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HARYANA ELECTIONS: BJP FACES CONGRESS' RESURGENCE

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RUPEE SETTLES FLAT AGAINST US DOLLAR

NEW DELHI, THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 12, 2024; PAGES 12-14

Established 1864



the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

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

Late City Vol. 34 Issue 254
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable



RAJ KUMAR'S
HAT-TRICK HELPS INDIA
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Stern message by Centre to Rahul for anti-national remarks in US

LEADERS ACROSS PARTIES CRITICISE

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Yet another foreign trip by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has stoked another round of controversy in the political circles of India and the Centre and BJP Leaders on Wednesday also commented that Rahul Gandhi's quota remark in a foreign land has exposed the Congress "anti-reservation face" and making "anti-national statements" has become a habit for the former Congress chief. Sending a stern message to Rahul Gandhi, Home Minister Amit Shah said that as long as the BJP is there, no one can abolish reservation or mess with the nation's security. The senior BJP Leader's comments came after Rahul Gandhi told students of Georgetown University in the United States that the Congress would think of scrapping reservations when "India is a fair place", which he said is not the case right now. "Standing with forces that conspire to divide the country and making anti-national statements have become a habit for Rahul



Rahul Gandhi interacts with the media at the National Press Club, in Washington DC, USA and Amit Shah condemns his anti-national statements. Photos: PTI

Gandhi and the Congress party," Shah said who was also joined by his other Cabinet colleagues including Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. Hitting back at the BJP for accusing Rahul Gandhi of making "anti-national statements", the Congress said the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha has only talked about upholding the Constitution and asked why the ruling party has a "problem" whenever there is such talk. The Home Minister said whether it was supporting the National Conference's "anti-national and anti-reservation agenda" in Jammu and Kashmir or making "anti-India statements" on foreign platforms, Rahul Gandhi has "always threatened" the nation's security and hurt sentiments. **Continued on Page 2**

Pakistan spreads terror to discourage voters in J and K polls

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

In the run-up to the first phase of polling across 24 Assembly segments on September 18, Pakistan has stepped up efforts to spread the reign of terror to discourage enthusiastic voters from participating in the maiden assembly polls taking place after the Abrogation of Article 370 in the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir. On Wednesday, two major provocative incidents were reported in the Jammu region which indicated terrorist handlers and their sympathisers in Pakistan are desperately trying to disturb the peaceful conduct of the upcoming Assembly polls. In one incident, two heavily armed Pakistani terrorists, hiding in the upper reaches of Basantgarh bordering Kathua and Udhampur districts, were neutralised by the joint team of security forces late Wednesday evening. In a separate incident, a BSF jawan was injured during unprovoked firing by the Pakistani rangers on the border outpost of BSF in the Akhnoor sector. In response, BSF troops 'effectively' retaliated to give a befitting reply to the Pakistani rangers. However, there was no official confirmation whether the Pakistani rangers suffered any fatal injuries or not. Confirming the elimination of two foreign terrorists in the



File photo: PTI

ongoing operation, Rising Star Corps of the Indian Army posted on X, "Two Terrorists neutralised in the ongoing Operation at Khandara Kathua by troops of Rising Star Corps-operations in progress". The initial contact was established during ongoing search operations launched by the security forces to pin down the group of terrorists roaming in the area. After the brief exchange of fire between terrorists and security forces additional troops were rushed to the encounter site to plug the possible exit routes along the Khandara top. A group of more than three terrorists was spotted in the area after which search operations were launched to neutralise them inside the deep forests. On September 9, two heavily armed terrorists believed to be Pakistani were neutralised by the troops of the Indian Army while they were attempting to infiltrate inside the Indian territory in the Laam sector of Nowshera in the frontier district of Rajouri on Monday. For the past several days, different parts of Jammu and Kashmir have been witnessing an 'unprecedented' response to the high-voltage campaigning by the candidates representing various political parties. The atmosphere in Kashmir valley is electrifying as many candidates are canvassing as late as midnight in their native villages and mohallas in the urban centers amid tight security arrangements. In Jammu, unconfirmed reports indicated the BSF soldier was targeted by a sniper from across the International border. Senior BSF officials of the Jammu frontier rushed to the forward area to take stock of the ground situation. **Continued on Page 2**



Members of Hindu organisations stage protest over illegal construction in a mosque, at Sanjauli, Shimla. PTI

Shimla: Police, protesters clash over encroachment by mosque

PNS ■ SHIMLA

Protesters demanding the demolition of an illegal portion of a mosque in Shimla's Sanjauli area clashed with security personnel on Wednesday, breaking barricades and pelting stones as police used water cannons and baton-charged to disperse them. Raising slogans of "Jai Shri Ram" and "Hindu Ekta Zindabad", hundreds of protesters gathered at the Sabzi Mandi Dhalli and marched towards Sanjauli, defying prohibitory orders and ignoring warnings by the administration to lodge their protest and broke barricades erected near the Dhalli tunnel. **Continued on Page 2**

Delhi Police asks metro staff to be vigilant

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Two days after the suspected bid to derail the Kalindi Express train in Kanpur, the Delhi Police has asked the metro staff to be on high alert along with increasing deployment of security at Delhi Metro stations. A major train accident was averted on Monday by an alert loco pilot as the Bhiwani-Prayagraj Kalindi Express was brought to a screeching halt after hitting an LPG cylinder placed on tracks. A bottle of petrol and matchboxes were also found at the site hinting at sabotage. The Kanpur Police has lodged an FIR in the matter.



According to officials on Wednesday, the Delhi Police have also asked the staff of Delhi Metro to be vigilant and alert. It has also asked to increase checking of passengers and subsequently more police personnel will be deployed at the metro stations in the city to deter any similar sabotage attempt in the city's lifeline Delhi Metro. "The entire staff of the Railways unit has been put on high alert following the Kanpur incident," a senior police officer of the Delhi Police said, adding that both foot and motorcycle patrolling have been enhanced. He added that anti-sabotage checks are being conducted regularly along the railway tracks with the help of dog squads and bomb disposal teams. "We have also asked the railway staff of many adjoining areas to keep strict vigil in and around the railway stations and railway tracks," another senior police officer said. **Continued on Page 2**

Right time to invest in Indian Semiconductor industry: PM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday called for making India a global semiconductor hub and pointed out that this is the right time to invest in India's semiconductor industry. Modi said India is well-positioned for success in this field and that the world can count on India's growing semiconductor ecosystem. Modi said that India is now the eighth country globally to host an event focused on the semiconductor industry. Speaking at the SEMICON 2024 conference at Greater Noida, Modi said the Covid pandemic showed the importance of the supply chain and underscored the need to act to ward off any disruption. "Whether it was Covid or war, there hasn't been a single industry to remain unaffected by supply chain disruptions," he said. Stating that India is a huge consumer of such chips, he emphasised that the world's finest digital public infrastructure was built upon it. "This small chip is doing big things to ensure last-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi at an exhibition during the inauguration of SEMICON India 2024, in Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh, Wednesday. PTI

mile delivery in India," Modi said. During his speech, he mentioned various initiatives and achievements that position India as a key player in the global semiconductor industry. Interestingly, Semiconductor stocks rallied after PM Modi asserted India's commitment to building and growing its semiconductor infrastructure at the Semicon India 2024 event. The Prime Minister also highlighted the importance of partnerships between industries and the Government. The Prime Minister said resilience of supply chains is critical for the economy as he made a pitch to boost investments in domestic manufacturing of semiconductors — the foundation of everything from smartphones to EV and AI. Stressing the importance of a

resilient supply chain, the Prime Minister expressed pride in India's central role in building resilience across sectors, positioning the country as a key player in the global mission to safeguard supply chains. Prime Minister showcased India's reformist regime, stable policies and a market that has tasted technology to make a strong pitch for investments in semiconductor manufacturing. "In 21st-century India, the chips are never down." "Whether it is mobile manufacturing, electronics, or semiconductors, our focus is clear - we want to build a world that doesn't stop or pause in times of crisis but keeps moving forward," he said. The Prime Minister also spoke about the comprehensive approach under the Semicon India Program, which provides financial assistance for front-end fabs, display fabs, and semiconductor packaging, ensuring that all critical components of the supply chain are covered. **Continued on Page 2**

Harris puts strong challenge to Trump on key issues

AP ■ PHILADELPHIA

Kamala Harris pressed a forceful case against Donald Trump on Tuesday in their first and perhaps only debate before the presidential election, repeatedly goading him in an event that showcased their starkly different visions for the country on abortion, immigration and American democracy. The Democratic vice president provoked Trump with reminders about the 2020 election loss that he still denies, delivered derisive asides at his false claims and sought to underscore the Republican former president's role in the Supreme Court's overturning of a national right to abortion two years ago. Trump tore into Harris as too liberal and a continuation of Biden's unpopular administration, as he launched into the sort of free-wheeling personal attacks and digressions from which his advisers and supporters have tried to steer him away. In one moment, Harris turned to Trump and said that as vice president, she had



Republican presidential nominee former President Donald Trump shakes hands with Democratic presidential nominee Vice President Kamala Harris during an ABC News presidential debate at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia. AP/PTI

spoken to foreign leaders who "are laughing at Donald Trump," and said she had spoken to military leaders, "and they say you're a disgrace." As Trump, 78, again questioned her racial identity, the 59-year-old Harris, the first woman, Black person and person of South Asian descent to serve as vice president, pointedly gestured to Trump and responded, "I think the American people want better than that, want better than this." Trump in turn tried to link Harris to the still-unpopular Biden, questioning why she hadn't acted on her proposed ideas while serving as vice president. Trump also focused his attacks on Harris over her assignment by Biden to deal with the root causes of illegal migration. "Why hasn't she done it? She's been there for three and a half years," he said. **Continued on Page 2**

Shekhawat unveils restored rail coach at GSDS, Rajghat

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After his return from South Africa in July 1914, Mahatma Gandhi travelled the length and breadth of India, with mode being the third class on Indian Railways. The aim was to have a one-to-one connection with the masses, he shared his experiences in the book "Third Class in Indian Railways" penned in Ranchi on September 25, 1917. In a bid to bring these historical moments closer to common public, on Wednesday, Union Minister for Culture Gajendra Singh Shekhawat unveiled a meticulously restored railway coach at Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti (GSDS) at Rajghat in the national Capital which is visited by over 10,000 people daily, including domestic and foreign visitors. The historical coach is painted brown and marked with a 'III' to denote third-class compartments, featuring a life-size sculpture of the

'Father of the Nation', depicting the famous act of stepping down from the coach, underscoring its national legacy. Donated by the Union Ministry of Railways, the coach is also enriched with sculptures showcasing Gandhi's travels and interactions with fellow passengers, providing visitors with an immersive experience that brings to life Mahatma Gandhi's rail journeys. During the ceremony, Shekhawat emphasised that Gandhi's principles, especially his commitment to ahimsa (non-violence), remain profoundly relevant in today's geopolitical climate. "Gandhi's thoughts are relevant even today. Today, war has broken out in Russia-Ukraine and Gaza-Israel. In such a time, peace can be established in the world only by using Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence." He recalled that Gandhi always used to travel in third class and connect directly with the common



people. The Union Cabinet Minister also noted that the current Government's initiatives, such as the Atmanirbhar Bharat vision in defence and technology, align with Gandhi's ideals. Shekhawat also addressed the urgent issue of climate change, urging adherence to Gandhi's teachings to protect the environment. "Gandhi transformed the freedom movement into a mass movement. His memories will become a source of inspiration and energy for future India," said the Minister, adding that the Prime Minister Narendra Modi took inspiration from Gandhi and launched a cleanliness campaign across the country. **Continued on Page 2**

We made the country free from open defecation by building a record 11 crore toilets. This was Gandhi's dream, which our Prime Minister realised, said the Minister. On the occasion, GSDS Vice Chairman and former Union Minister Vijay Goel, reflected on Gandhi's profound connection with train journeys, recalling an incident in 1893 when Gandhi was forcibly removed from a train in South Africa due to racial discrimination. This pivotal experience acted as a catalyst for Gandhi to fight against apartheid and other injustices. Dr Jwala Prasad, GSDS director acknowledged the committee's efforts under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to realise Gandhi's dreams, particularly through the Swachhata Abhiyan. Shekhawat also participated in the Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam campaign, planting a sapling dedicated to environmental conservation. **Continued on Page 2**

Stepfather of Malaika Arora commits suicide

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Actor-model Malaika Arora's stepfather Anil Mehta allegedly committed suicide by jumping from a building in Mumbai on Wednesday morning, a police official said. Mehta allegedly jumped off the sixth floor of a building in Bandra area, an official said. Police rushed to the spot and shifted him to a hospital where he was declared dead before arrival, the official said. The exact reason behind the incident was not yet known, the official said, adding that an investigation was underway. According to him, Mehta was the stepfather of the Bollywood actor. Meanwhile, a source told PTI, "It's true that Malaika's (step) father passed away this morning. He has not committed suicide, it's an accident. They all are shocked because he had no ailment or anything as such." The police 'panchnama' will make things clear, the source said. **Continued on Page 2**



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Presidential debate showdown

In a heated TV debate, Harris and Trump present sharply contrasting visions on issues like healthcare and economy

The 2024 presidential race is shaping up to be one of the most intense and polarised in US history. At the forefront of this political battle is a head-to-head TV debate between two defining figures—Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump. Their exchange, filled with sharp contrasts in policy, tone, and vision for America, laid bare the deep ideological divide within the nation. Vice President Kamala Harris took the stage emphasising unity, justice, and inclusivity. Known for her dynamic speaking style and sharp prosecutorial background, she framed her narrative as one that focuses on healing America's divisions while pushing for progressive reforms. Harris reiterated her commitment to building a more equitable society, focusing on issues such as healthcare reform, boost to small businesses, climate action, and women's rights to make choices about themselves. One of her most resonant points during the debate was her advocacy for women's reproductive rights, which she positioned as not just a women's issue but a fundamental human right. However, Harris's challenges lie in overcoming the perception of being too liberal for moderate voters.



On the other hand, Donald Trump, came out swinging with a populist message centred on nationalism, economic protectionism, and anti-establishment rhetoric. Trump focused on border security, economic growth, and energy independence, tapping into the concerns of many rural and working-class Americans who have felt left behind in the evolving global economy. At one point in time, he called Harris a Marxist implying her left-of-centre agenda. Trump's ability to connect with his base through a straightforward

approach remains his powerful asset. His rhetoric around deregulation and America-first policies resonated with voters who see him as a champion of their economic interests. However, in most of the debate, he looked less confident and defensive, unlike his debate with Joe Biden where he was more aggressive. Besides, he was floored by Kamala's facts that he was criticised by his staff and even Republicans including Dick Cheney were rooting for her. His handling of key issues like the COVID-19 pandemic and the January 6 Capitol riot also came up in the debate which further receded his confidence and put him on the backfoot. The big question is who resonates more with the people and who would eventually win. Right now, it looks like a fair competition but with Kamala having a slight edge, though it would be folly to disregard Trump's fanbase and constituency which is proactive and loud. Many of the cherished goals of Kamala like climate action, Israel policy, and Gun policy do not go down well with many Americans who would be looking up to Trump as their representative. Trump, continues to resonate with a significant portion of the American population—particularly white, rural, and working-class—who feel disconnected from the progressive direction the country has taken in recent years. His simplistic ideas may not work but they do sway people.

PICTALK



Low clouds cover the mountains after rainfall, in Shimla, PTI

Alzheimer's: Early detection is the key

Thanks to the new technology, early detection with accuracy of Alzheimer's is now possible which can lead to better outcomes through timely interventions

Alzheimer's disease is one of the most challenging neurological disorders, affecting millions globally. It is characterised by progressive memory loss, cognitive decline, and behavioural changes. While the disease is often associated with older adults, the importance of detecting it in its early stages cannot be overstated. Early detection allows for timely intervention, which can slow down the progression of the disease, offering patients more years of quality life. Moreover, early diagnosis empowers individuals and their families to plan for the future, make informed decisions, and access the latest treatments.



stages of Alzheimer's. Researchers are now focused on identifying the disease's biomarkers before significant memory problems arise, providing a window of opportunity for early intervention. Beyond medical benefits, early detection has psychological and social advantages. It allows patients to maintain independence for a longer period, reduces anxiety associated with uncertainty, and provides clarity to families about caregiving responsibilities. Detecting Alzheimer's in its early stages has become a critical aspect of managing the disease effectively. With the advent of advanced diagnostic tools like CLEIA, early detection is now more achievable than ever. Agappe Diagnostics in collaboration with Fujirebio Holdings of Japan, has made a groundbreaking advancement in India's healthcare sec-

tor by introducing Chemiluminescent Enzyme Immunoassay (CLEIA) technology. This development is a monumental step forward in the indigenous manufacturing of cutting-edge diagnostic tools, specifically designed for early detection of critical diseases like Alzheimer's, Cancer, and Gastrointestinal disorders. "We have long standing productive relations with India that are all set to further strengthen and flourish," said Takashi Ariyoshi, deputy chief of Japanese embassy in India. CLEIA, an evolved version of the widely recognized Chemiluminescent Immunoassay (CLIA), merges the sensitivity of chemiluminescence detection with the precision of enzyme immunoassays. This powerful combination allows for the accurate detection of low concentrations of biomarkers, making it a game-changer in early diagnosis. In the case of Alzheimer's, early identification of disease-specific biomarkers can significantly slow down cognitive decline by enabling timely interventions, including medications and lifestyle changes.

In modern In-Vitro Diagnostics (IVD), CLEIA plays a crucial role not just in early detection but also in disease progression monitoring and guiding personalized treatment. These aspects are particularly relevant in Alzheimer's care, where early diagnosis opens the door to medical treatments and cognitive therapies that can prolong independence and improve quality of life. This technology is a significant leap in advancing immunoassay technology in India. Through this partnership, cartridge-based CLEIA systems have been developed and launched, supporting the healthcare system with advanced, locally manufactured diagnostic tools. Besides, beyond Alzheimer's, CLEIA is instrumental in detecting cancer markers at an early stage, significantly improving survival rates for patients. The Inod-Japanese partnership underlines the benefits of the "Make in India" initiative, reducing dependency on imports in critical healthcare technologies.

(The writer is a senior journalist; views are personal)



KUSHAL JEENA

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(The writer is a senior journalist; views are personal)

Haryana elections: BJP faces Congress' resurgence



KALYANI SHANKAR

As Haryana gears up for its high-stakes assembly elections, the political landscape is marked by shifting alliances and big promises

Who will emerge victorious in Haryana's upcoming assembly polls? Will the ruling BJP retain the state, or will the resurgent Congress seize the opportunity to win? The nation is watching as the results of the impending polls in Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Jammu, and Kashmir will shape these states' future and significantly impact the national political landscape. Haryana is gearing up for a diverse, multi-cornered contest with 90 seats.

The main competition is between the BJP and the Congress. Still, other parties like AAP, Samajwadi Party, CPI(M), and Haryana Lokhit Party are also in the field, adding diversity to the electoral dynamics. The BJP, JJP, and Azad Samaj Party (Kanshi Ram) have allied with Dushyant Chautala as their chief ministerial candidate. At the same time, the INLD and BSP have chosen Abhay Singh Chautala as theirs.

The BJP and Congress have not declared their chief ministerial faces, but former chief minister Bhupendra Singh Hooda is leading the battle for Congress. The new BJP chief minister, Saini, is leading the BJP. Both parties are facing internal problems. In the case of the BJP, Minister Ranjit Singh Chautala and MLA Lakshman Dass Napa left the party after being denied tickets. Other prominent figures and district leaders resigned after not being considered for tickets. During seat-sharing discussions with its coalition partner AAP, Congress leaders in Haryana, including Hooda, are willing to concede only a few seats.

The Congress, led by former chief minister Bhupendra Singh Hooda, is optimistic about returning to power after a ten-year gap. The party is strategically wooing the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Samajwadi Party for an alliance. Meanwhile, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is facing allegations of involvement in a liquor scam. The Haryana polls are crucial. The BJP wants a third term, while the Congress aims to regain power. Other



regional parties are also vying for a share of power. In the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the BJP won all ten seats.

In 2024, it only secured five seats, with the Congress taking the other five. In the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, the BJP, lacking the majority, formed the government with the help of JD(U) and Telugu Desam. Before 2014, the BJP was a minor player in Haryana. Only after the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the party gained momentum. In 2019, the BJP formed a government with 40 seats, just six short of the majority. Dushyant Chautala's Jannayak Janta Party (JJP), which won ten seats, supported the BJP. However, JJP recently ended its alliance with the BJP.

In Haryana, the BJP's vote share decreased from 58.2% in 2019 to 46.11% in 2024. This was mainly due to the farmers demanding a legal minimum support price (MSP) guarantee. In 2024, the INDIA bloc, a coalition of regional parties and Congress surpassed the BJP's vote share. In March, BJP replaced Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar with Nayab Singh Saini. The new Chief Minister has introduced welfare schemes, promised to fill government job vacancies,



THE CONGRESS, LED BY FORMER CHIEF MINISTER BHUPENDRA SINGH HOODA, IS OPTIMISTIC ABOUT RETURNING TO POWER AFTER A TEN-YEAR GAP. THE PARTY IS STRATEGICALLY WOOING THE AAM AADMI PARTY (AAP) AND THE SAMAJWADI PARTY FOR AN ALLIANCE

and aims to leverage the Jat issue. However, the BJP does not have Jat's support. Also, Saini's short six-month tenure has limited his impact.

The Congress is upbeat after doubling its Lok Sabha seats in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. Congress focuses on joblessness, inflation, farmer's issues, and the controversial Agniveer scheme. The party is preparing its manifesto based on public suggestions, which includes welfare schemes like a Rs 6,000 pension for old-age people and 300 units of free electricity. The party also counts on 452,000 first-time voters and 4.09 million young voters. Congress aims to unite the opposition votes, while the BJP seeks to divide them strategically. AAP has some influence in border areas of Haryana. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is trying to keep the Indian coalition intact.

The AAP has agreed to fight in five seats. There are rumblings in the Congress, too. The Congress is facing factional fights. It is divided into two groups led by Hooda and Kumari Saini. The party tries to satisfy both factions, but Hooda holds more influence because of his previous role as chief minister. Turncoats and relatives of former chief min-

isters are in the Congress list of candidates.

The BJP is facing a tough battle in Haryana. Current polls indicate that the party may win fewer seats. BJP's weaknesses are the absence of strong leadership at the state level and a compelling counter-narrative against the Opposition charges. Prime Minister Modi, who leads the party's campaigns, has not addressed any election rallies yet. The Congress must work on complacency, internal conflicts, and a need for more organisation. The BJP faced rebellion after the candidate list was announced, and some influential people like Ranjit left the party.

Too many ticket aspirants could diminish the party's prospects. Ultimately, the arithmetic will determine Congress's victory. Also, the unity of the INDIA coalition is essential. If lucky, the BJP may minimise damage by securing a respectable number of seats, leading to a potentially significant outcome. Congress should avoid mistakes and take everybody along. Otherwise, it will miss a golden opportunity.

(The writer is a popular columnist; views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MAMATA IN THE DOCK

Madam — West Bengal Governor C.V. Ananda Bose has urged Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to comply with Article 167(c) of the Indian Constitution by informing Raj Bhavan of all decisions made by the state cabinet. This request comes in the wake of the public outcry following the gruesome rape and murder of a woman doctor at Kolkata's R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital.

A statement from the Governor's office, issued, emphasized that under Article 167, it is the Chief Minister's duty to provide the Governor with details of all cabinet decisions relating to the state's administration and any proposed legislation. The statement also reminded the Chief Minister that updates should be provided on matters discussed by the cabinet, especially when a minister's decision was not taken into consideration by the cabinet. The Governor's office criticised the state administration and law enforcement, stating that public perception had condemned their actions in this case.

The statement outlined several concerns, including misinformation given to the victims' parents, alleged tampering of the crime scene, delays in filing the FIR, and the hasty disposal of the body despite the parents' request for more time. Furthermore, it noted that the transfer and reappointment of the Principal of the hospital raised suspicions about the state's intentions, as did the Kolkata Police's alleged attempts to cover up the crime scene tampering. The statement added that civil society and the courts had strongly reprimanded the law enforcement agencies for their handling of the case, particularly regarding the events following the discovery of the victim's body. Kolkata calling shots.

Dorai Ramani Suresh | Ghaziabad

COURTS MUST BRING DOWN PENDENCY

Madam—The time has come for the judicial think tank to put the house in order. The job of the Judges are becoming a thankless one while going by their contin-

GST relief for the middle class



The 54 GST council meeting held under the finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman has brought some important relief to the middle class with deduction of tax cuts on sev-

eral items and services apart from cancer drugs. The middle class are burdened with penumbra of taxes on GST, results in upsetting the household budgets. Over the past few years, the taxes are being added up consistently, but the economic stature of the common man in the country are still the same. The banking sector in the country are grappling with cash crunch as the saving capacity of the people have gone down of inflationary spike. The Centre's gross GST collection for FY24 stood at Rs.20.18 lakh crore but the condition of economically crumbling the non-BJP states should also be improved and their GST share must be settled. The recommendation to constitute GOM to reduce GST from eighteen percent on health and insurance services seems reasonable and boost up these two sectors if implemented by October.

Janga Bahadur Sunuwar | Jalpaiguri

LACK OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN INDIA

Madam — The GDP of any country, alongside other factors, depends on the physical health of its citizens. However, a modern sedentary lifestyle is common, and government intervention is needed to encourage physical activity. A national survey revealed that over 200 million Indians are physically inactive, with 155 million adults and 45 million adolescents failing to meet WHO guidelines.

The joint study by Dalberg Advisors and Sports and Society Accelerator found that 48% of older adults believe they are too old for physical activity, and 45% think sports are unsafe for girls. Misconceptions, such as physical exertion being harmful to menstruating women or affecting marriage prospects, contribute to the gender gap in physical activity. Women, especially in urban areas, spend 75% of their active time on household chores, leaving little time for exercise.

Yash Pal Raihan | Jalandhar

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

FIRST COLUMN

GOD HAS THE SOLUTION

All we have to do is to take His shelter and remain in it



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

A famous oncologist was being interviewed on television. He was asked by a reporter about the causes of cancer. The doctor replied, "It is over stress mainly." Every time this matter came up, the oncologist emphasized the over stress reason. And we know what over stress is. It is mostly caused by cyclic thinking. We get into some problem and keep on thinking about it. Surely, worry results. The solution has to come from other sources. Aren't we extremely limited in what we know? But we refuse to accept this fact. I will recite three examples of when I found answers provided by God when I was in trouble, and only God could help. Beginning with my nature to fear excessively, I was suffering. One day I prayed sincerely for relief. Suddenly, a thought came that the Bhagavad-Geeta may have a solution.

Didn't Gandhiji turn to this book of eternal wisdom whenever he was faced with some problem? I looked for a knowledgeable person, and located one who was well-versed in the Geeta. I explained my problem. He referred me to verse #2.40, which is, "Neither there is a waste of effort here nor there is opposite effect. Even a little of this Karma-yoga protects one from great fear." This is what I was looking for. The next question was about karma yoga. What does this imply? He explained that all activities about God come under it. He cited examples of praying, having darshan, doing namaskar to God, chanting God's names or some mantra like Ohm and thanking God for favours done. They seemed simple enough and I got started. A connection was made with God. Sure enough, God got interested in me. I began to get intuitions. For example, I had been suffering from headaches mainly in the forehead part



for quite some time. I prayed for help. I got a feeling that I should go to Hanuman Mandir in Connaught Place, New Delhi. I did and prayed there sincerely for guidance and help. While returning, I felt that God was asking me to bring Him to my forehead. I was very excited and checked with my spiritual guide.

He confirmed that this is a bona fide process, as the 'ajna (agya) chakra' is located there. I began doing it and astonishingly I was beginning to get some relief. After practice for a few days, the persistent headache was gone. Since then I have been fortunate to not be so troubled by it. I recounted my experience to my spiritual guide. He told me that God is very pleased with me and giving guidance. Another headache appeared, which was only on the right side. I tried everything but there was no relief. Somehow, I had an inkling to look up various choices in Crocin. There was one with caffeine. My sixth sense, which is the same as God's guidance was to take it. Sure enough, there was relief. What happened? I had to know. I had stopped drinking green tea just before getting this strange headache. This tea had caffeine. Now I knew what the connection was. Only God could have known it, and He did. I was suffering headaches due to caffeine withdrawal. Another trouble arose due to the use of a nasal spray.

One spray and I began to feel uneasiness. When I got ready to use it another time, as prescribed, I was feeling quite troubled. Surely, I looked up its composition; it had steroids. God had prevented more damage from happening to me. All we have to do is to take His shelter and remain in it. The question is: why don't we? It is a very slow process. One must have good Sanskars to get started on this journey. Otherwise, one will not get started. Fortunately, I was blessed to have them. Lord Krishna has promised it, "Having My consciousness, you will cross all impediments by My grace." (18.58) This culminates in liberation from the painful cycle of birth and death when God releases us from all sins. (18.66) However, this will take several births after we get started. (6.45) I am counting upon it.

(The writer is a spiritual teacher; views expressed are personal)

The making of Kerala's catastrophe

Despite warnings from experts about the perils of unchecked quarrying and deforestation in the Western Ghats, successive governments failed to act, leading to Wayanad disaster



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN



S K Pottekkat, who could be rated as India's best travelogue writer has elaborated on his 1955 visit to Finland. "The country's area is 1,30,119 sq miles out of which 71 per cent is forests. Finland's main source of income is the pine trees grown in its forests. But to get permission from the government to cut down a single pine tree, one has to furnish proof that he has planted six pine saplings," writes Pottekkat in his memoirs.

He was a delegate to the World Peace Council meeting held in Helsinki, the capital city. In 2024, despite a massive industrialisation drive, the country has the tenth highest percentage of forest cover in the world. Pottekkat hailed from Kozhikode, the neighbouring district of Wayanad.

Once the region was full of evergreen forests filled with exotic trees, plants and flowers. Folklore is that the tribal youth who led a team of Englishmen to Wayanad was shot dead by the visitors to ensure that no more outsiders entered the fertile landscape.

But Wayanad has become a teardrop since 30 July 2024 as landslides and flash floods struck the district in quick succession swallowing hundreds of people and their houses. Pinarayi Vijayan, the chief minister, has asked the Centre to release Rs 2,000 crore as the first instalment towards the rescue, rehabilitation and reconstruction mission to be undertaken by the Government of Kerala.

He also blamed the Centre for its failure to provide the exact date, time and place of the natural disaster and has vowed to establish the State's early warning system for floods, landslides and heavy rainfalls. Vijayan will outclass the best of the entrepreneurs in the skill of mobilization of resources for the Chief Minister's Disaster Relief Fund.

All media briefings by Vijayan end with him announcing the details of persons who have contributed to the CMDRF in the aftermath of landslides and deluge that devastated Wayanad. But what stands out is the generous offer made by High Range Rural Development Society,

a non-governmental organisation, which came forward to build houses for all those who lost their dwelling places in the flash floods. According to the Kerala Government's estimate, 500 homes were washed away by the gushing waters. The HRDS told the Government that it would rebuild/construct 500 safe and secured houses each of 700 sq ft and costing Rs 10 lakh free of cost.

The NGO also told the government that it would help the landslide victims to set up group farming so that they could earn a reasonably fair monthly income. All the 500 houses to be constructed by the HRDS will feature self-contained guest rooms which could be rented out as part of the homestay programme. But Vijayan and his comrades are cold to the offer. The Centre has asked Vijayan to submit details of the losses suffered in nature's fury and how the State would go ahead with the rehabilitation and reconstruction. Though the disaster struck nearly a month ago, the Government has yet to come out with the details of the losses. In the aftermath of the 2018 floods, Vijayan had demanded Rs 40,000 crore as flood relief which included Rs 20,000 crore to rebuild the roads washed away in the deluge.

But senior officials who took stock of the situation once the flood water receded had told that roads could be rebuilt with Rs 5,800 crore. As part of mitigating future floods, Vijayan accompanied by an entourage of relatives (including his five-year-old grandson) and senior bureaucrats undertook a junket to the Netherlands.

But there is no end in sight for the floods in Kerala. There is no need to search for the

reason behind the landslides and floods in Wayanad and other places in the State. Prof Madhav Gadgil, a noted environmentalist who headed the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP) had told the State Governments not to disturb the ecology and environment beyond the current level.

The team of experts had found to their horror that quarrying and sand mining of unprecedented level were taking place with official connivance across the length and breadth of Western Ghats and this included Wayanad. In 1986, this writer shot a television documentary on the Wayanad district for Doordarshan.

There were no resorts or star hotels those days anywhere in the district. The District Collector Raveendran Thampi had been sanctioned one room as his camp office in the low power transmitter station of the Doordarshan at Kalpetta. Immediately after nature's fury in July 2024, Prof Gadgil said that the disaster was a man-made one and was waiting to happen at any time. "Wayanad has no more space for resorts, quarries and sand mining," said Prof Gadgil immediately after the landslide and flash floods.

But what the chief minister said in his briefing was shocking. "The Gadgil committee report is a big joke and one need not take it seriously," said Vijayan. The committee of experts led by Prof Gadgil toured the entire Western Ghats region and they were shocked by the kind of quarrying, mining and deforestation that was happening in the region. Prof Gadgil had described the Western Ghats region as the Water Tower of peninsular India.

Vested interests including religious groups are exploiting Wayanad to the hilt and this

made the committee ask the authorities to stop herewith the constitution of special economic zones and reschedule reservoir operations to downstream flows. More than what the Gadgil Committee had said in its report, what Prof T P Kunhikannan, a CPI(M) activist, had said about the report is significant.

A thorough study by Kunhikannan has proved that Prof Gadgil's suggestions should be accepted in toto by the authorities concerned. "The Church is campaigning against Gadgil Committee findings to save its commercial interests. There is nothing anti-people or anti-minorities in the report," said Prof Kunhikannan in his studies "Gadgil Report and Kerala's Development".

The top echelons of the Church read pastoral letters asking the laity to stage demonstrations across the country against the report as it was anti-minority," said Kunhikannan. No purpose will be served by subjecting the Wayanad disaster to another academic analysis. The Church sabotaged the Gadgil committee report by terming it as anti-development, anti-farmers and anti-people.

Through a series of pastoral letters (which were read out during Sunday Mass), the clergy unleashed a blitzkrieg against the WGEEP report. The then union government appointed another committee headed by G Kasturirangan, former ISRO chairman, to "examine" the feasibility of Gadgil's findings. Kasturirangan did his masters proud by diluting the WGEEP report and that was the death warrant of Wayanad.

(The writer is special correspondent with The Pioneer; views are personal)



PINARAYI VIJAYAN, THE CHIEF MINISTER, HAS ASKED THE CENTRE TO RELEASE RS 2,000 CRORE AS THE FIRST INSTALMENT TOWARDS THE RESCUE, REHABILITATION AND RECONSTRUCTION MISSION TO BE UNDERTAKEN BY THE GOVT OF KERALA

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India's green hydrogen revolution: Paving the way for a sustainable energy future

Green hydrogen is emerging as a powerful alternative fuel, offering a clean and versatile energy source produced through renewable means

The entire world grapples with the dire consequences of climate change and desperately searches for sustainable and clean energy sources. Green hydrogen, a powerful alternative fuel produced using renewable energy, has emerged as a viable alternative.



ARIF AGA

Now, in India, the green hydrogen revolution is gaining momentum, with the government, private sector, and start-ups playing pivotal roles in positioning the country as a global leader in this transformative technology. In recent years green hydrogen, produced through electrolysis powered by renewable energy sources like solar and wind, has gained significant attention.

The National Hydrogen Energy Roadmap, introduced in 2006, marked the first formal effort by the government to explore hydrogen's potential in India. Since then, technological advancements and a growing commitment to renewable energy have laid a solid foundation for the green hydrogen revolution. India faces immense pressure to decarbonize its energy systems

due to its heavy dependence on fossil fuels and huge carbon emissions. Green hydrogen can serve as a versatile energy carrier, with applications ranging from industrial processes and transportation to power generation and storage.

Unlike grey or blue hydrogen, which is produced from fossil fuels and involves carbon emissions, green hydrogen is entirely clean, thus aligning with global sustainability goals. India's vast renewable energy resources, particularly solar and wind, make it an ideal location for large-scale green hydrogen production.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) has noted that India's renewable energy capacity could provide the

low-cost electricity needed for green hydrogen production, potentially making it one of the most cost-effective producers in the world.

Recognizing the strategic importance of green hydrogen, the Union Government has implemented a series of policy measures to promote its development and adoption.

To make the country a global hub for green hydrogen production and export, the Indian government launched its ambitious National Hydrogen Mission in 2021. The mission focuses on creating demand in various sectors, ensuring supply chain resilience, and supporting research and development in hydrogen technologies. Key policy incentives include



subsidies and financial support for pilot projects, the development of hydrogen hubs, and mandates for industries to use green hydrogen in their operations. This proactive approach has started giving positive results now. However, there is a need to create a robust regulatory framework to facili-

tate the use of hydrogen as a fuel in multiple sectors, including refining, fertilisers, and transportation. India's commitment to achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2070, as announced at the COP26 summit. Green hydrogen is expected to play a crucial role in this journey by decarbonizing hard-to-abate sectors like steel, cement, and petrochemicals.

The transition to green hydrogen could also reduce India's dependence on imported fossil fuels, enhancing energy security and providing a significant economic boost. Indian conglomerates and big private businesses have been quick to recognize the potential of green hydrogen

and are making substantial investments in this area. Investments are being made for setting up hydrogen production units and integrating hydrogen fuel cells into transportation. Start-ups in the energy sector are also focusing on developing and deploying electrolyzers, creating robust hydrogen storage solutions, and innovating in the transportation sector with hydrogen fuel cell technology.

International collaborations will be instrumental in bringing global best practices to India and accelerating the green hydrogen revolution. India has actively sought to collaborate with Germany, Japan, Australia, and the European Union, forging partnerships to develop joint

ventures, share technology, and build capacity.

The green hydrogen revolution in India represents a unique opportunity to transform the country's energy landscape and lead the global transition towards a sustainable future.

With strong government support, proactive efforts by the private sector, and dynamic innovation from start-ups, India embarks on a journey to become a green hydrogen powerhouse. To achieve the target of net-zero emissions, green hydrogen would play a pivotal role in shaping India's energy future and driving global sustainability efforts.

(The writer is director, SgurrEnergy India; views are personal)

Rupee settles flat against US dollar

DGCA issues eVTOL guidelines

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The rupee witnessed range-bound trade and settled for the day on a flat note at 83.98 (provisional) against US dollar on Wednesday as the support from the lower level of crude oil prices and soft US dollar was negated by a weak trend in domestic equities.
Forex traders said significant corrections in asset classes like the dollar index and crude oil prices supported the rupee, while a negative trend in domestic equities and concerns over global economic growth capped the upside.
At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit moved in a narrow range. It opened at 83.97

against the American currency and touched an intraday high of 83.93 and a low of 83.98 against the American currency. The rupee finally settled for the day at 83.98 (provisional) against the US dollar.
On Tuesday, the rupee depreciated 3 paise to close at 83.98 against the American currency. "Indian rupee continued to remain range-bound stuck in a 83.90-84 range supported by active interventions from RBI at lower levels along with declining crude oil prices also capping the upside in same," said Maneesh Sharma, AVP - Commodities & Currencies, Anand Rathi Shares and Stock Brokers.



Sharma further noted that rupee's minimal volatility is also attributed to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) maintaining long-term

interest rate pauses and building record foreign exchange reserves. "Overall rupee is expected to maintain a trading range of 83.90-84.10 in the week ahead with minimal volatility with cues from US CPI & ECB interest rate decision in coming days to provide further direction to currency pair," Sharma added.
Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was down 0.23 per cent to 101.39 points.
Brent crude, the international benchmark, was trading higher by 2.44 per cent to USD 70.88 per barrel in futures trade.
Forex traders said crude oil level of USD 70 per barrel will act as a support for the domestic unit as India, the world's third-largest oil importer, stands to benefit from cheaper oil.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Aviation regulator DGCA has issued guidelines for airworthiness certification of electric aircraft that are capable of taking off and landing in a vertical manner. An advisory circular outlining the baseline airworthiness criteria for the type certification of Vertical Take Off and Landing Capable Aircraft (VCA) has been issued.
These aircraft are powered by an electrical system and are known as eVTOLs.
"This significant step aims to streamline the certification process and ensure the safety and reliability of emerging eVTOL technologies in India," the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said in a release on Wednesday.
The advisory circular provides comprehensive

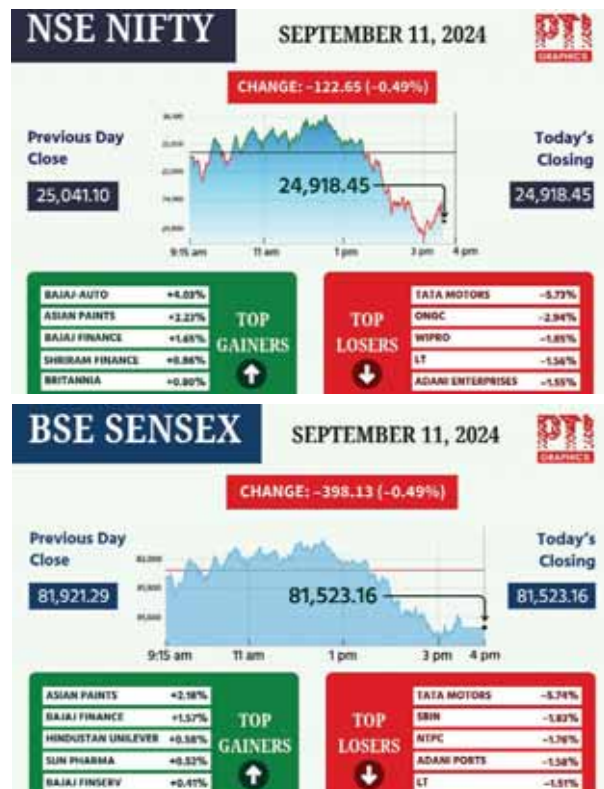


safety requirements on the design, construction, structural strength, flight performance, equipment, power plant installation, flight crew interface and other information required for type certification of eVTOL aircraft. The latest move is part of efforts to promote advanced air mobility solutions. DGCA said the initiative also aligns with global efforts to standardise eVTOL certification and encourages innovative efforts by the Indian industry in developing/ manufacturing eVTOL and its components. Last week, the regulator issued an advisory circular on vertiports that are to be used for eVTOL aircraft operations.

Market pullback: Sensex, Nifty down

India aims to become global aviation hub: Naidu

PTI ■ MUMBAI
Benchmark Sensex reversed its early gains to close lower by 398 points while broader Nifty slipped below the 25,000 mark due to selling in Tata Motors, Reliance Industries and L&T amid weak global trends.
In a volatile trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 398.13 points or 0.49 per cent to settle at 81,523.16. The index opened higher and touched the day's high of 82,134.95 points in the mid-session. However, selling pressure emerged in the pre-close session and the index tanked 498.15 points or 0.60 per cent to hit a low of 81,423.14.
The NSE Nifty declined 122.65 points or 0.49 per cent to 24,918.45. Among the 30 Sensex firms, Tata Motors was the biggest loser, tumbling nearly 6 per cent, followed by NTPC, Adani Ports, Larsen & Toubro, State Bank of India, JSW Steel, Mahindra & Mahindra, IndusInd Bank and Titan. In contrast, Asian Paints, Bajaj Finance, Hindustan Unilever and Bajaj Finserv were among the gainers.
The domestic market experienced a minor consolidation in line with



Asian peers due to correction of commodity prices like crude which has collapsed to USD 70 per barrel. "Market sentiment remained cautious due to the slowdown in the Chinese economy. Investors await the release of the US

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
Highlighting the aviation sector's growth potential, Union minister K Ram Mohan Naidu on Wednesday said efforts are on to make India a global aviation hub as well as to start manufacturing aircraft in the country.
With Asia-Pacific region poised to lead global aviation growth, Naidu said strategic investments in infrastructure and collaboration amongst the regional stakeholders is critical to achieving sustainable growth across the sector.
Speaking at the second Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference on Civil Aviation in the national capital, Naidu emphasised on three elements infrastructure, integration and innovation for the sector's growth. "My ministry is working with the vision of establishing a seamless aviation landscape in the country, integrating helicopters and seaplane operations alongside wide-body aircraft under the regional connectivity scheme UDAN," he noted.
India is one of the world's



fastest growing civil aviation markets and the fleet size of domestic carriers has increased to around 800 from 400 in 2014 while the number of domestic passengers climbed from 67 million to 152 million during the same period.
The number of operational airports have grown from 74 in 2014 to 157. "We have an ambitious plan of scaling this up to 350-400 airports by 2047," the civil aviation minister said. The country is also well-positioned to offer cost-effective and high quality MRO (Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul) services to domestic and international airlines, he noted. According to him, the government is



Uber Black returns to Mumbai

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ride-hailing app Uber on Wednesday announced the return of its upscale 'Uber Black' category in India, starting with Mumbai.
The move is a step towards addressing the growing preference of Indian customers towards premium offerings and Uber's ability to deliver a new standard of on-demand mobility in premium cars, the company said in a release.
"Uber brings Black back to India... Reintroduces its high-end category starting with Mumbai," the release said, adding that Uber Black allows for a personalised ride with customisable features like quiet mode, temperature control, and help with luggage.
Riders will get to enjoy in-car amenities and on-trip preferences, ensuring consistently high-quality experience, it added.
"We are thrilled to bring Uber Black back in an all new avatar to meet the evolving aspirations of Indian customers and introduce the business class of back seats on Indian roads," Prabhjot Singh, President, Uber India and South Asia, said.
As India's leading multimodal mobility service, Uber endeavors to cater to the full spectrum of riders, from those seeking affordable rides on two-wheelers or three-wheelers to those who desire a truly well-appointed experience in premium vehicles, Singh added.

Arunachal to add 12,500 MW of hydropower capacity in two years says Deputy CM

APSEZ to develop multipurpose berth at Kandla Port

PTI ■ ITANAGAR
Arunachal Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein said hydropower projects with a combined installed capacity of 12,500 MW in the state will commence operations in the next two years, according to a statement issued on Wednesday.
The projects will be taken up by CPSUs, including NHPC, NEEPCO, THDC and SJVN, he said during the Solung festival celebrations at Roing in Lower Dibang Valley district on Tuesday, it said.
Five such projects will commence next year, while three each will be taken up in 2026 and 2027, Mein was quoted as saying in the official communiqué.



"These will meet the power needs of the state as well as the nation and will foster rapid economic development in the state," the deputy chief minister said, adding that large dams would also bring multiple benefits to the state as they are all multipurpose projects.
"We will not only harness power from these projects

but also regulate water flow downstream and harness water for irrigation purposes and fisheries," he said.
These projects will boost tourism and employment generation in the state. Mein said the state would generate income to the tune of Rs 1,836 crore annually as equity shares from the projects.
The revenue accrued from the hydropower projects in the state will benefit the young generations, he said.
The deputy chief minister claimed that the government is also committed to develop small hydro projects in border villages of the state.
"These hydro projects will benefit remote villages, defence personnel and military set-up stationed in far-flung areas," he said.
Mein also highlighted the state government's initiatives to boost economic activities, including advancements in the tourism sector through the construction of the 218-kilometre Assam-Arunachal railway line passing through the sacred pilgrimage site of Parsuram Kund.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone (APSEZ) on Wednesday said it has signed a concession agreement with DPA to develop Berth No 13 at Deendayal Port, Kandla, Gujarat.
APSEZ has incorporated a wholly-owned subsidiary, DPA Container and Clean Cargo Terminal Limited (DPACCCTL) that will carry out operations at the berth it said in a statement.
Berth will handle multipurpose cargo and is expected to be commissioned in FY27.
In July 2024, APSEZ had received the LOI for the development, operation and maintenance of the berth for a 30-year concession period. According to the statement, APSEZ will develop the berth under DBFOT (Design,



Build, Finance, Operate, and Transfer) model for multipurpose clean cargo, including container cargo. Berth No. 13 is 300 metres long and offers 5.7 MMT capacity annually.
It is likely to be commissioned in FY27. APSEZ CEO and whole-time director Ashwani Gupta said,

"Berth No. 13 will diversify our presence at Deendayal Port. We will now handle the multipurpose clean cargo at the port, in addition to dry bulk cargo that we already handle."
"The statement said the berth will further consolidate the company's position on the western coast and enhance its

Apple drops prices in India with the launch of 16 series

Honda collaborates with IITs on AI technologies

ABHI SINGHAL ■ NEW DELHI
Apple on Monday has launched their new iPhone 16 series in India and markets globally. For the first time the prices of the new iPhone have been cheaper by Rs 15,000 for the pro models (pro and pro-max) due to their manufacturing in India. The Union Budget cutting of the customs duty on smartphones by 5% has also been a factor for the cheaper price of the imported models.
Apart Apple has also cut down the prices of their non-Pro models of iPhone 15.
In India, the iPhone 16, the entry level iPhone is priced at Rs 79,900 and the iPhone 16 Plus is available at Rs 89,900. Following these, the iPhone 16 Pro comes with a starting price tag of Rs 1,19,900 and the iPhone 16 Pro Max, will cost Rs 1,44,900 in the Indian

market.
The 16 series of the iPhone will be the first series to have artificial intelligence as their game changer. With that Apple has introduced the new camera "shutter button" which is the addition of the Action button (previously exclusive to the Pro). The iPhone 16 and its Plus model are powered with Apple's latest A18 chipset, which uses second-generation 3nm technology. The A18 chip comes with a 6-core CPU, featuring 2 performance cores and 4 efficiency cores.
Apple has also cut down the prices of their non-Pro iPhone 15 models by Rs 10,000 in comparison with iPhone 16 with higher storage. The 15 series of the iPhones are short of the advanced features like Apple intelligence AI and the newly launched shutter button.



The iPhone 16 will still be cheaper in the US like before. The new iPhones are priced at \$799 (around Rs 67,000) with a starting price tag, whereas the iPhone 16 Plus is priced at \$899 (around Rs 75,500). The iPhone 16 Pro price starts at \$999 (around Rs 83,870) and the iPhone 16 Pro Max is priced at \$1,199 (around Rs 1 lakh) for iPhone 16 Pro Max for 256GB.
The pre-order for the iPhone 16 series starts on September 13, at 5:30PM in India. The first sale will take place on September 20.
The new iPhone has been launched in four models iPhone 16, iPhone 16 plus, iPhone 16 pro, iPhone 16 pro-max.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Japanese auto major Honda on Wednesday said it has started joint research on AI technologies with IIT Delhi and IIT Bombay with plans to develop driver assistance and automated driving technologies applicable in various regions of the world, including India.
The joint research is aimed to further advance Honda CI (Cooperative Intelligence)--the original Honda AI that enables mutual understanding between machines and people, the company said in a statement.
Honda Cars India Ltd (HCIL), a Honda subsidiary in India, will sign a joint research contract with the two IITs.
"The IITs are a home to a large number of excellent researchers and engineers,

and through the joint research with those institutes, Honda will strive to advance the underlying technologies of CI, with an eye toward the future applications for technologies that reduce traffic collisions and enable automated driving," it said.
With an aim to achieve further advancement of CI, Honda and IITs have set joint research themes such as recognition of the surrounding environment and cultivation of cooperative behaviour, and will conduct research and development while utilising the cutting-edge AI technologies, it added.
Under the partnership, for each research theme, Honda associates and IIT professors will engage with IIT students for planning, designing, developing and testing technologies which work



beyond the confines of the laboratory and thereby proceed with the research and development more flexibly and with a high degree of freedom, Honda said.
"This will enable Honda and IITs to work in a more flexible environment with deeper exchange of academic and industry insights," it added.
In addition, as part of this research, Honda with the help of IITs is aiming to conduct verification of driving assistance and automated driving technologies in the suburbs of Delhi and in Mumbai. Due to numerous variations in the road systems and a large number of road users, India has a complex traffic environment where situations that occur frequently are difficult for AI to predict.

2023 ODI World Cup in India generated economic impact of USD 1.39 billion: ICC

PTI ■ DUBAI

The 2023 ODI World Cup in India created an "economic impact" of USD 1.39 billion with tourism among the biggest beneficiaries, according to a report released by the International Cricket Council (ICC) on Wednesday.

The Economic Impact Assessment conducted by Nielsen for the ICC, claimed that the mega-event held in October-November last year was the biggest ever ODI World Cup.

"The ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 has demonstrated the significant economic power of cricket, generating economic benefit of USD 1.39 billion (Rs 11,637 crore) for India," ICC Chief Executive, Geoff Allardice said in a statement. Australia ended India's unbeaten run in the tournament to win the trophy for a record-extending sixth time.

"The impact of tourism across the host cities amounted to USD 861.4 million of revenue generation, through accommodation, travel, transportation and food and beverage because of a massive influx of domestic and foreign tourists attending the matches," read an ICC statement.

"The secondary and incremental spends within the economy was a key driver, generating USD 515.7 million, which was approximately 37 per cent of the total impact." However, the ICC did not specify



whether the massive figure cited in the report is actual revenue. A record-breaking 1.25 million spectators attended the mega event, of which nearly 75 per cent were attending an ICC 50-over match for the first time ever, the report claimed.

"Nearly 55 per cent of the international respondents had previously visited India regularly, whilst an injection of new visitors thanks to the World Cup saw 19% of international attendees making their first ever visit to the country."

"International travellers visited multiple tourist destinations during their stay which amounted to an economic impact of USD281.2 million and nearly 68 per cent of international attendees said that they would recommend India as a tourist destination to friends and family in the future further enhancing India's global image," read the statement from the governing body.

Over 48,000 full and part time jobs were created by the event through direct involvement in delivering the tournament, as well as other organisations across the hospitality sector, added the report.

"The event created thousands of jobs and showcased India as a premier tourist destination, proving that ICC events not only engage fans passionately but also contribute significantly to the economies of our host nations," Allardice said.



Rohit, Kohli, Pant are probably going to be really big ones: Lyon ahead of Border-Gavaskar Trophy

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Veteran Australian spinner Nathan Lyon has identified Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, and Rishabh Pant as the three "big ones" to watch out for in the upcoming Border-Gavaskar Trophy Test series.

The five-Test series between India and Australia gets underway Down Under from November 22, part of the World Test Championship.

Besides the big ones, Lyon has also warned that the visitors have an "amazing line-up", making things massively challenging for the hosts.

"Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, and Rishabh Pant are probably going to be the three really big ones. But then, you've still got (Yashasvi) Jaiswal, Shubman Gill, (Ravindra) Jadeja, and who else will come out another five, I'm not sure," he told Star Sports.

However, Lyon was confident that if the Australians

delivered as a bowling unit over an extended period, it would be beneficial for them. "But, it's a pretty amazing line-up they've got, so it's going to be a massive challenge. As I said, if we, as a bowling group, are good enough for long periods, hopefully, we can challenge their defence," he added.

The Aussies have failed to win the title since their last series victory in 2014-15 at home. The Indians have won the title on four consecutive instances since then, winning twice each at home and away, a record for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

Besides, they also became the only Asian team to win a Test series in Australia, and also winning it on multiple occasions.

Overall, India is the most successful side when it comes to the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, winning it on 10 instances, along with a retention.

It will be harder to face SG balls: Bangladesh batter Litton on India Tests

PTI ■ DHAKA

He was Bangladesh's batting star during their historic 2-0 away Test series win in Pakistan but Litton Das believes that facing the red 'SG Test' in India would present an entirely different and more difficult test for the team.

Litton, who scored 56 and 138 in the two Tests, along with skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto, Mominul Haque, Mushfiqur Rahim, Shakib Al Hasan and young Shadman Islam will once again form the core of the Bangladesh batting line-up during the Test series starting September 19 in Chennai.

In Pakistan, Test matches are played with Kookaburra balls, which is also used at home by Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, New Zealand, South Africa. Stitches of the Kookaburra balls aren't as thick and pronounced as the Indian manufactured 'SG Test', which can aid reverse swing. "The ball will be a different one in India," Litton was



quoted as saying by ESPN Cricinfo. "It is a little harder to play against the SG ball. The Kookaburra ball is easier to play when it gets old. It is the opposite with the SG ball. It is harder to get away against the old ball when it's the SG." The right-handed keeper-batter's 138 after Bangladesh were reduced to 26 for 6 in the second Test is considered as one of the finest knocks under pressure but Litton doesn't want to rest on past laurels. "We played good cricket against Pakistan but it is already in the past," Litton said. "It is important for us to look forward. We will need your (media's) help. It would be helpful if you don't talk about

Tests, so we have to become more consistent in the format. That's the main challenge." Having played 223 international games across three formats for the 'Tigers' in past nine years has given him enough experience to tackle various situations. "I have to take responsibility now," he said. "It is the right time. I have been playing for ten years, so there has been some experience. I try to score off deliveries that I believe are there to hit. Scoring runs is more important these days. I think I bat in the same way that most batters approach the game."

Batting with lower-order is another expertise that he has acquired in recent years. "I usually get to bat with (Mehidy) Hasan Miraz. Sometimes I bat with Shakib bhai (Shakib Al Hasan) or Mushfiq bhai (Mushfiqur Rahim). If I don't play my shots, the team score won't go anywhere. I want to play like this. I try to play the way I bat in training," he said.

Hope GCL makes big impact on chess like IPL did on cricket: Arjun Erigaisi

PTI ■ LONDON

Indian Grandmaster Arjun Erigaisi hopes the Global Chess League will have a transformative effect on the sport similar to the revolutionary impact IPL had on cricket.

The GCL is the world's first and largest official franchise league of its kind, with chess players from all over the world competing in a unique joint team format.

"It's definitely a great thing that we now have Global Chess League in the chess circuit. I really hope it makes a big impact in the chess world like IPL did to cricket." The 21-year-old chess prodigy from Warangal has been creating waves this year. He ascended to World No.4 in the FIDE world ratings in June this year after beating France's Loic Travadon in the French Team Chess Championship 2024.

Having watched the 2013 World Championship match between the legendary Viswanathan Anand and Magnus Carlsen, Erigaisi is delighted to get a chance to be on the same as the two veterans.

"Last year, I was on the same team as Magnus Carlsen, and now I am on the same team as Vishy Anand, sir. I remember following the 2013 World Championship Match as a fan, and after 10-11 years, I got the chance to be in the same team as them. It's a big delight," said Erigaisi.

The second season of GCL begins in London on October 3.

"There are a limited number of team chess tournaments, but I love it whenever I get a chance to participate in a team event."

Punjab FC announce squad for 2024-25 Indian Super League season

PTI ■ MOHALI

Punjab FC, the only representative from north India in the top-tier Indian Super League, on Wednesday announced their 26-member squad for the upcoming season.

The team's home, away and third kits were also unveiled at an event here. The Shers will start their ISL campaign against Kerala Blasters on September 15 in Kochi and will play their first home game on September 20 at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in New Delhi. Head coach Panagiotis Dilmeris has picked a squad that has a balance of youth and experience. Luka Majcen, Mushaga Bakenga, Ezequiel Vidal, Ivan Novoselec, Asmir



Suljic and Filip Mrzljak are the foreign signings of the squad. The new Indian signings include Vinit Rai, Ninthoingamba Meetei, Muheet Shabir, Nihal Sudeesh (on loan) and

Likmabam Rakesh Singh (on loan). Mohammed Suhail F. And Shami Singamayum from the academy have been promoted to the senior side, joining Tekcham Abhishek Singh, Manglenthang Kipgen and Ayush Deshwal. Dilmeris said, "We have named a squad that can challenge for the top spots in the league this season. The foreign signings have plenty of experience and we have an exciting pool of Indian players."

"We have also maintained the core of our Indian players from last season. Our pre-season has been good, and we hope we start our season well and perform to our best capacity."

Dilmeris will have Konstantinos Katsaras and Sankaral Chakraborty as his deputies along with Papaioannou Ioannis as the strength and conditioning coach and Manish Timsina as the goalkeeping coach.

Duleep Trophy: Focus on Rinku, Iyer, Washington in round two

PTI ■ ANANTAPUR

Fringe players like Rinku Singh along with some seasoned names who have been ignored by the national selectors will be aiming to attract their attention when round two of Duleep Trophy begins here on Thursday.

The star power in the season-opening red-ball event will be reduced significantly for round two with India squad players released for a national camp ahead of the first Test against Bangladesh in Chennai from September 19. Sarfaraz Khan is the lone India squad member who will be featuring in the domestic competition.

In the absence of national

regulars, the focus will shift on the likes of Rinku, who was surprisingly not picked for the first round despite having an impressive first-class record. The spirited southpaw has also done well for India in T20 cricket. Shubman Gill joining the national team has led to Mayank Agarwal captaining the India A unit. Having played his last Test in March 2022, Agarwal needs a bagful of runs to get back into national reckoning.

Pacer Prasad Krishna, who missed the Duleep Trophy opener having not fully completed his rehab for a left quadriceps tendon, has been named in the India A squad. With the Australia tour on the

horizon, the performance of the lanky pacer will be keenly observed.

In the India B squad, captain Abhimanyu Easwaran will need to lead from the front following a forgettable outing in Bengaluru last week. Sarfaraz, who made a successful Test debut against England earlier this year, was upstaged by his brother Musheer in the opening game, the latter's 181 taking India B to a fine win over India A.

The elder brother will be eyeing a big knock before joining the national team in Chennai. Washington Sundar also features in the India B squad and his all-round abilities



keep him in the mix for all formats. Pacer Mukesh Kumar, who was pipped by Akash Deep for the first Test, will have a point to prove. India C openers Sai Sudharsan and Ruturaj Gaikwad will be looking to

pile on the runs to make a case for the reserve opener's role in the India setup. Left-arm spinner Manav Suthar will be aiming to build on his match-winning performance against India D. Rajat Patidar, dropped from the Indian team following a disastrous debut series against England, will need to show the hunger for red-ball runs. Shreyas Iyer, captain of India D, is another player who has been sidelined from the Test squad and only a mountain of runs can bring him back into the national reckoning.

The same goes for Devdutt Padikkal and Sanju Samson, who was a notable name missing from India D's playing eleven against India

C. Left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh too needs to do a lot more to enhance his red-ball credentials.

SQUADS:
India A squad: Mayank Agarwal (C), Riyan Parag, Tilak Varma, Shivam Dube, Tanush Kotian, Prasad Krishna, Khaleel Ahmed, Avesh Khan, Kumar Kushagra, Shaswat Rawat, Pratham Singh, Akshay Wadkar, SK Rasheed, Shams Mulani, Aaqib Khan.
India B squad: Abhimanyu Easwaran (C), Sarfaraz Khan, Musheer Khan, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Washington Sundar, Navdeep Saini, Mukesh Kumar, Rahul Chahar, R Sai Kishore, Mohit Awasthi, N

Jagadeesan (WK), Suyash Prabhudesai, Rinku Singh, Himanshu Mantri (WK).
India C: Ruturaj Gaikwad (C), Sai Sudharsan, Rajat Patidar, Abishek Porel (WK), B Indrajith, Hrithik Shokeen, Manav Suthar, Gaurav Yadav, Vysakh Vijaykumar, Anshul Khambhoj, Himanshu Chauhan, Mayank Markande, Aryan Juyal (WK), Sandeep Warrier
India D squad: Shreyas Iyer (C), Atharva Taide, Yash Dube, Devdutt Padikkal, Ricky Bhui, Saransh Jain, Arshdeep Singh, Aditya Thakare, Harshit Rana, Akash Sengupta, KS Bharat (WK), Saurabh Kumar, Sanju Samson (WK), Nishant Sindhu, Vidwath Kaverappa.