







# Centre to hold simultaneous elections with three new bills

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

The Centre is likely to bring three bills, including two to amend the Constitution, to put in place its plan to hold simultaneous elections. One of the proposed Constitution amendment bills, that deals with aligning the local bodies elections to that of the Lok Sabha and the Assemblies, will require an endorsement from at least 50 per cent of the states. Moving ahead with its 'one nation, one election' plan, the government earlier this month accepted the recommendations of the high-level committee for holding simultaneous polls for the Lok Sabha, state assemblies and local bodies in a phased manner after a countrywide consensus-building exercise. The proposed first constitutional amendment bill would deal with making provisions for holding Lok Sabha and state legislative assembly elections together. Citing recommendations of the high-level committee, sources said the proposed bill would seek to amend Article 82A by adding sub-clause (1) relating to the 'appointed date'. It will also seek to insert sub-clause (2) to Article 82A relating to the end of terms



of the Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies together. It also proposes to amend Article 83(2) and insert new sub-clauses (3) and (4) relating to the duration and dissolution of the Lok Sabha. It also has provisions related to the dissolution of the legislative assemblies and amending Article 327 to insert the term 'simultaneous elections'. This bill will not require ratification by at least 50 per cent of the states, the

recommendation said. The proposed second Constitutional amendment bill will require ratification by at least 50 per cent of the state assemblies as it will deal with matters relating to state affairs. It will seek to amend constitutional provisions relating to the preparation of electoral rolls by the Election Commission (EC) in consultation with State Election Commissions (SECs) for elections to local

Constitutionally, the EC and SECs are separate bodies. The EC holds elections to the post of the President, the Vice President, Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, state assemblies and state legislative councils while the SECs are mandated to conduct polls to local bodies such as municipalities and panchayats. The proposed second Constitutional amendment bill will also create provisions to hold simultaneous elections to municipalities and panchayats, along with

elections to Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies by inserting a new Article 324A. The third bill will be an ordinary one to amend provisions in three laws dealing with Union territories having legislative assemblies — Puducherry, Delhi and Jammu and Kashmir — to align the terms of these Houses with other legislative assemblies and the Lok Sabha as proposed in the first constitutional amendment bill. The statutes it proposes to

amend are the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act-1991, the Government of Union Territories Act-1963 and the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act-2019. The proposed bill will be an ordinary legislation not requiring a change in the Constitution and will also not need ratification by the states. The high-level committee had proposed amendments to three Articles, insertion of 12 new sub-clauses in the existing articles and tweaking three laws related to Union Territories having legislative assemblies. The total number of amendments and new insertions stands at 18. In its report submitted to the government in March, just before the general election was announced, the panel recommended implementing "one nation, one election" in two phases. It suggested simultaneous polls for the Lok Sabha and state assemblies in the first phase and elections for local bodies like panchayats and municipal bodies within 100 days of the general election in the second phase. It also recommended a common electoral roll, which would need coordination between the Election Commission and State Election Commissions.



Union Minister and BJP National President JP Nadda, and others listen to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Mann Ki Baat' radio programme, in New Delhi, Sunday  
Photo by: RANJAN DIMRI/THE PIONEER

## 'Mann Ki Baat' showcases positive developments: Modi

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserted on Sunday that his monthly radio broadcast 'Mann Ki Baat' has shown that people like positive developments and inspiring and encouraging stories. Speaking in the latest episode of the radio programme in which he touches about social issues and highlights people's efforts for a cause in different parts of the country, he noted that the broadcast is completing 10 years. Describing it as an "emotional" episode, he said the programme has become a unique platform that celebrates the spirit of India and showcases collective strength of the nation. He also thanked the media for taking its message to people. Modi said there is generally a perception that people don't pay attention if the content is not spicy or negative. However, 'Mann Ki Baat' has shown that they are eager for positive information. People like

positive things, inspiring examples and encouraging stories, he noted. Modi said the 'Make in India' programme is completing its 10 years, asserting that export is rising in every sector and the rise in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is a testimony to its success. It has helped local manufacturers a lot, he added. He urged people to buy 'Made in India' products in the coming festival season. Referring to his recent visit to the US, Modi said the return of nearly 300 antiquities to India is being widely talked about. When people start taking pride in their heritage, the world also respects their sentiments, he said, asserting that a large number of ancient artefacts has been returned to India by different countries in the last 10 years of his government. In the programme, he highlighted the success of the 'Swachh Bharat' mission, lauding it as a great tribute to Mahatma Gandhi who put special emphasis on cleanliness all his life.



## Himalayan research project to analyse sediment impact

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

As climate change intensifies hazards such as landslides, avalanches, and glacial floods in high mountain regions including Himalayas, a team of researchers from India, Canada and UK is set to conduct a study to understand the long-term impacts of sediment moved by these disasters on communities and river systems including Ganges river. The team, including experts from IIT Roorkee and the Dehradun-based Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology, will start research at a 150 km stretch of the Ganges River impacted by the 2021 disaster in Chamoli nestled in Himalayan region in Uttarakhand. Triggered by a rock and ice avalanche, this catastrophic event caused a devastating debris flood, resulting in over 200 fatalities and significant damage to two hydropower stations including Tapovan Vishnu Gad Hydropower. The landslide also temporarily created a dam in the Rishiganga valley, which eventually breached. The £1 million research SUPERSLUG project, led by researchers from the University of Plymouth, will centered around the 2021 disaster and focus on understanding how massive sediment flows—termed "sediment slugs"—affect river systems over time, often impacting areas far from the original disaster site. Utilising advanced monitoring technologies such as drones, satellite imagery, seismic sensors, and "smart cobbles," the team will gather data on sediment transport and landscape changes. This information will help create a digital twin of the river system, offering insights for disaster management and resource sustainability. Dr. Matt Westoby, the project lead and Associate Professor

of Physical Geography at the University of Plymouth, emphasised the urgency of this research which is backed by an £840,000 grant from the Natural Environment Research Council. He noted that while the immediate impacts of disasters are clear, the long-term consequences often remain unexplored. "High mountain regions like the Himalayas are among the most hazardous on the planet. The effects of climate change are likely to exacerbate these hazards, leading to increased landslide activity and landscape instability," he said. "We urgently need to understand the legacy impacts of sediment flows on river catchments and the communities that depend on them for water and livelihoods." The project will engage directly with local communities and authorities to ensure that findings are practical and beneficial for disaster preparedness and hydropower operations. Collaborating institutions also include Exeter, Hull, Leeds, Newcastle, Staffordshire, and the University of Calgary. Professor Tom Coulthard from the University of Hull highlighted the importance of understanding sediment movement. "Often it's the sheer volume of sediment, rather than just floodwaters, that causes significant damage during these multi-hazard events. Understanding how long sediment slugs persist in the system is crucial for predicting their impacts and managing future disasters." In a nut-shell, as per the statement from the University of Hull, this three-year initiative aims to fill critical knowledge gaps regarding the long-term effects of sediment slugs on ecosystems and communities, ultimately enhancing disaster resilience in vulnerable regions.

## CITU protests FSNL disinvestment

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) on Sunday protested on Government's move to disinvest the profit-making PSU Ferro Scrap Nigam Limited (FSNL). The CITU general secretary Tapan Sen in a statement said the Central Government is resorting to all "illegal practices" to sell the Mini Ratna company to Japan's M/s. Konoike Transport Co. Ltd and must roll back from the sale. Extending solidarity with the striking employees of FSNL, the CITU pointed out that PSU Navratna steel companies

are completely dependent on FSNL for scrap handling since its inception. "With utter surprise, no consultation with them has at all been initiated by the government on such a vital issue and the top managements of FSNL are also not properly aware of this clandestine move. FSNL is a company having a reserve fund of about Rs 200 crore and movable assets worth Rs100 crore employing more than 600 employees and 5,000 contract workers. During the year ended March 31, 2022, Company has paid Interim Dividend for FY 2021-22 amounting to Rs 9.50 per

equity shares," said CITU in a statement detailing the profits of the FSNL. CITU said that "such a golden egg producing company is straight away being guillotined by the government because of its sheer obsession for privatization factually without any valid reason." "CITU once again condemns the authoritarian anti-National move of the Modi government and stands strong with striking FSNL workers. CITU calls upon all its units to take this issue to all sections of workers and mobilize them insolidarity with this anti-privatization struggle," said CITU.

## Mental health certificates now needed for Transgender pre-hormonal therapy, surgery

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

Transgenders who want to go for pre-hormonal therapy or gender assignment surgery need to be assessed and certified by mental health professionals, according to the Union Health Ministry's standard operating procedures for the purpose. As for gynaecologists, the 'SoP for Medical Treatment of Transgender Persons' states that they should enquire as to how the patient wishes to be addressed in terms of name and pronoun, and also ensure that the words they use uphold the principles of safety, dignity and respect. Outlining the responsibilities of mental health professionals, the SoP document said their primary role would include assessment for gender incongruence, as per the

current diagnostic system followed by the World Health Organization, and certification for the same. Gender incongruence is characterised by a marked and persistent disparity between an individual's experienced gender and the assigned sex. It often leads to a desire for a 'transition' through hormonal treatment, surgery or other healthcare services in order to live and be accepted as a person of the experienced gender. According to the SOP, "Before endocrinology treatment, a certificate from one psychiatrist is required. Before Gender Affirmation Surgery, two certificates are required -- one by a psychiatrist and one by a clinical psychologist/psychiatrist." Apart from that, a mental health professional would also assess for distress and co-



morbid mental and/or substance use disorders and provide management of the same, the document stated. They would also provide support or therapy, if needed, to cope with issues related to gender incongruence, including participation in integrated cross-disciplinary care and intersectoral

collaboration for clients and caregivers. "The support would be provided pre-hormonal therapy/gender assignment surgery, during the period as well as post-surgery, if need be," it stated. According to the document, one cannot undergo gender affirmation surgery before the age of 18 years and a

certificate of being stable on endocrine treatment for one year and suitability for surgical procedure is required before gender affirmation surgery. The SOP stressed the need to make STD clinics friendly to gender-diverse patients and such facilities should document gender identity and sex assigned at birth for all patients to improve sexual healthcare for transgenders and gender nonbinary persons. Primary care providers should take a comprehensive sexual history, including a discussion on Sexually transmitted infection (STI) screening, HIV PrEP and PEP, behavioural health, and social determinants of sexual health. Clinicians can improve the experience of sexual health screening and counselling for transgender persons by

asking for their choice of terminology or modifying language to be used during clinic visits and history taking and examination, the SOP stated. Options for fertility preservation, pregnancy potential and contraception options should also be discussed, if indicated, the document said. As for the Fertility Preservation in Transgenders (Female to Male), the SoP states that the established method for fertility preservation includes cryopreservation of embryos and oocytes for females. Ovarian tissue cryopreservation is also a successful technique for fertility preservation and is no longer experimental, the document stated, adding that it has limited availability and is possible only after attaining puberty.



## Prakash Karat to lead CPI(M) interim

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

Senior CPI(M) leader Prakash Karat will be the coordinator of the party's Polit Bureau and the Central Committee as an interim arrangement until the 24th Party Congress to be held in April next year. The decision comes in the wake of the death of CPI(M) General Secretary Sitaram Yechury on September 12 at the age of 72. "The Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), now in session in New Delhi, has decided that Comrade Prakash Karat will

be the coordinator of the Polit Bureau and the Central Committee, as an interim arrangement until the 24th Party Congress to be held in April 2025 at Madurai," the CPI(M) said. "This decision was taken due to the sad and sudden demise of the sitting General Secretary of the CPI(M), Comrade Sitaram Yechury," it added. Karat, one of the senior most leaders of the CPI(M), was its general secretary from 2005 to 2015. He was elected to the Central Committee in 1985 and became a Polit Bureau member in 1992.

## Congress demands Sitharaman's resignation over extortion

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

Congress on Sunday attacked the BJP after a case was lodged against Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and others on a complaint relating to the now-scrapped electoral bonds scheme and demanded her resignation for "undermining democracy." The opposition party reiterated its demand for a Supreme-court monitored inquiry through an SIT into the whole electoral bond scheme. Addressing a press conference here along with party spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi, Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh charged that four ways were used to extort money through the "conspiracy of electoral bonds — prepaid bribery, postpaid bribery, post-raid bribery and through farzi companies". He said the Finance Minister should immediately resign as



she is "guilty" politically, legally and morally. Ramesh said the FIR was lodged on orders of the court and the Congress has nothing to do with the FIR. He said the Congress has been demanding a Supreme-court monitored inquiry through an SIT into the electoral bonds scheme and reiterates that demand. Singhvi also accused the BJP of "undermining democracy." "The Finance Minister cannot do this on her own. We know who is number 1 and number 2 and this was done on whose

directions," he said. "The larger issue is the level playing field which is necessary for free and fair polls. Free and fair polls are critical for democracy. This is an attack on our democratic system," Singhvi said while terming it as "EBS - Extortionist BJP Scheme". A case was registered on Saturday against Sitharaman and others on the directions of a court in Bengaluru, following a complaint relating to the now-scrapped electoral bonds scheme. According to police, an FIR

was registered under IPC sections 384 (punishment for extortion), 120B (criminal conspiracy) and 34 (acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention) against Sitharaman, ED officials, office-bearers of the BJP at state and national level, based on the order of a special court. BJP Karnataka chief B Y Vijayendra and party leader Nalin Kumar Kateel have also been named in the FIR. The complaint was lodged by Adarsh R Iyer, Co-President of 'Janadhikara Sangharsha Parishath' (JSP) alleging that the accused "committed extortion under the guise and garb of electoral bonds" and benefited to the tune of more than Rs 8,000 crore. The complainant further alleged that Sitharaman through the clandestine aid and support of ED officials facilitated extortion of thousands of crores of rupees for the benefit of others both at the state and national levels.





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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Saving Sunita Williams

Relying on her mental fortitude, Sunita has not only survived the ordeal but plays a crucial role in her rescue

It is heartening to hear that Sunita Williams will be back home soon. Elon Musk's SpaceX has launched a Falcon 9 rocket from Cape Canaveral, Florida to rescue two astronauts stranded in the International Space Station (ISS). The mission aims to retrieve American astronauts Butch Wilmore and Sunita Williams, who have been stranded on the International Space Station for months due to issues with Boeing's Starliner spacecraft. Originally planned for an eight-day stay, the astronauts' mission was extended far beyond after technical problems with the Starliner. As every Indian waits for her rescue the image of Kalpana Chawla flashes in the mind who lost her life in a space mission. She was one of the seven crew members who died in the Space Shuttle Columbia disaster when the spacecraft disintegrated during its re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere on February 1, 2003. The vast, unexplored frontier of space offers countless wonders, but it also brings unique challenges. The present snag is no fault of the astronauts but a lapse on the part of NASA and Boeing company which allowed the mission to proceed despite several alarms and glitches.

Sunita Williams, a veteran of two spaceflights and a woman who has spent over 300 days in space, embarked on her latest mission with the confidence and expertise that comes from years of training and commitment. However, space is as unpredictable as it is vast. A critical error occurred during her mission, which disabled vital components of the spacecraft, leaving her stranded in the ISS. The malfunction wasn't just a minor glitch—it was a cascade of failures. Yet, if there was one person equipped to face such adversity, it was Sunita Williams. Her resilience, mental fortitude, and the ability to maintain calm in even the most extreme conditions became the defining elements in her survival. Williams is no stranger to adversity. The daughter of Indian and Slovenian immigrants, she broke barriers early in her career by rising to prominence in a male-dominated field. Her indomitable spirit and work ethic have always stood out. She has done spacewalk, she holds the record for the longest single spaceflight by a woman, spending 195 days in space until 2017. Over her career, Williams has accumulated more than 322 days in space, marking her as one of the most experienced female astronauts in history. Sunita Williams approached this life-threatening situation with a mix of grit, hope, and resourcefulness. She immediately got involved in troubleshooting, all the while keeping her own morale high through mental exercises and meditation. Let's hope and pray that the rescue mission succeeds and Sunita along with colleague Butch Wilmore reaches home safely and is united with her family. This mission is also a lesson and learning for NASA and its contractors to ensure zero tolerance for any glitches and snags in their operations.

## PICTALK



Artistes perform 'Mahishasur Mardini' act ahead of Durga Puja festival, in Nadia district

PTI

## Breaking life into small steps for lasting fulfillment

Happiness is actually the most important project of life. True contentment comes from savouring each step, no matter how small

Happiness is the most important project of life. It should be broken up into smaller activities to attain the eventual goal. The only time that we probably understand this is in our childhood. As a child, I had intuitively learned the art of allocating the hours of the day for various activities, like waking up, getting ready and spending time in school, having lunch on return, completing homework, going out to play, returning for dinner, and going to bed. We lived in the present from one hour to the next. I was a satisfied and happy person as I could complete the 'Project Day'. We did not have the need or the time to look too far into the future. As we outgrew childhood, we forgot the lessons learned.

I joined college. Like others, I too started making grand resolutions on the first day of the year. My resolution could be as mundane as losing the 15 kgs within the first three months, which had taken me a year to gain.

It could also be an important resolution to secure 90 per cent marks in my semester examinations, a substantial



improvement over the 60 per cent in the previous one. Each resolution would fly out of the window within the first few months. I had forgotten to take small steps to reach the end destination. Things did not improve even after I started working. I found a new toy – a 'To Do List'. A diary would be earmarked for this most important ritual.

I would start with one such list and continue adding till I had inked the second or third page with only a few activities completed. I would give up, and start all over again. The previous year's diary was promptly destroyed lest anyone glanced into it and called my bluff. This continued for a few years till I discovered the computer. I could delete these pending activities at will, with

no one any wiser to my shenanigans. I was fooling only myself. I quit my railway job to join a government company working in the execution of construction projects. I was exposed to software-based project management tools for the first time. I reluctantly spent weeks with the consultant to develop an activity-based project breakdown structure. He educated us about the importance of breaking each activity into smaller sub-activities. We were reluctant to accept that more activities to monitor would result in successful and timely completion. He was not satisfied with the first draft of less than 100 activities. He was a tough taskmaster. We marched on, to our ever-increasing despair, and his impatience, till we

called it quits after we had reached 1000 odd activities. It was a revelation to me. I now appreciated the time that my wife spent planning the daily household chores. The exercise in project management also brought into stark focus all the wrong I was doing while making my New Year resolutions and the To-Do Lists, and more importantly, living my life.

I now understand why we remain unhappy most of the time. We forget to derive joy out of each step that we take, however small it may be. The young of today are far more mature. Hina Khan, a young actor, recently diagnosed with cancer, is a courageous woman fighting all that life has to throw at her. Her thoughts are the most inspiring words I have read in some time, "First normalise the challenges of your lives then set goals for yourself and try to live up to them all along the way. No matter how hard. Never back down. Never give up."

(The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)



SANJAY CHANDRA

## QUAD STRENGTHENS INDIA'S ROLE

Madam — China's aggressive posture has consistently threatened peace in the Indo-Pacific region. India, has faced quite a few challenges from the latter. It is a matter of pride that New Delhi is looked upon by other countries to be their firm partner on global platforms to tackle Beijing's economic and military prowess. Specifically, the Asia-Pacific region was described as Indo-Pacific to denote India's increasingly active involvement in the region. The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) is one international forum that glues the four friendly nations—the United States, Japan, Australia and India—together. All these nations are keen to usher in a free and open Indo-Pacific region, diminishing the influence of a marauding Beijing. The four have been able to sustain a momentum that no country can ignore. In the fourth in-person Quad summit at US Wilmington, leaders of the four countries underlined the importance of shared democratic values that have kept them together. Issues of health, security, climate change, capacity building and technology occupied the leaders' attention. More importantly, India is emerging as a 'leader' of the four, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi has proposed to host the next year's summit in New Delhi in 2025. It can only grow stronger from here.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

## TOP COURT REJECTS GUJARAT PLEA

Madam— The Supreme Court has 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 during the 2002 riots. Having carefully gone through the review petitions, the order under challenge and the papers annexed therewith, the judges were satisfied

## Durga Puja has transformed



This is in response to the article titled "A symphony of tradition and transformation" (September 29). In the mid-1980s, Durga Puja used to get celebrated with utmost devotion according to rituals with dominance of Bhakti encompassing both the organisers and public. Only on Saptami morning, we used to get awakened by the rhythmic beats of Dhak, all puja rituals used to

commence with rendition of Sanskrit mantras and people used to start flocking to the pandals. But in last 4 decades all things associated with Durga Puja have undergone a sea change! Far from commencing the Puja on Saptami morning, many pandals and idols now open up for public "consumption" right from the Mahalaya itself thereby "promoting" 4-day Puja to a "modern" 10-day extravaganza! After all majority of these "glamorous" Puja committees do not care to actually offer homage to it through rituals mantras holy hymns or flowers! Durga Puja of today is nothing but a fashion show of sorts with exhibition of flexing muscles - be it monetary might or trophies garnered!

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

that there is no error apparent on the face of the record or any merit in the review petitions, warranting reconsideration of the order impugned. The review petitions are, accordingly, dismissed and it is a landmark decision. The Gujarat government in its plea had said the apex court's observation in the January 8 judgement, holding the State guilty of "usurpation of power" and "abuse of discretion" for complying with an order of another top court bench, was an "error apparent on the face of the record" primarily on three grounds.

CK Subramani | Kerala

## TOURISM EDUCATION EMPOWERMENT

Madam — Tourism plays a pivotal role in the global economy acting as a bridge between cultures and fostering economic growth in various regions. It contributes approximately 10 per cent to the world's GDP and generates millions of employment opportunities, especially in rural and less developed areas.

By integrating tourism studies into academic curricula, institutions can equip students with essential skills in areas such as sustainable tourism practices, travel management and hospitality management. This education not only prepares students for diverse career opportunities but also fosters a deeper understanding of how to balance tourism's economic benefits with environmental sustainability and cultural preservation. Promoting tourism education in colleges cultivates a new generation ready to take the bull by the horns, driving innovation while advocating for responsible tourism practices that balance economic growth with social and environmental accountability. Moreover, it supports regional development by teaching students how to effectively market and manage local attractions thereby preserving cultural heritage while boosting local economies.

Tanisha Gupta | Ujjain

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## Transforming India through 'Make in India'



PIYUSH GOYAL

The 'Make in India' initiative has completed 10 years of transformative impact. PM Modi's vision has ignited a revival in manufacturing and spurred job creation

On September 25, the country observed 10 years of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's game-changing 'Make in India' initiative that is transforming India's industrial landscape by encouraging job-creating investments and giving many ordinary citizens the confidence to become wealth creators. It's been a remarkable 10-year journey, which gave renewed vigour to industrial sectors turning these into engines of growth, meeting domestic demand as well as contributing to exports. The exciting journey began at a difficult time when domestic investors were despondent because of the policy paralysis and poor governance by the indecisive Congress government.

The economy was down, confidence was shattered, headlines were dominated by a regular dose of corruption scandals, inflation was soaring, interest rates were high and the rupee had an uncertain outlook. To end the feeling of doom and gloom, the Indian voters decisively voted for PM Modi. Our Prime Minister came with a vision for India. He wanted to ensure that India became a global superpower. He wanted India to provide jobs and opportunities to our youth, recognising that manufacturing was critical to India's success story.

That is when the PM launched the 'Make in India' initiative. Ten years has been a remarkable journey, but it would not have been possible for the multidimensional and transformative changes done by the Modi government. Initiatives include GST, the Bankruptcy Code and a multitude of other reforms. To improve the ease of doing business, as many as 42,000 compliance requirements were done away with, and 3,700 provisions that provided for criminal penalties for minor offences were removed from various statutes to protect small businesses from harassment.

India sharply improved its rank in the World Bank's Doing Business Report from 142nd in 2014 to 63rd in 2019. The government's Startup India initiative



has encouraged many job seekers to become job creators with the help of Startup India initiative. This has helped the number of recognised startups increase to 1,40,803 in June this year, bringing in investments, and creating more than 15 lakh jobs.

These startups are driving the innovation ecosystem in the country, working on solutions to pressing issues in areas such as sanitation, space navigation, reducing food wastage, improving access to healthcare, and empowering women. The development of 11 Industrial Corridors is another focus area of the Government. 20 industrial smart cities are being developed under the program, which would help make these corridors the backbone of India's manufacturing growth. Four of these smart cities have already become magnets of investment with infrastructure and clearances available for manufacturing units to be set up. Potential investment of Rs 1.7 lakh crore is already committed which will provide direct employment to 80,000 persons and indirect to many more. The Government's PLI schemes focus on critical sectors such as electronics, pharmaceuticals, automobiles, textiles and medical devices to create the eco-systems in these sectors for sustained growth



MANY COUNTRIES ARE KEEN TO SIGN TRADE DEALS WITH INDIA. THE WORLD IS NOW LOOKING AT INDIA AS A MANUFACTURING DESTINATION. AND THE KEY REASON FOR THIS INTEREST IS INDIA'S COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE AND ROBUST ECONOMIC FUNDAMENTALS

and ensure their global competitiveness. PLI schemes have resulted in Rs 1.32 lakh crore in investment and a significant boost in manufacturing output of around 11 lakh crore. More than 8.5 lakh jobs have been created directly and indirectly through this initiative.

The Prime Minister's initiatives on infrastructure have been another shot in the arm of Indian manufacturing, apart from generating demand for goods and services, infrastructure development is a major facilitator of industrial activity. Today, India has a huge, and growing, network of expressways and highways. New, world-class railway stations are being built, while new freight corridors are coming up. India is increasingly being seen as a very attractive destination for investment. The country provides the 4D advantage - The decisive leadership of PM Modi; the Demographic dividend of our youthful, talented, skilled Indians; the Demand that 140 crore Indians generate in the economy; and Democracy that ensures the safety and security of investors, and the rule of law which will never allow discrimination against one or the other. The 4-D is a very, very compelling case to attract manufacturers to India. Domestic and international investors today find a golden

opportunity to grow their business. There is a flurry of activity in the investor community. A series of delegations is visiting India, hungry for opportunities to invest and participate in the Indian growth story. Foreign governments and global CEOs are keenly eyeing opportunities in India. Many countries are keen to sign trade deals with India.

The world is now looking at India as a manufacturing destination. And the key reason for this interest is India's competitive advantage and robust economic fundamentals. Today, inflation is under control, economic growth is strong and the Modi government is following strict fiscal discipline. This is all the more commendable in the current global situation marred by conflict and uncertainty. The initiatives of PM Modi have helped India rise from the unenviable situation of being regarded as one of the "Fragile Five" in the world in 2014, to being one of the Top Five in the world. In effect, PM Modi's initiatives like Make in India have contributed to making the last 10 years a transformational decade - a quantum jump over the last decade of Congress rule.

(The writer is Minister of Commerce and Industry; views expressed are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR













# BREAKING THE CYCLE THE URGENT NEED TO COMBAT ANAEMIA

In a world where health often takes a backseat to the demands of modern life, anaemia has emerged as a silent epidemic writes **ABHI SINGHAL**

In today's fast-paced world, many individuals struggle to prioritize their health and wellness, particularly those aged 21 to 50. This neglect can lead to significant health issues, including a common yet often overlooked condition: anaemia. Anaemia, characterized by a reduced number of red blood cells or malfunctioning red blood cells, can have serious implications for one's health. The latest statistics from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), conducted from 2019 to 2021, reveal a staggering prevalence of anaemia in India: 57% of women aged 15 to 49 and 25% of men in the same age group are affected. The figures are even more alarming for specific demographics, with 67% of children aged 6 to 59 months, 59% of adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 years, and 52% of pregnant women aged 15 to 49 years being anaemic. Given these statistics, it is imperative to raise awareness and break the cycle of anaemia, particularly among pregnant women who are set to bring new life into the world. The symptoms of anaemia can

significantly impact daily life, including fatigue, weakness, shortness of breath, pale skin, cold extremities, dizziness, rapid heartbeat, and difficulty in concentrating. These symptoms create a vicious cycle: anaemia leads to weakness, which in turn results in laziness and decreased productivity, ultimately affecting one's overall well-being and work output. To address this critical issue, a roundtable discussion titled "India's Silent Epidemic: Raising Awareness & Fostering Urgent Action Against Anaemia" was convened. The panel of experts included Dr Manju Puri, Director Professor of Obstetrics & Gynaecology at Lady Hardinge Medical College, New Delhi; Dr Tulika Seth, Professor of Haematology at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences; Dr Sarath Gopalan, Gastroenterologist and Hepatologist at Madhukar Rainbow Children's Hospital, New Delhi; and Dr William Joe, Assistant Professor at the Population Research Centre, Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi. The experts identified iron deficiency as the primary cause of anaemia. They

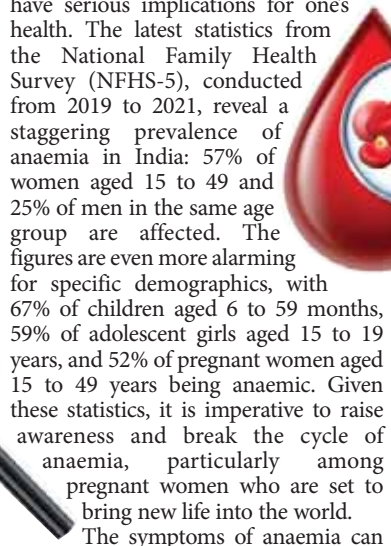
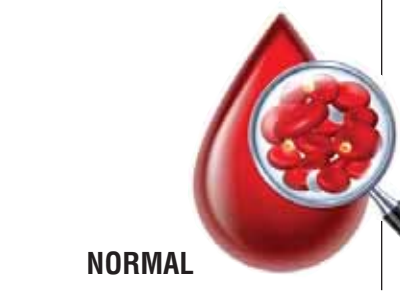
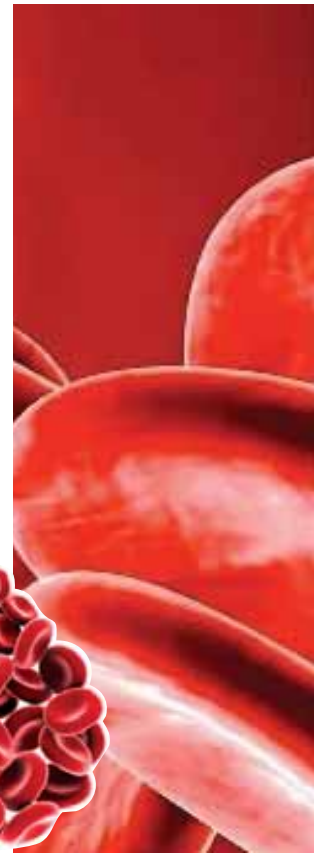
## ANEMIA SYMPTOMS AND CAUSES

### SYMPTOMS

- Fatigue
- Weakness
- Dizziness
- Shortness of breath
- Headache
- Cold hands, feet
- Irregular heartbeat

### CAUSES

- Nutrient deficiencies
- Blood loss
- Health conditions
- Menstrual periods
- Women pregnancy



**NUTRITION ALONE IS INSUFFICIENT. THE GOVERNMENT HAS IMPLEMENTED A SUPPLEMENTARY PROGRAM FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS, PROVIDING LOW-COST SUPPLEMENTS THAT ARE WIDELY AVAILABLE. EVEN WHEN PURCHASED, THEY ARE AFFORDABLE. IT'S IMPORTANT TO VIEW SUPPLEMENTS AS A NECESSARY BACKUP**

emphasized that one can have normal haemoglobin levels yet still be iron deficient. This situation is like to an iceberg, where anaemia is merely the visible tip. For instance, a person with a haemoglobin level of 12 could still suffer from iron deficiency. By administering iron supplements, their iron stores may improve, alleviating many symptoms, even if the haemoglobin level changes only slightly. Dr Tulika Seth highlighted the need for greater awareness regarding iron-rich foods. She noted that even educated individuals often struggle to name two iron-rich foods. "Unless you know about red meat and similar options, you're unlikely to consume sufficient amounts," she remarked. The discussion also underscored the significance of dietary counselling to enhance iron intake through improved dietary choices, which is essential for health management. Experts stressed that knowledge and awareness are crucial initial steps toward addressing anaemia. Furthermore, the quantity of nutrient intake was discussed as a pivotal factor. The experts addressed the role of iron supplements, particularly in light of the younger generation's reluctance to

consume leafy vegetables, which are vital for nutrient intake. While supplements can serve as a backup, they cannot replace the benefits derived from natural food sources. In response to inquiries about nutritional solutions and reliance on supplements, Dr Manju Puri noted, "Nutrition alone is insufficient. The government has implemented a supplementary program for vulnerable groups, providing low-cost supplements that are widely available. Even when purchased, they are affordable. It's important to view supplements as a necessary backup." Awareness remains the first step in combating anaemia. By understanding the symptoms, causes, and prevention strategies, individuals can take proactive measures to safeguard their health. Incorporating iron-rich foods—such as leafy vegetables, red meat, and fortified cereals—into one's diet is essential, and supplements can provide additional support when needed. Ultimately, health is one's greatest asset. Individuals are encouraged to prioritize their health by staying informed about anaemia and taking steps to prevent or manage this condition.

## "Nourishing Your Body: The Role of Nutrition in Daily Wellness"

BY **Dr Wajih Mehtab**

In a world filled with fast food, busy schedules, and growing health concerns, the importance of nutrition in our daily lives cannot be overstated. Proper nutrition is the foundation of a healthy body and mind, influencing everything from energy levels to disease prevention. Eating a well-balanced diet is more than just fuelling the body—it's about enhancing overall well-being and leading a vibrant, fulfilling life.

### The Building Blocks of Health

At its core, nutrition provides the essential building blocks our bodies need to function. Carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, and minerals all play crucial roles. Carbohydrates are the body's main source of energy, while proteins help build and repair tissues. Healthy fats, such as those found in nuts, seeds, and fish, support brain health and protect vital organs. Vitamins and minerals, found in abundance in fruits and vegetables, help regulate processes such as metabolism, immune function, and cell repair. Without these key nutrients, the body struggles to perform its everyday tasks efficiently. Poor nutrition weakens the immune system, slows down healing, and can lead to fatigue, poor concentration, and overall poor health. On the other hand, a diet rich in whole, nutrient-dense foods can optimise energy, mood, and productivity.

### Preventing Chronic Disease

One of the most important reasons to prioritize nutrition is its role in preventing chronic diseases. Conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, and obesity are increasingly common, yet many are preventable through better dietary choices. Diets high in processed foods, refined sugars, and unhealthy fats contribute to the development of these diseases, while diets rich in whole grains, lean proteins, fruits, and vegetables offer protection. The World Health Organization (WHO) stresses that a diet full of fruits and vegetables can reduce the risk of heart

diseases and certain types of cancer. Foods high in fiber, like whole grains and legumes, promote healthy digestion and reduce the risk of gastrointestinal disorders. Meanwhile, cutting down on salt, sugar, and saturated fats helps control blood pressure and maintain a healthy weight.

### Mental Health and Nutrition

The link between nutrition and physical health is well-documented, but its impact on mental health is equally significant. Nutrients such as omega-3 fatty acids, found in fish and flaxseeds, and

gives the body a steady supply of energy, while junk food leads to quick energy crashes. Eating a variety of nutrient-rich foods ensures that the body has everything it needs to keep going strong. Complex carbohydrates, such as brown rice and sweet potatoes, provide long-lasting energy. Proteins and healthy fats offer sustained energy release, keeping us feeling full and energised for longer periods. Vitamins and minerals also play a role, helping the body efficiently convert food into energy.

### Practical Tips for a Healthier Diet

Maintaining a nutritious diet doesn't have to be complicated. Simple, mindful choices can make a big difference. Here are a few tips:

**Focus on whole foods:** Prioritise fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats. Limit processed and packaged foods.

**Eat the rainbow:** Aim to include a variety of colours on your plate. Different coloured fruits and vegetables provide a wide range of vitamins and minerals.

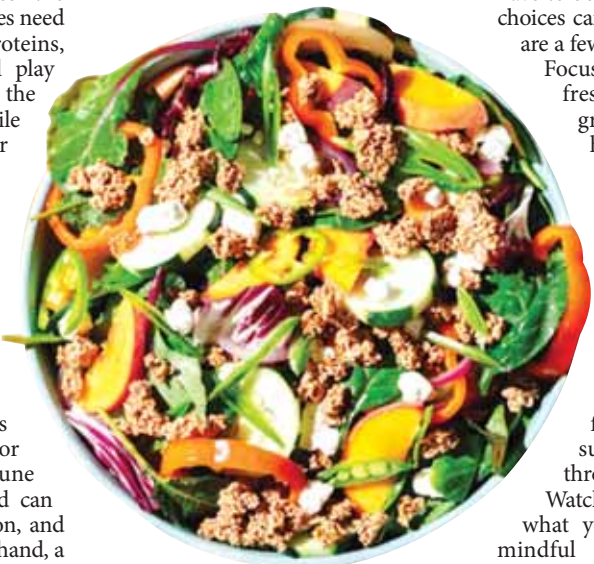
**Stay hydrated:** Water is essential for nearly every function in the body. Make sure to drink enough water throughout the day.

**Watch portion sizes:** It's not just what you eat, but how much. Be mindful of portion sizes to avoid overeating, even with healthy foods.

**Plan ahead:** Planning meals and snacks in advance can help you make healthier choices and avoid unhealthy last-minute options.

Nutrition is a cornerstone of health and wellness. By choosing nutrient-dense, whole foods and avoiding processed alternatives, individuals can significantly improve both their physical and mental health. Good nutrition doesn't just fuel the body—it fuels life, empowering us to live more energetic, fulfilling, and disease-free lives. Prioritising what goes on your plate is one of the most impactful decisions you can make for your long-term well-being.

The author is MSc, PhD, Consultant Nutritionist and Founder & Director, Artisan Academy of Advanced Clinical Nutrition.



BY **Dr Dinesh Kumar Tyagi**

Monsoon is the season that brings a necessary cool to the weather after the scorching summers. Although the weather becomes extremely pleasant, monsoons also open the gate to a plethora of waterborne and viral diseases and infections. The stagnant pools of water the puddles are breeding grounds for germs and bacteria and the humidity becomes another ally of viral infections. Let's discover some tips and habits that can help you avoid monsoon diseases.

A healthy gut ensures a good immune system. It is important to maintain a nutritious diet in all your meals ensuring that you are getting the fats, minerals, and vitamins you need. Eat seasonal fruits and vegetables and avoid oily spicy food that could meddle with your digestion.

Food made at restaurants, streets, or cafe's are usually made in unhygienic conditions. Food made in unhygienic conditions can lead to typhoid, infections as it carries various germs and bacteria. Try to eat home-cooked meals as much as possible and even if you eat out, eat freshly prepared food that is served hygienically to you. Waterborne diseases are very common during the monsoons. Drinking unsafe or impure water from public water coolers can lead you to catch them. Drink safe water from RO or try to get bottled water when you are out and about.

Damp clothes can cause skin infections and even lead to allergies. Wearing dry, clean clothing during rainy seasons is very important. Go for Synthetic, quick-



drying materials as they won't stay damp for long and don't retain moisture like cotton or linen. They help you stay dry and comfortable. Many of us love to enjoy the rain and get drenched in rain like kids. This may seem refreshing but it can lead you to catching cold, fever, and other waterborne diseases, especially during the peak monsoon season downpours. Keeping your umbrella and raincoat handy while going out during monsoons is a power move. It is an easy and effective way of keeping you from getting drenched in the rain and will protect you from exposure of the rain and the atmosphere that weakens your immunity. Viral infections are rampant during monsoon season due to the weather and humidity. Close contact in crowded places during this season should be avoided as that is where you will catch an

infection like swine flu or hepatitis. While monsoons will come and go, life goes on and you will have to go out and interact with people at offices or public spaces or even crowds. All you can do is maintain a good amount of space between you and others to avoid the risk of catching any infections. Make sure you are up to date about getting all your vaccines and booster doses. Outbreak diseases like hepatitis are very common during monsoons. Consult your doctor and make sure that you are not behind on getting any vaccines. Infections through insects like malaria and dengue are rampant during the monsoons. It is important to protect yourself from such diseases. Get a mosquito repellent that you can use in areas where there are a lot of stagnant bodies and

mosquitoes. You can also use nets at night to prevent mosquito bites.

Germs, bacteria, and insects including mosquitoes all have one hotspot during winter that is stagnant water. You should avoid going to water-logged areas during monsoons to avoid all such bacteria and germs and make sure to disinfect yourself properly after you have been through those areas.

It becomes important to cover your full body during monsoons to prevent mosquito bites or fungal infections of any kind. Stick to wearing full-length skirts, t-shirts, and pants to avoid any such issues.

Sunlight, although is very important for us for Vitamin D, during the rainy season the sunlight can weaken your immunity. The combination of sun and humidity after a rain shower can lead to dehydration. Wear shades, apply sunscreen, and try to stay in shaded areas during monsoons as much as possible.

Good sleep is very important for your immune system. Good sleep regenerates your body cells and keeps you body healthy. To avoid catching any viral fevers or infections you should maintain a good sleep cycle. Staying healthy, and maintaining good habits is the crux to staying away from all kinds of fevers, infections, and flu during monsoons. Some habits should be well inculcated like wearing dry clothes and maintaining a safe distance from crowds during the monsoons to stay healthy and safe.

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