestic performer and he once again underlined his prowess making 767 runs in the last Ranji season, and Musheer Khan, younger brother of Sarfaraz, smoothly graduated to First-Class cricket for Mumbai after blazing the Under-19 circuit. B Sai Sudharsan of Tamil Nadu, who made white ball debut for India, too has given an early indication of his readiness for red-ball cricket with a hundred for Surrey in English county cricket. He will play for Team C under Rituraj Gaikwad.

SQUADS:

India A: Shubman Gill (C), Mayank Agarwal, Riyan Parag, Dhruv Jurel (WK), KL Rahul, Tilak Varma, Shivam Dube, Tanush Kotian, Kuldeep Yadav, Akash Deep, Prasad Krishna, Khaleel Ahmed, Avesh Khan, Vidwath Kaverappa, Kumar Kushagra, Shaswat Rawat. **India B:** Abhimanyu Easwaran (C), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Sarfaraz Khan, Rishabh Pant (WK), Musheer Khan, Nitish Kumar Reddy (subject to fitness), Washington Sundar, Navdeep Saini, Yash Dayal, Mukesh Kumar, Rahul Chahar, R Sai Kishore, Mohit Awasthi, N Jagadeesan (WK). **India C:** Rituraj Gaikwad (C), Sai Sudharsan, Rajat Patidar, Abishek Porel (WK), Suryakumar Yadav, B Indrajith, Hrithik Shokeen, Manav Suthar, Gaurav Yadav, Vyshak Vijaykumar, Anshul Khamboj, Himanshu Chauhan, Mayank Markande, Aryan Juyal (WK), Sandeep Warrier. **India D:** Shreyas Iyer (C), Atharva Taide, Yash Dube, Devdutt Padikkal, Ishan Kishan (WK), Ricky Bhui, Saransh Jain, Axar Patel, Arshdeep Singh, Aditya Thakare, Harshit Rana, Tushar Deshpande, Akash Sengupta, KS Bharat (WK), Saurabh Kumar.

I've worked on my defence against spinners: Gill eyes improvement in Test performance



PTI ■ BENGALURU

Shubman Gill understands that his Test career has not touched the expected peaks yet, but the right-hander is banking on an improved defence against spinners to make a mark in the upcoming season that will feature 10 traditional format matches. Gill made close to 500 runs in the home series against England this year, in perhaps, his best sustained outing in Test cricket so far, and now he wants to build on that from the two-match series against Bangladesh, starting from September 19, where he will be challenged by a set of experienced visiting spinners. "I worked on my defence a little bit more against spinners. You should be able to defend a lot more when you are playing on a turning track against spinners, then you can play the scoring shots," Gill, who will lead Team A in the Duleep Trophy, said here on Wednesday. "With more T20s being played...I won't say on flat tracks but on batting-friendly tracks, I think it takes away a little bit of your defensive game. So, that was my focus in the England series," he added.

Unlike in white ball formats where Gill is a storm force, the 24-year-old is yet to blaze the Test arena, and he hoped for a turnaround sooner than later. "In Test cricket, my performance has not matched my expectations so far. But we are going to play 10 Test matches this season, and when I look back after those 10 Tests, hopefully, my expectations will be matched," he said. Gill also emphasised on his growing maturity as a person and cricketer, which he directly linked to the captaincy stints of India and in the IPL with the Gujarat Titans. "Every match or tournament that you play, you look to learn more about yourself irrespective of whether you are captain or not the captain. More so because of the captain you will get to know about other players too. It's important for the captain to have a connect with the players. "You should know their strength and weaknesses. Yeah, there are some changes in me especially when you are captain or vice-captain and having those conversations," he elaborated. But does being a part of the

leadership group add an extra layer of pressure on him? "Not really extra pressure (being part of the leadership group). My role as a batsman does not really change, even if I am the captain or vice-captain. It's all about scoring runs for the team," he said. In that context, Gill termed the Duleep Trophy, beginning here and at Anantapur from Thursday, as a fine opportunity to tune himself to the demands of red ball cricket. "This (Duleep Trophy) is a big tournament as every match is important for us. We are playing against some players whom we generally play with in the Indian team. So, we will get to see a good competition," he noted. Gill, who is set to open against Team B here, also said there have been some early talks between players and management about workload allocation considering the long duration of the season. "There is definitely talk among the selectors and players about the workload. But I think everyone has played a lot of cricket to be able to understand what they need to do when they are playing the match, more so for the bowlers I would say. "I am sure the bowlers had a conversation with the selectors about how they are going to manage their workload," he said. Meanwhile, Gill confirmed that India pacer Prasidh Krishna will not be available for the first round of the Duleep Trophy. "Prasidh Krishna is not ready for this match," he said. The Karnataka pacer has been recuperating from surgery that he had in February this year and did not play in the recently concluded KSCA Maharaja Trophy T20 despite being roped in by eventual champions Mysuru Warriors.

Pakistan drop to 8th in Test rankings following loss to Bangladesh

PTI ■ DUBAI

Pakistan's first-ever series loss to Bangladesh has resulted in Shan Masood's team slipping down to the eighth position in the ICC Test rankings besides hitting a historic low of lowest rating points since 1965. Pakistan were thrashed by 10 wickets in the first Test while the hosts lost the second by six wickets with Rawalpindi hosting both the matches. "Pakistan dropped two places in the ICC Men's Test Team Rankings to go to eighth position after suffering a shock series loss at home to Bangladesh," the ICC said on its website. "The hosts were sixth in the rankings table before the series, but back-to-back losses



have seen them drop below West Indies to eighth with 76 rating points. "This is the lowest rating points Pakistan have had in the Test rankings table since 1965, barring a brief period where they did not have a place in the rankings due to an

insufficient number of matches." Bangladesh's chase in the second Test of 185 was also the third highest successful chase in Pakistan for any visiting side, but there was a little in terms of promotion for the 'Tigers'.

Bangladesh remained in ninth position and behind Pakistan despite gaining 13 rating points. However, the 2-0 series win has bolstered Bangladesh in the points table for the World Test Championship cycle 2023-25 as they are now placed fourth behind table-toppers India, Australia at second and New Zealand at third. Bangladesh, who will now focus their attention on a two-Test series against India starting in Chennai on September 19, have 45.83 percentage points and 33 points with three wins and as many defeats in six Tests. In WTC, teams get 12 points for a Test win, four for a draw and six for a tie while being ranked according to percentage of points won.



Rahul Dravid set to be appointed Rajasthan Royals head coach for IPL 2025

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Rahul Dravid, who masterminded India's T20 World Cup 2024 triumph, is set to take over Rajasthan Royals' head coach role in the IPL 2025. Dravid, who is currently on a short career-break since India's victory at Barbados in June, will soon start working with the franchise on important issues such as player retention ahead of the auction later this year. "The talks have reached the final stages and he will soon step into the head coach job," a source close to the development told PTI. Kumar Sangakkara, who has been Royals' Director of Cricket since 2021, will continue in his role and is likely to be more hands-on with Barbados Royals (CPL) and Paarl Royals (SA20). Dravid has a long-standing association with Royals as their captain for two seasons in 2012 and 2013 before serving as mentor for two more years. Dravid then moved to Delhi Capitals in a similar role in 2016 and continued with the team till he assumed the role of the head of National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru. In 2021, he moved on from NCA to take up India's head coach role from Ravi Shastri. Now at Royals, Dravid will reunite with Sanju Samson, who is all set to be retained as RR captain for another season. Samson blossomed first under the 52-year-old.

Sharath, Manika headline India's TT squad for Asian Championships

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Veteran Sharath Kamal and star female player Manika Batra were on Wednesday named in the India squad for the 27th Asian Table Tennis Championships, scheduled to be held in Astana, from October 7 to 13. Sharath, the 42-year-old who recently featured in his fifth and last Olympics, is the captain of the men's team comprising Manav Thakkar, Harmeet Desai, G Sathiyar and Manush Shah. Manika will lead the women's team which also has Sreeja Akula, Ayhika Mukherjee, Diya Chital and Sutirtha Mukherjee.



"The selection process was rigorous, with the TTFI giving precedence to the world ranking, international experience, and

performance at the national level as key criteria for the final squad," said the TTFI in a statement. The Indian team has been under the guidance of foreign expert Massimo Constantini, who has been working to fine-tune the players' skills and strategies since his return to India in June. "I am hopeful they will put their best foot forward in the Astana championships," Constantini said. The squad, especially the women, had done well in the Paris Olympics, reaching the quarterfinals. The men's team had lost to the mighty China in the round of 16. It was the first time that India qualified for team events

at the Olympics. As a crucial qualification event for the World Table Tennis Championships and the Asian Games, the Asian Championships hold significant importance for the Indian team. **SQUAD**
Men's Team: A. Sharath Kamal (captain), Manav Thakkar, Harmeet Desai, G. Sathiyar, Manush Shah; Reserve Players: SFR Snehit and Jeet Chandra.
Women's Team: Sreeja Akula, Manika Batra (captain), Ayhika Mukherjee, Diya Chital, Sutirtha Mukherjee; Reserve Players: Yashaswini Ghorpade and Poymantee Baisya.

Karunakaran, Subramanian reach Taipei Open quarterfinals

PTI ■ TAIPEI

India's Sathish Kumar Karunakaran and Sankar Subramanian reached the men's singles quarterfinals of the Taipei Open badminton tournament but women's singles players had to deal with disappointment here on Wednesday. In men's singles, Karunakaran was made to work hard for a win but he eventually prevailed over Kantaphon Wangcharoen from Thailand 24-22, 23-21 to make the quarterfinals. Subramanian also had to toil but the Indian shuttler got the better of his Finnish opponent Joakim Oldorff, winning his round of 16 match 21-12, 19-21, 21-11. In another round of 16 men's singles



contest, Kiran George was in the lead when he won the first set against Indonesia's Yohanes Saut Marcellyno but the latter fought back to win the contest 15-21, 21-8, 21-16 in his round of 16 contest. Meanwhile, Indian players had to deal with disappointment in women's singles as three of them lost in the quarterfinals to crash out of the tournament. Aakarshi Kashyap was defeated in

straight sets 19-21, 18-21 by Thailand's Pornpicha Choeikeewong while the world No 3 Tai Zhi Ying from Chinese Taipei brushed aside the challenge from Taniya Hemant 21-11, 21-10 in a mere 27 minutes. Anupama Upadhyaya began well when she won the first set against her Lauren Lam, but the American shuttler bounced back to win the next two and the contest 17-21, 21-19, 21-11. Later on Wednesday, Indian women's doubles' pair of Rituparna Panda and Swetaparna Panda will be in action against Hong Kong's Lok Lok Lui and Hiu Yan Tsang while Rakshitha Ramaraj will take on Japan's Asuka Takahashi in women's singles quarterfinals.