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WORLD 9 IRAN'S PRESIDENT SLAMS WEST ON SUPPORT TO ISRAEL

MONEY 10 RUPEE SETTLES FLAT AGAINST US DOLLAR

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RAJ KUMAR'S HAT-TRICK HELPS INDIA THRASH MALAYSIA 8-1 11 SPORTS

Stern message by Centre to Rahul for anti-national remarks in US

LEADERS ACROSS PARTIES CRITICISE

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

Yet another foreign trip by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has stoked another round of controversy in the political circles of India and the Centre and BJP Leaders on Wednesday also commented that Rahul Gandhi's quota remark in a foreign land has exposed the Congress' anti-reservation face and making anti-national statements has become a habit for the former Congress chief.



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

Gandhi and the Congress party, Shah said who was also joined by his other Cabinet colleagues including Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

said the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha has only talked about upholding the Constitution and asked why the ruling party has a "problem whenever there is such talk. The Home Minister said whether it was supporting the National Conference's

"anti-national and anti-reservation agenda" in Jammu and Kashmir or making "anti-India statements" on foreign platforms, Rahul Gandhi has "always threatened" the nation's security and hurt sentiments.

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Pakistan spreads terror to discourage voters in J and K polls

MOHIT KANDHARI JAMMU

In the run-up to the first phase of polling across 24 Assembly segments on September 18, Pakistan has stepped up efforts to spread the reign of terror to discourage enthusiastic voters from participating in the maiden assembly polls taking place after the Abrogation of Article 370 in the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

On Wednesday, two major provocative incidents were reported in the Jammu region which indicated terrorist handlers and their sympathisers in Pakistan are desperately trying to disturb the peaceful conduct of the upcoming Assembly polls. In one incident, two heavily armed Pakistani terrorists, hiding in the upper reaches of Basantgarh bordering Kathua and Udhampur districts, were neutralised by the joint team of security forces late Wednesday evening.

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File photo: PTI

ongoing operation, Rising Star Corps of the Indian Army posted on X, "Two Terrorists neutralised in the ongoing Operation at Khandara Kathua by troops of Rising Star Corps-operations in progress". The initial contact was established during ongoing search operations launched by the security forces to pin down the group of terrorists roaming in the area. After the brief exchange of fire between terrorists and security forces additional troops were rushed to the encounter site to plug the possible exit routes along the Khandara top. A group of more than three terrorists was spotted in the area after which search operations were launched to neutralise them inside the deep forests.

while they were attempting to infiltrate inside the Indian territory in the Laam sector of Nowshera in the frontier district of Rajouri on Monday. For the past several days, different parts of Jammu and Kashmir have been witnessing an 'unprecedented' response to the high-voltage campaigning by the candidates representing various political parties. The atmosphere in Kashmir valley is electrifying as many candidates are canvassing as late as midnight in their native villages and mohallas in the urban centers amid tight security arrangements. In Jammu, unconfirmed reports indicated the BSF soldier was targeted by a sniper from across the International border. Senior BSF officials of the Jammu frontier rushed to the forward area to take stock of the ground situation.

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

Shimla: Police, protesters clash over encroachment by mosque

PNS SHIMLA

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

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Delhi Police asks metro staff to be vigilant

SAUMYA SHUKLA NEW DELHI

Two days after the suspected bid to derail the Kalindi Express train in Kanpur, the Delhi Police has asked the metro staff to be on high alert along with increasing deployment of security at Delhi Metro stations.

A major train accident was averted on Monday by an alert loco pilot as the Bhiwani-Prayagraj Kalindi Express was brought to a screeching halt after hitting an LPG cylinder placed on tracks. A bottle of petrol and matchboxes were also found at the site hinting at sabotage. The Kanpur Police has lodged an FIR in the matter.

According to officials on Wednesday, the Delhi Police have also asked the staff of Delhi Metro to be vigilant and alert. It has also asked to increase checking of passengers and subsequently more police personnel will be deployed at the metro stations in the city to deter any similar sabotage attempt in the city's lifeline Delhi Metro.

He added that anti-sabotage checks are being conducted regularly along the railway tracks with the help of dog squads and bomb disposal teams. "We have also asked the railway staff of many adjoining areas to keep strict vigil in and around the railway stations and railway tracks," another senior police officer said.

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Right time to invest in Indian Semiconductor industry: PM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday called for making India a global semiconductor hub and pointed out that this is the right time to invest in India's semiconductor industry. Modi said India is well-positioned for success in this field and that the world can count on India's growing semiconductor ecosystem. Modi said that India is now the eighth country globally to host an event focused on the semiconductor industry.



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

mile delivery in India," Modi said. During his speech, he mentioned various initiatives and achievements that position India as a key player in the global semiconductor industry. Interestingly, Semiconductor stocks rallied after PM Modi asserted India's commitment to building and growing its semiconductor infrastructure at the Semicon India 2024 event. The Prime Minister also

highlighted the importance of partnerships between industries and the Government. The Prime Minister said resilience of supply chains is critical for the economy as he made a pitch to boost investments in domestic manufacturing of semiconductors — the foundation of everything from smartphones to EV and AI. Stressing the importance of a

resilient supply chain, the Prime Minister expressed pride in India's central role in building resilience across sectors, positioning the country as a key player in the global mission to safeguard supply chains. Prime Minister showcased India's reformist regime, stable policies and a market that has tasted technology to make a strong pitch for investments in semiconductor manufacturing. "In 21st-century India, the chips are never down." "Whether it is mobile manufacturing, electronics, or semiconductors, our focus is clear - we want to build a world that doesn't stop or pause in times of crisis but keeps moving forward," he said.

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Harris puts strong challenge to Trump on key issues

AP PHILADELPHIA

Kamala Harris pressed a forceful case against Donald Trump on Tuesday in their first and perhaps only debate before the presidential election, repeatedly goading him in an event that showcased their starkly different visions for the country on abortion, immigration and American democracy. The Democratic vice president provoked Trump with reminders about the 2020 election loss that he still denies, delivered derisive asides at his false claims and sought to underscore the Republican former president's role in the Supreme Court's overturning of a national right to abortion two years ago.



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

spoken to foreign leaders who "are laughing at Donald Trump," and said she had spoken to military leaders, "and they say you're a disgrace." As Trump, 78, again questioned her racial identity, the 59-year-old Harris, the first woman, Black person and person of South Asian descent to serve as vice president, pointedly gestured to Trump and responded, "I think the American people want better than that, want

better than this." Trump in turn tried to link Harris to the still-unpopular Biden, questioning why she hadn't acted on her proposed ideas while serving as vice president. Trump also focused his attacks on Harris over her assignment by Biden to deal with the root causes of illegal migration. "Why hasn't she done it? She's been there for three and a half years," he said.

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Shekhawat unveils restored rail coach at GSDS, Rajghat

PNS NEW DELHI

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

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



people. The Union Cabinet Minister also noted that the current Government's initiatives, such as the Atmanirbhar Bharat vision in defence and technology, align with Gandhi's ideals. Shekhawat also addressed the urgent issue of climate change, urging adherence to Gandhi's teachings to protect the

environment. "Gandhi transformed the freedom movement into a mass movement. His memories will become a source of inspiration and energy for future India," said the Minister, adding that the Prime Minister Narendra Modi took inspiration from Gandhi and launched a cleanliness campaign across the country.

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

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Stepfather of Malaika Arora commits suicide

PTI MUMBAI

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

CM: Semicon to position India as global leader in semiconductors



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath during the inauguration of Semicon India 2024 in Greater Noida on Wednesday. PTI

PNS ■ GREATER NOIDA/ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has said Semicon India-2024 will position India as a global leader in semiconductors. "Today, Uttar Pradesh has emerged as a major exporter of consumer electronics. This success is a result of the efforts made over the past few years, with 55 per cent of the country's mobile manufacturing and 50 per cent of mobile component production now taking place in Uttar Pradesh," said the Chief Minister addressing the inaugural function of Semicon India-2024 at the India Expo Mart. The Semicon India 2024 is being organised from September 11 to 13 with the theme 'Shaping the Semiconductor Future'. Highlighting Samsung India for establishing its display unit plant in Uttar Pradesh, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath noted

that the state is also becoming a major hub for data centers. "Uttar Pradesh Semiconductor Policy-2024 has been implemented to create a favorable environment for the semiconductor industry in the state. This policy includes attractive provisions for capital assistance, interest subsidies, land value, stamp and electricity duty exemptions," he stated. The chief minister emphasised that this three-day event will mark the realisation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision. "In 2020, the global supply chain was severely disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical tensions, affecting the semiconductor industry as well," he said. Emphasizing that, under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, Uttar Pradesh has focused on developing the IT sector, data centers, electronic manufacturing, and semiconductors, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath noted that the state is positioning itself as a glob-

al hub for semiconductor design engineers. He highlighted that major companies such as MediaTek, ERM, Qualcomm, NXP, Synopsys, and Cadence have established operations in Uttar Pradesh, which is leveraging local talent and fostering innovation in semiconductor design. CM Yogi added that recognising this, the IT industry has been granted the status of an industry in Uttar Pradesh. This designation allows industrial land to be offered to IT companies at more affordable rates. The Chief Minister further emphasised that numerous measures have been taken to foster a favorable investment environment in the state. "As a result, Uttar Pradesh has earned the status of an Achiever State in Ease of Doing Business. Presently, 27 sectoral policies are active across different industries in the state," he asserted. Highlighting that ease of doing business, infra-

structure connectivity, and strong law and order are the USP (key strengths) of Uttar Pradesh, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath stated, "Uttar Pradesh boasts an extensive network of rail and road infrastructure. The Eastern and Western Freight Dedicated Corridors pass through the state. Additionally, the country's first inland waterway operates between Varanasi and Haldia. We are also developing a multi-modal terminal in Varanasi, a multi-modal logistics hub in Dadri, and a logistics transport hub in Udaki." He also mentioned that several significant projects are underway, including the state's first medical device park, film city, toy city, apparel park, and handicraft park along the Yamuna Expressway. Other initiatives such as the integrated township in Greater Noida, the mega food park in Bareilly, and Trans Ganga City in Unnao are progressing rapidly.

UP has transformed from investment drought to flooded market state: Yogi

PNS ■ GREATER NOIDA/ LUCKNOW

Chief minister Yogi Adityanath said that Uttar Pradesh has transformed from a state facing investment drought to a thriving market since 2017, owing to rule of law, investment-friendly policies, and a business-friendly atmosphere. The chief minister made the remarks at a joint press conference with Union Minister of IT and Electronics Ashwini Vaishnav on the sidelines of the Semicon India 2024. "Before 2017, Uttar Pradesh was not seen as a desirable investment destination. However, due to a shift in perception, the state now attracts significant investments. Uttar Pradesh today has rule of law, investment-friendly policies, and a business-friendly atmosphere. As a result, everyone now wants to invest in Uttar Pradesh." Highlighting the transformation in Uttar Pradesh since 2017, CM Yogi said, "When we were planning the Investors Summit in 2017, it was projected that only up to Rs 20,000 crore in investment could be achieved. However, last year, the Global Investors Summit attracted investment proposals totaling Rs 40 lakh crore." He added, "As of February this year, we have successfully brought investment proposals worth Rs 10 lakh crore to fruition. This underscores the significant improvement in Uttar Pradesh's work culture and investment environment." Chief Minister emphasised that significant efforts over the past seven years have transformed Uttar Pradesh into an investment-friendly state. CM Yogi also highlighted the implementation of the Semiconductor Policy 2024 in Uttar Pradesh, which is designed to facilitate and ease the path for investors. The chief minister later engaged in one-on-one meet-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Minister of Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnav and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath at an exhibition during the inauguration of Semicon India 2024 in Greater Noida on Wednesday. PTI

ings with global leaders and investors. Both domestic and international investors expressed confidence that, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has the potential to become a global hub for semiconductors. Chief Minister offered assurances of a safe and supportive investment environment in Uttar Pradesh. He emphasised the state's commitment to providing all necessary facilities to investors. Daehoon Lee of

South Korea's Hanyang Engineering said, "India offers vast opportunities for semiconductors. The world has witnessed India's progress in recent years, and with the rapid adoption of advanced technology, the scope for semiconductors here is continuously expanding." Ken Ukawa from Singapore noted, "The semiconductor industry in India may be small now, but with PM Modi's vision, it is poised to grow sig-

nificantly. This event, the first of its kind in India, has attracted companies from around the world, which is truly impressive." Rahul, a representative of the German company Visco Tech, acknowledged the improvements in law and order under CM Yogi's leadership, which have made Uttar Pradesh more attractive to foreign investors. "Our company has been increasing its investment in the state year after year," he added.

Two more girls injured in suspected wolf attacks

Bahraich (PTI): Two more girls have been injured in suspected wolf attacks in two villages of Mahasi tehsil in Uttar Pradesh's Bahraich district, officials said on Wednesday. According to the officials, one of the incidents, involving a 11-year-old girl, took place in Makupurva village late Tuesday night, while the other attack occurred in Bhavani Pur village, where a 10-year-old girl was injured. Though the villagers claim the attacks were carried out by wolves, government doctors suspect the injuries may have been caused by bites from another animal, they said. The forest department said it was yet to confirm which animal was behind the latest attacks in the region, which has been in the grip of fear due to man-eating wolves that have

killed eight people and injured more than 30 since mid-July. In the first incident, according to villagers, a 11-year-old girl, who was sleeping with her family in Makupurva village, was lifted from her bed and dragged by the neck by a wild animal late Tuesday night. The family raised an alarm and chased the animal away, forcing it to leave the injured girl behind, they claimed. In the second incident in Bhavani Pur village, a 10-year-old girl was dragged off her bed by a wolf around 5 am on Wednesday. The girl's mother said, "I saw the wolf approaching and we started hitting it with sticks. It left the child and fled." Bhavani Pur village head Gulraj also mentioned the possibility of a wolf attack. Both the girls are being treated at the Mahsi Community Health

Centre (CHC), the officials said. "Bite marks and scratches have been found on various body parts of both the girls. It is possible these are animal bites," CHC in-charge Dr Ashish Verma told reporters. He added that there have been around 30 similar cases since mid-July. However, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Ajit Pratap Singh expressed doubts about wolves being involved. "In the Makupurva incident, if a wolf had dragged a 4-foot-tall child by the neck, there would have been signs of dragging, which were not found. No wolf tracks were found nearby," he said. "Fresh wolf tracks were found at 4 am but the attack in Bhavani Pur was reported to have occurred at 5 am. The locations are far apart, and wolves cannot cover such a dis-

tance in such a short time," Singh said. He suggested that hospital doctors should send swabs of the girls' wounds to the Wildlife Institute of India for analysis to identify the animal involved. Since July 17, a campaign named 'Operation Bheediya' has been ongoing to capture a pack of six wolves that have been terrorising 50 villages in Mahsi tehsil of Bahraich district. Five wolves have already been captured and efforts to catch the remaining man-eating wolf have been intensified, the officials said. So far, at least eight people, including seven children, have died and over 30 have been injured in suspected attacks by these wolves, they said. The district administration and forest department are conducting rescue, relief and awareness campaigns in the area.

Govt set to develop Jhansi as peanut cluster

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Jhansi, renowned nationally and globally for its soft toys, gained further recognition when the state government designated it as the district's ODOP (One District One Product). Building on this success, the Yogi government now plans to replicate this model with Jhansi's peanuts. Under the UP AGREES scheme, supported by the World Bank, there is a strategic plan to develop Jhansi into a peanut cluster. If successful, Jhansi's peanuts will not only reach major markets across India, but also be exported to international markets, particularly Southeast Asia. In the last decade, peanut cultivation has garnered significant interest among farmers in Uttar Pradesh due to its mul-

tipurpose benefits. This growing interest has led to a notable increase in both per-hectare yield and the overall acreage dedicated to peanuts. Recognising this trend, the Yogi government plans to leverage the UP AGREES scheme to maximize benefits for farmers in the Bundelkhand region by developing Jhansi as a peanut cluster. According to the data from the Director of Economics and the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmer Welfare, the average peanut yield per hectare in India from 2013-14 to 2015-16 was 1,542 kg, while Uttar Pradesh's yield was only 809 kg. During that time, peanut cultivation covered 4.93 million hectares nationwide, with Uttar Pradesh contributing just 2 per cent to the total area. However, in the past decade,

the area under peanut cultivation in Uttar Pradesh has more than doubled, reaching approximately 4.7 per cent of the total acreage. Gujarat leads the country in peanut production, contributing 47 per cent of the total output from about 2 million hectares, followed by Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu, with shares of 16 and 10 per cent, respectively. Nationally, the average yield per hectare has increased from 1,542 to 1,688 kg. Given the rising demand for multipurpose peanuts in local markets and Southeast Asian countries like Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, and the Philippines, the Yogi government aims to position Jhansi as a major peanut production hub under the UP AGREES scheme. Notably, peanuts are

rich in protein, fiber, vitamins and minerals, offering numerous health benefits, including improved heart health, digestion, and weight management. Peanut oil, known for its antioxidants and vitamin E content, is widely used in cooking and beauty products, contributing to skin and hair health. Peanuts also serve as a valuable protein and energy source in animal feed, and are commonly consumed boiled, roasted, or as peanut butter and cheese. Additionally, peanuts are used in a variety of dishes, including curries, chutneys, salads, and snacks. Even peanut shells have economic value, as they can be used as fuel or sold by the kilogram to companies, potentially fetching up to Rs 5 per kilogramme.

Maya continues to attack Congress over quota

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) supremo Mayawati on Wednesday attacked the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi's recent remarks on the issue of reservations and alleged that the Congress is conspiring to abolish the system. The BSP chief also warned people from deprived sections of society to remain vigilant and emphasised the need for caution regarding the Congress party's intentions. "Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's clarification that he is not against reservation is clearly a misleading false statement. This is proof that during his 10 years of active participation in the government before the BJP came to power in the Centre, he, along with SP did not let the SC/ST reservation bill in promotions get passed," Mayawati posted on X. "Their (Congress) talk of increasing the reservation limit in the country from 50 per cent is also a deception, because if their intentions in this matter were clear, this work would definitely have been done in the previous Congress governments. Congress neither imple-



mented the OBC reservation nor implemented SC/ST reservation properly," she said. "It is clear from this that when Congress is not in power, it talks a lot about the interests and welfare of these neglected SC/ST/OBC classes for the sake of their vote interest, but when it is in power, it continuously works against their interests. These people should be aware of their conspiracy," the BSP leader said. On Monday, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, said that the Congress party will think of

scrapping reservations when India becomes a 'fair place', which it is not. The Congress leader who was on a visit to the US was interacting with students and faculty at Georgetown University in Washington, DC. Meanwhile, a four-member delegation from the 69,000 teacher recruitment candidates in the state met Mayawati on Wednesday. During this, the candidates submitted a memorandum to the BSP chief and also talked about the irregularities in implementing reservation by the government. Assuring the candidates, Mayawati said that "this fight is our fight and we are keeping an eye on it". She said that injustice will not be tolerated with the candidates of the reserved category under any circumstances. Targeting the Yogi government, the former CM said that it is the failure of the government that the matter reached the Supreme Court. If the government wanted, everyone would have got justice by now. But today due to the government, the candidates of the reserved category are facing trouble.

'Pattern of encounters': AKY says BJP has 'encountered' truth itself

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Wednesday continued his attack on the BJP-led Uttar Pradesh government, terming the killing of crime accused persons in gunfights with police as "fake encounters". The former chief minister and Kannauj Lok Sabha MP also sought to identify a "pattern of encounters" during the Yogi Adityanath rule, saying the BJP has "encountered the truth" itself. "A pattern of encounters has been set in BJP rule: Pick someone first, then make up a story of a fake encounter, then show fake pictures to the world, then after the murder, when the family members tell the truth, pressurise them with various kinds of pressure and temptations, protect the top leadership by bringing forward its second-rate leaders when exposed by opposition political parties," Yadav said in a post on X. He continued, "Then use the media, which maintains the relationship of 'jiska daana-uska gaana' for propaganda. Then get your so-called big BJP leaders, who are experts in lying, to make irrational statements to justify such illegal encounters. Defame the real media by portraying them as surviving on opposition or foreign support, and when public anger grows, conduct a formal, superficial investigation and bury the matter." "The more the BJP with its forces try to prove such encounters to be true, the bigger lie that encounter actually is. BJP

has encountered the truth itself," the SP chief alleged. Earlier on Tuesday, Yadav had slammed the Uttar Pradesh government, saying statistics of encounters during the BJP rule are also statistics of the "injustice of illegal killings" and "injustice done against the PDA". He also shared some data of "fake encounter killings", claiming that 60 per cent of those killed in gunfights with the police belonged to the PDA — a combine of 'Pichde, Dalit and Alpsankhyak' communities (backwards, Dalits and minorities). However, the data had no source mentioned. While the SP chief has been critical of the state's "trigger happy" police in the past also, his latest attack stems from the recent killing of Mangesh Yadav, a suspect in the Rs 1.5 crore robbery at a jewellery store in Sultanpur, who died allegedly after a gunfight with the police. He had previously also termed Mangesh Yadav's encounter as "fake" and alleged that it was done based on the basis of the accused's caste. However, on Monday, UP Director General of Police (DGP) Prashant Kumar denied the allegations, saying no partiality is practised by the state police. "Police do not do such things... When bullets are fired on police, those who have faced such situations, who are our former officers, all of them know about it... I deny all such things and the police take action completely impartially," he told reporters in Lucknow.

Groundwater depletion: NGT imposes fine of ₹5,000 each on Lucknow DM, others

New Delhi (PTI):

The National Green Tribunal has imposed a fine of ₹5,000 each on the district magistrate of Lucknow, the Lucknow Nagar Nigam and the Lucknow Development Authority for not appearing before the tribunal in pursuance to its directions. The green body was hearing a matter regarding groundwater depletion in the Uttar Pradesh capital. In an order passed on September 4, a bench of NGT Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava said that the tribunal had earlier issued notices to the authorities concerned. The bench also comprising judicial member Justice Arun Kumar Tyagi and expert member A Senthil after noting the submissions of the counsel for the

Central Ground Water Authority (CGWA) and Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) allowed their request seeking four weeks to file replies. It noted that there was no representation from the other authorities. The tribunal said, "In spite of service of notice, Lucknow Nagar Nigam, Lucknow Development Authority and District Magistrate, Lucknow, are not represented today. Hence, the cost of ₹5,000 each is imposed upon them for not appearing before the tribunal and not rendering assistance in the matter." The cost had to be deposited within two weeks, said the tribunal. The matter has been posted for further proceedings on December 20.

Couple, son crushed to death while making 'reel'

Lucknow (PNS): A heart-wrenching incident has come to light in Lakhimpur Kheri, where a family was hit by a train while making reels on the railway track and died. The deceased included husband, wife and their 2-year-old son. The accident happened near Oil railway station in Kheri police station area, when the train coming from Lucknow hit all three of them. According to information, Mohammad Ahmed (30), his wife Nazmeen (24) and son Arkam, of Mohalla Sheikh Saraf of

Laharpur in Sitapur, were making reels near the railway bridge when they were hit by the train. After the mishap, people gathered nearby and the police and RPF reached the spot and removed the bodies from the track, after which the train was sent forward. The bodies were sent for post-mortem. Some witnesses claimed that they alerted the victims when they were busy making a reel and even asked them to jump into the river to save themselves but they kept running on track and were ultimately crushed to death.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Presidential debate showdown

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

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



On the other hand, Donald Trump, came out swinging with a populist message centred on nationalism, economic protectionism, and anti-establishment rhetoric. Trump focused on border security, economic growth, and energy independence, tapping into the concerns of many rural and working-class Americans who have felt left behind in the evolving global economy. At one point in time, he called Harris a Marxist implying her left-of-centre agenda. Trump's ability to connect with his base through a straightforward approach remains his powerful asset. His rhetoric around deregulation and America-first policies resonated with voters who see him as a champion of their economic interests. However, in most of the debate, he looked less confident and defensive, unlike his debate with Joe Biden where he was more aggressive. Besides, he was floored by Kamala's facts that he was criticised by his staff and even Republicans including Dick Cheney were rooting for her. His handling of key issues like the COVID-19 pandemic and the January 6 Capitol riot also came up in the debate which further receded his confidence and put him on the backfoot. The big question is who resonates more with the people and who would eventually win. Right now, it looks like a fair competition but with Kamala having a slight edge, though it would be folly to disregard Trump's fanbase and constituency which is proactive and loud. Many of the cherished goals of Kamala like climate action, Israel policy, and Gun policy do not go down well with many Americans who would be looking up to Trump as their representative. Trump, continues to resonate with a significant portion of the American population—particularly white, rural, and working-class—who feel disconnected from the progressive direction the country has taken in recent years. His simplistic ideas may not work but they do sway people.

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PICTALK



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

Alzheimer's: Early detection is the key

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

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



stages of Alzheimer's.

Researchers are now focused on identifying the disease's biomarkers before significant memory problems arise, providing a window of opportunity for early intervention. Beyond medical benefits, early detection has psychological and social advantages. It allows patients to maintain independence for a longer period, reduces anxiety associated with uncertainty, and provides clarity to families about caregiving responsibilities. Detecting Alzheimer's in its early stages has become a critical aspect of managing the disease effectively. With the advent of advanced diagnostic tools like CLEIA, early detection is now more achievable than ever. Agappe Diagnostics in collaboration with Fujirebio Holdings of Japan, has made a groundbreaking advancement in India's healthcare sector by introducing Chemiluminescent Enzyme Immunoassay (CLEIA) technology. This development is a monumental step forward in the indigenous manufacturing of cutting-edge diagnostic tools, specifically designed for early detection of critical diseases like Alzheimer's, Cancer, and Gastrointestinal disorders. "We have long standing productive relations with India that are all set to further strengthen and flourish," said Takashi Ariyoshi, deputy chief of Japanese embassy in India. CLEIA, an evolved version of the widely recognized Chemiluminescent Immunoassay (CLIA), merges the sensitivity of chemiluminescence detection with the precision of enzyme immunoassays. This powerful combination allows for the accurate detection of low concentrations of biomarkers, making it a game-changer in early diagnosis. In the case of Alzheimer's, early identification of disease-specific biomarkers can significantly slow down cognitive decline by enabling timely interventions, including medications and lifestyle changes.

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



KUSHAL JEENA

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Haryana elections: BJP faces Congress' resurgence



KALYANI SHANKAR

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

Who will emerge victorious in Haryana's upcoming assembly polls?

Will the ruling BJP retain the state, or will the resurgent Congress seize the opportunity to win? The nation is watching as the results of the impending polls in Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Jammu, and Kashmir will shape these states' future and significantly impact the national political landscape. Haryana is gearing up for a diverse, multi-cornered contest with 90 seats. The main competition is between the BJP and the Congress. Still, other parties like AAP, Samajwadi Party, CPI(M), and Haryana Lokhit Party are also in the field, adding diversity to the electoral dynamics. The BJP, JJP, and Azad Samaj Party (Kanshi Ram) have allied with Dushyant Chautala as their chief ministerial candidate. At the same time, the INLD and BSP have chosen Abhay Singh Chautala as theirs.

The BJP and Congress have not declared their chief ministerial faces, but former chief minister Bhupendra Singh Hooda is leading the battle for Congress. The new BJP chief minister, Saini, is facing internal problems. In the case of the BJP, Minister Ranjit Singh Chautala and MLA Lakshman Dass Napa left the party after being denied tickets. Other prominent figures and district leaders resigned after not being considered for tickets. During seat-sharing discussions with its coalition partner AAP, Congress leaders in Haryana, including Hooda, are willing to concede only a few seats. The Congress, led by former chief minister Bhupendra Singh Hooda, is optimistic about returning to power after a ten-year gap. The party is strategically wooing the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Samajwadi Party for an alliance. Meanwhile, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is facing allegations of involvement in a liquor scam. The Haryana polls are crucial. The BJP wants a third term, while the Congress aims to regain power. Other regional parties are also vying for a share of power. In the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the BJP won all ten seats. In 2024, it only secured five seats, with the Congress taking the other five. In the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, the BJP, lacking the majority, formed the government with the help of JD(U) and Telugu Desam. Before 2014, the BJP was a minor player in Haryana. Only after the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the party gained momentum. In 2019, the BJP formed a government with 40 seats, just six short of the majority. Dushyant Chautala's Jannayak Janta Party (JJP), which won ten seats, supported the BJP. However, JJP recently ended its alliance with the BJP. In Haryana, the BJP's vote share decreased from 58.2% in 2019 to 46.11% in 2024. This was mainly due to the farmers demanding a legal minimum support price (MSP) guarantee. In 2024, the INDIA bloc, a coalition of regional parties and Congress surpassed the BJP's vote share. In March, BJP replaced Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar with Nayab Singh Saini. The new Chief Minister has introduced welfare schemes, promised to fill government job vacancies,



and aims to leverage the Jat issue. However, the BJP does not have Jat's support. Also, Saini's short six-month tenure has limited his impact. The Congress is upbeat after doubling its Lok Sabha seats in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. Congress focuses on joblessness, inflation, farmer's issues, and the controversial Agniveer scheme. The party is preparing its manifesto based on public suggestions, which includes welfare schemes like a Rs 6,000 pension for old-age people and 300 units of free electricity. The party also counts on 452,000 first-time voters and 4.09 million young voters. Congress aims to unite the opposition votes, while the BJP seeks to divide them strategically. AAP has some influence in border areas of Haryana. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is trying to keep the Indian coalition intact. The AAP has agreed to fight in five seats. There are rumblings in the Congress, too. The Congress is facing factional fights. It is divided into two groups led by Hooda and Kumari Saini. The party tries to satisfy both factions, but Hooda holds more influence because of his previous role as chief minister. Turncoats and relatives of former chief ministers are in the Congress list of candidates. The BJP is facing a tough battle in Haryana. Current polls indicate that the party may win fewer seats. BJP's weaknesses are the absence of strong leadership at the state level and a compelling counter-narrative against the Opposition charges. Prime Minister Modi, who leads the party's campaigns, has not addressed any election rallies yet. The Congress must work on complacency, internal conflicts, and a need for more organisation. The BJP faced rebellion after the candidate list was announced, and some influential people like Ranjit left the party. Too many ticket aspirants could diminish the party's prospects. Ultimately, the arithmetic will determine Congress's victory. Also, the unity of the INDIA coalition is essential. If lucky, the BJP may minimise damage by securing a respectable number of seats, leading to a potentially significant outcome. Congress should avoid mistakes and take everybody along. Otherwise, it will miss a golden opportunity. (The writer is a popular columnist; views expressed are personal)

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MAMATA IN THE DOCK

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

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

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

Dorai Ramani Suresh | Ghaziabad

COURTS MUST BRING DOWN PENDENCY

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

GST relief for the middle class



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

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

using commitment to serve the common man. This is the midfield crunch situation for Indian courts to have strategic timeout while going by the statistics of the pending cases. More than five crore cases are pending in various courts, including district courts, High Courts and the Supreme Court as revealed by the recent report. Without the support from the executive the dream of the courts for the common man will continue to be the herculean task. The trial courts must be filled with enough Judges. Doesn't mean other courts are hands free. The Court should set the accountability to dispose of cases within the stipulated time in all courts? The court should entertain appeals only after the due satisfaction of merits of the lower court order. The court must take stock of the backlogs and put a strategic team to find out reasons for delay. Depending on the nature of the case, prioritise the focus on those cases towards early completion. Besides they should not allow adjournments to eat away the time of courts and litigants time and cost. A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

LACK OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN INDIA

Madam — The GDP of any country, alongside other factors, depends on the physical health of its citizens. However, a modern sedentary lifestyle is common, and government intervention is needed to encourage physical activity. A national survey revealed that over 200 million Indians are physically inactive, with 155 million adults and 45 million adolescents failing to meet WHO guidelines. The joint study by Dalberg Advisors and Sports and Society Accelerator found that 48% of older adults believe they are too old for physical activity, and 45% think sports are unsafe for girls. Misconceptions, such as physical exertion being harmful to menstruating women or affecting marriage prospects, contribute to the gender gap in physical activity. Women, especially in urban areas, spend 75% of their active time on household chores, leaving little time for exercise. Yash Pal Ralhan | Jalandhar

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

GOD HAS THE SOLUTION

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



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

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

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



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

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

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

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

The making of Kerala's catastrophe



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

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



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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

But senior officials who took stock of the situation once the flood water receded had told that roads could be rebuilt with Rs5,800 crore. As part of mitigating future floods, Vijayan accompanied by an entourage of relatives (including his five-year-old grandson) and senior bureaucrats undertook a junket to the Netherlands.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



ARIF AGA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



subsidies and financial support for pilot projects, the development of hydrogen hubs, and mandates for industries to use green hydrogen in their operations.

This proactive approach has started giving positive results now. However, there is a need to create a robust regulatory framework to facili-

tate the use of hydrogen as a fuel in multiple sectors, including refining, fertilisers, and transportation.

India's commitment to achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2070, as announced at the COP26 summit. Green hydrogen is expected to play a crucial role in this journey by decarbonizing hard-to-abate sectors like steel, cement, and petrochemicals. The transition to green hydrogen could also reduce India's dependence on imported fossil fuels, enhancing energy security and providing a significant economic boost.

Indian conglomerates and big private businesses have been quick to recognize the potential of green hydrogen

and are making substantial investments in this area.

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

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

ventures, share technology, and build capacity.

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ DUBAI

The 2023 ODI World Cup in India created an "economic impact" of USD 1.39 billion with tourism among the biggest beneficiaries, according to a report released by the International Cricket Council (ICC) on Wednesday. The Economic Impact Assessment conducted by Nielsen for the ICC, claimed that the mega-event held in October-November last year was the biggest ever ODI World Cup. "The ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 has demonstrated the significant economic power of cricket, generating economic benefit of USD 1.39 billion (Rs 11,637 crore) for India," ICC Chief Executive, Geoff Allardice said in a statement. Australia ended India's unbeaten run in the tournament to win the trophy for a record-extending sixth time. "The impact of tourism across the host cities amounted to USD 861.4 million of revenue generation, through accommodation, travel, transportation and food and beverage because of a massive influx of domestic and foreign tourists attending the matches," read an ICC statement. "The secondary and incremental spends within the economy was a key driver, generating USD 515.7 million, which was approximately 37 per cent of the total impact." However, the ICC did not specify



whether the massive figure cited in the report is actual revenue. A record-breaking 1.25 million spectators attended the mega event, of which nearly 75 per cent were attending an ICC 50-over match for the first time ever, the report claimed. "Nearly 55 per cent of the international respondents had previously visited India regularly, whilst an injection of new visitors thanks to the World Cup saw 19% of international attendees making their first ever visit to the country. "International travellers visited multiple tourist destinations during their stay which amounted to an economic impact of USD281.2 million and nearly 68 per cent of international attendees said that they would recommend India as a tourist destination to friends and family in the future further enhancing India's global image," read the statement from the governing body. Over 48,000 full and part time jobs were created by the event through direct involvement in delivering the tournament, as well as other organisations across the hospitality sector, added the report. "The event created thousands of jobs and showcased India as a premier tourist destination, proving that ICC events not only engage fans passionately but also contribute significantly to the economies of our host nations," Allardice said.



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

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Veteran Australian spinner Nathan Lyon has identified Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, and Rishabh Pant as the three "big ones" to watch out for in the upcoming Border-Gavaskar Trophy Test series. The five-Test series between India and Australia gets underway Down Under from November 22, part of the World Test Championship. Besides the big ones, Lyon has also warned that the visitors have an "amazing line-up", making things massively challenging for the hosts. "Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, and Rishabh Pant are probably going to be the three really big ones. But then, you've still got (Yashasvi) Jaiswal, Shubman Gill, (Ravindra) Jadeja, and who else will come out another five, I'm not sure," he told Star Sports. However, Lyon was confident that if the Australians

delivered as a bowling unit over an extended period, it would be beneficial for them. "But, it's a pretty amazing line-up they've got, so it's going to be a massive challenge. As I said, if we, as a bowling group, are good enough for long periods, hopefully, we can challenge their defence," he added. The Aussies have failed to win the title since their last series victory in 2014-15 at home. The Indians have won the title on four consecutive instances since then, winning twice each at home and away, a record for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. Besides, they also became the only Asian team to win a Test series in Australia, and also winning it on multiple occasions. Overall, India is the most successful side when it comes to the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, winning it on 10 instances, along with a retention.

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

PTI ■ DHAKA

He was Bangladesh's batting star during their historic 2-0 away Test series win in Pakistan but Litton Das believes that the red 'SG Test' in India would present an entirely different and more difficult test for the team. Litton, who scored 56 and 138 in the two Tests, along with skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto, Mominul Haque, Mushfiqur Rahim, Shakib Al Hasan and young Shadman Islam will once again form the core of the Bangladesh batting line-up during the Test series starting September 19 in Chennai. In Pakistan, Test matches are played with Kookaburra balls, which is also used at home by Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, New Zealand, South Africa. Stitches of the Kookaburra balls aren't as thick and pronounced as the Indian manufactured 'SG Test', which can aid reverse swing. "The ball will be a different one in India," Litton was



quoted as saying by ESPN Cricinfo. "It is a little harder to play against the SG ball. The Kookaburra ball is easier to play when it gets old. It is the opposite with the SG ball. It is harder to get away against the old ball when it's the SG." The right-handed keeper-batter's 138 after Bangladesh were reduced to 26 for 6 in the

second Test is considered as one of the finest knocks under pressure but Litton doesn't want to rest on past laurels. "We played good cricket against Pakistan but it is already in the past," Litton said. "It is important for us to look forward. We will need your (media's) help. It would be helpful if you don't talk about

the Pakistan series. As a player, it is already in the past for me," he said. For Litton, Bangladesh's improvement in traditional format has been gradual and inspiring. "It is inspiring that people will know you if you do well," he said. "There's nothing better than that. I don't think it is pressure. We are improving in

Tests, so we have to become more consistent in the format. That's the main challenge." Having played 223 international games across three formats for the 'Tigers' in past nine years has given him enough experience to tackle various situations. "I have to take responsibility now," he said. "It is the right time. I have been playing for ten years, so there has been some experience. I try to score off deliveries that I believe are there to hit. Scoring runs is more important these days. I think I bat in the same way that most batters approach the game." Batting with lower-order is another expertise that he has acquired in recent years. "I usually get to bat with (Mehidy) Hasan Miraz. Sometimes I bat with Shakib bhai (Shakib Al Hasan) or Mushfiq bhai (Mushfiqur Rahim). If I don't play my shots, the team score won't go anywhere. I want to play like this. I try to play the way I bat in training," he said.

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

PTI ■ LONDON

Indian Grandmaster Arjun Erigaisi hopes the Global Chess League will have a transformative effect on the sport similar to the revolutionary impact IPL had on cricket. The GCL is the world's first and largest official franchise league of its kind, with chess players from all over the world competing in a unique joint team format. "It's definitely a great thing that we now have Global Chess League in the chess circuit. I really hope it makes a big impact in the chess world like IPL did to cricket," The 21-year-old chess prodigy from Warangal has been creating waves this year. He ascended to World No.4 in the FIDE world ratings in June this year after beating France's Loic Travadon in the French Team Chess Championship 2024. Having watched the 2013 World Championship match between the legendary Viswanathan Anand and Magnus Carlsen, Erigaisi is delighted to get a chance to be on the same as the two veterans. "Last year, I was on the same team as Magnus Carlsen, and now I am on the same team as Vishy Anand, sir. I remember following the 2013 World Championship Match as a fan, and after 10-11 years, I got the chance to be in the same team as them. It's a big delight," said Erigaisi. The second season of GCL begins in London on October 3. "There are a limited number of team chess tournaments, but I love it whenever I get a chance to participate in a team event.

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

PTI ■ MOHALI

Punjab FC, the only representative from north India in the top-tier Indian Super League, on Wednesday announced their 26-member squad for the upcoming season. The team's home, away and third kits were also unveiled at an event here. The Shers will start their ISL campaign against Kerala Blasters on September 15 in Kochi and will play their first home game on September 20 at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in New Delhi. Head coach Panagiotis Dilmpieris has picked a squad that has a balance of youth and experience. Luka Majcen, Mushaga Bakenga, Ezequiel Vidal, Ivan Novoselec, Asmir



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

Likmabam Rakesh Singh (on loan). Mohammed Suhail F. And Shami Singamayum from the academy have been promoted to the senior side, joining Tekcham Abhishek Singh,

Manglenthang Kipgen and Ayush Deshwal. Dilmpieris said, "We have named a squad that can challenge for the top spots in the league this season. The foreign signings have plenty of experience and we have an exciting pool of Indian players. "We have also maintained the core of our Indian players from last season. Our pre-season has been good, and we hope we start our season well and perform to our best capacity." Dilmpieris will have Konstantinos Katsaras and Sankaral Chakraborty as his deputies along with Papaioannou Ioannis as the strength and conditioning coach and Manish Timsina as the goalkeeping coach.

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

PTI ■ ANANTAPUR

Fringe players like Rinku Singh along with some seasoned names who have been ignored by the national selectors will be aiming to attract their attention when round two of Duleep Trophy begins here on Thursday. The star power in the season-opening red-ball event will be reduced significantly for round two with India squad players released for a national camp ahead of the first Test against Bangladesh in Chennai from September 19. Sarfaraz Khan is the lone India squad member who will be featuring in the domestic competition. In the absence of national

regulars, the focus will shift on the likes of Rinku, who was surprisingly not picked for the first round despite having an impressive first-class record. The spirited southpaw has also done well for India in T20 cricket. Shubman Gill joining the national team has led to Mayank Agarwal captaining the India A unit. Having played his last Test in March 2022, Agarwal needs a bagful of runs to get back into national reckoning. Pacer Prasidh Krishna, who missed the Duleep Trophy opener having not fully completed his rehab for a left quadriceps tendon, has been named in the India A squad. With the Australia tour on the

horizon, the performance of the lanky pacer will be keenly observed. In the India B squad, captain Abhimanyu Easwaran will need to lead from the front following a forgettable outing in Bengaluru last week. Sarfaraz, who made a successful Test debut against England earlier this year, was upstaged by his brother Musheer in the opening game, the latter's 181 taking India B to a fine win over India A. The elder brother will be eyeing a big knock before joining the national team in Chennai. Washington Sundar also features in the India B squad and his all-round abilities



keep him in the mix for all formats. Pacer Mukesh Kumar, who was pipped by Akash Deep for the first Test,

will have a point to prove. India C openers Sai Sudharsan and Rituraj Gaikwad will be looking to

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

C. Left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh too needs to do a lot more to enhance his red-ball credentials. **SQUADS:** **India A squad:** Mayank Agarwal (C), Riyan Parag, Tilak Varma, Shivam Dube, Tanush Kotian, Prasidh Krishna, Khaleel Ahmed, Avesh Khan, Kumar Kushagra, Shaswat Rawat, Pratham Singh, Akshay Wadkar, SK Rasheed, Shams Mulani, Aaqib Khan. **India B squad:** Abhimanyu Easwaran (C), Sarfaraz Khan, Musheer Khan, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Washington Sundar, Navdeep Saini, Mukesh Kumar, Rahul Chahar, R Sai Kishore, Mohit Awasthi, N

Jagadeesan (WK), Suyash Prabudessan, Rinku Singh, Himanshu Mantri (WK). **India C:** Rituraj Gaikwad (C), Sai Sudharsan, Rajat Patidar, Abhishek Porel (WK), B Indrajith, Hrithik Shokeen, Manav Suthar, Gaurav Yadav, Vyshakh Vijaykumar, Anshul Kshambo, Himanshu Chauhan, Mayank Markande, Aryan Juyal (WK), Sandeep Warrior **India D squad:** Shreyas Iyer (C), Atharva Taide, Yash Dubey, Devdutt Padikkal, Ricky Bhuji, Saransh Jain, Arshdeep Singh, Aditya Thakare, Harshit Rana, Akash Sengupta, KS Bharat (WK), Saurabh Kumar, Sanju Samson (WK), Nishant Sindhu, Vidwath Kaverappa.

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