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WORLD 8 TRUMP THREATENS TO END BIDEN IMMIGRATION PROGRAMMES

MONEY 10 JIO-BP INAUGURATES 500TH EV CHARGING STATION

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INDIA LIKELY TO MAINTAIN SUPREMACY OVER BANGLADESH 12 SPORTS



Police altered documents in RG Kar case, claims CBI



Activists of various left wing parties clash with police personnel during a protest march against the alleged sexual assault and murder of a trainee doctor at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, in Kolkata, Thursday

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Central Bureau of Investigation has reasons to believe that a section of Kolkata Police officials had tried to create fake documents in the Kolkata lady doctor rape and murder case.

to "create" and "alter" certain documents that could change the direction of the case. Hearing a writ petition the Calcutta High Court had transferred the case to the CBI following allegations that the Kolkata Police was trying to suppress facts.

"During custodial interrogation of both the accused persons, new/ additional facts have emerged to the effect that some false records pertaining to the instant case were created/ altered in the police station," the CBI letter said.

given three versions of "sudden illness, suicide and then death over telephone before we rushed to the hospital ... then in the hospital we were made to sit for three hours while her mother literally held their feet to let her see her daughter's face once," said the father of the victim. The ordeal did not end there as the old parents were made to sit in the Tala Police Station for more than an hour and were repeatedly monitored while they wrote the FIR.

Domestic Violence Act applicable to all women: SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a significant verdict, the Supreme Court on Thursday ruled that the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, is a civil code that is applicable to every woman in India irrespective of her religious affiliation or social background.



which allowed it and remanded the matter to the magistrate with a direction to consider his application by giving an opportunity to both parties to adduce their evidence. The judges noted that aggrieved by the order, the woman approached the High Court which dismissed her plea in April last year and directed the magistrate to consider the application filed by the man under section 25 of the Act.

Hindu Temple vandalised in US

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Unknown miscreants have vandalised the BAPS Hindu temple in California's Sacramento, desecrating it with expletive-laden graffiti saying "Hindus go back!", the BAPS Public Affairs said.

SC to hear Godhra incident appeals on 15 January

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday said it will hear on January 15 the appeals filed by the Gujarat Government and several other convicts in the 2002 Godhra train burning case.



Gujarat Government's counsel Swati Ghildiyal requested the bench to post the matter for hearing on some other day as she was to argue before another Supreme Court bench in a death penalty-related matter.



People gather at a government hospital after their family members drowned while taking holy dips in rivers and ponds during the 'Jivitputrika' festival on Wednesday, in Aurangabad district of Bihar, Thursday, Sept. 26, 2024.

Several drown during Bihar festival

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PATNA/NEW DELHI

At least 43 people, including 37 were missing while taking holy dips in rivers and ponds in separate incidents during the 'Jivitputrika' festival in Bihar, the State Government said on Thursday.

Patna, Vaishali, Muzaffarpur, Samastipur, Gopalganj and Arwal districts. The DMD has pressed several teams of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) for search and rescue operations.

FIRST WOMAN PRESIDENT TO MEET TROOPS AT SIACHEN



President Droupadi Murmu pays tribute at the Siachen War Memorial during a visit to Siachen Base Camp, on Thursday

HP govt face flak by party for adopting Yogi model

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ SHIMLA/NEW DELHI

Himachal Pradesh Minister Himakant Singh was summoned to Delhi and reprimanded by the Congress brass over a controversial order issued by his department mandating food outlets across the State to display the name and address of their owners, which has however been withdrawn.

the move as it had criticised a similar move by the Uttar Pradesh Government during the Kanwar Yatra a few weeks back. Sources said Vikramaditya has been asked not to give controversial remarks on this matter.

SC rejects Gujarat Government plea in Bilkis case



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday dismissed a plea filed by the Gujarat Government seeking a review of the court's verdict which contained certain observations against the State while quashing the remission granted to 11 men convicted of raping Bilkis Bano and murdering seven of her family members during the 2002 riots.

Little hopes of ceasefire between Israel, Hezbollah

AP ■ TEL AVIV

The Israeli Prime Minister appeared to downplay hopes of an imminent truce with Hezbollah on Thursday after the United States and its allies called for an "immediate" 21-day ceasefire to "provide space for diplomacy."

had been any directive to ease up on fighting on the northern border with Lebanon. The comments raised questions about a new international initiative to halt increasingly heavy exchanges of fire that have killed hundreds of people in Lebanon and threatened to trigger an all-out war between Israel and Hezbollah.



country would continue fighting "with all our might until victory and the safe return of the residents of the north to their homes." Hezbollah has also not yet

responded to the proposal for a pause in fighting, although Lebanon's caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati has welcomed it. The Lebanese militant group has insisted it would only halt its strikes if there is a ceasefire in Gaza, where Israel has been battling Hamas for nearly a year.

to meet with other world leaders on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly. Israel launched a massive operation in Gaza after a Hamas-led attack into southern Israel on October 7 in which about 1,200 people (mostly civilians) were killed, and 250 taken hostage.

HC halts counting of DUSU polls' votes till all defacement is removed

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
The Delhi High Court on Thursday halted the counting of votes of DUSU elections, which are scheduled on Friday, till all the defacement material, including posters, hoarding and graffiti, is removed and public property is restored. A bench of Chief Justice-designate Manmohan and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela said the elections process may proceed but the counting of votes will not take place till the court is satisfied that defacement of property has been removed. "This court directs that the elections process may proceed yet no counting of votes shall take place either on Delhi University (Students' Union) elections or on college elections till this court is satisfied that

posters, hoardings, graffiti, spray paints are removed and public property is restored," the bench said. It directed the varsity to file a fresh status report and to ensure that EVMs and ballot boxes, to be used in the Delhi University Students' Union (DUSU) elections, are kept secured in a safe place till further orders. The court also directed the Delhi University to pay the expenses incurred by the civic authorities, including MCD and Delhi Metro, in removing the defacement and added that the varsity may recover the amount from the candidates thereafter. "Delhi University has to bear the cost for this. Civic agencies can't be made to suffer due to this. You (DU) are not doing



anything, you don't have a system in place. DU was merrily going around with it. You never came to the court that guidelines were being violated by the candidates, it was private persons who approached the court and apprised us of the situation," the bench said. It said the varsity, where lakhs of students are studying, is not able to deal with the 21 candidates and added that the problem was "lack of will and lack of courage." "These 21 students are bringing a bad name to the university. How can you allow this to happen? You have to exercise your powers, you don't have to be scared of anyone," the bench said and listed the matter for further proceedings on October 21. During the hearing, the counsel for the DU

submitted that out of the three options suggested by the court on Wednesday, counting of votes can be withheld. The petitioners, however, urged the court to cancel the elections till the time the defacement is cleaned. The court had suggested that the university should defer the elections, scheduled for September 27, or disqualify the candidates and start nomination afresh or should allow polling but not declare the results till all the defacement is removed. The court was hearing a plea seeking action against the prospective DUSU candidates and student outfits involved in damaging, defacing, soiling or destroying the beauty of public walls. Petitioner Prashant Manchanda, a practising advo-

cate, also sought action against those involved in damaging classrooms, thus denying the citizens a clean and beautiful environment and surroundings free from defacement as well as depriving the students of their right to education. He also sought a direction to erring candidates and their parties to remove the defacement and refurbish the areas and further take efforts for beautification of the destroyed portions. On Wednesday, another petition by a group of students studying at DU came up for hearing. The petitioners, represented by advocate Govind Jee, highlighted the alleged nuisance, disruptions and other activities like defacement of public property under the guise of DUSU elections.

ABVP participates in cleanliness drive day before DUSU polls

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
A day before the Delhi University's Student Union (DUSU) polls, Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) workers participated in a cleanliness drive while National Students Union of India (NSUI) demanded that the administration and the Delhi Police to ensure fair and transparent conduct of the elections on Thursday. A blame game also erupted between the student unions as the ABVP alleged that students were being taken to a party organised by the NSUI where they got injured in road accident. Meanwhile, NSUI claimed that it is a false allegation and they hadn't organised any party. "It is ABVP's cheap tactic to defame us. Our manifesto is an answer to their allegations and we follow Lyngdoh committee rules and regula-

tions," the student outfit said in a statement. Earlier, ABVP has alleged that NSUI was luring students of Sister Nivedita College of Delhi University to Mojoland Water Park in Murthal, Haryana for a party on Thursday, when an accident took place on the way in which two students were seriously injured and other students were also injured. "The seriously injured stu-

dents are admitted in a hospital in Dwarka area of Delhi for surgery," they stated. They condemned NSUI for playing with the safety of DU girl students and corrupting the student union elections by using money and power. ABVP's National Minister Shivangi Kharwal said, "On Wednesday, NSUI goons forcefully entered Miranda House of Delhi University and then by

luring the students of Sister Nivedita College, they took them out of Delhi without the permission of the college administration and the parents of the students, where the students got seriously injured in the accident." Addressing a press conference, Varun Choudhary, president of the Congress-affiliated NSUI alleged that people linked to the ABVP and RSS had been appointed electoral officers for the polls. "Individuals previously associated with the ABVP are now serving as election commissioners that can influence the election results," Choudhary said. "To maintain the integrity of the election process, proctors with ties to the RSS should also be barred from election duty," he said. The Congress-backed organisation, however, expressed confidence that it would win this year's elections



The Pioneer's Associate Editor, Deepak Kumar Jha, on Thursday received 'Excellence in Journalistic Reporting' award honoured by the prestigious trade and commerce body - FICCI. The award was given by Special Secretary and Member, CBIC, Sungita Sharma in the presence of Supreme Court judge Justice Sanjay Karol, Delhi High Court Judge Navin Chawla, former Lokayukta Manmohan Sarin, FICCI CASCADE Chairman Anil Rajput and several distinguished guests. Amongst the awardees on the concluding day of the two day FICCI MASGRADE were IPS officers, Paramilitary officials, Enforcement Officers and school children who have helped prevent smuggling and trading of counterfeit products. This was the 10th edition of FICCI's Movement Against Smuggled and Counterfeit Trade through its Committee Against Smuggling and Counterfeiting Activities Destroying the Economy (CASCADE). The event was inaugurated by Union Minister Ravneet Singh Bittu on Wednesday
Pioneer Photo

Kejriwal targets PM Modi for conspiring against him, AAP leaders

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI
Addressing the Delhi Assembly for the first time since he came out of jail two weeks back, former Chief Minister and AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP for "conspiring against him and his party leaders. He said 'Prime Minister Narendra Modi is very powerful but not God' and that he will make sure to not let work in Delhi stall. This was also the first time in months that Kejriwal and former Delhi Deputy CM, Manish Sisodia were in the assembly and the AAP convenor hit out at the BJP with a joke on this fact. He said, "BJP wanted to show Kejriwal is dishonest and stop all works in Delhi... They put me and all the other leaders in jail... All their conspiracies have failed." Further attacking PM Modi, Kejriwal said, "They made the rule that leaders aged 75 will retire... But he says that rule does not apply to him." Starting his speech by taking a dig at the opposition BJP MLAs, Kejriwal said, "My colleagues in the opposition must be sad to see Manish Sisodia and me here. I always say Prime Minister Modi is very powerful and has a lot of resources, but Modi is not God. There is no doubt that there is God or some kind of energy in this universe which has helped us. Therefore, I want to thank the Supreme Court." Reiterating his views on the retirement of Modi when he



becomes 75 years old, he said, "I talked to a senior RSS leader, who said that they have given an ultimatum to Prime Minister but he shared that Modi is not ready to resign from his prime minister'ship. He made BJP leaders like L.K. Advani and Murli Manohar Joshi resign but when his turn came, he is not ready to leave. Such is the lust for power." However, he added that since he has been in jail, the BJP has tried to stall the work in the national Capital through its Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena including the termination of bus marshalls, stopping medicines and tests in mohalla clinic, pensions not being given to the elderly and stopping the 'teerth yatra'. "Please fear God if not anything else. I want to let the people of Delhi know that their brother and son have come back and will make sure that work gets done irrespective of whatever I have to do," he stated, adding that he also had a conversation with a senior BJP leader. "I met a senior BJP leader three to four days back and I asked how arresting me helped

them. He told me that they derailed the entire Delhi government by arresting me and was very happy about it. I was surprised about what he said to me. I wonder what kind of party it is that is happy by ruining the life of the people of Delhi," he stated. Kejriwal, who once occupied the 'number one' chair as chief minister, was assigned seat number 41, several paces away from his former position. His successor, Atishi, now occupies the chief minister's seat, while Kejriwal's trusted lieutenant, Manish Sisodia, was placed next to him at seat number 40. When he arrived in the assembly, chants of 'Kejriwal jai ho' were also hailed. Kejriwal had served as chief minister of Delhi for nearly a decade before stepping down. He also stated that the BJP leaders tried to prove him dishonest and ineffective from jail. "People of Delhi know a couple of things. First, they know that Arvind Kejriwal is completely honest and second, they know that Arvind Kejriwal works for the public. They (BJP-led central government) wanted to portray me as dishonest and derail the work that I've done. They lodged a fake case, and jailed me, Manish Sisodia, Satyendar Jain, Sanjay Singh and others. Despite this, our party continues to be strong," Kejriwal added. He also claimed that despite most of the senior leadership of the party being in jail, AAP didn't break. "I challenge you that even if two of your senior leaders are jailed, your party will break," Kejriwal claimed.

Delhi Assembly witnesses heated discussion between AAP, Opposition over termination of 10,000 bus marshalls Both sides support resolution to restore their jobs

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
The Delhi Assembly on Thursday witnessed a heated discussion between the ruling AAP and the opposition on the first day of a two-day session over the termination of around 10,000 bus marshalls, with both sides finally supporting a resolution to restore their jobs. Participating in the short duration discussion on the regularization of DTC bus marshalls, AAP MLAs Kuldeep Kumar, Rohit Kumar and Abdul Rehman hit out at Lieutenant Governor (LG) Vinai Kumar Saxena and the BJP holding them responsible for the bus marshalls losing their jobs and their plight due to a non-payment of salaries. AAP MLAs, including Madan Lal and Jarnail Singh, accused a BJP MLA of uttering objectionable words against the bus marshalls and calling them "rapists". They claimed that these civic defence workers belonged to the poor families and they not only provided safety and security to the women and children in DTC and cluster buses but also did the same for the families. The BJP MLAs opposed the charge and accused the AAP of doing politics on the issue. Leader of Opposition Vijender Gupta alleged that the AAP government had



betrayed the bus marshalls. He claimed that in a letter to the LG on October 11, 2023, then chief minister Arvind Kejriwal wrote that "the correct legal position may be ascertained and till its determined, services of all civil defence volunteers may be terminated by October". Gupta also proposed that a resolution be passed in the House to restore the jobs of the bus marshalls and provide them with "permanent" employment. In his reply to the discussion, minister Saurabh Bharadwaj said the lives of 10,000 bus marshalls have been ruined as they have not been paid their salaries. They are unable to meet their basic needs, the minister added. He alleged that since Saxena took over as the LG, it has become a "pattern" that officers will find some fault or the other with a scheme that is to be stalled. "The salaries of 10,000 bus marshalls were stopped in January 2023 because of officers in the transport depart-

ment who questioned the deployment of civil defence bus marshalls because public transport buses had CCTV cameras for the purpose of security," Bharadwaj claimed. This observation by the officers was opposed by Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot and Revenue Minister Atishi, he said. Atishi has since been sworn in as the chief minister after Kejriwal stepped down. Bharadwaj said in his letter, Kejriwal had also sought disciplinary action against the officers responsible for stopping the bus marshalls' salaries. "If the BJP is ready, we are ready to restore their jobs. A resolution can be passed by the House," he said and added that a resolution already passed on the issue on February 29 can be passed again. Bharadwaj also suggested that the resolution should have a paragraph that both the AAP and BJP MLAs will go to meet the LG at 11 am on October 3 (the first day of Navratri) and not return back till the implementation of the resolution is ensured. Assembly Speaker Ram Niwas Goel put the resolution to vote and it was passed by a voice vote. However, Goel said the leader of opposition was backing out from the proposal to go to the LG's office for its implementation.

Kejriwal, Atishi inspect city roads



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
AAP supremo and former Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday, along with his successor Atishi, inspected the roads in the city, stating that the works of public welfare "stalled by the BJP" will be resumed and all damaged roads in the city will be repaired. "I want to assure the people of Delhi that I have come back and the stalled works will be resumed. All their problems will be solved," Kejriwal said, claiming that he was sent to jail because the BJP wanted to defame the AAP government in Delhi by stalling public works. He stated the AAP government will inspect all broken roads in Delhi and repair them. Asked if he would be seen playing a more active role, Kejriwal said, "We are in action mode round the clock. I was in action mode even in jail." Senior AAP leader Manish Sisodia and local MLA Dilip Pandey also accompanied Kejriwal and Atishi during their inspection of a road in the Delhi University (DU) area. "A few days ago I met their big leader. I asked what did you get from my arrest? I was shocked and felt sad to hear him say that at least the Delhi government got derailed and the city was stalled," Kejriwal claimed. Their aim was to defame the AAP government by stalling works in Delhi, he alleged while asserting that the AAP and its government would not let people's works get stalled. "During the inspection, Kejriwal was briefed by Pandey about the broken roads in his assembly constituency," a statement said. It added that there are some roads under the jurisdiction of

the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), for which the process of allocating the repair works was underway. There are about 36 projects, out of which 30 have been approved, it said. "Now that I have come, you don't worry. All your pending work will start again. All problems will be solved. We just came to inspect the road passing in front of DU's North Campus. There is a water pipeline under this road. The road has broken due to this pipeline. This road is used a lot by people. I have talked to CM Atishi about the repair of this road. This road will be repaired soon. Apart from this, we will inspect all the broken roads in Delhi and get them repaired," Kejriwal said. Sharing a video clip from this inspection, Kejriwal posted on his 'X' handle and stated, "They had stopped the work of Delhi by sending me to jail. Roads were also damaged. That was their purpose. Today I inspected a road in Delhi University with CM Atishi. This road will also be repaired soon, and the rest of the roads in Delhi will also be repaired soon. Now I am back, the people of Delhi should not worry. All the stopped work in Delhi will be done." On the other hand, Delhi Chief Minister Atishi tweeted, "Today, I inspected the Vishwavidyalaya Marg road with Arvind Kejriwal and Manish Sisodia. The road is in a very bad condition. It will be repaired soon. BJP had conspired to bring Delhi to a standstill by arresting Arvind Kejriwal. But Delhiites' son Arvind Kejriwal is now back among the people, under his guidance the stalled work of Delhi will be completed at double the speed."

Speaker adjourns Assembly session, Opposition MLAs marshalled out

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
The two-day session of the Delhi Assembly started on a stormy note on Thursday as BJP and AAP leaders raised slogans against each other, forcing the speaker to briefly adjourn the proceedings even as many opposition MLAs were marshalled out. Chaos erupted as soon as Speaker Ram Niwas Goel listed names of leaders who will raise issues in the House to which BJP leaders objected and demanded that their issues be raised as well. The BJP leaders wanted to raise issues such as tabling of

reports of Comptroller and Auditor General and drainage and sewer system of the national Capital. The LG Secretariat had written to Chief Secretary Dharmendra and Finance Secretary Ashish Chandra Verma, asking them to lay pending reports of the apex auditor CAG in the assembly during the session after bringing the matter to the chief minister's attention. Both AAP and BJP leaders then started raising slogans, with some BJP MLAs coming to the well, against each other prompting the speaker to adjourn the proceedings for



15 minutes. They were marshalled out of the house even as the AAP claimed that these are there cheap tactics to not

discuss the issue of termination of bus marshalls. However, the BJP MLAs returned and joined the discussion on the issue. "Even though we were insulted and thrown out of the assembly, we have come here so we can discuss the matter," Leader of Opposition Vijendra Gupta said. The assembly also discussed the alleged illegal cutting of 1,100 trees where the Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena did so without the permission of Supreme Court to protect farm houses. The new government headed

by Chief Minister Atishi is expected to seek a vote of trust in the House on Friday. Atishi has now been allotted the seat number one in the assembly, while his predecessor and former Chief Minister was allotted seat number 41 in the Delhi assembly, many paces away from the chief minister's chair. Kejriwal's trusted lieutenant Manish Sisodia was given a spot next to him, who was chief minister for close to 10 years, at seat 40. Goel also announced the resignations and disqualifications of four MLAs, including three from the ruling AAP.

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VP Dhankhar reflects upon J and K transformation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

Amid Assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Thursday said the Dal lake in Srinagar was “dull” when he went there in 1990 but is now teeming with tourists, while pointing out that Article 370 is no longer applicable to the region. Addressing the 83rd foundation day celebrations of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), Dhankhar recalled his visit to Srinagar in 1990 as a Union minister, when he stayed in a hotel near the Dal lake. “Everything was dull. D-U-L-L. Not even 20 souls could be seen on the road. A state of dejection and hopelessness,” the vice president said. He said the Rajya Sabha, which he presides over as its chairman, was informed last year that two crore tourists had visited Jammu and Kashmir. Dhankhar pointed out that Article 370, which was envisioned as a temporary provision of the Constitution, is no longer there.



“Article 370, the only article labelled as temporary and which was taken by some people, including those who had taken an oath under the Constitution, to be permanent, is no longer there,” he said. “The state of the nation today is beyond my dreams. I never imagined. I did not conceive of the Bharat that it is today,” Dhankhar said, comparing the present-day situation with that of the 1990s. The vice president said the 1990s were a period when India had to pledge its gold with Swiss banks to sustain its financial credibility as forex reserves had plunged to USD 1 billion and financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, issued directives to India in

the garb of advisories. “Now, the IMF says India is the most-favoured global destination for investments and opportunity, and the World Bank calls India a role model on digitisation,” he said. Dhankhar said the 1990s were also an era of middlemen on the corridors of power, corruption was rampant and only a person with pedigree could get access to opportunities. “Now, the power corridors are fully sanitised. The middleman has disappeared... All transactions take place digitally, without a human interface. That is the change I never imagined,” he said. The vice president expressed satisfaction that recognition for the scientific community has increased significantly. “Soothing to note that in the last few years, recognition for the scientific community has gone up. It has gone up in several ways, including the government being very serious about it, and the prime minister’s heart and soul are deeply in the scientific community,” he said.



Former Attorney General KK Venugopal and CJI DY Chandrachud sharing lighter moments at MK Nambyar Memorial lecture PNS

Lawyers indispensable in constitutional discourse: CJI Chandrachud

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud on Thursday said lawyers play an indispensable role in shaping constitutional discourse. While judges have the ultimate authority to interpret the Constitution, it is the lawyers who craft and present the interpretive frameworks for the judiciary to consider, said CJI, while addressing MK Nambyar memorial lecture here. “In this sense, interpretation is as much a job of a lawyer as it is of a judge, for without robust legal arguments and advocacy, constitutional interpretation

would lack the necessary depth and diversity of perspectives,” said Chandrachud. Noted lawyer MK Nambyar is father of former Attorney General KK Venugopal. “As we celebrate the legacy of Mr MK Nambyar, we must remember that there were many more like him, who left their imprints on the Constitution, enhanced it, infused it with meaning, and took the texts to its legal destiny. The reason we celebrate them is that they read in between jurisprudential lines, and travelled beyond the text, beyond obsequious obedience of the supposed ‘intent of the framers’.

President Murmu salutes Siachen soldiers bravery, sacrifice

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI



President Droupadi Murmu on Thursday visited the Siachen base camp and told soldiers posted at the world’s highest battlefield that all citizens salute their bravery. Addressing the troops, she said in difficult situations like heavy snowfall and minus 50 degrees temperature, they present extraordinary examples of sacrifice and tolerance in protecting the motherland. The President said as the supreme commander of the armed forces, she felt very proud of them and that “all citizens salute their bravery.” “They face severe weather conditions. In difficult situations like heavy snowfall and minus 50 degrees temperature, they remain deployed at their front with full devotion and vigilance. They present extraordinary examples of sacrifice and tolerance in protecting the motherland,” President Murmu said. She told soldiers that all Indians are aware of their sacrifice and bravery and “we respect them,” according to a statement issued by the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Dressed in Indian military

uniform, Murmu also paid tributes at the Siachen War Memorial. The Memorial, she said, is a symbol of the sacrifice of soldiers and officers who have been martyred since the Indian Army began Operation Meghdoot on the Siachen Glacier on April 13, 1984. Under Operation Meghdoot, the Indian Army established its full control over the glacier. The President said since the commencement of Operation Meghdoot, “the brave soldiers and officers of the Indian armed forces have ensured the security of this region.” Lt Governor of Ladakh Brigadier B D Mishra had

received President Murmu on her arrival at Thoise airfield. President Murmu is the country’s third president to have visited Siachen base camp, located in the Union Territory of Ladakh, the others being A P J Abdul Kalam and Ram Nath Kovind. While Kalam visited in April 2004, Kovind went to the base camp in May 2018. The Siachen glacier is at a height of around 20,000 feet in the Karakoram mountain range. It is known as the highest militarised zone in the world where soldiers have to battle extreme cold, high winds and frostbite among other severe weather conditions.

Engineers Conclave 2024

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

The 11th Engineers Conclave, jointly organised by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and Indian National Academy of Engineering (INAE) in Hyderabad, commenced on Thursday, defence ministry said here. Giving details, officials said the aim of the two-day annual conclave is to deliberate on two strategic priorities, ‘Additive Manufacturing for Defence Applications’ and ‘Defence Manufacturing Technologies’.

The event, being held at Defence Research and Development Laboratory (DRDL) of DRDO, brings together engineers, scientists, academicians and industry leaders to discuss emerging technologies and advancements in indigenisation. The conclave was inaugurated by the Chief Guest, Former Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission Dr Anil Kakodkar and Guest of Honour, Secretary Department of Defence R&D and Chairman DRDO Dr Samir V Kamat. DRDL Director (Hyderabad) Shri GA Srinivasa Murthy, Director General, Missiles and Strategic Systems Shri U Raja Babu, and INAE President Prof Indranil Manna addressed the gathering.

Modi, Congress leaders greet Manmohan Singh on his 92nd birthday

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI



Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday greeted his predecessor and Congress leader Manmohan Singh on his 92nd birthday. Congress leaders lauded his contributions and Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi hailed his humility, wisdom and selfless service in shaping the country’s future. Modi said in a social media post, “Birthday greetings to former PM Dr. Manmohan Singh ji. I pray that he is blessed with a long and healthy life.”

Manmohan Singh was prime minister of the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government between 2004 and 2014. He was also India’s finance minister in the P V Narasimha Rao-led government during 1991-96, an epochal era for the country’s economy marked by wide-ranging reforms. Born in 1932 in a region now part of Pakistan, he is credited as being the key architect of the economic reforms effected by the Rao-led government that broke the stranglehold of socialist-era policies. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge led party leaders in greeting Manmohan Singh and hailing his contributions to the country. Kharge said he stood as a “rare embodiment of simplicity, dignity and ingenuity in the realm of politics.” “On the occasion of his birthday, I extend my warmest wishes to former prime minister Dr Manmohan Singh ji,” Kharge said. “He stands as a rare

embodiment of simplicity, dignity and ingenuity in the realm of politics. A visionary statesman, whose actions spoke louder than words, we remain deeply grateful for his tremendous and invaluable contributions to the nation,” the Congress chief said. Wishing him good health, happiness and a long life ahead, he added. In a social post, Rahul Gandhi said, “Happy Birthday to Dr Manmohan Singh ji. Your humility, wisdom, and selfless service in shaping our country’s future continue to inspire me and millions of Indians. Wishing you good

health and happiness always!” Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also extended birthday greetings “to the pioneer of liberalisation and economic reforms in the country.” “Manmohan Singh ji gave the people wonderful welfare policies and rights like MGNREGA, Right to Food, Right to Information, Right to Education. Due to your historic efforts for inclusive development, India became one of the few economic powers in the world. Your honesty, hard work, simplicity and humility are an inspiration for all of us. May God keep you healthy and a long life,” she said in a social media post. Congress general secretary in-charge organisation KC Venugopal, while extending his warmest greetings to Manmohan Singh, said India saw “unprecedented growth, progress and transformation during the UPA era” under his stewardship. “It was a time when through a rights-based welfare framework and a reformist zeal, India saw its greatest

reduction in poverty and a massive growth of the middle classes,” he said. “His (Singh’s) journey from humble origins to the highest office in the country is an inspiration for generations to come. He is not someone who makes a big show of himself, but rather lets his hard work and talent do the talking,” Venugopal said. Even today, his advice and expertise continue to guide us in our actions, he said. “Despite the innumerable attacks he faced, like he once said, history will be kinder to him and his contributions to India’s development will be written in golden letters in history,” Venugopal added. Several other Congress leaders hailed Manmohan Singh’s contributions to the country while greeting him. The Congress said in a social media post, “Renowned economist and former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh’s entire life has been dedicated to the country. He has made many public welfare policies keeping in mind the interest, progress and welfare of all sections of the country.”



India sees major decline in out of pocket expense on health

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

There has been a significant decline in out-of-pocket expenditure (OOPE) on health, dropping from 64.2 per cent in 2013-14 to 39.4 per cent in 2021-22, data available from the National Health Account (NHA) has revealed, reflecting a major shift towards more equitable healthcare access in the country. Describing the trend as a “very positive indicator,” Dr V K Paul member (Health) of NITI Aayog said that the substantial savings—over Rs 1 lakh crore—has been resulted from the central health flagship Ayushman Bharat PMJAY scheme. Additionally, other initiatives, like the free dialysis scheme launched in 2015-16, have positively impacted millions of individuals.

of such spending can lead to significant financial strain for families, OOPE refers to the payments made directly by individuals at the time they receive healthcare services or goods including medical consultations, hospital stays, medications, diagnostic tests, and other health-related costs that are not covered by insurance or government programs. Since catastrophic health expenditure often leading to debt or financial hardship, the India’s National Health Policy 2017 has set ambitious goals. It aims for a significant decrease in OOPE, targeting a 25 per cent reduction in the proportion of households facing catastrophic health expenditure by 2025. Union Health Secretary Apurva Chandra added that the increase in government health expenditure (GHE), rose from 1.13 per cent of GDP in 2014-15 to 1.84 per cent in 2021-22, and from 3.94 per cent to 6.12 per cent of general government expenditure (GGE). Per capita GHE tripled from Rs 1,108 to Rs 3,169 during the same period, with a notable increase of 37 per cent from 2020-21 to 2021-22. These changes reflect the government’s commitment to enhancing public health investment, with GHE’s share of total health expenditure growing from 29 per cent to 48 per cent.

Left parties demand ceasefire in Gaza conflict

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI



Left parties issued a joint statement on Thursday demanding an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and informing that they will observe October seven, which marks the completion of a year of an ongoing conflict in Gaza, as a day to demand an end to the war. The statement was issued by five parties -- the Communist Party of India (Marxist), the Communist Party of India, the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation, the All India Forward Bloc and the Revolutionary Socialist Party. It was signed by Prakash Karat on behalf of the CPI(M), Dipankar Bhattacharya of the CPI(ML) Liberation, D Raja of the CPI, Manoj

Bhattacharya of the RSP and G Devarajan of the AIFB. The parties called upon the Indian government to halt all arms exports to Israel and work for a two-State solution, whereby an independent Palestinian State can come into existence. “October 7 marks the completion of one year of Israel’s genocidal war in Gaza. In the name of retaliating against Hamas for the latter’s attack within Israel on October 7 last year, the Israeli armed forces have conducted a brutal and indiscriminate attack on Palestinians in Gaza,” the

Left parties said. They said as a result of the war, nearly 42,000 Palestinians, mainly women and children, have died and thousands more are buried under the rubble. “Israel has not spared residential buildings, schools and hospitals from their savage aerial and ground bombardment,” they said, adding that a medical journal, “The Lancet”, has estimated that the death toll from Israel’s aggression could be above 85,000 (as of August 6), counting both the direct and indirect fatalities. The Left parties pointed out that even as the International Court of Justice (ICJ) said in January that the Israeli actions were leading to possible genocide and called upon Israel to cease military actions in Gaza, Israel has so far “scuttled all meaningful talks for a ceasefire”.

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Navy chief strengthens naval ties on Greece visit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI



Navy chief Admiral Dinesh NK Tripathi is on a four-day official visit to Greece beginning Thursday. This visit is part of ongoing efforts to further consolidate bilateral defence relations between India and Greece, with a focus on enhancing naval co-operation, defence ministry said here. During the visit, the Navy chief will engage in bilateral discussions with senior Greek defence officials, including Ioannis Kefalogiannis, Deputy Minister of Defence, Vice Admiral Dimitrios E

Kataras, Chief of the Hellenic Navy General Staff (HGNS), Vice Admiral Christos Sasiakos, Deputy Chief of Hellenic National Defence General Staff.

The discussions are expected to cover a broad spectrum of defence cooperation areas, particularly maritime security, joint training initiatives, and exploring avenues for future operational collaboration between the two navies. As part of his visit, Admiral Tripathi will visit the Salamis Bay, the base of the Hellenic Naval Fleet as well as the Hellenic Naval Academy. Through demonstrations and visits to Hellenic naval assets, the Hellenic Navy has planned to introduce Greece’s naval capabilities and training methodologies to the Navy chief.

Over 50 common medications flagged for quality concerns

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI



Over 50 drugs including popular medications such as Paracetamol tablets IP 500mg, anti-diabetic drug Glimepiride, vitamin C softgels, Vitamin C and D3 tablets Shelcal, and high BP medicine Telmisartan, among others have been found to be of “Not of Standard Quality (NSQ) Alert” as per the Central Drugs Standards Control Organization (CDSCO), the country’s top drug regulator. The alert was issued after random monthly sampling conducted by state drug officers. The regulator releases the list of “not of standard quality” drugs every month. The batches of medicines flagged by the CDSCO in its drug alert for August are of companies such as Alkem Laboratories, Hindustan Antibiotics Limited, Hetero Labs Limited, Karnataka Antibiotics and

Pharmaceuticals Ltd, Nestor Pharmaceuticals Ltd, Priya Pharmaceuticals and Scott-Edil Pharmacia Ltd, according to a news agency. The CDSCO’s drug alert for August also included samples from batches of medications such as D3 tablets and Ciprofloxacin tablets. Antibiotics such as Amoxicillin And

Potassium Clavulanate tablets have also been categorised as not of “not of standard quality”. While batches of some drugs failed the ‘dissolution test’ as per Indian Pharmacopoeia (IP) and failed the ‘Assay’ and ‘water’ test as per IP, some were identified as spurious or having uniformity of volume issues. These

drugs are produced by several pharmaceutical companies. According to the CDSCO, the drugs licensing authorities of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Rajasthan, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Odisha, Punjab, Sikkim and Tamil Nadu, have not submitted any data regarding the Not of Standard Quality (NSQ) Alert for August 2024. In August, the top drug regulator had banned over 156 fixed-dose drug combinations in the Indian market due to potential risks to humans. These included popular fever drugs, painkillers, and allergy tablets. Earlier in February, the DCGI Rajeev Raghuvanshi instructed states/UTs to keep a strong vigilance and surveillance on the quality of drugs available in the market by doing random sampling of the medicines.

Modi targets Congress: Infighting, lies drive Haryana to back BJP again

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ CHANDIGARH/NEW DELHI

The Congress spends most of its time infighting, tells lies to grab power and remains distant from public issues, Prime Minister Narendra Modi claimed on Thursday while asserting the people have decided to give another chance to the BJP to serve Haryana.

Interacting with Haryana BJP workers through the NaMo app as part of the party's "Mera Booth, Sabse Mazboot" programme, he discussed fieldwork at the booth level for the October five assembly polls and told them to make utmost effort to win each booth.

"A week remains for polling (in Haryana) and (you should) focus on every family in a polling booth," he told

party workers. There are 20,629 polling booths in Haryana.

Modi began his nearly hour-long interaction by mentioning his special connection with the people of Haryana, where he extensively worked for the party organisation in the 1990s, and expressed his gratitude to them.

Alleging the Congress has failed as an opposition in the past 10 years, the prime minister claimed its maximum time goes into infighting. Every child in Haryana is aware of the grand old party's internal strife, he said.

These days, the Congress' loudspeakers that were earlier making big claims have fallen weak, Modi said. "Some are saying the Congress is becoming weak each day.

During the past 10 years, the Congress has failed as opposition too."

"The party remained far from people's issues for 10 years... Such people can never win the trust of the people of Haryana," he said.

"But our strategy should not be to sit pretty on their internal strife. They are going to die their death, but we have to plant our flag deep by working harder than before," Modi said.

Attacking the Congress further, he said, "The entire basis of those who are fighting against us in the polls is lies. They repeatedly tell lies, their talks have no head and tail and they vitiate the atmosphere."

Modi claimed the Congress made tall promises to the people of Himachal Pradesh like they would "lay roof



made of gold for every house". But after coming to power in the state, development came to a standstill, the prime minister alleged, adding they talked of the old pension scheme but were now unable to pay salaries or carry out

recruitments. The Congress had promised to give Rs 1,500 to women who are waiting for it even after two years, he said. Himachal Pradesh is an example of how they told lies to win elections and the people of Haryana need to be

informed about it, the prime minister said at the interaction.

He alleged the Congress were experts in lying but wear the mask of "Raja Harishchandra". You will have to go door-to-door to expose them, Modi told the BJP workers.

One cannot imagine how many atrocities were committed against the Dalits during the Congress rule in Haryana, he said and asked the party workers to expose such incidents publicly.

"Haryana has for the first time got an OBC chief minister. They never made a chief minister from the backward classes. But the Congress will never say this," Modi said.

He alleged the Congress was not able to accept that Modi and Nayab Singh Saini, both

of who come from backward classes, became prime minister and Haryana's chief minister, respectively.

Recounting the BJP government's initiatives for farmers, the prime minister alleged that during the Congress rule in Haryana, the farmers got Rs 2 compensation cheques for crop damage.

It is the BJP government in Haryana which has been giving minimum support price on 24 crops, he said, adding the farmers should seek clarification from the Congress for their lies on the issue and tell them how much crops were being procured at MSP. Accusing the Congress of indulging in a scam with funds for Dalits' welfare in Karnataka, Modi alleged the party did not fulfil even a single promise in states where

it is in power, be it Karnataka or Telangana.

Now they are talking big in Haryana, he said, adding, "Spreading rumours and telling lies is in their blood". The Congress people live only for their family and that is their character, he said in response to a Haryana BJP worker's feedback during the interaction.

"I have full belief that the BJP is forming the government with a big mandate. One voice is heard from every home 'Bharosa Dil Se, Bajpa Phir Se' We have to put all our might to win the polling booth. You have to break all records of voting," he said.

Referring to the Haryana BJP's "Mahra Haryana-Non-Stop Mahara" campaign, Modi said it has been inspired by mothers and sisters from the state.



BJP gears up for crucial J and K Assembly polls

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The Bharatiya Janta Party is fully geared up to defend its 'impregnable citadel' in the last and crucial phase of maiden assembly polls in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

In the third phase polling is scheduled to take place across 40 Assembly segments. Out of these 40, 24 seats fall in the Jammu region.

In the 2014 Assembly polls, BJP won 19 out of 21 Assembly segments from the four districts of Jammu, Kathua, Samba, and Udhampur.

This time three new seats have been added, one each in Kathua, Samba, and Udhampur during the Delimitation of Assembly constituencies.

BJP's performance in this phase is going to make or break the chances of government formation on its strength.

The Union Home Minister Amit Shah Thursday claimed that the Congress-NC alliance has been wiped out in the first two phases of the Jammu and Kashmir elections.

He also hit out at Omar Abdullah for contesting two Assembly seats out of fear. On Rahul Gandhi's claim to restore statehood in J&K if his party wins, Amit Shah responded that it can only be done when "BJP wants".

Leaving no stone unturned, the top brass of the party has already started carpet bombing across different Assembly constituencies of Jammu, Samba, Kathua, and Udhampur districts.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to address a mega rally here in MAM sports stadium on September 28 ahead of winding up the month-long high-octane campaign.

On Thursday Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath addressed eight rallies covering all four districts of the Jammu region.

Other star campaigners of the party including Smriti Irani,

Union Ministers Shivraj Singh Chouhan, and Nitin Gadkari have addressed a series of meetings in Jammu. Both the leaders while targeting the opposition parties Congress, National Conference, and the Peoples Democratic Party appealed to the voters to give a decisive mandate to the BJP candidates to ensure the formation of a stable government that can carry forward the growth-oriented agenda of the Union government at the helm of affairs.

Addressing a rally in the border belt of Ramgarh Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath Thursday said, "After BJP's return (to power) here, Pakistan-occupied Kashmir is also going to be a part of Jammu and Kashmir. And this is the commotion in Pakistan, they are struggling to save their democracy".

Comparing the situation in both countries the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister said, "On one side there is India and on the other side there is Pakistan, there is a shortage of food there, naturally, beggar Pakistan is not able to handle itself today. Pakistan-occupied Kashmir is raising its voice for separation from it.

It is saying that we also had the right to participate in the J&K elections...Balochistan is also saying that our chemistry does not match with Pakistan. Because Pakistan is the enemy of humanity, it is a cancer of humanity. The world must be freed from this cancer..."

He said that the ongoing Assembly polls in J&K are historic and the "results will be a slap on the faces of NC, PDP and Congress.

He said Pakistan's condition at present is horrific. "The country is falling apart. On the contrary, Prime Minister Narendra Modi gives 80 Crore people of India a free ration and 60 Crore are getting free treatment up to Rs 5 lakh which has been enhanced up to Rs 7 lakh.

"Pakistan is a sinking ship," he said. Yogi also addressed two other election meetings in RS Pura and Chhamb.

Kolkata Court gives death sentence to rape, murder accused

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

A POCSO b(Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act) Court on Thursday awarded death sentence to a man for raping and murdering a 6-year-old girl about a year and a half ago terming it "not a rare but rarest of rare case."

The sentence comes against the backdrop of the ongoing controversy over the RG Kar College rape and murder case. Special POCSO Judge Sudipto Bhattacharya sentenced Ashok Kumar Shaw the accused to death terming he deserved no mercy for the crime he had committed against a child who had no chance of defending herself.

"Mercy to the guilty is cruelty to the innocent," the judge said while announcing the quantum of punishment. The victim was raped and



murdered in the Tiljala area of south-east Kolkata, on March 26, 2023. She was allegedly lured away by the convict.

The police subsequently discovered her body in a nearby flat. Wednesday's was the third such verdict in a matter of a few months in the State.

"The prosecution was able to establish the case successfully and the guilty was finally brought to book ... and an exemplary punishment was awarded," said Madhavi Ghosh the Public Prosecutor.

PM Modi cancels Pune visit due to heavy rain, orange alert

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Amid continued heavy rains witnessed for the second consecutive day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi cancelled his scheduled visit to Pune on Thursday to inaugurate, dedicate and lay foundation stones for several development projects worth Rs. 22,600 crore and throw open the Solapur Airport to air traffic.

Confirming the development, Pune divisional commissioner Chandrakant Pulkundwar said: "The Prime Minister's visit to Pune has been cancelled. The scheduled programmes have been officially postponed," Pune divisional commissioner Chandrakant Pulkundwar said.

"Owing to an orange alert issued by the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the Prime Minister's programme has been cancelled.

In the event of rains, people coming for the programme will have problems. Keeping the safety of people in mind, the PMO has cancelled the programme," Maha-Metro spokesperson Hemant Sonawane said.

Pune recorded 130 mm of rainfall on Wednesday and there was no let in heavy rains on Thursday as well.



During his visit to Pune, Modi was to flag off the Metro train scheduled to run from District court yMetro station to Swargate, Pune. The inauguration of Pune Metro section of District Court to Swargate meant completion of the Pune Metro Rail Project (Phase-I). The cost of the underground section between District Court to Swargate is around Rs 1,810 crore.

The Extension of Pune Metro Phase-I is developed at the cost of around Rs 2,950 crore The three stations -- Market Yard, Padmavati and Katraj -- coming under

the project have been constructed underground.

During his Pune visit, Modi was also to lay the foundation stone for the Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule's First Girls' School at Bhidewada.

Modi was also to dedicate to the nation Bidkin Industrial Area, a transformative project covering an expansive 7,855 acres under the National Industrial Corridor Development Program of Govt. of India, situated 20 kms south of Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar (known earlier as Aurangabad).

Delhi HC asks Centre to review Rahul Gandhi citizenship petition



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday asked the Centre to obtain a copy of a petition pending before the Allahabad High Court on the issue of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's citizenship.

The court said a petition on a similar issue is also being heard by the Allahabad High Court and two courts can't deal with the same issue simultaneously.

On Wednesday, Allahabad High Court sought response from Union Home Ministry on its notice to Rahul on British Citizenship holding.

The court said before proceeding further in the matter, it will be in the interest of justice to know the position about the pending petition in the Allahabad High Court. "We read in the newspaper that Allahabad High Court is also seized of

the controversy. Two courts cannot deal with the same issue simultaneously.

"You (Centre) check up the status of the petition at Allahabad High Court and also obtain a copy of the petition. We just want to be doubly sure that we are not taking over someone else's jurisdiction," a bench of Chief Justice designate Manmohan and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela said. The bench was hearing a plea by BJP leader Subramanian Swamy for directions to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to decide his representation seeking cancellation of Rahul Gandhi's Indian citizenship.

Swamy, in his plea, also sought a direction to the Home Ministry to furnish a status report on the representation filed by him against Gandhi, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha. The plea, filed by advocate Satya Sabharwal,

Sanjay Raut found guilty in defamation case

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a major political development in the run-up to the State Assembly polls, Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut was on Thursday found guilty and sentenced to 15 days' imprisonment in a 2022 defamation case filed by Medha K. Somaiya - wife of BJP's former MP Kirit Somaiya.

A Metropolitan Magistrate's court awarded him a fine of Rs 25,000, in the same case.

Immediately afterwards, Raut moved an application before the court which suspended his jail sentence for 30 days to enable him file an appeal in an upper court. The court also granted him bail against a cash surety of Rs 15,000.

The 25th Metropolitan Magistrate, Mazgaon, came out with this politically significant Order in a libel suit filed in April 2022 by Medha Somaiya against Raut, who had alleged a Rs 100-crore toilet construction scam linked to Yuva Pratishthan, a non-government organisation run by the Somaiyas, at Mira Road in Thane district.

NCW urges companies to address workplace harassment

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In the backdrop of the tragic incident involving a young Chartered Accountant at Ernst and Young (EY) India in Pune, who reportedly died due to severe work pressure, Delina Khongdup, a member of the National Commission for Women, has called upon the companies to urgently address employee's concerns regarding workplace harassment including work pressure.

Addressing Assocham 5th Diversity and Inclusion Excellence Awards and Conclave 2024, she also underscored the importance of prioritising maternity benefits which is essential for fostering a supportive work environment.

Providing these benefits not only supports women during a critical life stage but also enhances overall employee well-being and job satisfaction, she said, stressing the need for diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

"This should be a constant practice in organisations for the entitlement of women and all genders. This is a human and social responsibility to achieve gender diversity for all walks of society. India has a vast diversity and there should be a feeling of inclusivity in all the places possible," she said.

"Corporate India should recognise this inclusivity and bridge the gender balance relationship in working spaces. Harassment in the workplace and non-payment of maternity benefits should be addressed immediately for betterment.

We should apply a holistic approach to achieve the goal of Viksit Bharat @2047," Khongdup added.

Ravi Bhatnagar, Co-Chairperson, ASSOCHAM National CSR highlighted the importance of recognising employee well-being at workplaces so that gender diversity can take center stage.

Dr Shweta Sharma, a clinical psychologist and Joint Secretary Indian Association of Clinical Psychologists (IACP) while talking to The Pioneer agreed as she said that by ensuring access to maternity leave and other related support, companies can promote a culture of inclusivity and care, which ultimately benefits everyone in the organisation.

She further said that from a psychological standpoint, the importance of work-life balance in a company's policy cannot be overstated, particularly in high-stress environments like EY India, where demanding workloads often contribute to mental health struggles. "A well-structured work-life balance policy promotes mental well-being, reducing burnout, stress, and anxiety among employees.

It allows individuals to maintain personal time for rest, relationships, and self-care, which are vital for psychological resilience. Companies that prioritize this balance can significantly improve employee satisfaction, productivity, and retention.

Encouraging staff to seek help when needed helps reduce the stigma around mental health challenges," said Dr Sharma.

Anvar claims CM Vijayan is held hostage by political aides, accuses police of gold smuggling

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Political Kerala had a jolt on Thursday evening as an independent MLA in the CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front dared Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan to reply to his allegations against P Sasi, the political secretary of the chief minister and M R Ajith Kumar, additional director general of police.

P V Anvar, the MLA, hitherto considered as a close confidante of Vijayan, declared in a press meet at Nilambur that the Kerala Chief Minister is being held hostage by a coterie led by his

new son-in-law Mohammed Riyaz (who is also the minister for PWD and tourism), political secretary Sasi and ADGP Ajith Kumar. "Pinarayi Vijayan will be the last Communist chief minister in the State. Even M V Govindan, the CPI(M) state secretary, does not have any role in the party or in the government today," charged Anvar.

The seriousness of Anvar's press meet could be understood from the fact that Governor Arif Mohammed Khan asked Raj Bhavan officials to translate a word by word account of what the



MLA said in the presser. The media meet was convened by Anvar in violation of the CPI(M) diktat to him not to speak to the

media. But Anvar's response to the directive has put the party and the chief minister in a quandary as he alleged that the police in the State had

robbed gold worth crores of rupees smuggled into the country by poor Muslim workers returning home after their trip to West Asian countries.

"Last three years saw 180 instances of police seizing gold from poor workers returning home via Calicut International Airport. Though the police is bound to hand over the gold to the Customs department, they have not followed the instructions," said Anvar who alleged that the gold was shared by the coterie consisting of Sasi and Ajith Kumar. He went to the extent

of calling Ajith Kumar, one of the senior IPS officers in the State a "criminal".

By the time the press meet was over, it was clear that Anvar had declared a war against Chief Minister and has got BJP's leadership. But P C George, seven time MLA and a senior BJP leader in Kerala told

The Pioneer that Anvar himself has no credibility as he was facing serious criminal cases in connection with unauthorized construction of private check dams, quarrying and mining. "He is an Islamic terrorist and his allegations lack conviction," said George.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Trouble for Siddaramaiah

Karnataka CM faces fresh political and legal challenge as alleged land scam during his previous tenure gains traction

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah is facing the heat as a special court has directed the Mysuru Lokayukta police to investigate his connection with an alleged MUDA scam. This follows the Karnataka High Court's dismissal of Siddaramaiah's petition challenging the Governor's approval for the investigation. Siddaramaiah finds himself embroiled in a controversy as a probe into an alleged land scam during his previous tenure (2013-2018) gains momentum. The allegations revolve around irregularities in the denotification of prime land in Bengaluru, where government-owned land was allegedly released for private development, bypassing legal procedures. This development has not only triggered a political storm but also raised questions about the stability of his government, which is already navigating internal challenges. The case, brought to light through opposition parties and activists, accuses Siddaramaiah of misusing his position to facilitate the denotification of land in favour of private individuals. It is claimed that these actions led to substantial financial losses to the state exchequer. The denotification process is typically reserved for cases where the government no longer requires the land for public purposes. However, the opposition alleges that the decision-making was influenced by vested interests.



The probe, aims to examine Siddaramaiah's role and whether he acted within the framework of the law. While the investigation is in its preliminary stages, the political ramifications are already visible. With the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) demanding a thorough investigation and even his resignation, the pressure on Siddaramaiah is mounting. In response to the accusations, Siddaramaiah has strongly denied any wrongdoing, calling the probe a politically motivated attempt to tarnish his image and destabilise his government. Siddaramaiah's defence rests on his claim that the land denotification was carried out in compliance with legal procedures and was vetted by relevant authorities. He also pointed out that similar cases have been registered against several politicians across party lines, suggesting that this is a standard political practice to harass the CM's of the Opposition parties and not unique to his administration. If the investigation gathers pace and incriminating evidence surfaces, it could weaken his authority, both within his party and in the eyes of the public. The BJP, as the principal opposition in Karnataka, is likely to leverage the land scam to question Siddaramaiah's integrity and leadership. Their demand for accountability could lead to prolonged political uncertainty, especially if the case moves into the courts or if there are calls for judicial oversight. Further, any perception of corruption, especially in a state like Karnataka where electoral battles are fiercely fought, could erode Siddaramaiah's public image. His government, which came to power on promises of transparency and development, may find itself in a difficult position defending its track record if this case gains momentum and more evidence surfaces.

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PICTALK



An artist gives finishing touches to a clay idol of Goddess at artisans' village Kumartuli, in Kolkata. PTI

World tourism day: Uniting people, fostering peace

Whether visiting cultural landmarks, enjoying local cuisine, or simply interacting with people, tourism fosters global unity and peace

Every year on September 27, the world celebrates World Tourism Day, a reminder of the crucial role that tourism plays in fostering cultural exchange, boosting economies, and promoting peace. As borders open and people explore new destinations, tourism serves as a bridge, uniting diverse cultures and breaking down barriers between nations. In 2024, as we celebrate World Tourism Day, the theme focuses on the far-reaching benefits of travel beyond leisure, recognising how tourism helps us understand the world, its people, and its many cultures in deeper and more meaningful ways.



Tourism is not merely about sightseeing; it's about experiencing the essence of a place, its history, and its culture. As Bulat Nurmukhanov, Deputy Chairman of the Moscow City Tourism Committee, emphasises, "Tourism is primarily a way to immerse oneself in new cultures and experience history." Through tourism, individuals are given the chance to see the world through different lenses, fostering greater acceptance and understanding of other people and their ways of life. This broader understanding is why cities like Moscow have prioritised cultural tourism as a key driver for their economic and social growth. The Moscow tourism strategy emphasises the importance of museums, exhibitions, and cultural events, which help travelers connect with the history and artistic traditions of the region. This approach reflects a global shift in tourism, where travelers seek deeper, more authentic experiences that expand their worldviews. Tourism has always played a unique role in creating connections between people from different backgrounds. It allows us to learn from one another, building bridges of

understanding and respect. On World Tourism Day, this aspect of travel is especially highlighted, as we reflect on how it fosters harmony in an increasingly interconnected world. As Kush Kapoor CEO of Roseate Hotels & Resorts, points out, "Tourism is about the connections we forge and the cultural experiences we offer." Kapoor stresses the importance of offering travelers more than just a stay, but a chance to explore different cultures and traditions. In a world where differences can sometimes divide, tourism brings people together, promoting peace and mutual respect. For hotels and resorts, the focus is now on providing culturally aware experiences, from diverse culinary offerings to personalised services that reflect the traditions and customs of visitors. This kind of attention to cultural diversity enriches the overall travel experience, making it more inclusive and meaningful. Beyond cultural connections, tourism is a major economic driver for many countries. It generates millions of jobs, supports local businesses, and

contributes to the global economy. Sustainable tourism focuses on minimising the environmental footprint of travel while maximising the positive social and economic impact on host communities. From eco-friendly hotels to tours that support local artisans, tourism can be a powerful tool for inclusive development and environmental protection. Perhaps the most significant impact of tourism is its role in promoting global peace and understanding. By encouraging interactions between people of different cultures, tourism helps to break down prejudices and build mutual respect. As we celebrate World Tourism Day, it's important to remember that each journey is not just a trip to a new place but an opportunity to engage with the world in a way that promotes peace and harmony. When people experience the customs, values, and traditions of other cultures, they begin to appreciate the similarities and shared humanity that unite us all. (The author is a travel writer, views expressed are personal)



ANJALI PATHAK

Exploring the depths of the human mind



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

As AI draws comparisons to human cognition, the mystery of the mind grows more complex, raising crucial questions about its unused potential



The human mind is a unique organic entity whose lengths of reach and visions of the range are still to be fully mapped. Many believe that an average mind works at less than 30 per cent of its potential. Putting this in the context of artificial intelligence, the matter becomes even more complex. There is a theory doing the rounds in the field of artificial intelligence that suggests that entities of artificial intelligence have the potential of organic functioning, just like the human mind. The evidence for this is fairly mixed. Some conclusions may emerge over time. The crucial question concerning artificial intelligence however does include its possibilities and potential for organic evolution and growth. As observed, sooner or later, answers will emerge. Even otherwise, the human mind is a suo motu logic of its existence. Attempts to map it, are indeed one of the exciting aspects of human endeavour. Notwithstanding some breakthroughs in mapping the brain, there are areas of brain function that need a closer look both physically and operationally. Interestingly, notwithstanding all this, there is a common reference to the 'second childhood' of human beings, where people, upon reaching a certain

age, start behaving with child-like traits. It is difficult to explain this process, but it is fairly obvious to notice. Similarly, the jury is out on the age by which, the basic orientation of the brain fully takes place. One also needs to know when it matures enough to develop a relationship between the 'conscious' brain and the 'subconscious' brain. Notwithstanding the diverse interpretations of the above narrative, it is obvious that at some stage the basic foundations of the mind seemingly get concretised. One such example is the influence of early childhood experiences on a growing human being. There are stages of childhood emerging into early adulthood. All this becomes integral to the individual's ways of thinking and behaving. Popularly, this is known to affect the orientations of a growing individual on matters of finance, gender or for that matter even values. The list can be extended but more to the point one does not know, exhaustively, of all the influences which go into the making of an operationally adult human mind. Very often, there may be latent influences on a human mind



MANY AREAS OF THOUGHT, REFLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND RESEARCH MAY CONTAIN INDICATIONS OF UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS OF THE MIND. IT MAY BE A CHALLENGE, BUT A CHALLENGE THAT CANNOT BE EVADED

that may not manifest themselves until a much later point in adulthood. All in all, many ambiguities remain, and so do many contradictions that stay alive so far as the working of the mind is concerned. Above all, it is generally believed that hormonal changes affect the working of the mind. Both men and women reportedly pass through menopause in their later life. Many are of the view that menopausal effects are more identifiable amongst the women than the men. An issue, however, remains to be fully answered: what are the factors that influence the working of the mind? Yet another element that influences behaviour is the fall out of a mental shock. It can have many approximations of derailing the thought process of the individual, and indeed, impacting many values. Put simply, many areas of thought, reflection, analysis, and research may contain indications of understanding the dynamics of the mind. It may be a challenge, but a challenge that cannot be evaded. Further, there are also some transgenerational aspects to it. Say, how two parents deal with each other, or singly and collectively deal with a child

is an important factor for the child's growth. This can carry on across generations. Physiologically, the passing of some genes is known to happen across generations. This is not only in terms of physical characteristics but also certain diseases that may have affected one of the grandparents in a given generation and resurfaced again two generations later in the physical system of a descendant. The mapping of this process, as of today, needs much additional work to be done. This also contains a whole research agenda of human physiology, physical anthropology, medicines and more. Such a subject matter would deserve an integrated approach of not just, anthropology, psychology, genetic sciences and more, but a whole setup of support disciplines with appropriate interdisciplinary framework. This will give insights into the physiology of the human being and the composition of the brain and mind. It is a challenging task, but it is a task that cannot be avoided. (The writer is a well-known management consultant of international repute. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

GOVERNOR SPARKS CONTROVERSY

Madam — Tamil Nadu Governor R N Ravi, in an unprecedented move on the evening of June 29 last year, unilaterally removed Tamil Nadu Minister V Senthilbalaji from the Council of Ministers. But he hastily backtracked from his decision late at night because he too knew that his act was not only illegal but also unconstitutional. Some people say that Ravi has always been in the habit of being in controversies. But I believe that R N Ravi is a Governor later, first he is the order follower of the ruling Home Ministry. The ideology of the Home Ministry is clearly visible in every decision and every speech of him. For example, just two days ago, while giving a lecture, he said that 'secularism is a European concept, that is why it was not a part of the Indian Constitution earlier, later, an 'insecure Prime Minister' got it added to the Constitution during the Emergency'. For example, in one of his sentences, he first hinted at the concept of a Hindutva nation and secondly, he also criticised former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Some critics are demanding the immediate removal of R N Ravi from the post of Governor, whereas I believe that this is an ideological war which has been started by the central Government through the Governor, hence it would be better to answer this verbal war with thoughts only. Ravi should be asked, and then he will also say that the entire Constitution of India is external and is a copy of Europe, especially Britain, hence the entire Constitution should be abolished? Is our Constitution, on the basis of which we are proudly waving the flag of being the largest democracy today, also a European concept? Has the Governor forgotten that he has taken oath of this Constitution? Secularism is an integral part of our Constitution. It is our biggest duty to keep religion separate from politics. Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

Ukraine appreciates India's efforts



The meeting of Ukrainian President Zelenskyy with the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the sidelines of his US visit for the Quad is taken with the overwhelming gesture from the Ukrainian counterparts. Ukraine has been visited by almost all the Quad leaders in person, and India particularly is playing a spe-

cial role in establishing peace within Ukraine with its humanitarian assistance, negotiating stability deals and peace settlement mediation between Ukraine and Russia. The Indian efforts for peace initiation is so far are still moving ahead in the back channel diplomatic level. For which Ukraine is thankful for the clear support of India towards Ukrainian integrity and sovereignty. India's efforts in this regards is particularly welcoming that, we take care of every nation near or far from us; stuck in the political or economic or geopolitical turmoil, India's assistance will be helpful to ensure peace and tranquillity in the war hit country. Also such moves will also help India to meet its commitment of becoming Vishwa Shanti Guru or World's Peace Leader in the time to come. This peace collaboration between India and Ukraine will take Indian diplomatic skills to the next level. Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

INDIA'S HOCKEY DOMINANCE CONTINUES

Madam—Indian hockey is on a high as exemplified by the way Manpreet Singh's men dominated the Men's Asian trophy at China's Hulunbuir. Notwithstanding the fact that India was the favourites to lift the title, the boys had to perform on the day, and they did. Although India fought hard to overcome an unexpected resistance from China in the final, the same team it had blanked in the league match, there was little doubt that it was the best team on display throughout the tourney. The 2020 Tokyo Olympics bronze medal, 2023 Hangzhou Asian Games gold medal, bronze at the recent Paris Olympics, and now Asian gold: India has had an excellent run on the astroturf for a couple of years, after a long, long period. The best part of the present Indian hockey team is the unity and spirit with which they come across the field come what may. Coach Craig Fulton's disinclination towards unnecessary and unwarranted chopping of players, in contrast to a few former coaches, has played its role. The talented players, of course, are indispensable

to Indian hockey. At the same time, it is felt that India should not rest on its laurels; 2026 World Cup in Belgium and the Netherlands should be another platform to showcase their undoubted brilliance. Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

ENCOUNTERS RAISE CONCERNS

Madam —The recent reports of police encounters resulting in the deaths of alleged criminals raise a critical question about our justice system and accountability, such as how can we allow a system where police act as judge, jury, and executioner? Does law enforcement cross the line from justice to vigilantism? The tragic killings in Badlapur, Unnao, and Chennai reveal a disturbing trend. We need to consider how we can assure accountability that seems to reward extrajudicial actions. It is imperative for supreme courts to intervene and uphold the principles of justice in democracy. Anshu Bharti | Begusarai

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FIRST COLUMN

SHARPENING THE QUAD VISION

Quad summit focused on maintaining peace in the Indo-Pacific region as its top priority



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

Prime Minister Modi's high-profile visit to the US this week reiterated the salience of US-India bilateral, underscored by several key decisions with a clear focus on the future of this 21st century partnership. This visit by the Indian PM, coming after his trips to Russia and Ukraine, points towards a multi-pronged approach, where India is willing to have diplomatic engagements at the highest level, keeping its national interests sacrosanct.

That PM Modi and President Biden have found a mutual friendship framework, despite the Indian PM having held a political roadshow of sorts with his predecessor in the Oval Office, is a signal to the large world, that the US-India bilateral has bipartisan support. The Quas leaders' summit, Modi's rockstar concert-style engagement with the Indian diaspora and his meeting with top CEOs from the technology sector in the US, all point towards an escape velocity having been achieved by the US and India, with no scope of a look back.

China was the invisible elephant in the room, at the Quad leaders' summit. The statement from the Quad summit without naming an aggressive, maritime international law violator, China, mentioned "As four leading maritime democracies in the Indo-Pacific, we unequivocally stand for the maintenance of peace and stability across this dynamic region, as an indispensable element of global security and prosperity.

We strongly oppose any destabilising or unilateral actions that seek to change the status quo by force or coercion. We condemn recent illicit missile launches in the region that violate UN Security Council resolutions. We express serious concern over recent dangerous and aggressive actions in the maritime domain. We seek a region where no country dominates and no country is dominated—one where all countries are free from coercion, and can exercise their agency to determine their futures. We are united in our commitment to upholding a stable and open international system, with its strong support for human rights, the principle of freedom, rule of law, democratic values, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and peaceful settlement of disputes and prohibition on the threat or use of force in accordance with international law, including the UN Charter. Respect for the leadership of regional institutions, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), is and will remain at the centre of the Quad's efforts." While Quad is not a defence partnership like NATO, the presence of a global superpower, China with its coercive maneuverers in the entire Indian Ocean region, bore heavily on the leaders during the summit in Delaware. Delhi, Delaware (President Biden's hometown), Sydney, and Tokyo are keenly watching the international waters, and violations by China have been reported. The leaders announced "Today we are announcing a new regional Maritime Initiative for Training in the Indo-Pacific (MAITRI), to enable our partners in the region to maximise tools provided through IPMDA and other Quad partner initiatives, to monitor and secure their waters, enforce their laws, and deter unlawful behavior. We look forward to India hosting the inaugural MAITRI workshop in 2025. In addition, Quad partners intend to layer new technology and data into IPMDA over the coming year, to continue to deliver cutting edge capability and information to the region." China would continue to be a key concern for Quad leaders, and would perhaps serve as the super glue closely packing these four countries, with major interest in the Indo-Pacific region in a tighter embrace. The next Quad leaders' summit is likely to be hosted by Delhi, where a new US president is likely to be the key guest of honour. Given that ex-President Trump had encouraged the Quad grouping and President Biden has elevated it to leaders summit, it is safe to assume that QUAD is here to stay.



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

Dissanayake's rise amidst Sri Lanka's political uncertainty



NILANTHA LANGAMUWA

As the nation transitions under Dissanayake's leadership, questions loom about his ability to navigate the complex web of rivalries that define Sri Lanka's volatile democracy

One of the senior editors in Colombo recounted an experience he had in Parliament after a crucial debate, where he observed two politicians discussing serious issues. After the discussion, the editor remarked to one of the leaders, "Look, you always attack him in Parliament, but behind the scenes, you are so close and listen to him carefully." This leader was none other than Anura Kumara Dissanayake, the newly elected ninth Executive President of Sri Lanka and leader of the Marxist-Leninist Party Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna. The person he was listening to was his predecessor, former President Ranil Wickremesinghe, a neoliberal democrat. In response to the editor's comment, Dissanayake stated, "Whatever we say in Parliament, listening to him for five minutes behind the scenes is where we can learn a lot about politics." Wickremesinghe embodies the craft of political manoeuvring, while Dissanayake represents an idealism that has sought to reshape politics through violent revolution, a pursuit that has, lamentably, cost over 60,000 young lives. But later, he engineered a shift among a few key party members to adopt a middle ground to attract liberal democrats through the NPP alliance. So far, it has been a successful story.



The friendship between these two leaders grew for a reason: Wickremesinghe was facing serious internal rifts within his party, the United National Party, where his junior, Sajith Premadasa, was rebelling against him. The history of this party is filled with tales of internal conflicts and bitter betrayals that continue to haunt its prosperity. Nevertheless, Wickremesinghe demonstrated resilience, showing that no matter who declared a power struggle against him, he could adeptly play the game of politics. This Machiavellian politician, well-versed in power dynamics, understands that he would never engage in a battle when it could be won through deception. The painful reality, however, is the consequences of these internal conflicts within political parties as the country enters a new era dominated by "political coalitions." In my opinion, this is not a healthy exercise for a robust democracy.

The erosion of political parties, the backbone of political ideologies, inevitably paves the way for unprecedented crises and precarious social outcomes. However, few realise that the friendship between Wickremesinghe, a man from Colombo's elite and a well-established political family, played [knowingly or unknowingly] a vital role in President Dissanayake's victory. The longstanding enmity between Wickremesinghe and Premadasa was undoubtedly a significant factor in Dissanayake's success, even though many predicted that no candidate would secure the over 50 per cent of votes required to win. The results reflect the polarised political divisions in Sri Lanka, where minority-dominated areas remarkably rejected Dissanayake, presenting a significant challenge for the forthcoming general elections, as his political alliance will need to secure over 113 seats out of 225 to establish its power in Parliament. Erik Solheim, former Norwegian minister and climate change advisor to Sri Lanka, who has been actively involved in Sri Lankan politics since the LTTE era as



THE RESULTS REFLECT THE POLARISED POLITICAL DIVISIONS IN SRI LANKA, WHERE MINORITY-DOMINATED AREAS REMARKABLY REJECTED DISSANAYAKE, PRESENTING A SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGE FOR FORTHCOMING GENERAL ELECTIONS, AS HIS POLITICAL ALLIANCE WILL NEED TO SECURE OVER 113 SEATS OUT OF 225 TO ESTABLISH ITS POWER IN PARLIAMENT

a mediator in peace talks, commented on the significance of this election, stating, "The weakness of the election winner is that his coalition has very little experience running a complicated state like Sri Lanka. They may struggle to achieve a majority in Parliament and implement their many promises in a challenging economic environment." Despite the worldwide congratulatory messages pouring in for the new leader, I find these insights particularly useful for forecasting the future trajectory of electoral outcomes and the challenges that the island nation is likely to face. The caretaker government, appointed for just two months until 14 November, faces low expectations and should refrain from making new appointments, wisely retaining some senior ministry secretaries from the previous administration. If the President fails to secure a majority in the House, he will need to form a coalition, but if that proves impossible, the opposition may take control of Parliament, leading to chaotic infighting—an alarming scenario for an inexperienced President unprepared for Sri Lanka's complex political landscape. This situation accentuates significant uncertainties ahead. Historical trends suggest that a President's party or coalition often secures a majority in subsequent elections; however, the recent election results, where the winning candidate failed to garner over 50 per cent of the vote amidst three main contenders, complicate this. The strong support for Sajith Premadasa and Ranil Wickremesinghe in Tamil-dominated provinces indicates a serious challenge for the newly elected President and his coalition as they approach the upcoming par-

liamentary elections. However, what is remarkable about this election is that it was exceptionally peaceful, with no violence reported, allowing for a refreshing power transition. The commendable role played by the Elections Commission in Sri Lanka cannot be overstated. This calmness is particularly surprising in a country where people previously took to the streets, violently ousting the Prime Minister and President after experiencing a devastating economic crisis. Many find it hard to believe. Nonetheless, this should not be seen as the calm before the storm, as the country's economy remains precarious. No leader can fulfil all the promises made during the election campaign. The responsibility now lies with the leader and his team to convince the public, fostering understanding and collaboration to overcome the challenges ahead. This is where the reality of the much-discussed "new renaissance" will be tested against the ground realities. The nation-state and its historical trajectory will provide important lessons in understanding what the future may hold. What does it mean for a nation's history to be an intricate weave of choices and consequences rather than a mere succession of events? This perspective compels us to reflect on the profound implications of individual and collective decisions on the essence of a nation. The dismissal of "what ifs" simplifies a complex reality rich with potential paths, urging us to explore the interplay between certainty and possibility. In the post-independence landscape, missed opportunities for reconciliation and economic transformation reveal a dissonance between political aspira-

tions and societal realities. The notion of a 'false renaissance' recurs throughout pivotal moments: the 1948 declaration of Independence, the 1956 Sinhala Only Act, the 1972 establishment of a republic, the 1977 shift to an open economy, the election of the first female executive president in 1994, the conclusion of the civil war in 2009, and the election of an apolitical leader (Gotabaya Rajapaksa) to overhaul the social structure in 2019—all serve as warnings against complacency born from superficial progress that obscures unresolved tensions and deep-rooted systemic issues. Therefore, sensationalising the new leader's humble family background and expressing anger towards the "self-proclaimed elites" and their alleged corruption may not provide the sustainable answers that the nation desperately seeks. Instead, it is the collective will and the leader's capacity to engage with those who oppose him that will be essential for embarking on this new journey. While propaganda may orchestrate a false renaissance, the shimmering illusions of progress starkly contrast with the gritty ground reality, exposing a profound philosophical enigma: the allure of superficial advancement often obscures the underlying fractures of society. This compels us to confront the uncomfortable truths of our existence that we habitually choose to ignore in our quest for meaning and coherence. This challenge now lies before the new leadership. Behold an essential, paradoxical truth: within this tranquil interlude lies the profound anticipation of the storm to come. (The writer is a journalist and author. Views expressed are Personal)

Agri-tech 2.0 : Digital innovations paving the path to sustainable farming

By boosting productivity, promoting sustainability and reducing environmental impact, these technologies offer a pathway for sustainable future

As the global population heads toward an estimated 10 billion by 2050, the agricultural sector faces mounting pressure to significantly increase food production. For India, with its vast and diverse agricultural landscape, this presents a critical challenge. Traditional farming methods alone will not be enough to meet the needs of a growing population while also addressing the threats posed by climate change, dwindling natural resources and the imperative for sustainable practices. In this context, agri-tech, the convergence of technology and agriculture, offers a transformative pathway forward. By integrating cutting-edge digital technologies into farming, India has the potential to enhance productivity, sustain-



AUROBIND UPADHYAYA

ability, and resilience. This article explores how these emerging technologies are reshaping the agricultural sector in India, positioning it to meet the demands of the future. **Agriculture at a Crossroads** : For decades, agriculture has been the backbone of India's economy, employing over 50 per cent of the workforce and contributing significantly to GDP. However, the sector is

now facing unprecedented strain. The growing population, along with environmental challenges such as erratic weather patterns, water scarcity, and soil degradation, has placed the industry at a critical juncture. The traditional methods of farming are no longer sufficient to meet the increasing demand for food while preserving the environment. This is where agri-tech comes into play, providing innovative solutions that can transform Indian agriculture by improving efficiency and promoting sustainable practices. **Precision Agriculture: Data-Driven Farming**: One of the most promising advancements in agri-tech is precision agriculture, which leverages technologies such as GPS, IoT sen-

sors, and drones to optimise farming operations. By gathering and analysing real-time data on factors like soil health, weather conditions, and crop growth, precision agriculture enables farmers to make informed decisions. This approach helps in the efficient use of water, fertilisers, and pesticides, minimising waste and environmental harm while maximising crop yields. In India, the adoption of precision agriculture is accelerating. According to the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), these techniques have the potential to increase yields by 15-25 per cent while reducing input costs by 10-15 per cent. The precision agriculture market in India is expected to grow significantly, from USD 57.6 mil-



lion in 2020 to USD 124.2 million by 2025. Government initiatives like the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY) for water conservation and the Soil Health Card Scheme for better fertiliser management are further driving this growth. **AI and Machine Learning**: Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) are also playing a crucial role in modernising Indian agricul-

ture. By analysing vast amounts of data from satellite imagery, weather forecasts, and historical crop performance, AI algorithms can predict potential problems like pest outbreaks and suggest the best times for planting. AI-powered platforms are already being used to predict pest infestations and optimise pesticide use, potentially reducing the need for harmful chemicals by up to 30 per cent. **Ensuring Transparency**: Blockchain technology is emerging as a revolutionary tool in agricultural supply chains. By offering a decentralised ledger for recording transactions, blockchain ensures transparency, reduces fraud, and promotes fair trade practices. For farmers, suppliers, and consumers alike,

blockchain provides verifiable information about the origin and journey of food products, ensuring adherence to sustainability standards. The blockchain market in India's agriculture and food supply chain is expected to grow at a CAGR of 47.8 per cent, reaching USD 289 million by 2027. **IoT and Smart Farming**: The Internet of Things (IoT) is revolutionising how farmers monitor and manage their crops. IoT devices, such as soil moisture sensors and weather stations, provide real-time data on environmental conditions, allowing for better decision-making in the field. For example, smart irrigation systems can adjust water usage based on real-time data, saving water and improving crop health. The IoT in agriculture market

in India is projected to reach USD 634.5 million by 2027, growing at a CAGR of 12.5 per cent. **Use of Drones**: Equipped with high-resolution cameras and sensors, drones provide farmers with detailed aerial imagery of their fields. This helps in identifying issues such as nutrient deficiencies, pest infestations, and water stress. Farmers can then take targeted actions, reducing waste and environmental damage. The use of drones in Indian agriculture is expected to grow substantially, with the market anticipated to reach USD 108 million by 2025. (The writer is chief growth officer with Arahax Technologies; views are personal)

CBDT reshuffles responsibilities

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), the authority that supervises the income-tax department's work in the country, has carried out a fresh reshuffle of responsibilities amongst its members, with the investigation wing reporting to the chairman. An official order issued on September 24 said CBDT Chairman Ravi Agrawal, a 1988-batch Indian Revenue Service (IRS) officer, will be in charge of "coordination and overall supervision" of the board's work and that of the investigation, central and criminal investigation directorates. Earlier, there used to be an independent post of member (investigation) in the CBDT, but it was done away with last year as part of the work re-orientation of the board and



the chairman was authorised with the "supervision of the work of investigation", a senior officer told PTI. Some other members' responsibilities were also reorganised then, he said. According to the order, Harinder Bir Singh Gill, a

1987-batch IRS officer, will be the member (taxpayer services and revenue), apart from holding the additional charge of member (systems and faceless services). Sanjay Kumar, a 1988-batch officer, will hold the charge of member (audit and

judicial), besides the additional charge of member (income tax). Prabodh Seth of the 1989 batch will be the member (administration) and his batchmate, Ramesh Narain Parbat, will be the member (legislation), according to the order that also listed out the zonal charges for these officers. The CBDT, under the Department of Revenue in the Union finance ministry, is headed by a chairman and can have six members in the rank of a special secretary. The board currently has a vacancy of two members. The latest reshuffle was affected as the tenure of two members ended in August, with Pragma Sahay Saxena taking voluntary retirement from service and the scheduled superannuation of Pravin Kumar, the officer said.

Jio-bp inaugurates 500th EV charging station

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



Nita Mukesh Ambani, Director, Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) and Murray Auchincloss, CEO, bp, on Thursday inaugurated the 500th Jio-bp pulse EV-charging station of Jio-bp. Jio-bp is a fuels and mobility joint venture between RIL and global energy giant BP. "The commissioning of the EV-charging station enables access for guests at the Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre, Jio World Plaza and Jio World Convention Centre in Bandra Kurla Complex (BKC), Mumbai, marking the installation of the 500th Jio-bp pulse charging point in India," a company statement said. Jio-bp has expanded its network of EV-charging stations at a rapid pace, growing from 1,300 to 5,000 in just a year. With 95 per cent of its EV-charging network comprising fast charging stations -- the highest in the industry -- the company is poised to deliver high speed electrons with unmatched industry-leading uptime of 96 per cent, establishing itself as the country's most reliable charging network, it said. Jio-bp is also the first in the industry to deploy the top-rated 480 KW chargers backed by unique CVPs, which enables it to provide an efficient and quick charging experience at locations such as malls, public parking, corporate parks, hotels, and wayside amenities. "By reducing range anxiety through its rapidly growing charging infrastructure, minimising charging time

with DC fast chargers, and delivering a seamless charging experience through its state-of-the-art Jio-bp pulse charging app, Jio-bp has occupied pole position in accelerating the adoption of electric vehicles in India," it said. Ambani said Jio-bp is playing a pioneering role in accelerating EV adoption in India. "With the largest network share of fast-charging stations, fastest growth in EV charging infra, and highest reliability, Jio-bp is offering a well-packaged, digitised charging solution to millions of Indians". With its foray into green electrons, powered by Reliance Jio Infocomm Ltd's solar power plants, Jio-bp is making rapid progress in its broader goal of promoting sustainable green mobility in India. "EV charging is one of bp's key transition businesses in our journey to becoming an integrated energy company. We are focusing on scale, speed, and strategic locations to provide a seamless customer experience. By combining bp and RIL's capabilities, we are delivering EV charging with convenience, creating a unique value proposition for customers," Murray Auchincloss said in a statement. With its sustained charging infrastructure growth, pioneering customer proposition, and focus on sustainability, Jio-bp is reinforcing its position as the fastest, mostly widely available, and most reliable EV charging partner in India.

ICRA sees room for petrol, diesel price cuts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



A reduction in crude oil prices in recent weeks has improved margins on retail auto fuels, providing state-owned firms a headroom to cut petrol and diesel prices by Rs 2-3 per litre, rating agency Icrs said on Thursday. The price of a basket of crude oil India imports averaged USD 74 per barrel in September, down from about USD 83-84 a barrel in March when petrol and diesel prices were last cut by Rs 2 per litre. In a note, Icrs said the marketing margins on retail sales of auto fuels for the Indian Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) have improved in recent weeks with the reduction in crude prices. The rating agency anticipates that there is headroom for the downward revision of retail fuel prices if crude prices remain stable at current levels. Girishkumar Kadam, Senior Vice President and Group Head, Corporate Ratings, ICRA, said: "ICRA estimates that the OMCs' net realisation was higher by Rs 15 per litre for petrol and Rs 12 a litre for diesel vis-à-vis international product prices in September 2024 (till September 17). The retail selling price (RSPs) of these fuels have been unchanged since March 2024 (Rs 2/litre was reduced on petrol and diesel on March 15, 2024) and there appears to be headroom for their downward revision by Rs 2-3 per litre, if crude prices remain stable". Crude prices have witnessed a sharp decline in the last few months, primarily due to weak global economic growth and high US production and the OPEC+ has pushed the rollback of its production cuts by two months to combat the declining prices. A decline in the price of crude oil -- which is converted into fuels like petrol and diesel at

refineries -- had rekindled hopes for a reduction in petrol and diesel rates that have been on a freeze for over two years now barring a pre-election reduction in March. While petrol and diesel pricing is deregulated (meaning oil companies have the freedom to fix retail rates), the state-owned fuel retailers, Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL), have rarely used this freedom since late 2021 by not revising prices in line with cost. They stopped daily price revision in early November 2021 when rates across the country hit an all-time high, prompting the government to roll back a part of the excise duty hike it had effected during the pandemic to take advantage of low oil prices. The freeze continued into 2022 but the war-led spike in international oil prices prompted a Rs 10 a litre hike in petrol and diesel prices from mid-March 2022 before another round of excise duty cut rolled back all of the Rs 13 a litre and Rs 16 a litre increase in taxes on petrol and diesel done during the pandemic. That followed the current price freeze which began on April 6, 2022, and continued till March 15 reduction. Thereafter there has been a freeze in rates again. Petrol costs Rs 94.72 per litre in the national capital and diesel comes for Rs 87.62 a litre. Icrs said the Singapore Gross Refining Margins (GRMs) witnessed significant moderation in the first half of the 2024-25 fiscal (April 2024 to March 2025) to about USD 4 per barrel due to a drop in crack spreads with higher product output and reduced demand. The impact is mainly on account of weak demand from China due to rising electric vehicle (EV) sales, muted industry demand and real estate downturn. Further, demand in Europe has also been subdued due to weak industrial activity and a structural shift in vehicle fleets towards EVs, it said. "A marketing gain of Rs 1 per litre on petrol and diesel would compensate for the GRM loss of USD 0.9 per barrel for the domestic refining and marketing industry," Icrs said. Commenting on the OMCs' profitability, Kadam said: "The OMCs reported healthy operating margins in FY2024 (April 2023 to March 2024), recouping the losses incurred during FY2023. Despite moderation in the GRMs, the improvement in marketing margins is likely to result in the OMCs maintaining their profitability in H1 FY2025". However, inventory losses due to a sharp decline in crude prices could impact profitability to an extent in Q2 FY2025. Further, the profitability for standalone refiners would take a hit with the declining GRMs. Icrs's outlook on the refining and marketing sector remains Stable.

India aims to integrate scalable food security interventions

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



India is seeking to integrate scalable food security interventions into existing government programmes while promoting local crop varieties, a top government official said on Thursday. Agriculture Secretary Devesh Chaturvedi outlined these priorities during a review of the implementation of the United Nations World Food Programme's (WFP) country strategic plan (CSP) for India spanning 2023-2027. Chaturvedi, who chaired the first meeting of the Country Programme Advisory Committee (CPAC) under the new CSP, suggested the officers to "identify the scalable interventions and

initiatives and prepare mechanisms for including the same in ongoing programmes of ministries/departments." The secretary called for a dedicated workshop to discuss the agriculture sector initiatives in detail, highlighting the need for a focused approach, an official statement said. Chaturvedi emphasized promoting nutritious local varieties of rice and millets alongside fortified cereals, signalling a shift towards indigenous crop promotion. He advised exploring the possibilities of bringing the Farmer Producer Organizations (FPO) into different initiatives. The secretary also emphasised that while accessing the

nutritional outcomes of the programmes "we should also look at the standards on nutrition applicable for the Indian population." The committee, comprising joint secretaries from various ministries and NITI Aayog representatives, is tasked with coordinating and reviewing progress on initiatives outlined in the strategic plan. The CSP, underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding between India's agriculture ministry and UN-WFP, focuses on four key outcomes: enhancing food-based social protection systems, promoting diverse and nutritious diets, empowering women financially, and building climate-resilient food systems. WFP Country Director Elizabeth Faure briefed the committee on ongoing initiatives, including efforts to boost food security for smallholder farmers in Assam, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh, and the nationwide push to bring millets in mainstream. The meeting saw participation from various ministries, including Food & Public Distribution, Women and Child Development, and Rural Development, as well as agencies like the National Disaster Management Authority and India Meteorological Department. India, the world's most populous country, faces significant challenges in ensuring food security for its 1.4 billion people.

India set to achieve GDP growth in FY25 says Finance Ministry

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



India is set to achieve 6.5-7 per cent GDP growth in the current financial year as indicated by the movements in high-frequency indicators till August, a finance ministry report said on Thursday. The recent developments analysed indicate strong foundations of macroeconomic stability in India with steady growth, investment, employment and inflation trends, a strong and stable financial sector and a resilient external account, including a comfortable foreign exchange reserve position. "A challenge on the macroeconomic front is of navigating the continuing uncertainty in global economic prospects. We will likely encounter a cycle of policy rate cuts globally amid fears of a recession in advanced economies and continuing geopolitical conflicts," the Monthly Economic Review for August said. On balance, the report said, the GDP growth of 6.7 per cent in Q1 FY25 and the

skewed spatial distribution of rain may have an impact on farm output in a few regions. However, in the absence of any serious adverse climate shocks, rural incomes and demand should get stronger, and food inflation will be milder, it said. There are also incipient signs of strains in certain sectors. For instance, the automobile dealers' body FADA has pointed to moderating sales of passenger vehicles and a build-up of inventory, it added. Data from Nielsen IQ indicated that the growth of

fast-moving consumer goods sales in urban areas slowed in Q1 FY25. While these may turn out to be transient with the onset of the festival season, they warrant monitoring. Further, capital spending by Indian states has declined in the current financial year. Stock markets around the world are booming, reinforced by recent policy announcements in a few countries, it said. "Consequently, the risk of an eventual correction has risen. If the risk materialises, the spillover effect may be felt globally as well," it said.

Dr Reddy's faces penalty in Mexico for regulatory deviation



Dr Reddy's Laboratories said on Thursday the Mexican drug regulator has imposed a penalty of around Rs 28 lakh. The drug regulatory body of Mexico has imposed a penalty of MXN 6,51,420 (Rs 28 Lakh) on the company for deviation from prescribed guidelines for filing intimation of import of a reference standard for one of the active pharmaceutical ingredients, the Hyderabad-based drug major said in a regulatory filing. Shares of the drug maker were trading 0.39 per cent up at Rs 6,720 apiece on BSE.

Fixing SpiceJet's broken wings

Can the low-cost airline heal enough to effectively compete with IndiGo and Air India?

KUSHAN MITRA ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi High Court order mandating the return of three engines used by the airline on their Boeing 737 aircraft. With leasing companies asking the airline to pay up, and taking their aircraft away, the airline is down to just having 21 operational aircraft according to website airfleets.net. This is a precipitous decline from the halcyon days of the airline before Covid when the airline had almost five times as many aircraft in its fleet and was the first Indian operator of the Boeing 737 MAX aircraft. However, the one-two punch of the coronavirus shutdown and the grounding of the Boeing 737MAX fleet worldwide following two deadly disasters almost knocked the airline out. But this is not a time to dwell on the past, the fact is that despite difficult odds the airline has managed to raise a

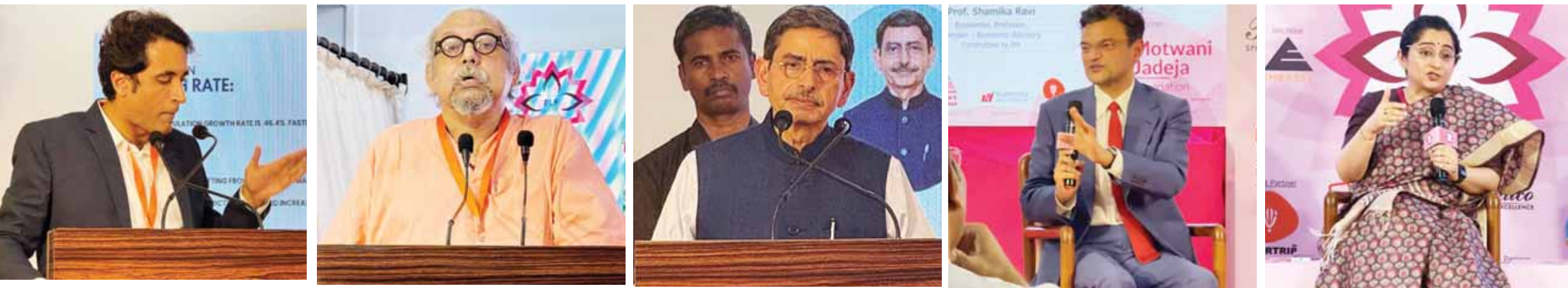


large sum of money from Qualified Institutional Placement (QIP) with institutions such as Morgan Stanley, Goldman Sachs, BNP Paribas, Nomura and Tata Mutual Fund subscribing to the issue. The quality of investment is a very positive indicator of the future prospects of the airline. SpiceJet has a lot to do, first and foremost to regain the confidence of employees, service providers and most importantly customers. They can do this by becoming more reliable and offering more services. Due to issues with leasing companies, the airline has been forced to wet-lease temporary aircraft from airlines in Cambodia and Turkey. They should now concentrate on operating their own fleet and by repaying dues owed to leasing firms, rebuild their

confidence in SpiceJet as a reliable airline. There is now talk of the airline growing to 100 aircraft by the end of 2026. If this fructifies, it is a welcome move as the Indian aviation sector needs the competition as the domination of IndiGo and Air India/Air India Express leave customers with little choice. This duopoly needs to be challenged, and SpiceJet was a capable third player in the sector. Now however, they will have to deal with increased competition from the likes of Akasa. That said, the growth prospects for the Indian aviation sector are extremely high. Between January and June 2024, domestic air traffic numbered 79.35 million passengers, which was a growth at 4.28 percent from the same period last year. The growth could have been higher still had it not been for the collapse of Go First last year and persistent engine problems with Pratt&Whitney GTF engines plaguing IndiGo leading to almost a quarter of their fleet grounded. If SpiceJet can get their act together, and there is no reason to doubt that they can't after the fund-raise, the Indian aviation sector could easily grow to 250 million passengers per year by 2028.

INBRIEF

- NGEL INKS JV AGREEMENT WITH MAHAPREIT**
NEW DELHI: NTPC Green Energy Limited, entered into a Joint Venture Agreement (JVA) with Mahatma Phule Renewable Energy and Infrastructure Technology Ltd. (MAHAPREIT) on 25th September 2024.
- KATTANKULATHUR: SRM Medical College Hospital & Research Centre (SRM SKMCH&RC) has inaugurated a Tobacco Cessation Centre at its Kattankulathur location. The center, located at the Psychiatry OPD (C-1/37), First Floor, C Block, will operate from Monday to Saturday, 8 AM to 2 PM.**
- AMRITSAR: The Punjab government has approved the renaming of government schools to honor prominent freedom fighters and martyrs, aiming to commemorate their sacrifices for the country's independence.**
- AMRITSAR: An orientation workshop for college eco-club in-charges from seven districts was organized by the College Development Council, Guru Nanak Dev University under the Environment Education Programme.**



PONDICHERRY LITERARY FESTIVAL

SHAPING INDIA'S LITERARY FUTURE

As India's literary festivals increasingly become platforms for political agendas and sensational debates, the Pondicherry Literary Festival offers a breath of fresh air

BY KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

Literary festivals are reasonably new phenomena that have sprouted across the globe. They are gatherings of authors who come from all corners of the world to discuss the evolution of literature and the modern trends that drive it. A festival syndrome has taken over India's literary world. The land of Kalidasa is bereft of any authors who are incapable of matching the stature of global-quality writers. Though there are writers who get patronage from some publishing firms or newspapers because of their obsession with anarchy and "out-of-the-box" stances like equating Maoists as "Gandhians with AK-47 rifles" and comparing their country to a "mobile-free republic", they are mere pygmies when compared to the ones in the global arena. The literary festivals that mushroomed across India gave a lot of hope to average Indians. The general expectation was that young authors would get a platform to tell the world what they felt about the emerging Indian literary world. But what we saw was that the festivals were getting hijacked by a coterie who set the agenda for wannabe writers. They want the new-generation authors to speak and write only against the concept of India. These literary festivals became an extension of the

Progressive Writers' Forum of the former Soviet Union, where the Communist Party was the last word on literature. The Party would decide what constitutes literature and ask the writers to "compose" ideology in the form of novels and poems. The two-day Pondicherry Literary Festival held on 21st and 22nd September brought in a refreshing change. The Pondicherry Literary Festival, officially launched in 2018, has emerged as one of the leading cultural events in south India - nay, in India itself. The event featured the crème de la crème of India's intelligentsia. It saw the active participation of authors like Aravindan Neelakantan, Anand Ranganathan, Kanchan Gupta, Vikram Sampath and many others. The event has systematically avoided noise from debates that are curated for the sake of polemics, thus giving an undesirable lease of life to debunked narratives. "We empower with knowledge on spiritual, religious and cultural subjects that showcase Bharat Shakti and critically evaluate what holds her back via lectures and conversations, book talks and presentations on science and technology, defence and security. This year we focus on Bharat in the New Age. 'Bharat Shakti' is a phrase we have chosen from the writings of Sri Aurobindo to serve as our guiding principle. Pondicherry is Sri Aurobindo's seat of *sadhana* and we take these



associations with reverence and respect," said Alo Sud, the festival director, who is the moving spirit behind this event. Pondicherry Lit Fest had a baptism by fire in 2018. "There were attacks and diatribes on us from the Left ecosystem, who had no qualms in designating this festival as a Sanghi, right-wing event. We do not categorise people based on rights, lefts or based on religions. This is an event where delegates can come, take part and return with their minds filled with ideas, knowledge and ground realities," said Alo Sud. In an era where commercial writers/authors advertise their new



works well in advance, authors like Aravindan Neelakantan and Anand Ranganathan are exceptions. They do not publicise their new works and it is by word of mouth that their contents get disseminated. The "secular media" blackout their groundbreaking works because of the unpalatable facts they highlight. It is Pondicherry Lit Fest that offers everyone (irrespective of caste, creed, ideology, and religion) a platform to air their views and grievances. The delegates were given a bird's-eye view of the happenings in spheres like science, technology, defence and security. The festival

stood out because there was no name-calling or Modi-bashing. The rest of the literary festivals staged across India seem to be dedicated to abusing Narendra Modi. Sometime in 2016, a Carnatic musician, feeling he was being relegated to the fourth round, came out with a startling disclosure that there was no freedom of expression under the Sangh Parivar regime. It hogged national limelight, as even the staunchest critic of Modi was hearing such an allegation for the first time. The result? The musician became an overnight star and was honoured with the

title *Sangeeta Kala Nidhi!* What Dr M Rajeev Kumar, a noted critic and author of many short stories and dramas, says about lit fests is noteworthy. "We do have many lit fests, but their agenda is fixed. There is no literature or culture in these events other than promoting certain politicians, their ideologies and some publishing houses. Lit festivals are for open discussions and not for name-calling and abusing rivals," said Dr Kumar, who has been writing for more than five decades and has yet to be invited to at least one lit fest in Kerala. Interestingly, there are lit festivals in West Asian countries too, where the targets are Modi and Indian nationalism. There are frontal organisations of extremist outfits as well as the CPI(M) (masquerading as cultural associations). This is what makes Pondicherry Lit Fest stand out from other events. Lucid speeches, lively discussions, and speakers who are keen to take the participants into confidence make it distinct from other such festivals. Delegates are treated to sumptuous meals of knowledge, wisdom and erudition. Who said avant-garde art and literature are meant only for intellectuals? Come to Pondicherry and you will be elevated to the level visualised by Sri Aurobindo, for whom the waterfront state was the second home.

NEW ARRIVALS

SEPTEMBER RELEASES



Time to Come Home: Sowing the Seeds of Self-Love for Lasting Happiness
by DAMINI GROVER (PRICE: ₹399, PAGES: 280) Hay House

In *Time to Come Home*, award-winning psychologist and life coach Damini Grover offers a transformative guide that dives deep into the vital themes of self-love and personal growth. The book emphasises that self-love is foundational for a fulfilling life, helping readers reconnect with their true selves while embracing their imperfections. Grover provides actionable steps and relatable stories to create a clear roadmap for understanding and practising self-love in everyday life, addressing common challenges of self-acceptance and personal development. This inspiring work invites readers to honour their worth and prioritise their happiness, ultimately leading to lasting fulfillment.

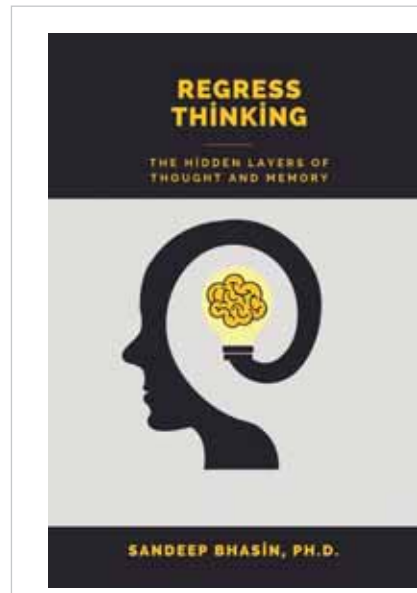
Turtle Moon
By HANNAH GOLD (Price: ₹499, Pages: 337) HarperCollins Children's Books

In *Turtle Moon*, Silver Trevelon's family grapples with unhappiness due to the absence of a long-awaited sibling. When her father receives an invitation to paint at a turtle rescue centre in Costa Rica, Silver hopes it will be the adventure that brings her family closer together. As she settles into life at the animal centre, she witnesses a rare leatherback turtle nesting on the beach. However, excitement turns to alarm when the turtle's eggs are stolen, propelling Silver and her new friends into a perilous quest to retrieve them. Their journey into the heart of the jungle uncovers long-buried secrets, testing their courage and resolve.

Exploring the interplay of thought and memory

In 'Regress Thinking: The Hidden Layers of Thought and Memory', author SANDEEP BHASIN explores the complexities of the mind and how understanding our thought processes can enhance creativity and memory, writes SAKSHI PRIYA

Regress Thinking: The Hidden Layers of Thought and Memory by Sandeep Bhasin invites readers on an enlightening journey through the complexities of the mind, combining historical insights with contemporary applications to offer a fresh perspective on creativity and cognitive processes. With over thirty years of experience across various fields, Bhasin draws on his extensive knowledge to explore these themes further. The book is structured around several central themes, each highlighting the vital role of creativity as a multi-dimensional process. Bhasin explores the psychology of creativity, illustrating how ideas emerge from the intricate interplay of different brain functions. He introduces the notion of *Regress Thinking*, a concept that encourages readers to retrace their cognitive steps to uncover hidden insights that might have been overlooked in the rush of everyday thought. This methodology is not just an academic pursuit, it has tangible applications in business, technology, and personal development. Bhasin's writing is both clear and engaging, making complex concepts accessible to a broad audience. He encourages readers to adopt a mindset of experimentation and to regard failure as an essential part of the creative process. By drawing connections between historical innovations and modern challenges, he highlights that lessons from the past can provide crucial strategies for tackling present-day problems. A standout aspect of the book is its use of case studies and real-life examples,



which illustrate the various manifestations of regression and its impact on individual's lives. These narratives offer practical insights and inspiration for overcoming challenges, providing a comprehensive framework for understanding and managing regression. Bhasin empowers readers to harness the potential of regression while mitigating its negative effects. One particularly compelling section of the book focuses on the four stages of the creative process: preparation, incubation, illumination and verification. Bhasin explains how each stage contributes to idea



ABOUT THE BOOK
Book : Regress Thinking: The Hidden Layers of Thought and Memory
by SANDEEP BHASIN PH.D.
Publisher : Notion Press
₹990.00

generation, urging readers to embrace the non-linear nature of creativity. He also discusses the significance of environmental factors, mindset and collaboration in enhancing creative potential, reminding us that creativity

flourishes in supportive and stimulating settings. Moreover, Bhasin's examination of cognitive efficiency sheds light on the brain's remarkable ability to prioritise information and dismiss what it considers unimportant. This selective forgetting is framed as a beneficial feature, reinforcing the idea that understanding our mental processes can significantly enhance our learning experiences. *Regress Thinking* serves as a guide to individual creativity, it advocates for harnessing collective intelligence in our interconnected world. Bhasin promotes a culture of openness and collaboration, positioning these

elements as essential for addressing the pressing issues we face today. *Regress Thinking* is a fascinating read that intertwines history, psychology and practical application. It acts as both a manual and a companion for those looking to unlock their creative potential and navigate the intricacies of modern life. With its actionable insights and philosophical reflections, this book is a significant addition for anyone interested in enhancing their cognitive abilities and nurturing innovation. Bhasin's approach will resonate with those eager to explore the depths of their minds and utilise the past as a springboard for future success.

INDIA LIKELY TO MAINTAIN SUPREMACY OVER BANGLADESH

PTI ■ KANPUR
India would want their big guns Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma to fire when the mighty hosts aim for a clean sweep against a beleaguered Bangladesh in the second and final Test starting here on Friday.
The all-round show of Ravichandran Ashwin, Shubman Gill's sublime hundred, Ravindra Jadeja's quality batting and Rishabh Pant's roaring comeback allowed India to script a comfortable victory in Chennai despite being put under pressure by the Bangladesh pacers on day one.
India bounced back in the game reaffirmed their supremacy in Test cricket, especially at home where they are on course for a record extending 18th consecutive series win. Having made a successful return in white-ball cricket, it was time for Pant to show that it is the Test arena where he can make the maximum impact.
It seems he has even added one more dimension to his game: curbing his aggressive instinct



if the situation demands, making him even more dangerous.
However, both Rohit and Virat's bats remained silent in the series-opener as Bangladesh pacers — Hasan Mahmud and Taskin Ahmed — bowled probing lines on a supportive track and were rewarded. With a long Test season ahead of them, the two premier batters must be itching to get back among the runs.
Playing his first Test at home since March 2023, Kohli did not look at his sharpest and one can trust him to not go for expansive cover drives at the start of his innings.
CHANGE IN COMBINATIONS: The Green Park wicket has traditionally been a low and slow track that assists spinners. While it is expected to offer some assistance to the fast bowlers initially, the basic nature of the pitch, prepared with black soil brought from Unnao, is not expected to change much.
The wicket will become slower as the game progresses. It means, India can field three spinners instead of three

their playing eleven. They struggled against a high-quality Indian pace attack in their first essay in Chennai and then could not handle Ashwin and Co while chasing an improbable target.
The team management has given contrasting statements on Shakib Al Hasan's availability. While a selector had said that he is doubtful due to a finger injury he suffered while batting in Chennai, chief coach Chandika Hathurusinghe said he is eligible for selection.
Bangladesh can bring left-arm spinner Taijul Islam in place of lanky pacer Nahid Rana. They also have an option in off-spinner Nayeem Hasan.
A SPLENDID DOUBLE AWAITS JADEJA: In 73 Tests, Ravindra Jadeja has taken 299 wickets and scored 3122 runs. He needs to add just one more scalp to his kitty to become the second-fastest player in Test history to complete the double of 300 wickets and 3000 runs.
England great Ian Botham had achieved the feat in 72 matches.
CONDITIONS CHALLENGING: The muggy weather will pose a huge challenge for the players. The humidity has been very high in the city in the last few days. The Indian team made Thursday's practice optional, saying it needs to save players from searing heat.
The match may see interruptions on first and third day with weather forecast predicting rain.
India have not lost a Test to Bangladesh till date and the visitors will need a special effort to reverse that statistic.
TEAMS (FROM):
India: Rohit Sharma (C), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, KL Rahul, Sarfaraz Khan, Rishabh Pant (WK), Dhruv Jurel (WK), R Ashwin, R Jadeja, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohd. Siraj, Akash Deep, Jasprit Bumrah, Yash Dayal.
Bangladesh: Najmul Hossain Shanto (C), Mahmudul Hasan Joy, Zakir Hasan, Shadman Islam, Mominul Haque, Mushfiqur Rahim (wk), Shakib Al Hasan, Litton Kumer Das, Mehidy Hasan Miraz, Taijul Islam, Nayeem Hasan, Nahid Rana, Hasan Mahmud, Taskin Ahmed, Syed Khaled Ahmed, Jaker Ali Anik.



Shakib retires from T20Is, says Kanpur Test will be his last if no farewell at home

PTI ■ KANPUR
Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan on Thursday announced his retirement from T20 Internationals with immediate effect and also said that the second Test against India will be his last if his country's board doesn't give him a farewell match against South Africa at home.
His final international game for Bangladesh will be in the Champions Trophy which is likely to be held in UAE and Pakistan.
The 37-year-old great, who featured in 129 T20Is for Bangladesh will, however, continue to play in franchise leagues.
"I have played my last T20 match in T20 World Cup. We have discussed this with the selectors. Looking at the 2026 World Cup, this is the right time for me to move out. Hopefully, BCB will find some great players and we will perform well," said Shakib on the eve of the second and final Test against India here.
Shakib, who has played 70 Tests, scoring 4600 runs and taking 242 wickets might just play his last Test in the North Indian industrial town in case the cricket board can't assure him of his security after being accused of murder although he wasn't even in the country at that time.
"I have expressed my desire to play my last Test in Mirpur to BCB. They agreed with me. They are trying to organise everything so that I can go to

India is capable to make a strong impression in women's T20 WC: Sthalekar

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Former Australian captain Lisa Sthalekar said India have the all-round depth to grab an elusive ICC title during the upcoming women's T20 World Cup.
The global showpiece will be held in the UAE from October 3 and India's best effort in the event remains a final berth in 2020, where they lost to Australia.
"I can see Australia in the semifinals as they are aiming to win their fourth (title) in a row. England too had a strong pre-tournament build-up. India's chances are also very high and I expect them to be in the semifinals, if not in the finals," Sthalekar told a select group of journalists at the ABC — International Development's five-day cricket commentary



and mojo programme at the Australian High Commission. The former Australian skipper validated her argument citing good options through India's line-up.
"India has got power, depth, decent bowlers and if their 4-7 number batters can score at a good strike rate, they will be in a good position. They need a good start from the openers. Jenimah Rodriguez did well in the West Indies (in the CPL) recently. It will be fascinating to see how she performs in the WC," she said.
Delving further deep into the chances of the Harmanpreet Kaur-led side, Sthalekar said India have the wherewithal to beat Australia, their nemesis in global events over the years.
"For example, in the 2020 T20 WC, Poonam Yadav took four wickets in the first game and

dislodged Australian middle-order. India won that match by 17 runs.
"If any top order Indian batter scores a century or bowlers have a good day, they can take the game away," said the veteran who was the first woman to score 1,000 runs and take 100 wickets in ODIs. Expressing delight over ICC's decision of having equal prize money in men's and women's WCs, the 45-year-old said it will have a bigger impact on the game.
"From a prize money perspective, I think it's really good. But what I am most pleased about than just the winner getting the same prize money as their male counterpart is how much money teams are getting for just participating in the World Cup.
"So, it ensures that it's not just the strong nations getting stronger and wealthier, but there is an effort at growing the global game," she said.
She used Scotland to leverage her point.
"Scotland coming in for the first time will earn money, probably more money than their national contract. The headline is equal prize money and that was primarily the intention.
"But when you look a little bit deeper, they would like to have a bigger impact on the game." After her playing days, Sthalekar has established herself as a respected voice of the game over the last decade. The Indian-origin Aussie described the effort she put in to reach the higher rungs of her job as a commentator.
"Not everyone has to be a Richie Benaud or a Danny Morrison. But we all have different skills and strengths that we bring to the commentary box. That's why you have diverse personalities (doing commentary)," she said.
Sthalekar picked commentating during the IPL as her biggest career moment.
"You have to have goals in your career and IPL (commentary) was my 10-year goal as a commentator. But I got a call to be in the IPL commentary team within six months.
"I remember my first IPL game as a commentator at the Eden Gardens in 2015. Some 70000 screaming fans were there and I had to do an interview with Gautam Gambhir," she said.

Pujara was backbone of Indian batting on last two Aus tours, he will a big miss this time: Vihari

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Hanuma Vihari, part of India's back to back series wins in Australia, reckons the services of veteran batter Cheteshwar Pujara will be dearly missed when the team aims for a hat-trick Down Under later this year.
The five Test series begins in Perth from November 22. Out of favour Pujara was the leading run-getter in the 2018-19 series with 521 off 1258 balls and was once again the backbone of Indian batting three years later when he accumulated 271 runs off 928 balls.
Across the two teams, the 103-Test veteran by far faced the number of balls to wear out the opposition attack comprising Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Starc.
As another Border-Gavaskar Trophy is on the horizon, Vihari wondered who can play Pujara's role this time around.
"Pujara will be a big miss. He was the backbone of the batting line-up in the last two series for Team India. He took blows, he batted time, he stayed there for a long time, he saw the new ball, he got runs. He made the job easier for the other batters coming in," Vihari told PTI in an interaction arranged by JioCinema.
"So that kind of role... Who will play is a question mark for me. Currently I would say we have an attacking mode of a batting line up (the top six). All like to play their

India U20 face stern Iran test in AFC Qualifiers

PTI ■ VIENTIANE (LAOS)
India will be looking to iron out the rough edges before facing Iran in their next Group G game of the AFC U20 Asian Cup 2025 qualifiers here on Friday.
India put up a good show to register a 4-1 victory against Mongolia in their first Group G match but there is still a lot of work to be done.
"The last match was a big motivation for our team. I've always maintained that winning the first match of a tournament is crucial, and the boys stuck their heads in and played extremely well against Mongolia," said Ranjan Chaudhuri in a release.
"But we cannot rejoice in the victory just yet. We must immediately begin preparations for the next game. We missed a lot of chances against Mongolia, and that is something we cannot afford against Iran.
"They are an extremely good side, but we have made our plans according to their game as well. Anything can happen on the day, and with a little

Man United stunned 1-1 by Dutch club Twente in revamped Europa League

AP ■ MANCHESTER
Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag questioned his players' killer instinct after they were held to a 1-1 draw by his old club FC Twente in the revamped Europa League.
Sam Lammers capitalised on a mistake by Christian Eriksen in the second half at Old Trafford and raced away to fire an equalizer for the Dutch underdog.
"You saw that was the game of their life. They fought for every yard and we didn't," Ten Hag said. "99% is not enough, You have to give 100%. You have to

luck, our boys can get a good result. The most important thing for us is to play our game well, and come out of the match with our heads held high, with a smile," he said.

While India registered a 4-1 win against Mongolia, Iran trampled hosts Laos 8-0, a result that puts them firmly on top of Group G.
However, Iran head coach Hossein Abdi was wary of India's potential threat.
"India have quality players, many of whom I've seen at the U-17 level in Thailand last year. They play a fast game, have shown a good understanding of football. I think the game has progressed very fast in India recently, and we will see further advances in the future," he said.

Man United stunned 1-1 by Dutch club Twente in revamped Europa League

kill the game. You have to finish it off."
Eriksen had put United ahead with a stunning first-half strike but was caught in possession by Lammers, whose goal secured an unexpected point for the visitors.
Ten Hag had spoken before the game of his affection for the team he supported as a boy in the Netherlands and represented as a player. He said it was "not nice to have to hurt something you love."
Instead it was United fans left in pain, despite Eriksen seemingly putting the home team on course for victory. United has won just three of

seven games in all competitions this season and Wednesday's draw came after a 0-0 draw at Crystal Palace in the Premier League on Saturday.
Eriksen swept United ahead in the 35th with a first-time shot into the top corner. Connecting with a loose ball just inside the box, the playmaker didn't break stride as he whipped his effort past past Twente goalkeeper Lars Unnerstall with power and precision.
With one fist clenched, he ran to the corner to celebrate in front of the home fans. But it was Twente's supporters

left cheering the loudest after Lammers' goal in the 68th when beating Andre Onana at his near post.
"There's a lot of football (still to play) when you (are) one up and the game takes more than 90 minutes," Ten Hag said.

deflected by defender Abdul Rahman Baba into his own net early in the second half. Giannis Konstantelias equalized on a rebound before Osimhen set up Yunus Akgün to net the winner. Mauro Icardi added a stoppage-time goal.
Lazio cruised past Dynamo Kyiv 3-0. Boulaye Dia struck twice and Fisayo Dele-Bashiru added one. Both teams ended the game with 10 men.
Real Sociedad, struggling in La Liga, got a goal from Ander Barrenetxea at Nice but the home team salvaged a 1-1 draw thanks to Pablo Rosario's goal late in the first half.
Another team struggling