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ASHWIN-JADEJA TANGO SAVES INDIA 12 SPORTS



Cong, NC celebrated in Pak: Modi

JAMMU AND KASHMIR ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a roadshow for J and K Assembly elections, at Katra in Reasi district, Jammu and Kashmir, Thursday

He said that Pakistan has itself exposed the Congress and the National Conference. He went on to say that the BJP government will not allow the implementation of Pakistan's agenda in Jammu and Kashmir.

"Pakistan itself has exposed the Congress and the National Conference. They wanted to implement Pakistan's agenda here... We will not allow the implementation of Pakistan's agenda in Jammu and Kashmir. No power in the world can bring back Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir".

PM Modi also sounded a note of caution saying that a vote for Congress would lead to the reinstatement of Article 370, which he said would pave the way for violence to return to the Valley.

"Every vote given to Congress will implement the manifesto of PDP and NC. PM Modi said that the upcoming elections will be a turning point for the region, framing the choice as one that will define the future of Jammu and Kashmir. This election is about choosing Jammu and Kashmir's future."

Continued on page 2



A Lebanese army bomb disposal specialist wearing a protective gear prepares, with his comrade, to detonate a walkie-talkie that was found at the parking of the American University Hospital, in Beirut, Lebanon AP/PTI

Hezbollah fires new barrage into northern Israel

AP ■ BEIRUT

Hezbollah fired a new barrage into northern Israel on Thursday, continuing its drumbeat of exchanges with the Israeli military as fears of a greater war rise after hundreds of electronic devices exploded in Lebanon, killing at least 32 people and wounding more than 3,000 others.

Continued on page 2

India takes strong objection to US court's summons over Pannun's suit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Taking strong objection to a US court's summons to the Indian government over Khalistani terrorist Gurbatwant Singh Pannun's civil suit alleging a plot to murder him, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri on Thursday termed it as "unwarranted" and "unsubstantiated imputations."

The US District Court for Southern District of New York named the Government of India, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval (NSA) and former R&AW chief Samant Goel, in the summons. Foreign Secretary Misri said, "As we've said earlier, these are completely unwarranted and unsubstantiated imputations. Now that this particular case has been lodged, it doesn't change our views about the underlying situation. I would only invite your attention to the person behind this particular case whose antecedents are well known."



In November, the UK newspaper Financial Times reported that the US had thwarted a plot to kill Pannun, who holds dual citizenship in the US and Canada. Officials in the Joe Biden administration later confirmed this. In its first response, the External Affairs Ministry had said it is a "matter of concern" and stressed that India has launched a high-level probe.

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India 'effective' in terror, money laundering combat, says FATF

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Global anti-money laundering and terror financing body FATF on Thursday launched its much-awaited mutual evaluation report on India, saying the country's systems were "effective" but "major improvements" were required to strengthen prosecution in these cases.



watchdog FATF has given high rating to India on parameters, including financial intelligence, anti money laundering and terror financing risks, as well as disclosure of beneficial ownership. Of the recommendations made by FATF, fast tracking trials in terror financing and money laundering cases is important.

Rest of the recommendations are ancillary in nature, Agarwal said. "We have passed the test with distinction," Agarwal said, adding since India is in regular follow up as per FATF, the country may report risk assessment after three year. "But there is no compulsion on us," Agarwal said. On possibility of terror financing abuse by not-for-profit organisations (NPO), Agarwal said FATF has said that preventive measures should be taken to check terror financing.

The income tax department has used multiple data points to identify "at risk" NPOs and there is ongoing engagement with NPOs to sensitise them so that they are not used as a medium for financing terror, Agarwal said. "India has no low rating (by FATF) on any parameter... It is either high rating or medium rating," Agarwal added.



A damaged SUV after it crashed into a guardrail, in New Delhi, Thursday, September 19, 2024. At least two people suffered injuries in the accident, according to officials PTI

Drunken college goers meet mishap

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

A first year college student died while three received minor injuries when their speeding SUV crashed into a guardrail that pierced through the middle of the vehicle near Rajghat in north Delhi on early Thursday.

According to police, the black coloured Hyundai Venue car had five occupants, all students of Delhi University colleges, who were returning from a birthday party at a pub in neighbouring Gurugram. Prima facie, it appears that the car was being driven at a high speed and the driver lost control leading to the crash, police said, adding that the incident occurred on the stretch of road from Shanti Van to Geeta Colony.

Continued on page 2

21 Dalit homes set ablaze in Bihar, probe underway

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PATNA

Twenty-one houses were set on fire in Bihar's Nawada district near the Capital city Patna. Preliminary investigation suggested that a land dispute could be the cause behind the incident that happened in Manjhi Tola in Mufassil police station area on Wednesday late evening.



Charred remains are seen after multiple houses were allegedly set on fire, in Nawada district, Bihar, Thursday PTI

Nawada District Magistrate Ashutosh Kumar Verma said the district police has arrested 15 people for allegedly torching the houses. Verma said approximately 21 houses, some of which were semi-pucca, were burned by a group in Manjhi Tola. He added that senior administrative and police officials on-site will provide a report detailing the exact number of damaged houses.

A police officer said shots were also fired in the air when the houses were being torched. Investigations have revealed that out of a total of 34 houses that were set on fire, 21 were completely destroyed and 13 were damaged partially. A Special Investigation Team (SIT) has been formed to investigate further, and searches are ongoing to apprehend the remaining

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Plans Underway for Incredible India's Vibrant Tribal Homestays

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Get ready to explore the stunning beauty and vibrant culture of India's tribal regions like never before! Exciting plans are underway to encourage tribal communities to welcome tourists into their homes, allowing them to share their unique heritage.

and fostering sustainable development. The Union Tourism Ministry plans to provide funding to tribal households and villages for the construction of 5 to 10 homestays in each tourism-potential tribal village under its Swadesh Darshan program.



REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE

"Each household will be eligible for Rs 5 lakhs for the construction of two new rooms and upto Rs 3 lakhs for renovation of existing rooms and Rs 5 lakh for village community requirement," an official of the Ministry shared the details.

He said that the plan is the nascent phase and nitty-gritty will be worked out to ensure there is no violation of the regulations and tribals and visitors rights are protected.

The Ministry's Homestay scheme in tribal areas is part of the central flagship Pradhan Mantri Janatiya Unnat Gram Abhiyan which was cleared by the Union Cabinet Ministry, a day ago. With a total outlay of Rs.79,156 crore (Central Share: Rs.56,333 crore and State Share: Rs. 22,823 crore), the scheme aims to improve the socio-economic condition of tribal

communities, by adopting saturation coverage for tribal families in tribal-majority villages and aspirational districts. Around 5 crore tribals in the 63,000 villages are expected to benefit as 549 districts and 2,740 blocks spread across all tribal majority villages in 30 States/UTs will be covered.

The Ministry comprises 25 interventions/schemes which will be implemented by 17-line ministries. Each Ministry/Department would be responsible for implementation of schemes related to it in a time bound manner through funds allocated to them under the Development Action Plan for Scheduled Tribes (DAPST) in the next 5 years, as per the official.

Continued on page 2





# BJP slams Congress-NC alliance over Article 370 remarks

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Thursday slammed the Congress-National Conference alliance for their remarks on restoration of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir after the Pakistani Defence Minister Khawaja Asif backed the allies over their stance on Jammu & Kashmir's special status. Union Home Minister Amit Shah and several other BJP leaders posted Asif's remarks to a Pakistani channel that his country shared the view of the Congress-NC alliance that Article 370, which gave the union territory special powers and was scrapped in August 2019, should be restored. The controversy erupted after Pakistani Defence Minister Khawaja Asif during an interview with Geo News said that the Shehbaz Sharif government and the Congress-National Conference alliance are on the "same page" on the issue of restoration of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir.



Shah said the Pakistan defence minister's statement on the Congress and National Conference lending support to Article 370 and 35A has once "again exposed" the opposition party. Shah also claimed that the tune of opposition leader Rahul Gandhi's party and Pakistan has always been the same and the Congress has always been "hand in glove with the anti-national forces". He said the statement of Pakistan Defence Minister Khawaja Asif proved that the



neighbouring country and the Congress have the "same intentions and agenda". "Pakistan defence minister's statement about the Congress and the JKNC's support on Article 370 and 35A has once again exposed the Congress. This statement has once again made it clear that the Congress and Pakistan have the same intentions and agenda. For the last few years, Rahul Gandhi has been standing with every anti-India force, hurting the sentiments of the countrymen," Shah wrote on X in Hindi. The home minister said he is asking for proof of air strikes and surgical strikes against Pakistan or saying "objectionable things" about the Indian Army, the tune of the Congress Party and Pakistan has always been the same. The Congress has always been "hand in glove with the anti-national forces", he asserted. "But, the Congress party and Pakistan forget that there is Modi government at the Centre, hence neither Article

370 nor terrorism is going to come back in Kashmir," he said. BJP's Amit Malviya also attacked Congress and Rahul Gandhi, sharing the video of the interview on social media. "Pakistan's defence minister Khawaja Asif, on Hamid Mir's Capital Talk on Geo News says, 'Pakistan and National Conference-Congress alliance are on the same page in Jammu & Kashmir to restore Article 370 and 35A,'" he wrote. Former Union Minister Rajeev Chandrasekar echoed similar sentiments, accusing Congress of aligning with Pakistan on various issues. He questioned what leverage Pakistan might have over Congress. BJP general secretary Tarun Chugh, who is in charge of the party's affairs in Jammu and Kashmir, claimed the opposition alliance is running Pakistani agenda in the ongoing polls. Ram Madhav, one of the two BJP election in-charges for the polls, said on X while sharing Asif's reported comments, "A clear challenge to people of J&K. NC-Congress alliance is 'on same page' with Pakistan, declares Pak Defence Minister Khawaja Asif. People will teach a big lesson to this treasonous alliance in the elections. J&K will stand with those who stand with Hindustan, not those 'on same page' with Pakistan." Chugh alleged that it is now clear that the Congress-NC alliance is working at the behest of Pakistani government, and that the intention of Pakistan to interfere in the elections has been exposed as well. It has been a key agenda of the Abdullah and Gandhi families to keep the situation unstable in Jammu and Kashmir, he charged. Expressing confidence in the people of Jammu and Kashmir, Chugh said they would not succumb to Pakistan's agenda. "The nationalist people of Jammu and Kashmir will not allow the implementation of Pakistan's agenda through the Gandhis and Abdullahs."



# JP Nadda hits back at Kharge, accuses Rahul Gandhi of abusing PM Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

BJP National President J P Nadda on Thursday hit back at Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, calling it an effort to "polish and re-launch" their "failed product" and accused Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi of having a history of abusing Prime Minister Narendra Modi and OBCs, and of siding with anti-India forces. Nadda also accused the grand old party of hurling abuses at PM Modi over 110 times in the past decade after Kharge asked the PM to school his party leaders regarding the use of "violent languages" against Rahul Gandhi. In a tit for tat response Nadda wrote, "Respected Kharge ji, due to what compulsion are you trying to justify Rahul Gandhi, a person whose history is of abusing the entire OBC community including the Prime Minister of the country by calling them thieves, and using extremely indecent words for the Prime Minister of the country?" He further criticized Kharge for allegedly overlooking or ignoring past actions of Congress leaders, including Rahul Gandhi. "It's unfortunate that under the influence of its 'famous prince', the oldest political party in the country has now become a 'copy-paste' party," Nadda's letter stated. "After reading that letter, I felt

that the things said by you are far from reality. It seems that in the letter you have either forgotten the misdeeds of your leaders including Rahul Gandhi or have deliberately ignored them, so I felt that it is important to bring those things to your notice in detail. It is said that the oldest political party of the country has now become a 'copy & paste' party under the pressure of its famous prince," Nadda responded in the letter. Further intensifying his attacks, the BJP chief said, "It is very sad that the oldest political party of the country has now become a 'copy and paste' party under the pressure of its famous 'yuvraaj' (prince)." Listing over a series of abuses, Nadda alleged, "In the last 10 years, the leaders of Congress and Company have abused the country's illustrious Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji more than 110 times and the unfortunate thing is that the top leadership of Congress is also involved in this." "Sometimes it was said 'Modi will dig your grave', sometimes it was said 'neech', sometimes 'bastard', sometimes 'merchant of death', sometimes 'poisonous snake', sometimes 'scorpion', sometimes 'rat', sometimes 'Ravan', Sometimes 'Bhasmasur,' he said as he went on to mention a series of inappropriate words. He said that the Congress' letter exposed the "double standards" of the party adding that

# Delhi High Court seeks dismissed IAS response to UPSC perjury charges

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday sought the stand of Pujja Khedkar on the UPSC's charges that the former IAS probationer committed perjury by making a false statement in relation to her anticipatory bail plea. Justice Subramaniam Prasad asked Khedkar to file her reply to the Commission's application, which is filed in the proceedings on her pre-arrest bail plea. "I will issue notice. File your reply," Justice Prasad told Khedkar's counsel, and listed the matter for hearing on September 26. Khedkar has been accused of cheating and wrongly availing Other Backward Classes (OBC) and disability quota benefits in civil services examination.

The UPSC submitted that Khedkar, in her rejoinder, made an "absolutely false" statement on affidavit that the Commission had collected her biometrics during personality tests. Seeking initiation of inquiry and appropriate proceedings against her for the violation, the application alleged that even in another proceedings pending in the high court, Khedkar has committed "perjury", which is an offence under the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita. Senior advocate Naresh Kaushik, appearing for the UPSC, said her conduct was "dangerously wrong". "The claim that the Commission collected her biometrics is absolutely false made with the sole aim and purpose of deceiving this Hon'ble Court for obtaining



favourable orders. The said claim is denied since the Commission did not collect any biometric (eyes and fingerprints) during her Personality Test or carried out any attempts verification on the basis of the same. The Commission has not collected any biometric information from any candidate during the Personality Test of the Civil Services Examinations held so far," the application said. "There is little doubt in the

conclusion that the conduct of Ms. Pujja Manorama Dilip Khedkar amounts to perjury," it asserted. Khedkar's counsel, on the other hand, termed the application a "pressure tactic". Khedkar allegedly misrepresented information in her application for the UPSC Civil Services Examination, 2022 to get reservation benefits. The High Court has earlier granted her interim protection from arrest in the case. Both the UPSC and the Delhi Police have sought dismissal of her plea for pre-arrest bail. The UPSC initiated a series of actions against Khedkar in July, including lodging a criminal case against her for availing attempts in the civil services exam by faking her identity.

# Def Min urges navy commanders to strengthen Indo-Pacific presence

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday said the Indian Navy's growing strength in the Indo-Pacific region should not be taken for granted and called upon the naval commanders to continue introspection from time to time, and be prepared for every situation in today's volatile global scenario. This note of caution was in apparent reference to China flexing its muscle in the region. Making these observations here while addressing the second edition of Naval Commanders Conference, he also emphasised on the need of a strong naval capability to protect the economic, trade, transport and overall national interests. He commended the Indian Navy for playing a crucial role in promoting peace and prosperity in the Indian Ocean, terming the region as valuable and sensitive in view of the economic, geopolitical, trade and security aspects. Pointing out that India was once a landlocked country with sea shores, but now it can be seen as an island country with land borders, Rajnath Singh lauded the Indian Navy's readiness towards safeguarding the maritime interests of the country, which has resulted in establishing its credibility as the first responder in the region. "A large part of the world's trade passes through the

region, which makes it valuable. At the same time, incidents like piracy, hijacking, drone attacks, missile attacks and disruption of sea cable connections in the seas make it extremely sensitive. Our Navy has made a significant contribution in protecting the economic interests of all stakeholder nations of Indo-Pacific and in smooth movement of goods in the Indian Ocean region. Its anti-piracy operations are garnering appreciation not only in India but also globally. India is now seen as a preferred security partner in this entire region. Whenever we need it, we will ensure security in the region," Rajnath Singh said. The defence minister reiterated Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government's endeavour to make the Indian Navy more potent by inducting state-of-the-art ships, submarines etc. for its capability development, with focus on being Aatmanirbhar. He highlighted that 64 ships and submarines are currently under construction in Indian shipyards, and orders have been placed for 24 additional platforms. He added that, in the last five years, more than two-third of the Navy's modernisation budget has been spent on indigenous procurement, resulting in accelerated development of the domestic defence ecosystem.

# PM Modi urges public to bid on auctioned mementoes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday urged people to bid for the mementoes he has received and which are now being auctioned, noting that their proceeds will be used for the 'Namami Gange' initiative. He said in social media post, "Every year, I auction the various mementoes I receive during the public programmes. The proceeds of the auction go to the Namami Gange initiative. I'm delighted to share that this year's auction has opened. Do bid for the mementoes you find interesting!" Namami Gange is a government's initiative for conservation and rejuvenation of the Ganga river.

# Modi and Biden to sign agreements at Quad Summit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Joe Biden will have a substantive engagement on the sidelines of the Quad summit on Saturday, and the two sides will sign at least two agreements following the talks. One pact will be related to the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) and the other memorandum of understanding (MoU) will be on the India-US drug framework, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said here on Thursday. Modi will pay a three-day visit to the United States beginning September 21 to attend the annual Quad summit and address the "Summit of the Future" at the United Nations General Assembly. Modi will hold separate bilateral talks with Biden, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and his Japanese counterpart Fumio Kishida on the sidelines of the Quad summit in Wilmington, Delaware on September 21.



At the meeting with Biden, Modi is also expected to apprise US President of his recent talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow and with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv on finding a peaceful solution to the Russia-Ukraine conflict. "There will be an opportunity to have a substantive engagement between the prime minister and President Biden, where they will have the opportunity to review the comprehensive global strategic partnership between

India and the US, which today covers almost every aspect of human endeavour through the 50-plus engagements and bilateral dialogue mechanisms," Misri said. He was briefing the media on Modi's trip to the US. "It will also give an opportunity to thank President Biden for his pioneering role in strengthening the India-US relationship and several new initiatives, such as the initiative on critical and emerging technologies," Misri said.

The foreign secretary said there will be an opportunity for both sides to exchange a few agreements, including one on the IPEF. The pact on the IPEF is related to the clean economy and fair economy pillars. In line with Washington's long-term vision for the Indo-Pacific, Biden launched the ambitious Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) in May 2022. It is an initiative aimed at deeper cooperation among like-minded countries in areas like clean energy, supply-chain resilience and digital trade. Besides India, Japan and Australia, the other member countries of the IPEF are Brunei Darussalam, Fiji, Indonesia, South Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. The IPEF has four pillars -- trade, supply-chain resilience, clean economy and fair economy. India is yet to join the trade pillar and discussions between the two sides on it are underway.

# Jawhar Sircar resigns from RS, after criticising TMC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Jawhar Sircar, who had questioned the TMC government in West Bengal over steps taken after the Kolkata rape-murder incident, on Thursday resigned from his Rajya Sabha membership. According to official sources, Rajya Sabha chairperson Jagdeep Dhankhar has accepted his resignation as Rajya Sabha member with immediate effect. Sircar had recently written to his party head and state chief minister Mamata Banerjee describing the steps taken by her government in handling the rape and murder of the doctor at RG Kar hospital "too little and quite late". He had also announced that he would quit politics altogether.

# PM 2.5 pollution linked to increased brain stroke risk surpassing smoking: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As winter approaches and smog becomes a concern, a study published in The Lancet has sounded alarm that fine ambient particles like PM2.5 in the environment can directly damage arterial cells, the risk of subarachnoid hemorrhage, a serious type of brain stroke, surpassing the impact of smoking. The research, led by an international team from India, the US, New Zealand, Brazil, highlighted how PM air pollution was responsible for the loss of 2.6 million healthy life years due to subarachnoid hemorrhage in 2021, surpassing the impact of smoking. It has called for urgent need for public health measures to improve air quality and protect vulnerable populations like kids, elders and those with co-

morbidities. The authors said that air pollution contributed to 14% of deaths and disabilities caused by this severe stroke subtype, the same level as smoking. Data speaks: As pollution has been on rise, in 2021, 11.9 million people experienced new strokes—an increase of 70% since 1990—while stroke-related deaths reached 7.3 million, a 44% rise since 1990. The study has identified 23 modifiable risk factors responsible for 84% of the global stroke burden in 2021. The top five were high systolic blood pressure, particulate matter air pollution, smoking, high LDL cholesterol, and household air pollution. Despite significant efforts to reduce these risk factors, more work is needed to mitigate the damage caused by



environmental pollutants and unhealthy lifestyles, said the study. Dr Catherine O Johnson, co-author and lead research scientist at the University of Washington's Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), emphasised on the urgent need for climate actions and air pollution reduction strategies, particularly as air

like PM2.5 can directly damage arterial cells, increasing the risk of ruptures. Prof. Kalpana Balakrishnan from Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education and Research, Chennai, and Dr. K. Srinath Reddy from the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) echoed these concerns. "Masking is not a solution because it is impossible to reduce exposure for large populations with them. Emission reductions at source and use of cleaner technologies are proven ways. We just need to allocate sufficient resources to make green development possible," Prof Balakrishnan said. According to Dr Reddy, well-ventilated indoor spaces and an outdoor environment with good airflow and greenery reduce pollution-related complications.

# Shashi Tharoor to head parliamentary standing committee on external affairs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor will head the parliamentary standing committee on external affairs and veteran leader Digvijaya Singh will head the panel on education, party sources said on Thursday. Former Punjab chief minister Charanjit Singh Channi will lead the parliamentary standing committee on agriculture and Koraput MP Saptagiri Ulaka will head the panel on rural development. Channi, who is a Dalit, and Ulaka, who hails from a tribal community, were chosen by the party with social justice being the centrepiece of all recent appointments. The leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi



has been stressing the participation of the deprived sections in governance and calling for the party organisation to be more inclusive. The sources said the Congress has forwarded the names of the four leaders to head the four department-related parliamentary standing committees it has been assigned to lead. While there has been no official notification on the chairship of the

parliamentary standing committees, it is expected to come out soon. The Congress will chair the Department Related Standing Committee on External Affairs; Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Food Processing; Rural Development and Panchayati Raj in the Lok Sabha; and Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports in the Rajya Sabha. This was decided after hectic parleys between the government and the opposition over the panels' chairship. Congress' chief whip in the Rajya Sabha Jairam Ramesh and the party's deputy leader in the Lok Sabha Gaurav Gogoi were involved in the negotiations with the government to arrive at a consensus.

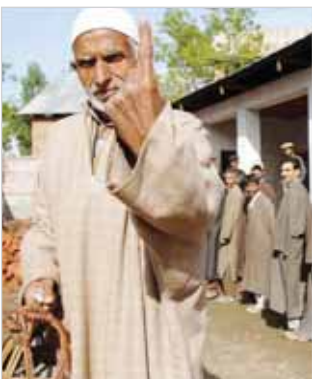




# India wins in J and K

The large turnout and peaceful voting in phase I of the elections marks a significant victory for the nation

The first phase of polling in Jammu and Kashmir, held on September 18 was not only peaceful but also a thumbs up for democracy as 58 per cent voters cast their vote. Approximately 23.27 lakh voters, including 5.66 lakh youths, were eligible to cast their votes to determine the fate of 219 candidates in Phase 1. Though two more phases are left but morning shows the day. Widespread apprehensions arose following a series of attacks in Jammu, raising serious concerns about the high likelihood of disruption. The successful democratic exercise in itself is a victory for the country. Indeed, it marks a crucial moment in the political landscape of the region. For the first time since the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019, the Union Territory is witnessing elections that hold significant weight for both the state and the country at large. This election is not merely a democratic exercise; it is a test of the stability, governance, and the long-term vision for integrating the region more firmly with the rest of India. The elections are being



closely watched, particularly after the transition of Jammu and Kashmir from a state to a Union Territory. For the people of the region, the act of voting is more than just a participation in democracy. The return of democratic process after years of instability, militancy and unrest is expected to reassure the local population that their voices matter in shaping their future. The turnout, especially in rural areas, is a clear indication that people feel secure enough to participate in democratic process.

The election campaign has brought a range of issues to the forefront, which will determine how the political winds blow in the region. Development, unemployment, and security are the most pressing concerns, with local leaders attempting to address the economic stagnation that has plagued Jammu and Kashmir for years. Tourism, once the backbone of the state's economy, has taken a severe hit, and while efforts have been made to revitalise the sector, it remains a sensitive issue in the polls. At the same time, political parties have taken contrasting stances on the abrogation of Article 370. While some align with the central government's move, touting it as a path to progress, others continue to advocate for the restoration of special status. This dichotomy underscores the ongoing divide between different regions of Jammu and Kashmir, which will likely influence the outcome of the elections. A high voter turnout and peaceful elections emboldens the government's stance on its Kashmir policy, reinforcing the narrative that the decision to revoke Article 370 was justified and has led to positive outcomes for the region. For opposition parties, the elections offer an opportunity to challenge the ruling government's narrative and build alliances with local players. As the first phase of polling concludes, Jammu and Kashmir stands at a crossroads. The region's political future hinges on how the rest of the election unfolds and what messages the electorate sends through their vote.

## PICTALK



Pilgrims arrive at the Shri Badrinath Dham in Chamoli district

# Modi@74: A journey of triumphs and challenges



K S TOMAR

Narendra Modi, a man who rose through the ranks, from RSS worker to become a global leader, has undergone a remarkable transformation

As Narendra Modi turns 74, the Prime Minister of India stands at a pivotal point in his political career. Having transformed from a grassroots worker in the RSS to a global leader, Modi's leadership has been marked by several triumphs, while also weathering significant criticism. A closer look at his governance reveals a complex blend of successes and shortcomings, reflecting his unique vision for India and the challenges of implementing sweeping reforms in a diverse, evolving democracy. Successes: Economic Reforms: Modi's tenure has been defined by key economic reforms aimed at spurring growth and investment. The implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in 2017 stands as one of India's most transformative reforms, simplifying the tax system and promoting ease of business.



Another flagship initiative is the "Make in India" program, which sought to position India as a manufacturing hub, attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) in sectors such as defence, electronics, and pharmaceuticals. Infrastructure Development: Under Modi's leadership, infrastructure has seen significant growth. Projects like Bharatmala and Sagarmala have expanded transportation networks, while initiatives like Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana and Ujjwala Yojana have improved housing and provided cooking gas to millions of households. Challenges Before Modi: As Narendra Modi enters the later stages of his political journey, he faces a series of challenges that will shape his legacy and influence India's future. While his tenure has seen significant achievements, Modi's leadership must now address pressing concerns across various sectors that demand urgent attention and innovative solutions.



ON THE GLOBAL STAGE, MODI HAS STRENGTHENED INDIA'S RELATIONSHIPS WITH KEY NATIONS LIKE THE US, JAPAN, AND ISRAEL. UNDER HIS LEADERSHIP, INDIA HAS PLAYED A MORE PROMINENT ROLE IN GLOBAL FORUMS SUCH AS G20 AND BRICS

Economic Recovery and Job Creation: India's economic recovery post-COVID-19 remains fragile. Despite some growth, inflation continues to be a persistent challenge, driven by rising global oil prices and domestic supply chain disruptions. For the average citizen, higher living costs are squeezing household budgets, particularly for the poor and middle class. Modi's government must balance inflation control with promoting sustained economic growth. The issue of unemployment, especially among the youth, looms large. Urban and rural areas continue to experience high joblessness, and despite various reforms, the informal sector, which provides most jobs, is still recovering from the effects of demonetization, the Goods and Services Tax (GST), and the pandemic. Modi will need to focus on bolstering labour-intensive industries, strengthening small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and encouraging entrepreneurship. Agriculture and Farmers' Discontent: Even after repealing the controversial farm laws following large-scale protests, rural distress persists. Indian farmers continue to face challenges such as low productivity, insufficient infrastructure, and limited access to credit. To address these problems, Modi will need to prioritize rural development and improve agricultural infrastructure. However, he must tread cautiously with new reforms to avoid reigniting protests. Farmers will require sustained support through initiatives like improving Minimum Support Prices (MSP) and introducing technological innovations to

enhance productivity. India-China Relations and Regional Security: India's strained relations with China, particularly after the 2020 Galwan Valley clashes, remain a significant foreign policy challenge. The border standoff continues, and while diplomatic negotiations have curbed escalation, the potential for conflict still exists. Managing the delicate balance between regional security and diplomatic efforts with China is critical. Despite these successes, Modi's tenure has not been without shortcomings. The "Make in India" initiative has struggled to create enough manufacturing jobs, and his government's 2016 demonetization policy disrupted the informal economy without yielding long-term benefits. Modi also faced one of the largest protests in Indian history over controversial farm laws, which he ultimately had to repeal. Additionally, his leadership has been criticized for deepening communal divisions, with incidents of religious violence and the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) sparking social tensions. As Modi continues to lead, his legacy will depend on balancing development with social harmony and democratic governance. (The writer is a strategic affairs columnist and political analyst; views are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### ONE NATION ONE POLL

Madam — The Cabinet nod for 'One nation - One election' (19-9-24) displays the misplaced priority of the Union government. Except the cost factor there is no other point worth considering to support the decision of the Cabinet. Election is an opportunity for the people to demonstrate their democratic sanction or resentment over the policies and programmes of a government. People exercising this right to ventilate their agreement or disagreement over the governments in the Center or the States should not be curtailed just to avoid expense. The expectations of the people being state specific in assembly elections and nation specific in the Parliament elections there is possibility of either of them getting swayed by the general mood. Possibility of holding elections in a massive way is not practically feasible. We are seeing the inability of the Election Commission to hold elections to a few States at one stroke. The Commission is not able to hold elections to Maharashtra Assembly along with elections in J&K and HP. Even elections to the state assembly are held in multiple slots. We have also seen the Commission rendered helpless to deal properly with the violations reported during the last General elections. The very idea of mandating holding elections to assemblies along with election to the Parliament is against the very Federal structure of the constitution. Proposal to hold elections to local bodies in 100 days after the General elections is also expensive and it is aimed at swaying the polls taking advantage of the outcome of national level elections. The arbitrary decision is undemocratic, anti-federal and strangles the right of the people to decide their choice on local, state and nation specific needs and demands. Above all, the move of government is, as usual, to divert the attention of the people from the basic and burning issues of the nation in many of which the performance of the government is definitely not upto the mark.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

### Hundred days of achievements



Prime Minister Narendra Modi's first 100 days of his third term have demonstrated a clear focus on development and global leadership. The government's investments of 73 lakh crore in infrastructure projects like roads, railways, and ports are vital steps toward boosting the economy and creating jobs. Raising capital expenditure to Rs11.11 lakh crore reflects

a strong commitment to job creation and overall economic growth. Efforts in agriculture, such as the ₹20,000 crore allocation to farmers and increased MSP, along with the recognition of 1 crore "Lakshpati Didis," are praiseworthy. Foreign policy initiatives, including Modi's engagement with nations like the U.S., Russia, and China, indicate a proactive approach in shaping India's global standing. These accomplishments set a positive tone for the future, even as challenges like inflation and political tensions remain.

In his first 100 days of a third term, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has focused on development and global leadership, with significant investments in infrastructure, agriculture, and foreign relations. While progress is evident, challenges like inflation and political tensions continue to test his government's future agenda.

Vishesh Shukla | Lucknow

### WORLD BAMBOO DAY

Madam—Bamboo is one of the largest members of the grass family and is the fastest growing woody plant on the planet. Its growth rate varies according to the soil and climate, and is best known as a major food source for pandas. Bamboo is also used for culinary and medicinal purposes in many parts of the world, as well for construction materials, furniture, textiles, musical instruments, bicycles, clothing and more. As a packaging material, bamboo is strong, durable and sustainable. It is one of the more remarkable natural materials available to us. The Economist recently quoted that bamboo is literally, the green equivalent of plastics. This is because it is renewable and low-carbon. It also said bamboo is now part and parcel of our packaging material. Furthermore, bamboo produces up to 35% more oxygen than trees, thus helping to offset carbon-dioxide emissions. It's easy to see why bamboo is a favorite when it comes to sustainable materials.

C.K. Subramani Iyer | Coimbatore

### CONGRESS PROMISING THE MOON

Madam — The Congress election manifesto in Haryana is a bundle of high cost freebies not at all feasible financially for the State to implement. While the political parties must examine the impact of their pre poll announcements over the health of the State exchequer and present the detailed outline of available revenue which would bear the brunt of the freebies. The poll regulator Election Commission of India should also draft strict rules for manifestos and promises which are not viable. The cult of freebies must stop if we really wish to progress morally, economically and socially and if Election Commission fails, the Supreme Court of India must take cognizance of the matter and direct the Election Commission to stop this nonsense. The freebies can become a real liability for the exchequer.

Jai Prakash Gupta | Ambala

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

# Kolkata's protests and the culture of rape: A call for societal change



ACHARYA PRASHANT

The tragic incident at RG Kar Medical College, Kolkata underscores the urgent need for a profound societal shift in attitudes toward women

The recent public outcry in Kolkata, sparked by the tragic incident at RG Kar Medical College, has transformed into a significant and sustained protest. Junior doctors gathering in front of the Health Department, alongside widespread public engagement, underscores a profound frustration with the pervasive violence against women in India. Reflecting on the August 9 incident, it's evident that the protest is not merely about the individual responsible. Despite the apprehension of the perpetrator, the continuing movement raises crucial questions about why such intense outrage persists.



The root problem, as I see it, lies in the cultural context that enables such violence. It's not just about one person's actions but about a broader cultural environment. The protests highlight a growing recognition that the issue is embedded within a culture that normalizes and perpetuates violence against women. The Kolkata demonstrations have brought to light a critical aspect of this cultural problem: the normalization of rape and the way women are

mentally change societal norms and practices that contribute to a pervasive culture of violence and exploitation. As long as these cultural attitudes persist, incidents of rape will continue. The troubling normalization of sexual violence in Indian society is evident in various ways. For instance, the fact that the name of the doctor murdered and raped in Bengal was trending on porn websites for an extended period reflects a serious cultural issue. It shows how sexual violence is often sensationalized and dehumanized rather than addressed with the seriousness it deserves. This critique extends to societal behaviors and attitudes, illustrated by the public reaction to the Ujjain incident. The fact that such a violent act occurred in a busy area, with onlookers observing and recording it, underscores the disturbing normalization of sexual violence. Such incidents are met with alarming indifference. Examining the cultural foundations of this issue reveals how cultural norms perpetuate gender inequality and violence. There are many

subtle signs of rape culture that are often overlooked, such as the objectification of women and the normalization of harmful attitudes and practices. Addressing this issue requires a profound cultural transformation. It's not just about legal measures or punishing offenders; it's about transforming the norms and values instilled from a young age. Culture is nurtured in our homes, and changing how we educate and raise our children is crucial to addressing rape culture. In conclusion, the protests in Kolkata and similar movements across India are not just reactions to individual cases of violence but a critical response to a deep-seated cultural issue that normalizes and perpetuates sexual violence. This situation underscores the urgent need for a fundamental cultural shift. Until we address the broader culture of rape, incidents of sexual violence will continue to plague our society. (Acharya Prashant is a Vedanta teacher and an advocate of women rights; views expressed are personal)



## FIRST COLUMN

## APPLY SPORTS ETHICS IN THE WORKPLACE

The lessons learned through sports cultivate a healthier and productive work environment



SAKSHI SETHI

Sports have since long been a crucial element of human culture, teaching participants important life skills and values. The discipline, teamwork and perseverance developed in sports can easily be translated into a professional setting, where these qualities often lead to success. Applying sports values to the workplace creates a healthier and more productive environment that benefits individuals and teams alike.

The term 'resilience' is one of the core values in sports, where athletes regularly face challenges, setbacks and failures. Whether it's losing a game, dealing with injuries or facing tough competition, athletes learn to recover, adapt and continue working toward their goals. The similar value is crucial in the workplace, where employees encounter stress, failed projects and unexpected obstacles. Resilience helps employees bounce back from difficulties and maintain a positive attitude despite setbacks. It encourages them to see failure as an opportunity for growth rather than a reason to give up.

There is no denying the fact that athletes exhibit tremendous commitment and passion for their sport, dedicating hours of practice, maintaining a strong mental focus and striving to overcome challenges. At the workplace, too, similar commitment is essential for both personal as well as organizational success. Employees who are passionate about their work are more engaged, motivated and willing to go the extra mile. Just as athletes work toward improving their performance, committed employees consistently seek opportunities to learn, grow and contribute to their team.

When talked about the Paralympics, these athletes provide a powerful



source of inspiration when it comes to work ethics. They demonstrate exceptional dedication, resilience and perseverance—qualities that can directly inspire and shape one's approach to professional life. The lessons learned from their incredible journeys highlight the importance of maintaining a strong work ethic, overcoming adversity and striving for excellence in any field. Passion fuels innovation and creativity, leading to breakthroughs and a sense of fulfillment in one's job encouraging professionals to remain committed to their goals even when facing challenges at the workplace. It teaches us that obstacles, whether personal or professional, can be overcome with time, effort and persistence.

The values learned through sports are not only essential for athletic success but also for professional growth and productivity in the workplace. By embracing these values, individuals and teams can foster a work culture that promotes collaboration, perseverance and a drive for excellence. Recognizing progress, no matter how small reinforces one's belief that effort pays off and celebrating these victories along the way keeps the individual motivated and energized to continue. Instead of shying away from difficulties, one must see them as opportunities to learn and grow. When an individual approaches obstacles with the belief that effort leads to improvement, they build resilience and perseverance.

As stated above, undoubtedly, Paralympians have to cope with significant adversity, whether it's learning to use a prosthetic limb or recovering from a life-altering injury. In the workplace, this means that failures, mistakes or even unexpected challenges are not the end but an opportunity to bounce back stronger. In the workplace, adopting a mindset that welcomes challenges rather than avoiding them is a key part of developing a strong work ethic. It pushes professionals to take on difficult tasks, expand their capabilities and evolve in their careers. Sports values do provide excellent lessons that can be transferred to the workplace, promoting personal growth, team cohesion and overall success. (The writer is an educator; views expressed are personal)

## Sri Lanka's pivotal presidential election

With traditional parties in decline and new alliances emerging, this election may spring surprises. The outcome will determine Sri Lanka's capacity to address its urgent challenges

Sri Lanka faces a pivotal moment in its political history as it prepares for the presidential election this Saturday, 21 September. This election, the ninth for the executive presidency, unfolds amid severe political polarisation, sharply contrasting with the last election in November 2019. The decline of traditional political parties and the rise of various political alliances are prominent features of this election, with three main candidates competing in a manner distinct from the two-horse races of previous presidential contests. The fragmentation of political parties, the absence of anti-defection laws, and the formation of new alliances driven more by personal interests than by cohesive agendas pose significant risks to democratic stability and governance. The 2019 presidential race featured two main candidates and a notable but relatively minor third-party candidate. It saw a record voter registration of 15,992,096 and a turnout of 83.72% (13,387,951), surpassing previous highs of 81.52% in 2015 and 81.06% in 1982. Despite this high turnout, 135,452 votes were invalid, leaving 13,252,499 votes as valid. Gotabaya Rajapaksa of the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna won with 52.25% of the valid votes (6,924,255), while his main opponent, Sajith Premadasa of the National Democratic Front, received 41.99% (5,564,239). Anura Kumara Disanayake of the National People's Power secured a mere 3.16% (418,553 votes). In the subsequent general election on 5 August 2020, Premadasa and Disanayake faced off again for parliamentary seats. Premadasa won 305,744 votes, while Disanayake received 49,814 votes.

In the 2015 parliamentary elections, Premadasa garnered 112,645 votes from Hambantota, whereas Disanayake, contesting from Colombo, secured 65,966 votes. Ranil Wickremesinghe, one of main three main contenders, in this year's race but absent from the 2019 presidential election, leads the United National Party. His party received 249,435 votes (2.25%) in the general elections, including 30,875 from Colombo and 28,282 from Gampaha. Although his party did not win a parliamentary seat, Wickremesinghe was appointed to a national list position. Amid severe social upheaval caused by economic mismanagement, which resulted in the resignation of both the President and Prime Minister, Wickremesinghe, a seasoned politician and six-time Prime Minister, capitalised on the moment to make his comeback. After Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa was forced to resign, Wickremesinghe was appointed as Prime Minister.

However, protests demanding the resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa led to his dramatic escape, first to Trincomalee by navy ship, then back to Colombo by air force chopper, and finally to the Maldives by air force cargo flight. Rajapaksa officially resigned on 14 July 2022. Subsequently, Prime Minister Wickremesinghe was appointed as President by the constitutional process. Wickremesinghe's appointment highlights the complexities of Sri Lanka's political system.

According to the constitution, the President must appoint a Prime Minister who commands the majority's confidence in Parliament, illustrating the considerable unchecked powers inherent in the executive role. Rajapaksa's assumption that Wickremesinghe, who came to Parliament through the national list, was the candidate who earned the majority's confidence reflects the intricate dynamics of Sri Lanka's



NILANTHA LANGAMUWA



THE FRAGMENTATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES, THE ABSENCE OF ANTI-DEFECTION LAWS, AND THE FORMATION OF NEW ALLIANCES DRIVEN MORE BY PERSONAL INTERESTS THAN BY COHESIVE AGENDAS POSE SIGNIFICANT RISKS TO DEMOCRATIC STABILITY AND GOVERNANCE

politics. However, Wickremesinghe has effectively stabilised the situation after the social upheaval. In this context, Wickremesinghe has emerged as a major candidate, yet the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna has nominated its candidate, Namal Rajapaksa.

Reports suggest that Rajapaksa's ambitions to secure the prime ministership were opposed, leading a faction of his party to break away from Wickremesinghe. Rajapaksa's candidacy appears more focused on maintaining his family's political lineage rather than presenting a genuine bid for leadership. Nonetheless, his endorsement of supporting Sajith Premadasa, where he appeals to supporters to cast their second vote for Premadasa, could be a decisive factor in the election outcome. Meanwhile, the NPP, initially opposed to the public uprising that led to Rajapaksa's removal, has become a significant political entity.

Anura Kumara Disanayake, who ironically led his political party into alliances with traditional parties to secure ministerial positions over the past few decades, has skillfully capitalised on widespread dissatisfaction with corruption and the growing anger towards conventional politicians to bolster his standing. His alliance's emotionally charged propaganda has infiltrated every corner of society, despite its lack of deep ideological substance. The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), his original party, has skillfully harnessed this discontent to challenge the status quo.

However, Disanayake's path to victory remains uncertain, especially with three major candidates in the race. Voter statistics reveal additional obstacles: with 17.1 million registered voters and an anticipated 80% turnout (13.7 million), a candidate would need approxi-

mately 7 million votes to secure the presidency in the first count.

The NPP's past performance shows limited success, receiving 418,553 votes (3.16%) in 2019 and 445,950 votes (3.84%) in parliamentary elections in 2020. The party faces challenges in Tamil-majority districts like Nuwara-Eliya, Jaffna, Wannu, Batticaloa, and Trincomalee, and in areas with lower voter counts, such as Polonnaruwa and Matala. To succeed, the NPP must secure substantial votes from Colombo, Gampaha, Kalutara, Kandy, and Kurunegala, requiring an estimated 700,000 to 800,000 additional votes.

Given these dynamics and the competition among three candidates, the NPP or JVP may struggle to achieve significant success in this election. However, the election remains crucial in determining the country's social and governance structure. Conversely, Sajith Premadasa appears to have significant potential to garner a majority of the votes, while Wickremesinghe has also gained substantial ground. Therefore, it is unlikely that any candidate will secure over 50% of the vote in the first round of counting, which may necessitate counting the second votes.

This uncertainty could trigger a new wave of political instability if major alliances and key candidates fail to manage the results effectively and refuse to accept the people's verdict. Despite flashy manifestos and hefty campaign budgets, none of the candidates have provided a clear plan to tackle the staggering \$100 billion national debt. They all parrot the same old IMF rhetoric, yet almost none offer a concrete strategy beyond this worn-

The situation in the island nation is dire, and there's no straightfor-

ward path for the incoming leader to steer the country out of its deepening crisis. As of 1 July 2024, about 24.8% of Sri Lanka's population lives in poverty, with rates varying dramatically between districts—3.5% in Colombo versus 44.2% in Nuwara-Eliya.

Poverty in rural areas has surged from 15% to 32%, while urban poverty has tripled from 6% to 18%. A recent survey revealed that 31% of the population is impoverished, with 33% skipping meals and 47% cutting back on meal sizes. Malnutrition affects nearly one-third of children under five, and over 40% of women aged 18-60 are overweight or obese, reflecting severe economic and health issues. Regardless of the election's outcome, Sri Lanka's entrenched political divisions threaten to entrench a fragmented legislative body, where effective governance and decisive action may become increasingly elusive.

Such divisions risk entrenching a cycle of delays and inefficiencies, potentially leading to a state of perpetual gridlock that hampers national progress. Antonio Gramsci's notion of passive revolution becomes pertinent here, warning of significant changes that merely preserve existing power structures. Hannah Arendt's insight that "The most radical revolution will become a conservative the day after the revolution" cautions against decisions driven by emotion over reason.

Thus, the question looms: can this election transcend emotional politics to instigate genuine reform, or will it simply entrench the status quo? Regrettably, the candidates' manifestos seem to hint at the latter.

(The writer is a journalist and author. Views expressed are personal)

## Chronicles of compliance: The missing case diaries in money laundering probes

Money laundering poses a significant threat to society, undermines democratic institutions, and fosters criminal activities and corruption

The international community established the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to combat money laundering and terrorist financing through international standards. The FATF's 40 Recommendations provide a comprehensive framework for countries to prevent and address these financial crimes. India enacted the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in 2002, effective from July 1, 2005, in alignment with its international obligations. The PMLA aims to combat the laundering of illicit funds, including those from activities such as drug trafficking, thereby safeguarding the country's financial integrity.



PRAKHAR BAJPAI

Section 172 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), maintains a chronological record of the investigation process conducted by the police officer. This detailed documentation includes every step taken during the investigation, such as the date and time of receiving information about the crime, the start and finish times of the investigation, locations visited, witness statements recorded, and evi-

dence collected. This comprehensive record ensures continuity and transparency in the investigation, serving as a crucial handover document when different officers handle the case at various stages. The case diary is essential for maintaining continuity and transparency in the investigation process, offering a comprehensive overview of progress to courts and defence lawyers. This transparency is indispensable for maintaining procedural integrity and accountability in the investigative process.

**Concerns Regarding the Absence of a Case Diary under PMLA:** In contrast, the PMLA mandates thorough investigations into money laundering but does not specify the need for a

detailed case diary as in the CrPC. This absence raises concerns about potential misuse by the Enforcement Directorate. Without a mandated case diary, there is no obligation for investigators to maintain a comprehensive, chronological record of their actions. This lack of documentation could reduce accountability and allow for the manipulation or selective presentation of evidence without a transparent trail of how and when it was obtained, compromising the investigation's integrity.

This can lead to biased or unjust conclusions, undermining the integrity of the investigation and in cases where multiple officers are involved in different stages of the investigation, the absence



of a detailed case diary can result in inconsistent handovers. Critical information might be lost or altered, impacting the continuity and coherence of the investigation. This ultimately leads to violations of individual rights and compromise on due process of law.

**Case Diary Maintenance:** It is important to understand that the accused under CrPC does not have an automatic right to

view the case diary. Access to the case diary is at the discretion of the Court or the police officer. However, the significance of maintaining a case diary as noted above lies in its ability to keep investigating agencies diligent and accountable throughout the investigation process.

Furthermore, under the criminal law procedure, it is considered a dereliction of duty if the Magistrate does not request and review the case diary before authorizing any form of custody to the accused which means the perusal of the case diary by the magistrate is essential before any remand, whether judicial or police custody and haphazard maintenance of a case diary discredits those responsible and defeats the very purpose for

which it is required. Therefore, it is suggested that similar practice needs to be followed under the PMLA cases as well. Mandating ED to maintain a case diary ensures that it adheres to the due process of law during investigations and thereafter, the court will become entitled to use the case diary during trials or inquiries as an aid in the inquiry or trial, thereby holding the ED accountable for its investigative procedures, doing this the magistrate will be getting aid and true picture of the detailed record of the investigation proceedings conducted by ED till date in a narrative form, recorded promptly, with sufficient detail, and in chronological order and thus, will be able to objectively decide whether to remand the

accused or not. The Supreme Court is set to review 2 aspects of PMLA in July 2024, firstly, the FIR which is akin to ECIR under PMLA should be supplied to the accused or not. Secondly, the reversal of the presumption of innocence. It is to be noted that giving a case diary a statutory requirement under PMLA and thereby, mandating the ED to maintain one will be crucial in shaping the final judgement, which could fundamentally impact the legal framework for money laundering investigations in India. A ruling in favour of maintaining a case diary would enhance the fairness and transparency of PMLA proceedings, ensuring the accused's right to a fair trial. (The writer is a law student; views expressed are personal)







# SC rejects telecom companies curative pleas on AGR computation

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
In a jolt to telecom firms, the Supreme Court has dismissed a batch of pleas filed by companies, including Vodafone Idea and Bharti Airtel, seeking correction of alleged errors in the Adjusted Gross Revenue.  
A bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices Sanjiv Khanna and B R Gavai also rejected the plea of telcos seeking to list the curative petitions for open court hearing.  
A curative petition is the last legal recourse in the apex court and is generally considered in-chamber unless a prima facie case is made out for reconsideration of the verdict.  
“Application for listing the Curative Petitions in open Court is rejected. We have



gone through the Curative documents. In our opinion, no case is made out within

the parameters indicated in the decision of this court in Rupa Ashok Hurra v Ashok Hurra. The Curative Petitions are dismissed,” the bench observed in an order dated August 30, which was uploaded on Thursday.  
On October 9 last year, the top court had taken note of submissions of some telecommunication companies seeking listing of their pleas on Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) due issue. The telcos had referred to alleged errors in the arithmetic calculation for arriving at the AGR-related dues by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT).  
In July 2021, the Supreme Court dismissed a plea seeking correction of errors in the demand of AGR dues. The telecom companies had moved the top court claiming

# India-US trade potential worth 500 billion USD: Hardeep Puri

**PTI ■ HOUSTON**  
The United States is India's sixth largest energy trade partner and the growing bilateral trade has the potential to cross the USD 500 billion-mark from USD 200 billion at present, Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri has said.  
The hydrocarbon trade between the two countries has reached USD 13.6 billion in 2023-24 nearly double the figure from 2018-19, Puri said at a roundtable with energy companies. The roundtable, held on the sidelines of the global energy conference Gastech 2024, here was attended by Mukesh Aghi, President and CEO of USISPF, and Consul General of India in Houston, D C Manjunath, among others.  
Puri said that the US is now India's sixth-largest energy trade partner, with hydrocarbon trade valued at USD 2.43 billion in the first two months of FY 2024-25.  
This momentum indicates the potential for total bilateral trade to soar from around USD 200 billion to over USD 500 billion, he said.  
During his visit the minister also engaged with stakeholders from the US-India Business Council (USIBC), the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF), and industry leaders to underscore the significance of the US-India energy partnership.  
The conference was organised by USISPF, an advocacy group dedicated to strengthening



the strategic partnership between the US and India. Puri highlighted India's leadership during its G20 Presidency, where it launched the Global Biofuels Alliance in collaboration with the US and other like-minded countries. This initiative aims to develop and deploy low-carbon solutions, further reinforcing the commitment to sustainable energy practices. In a meeting with Brad Crabtree, Assistant Secretary of the Office of Fossil Energy and Carbon Management at the US Department of Energy, Puri discussed the unique challenges India faces as the third-largest hydrocarbon consumer while aiming for net zero emissions by 2070. The discussion covered issues such as carbon capture, utilization, and storage (CCUS) as a vital solution for enhancing energy security and emissions reduction, alongside advancements in CO2 removal and innovative biofuels.

# Banking sector to play major role in India's development: Sitharaman

**PTI ■ PUNE**  
Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday said the banking sector will have to play a crucial role in driving the agenda of making India a developed nation or Vikiat Bharat by 2047.  
The Finance Minister was speaking at an event here to mark the 90th Foundation Day of the Bank of Maharashtra, a public sector lender.  
“Banks will have to play a crucial role in driving the agenda set by the Prime Minister and by your role, we are going to give greater momentum to achieving this dream,” she said.  
Sitharaman said banks will be required to give strong momentum to the infrastructure sector, ensure the availability of need-based



funding to MSMEs, bring unbanked population under the ambit of formal banking channels, and help increase insurance penetration.  
She noted that technology is changing the banking landscape as it provides a secure and easy-to-navigate digital banking experience to all customers.  
However, she added that “you (banks) cannot have a digital system which somewhere gets hacked, and the entire system and the trust which is laid on it getting compromised. So

# Government to soon release committee report on MSP of crops: Shivraj

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**  
Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Thursday announced that the government will soon release the report of the committee on Minimum Support Price (MSP) for crops, which was established following the withdrawal of the three controversial farm laws.  
The minister also unveiled new initiatives aimed at modernizing agriculture and improving farmer engagement during a press briefing on the achievements of the Modi 3.0 government's first 100 days. ‘Adhunik Krishi Choupal’, a new programme featuring scientists sharing agricultural innovations with farmers, will be aired on Doordarshan and All India Radio from October. The minister will hold weekly interactions with farmers and agricultural leaders at the



Shivraj Singh Chouhan at a press conference on 100 days achievements of the ministry at National Media Centre, in New Delhi on Thursday.

agriculture ministry, in an initiative dubbed “Kisan Samvad.”  
On genetically modified (GM) cotton technology awaiting regulatory approval, Chouhan said, “This is a sensitive topic for us. The approval will be given after wider consultations.”  
“The report has not been prepared yet. The committee is working continuously,” Chouhan told reporters when asked about the status.

make suggestions so as to make MSP more effective and transparent; to promote natural farming; and to change crop patterns keeping in mind the changing needs of the country. Asserting that the government is pursuing a three-pronged strategy to boost farm output, the minister said the focus is on ensuring timely supply of affordable crop inputs, enhancing farmers' income and ensuring fair prices for produce. To combat impact of climate change, 109 high-yielding, climate-resilient crop varieties have been released, Chouhan said.  
The government has asked states to submit their seed requirements early, particularly for new crop varieties for the upcoming rabi season in order to prevent the delays. Fertiliser affordability is another key focus. The Cabinet recently approved subsidies for non-urea fertilisers, a decision expected to provide significant relief to farmers preparing for rabi sowing, he said.  
Risk mitigation remains a cornerstone of the government's agricultural policy. “The Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana continues to be our primary tool for crop insurance,” Chouhan explained. He also highlighted the ongoing financial support through PM-KISAN, which provides Rs 6,000 annually to eligible farmers. Addressing the perennial issue of fair pricing, Chouhan said the government has increased the MSP for kharif crops. Additionally, it has committed to the Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshhan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA) scheme. The Cabinet has approved the continuation of price support scheme under PM-AASHA to stabilize crop prices and increase farmers' income.

# SEBI eases rules for public issuance of debt securities

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Markets regulator Sebi has amended rules to streamline the process for public issuance of debt securities aimed at providing faster access to funds for such issuers.  
Under the amended rules, Sebi has reduced the period for seeking public comments on the draft offer documents from 7 working days to 1 day for issuers whose specified securities are already listed and 5 days for other issuers.  
“The issuers whose specified securities are listed on a recognised stock exchange having nationwide trading terminals shall post the draft



offer document filed with stock exchange(s) for one day immediately after the date of filing the draft offer document with stock exchange(s),” the regulator said in a notification. Also, the minimum subscription

period has been cut from 3 to 2 working days.  
Further, in case of revision in the price band or yield, the bidding period disclosed in the offer documents, can be extended by one working day instead of three working days.  
The new rules are aimed at facilitating ease of doing business and providing flexibility to issuers.  
Additionally, Sebi has provided flexibility to issuers by providing discretion to them with regard to advertisement of public issues through electronic modes subject to a window advertisement (containing a QR Code and Link to full advertisement) in newspapers.  
Further, Sebi has simplified disclosure requirements for non-convertible securities in the offer documents.  
It has removed the requirement for PAN and personal address disclosure of promoters in offer documents.  
The regulator clarified the key operational and financial parameters will be disclosed in line with financial information requirements.  
To give this effect, Sebi's issue and listing of non-convertible securities rules have been amended on September 17 that became effective from the same day.

# India to become third largest economy by FY31: S&P Report

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
India is on track to become the third-largest economy by 2030-31, driven by a projected annual growth rate of 6.7 per cent this fiscal, S&P Global said in a report on Thursday.  
The report also said that with 8.2 per cent growth rate in FY2024, continued reforms are crucial to improving business transactions and logistics, boosting private sector investment, and reducing reliance on public capital.  
It said equity markets are

expected to stay dynamic and competitive due to strong growth prospects and better regulation, and foreign inflows into Indian government bonds have surged since the country joined major emerging market indexes, with further growth anticipated.  
To maximize trade benefits, India must develop infrastructure and geopolitical strategies, particularly regarding its extensive coastline, said the first edition of ‘India Forward: Emerging Perspectives’ report.  
Nearly 90 per cent of India's trade is seaborne, necessitating robust port infrastructure to manage increasing exports and bulk commodity imports, it added. Noting that India faces rising domestic energy demands and can look to sustainable technologies, including renewable and low-emission fuels, balancing energy security with its energy transition plans, the report stated that agriculture will rely on advanced technologies and new policies to improve infrastructure and productivity.

# Centre announces steps to resolve shipping related woes of traders

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
The government on Thursday announced steps, including reducing certain charges at ports and purchase of five additional second-hand container vessels by SCI, to resolve shipping sector-related problems of exporters and importers.  
These measures were announced after a meeting of all the concerned stakeholders of the international trade segment, including senior officials of ministries like commerce and industry, shipping, ports, finance, civil aviation and railways; apex exporters body FIEO (federation of Indian export organisations), customs officials, freight forwarders, transport operators and shipping companies.  
Exporting community and experts have flagged shipping sector issues which are hurting the country's exports, which has contracted by 9.3 per cent in August.  
The issues figured in the discussions include container shortage, surge in ocean freight rate and shipping cost,

shipping delays at the Indian ports, and turnaround time at the ports.  
Briefing media after the deliberations, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said that several issues were discussed to look at addressing the challenges that exporters and importers are facing in the shipping area.  
“I am confident that it (decisions taken today) will result in significantly bringing down the shipping cost, improve the availability of empty containers, help faster evacuation of export consignments, and significantly reduce the congestion at ports,” he said.  
It was announced that the Shipping Corporation of India (SCI) will “purchase five additional second-hand container vessels” to further boost cargo handling capacity. The SCI also announced that they are chartering container ships to significantly increase the container capacities, on an immediate basis capacity will be enhanced by 9,000 TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent unit). The Railway board and Container Corporation

# India, South Korea begin to share electronic bill of lading

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
India and South Korea have started sharing the bill of lading in an electronic transfer mode between the customs of both sides, a move that will help promote ease of doing business, a senior official said on Thursday.  
A bill of lading is a legal document that serves as a receipt, contract, and proof of ownership for shipped goods.  
Director General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) Santosh Kumar Sarangi said as and when the system becomes a norm for all the countries, there will be no requirement for physical submission of records.  
“India in collaboration with South Korea has now started this concept of sharing the bill of lading in an electronic transfer mode between the customs of both sides,” he said while addressing a session in the ‘Deloitte Government Summit’ here.  
South Korea is a key trading partner of India and both countries have implemented a comprehensive free trade agreement in 2010.  
India's exports to the country stood at USD 6.41 billion in 2023-23, while imports aggregated at USD 21.13



billion.  
Sarangi added that doing away with physical submissions may happen in the next 1-1.5 years.  
The United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) has taken this initiative to ensure that all trade documentations happen through the electronic transfer mode and that work is under progress as various countries are participating.  
UNCITRAL is the core legal body of the UN system in the field of international trade law. Its business is the modernisation and harmonisation of rules on international business.  
Sarangi also said a lot of startups are working in the direction of ensuring tracking and tracing of goods

# INBRIEF

**KENYA HIGH COMMISSION VISITS GNDU**  
**AMRITSAR:** Esther Karema Mutua from the Kenya High Commission visited Guru Nanak Dev University. During her visit, Ms. Mutua met with Kenyan students and the Chairman of the International Student Cell at the Golden Jubilee Centre for Entrepreneurship and Innovation of the Guru Nanak Dev University.

**REC SIGNS MOU WITH RE DEVELOPERS**  
**GANDHINAGAR:** REC Limited has signed an MoU during the 4th Global Renewable Energy Investors Meet & Expo (RE-INVEST 2024) in Gandhinagar with RE developers aggregating about Rs 1.12 lakh crore.

**STUDENTS ENGAGE IN CONFERENCE ON ANATOMY, AI & AMP**  
**KATTANKULATHUR:** The 45th National Conference of the Association of Anatomists-Tamil Nadu at the SRM Medical College Hospital and Research Centre, drawing participation from over 300 students.

**VIT-AP UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**  
**AMRAVATI:** Global South as a region signifying economic growth questions of inequality, development, sustainability take precedence in scholarly debate as witnessed in the efforts of the School of Social Sciences and Humanities (VISH), VIT-AP to highlight these issues.



# A DIVINE JOURNEY

SHARANYA CHANDRAN'S *Hymns to Hara* was more than a performance, it was a profound tribute to Lord Shiva, blending tradition, personal devotion and artistic grace in a moving return to the stage, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

The stage was set, the lights dimmed and the air filled with anticipation as Sharanya Chandran stepped gracefully onto the Stein Auditorium stage. What followed was not merely a dance performance but a spiritual journey, an exquisite expression of devotion, emotion and divine energy. In her solo Bharatanatyam presentation, *Hymns to Hara*, Sharanya Chandran paid tribute to Lord Shiva. The term *Hymns to Hara* refers to devotional songs or praises dedicated to Lord Shiva, who is often called "Hara," meaning "the remover" or "destroyer of evil" in Sanskrit. This title perfectly encapsulated the performance, as it was a spiritual offering through dance, celebrating the multifaceted aspects of Lord Shiva, his power, love and divine qualities. From the very first moment, it became evident that this was much more than a dance, it was a deep exploration of the divine, a celebration of devotion and a portrayal of the complex emotions evoked by Lord Shiva. Sharanya's depiction was powerful and moving, capturing the essence of Shiva's multifaceted nature. As the daughter of the renowned Bharatanatyam dancer Geeta Chandran, Sharanya has long been admired for her ability to infuse



depth and emotion into her performances. In *Hymns to Hara*, she explored the many dimensions of Shiva, his compassion, his wrath, his fearlessness and even his more unsettling aspects. Each emotion was brought vividly to life through

Sharanya's precise movements, her expressive face and her profound understanding of the Bharatanatyam tradition. What made this performance particularly meaningful was the personal connection Sharanya

brought to it. After a hiatus from the stage, *Hymns to Hara* marked her return to performing and it was clear how much the experience meant to her. The performance was a tribute to her grandparents, both devout followers of Lord Shiva, making it a poignant expression of familial love and devotion. Additionally, the evening carried personal significance for Sharanya as it coincided with her ten-year anniversary at J-PAL South Asia, where she successfully balances a career in development alongside her passion for dance. The beauty of *Hymns to Hara* lay in Sharanya's ability to work together with various elements of Indian culture. Drawing inspiration from poems and verses in Tamil, Maithili and other languages, she crafted a vivid portrayal of Shiva's complex character. The traditional Bharatanatyam pieces were carefully selected, creating a cohesive and visually captivating performance. Throughout the evening, Sharanya was accompanied by her mother and guru, Geeta Chandran, who provided the rhythmic beats of the Nattuvangam. The live music, featuring K Venkateshwaran on vocals, Manohar Balachandirane on the Mridangam, Varun Rajasekharan on the ghatam and G

Raghavendra Prasath on the violin, enhanced the emotional depth of the performance, adding an even greater spiritual resonance to the evening. What set Sharanya's performance apart was not just her technical prowess as a dancer but her ability to connect with the audience on a deeper level. Her dual life as a policy professional and a dancer gave her work a unique perspective, adding richness to her portrayal of themes such as duty, devotion and the search for meaning. In *Hymns to Hara*, Sharanya Chandran did more than just perform Bharatanatyam, she invited the audience into her world, a world shaped by family, faith and art, where tradition and personal history beautifully intertwined. It was a performance that touched the heart, leaving the audience not only in wonder of her talent but deeply moved by the sincerity and emotion she poured into every step.



Photos: Pankaj Kumar

## EXPLORING THE ARTISTIC SPIRIT

The Capital Art Show in Delhi is a vibrant celebration of artistic expression, showcasing the rich diversity and creativity of Indian artists through over 80 stunning artworks and sculptures, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

Delhi, a city full of cultural richness, has become a vibrant place of artistic energy, blending its historic heritage with modern creativity. As visitors entered The Claridges for "The Capital Art Show," they were immediately immersed in Delhi's vibrant artistic spirit. The exhibition unfolds as a space of mesmerising beauty, where every artwork tells a unique story that goes beyond language. This curated collection stands as a tribute to the artist's mastery, each piece reflecting their inner world with precision and passion. The exhibition celebrates the artist's world, where every piece is a masterpiece that touches the soul. It's a space where everyone wants to be included, as artists have a special way of expressing what words cannot, painting straight from the heart. The Capital Art Show is more than an exhibition, it's a compelling display of human creativity and expression. Each piece offers a distinct appeal, drawing visitors into a space where emotions, memories and nature blend seamlessly. The gallery's peaceful yet vibrant atmosphere makes it feel as though the artworks are alive, quietly engaging with those who appreciate them. This collection, rich in diverse styles and mediums, invites deep reflection and enriches a profound connection. It pulls you into the artist's world, much like M.F. Hussain's bold acrylic strokes, which capture the energy and complexity of Indian life in a single painting. The show, curated by the renowned Rahul Kumar and featuring the debut of Sameera Anand, offers a fresh perspective on Delhi's evolving art scene. Her collection masterfully blends works from past legends with emerging talents, showcasing both legacy and innovation. Attendees were treated to



Photos: Pankaj Kumar

masterpieces by iconic artists like F.N. Souza, S.H. Raza, B. Prabha and Krishen Khanna, along with dynamic pieces from contemporary artists such as Jeram Patel. With over 80 stunning artworks and sculptures, the exhibition celebrated the rich diversity and creativity of India's artistic landscape. The exhibition left no doubt that in the world of art, everyone yearns to be

included. Through the universal language of visual expression, The Capital Art Show had created a space where attendees could feel truly alive, connecting with the indescribable and experiencing the profound beauty of human creativity. It was, in every sense, a masterpiece of curation and artistic expression. The gallery was thoughtfully arranged into thematic

sections, each offering a unique yet interconnected view of artistic expression. "Post-Modernism & The Indian Approach" challenged Western conventions with abstract and figurative works rooted in Indian identity. "Memory as a Tool," featuring Viswanath Kuttum's evocative pieces such as *What Do We Want to See in the World - (2024)* and *Ellora Caves Series (Set of 6) (2024)*, explored

recollection through materials like paraffin, beeswax, resin and brown powder on paperboard, creating a dreamlike experience. In "The Self," N. Ramachandran's mixed media boxes captured childhood memories, revealing different stories when opened or closed, with nostalgic engravings. "In Celebration of Nature," highlighted by KP Pradeepkumar's *Flower Seasons (2020)*, used mixed media including watercolours, gouache, tempera and pastels to honour the beauty and fragility of the natural world. In "Ecology & Environment" showcased Pankaj Chouhan's compelling watercolour on paper, addressing environmental degradation and human impact. "Changing Architecture," represented by Sunil Yadav's *Geometric Paradox (2024)* in pastels on paper, blended geometric and organic forms to explore how spaces shape emotions. "Abstracted Forms" featured deep sentiments manifested in non-representational works, with notable pieces like Kumaresan Selvaraj and Yuwan Bothisathuvar's *Nothing From (2022)* on Canson paper and plywood, evocative art. Finally, "Progressives & Associates" paid tribute to the pioneers of Indian modernism, celebrating their bold innovation and influence on the future of Indian art. The Capital Art Show was a deeply moving experience. It felt as though each artwork was speaking directly to us, creating a dialogue that spanned across time and personal boundaries. The art didn't just hang on the walls, it seemed to breathe and interact, inviting us to see our own reflections in its depths. The show made the beauty of human creativity feel personal, reminding us that in the world of art, we all have a place. It was truly an immersive journey that left a lasting impression.

## A RICH TRIBUTE TO THE DHRUPAD MAESTRO

18th Pandit Siyaram Tiwari Music Festival Celebrates the Legacy of Dhrupad

By **GYANESHWAR DAYAL**

The 18th edition of the Pandit Siyaram Tiwari Music Festival paid a grand tribute to one of the most revered figures in Indian classical music. The festival honoured the life and legacy of Pandit Siyaram Tiwari, a maestro of the ancient Dhrupad tradition. Dhrupad, the oldest form of North Indian classical vocal music, has roots in the chanting style of the Samaveda, a sacred Sanskrit text dating back over 3,000 years. This meditative and contemplative genre, once confined to Hindu temples and royal courts, has evolved into a sophisticated art form over the centuries. A key feature of Dhrupad is its deep connection to nada yoga, the practice of exploring the inner sounds and vibrations of the body, believed to be the fundamental building blocks of the universe. Dhrupad vocalists cultivate an extraordinary resonance, enabling them to express a wide range of tones and microtones. It is this ancient tradition that Pandit Siyaram Tiwari, a leading exponent of the Darbhanga gharana, championed throughout his life until his passing in 1998. Born on March 10, 1919, Pandit Siyaram Tiwari was celebrated for his mastery of Dhrupad and was particularly known for introducing fast-paced laykari (rhythmic play) within the genre. His contributions were recognised with prestigious awards such as the Padma Shri in 1971 and the Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship in 1984, India's highest honor for musicians. The Pandit Siyaram Tiwari Memorial Sangeet Trust, under the curatorship of Dr. Sumeet Anand Pandey, organised this festival to preserve and promote the rich tradition of Dhrupad. Dr. Pandey, Tiwari's maternal grandson and an acclaimed Dhrupad vocalist, continues to uphold the family's musical legacy. As the co-founder and secretary of the Trust, Dr. Pandey is committed to sharing the timeless beauty of Dhrupad with a wider



Photos: Pankaj Kumar



audience. This year's festival featured captivating performances, beginning with Shashi Kant Pathak, who delivered a mesmerising solo on the Pakhawaj, a classical Indian drum. Pathak's performance earned him the "Navodit Kalakar Samman" award. He was accompanied by Rajesh Mishra on the Sarangi and Dr. Pandey himself on vocals. The evening concluded with a masterful Sarod recital by Pandit Biswajit Roy Chowdhury, who performed ragas from the Malhar family, accompanied by Pandit Durjay Bhaumik on Tabla. The noted music critic Pandit Vijay Shankar Mishra served as the compère for the event, guiding the audience through the evening's rich offerings. Speaking at the event, Dr. Pandey said, "It's a great honor to continue the legacy of my grandfather, Pandit Siyaram Tiwari, through this annual festival. Dhrupad is a timeless tradition that deserves to be celebrated and shared with the world. We hope that this festival will inspire new generations to appreciate and learn this beautiful art form." This year's festival held particular significance as the Pandit Siyaram Tiwari Memorial Sangeet Trust marked its 10th anniversary. Over the past year, the Trust organised 10 festivals across India, showcasing the beauty of Indian classical music. Two notable initiatives, Geetam Vadyam Nrityam and Vani Veena Venu, received widespread acclaim. Additionally, Dr. Pandey launched the "Naya Swar" series in Delhi, featuring performances by young maestros, with plans to expand to cities like Kolkata, Mumbai, and Bengaluru in the coming year. The Darbhanga school, to which Pandit Siyaram Tiwari belonged, is known for producing versatile vocalists skilled in Dhrupad, Khayal, Thumri and Bhajans. Pandit Tiwari's exemplary mastery in these forms continues to serve as a guiding light for future generations of musicians. Dr. Pandey's dedication to his craft extends beyond India. He has been invited as a Fulbright visiting fellow for 2024-25 at the University of California, Los Angeles, where he will engage in teaching, research, and concerts. His recent tour of seven European countries, where he presented Dhrupad on prestigious stages, further solidifies his role in taking Indian classical music to a global audience. As the 18th Pandit Siyaram Tiwari Music Festival concluded, it not only celebrated the enduring legacy of the Dhrupad maestro but also reaffirmed the vibrant future of this ancient musical tradition.

