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MONEY 10 BHARTI AIRTEL LEADS THE MARKET RALLY

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CHOPRA FINISHES SECOND IN DL FINAL 11 SPORTS

KEJRIWAL OFFERS TO QUIT AS DELHI CM

RAJESH KUMAR/ SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

In an unexpected move that shook the political circles here, AAP convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday announced that he would resign after two days and would demand early polls in Delhi while vowing not to sit in Chief Minister's chair till people give him a 'certificate of honesty'.



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal with other AAP leaders wave during a party workers' meeting, in New Delhi on Sunday

Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

seems because the Supreme Court granted him bail on Friday, but with several conditions which gives more powers to the Lieutenant Governor. The most significant of these is a restriction barring him from entering the Chief Minister's office or signing official documents "unless absolutely necessary to obtain the Lieutenant Governor's sanctions." He has also been barred

from entering the Delhi secretariat. The surprising decision has left everyone wondering who will be the next Chief Minister of Delhi. Party insiders say Sunita Kejriwal, Rakhi Birlan, Atishi, Gopal Rai and Sandeep Pathak are among the top contenders for the CM post if he resigns. The shock announcement may reap poll benefits for the AAP as

Kejriwal framed his recent announcement as a moral stand, suggesting that he will not occupy the CM chair until he receives a "certificate of honesty" from the electorate. Experts said the move is likely aimed at addressing corruption and governance under Kejriwal's leadership and also serves to rally AAP and its supporters around a

narrative of integrity and accountability. Meanwhile, choosing a CM for just a few months has often led to a power tussle and big exits later, as was witnessed in Jharkhand recently between JMM's Hemant Soren and Champai Soren, and in Bihar in 2014 after JD(U) chief Nitish Kumar reclaimed the top seat from Jitan Ram Manjhi.

Termed it as PR stunt, BJP national spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari claimed that Kejriwal has understood that his image among the people of Delhi is not of an honest leader. BJP leader Manjinder Singh Sirsa said that Kejriwal has no option but to resign because of the bail conditions on him by the Supreme Court. Sirsa claimed that Kejriwal sought two days' time to resign from CM's post to convince the party MLAs to make his wife, Sunita Kejriwal the Chief Minister of Delhi. BJP leader Kapil Mishra termed Kejriwal's announcement as the "victory for the people" of Delhi. "In the end, the corrupt Kejriwal will have to resign. This resignation is being forced due to the Supreme Court's strict action. The man who was adamant about running the Government from jail had to announce his resignation today. This is a major victory for the people of Delhi against corruption," he said. BJP's Harish Khurana questioned why the AAP Leader is creating a drama. "Why after 48 hours? He should resign today. In the past too, he has done this. People of Delhi are asking, he can't go to the secretariat, can't sign documents? What is the point then?"

"You people might be thinking I have just come out of jail, why is he going to resign. They have raised allegations against me... They are saying that SC has put conditions on bail. After I resign, AAP will hold a high level meeting and decide a name for CM post," Kejriwal said while addressing party workers at his new headquarters. He said, "Despite the court giving us bail, the case will continue. I spoke to my lawyers. Till the case does not end, I will not sit on the CM's seat. After two days, I am going to resign from the post of CM. I will not sit on the CM's seat till the people elect me and send me to the seat again." Kejriwal alleged that the probe agencies sent him to jail to break his spirits, and the party. "Why did they send me to jail? It was not like I had committed any crime. They also know this. They just want to break my spirit, break my party, poach our Leaders, Ministers... send ED, CBI to torture our Leaders. But our Leaders and workers did not break. But I want to tell you today that they strengthened me by sending me to jail," he said. AAP convener added, "Both Sisodia and I were also stressing about this. He will also not hold any charge. We both will assume our seats when people will elect us." The AAP national convener said, "I will become Chief Minister and Manish Sisodia deputy CM only when people say we are honest. Kejriwal said he would hold a meeting of AAP MLAs in the next couple of days and a party Leader would take over as Chief Minister. Continued on Page 8



Prime Minister Narendra Modi flags-off Tatanagar-Patna Vande Bharat train in Jamshedpur, through Video conferencing, Sunday

PTI

Vande Bharat on Voters' Platter

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ JAMSHEDPUR/RANCHI

With Assembly polls in few States round the corner, fresh spice of Vande Bharat train series are back on the platter of the voters as Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday flagged off six Vande Bharat Trains and also launched various projects worth Rs 660 crore.

Ranchi to Tata. Modi landed at Ranchi and the programme had to be scheduled virtually. PM apologised to the people for not being able to reach Tatanagar as "my chopper could not take off from Ranchi due to bad weather". Later during the day PM reached Jamshedpur by road to attend the political programmes and a Parivartan Maha Rally as per schedule. Modi is on a three-day visit to Jharkhand, Gujarat and Odisha where he will flag off several trains, lay the foundation stones and launch projects worth more than Rs

12,460 crore. Jharkhand goes to polls this November. He flagged off six Vande Bharat trains for Jharkhand, Odisha, Bihar and UP at Ranchi. Union Ministers Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Annapurna Devi and Sanjay Seth and Jharkhand Governor Santosh Kumar Gangwar were present at Tatanagar station. Sources said some of the rail projects for poll bound Maharashtra and Jammu and Kashmir are also in pipeline. "The work of laying railway lines, doubling of these and developing modern facilities at railway stations are

underway at a fast pace in Jharkhand," Modi said. Jharkhand, which was lagging in development, will also see rapid growth with the launch of these projects, he said. "The Centre has increased its investment for the development of Jharkhand. This year, Jharkhand has been given an allocation of Rs 7,000 crore for the development of railway infrastructure. If we compare the budget of the past 10 years, it is 16 times higher. Jharkhand has joined the list of States where 100 per cent electrification of the railway network has been achieved," he said.

Road to justice in Kolkata

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Central Bureau of Investigation on Sunday alleged a "larger conspiracy" and "deep nexus" between the hospital authorities and a section of the police in the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital rape and murder case.

A day after arresting Abhijit Mondal the officer in-charge of the Tala Police Station and re-arresting former RG Kar principal Sandip Ghosh — who is already in jail in custody on charges of corruption — the CBI advocates told the Sealdah Court that the two sides had conspired to destroy evidence and hush up the case.

Both Mondal and Ghosh were given three-day CBI remand by the designated court. Terming the incident an "institutional murder" the CBI pointed out in point 8 of the remand letter how the officer in-charge showed extra hurry in allowing the cremation of the victim's body. The police "allowed cremation in a hurried manner when the family members demanded second autopsy," the remand letter said questioning the gap of more than 14 hours between the timing when the report



Tala police station officer-in-charge Abhijit Mondal, accused in the doctor rape and murder case, comes out of the Sealdah court after the court sent him to CBI custody till September 17, in Kolkata, Sunday

was beyond his authority, sources quoting the CBI lawyer said. A postgraduate lady doctor of the RGKMCH was raped and murdered in the wee hours of August 8 explaining the "deep nexus" between a section of the police and the hospital authorities, the CBI said. CBI added that there was evidence to show that on the day of the incident Ghosh and Mondal had multiple telephonic conversations. Besides, "Mondal allowed the entire crime scene to be crowded by hospital people and outsiders for hours... people came and went and evidence was allowed to be tampered," lawyers said, adding this took place in front of some of the topmost officers of Kolkata Police. The CBI sources also said that apart from Mondal there were four more police officers who were under their scanner. Among them, there was an Indian Police Services officer. "Notices would soon be served to some of these officers for interrogation," sources in the central agency said adding however, that there was "nothing between the CBI and the police," and that "all the steps that are being taken are taken in the interest of the investigation."

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/KOLKATA

Nature's fury engulfs India

Heavy rains have wreaked havoc across India, flooding streets, widespread destruction, disrupting traffic, triggering landslides and chaos in multiple states. From north to south and east to west, the monsoon's relentless downpour has left cities grappling with submerged roads, rescue operations, and widespread chaos.

Gangetic West Bengal. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) data showed India, this monsoon has received 857.5 mm rainfall as against the normal of 795.9 mm so far. Notably, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Punjab and Chandigarh are among the rain deficit States and two weeks left for departure of monsoon this year. Data showed East and North-East sub division has received 1047 mm rainfall as against the normal of 1233.9 mm, a deficit of 15 per cent so far; North-West India including Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, has received rainfall of 590.9 mm as against the normal of 552.5 mm, around 7 per cent more this season.



Central India received 1068.5 mm as against normal of 906.8 mm rainfall, which is 18 per cent more so far. South Peninsula received 759.8 mm

rainfall as against the normal of 631.5 mm, around 20 per cent more this year. The torrential downpour across Delhi for the past few

days has surpassed both annual and seasonal average rainfall in September in the national Capital. According to the India

Meteorological Department (IMD) data, the city has already exceeded the 1,000 mm rainfall mark this month, the highest since 2021 and the second highest in at least the last decade, as against the usual 650 mm of rainfall that it receives during the monsoon season. The month has recorded 125.8 mm of rainfall, which is also 55 per cent higher than normal. Moreover, this continuous spell has brought the city to a halt as rain results in severe waterlogging, closure of underpasses, and traffic snarls, along with occasional reductions in visibility in the city. It has also led to the loss of lives due to drowning and electrocution with reportedly about 40 people dying in

Delhi so far. South Peninsula received 759.8 mm rainfall as against the normal of 631.5 mm, around 20 per cent more this year. The IMD has also issued a fishermen warning, advising against venturing into the northern Bay of Bengal and the coasts of Bangladesh, West Bengal, and Odisha until the morning of September 16 due to expected rough sea conditions. Squally winds with speeds of 45-55 km/h, gusting up to 50 km/h, are anticipated over Gangetic West Bengal (including Kolkata) and nearby areas in North Odisha and Jharkhand. Residents and travelers in the affected areas are advised to stay updated on weather

alerts and take necessary precautions to ensure safety during the severe weather conditions. As many as 200 people died this monsoon so far. Water leakage has been reported at the Taj Mahal after incessant rain in Agra. The death toll in the collapse of a three-storey house in Zakir Nagar in Meerut has risen to 10 while the rescue work at the site is still underway. The local meteorological department issued a 'yellow' alert for thunderstorm and lightning at isolated places in six districts of Himachal Pradesh on Sunday and Wednesday. It also predicted a wet spell in the State till September 21. Over 40 roads were closed in the State and 53 power supply schemes were disrupted on Saturday evening as per the State Emergency Operation Centre (SEOC).

# Girl sold twice to two persons, gangraped

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A girl was allegedly lured, kidnapped, and sold twice to different individuals, who subjected her to sexual exploitation, police said on Sunday.

The victim, a resident of Thakurganj, managed to escape from her tormentors and returned home on September 11. Horrified by her ordeal, her family members filed a complaint with the Thakurganj police.

According to reports, the accused, Prakash, lured the girl on October 20, 2023, and took her away. He held her hostage for two days, raped her, and then sold her to Kamal Kumar of Biswan, Sitapur.

Kamal allegedly exploited her for several days and sold her to Sarwan, also of Sitapur, when she became pregnant. Sarwan and his friend Awadhesh allegedly gang-raped the girl, locked her in a room, and beat her with a mobile charger cord and stick.

The girl alleged that Awadhesh's sister Rekha and Sarwan's elder brother also beat her. During heavy rainfall on September 10, the girl escaped and returned home. The Thakurganj police registered a case and arrested

## Minor girl kidnapped, raped at knife-point

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A minor girl was allegedly kidnapped and raped by a youth at the knife-point and handed death threats when she tried to raise an alarm, in Chinhath police station area, police said on Sunday.

As per reports, the girl was going to get medicines on September 12 when she was kidnapped and raped.

The victim reached home and narrated her ordeal to her family, who informed the Chinhath police.

The police registered a case based on the complaint and arrested the accused, who is said to be a technician working with a private company.

Prakash, Kamal Kumar, and Sarwan Yadav.

In a separate incident, some car-borne accused allegedly attempted to kidnap a 10-year-old girl student on Lohangpur-Gohna Kala Marg in Bakshi-Ka-Talab police station area. The girl was cycling her way back home from school when

DCP (East) Shashank Singh said that the 17-year-old victim was going to get medicines on the evening of September 12. As she realised that she had forgotten to bring money, she turned back and started returning home.

In the meantime, the accused, identified as Ajay Kumar, kidnapped her at a deserted place and raped her at the knife-point. When she resisted, the accused beat her up and threatened to kill her before fleeing the scene.

The DCP said that the accused, Ajay Gautam of Buddh Vihar Colony, was arrested near Rashtriya Udyog Ashram Inter College on Chinhath-Deva Road on Saturday.

the accused tried to kidnap her at the knife-point. When she offered resistance, they threw chilli powder in her eyes.

The girl escaped and returned home, and her father filed a police complaint. Inspector, BKT, confirmed that the complaint was received, and the crime scene was inspected.

# CM reviews flood relief efforts in Bahraich

Adityanath meets families affected by man-animal conflict

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday conducted an aerial survey of the flood-affected areas in Bahraich to assess the situation firsthand. Following the survey, he held a meeting with local public representatives to discuss current conditions and the necessary steps to mitigate the impact of the disaster.

The chief minister noted that while life in the region has largely returned to normal, continued vigilance is essential.

He urged public representatives to remain connected with local communities and provide reassurance, especially regarding concerns about wolves that have been troubling residents. He assured them that efforts to capture the animals were ongoing.

CM Yogi also stressed the importance of ensuring that all eligible beneficiaries receive the benefits of Central and state government schemes.

He directed officials to launch a special campaign to make sure no deserving individual is overlooked. He lauded the coordinated efforts of public representatives, district authorities, the police administration, and the Forest department in address-



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath meeting families affected by human-wildlife conflict, in Bahraich on Sunday

ing the challenges posed by the recent floods.

Yogi highlighted how their team work has instilled confidence among the local population. The Forest department, along with administrative officials, is already developing a strategy to prevent future incidents.

Before the meeting, CM Yogi conducted an aerial survey to

get a first-hand view of the flood-affected areas.

He was briefed by administrative officials on ongoing relief efforts, flood management, and other pressing issues. He also inquired about compensation for the families of the deceased and medical treatment for the injured.

While confirming that life in the

affected villages is returning to normal, the chief minister emphasised the need for continued vigilance until the area is entirely safe.

He assured that teams would remain on the ground to protect every citizen and continue serving the public with the utmost care and caution. Present at the meeting were

Minister of State for Forests (Independent Charge) Dr Arun Kumar Saxena, Minister of State for Forests KP Malik, Bahraich MP Anand Kumar Gond, MLAs Sureshwar Singh, Subhash Tripathi, Anupama Jaiswal, Saroj Sonkar, Ramnivas Verma, MLC Padmasen Chaudhary, and Pragya Tripathi.

## Protesters create ruckus after 14-year-old boy crushed by dumper

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a tragic incident, a 14-year-old boy, identified as Akash Maurya, was crushed to death by a speeding dumper in Bagha village of Itaunja on Sunday.

The accident sparked widespread outrage among local villagers, who took to the streets in protest.

According to reports, Akash was playing outside his home when the dumper struck him, with the front wheel passing over the lower part of his body, causing instant death.

The driver of the dumper fled the scene, abandoning the vehicle. Villagers noted the dumper's registration number and informed police.

Upon arrival, the ambulance was met with hostility as the driver refused to transport the body, leading to an escalation in the protest.

Irate villagers pelted the ambulance with stones, damaging its windows. They also blocked the road and disrupted traffic.

Local MLA Yogesh Shukla reached the scene only to face the ire of the protesters. As tensions rose, the MLA had to beat a retreat.

The police, summoned from multiple stations in Lucknow, worked to manage the situation. They managed to pacify the family and took the body into custody for autopsy. The protesters expressed frus-

tration over the reckless operation of dumpers and illegal mining in the locality.

They claimed that numerous complaints about unsafe mining practices had been ignored. They demanded that action be taken to prevent further tragedies.

ADCP (North) Jitendra Kumar said that the police had brought the situation under control and were actively investigating the case.

An FIR has been registered against the dumper driver, who has been taken into custody.

### GOLD BANGLED STOLEN

Three women allegedly stole two gold bangles weighing 43.76 grams from a prominent jeweller's showroom in Sushant Golf City police station area.

The incident, which took place on September 11, came to the fore when the showroom manager cross-checked the items at the time of closing the shop.

In his complaint, store manager Pawan Kumar Jaiswal said before closing the shop at around 9 pm, they found two bangles missing.

"When we scanned the CCTV footage, three women were spotted. They were shown bangles by our staff members Akash Singh and Mehak Gupta. One of the women stole two bangles and made off with them," Jaiswal said.

## Master trainers to improve staff conduct in govt hospitals

Lucknow (PNS): In an attempt to enhance the quality of healthcare services, the Uttar Pradesh government is training frontline staff in government hospitals to improve their behaviour towards patients and their attendants.

The initiative aims to address common concerns about the treatment of patients in hospitals, ensuring that people no longer face issues related to staff conduct during their visits.

The government hopes that this move will not only improve the standard of healthcare, but also create a more supportive environment for patients and their families.

By prioritising a compassionate approach, the administration seeks to foster a positive perception of government healthcare facilities, making them more accessible and trustworthy for the public.

Principal Secretary (Medical Health and Family Welfare) Partha Sarthi Sen Sharma said that master trainers had been trained to provide a good experience to patients and their attendants in government hospitals.

During a recent high-level meeting, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath emphasised that respectful and quality healthcare is a critical aspect of public health service. He noted that the behaviour of frontline staff plays a pivotal role in shaping the hospital's image, as it is often the first point of contact for patients.

## IT ex-commissioner's friend stabbed by former's servant

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The servant of a retired Income Tax chief commissioner allegedly stabbed an administrative officer on Saturday evening when the victim intervened in a verbal spat between the accused and his wife in Eldeco Greens Colony of Gomti Nagar. The administrative officer had gone to meet his friend.

As per reports, when the officer confronted the accused, who was beating his wife allegedly under the influence of liquor, he was attacked with a knife. The Gomti Nagar police have taken the accused into custody.

Inspector Rajesh Tripathi said that retired Income Tax chief commissioner Praveen Sinha, a resident of Gomti Nagar, had employed Amit as his servant. Amit and his wife stay at the officer's house (on the second floor).

Amit, said to be a liquor addict, fights with his wife off and on. On the fateful day, he again picked a fight with his 8-month pregnant wife on Saturday and thrashed her.

Around 8 pm on Saturday, SS Srivastava, a resident of Jankipuram (Sector H), went to meet his friend Praveen. In the meantime, Amit started beating his wife under the influence of alcohol.

When Srivastava tried to inter-

vene, Amit picked up a knife lying nearby and stabbed him causing him to sustain serious injuries.

The inspector said that Srivastava is undergoing treatment. A case has been registered against Amit and investigation is ongoing.

Meanwhile, a driver, allegedly under the influence of alcohol, rammed into a stationary car carrying a family in Hazratganj on September 13 night.

According to reports, Raman Talwar from Daliganj Mankameshwar Temple had parked his Innova on Sapru Marg while he and his children were inside.

Suddenly, a high-speed Tata Nexon crashed into his vehicle, causing severe damage. The impact also affected two other vehicles, including an Audi parked nearby.

When Talwar confronted the errant driver, identified as Navneet Singh Maurya, he was threatened.

Maurya allegedly claimed to have high-level connections and initially refused to exit his vehicle.

Upon eventually getting out, he continued to intimidate those present. The police have registered a case and are investigating the incident.

However, Talwar reported that the police made him wait for a long time before registering his complaint.

## New parking facility to come up at Shringverpur Dham

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a move to enhance the spiritual and cultural experience for devotees, Uttar Pradesh Minister of Tourism and Culture Jaiveer Singh has announced the development of a new parking facility at Shringverpur, with an investment of Rs 4 crore.

Singh said that a dedicated parking facility would be established at Shringverpur Dham, an important site within the Ramayana Circuit.

"The new facility will accommodate eight buses and 36 cars, providing greater convenience for visitors. It will also include essential amenities such as drinking water and toilets," he said.

Located approximately 40 km from Prayagraj on the banks of the Ganga river, Shringverpur Dham holds a special significance in the Ramayana. It is

believed to be the site where Lord Ram, along with Sita and his brother Lakshman, crossed the river during his exile.

The site also hosts the revered penance site and ashram of Mata Shanta and Shringa Rishi. Singh also noted that several key developments are underway at Shringverpur, including the construction of a grand Nishadraj Park near the new parking facility. The area features other attractions such as Nishadraj Fort, an archaeological treasure, and Shri Ramghat, all closely associated with the Ramayana.

"Tourists visiting Shringverpur will soon be able to enjoy both spiritual experiences and a glimpse of rural tourism," Singh said.

"The Tourism department is committed to improving basic infrastructure, including roads, drinking water, and sanitation. Our goal is to not only enhance spiritual tourism but also pro-

mote the village as a unique tourist destination that blends rural charm with religious significance," the minister said.

Additionally, Shringverpur Dham is a popular site for monthly fairs held on Amavasya and Purnima. A major fair during the holy month of Kartik, running from Ekadashi to Purnima, attracts numerous pilgrims from across the region.

The new development plans aim to make these events more accessible and enjoyable for the increasing number of visitors. The development of Shringverpur Dham aligns with the UP government's vision for the Ramayana Circuit and is expected to boost the region's religious tourism potential, offering devotees a well-rounded spiritual experience connected to the sacred journey of Lord Ram.

## Sultanpur Road projects to be developed in two phases

Lucknow (PNS): The development of a Wellness City and an IT City on Sultanpur Road will take place in two phases.

According to Lucknow Development Authority (LDA) Secretary Vivek Srivastava, 100 per cent of the land for the Wellness City has already been acquired, while only 65 per cent of the land for the IT City has been acquired so far.

Srivastava shared these details during a review meeting on Sunday. He noted that 296 acres

out of the planned 1,200 acres for Wellness City have been reserved for private entrepreneurs, specifically for the establishment of a medicine market and a superspecialty hospital.

Farmers in the IT City area are still protesting, demanding adequate compensation. Their leaders have met senior LDA officials and state government representatives, but the agitation continues.

The protesters are requesting compensation rates aligned with

those set by the district magistrate. LDA Vice-Chairman Prathmesh Kumar assured the leaders that their demands would be reconsidered and forwarded to the government for further evaluation. Kumar also mentioned that there are thousands of applications on file with the LDA for accommodation within the new developments.

Online booking for large plots and other facilities is expected to begin by the end of October this year.

## VP Bhatkar unveils plans for quantum computers

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Vijay Pandurang Bhatkar, renowned as the 'Father of Supercomputers', announced on Sunday that he is working on developing quantum computers, which promise to be several times more precise than the supercomputers he created earlier. "A prototype of this technology has already been developed, with a projected completion timeline of five years," Bhatkar said while addressing mediapersons at Raj Bhawan on Sunday.



He is in Lucknow for the 67th convocation of Lucknow University. Reflecting on his experiences with supercomputers, Bhatkar

discussed the challenges he faced in their development.

He emphasised the need for this technology in India, particularly given its reliance on agriculture. Accurate weather prediction was crucial for farmers, who had traditionally relied on methods that were often inadequate due to the disparity between Indian and European weather patterns. He recounted that former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was interested in forging a high-technology agreement with the United States, the only country at the time with supercomputer technology.

However, objections arose, with concerns that India might use this technology for defence purposes. Despite an initial agreement, Gandhi questioned

whether India could develop this technology independently. Tasked with this responsibility, Bhatkar and his team of 100 successfully built India's supercomputers for Rs 37 crore within three years. Bhatkar underscored the importance of supercomputers in advancing technology, asserting that no significant technological progress—whether in aeronautics or space—can occur without them.

He noted that in the era of artificial intelligence, supercomputers will need to be advanced to surpass human intelligence. Addressing concerns about artificial intelligence potentially displacing jobs, Bhatkar acknowledged that this is an ongoing debate among scientists. Regarding his current work on Quantum Computers, Bhatkar explained that they are based on quantum particles and will offer high speeds capable of solving complex mathematical problems. This advancement could enable significant improvements in technology, including the ability to develop advanced simulations and aircraft. He noted that several countries are already working on quantum computing.

## Exhibition offers glimpse into city's culinary delights

Lucknow (PNS): Sanatkada is hosting 'Lucknowi Bawarchi Khane', a unique exhibition celebrating the rich and diverse culinary traditions of the state capital.

The exhibition, which began this weekend, will run for three months. Key organiser Madhavi Kukreja explained that the exhibition offers visitors an intimate glimpse into the personal stories and generational legacies of Lucknow's cherished street food vendors and home kitchens.

"Lucknowi Bawarchi Khane" will take attendees on a journey through the city's culinary evolution. From the bustling narrow lanes of street food vendors to the quiet kitchens where family recipes are lovingly passed down through generations, visitors can explore curated sections showcasing the experiences and histories of both street food vendors and home chefs," she said.

The exhibition will feature installations such as a traditional 'dastarkhwan' setup, kitchen displays, a street food map of Lucknow, and a 'naimatkhana', all designed to evoke the warmth, aromas, and legacy of Lucknow's food culture.

## 'Anesthesiologists play vital role in managing crises'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The department of anaesthesia at King George's Medical University (KGMU) hosted the 5th International & 15th National Conference of Anaesthesiologists (ICACON-2024), which concluded on Sunday. The event brought together leading professionals, researchers, and thought leaders in anaesthesiology to discuss the latest advancements, trends, and challenges in the field.

Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak highlighted the vital role anaesthesiologists play in managing crises within operating theatres and intensive care units (ICUs), noting that their expertise is crucial for saving lives in critical situations.

Mayankeshwar Sharan Singh encouraged participants to engage fully in both the scientific discussions and the rich cultural heritage and cuisine of Lucknow.

KGMU Vice-Chancellor Prof Soniya Nityanand congratulated the department for the success of ICACON-2024. ICACON-2024 chairperson Prof Monica Kohli and organ-

ising secretary Dr Tanmay Tiwari said that the conference's theme centred on innovation in anaesthesia practice, patient safety, and global collaboration. The event featured plenary sessions, workshops, and panel discussions, providing a platform for knowledge exchange and the sharing of best practices.

"The department of anaesthesia at KGMU has been at the forefront of advancing anaesthetic practices in India and beyond, playing a crucial role in training medical professionals and conducting groundbreaking research. Their ongoing contributions have significantly enhanced both education and patient care in anaesthesiology," Prof Kohli said.

Dr Tanmay Tiwari expressed gratitude to the distinguished national and international speakers for their insights into emerging technologies and the challenges faced by anaesthesiologists worldwide.

He highlighted that the conference offered valuable opportunities for continuing medical education (CME) and skill enhancement for anaesthesiologists, paramedics, and nursing professionals.

## AI-assisted software tool to detect TB using chest X-ray

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The department of pulmonary medicine at Sanjay Gandhi Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences (SGPGIMS), in collaboration with STPI-backed startup Dectroce, has developed an AI-assisted software tool that enables rapid detection of tuberculosis (TB) with approximately 95% accuracy using only chest X-ray images.

This research has been published in 'Nature Scientific' and recognised by the global WHO team in the United Kingdom. The study was authored by Dr Alok Nath, Dr Zia Hashim, Dr Saumya Shukla, Dr Zafar Neyaz, Dr Richa Mishra (SGPGI), Dr Ankit Shukla (Faculty of Medicine, University of Queensland), and Nikhil Misra (IIT-Kanpur).

Following clinical validation, head of the department of Pulmonology (SGPGI) Prof Alok Nath introduced this AI tool for patient use.

According to Prof Nath, this software has significant poten-

tial in remote and under-equipped areas, where 30-40% of TB cases remain undetected, contributing to the disease's spread and increasing the overall burden.

"In our country, approximately 2,50,000 TB cases each year go undetected and miss diagnosis," he pointed out. Prof Nath emphasised that this new software tool could revolutionise rapid, point-of-care TB diagnosis.

"The software allows for the upload of chest X-ray images of suspected TB patients, and within seconds, provides a diagnostic result in chart form, facilitating prompt confirmation. The application is user-friendly, as images can also be uploaded via a mobile app," he explained.

He further noted that TB represents a significant portion of communicable diseases globally and is a leading cause of death. "Therefore, rapid and accurate diagnosis of TB, especially in densely populated areas, is crucial for strengthening TB eradication programmes," he added.

the pioneer  
**CLASSIFIEDS**  
NOTICE

I have changed my name from kausar Bano to Qaisar Bano for all future purpose. Qaisar Bano W/O Mohd Naseeb R/O 12/459, Gwaloli Kanpur

# Indian civilisation deeply rooted in democratic principles: CM

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister and Gorakshapeethadhiswar Yogi Adityanath said that at a time when much of the world lacked a strong emphasis on civilisation, culture and human values, India was flourishing in all these areas.

"From ancient times to the present, Indian civilisation has been deeply rooted in democratic principles. The Rishi tradition emphasised the principle of 'Live and Let Live', a true form of democracy, one that originated in India," he remarked.

"Unlike other cultures that sought to conquer or dominate, India's ethos has always been one of inclusivity, captured in the timeless philosophy of 'Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah' (May all be happy). This spirit is reflected today in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas," he added.

Chief Minister Yogi made these remarks while presiding over the inaugural conference on 'India as the Mother of Democracy', which was part of a series of discussions on contemporary issues, held in observance of the 55th death anniversary of Yugpurush Brahmalen Mahant Digvijaynath Ji Maharaj and the 10th death anniversary of Rashtrasant Brahmalen Mahant Avedyanath Ji Maharaj on Sunday.

Welcoming Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh Narayan Singh who was the chief guest, Chief Minister Yogi said, "The evidence of democratic values can be found in India from the Vedic period through the Ramayana and Mahabharata eras. In Indian democracy, the people's voice and interests have always been of utmost importance. Indian tradition has long upheld the belief that the king is responsible for the well-being of the people."

He added, "During the Ramayana era, Lord Ram prioritised the people's voice, and Lord Krishna oversaw governance through a council

## Indian values shaped principles of democracy, says Harivansh

PNS ■ GORAKHPUR

Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh Narayan Singh stated that the principles of democracy have been shaped by India's 5,000-year-old values. He highlighted that the true democracy today is deeply rooted in Indian traditions and values.

The Rajya Sabha deputy chairman said, "The essence of democracy lies in the freedom to express one's views openly, a principle deeply rooted in thousands of years of Indian tradition. Indian democracy provides people with full freedom, along with the ability to correct its flaws."

The Rajya Sabha deputy chairman remarked that those influenced by Western ideals have mistakenly viewed Indian democracy as an imported concept, largely because of the habit of looking to Greece for inspiration. He pointed out that when India gained independence, many foreign scholars doubted the survival of democracy in the country.

"The next year will mark the 'Amrit Kaal' of India becoming a Republic. But, when we say this, then this meaning should not be derived that democracy started in India on January 26, 1950. If it had started, then the neighbouring countries,

which got democracy along with you (us), democracy does not exist there," he said. Singh said, "India is now presenting itself to the world as the true mother of democracy, a topic that had not been widely discussed before but is now being highlighted, including at the G-20 summit."

Focussing on China, Harivansh said, "I believe that there has been a lapse on the part of a very senior visionary leader of ours. After 1947, when China in the neighbourhood in 1947-48 was starting its political, economic journey, it had made a document for 100 years. In India, that work was done after 2014. This should have been done earlier."

"In 1977-78, we were at par with China, and ahead of China in some areas. In 1960, our GDP was ahead of them. Those who were in power then, could not see China changing its pose." He also accused the then Central government of not allowing the first non-Congress government formed in Kerala to continue. He praised Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for advancing significant discussions on Indian democracy through such events. Referring to Chief Minister Yogi as the embodiment of the Ram raj concept, Singh said: "Yogiji

reflects the spirit of Ram raj, with his work exemplifying ancient Indian values of equal justice and security for all." The Rajya Sabha deputy chairman, while paying tribute to the revered memories of Brahmalin Mahant Digvijaynath and Brahmalin Mahant Avedyanath, remarked that remembering great figures from the past serves as an inspiration for the future.

Both Gorakshapeethadhiswar played a pivotal role in reviving national, social, and cultural consciousness, and their lives were devoted to upholding Indian values, he added. The conference was also addressed by former executive president of Uttar Pradesh Hindi Sansthan, Lucknow, Prof. Sadanand Gupta, Brahmachari Das Lal of Sawai, Agra and Swami Vishvesh Prapannacharya of Sugreev Kiladhis Ayodhya. On this occasion, chief priest of Gorakhnath temple Yogi Kamalnath, Mahant Suresh Das from Ayodhya, Mahant Shivnath from Cuttack, Mahamandaleswar Santosh Das alias Satua Baba from Kashi, Mithileshnath, Rammilan Das, Bhayanaknath from Karnataka, Kamalnath from Ahmedabad, Ravindradas and others were also present.

# Solving problem of citizens govt's top priority: CM

Gorakhpur (PNS): During his visit to Gorakhpur, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath met with approximately 300 people at the Janata Darshan held at the Gorakhnath temple on Sunday morning and listened to their concerns.

Reassuring the public, the chief minister emphasised that addressing the issues of every individual is a top priority for the government, which is committed to working with sensitivity and urgency. He assured those in attendance that no one should worry, as all problems will be resolved effectively. Throughout the event, held in front of the Mahant Digvijaynath Smriti Bhawan, Chief Minister Yogi patiently listened to each person's grievances. He continuously instructed the officials present to give due attention to every case, ensuring that each matter was addressed promptly and transparently, with no room for negligence. As usual, the attendees were seated on chairs, and the chief minister personally approached them, listening attentively to their concerns. He assured everyone that their issues would be resolved swiftly, with quality and satisfaction as the government's goals.

For complaints regarding land encroachment, he directed strict legal action, stressing that no one's land should be forcibly taken. Individuals or groups



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath interacts with the children during his visit to the Gorakhnath Temple premises in Gorakhpur. PTI

involved in such activities, including powerful figures or land mafias, would face stringent consequences under the government's zero-tolerance policy towards crime and criminals, he added. Among the attendees were individuals seeking financial assistance for medical treatment. Chief Minister Yogi assured them that lack of funds would not be a barrier to receiving healthcare. He instructed officials to expedite the hospitals' cost estimates and submit them to the government, promising that sufficient funds would be provided from

the Chief Minister's Discretionary Fund for those in need. Meanwhile, Gorakshapeethadhiswar and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath warmly welcomed and interacted with young devotees who visited Baba Gorakhnath at the Gorakhnath temple on Sunday morning. He spent time conversing with the children, offering them chocolates, and blessing them for a bright future. As part of the week-long Srimad Bhagwat Mahapurana Katha Gyan Yagya at Gorakhnath temple, the chief minister followed his traditional routine on Sunday. After

offering prayers at the temple and paying respects at the samadhi of his guru, Brahmalin Mahant Avedyanath, CM Yogi spent time at the temple's cowshed, engaging in cow service. During his visit, the chief minister noticed children with their families near the main temple and called them over. He asked each child their name, where they were from, and which class they were in, speaking to them in a warm and friendly manner, even sharing a few lighthearted moments. He gifted them chocolates and showered them with love, affection, and blessings.

# Meerut house collapse death toll rises to 10



Rescue operation underway on the second day on Sunday after a house collapsed in Meerut. PTI

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The death toll in the three-storey house collapse in Meerut rose to 10 even as the rescue work at the site was still underway, an official said on Sunday.

Meerut District Magistrate Deepak Meena said the deceased included one man, three women and six children. "When the rescue operation started, the relatives gave information about 15 people. Three managed to escape when the house was collapsing," the district magistrate told reporters. Meena said after getting information about the collapse of a three-storey house in the Zakir Colony on Saturday, a rescue operation was launched. The district administration released a new list of the deceased on Sunday afternoon. According to it, those who died in the incident have been identified as Naffo alias Nafias (65), her son Sajid (40), Saima (35) the wife of Sajid; Sania (15) (Sajid's daughter), Saqib (12) (Sajid's son); Farhana (27), Alisa (25), Ria (10), Himsa (6 months) and Saifiyan (7). Those who survived are Samrin (4), Naem (22), Naadem (26), Saqib (20) and Aliya (8), the

district administration said, adding they are undergoing medical treatment. Meena said a process is underway to provide financial assistance of ₹4 lakh for each deceased from the natural calamity fund and ₹1.20 lakh for the house being completely damaged.

Action is also being taken to provide financial assistance to the affected family for the animals that died in the incident, he added. The number of livestock rescued and the fatalities remains unclear so far. Rescue operations, being carried out by the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), will continue till the rubble is cleaned, he added.

Meerut Divisional Commissioner Selva Kumari J, Senior Superintendent of Police Vipin Tada, and Superintendent of Police (City) Ayush Vikram Singh were present at the spot. The house collapsed around 5:15 p.m. on Saturday following which the emergency services were pressed into service. The owner of the house has been identified as Naf

Alauddin. He ran a dairy from the house. After the tragic incident, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath directed the officials to reach the spot and expedite the relief work. He also instructed the officials to provide proper treatment to the injured.

The Samajwadi Party and Congress expressed deep sorrow over the house collapse and demanded that the government provide proper compensation to the affected family. In a post in Hindi on X, the SP said, "Ten people died after being buried under the rubble when a three-storey building collapsed in Meerut. Very sad! May God give peace to the departed souls. Wishing the injured a speedy recovery. The government should give proper compensation to the victims' families!"

The Uttar Pradesh Congress unit too took to X to express sadness over the deaths in the incident. "We pray for peace to all deceased. We request the state government to provide adequate compensation to the families of the deceased and arrange for free proper treatment for the people injured in the incident," it said.

# Tantrik, associate held for assaulting minor

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Police arrested a tantrik and his associate after a video surfaced online showing a teenage girl being brutally beaten in Sambhal during a tantric ritual, officials said. Gunnar police station SHO Vineet Kumar said that the video purportedly showed the tantrik and his associate subjecting the girl to physical abuse during the ritual.

"The accused, identified as Gopi and Vasudev, both residents of Isampur, were apprehended based on the evidence in the video," he said. The station house officer explained that the duo preyed on innocent people by instilling fear of "evil spirits" and "shadows". They allegedly lured their victims by offering false promises of resolving their problems through tantric rituals.

A case was registered against Gopi and Vasudev on Saturday under relevant sections of the law and investigations are underway. Meanwhile, six minors were arrested in connection with

the murder of a 16-year-old boy in Khetalpur village of Bhadohi district, police said on Sunday.

The incident occurred allegedly due to a love triangle involving a teenage girl and three of the suspects, police said. The body of one Shiv Shankar Prajapati was found strangled in a field in Khetalpur village on Friday morning. A liquor bottle was found at the scene.

The group lured Shiv Shankar to a liquor shop under a false pretext. During getting him heavily intoxicated, they strangled him with a rope, police said. "Six teenagers, aged between 13 and 16 years have been held in connection with the case. During questioning, the suspects admitted to the crime, stating that they targeted Shiv Shankar because of his romantic involvement with the teenage girl," Superintendent of Police Meenakshi Katayyan said. All six minors are being presented in the juvenile justice court and will be sent to a juvenile home pending further legal proceedings, Katayyan added.

# Man kills daughter-in-law, hangs himself to death

PTI ■ BANDA

A 58-year-old man allegedly hanged himself to death in a forest after killing his daughter-in-law in Mahoba district, police said on Sunday. The blood-soaked body of the daughter-in-law, Maya Devi (32), was found on a cot in her house in Chauka village of Mahobkanth area on Saturday, Station House Officer (SHO) Radheshyam Verma said. There were deep injury marks on her neck, Verma said. He said the victim's father-in-law Gopal Kushwaha

and husband Ravi were suspected of killing her. Gopal Kushwaha was found hanging from a tree on Saturday night, the station house officer said. Police suspected that Gopal might have committed suicide out of fear. Based on a complaint lodged by Maya's father Ramkishan Kushwaha, a case of murder has been registered against Gopal and his son Ravi, who is absconding, the station house officer said. Both the bodies have been sent for post-mortem examination and efforts are on to nab Ravi, Verma said.

## 2 kids drown

Shahjahanpur (PTI):

Two children drowned while trying to rescue a goat that had gone into a river here, police said on Sunday. The incident happened in Tilua village of Kalan area when some children went to graze their goats near a river on Saturday evening. Superintendent of Police (SP) Rajesh S said. When a goat went into the river six children also went into the river to rescue it, he said.

**Indian Bank**  
ALLAHABAD

**Zonal Office: Tindwari Road Near Saint Mary School Banda (U.P.) - 210001**  
Appendix-IV Under [RULE - 8 (1)] of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002  
**POSSESSION NOTICE (Rule 8(1) for Immovable Properties)**

Notice is hereby given under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under rule 13(12) read with rule 3 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, the Authorised Officer issued a demand notice on the date against the borrower as mentioned hereinafter, calling them to repay the amount within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the under noted borrowers and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the properties described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13(4) of the said Act read with rule 8 of the said Rules on the dates mentioned against each Account. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property / ies and any dealing with the properties will be subject to the charge of the Indian Bank (e-ALLAHABAD BANK), Branch Banda Main, Distt. Banda, for the amounts and interests thereon mentioned herein below.

The attention of the borrowers detailed hereunder is invited to the provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Sl. No.	Name and address of the Borrowers/Mortgagors/Guarantors	Description of the Immovable Property	Date of Demand Notice outstanding Amt.
<b>Branch: Banda Main, Distt. Banda, Mobile No.: 7465819960</b>			
1.	<b>Borrower:</b> M/s Shiv Collection, Business Address: Gosai Gunj Near Sudha Saurabh, Banda, Uttar Pradesh - 210001, (Proprietor) Mr. Anil Kumar Sahu S/o Maiku Sahu, Address: Civil Lines Banda, Uttar Pradesh-210001	Equitable Mortgage of property at Gata No. 2458, Majua-Mawai Bujurg, Pargana and Distt. Banda, Uttar Pradesh-210001, in the name of Anita Sahu W/o Anil Kumar Sahu, Area-262.45 Sq. Meter. <b>Boundaries:</b> EAST: Land of Brajmohan Tiwari, West : Plot of Ravit Bhatija and other, North : 18 ft wide Road, South : Plot of Vidya Bhusan	<b>14.06.2024</b> Rs. 15,94,645.00 + intt. & Charges from 15.06.2024
	<b>2. Guarantor &amp; Mortgagor:</b> Mrs. Anita Sahu W/o Anil Kumar Sahu, Address: GIC Hostel ke Pichne Banda, Uttar Pradesh-210001	<b>Hypothecated Assets :-</b> Hypothecated Stock & other charged movable assets at M/s Shiv Collection, Add : Gosai Gunj, Near Sudha Saurabh, Banda, Uttar Pradesh-210001.	<b>11.09.2024</b> Rs. 15,94,645.00 + intt. & Charges from 15.06.2024
2.	<b>Borrower:</b> M/s Active Automobile, Address: Zila Parishad, Banda, Uttar Pradesh, (Proprietor) Md. Nadeem Khan S/o Musawar, Address: Moh. Khaipar Sahar, Banda 210001	Premises at Paharaha Road, Chak No. 279, khasra No. 1110/4, 1114/2/8 1115 Mauza Duretdi, Dist. Banda Uttar Pradesh, in the name of Md. Siddiq Akhtar S/o Md. Muin uddin Rahi, Area: 0.312 hectare. <b>Boundaries:</b> EAST: Nala Then Road to village Duretdi, West: Paharaha Road, North: Open land of Shri kalyan Singh & others, South: Nala Then road to village duretdi. <b>Hypothecated Assets :-</b> Hypothecated Stock & other charged movable assets.	<b>13.06.2024</b> Rs. 24,54,581.00 + intt. & Charges from 14.06.2024
	<b>2. Guarantor &amp; Mortgagor:</b> Md. Siddiq Akhtar S/o Md. Muin uddin Rahi, Address: House No.121, Chhavani Station Area, Banda uttar pradesh		<b>11.09.2024</b> Rs. 24,54,581.00 + intt. & Charges from 14.06.2024

Date : 16.09.2024 Place: Banda, Distt. Banda Authorised Officer, Indian Bank

**Indian Bank**  
ALLAHABAD

**Zonal Office: Tindwari Road Near Saint Mary School Banda (U.P.)-210001**  
**e-Auction**

**Sale notice for sale of immovable properties [See proviso Rule 8 (6)]**  
E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower's and Guarantor's that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the Symbolic possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Indian Bank as Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" basis on 18.10.2024 for recovery of Bank's dues from Borrowers and Guarantors due to the Indian Bank Secured Creditor. The details are described as below:

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower	Name of Guarantors	Bank's Dues	Details of Property (As per Deed) ID No.	Reserve Price Earnest Money Incremental Bid Rs.
1.	<b>Borrower:</b> Shri Shivman S/o Vijay Kishore and <b>Borrower &amp; Mortgagor:</b> Shri Vijay Kishore S/o Chunku Prasad <b>Both R/o</b> Tambahshwar Nagar, Habibpur Fatehpur 212601	---	Rs. 21,52,895.00 as on 13.05.2024 with further interest cost, other charges and expenses thereon from 14.05.2024 Not Known to Bank	A residential plot at Part of Gata Number 303, Mohalla-Habibpur, qasba, Pargana, Tehsil and District Fatehpur, U.P., in the name of Vijay Kishore S/o Chunku Prasad. <b>Area: 70 Sq. mtr.</b> <b>Boundaries:</b> East: Plot of Raju, West: Rasta Kachha 15 feet, North: Plot of Ram Shriromani, South: Plot of Bhaiyan	₹. 22.76 लाख ₹. 2.276 लाख ₹. 10,000.00
QR Code					
<a href="http://www.indianbank.in">www.indianbank.in</a>					
2.	<b>Borrower:</b> M/s S. N. Construction and Suppliers, Business Address: New Colony Jwalaganj, Distt. Fatehpur, <b>Abdul Shafiq S/o Abdul Rahman, R/o New Colony, Jwalaganj, Fatehpur, UP-212601</b>	---	Rs. 38,64,232.00 as on 07.02.2024 with further interest cost, other charges and expenses thereon from 08.02.2024 Not Known to Bank	A Residential House situated at Gata No. -2575, Revenue Village- Qasba Fatehpur South Known as Mohalla Jwalaganj, Pargana, Tehsil and District- Fatehpur, measuring Area- 191 Sq. Mt. in the name of Abdul Shafiq s/o Abdul Rahman <b>Boundaries:</b> East: Rasta Kachha 10 feet, West: Rasta Kachha 10 feet, North: Plot of Fareed and Smt. Shahjahan, South: Plot of Qanee Fatima, Property ID No. IDIB3136691593	₹. 44.33 लाख ₹. 4.433 लाख ₹. 10,000.00
QR Code					
<a href="http://www.indianbank.in">www.indianbank.in</a>					

Date Time of submission of process Compliance form & EMD 17.10.2024 upto 5:00P.M. and Date & Time of e-auction 18.10.2024 from 10.00 AM-4.00 P.M. with unlimited extension, with Bid incremental mentioned as above.

The intending Bidders/Purchasers are requested to register with online portal (<https://www.ebkraj.in>) using their mobile number and email id. Further, after completing their eKYC, the intending Bidders/Purchasers have to transfer the EMD amount in their e-Wallet by 20.08.2024, 5 PM. The registration, eKYC and transfer of EMD in wallet must be completed well in advance, before auction. Platform (<https://www.ebkraj.in>) for e-Auction will be provided by our e-Auction service provider PSB alliance Pvt. Ltd., (Contact Phone 8291220220, email ID: support.ebkraj@psballiance.com). The intending Bidders/ Purchasers are requested to participate in the e-Auction process at e-Auction Service Provider's website <https://www.ebkraj.in>

**Corporate Office: Avvai Shanmugam Salai Royalpettah, Chennai-600014**

Date: 16.09.2024 Place: Banda, Distt. Banda Authorised Officer, Indian Bank

# Rising Ganga floods several localities in Varanasi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Rising Ganga water entered several localities on both sides of Varuna river as the latter started reverse flow after the water level of Ganga continued to rise for the fourth consecutive day here on Sunday and it crossed the warning level of 70.262 metres. The water level was recorded at 70.13 metres at 8 am and crossed the warning level later during the day and is expected to reach 70.5 metres by Monday morning. It is the sixth time in this rainy season when such a rising trend is being seen and this time due to heavy rain in western UP, Bundelkhand regions apart from many states in North India, causing rising trend in many tributaries of Ganga and Yamuna rivers. As the river Ganga crossed the 69 metres mark, the Varuna started reverse flow from its confluence point near Adi Keshav Ghat in the northern parts of the city. Due to this rising trend in Ganga, several localities on both sides of Varuna like Saraiyya, Salarpur, Purnanapal, Nakhigat and others in northern parts of the city got flooded while in southern part, many new localities like Matuti Nagar and



The water level in Varanasi crossed the warning level on Sunday.

others near Samne Ghat were flooded. The rain in the afternoon hours has further increased the troubles of the residents. As per the report of Middle Ganga Division-III of Central Water Commission (CWC), though the intensity of rising trend of Ganga has slowed down it continued to rise with a speed of 40 mm per hour. Just a day ago it was rising at a speed of 100 mm per hour. During the last 24 hours, the water level was increased by 1.79 metres, rising from 68.34 metres to 70.13 metres. Besides, the river was recorded rising right from upstream Phaphamau to down-

stream Ballia, including Prayagraj, Mirzapur, Varanasi and Ghazipur. At Assi Ghat in the city, Subah-e-Banaras venue was submerged in the water, forcing the organisers to shift the site to an upper location, as the famous Ganga aarti is being conducted at Dadhaswanedh Ghat. Besides the stairs of newly-developed Namu Ghat near Rajhat were also submerged. The river water already entered the famous Sheela Mata Mandir at Old Dasaswamedh Ghat forcing the devotees to wade through the water to reach the temple. Most of the 'chowkis' of pandas have been submerged in the water.



People living in low-lying areas shifting their belongings to a safer place after a rise in the water level of Ganga and Yamuna rivers following heavy rains in Prayagraj on Sunday.

Dozens of low-lying temples located at internationally famous 84-odd ghats were either submerged in the water fully or partially. The people are facing difficulty in cremating bodies at two cremation ghats of Manikarnika and Harishchandra. However, the residents of several villages of Daab areas surrounded by Ganga and Gomti rivers have heaved a sign of relief as the water level of Gomti was recorded steady at upstream Jaunpur. The flood situation in downstream UP-Bihar border district of Purvanchal (eastern UP) Ballia turned further grim again as the

water level was already above the danger mark. The Ganga was flowing in Ballia at 57.52 metres against the danger mark of 58.32 metres in the morning and it is expected to reach 58.75 metres by Monday morning rising with a speed of 80 mm per hour. In downstream Ghazipur the river was recorded at 62.7 metres against warning level of 62.10 metres and is expected to reach 63.18 metres above the warning level of 62.105 metres while danger mark in Ghazipur is 63.105 metres. At upstream Mirzapur it was at 76.12 metres against the warning level of 76.724 metres.

# Kanpur Metro saves around ₹26L

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Kanpur Metro has saved approximately ₹26 lakh in just the first two months by implementing a cost-effective energy model. In August 2024 alone, the savings amounted to ₹14 lakh, following a ₹12 lakh reduction in July 2024. These savings are attributed to purchasing affordable electricity through the Indian Energy Exchange (IEX), part of the Energy Exchange Programme. The Uttar Pradesh Metro Rail Corporation Limited (UPMRC) is not only the first government entity in the state but also the second metro operator in the country to source power from this exchange. The UPMRC is procuring electricity for Kanpur and Lucknow Metro through the Indian Energy Exchange (IEX) under the 'Open Access Model', which began for Kanpur Metro on June 28 this year. Previously, electricity was purchased from Uttar Pradesh Power Corporation Limited (UPPCL) at standard rates. In the first month of using the IEX, July 2024, Kanpur Metro achieved a 40 per cent reduction in per-unit energy costs, resulting in savings of approximately ₹12 lakh. These savings increased to around ₹14 lakh in August 2024. Combined, the total savings for Kanpur Metro so far amount to about ₹26 lakh. With the upcoming full-scale commercial operations of Kanpur Metro on Corridor 1 and 2, even greater savings are anticipated from this model. The Indian Energy Exchange (IEX), regulated by CERC, was established to address the power sector's demand-supply gap and enhance transaction transparency. Kanpur Metro benefits from this system by booking daily slots at IEX to acquire electricity at competitive rates. When power is available from any state at an eco-



Solar plant set up by UPMRC at Gurdev Chauraha Metro Depot.

nomical price, it is procured from the National Grid. For the remaining slots, electricity is supplied by Uttar Pradesh Power Corporation Limited (UPPCL) at standard rates. Currently, the commercial rate for electricity from UPPCL is approximately ₹8.00 per unit, whereas the average cost of electricity from the exchange is around ₹4.90 per unit. This means electricity purchased from the exchange is about 40 to 50 per cent cheaper per unit compared to UPPCL. Kanpur Metro is benefiting from these savings by acquiring electricity at significantly lower rates. The other government and private organizations could adopt this model to reduce their power costs, potentially boosting productivity, especially in manufacturing and service industries. According to Managing Director Sushil Kumar, "UPMRC is paving the way for significant savings in both electricity and costs through various innovative measures in its projects. By procuring affordable electricity from the national grid via the Indian Energy Exchange, Kanpur Metro saw impressive results in the first month, with savings increasing even further in the second month, totalling approximately ₹26 lakh so far. Additionally, initiatives such as a 1 MW solar plant at the Gurudev Chauraha metro depot, a Regenerative

Braking system in metro trains and elevators, an advanced HVAC system for train air conditioning, and 100 per cent LED lighting throughout the metro system are benefiting both the company and the environment." **GIRL'S BODY FOUND:** A missing 13-year-old girl was killed in Fatehpur on Saturday night. Her body was recovered from a garden near Jafrabad bypass on Sunday morning. On getting information the ASP and field unit rushed to spot and carried out investigation. According to a report, a resident of an area under the Bindki Kotwali, she had gone to the coaching institute around 4 pm on Saturday. After she failed to return till late, her kin contacted the coaching institute and were informed that she did not reach there on Saturday. On failing to trace her, they informed the police on the helpline No 1090. Thereafter, the Kotwali police came to know the incident. Around 11 pm, her mother lodged an FIR about her daughter being missing. Kin along with police and local residents kept on searching the girl till 2 am. On Sunday morning, villagers saw the girl dead on the bypass and informed the police. Surveillance, Intelligence Bureau and SOG teams were also deputed to work out the murder case.

# Deogarh-Varanasi Vande Bharat special gets warm welcome

**Varanasi (PNS):** For the convenience of the passengers, the Railway administration will launch Vande Bharat train between Agra Cantt and Banaras on Monday as 02176 Agra Cantt-Banaras Vande Bharat Inauguration Special Train. Meanwhile, the Deogarh-Varanasi Vande Bharat Inauguration Special train which was flagged off by Prime Minister Narendra Modi through virtual medium was warmly welcomed when it arrived here on Sunday. According to Public Relations

Officer (PRO) of North Eastern Railway (Varanasi Division) Ashok Kumar, 02176 Agra Cantt-Banaras Vande Bharat Inauguration Special train will depart from Agra Cantt on September 16 at 4.15 pm, leave Tundla Jn at 5.10 pm, Etawah Jn at 6.15 pm and Kanpur Central at 7.55 pm and arrive at Banaras at 11.55 pm. Eight coaches of Vande Bharat Train will be installed in this train. It will be the first Vande Bharat train for Banaras station and sixth one for this parliamentary constituency of the PM. All

other running five Vande Bharat train run or pass through Varanasi Junction. The reverse Varanasi-New Delhi had its originating/termination station at Banaras station for just one day. Apart from two Varanasi-New Delhi, the other Vande Bharat trains are for Ranchi and now for Deogarh. Besides, Patna-Gonti Nagar (Lucknow) which passes through Ayodhya Dham has also a stoppage at Varanasi Jn. Earlier, there was a direct express train between Manduadih (now Banaras) and

Deogarh but it was stopped after sometime and since then, there was demand for a direct train between these two Dwadasa Jyotirlinga cities. Meanwhile, according to a Northern Railway official, 22500 Varanasi-Deogarh Vande Bharat will leave from Varanasi Jn at 6.20 am regularly from Monday and it will reach Pt Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn (DDU) station at 6.50 am, Sasaram at 8.15 am, Gaya at 9.25 am, Nevada at 10.05 am, Kiul at 10.53 am, Jaisidh at 1.15 pm and Deogarh at 1.40 pm.

The train will complete the journey from Varanasi to Deogarh in seven hours and 20 minutes. The maximum halt will be of 20 minutes at DDU. On return, 22449 Deogarh-Varanasi Vande Bharat will leave from Deogarh at 3.15 pm. It will reach Jaisidh at 3.22 pm, Kiul at 4.48 pm, Nevada at 6.23 pm, Gaya station at 7.10 pm, DDU at 9.30 pm and arrive at Varanasi Jn station at 10.30 pm. On the return journey, this train will reach five minutes earlier as it will not stop at Sasaram.

# Two youths killed in accident

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Two youths were killed and one was seriously injured when their car collided head on with a truck on the eastern bypass of GT Road in Kannauj late on Saturday night. The deceased were residents of the Kannauj district. Police have impounded the truck while its driver escaped from the spot. Around 11 pm the car coming from the wrong side collided head on with the truck in Jalalpur Sarwan village near eastern bypass of GT road. As a result the car-borne Ranju Thakuri (35) and Anshul Sinha (32) of Devintola, Sarameera, were killed on the spot while Govind Rathaur (30) of Tewari Mohalla was seriously injured. Villagers said the speeding car was coming from Delhi side on

the highway. On their information, Sadar Kotwali in charge Kapil Dubey rushed to the spot and rescued all the three youths and sent them to the emergency ward of the district hospital by an ambulance. At the hospital, Ranju and Anshu were declared dead by the doctor while Govind was admitted for treatment. Truck driver escaped after the incident. Kotwali Incharge said the mishap took place when the car was running on wrong side. All the youths were returning after dinner in a dhaba situated along the GT road. Raids were on to nail the truck driver, he said. Meanwhile a motorcyclist was killed while two other friends were seriously injured when a speeding loader knocked them near Sirdharpur village on the

Agra-Lucknow expressway service road in Unnao on Sunday morning. The mishap took place when Farman (47) of Mohalla Ansar Maidan, Bangermau, Unnao, along with friends Mohsin and Ishtiyaq was returning to home after collecting fish from the river bank. In the incident Farman was killed on the spot while Mohsin and Ishtiyaq were seriously injured. They were taken to Bangermau hospital where Farman was declared dead by the doctors. After the first aid, Mohsin and Ishtiyaq were referred to another hospital. Police sent the body for an autopsy. The driver, who was carrying the 'dona pattal', escaped after his uncontrolled loader overturned on the spot.

# New DM takes charge

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

New DM of Prayagraj Ravindra Kumar Mander took charge on Sunday. He reached Prayagraj directly from Jaunpur and here first visited the Bade Hanuman temple but could not go inside it due to the water of Ganga and Yamuna being filled there. He took the blessings of Lete Hanuman, who is called the 'Kotwal of the city' from outside the temple itself. After this, he reached the Mankameswar temple located on the banks of Yamuna, where he worshipped Lord

Shiva and received blessings. After this, he reached the Circuit House and then the Treasury office located in the Collectorate. He took charge at 4:15 pm. Treasurer Nitesh Mishra introduced him to various records. Here he met the officers and got their introduction. After about 15 minutes, he again reached the Circuit House. He also held a brief meeting with the officials. An IAS officer of 2012 batch, he is originally from Jaipur, Rajasthan. Prior to this, he served as DM in Jaunpur and Rampur districts.



# UP Police inspector dies of cardiac arrest in bus

PTI/PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A 36-year-old Uttar Pradesh Police inspector died of cardiac arrest in a roadways bus while coming from Lucknow to Prayagraj on Sunday, officials said. Inspector Anurag Sharma (36) had recently been transferred from Prayagraj to Lucknow, they said. He was on his way to Prayagraj where his wife and children stay, Kotwali police station in charge Rohit Tiwari said. The officer said Sharma boarded the bus on Saturday night and on Sunday morning, all passengers got down at Zero Road bus stand but

the inspector remained on his seat. When he did not wake up, the conductor informed the police, he said. Tiwari said Sharma's family has been informed about his death. Prima facie, his death appears to be due to cardiac arrest, he said, adding that the body is being sent for post-mortem examination. **TWO ARRESTED:** Police have arrested two women who stealing gold chains, purses etc by entering the crowd of women during Urs here. They used to steal people's belongings by taking advantage of the crowd at Line Shah Baba Dargah located

at Prayagraj Junction. After several complaints of theft, the police started searching the CCTV and the matter came to light. The police identified the accused by showing the CCTV footage and arrested them near DSA ground and recovered ₹3,400 and a gold locket from them. ACP Manoj Kumar Singh said that the arrested women were Asma Parveen of Kasari-Masari under Dhoomanganj police station and Ruby Ansari of Ek Minara Masjid, Kasari Masari, under the Dhoomanganj police station.

# Essay competition inaugurated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Under the aegis of Central Women Welfare Organisation (New Delhi), an essay competition was organised here on Sunday and an on spot drawing competition will be held on September 22 for the children of railway employees. The essay competition was inaugurated in the Officers' Club of Varanasi Division (NER) by Chairperson of Divisional Women Welfare Organisation (NER Varanasi) Monica Saxena by lighting the lamp. On the occasion, secretary of organisation Pooja Singh and members of the executive committee, Ritika Singh, Namrata Singh, Shalini Pathak, Shivangi Srivastava, along with the participants and their families were present. A total of 250 participants participated in the essay competition in all three groups (6-9, 9-12, 12-15 age groups) of Prayagraj Rambagh, Mau, Ballia, Siwan, Gorakhpur and Chhapra stations of Varanasi



Chairperson of Divisional WWO (NER) Monica Saxena inaugurating an essay contest in Varanasi on Sunday.

division. The maximum number of participants were from Varanasi division. After the completion of the essay competition, all the participants were given fruits, biscuits and snacks. On the occasion, Monica Saxena, showing immense affection towards all the participants, encouraged them to

continue practicing their art. She expressed hope that next year, more children of railway employees and officers will participate in the essay competition than this year. The essay competition was conducted by Chief Welfare Inspector Jitendra Srivastava and vote of thanks was proposed by Monica Saxena.

# Pledge administered on Hindi Diwas

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

On the occasion of Hindi Diwas on Saturday, Chief General Manager (CGM), NTPC Auraiya Jayaved Parida administered pledge to employees. On the occasion Tanmoy Dutta, Head of HR, SK Balyan, Head of O&M, VP Pandey, Head of C&M and Dr Bijay Naik, CMO were present. Various competitions will be organised during the Hindi fortnight. **SPORTS MEET:** The four-day National Sports Meet (basketball boys' category U-14 & U-17) organised at Kendriya Vidyalaya IIT Kanpur concluded with a vibrant closing ceremony marking the end of an exciting action packed tournament on Sunday. A total of 516 participants from 23 regions located in various parts of India participated in the event. The ceremony commenced with a grand welcome and felicitation of the chief guest Sona Seth, Deputy commissioner,

Lucknow region, guest of honour Vijay Prakash, Assistant Commissioner, Lucknow Region, and special guests Neeraj Mishra, Professor IIT, Kanpur, Mayank Gupta, President, KV Alumnae Association, KV IIT Kanpur, by the NCC cadets. On the occasion, venue principal RC Pandey welcomed the chief guest by presenting saplings. The students of KV IIT, Kanpur welcomed guests with their lively welcome song. The principal extended a formal welcome and greeted everyone. A high energetic Zumba dance performance was presented by the children of KV, IIT Kanpur. Acknowledging the outstanding achievements of the participants, the chief guest honoured all the teams with certificates and the winner U-17 Jaipur region, first runner-up Varanasi region, second runner-up Bhopal region, winner U-14 Jaipur, first runner-up Hyderabad and second runner-up Patna region with trophies and medals.

# Seven-ft-long crocodile creates panic

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Panic prevailed among the villagers when they saw a seven-foot-long crocodile in the middle of Singhpur-Mainawati road under Bithoor police station area early on Sunday morning. Stray dogs

also kept on barking on the road passing through the Sambharpur village near ISKCON temple. On hearing the noise, villagers came out of their houses and saw the crocodile. They somehow managed to tie it with a thick rope and

informed the police which rushed to the spot and apprised the Forest department officials about the incident for rescue. Villagers say the crocodile must have come out of the Ganga river and entered the village mistakenly.

# Cleanliness march organised



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

On the occasion of cleanliness fortnight, a cleanliness march was organised for community awareness in IFFCO Ghyanagar Pulpur. The First lady of IFFCO Pulpur unit, Vineeta Kudesia, kicked off the rally by cutting the ribbon. The cleanliness march was taken out with banners, posters and slogans of cleanliness awareness giving the message of cleanliness. Senior Executive Director (Unit Head) Sanjay Kudesia said we are following all the directions of the Government of India in the cleanliness campaign. He said to make IFFCO

Colony plastic free, cloth bags have already been distributed so that people can use them in their daily life. He declared the administrative building plastic free. Apart from this, a painting competition was organised for children of all categories on the topic of cleanliness. The programme was coordinated by PRO Swamy Prakash. GMS respectively Sanjay Vaish, MD Mishra, Sanjay Bhandari, JGMs respectively Ratneswar Kumar, SK Singh, AK Gupta, HOD Human Resources Shambhu Shekhar, a large number of children, women and IFFCO employees were present. **FOUNDATION STONE LAID:** Mayor Umesh Chandra Ganesh Kesarwani laid the

foundation stone of Shivalaya Park by performing bhoomi puja at Arail in Naini here. This park will be built on 11 acres of land at a cost of ₹17 crore. The Mayor said that there will be divine 'darshan' of Lord Shiva in this Shivalaya Park, which will become a major tourist destination for Naini and Prayagraj as well as crores of pilgrims coming from the country and abroad. He said this Shivalaya Park will become a symbol of religious and cultural heritage, where there will be a wonderful display of the power and glory of Lord Shiva. This pilgrimage site will provide a new direction to the pilgrimage tourism of Prayagraj. The replicas of 12 Jyotirlingas, Samudra Manthan, huge Nandi statue, Shiva's trident and replicas of various major Shiva temples of the country will be installed in the Shivalaya Park. With a total of 22 grand artifacts, this park will become a place of religious and cultural importance. Regional corporators Ranvijay Singh Dabhu, Dilip Jaiswal, Sanjay Kumar and other local dignitaries were present on the occasion.

# Three-day Hindtex Fair to be held from today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

In collaboration with Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Ministry of Textiles, Government of India, Eastern UP Exporters' Association (EUPEA) will organise the three-day 9th Hindtex Fair (buyers sellers meet) at Deendayal Hastkala Sankul, Bada Lalpur here from

Monday. On the first day at 11 am, it will be inaugurated by Uttar Pradesh Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Stamp, Court Fee and Registration Ravindra Jaiswal. The function will also be attended by Mayor Ashok Tiwari, regional BJP president (Kashi) Dilip Patel. Special guests of the function will be Regional Director

(Handicrafts) VP Thakur, city BJP chief Vidya Shankar Rai, Joint Commissioner (Industry) Umesh Singh. Founder president of EUPEA Ashok Gupta will preside over the inaugural function. This information was given jointly by EUPEA president Naveen Kapoor, programme coordinators Amitabh, Raghu Mehra, Syed Hasan Ansari, Rajesh

Kushwaha, Mahmud Hasan, Haji Rais Ahmed, KK Bajpai, Rajiv Agarwal, Anil Agarwal, Anurag Kapoor, Mukesh Agarwal, Mukund Agarwal and Anupam Agarwal in a press release. They informed that products of handicrafts, home furnishing, carpets, dress materials, sarees, zari, dardosi etc will be displayed in this international product fair, in which 60

exporters and 10 handicraft artisans will display their products. They said that information has been received about the arrival of 125 buyer representatives of Indian and foreign companies in this fair. To promote exports, a seminar will be held with foreign customers on the second day of the fair on September 17. The fair will conclude in the evening on the last day.

# PM Modi flags off Vande Metro, inaugurates four Vande Bharat trains in Bihar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India's first Vande Metro, which will be virtually flagged off by Prime Minister Narendra Modi today in Gujarat is poised to transform inter-city travel with its advanced medium-distance capabilities. According to Railway Ministry, PM Modi will be in Ahmedabad, the train will start from Bhuj and reach Ahmedabad covering 359 km of distance in 5.45 hours.

For passengers, its regular service will start from September 17 from Ahmedabad and the total journey will cost Rs 455. "While the other metros cover only short distances, Vande Metro trains will connect cities from the heart of the city to the peripheral cities," the ministry said. It added that the word 'metro' gives an impression of urban landscape, however, Vande



Metro was conceptualised by incorporating numerous advancements. Giving a comprehensive overview of the Vande Metro and other Metros being operated in the country, the ministry said, "Vande Metro operates at a maximum speed of 110 km/h, offering faster acceleration and deceleration to passengers. This speed

advantage ensures quicker commutes and improved efficiency." It added, "With ergonomically designed seats, fully air-conditioned cabins and modular interiors, Vande Metro definitely proves to be superior than the other metros." Highlighting its safety aspects, the Railway Ministry

said that Vande Metro is equipped with advanced safety systems like KAVACH for collision avoidance, fire detection, and aerosol-based fire suppression, along with emergency lights. So far its accessibility is concerned, according to the Ministry, it has been designed with inclusivity in features such as Divyangjan-friendly

toilets, a fully sealed flexible gangway and meal service among others.

Emphasising its superior technology, the Ministry said that Vande Metro incorporates cutting-edge technology, including under slung propulsion and advanced braking systems, offering a smoother ride. "Featuring 12 coaches with seating for 1,150 passengers, the Vande Metro offers a host of innovative features. It boasts double-leaf automatic sliding doors, similar to those in urban metro trains, and a fully sealed flexible gangway that ensures a dust-free, quiet, and rain-proof interior," the ministry said.

A significant upgrade, according to the ministry, from traditional suburban trains and metro coaches is the Vande Metro's modular design that includes ejector-based vacuum evacuation toilets. It stated that the Vande Metro

is designed to connect cities within a 150 km radius, providing efficient and comfortable journeys of approximately 3 to 4 hours. "Vande Metro facilitates smooth end-to-end passenger movement and reduces crowding in individual coaches. The semi-permanent couplers, similar to those on Vande Bharat trains, provide a jerk-free travel experience," the Ministry said.

It added, "The train offers faster journeys between mid-distance cities. Its rapid acceleration and deceleration contribute to efficient travel, while driving cabs at both ends eliminates turnaround time." Talking about features that will benefit passengers, it said that Vande Metro has modern amenities, including mobile charging sockets with both type-C and type-A outlets, CCTV surveillance for added security, and route-map indicators above the doors.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Bihar got four more Vande Bharat Express trains on Sunday with Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually flagging them off. These trains would operate on the Tatanagar-Patna, Bhagalpur-Howrah and Gaya-Howrah routes, besides the Deogarh-Varanasi Vande Bharat that would pass through Bihar. These were among six Vande Bharat trains flagged off by the PM from Ranchi.

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar attended the programme virtually from his official residence at 1, Anne Marg in Patna, a statement issued by his office said. Deputy CMs Samrat Choudhary and Vijay Kumar Sinha, and senior railway officials were present at Kumar's residence during



the programme, it said. MoS for Railway Ravneet Singh Bittu was present at the Bhagalpur station when the trains were flagged off. "It's a new chapter in modern rail travel for Bihar... It will provide faster, more comfortable, and efficient connectivity. This state-of-the-art train is a testament to India's growing infrastructure and commitment to enhancing passenger experience," he posted on X.



## Amit Shah releases expanded Hindi Kahavat Kosh on Hindi Diwas

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah has released the second edition of 'Hindi Kahavat Kosh', authored by Sharad Agrawal, a renowned physician from Uttar Pradesh's Bareilly. The book is a comprehensive compilation of over 10,000 Hindi proverbs and more than 200 stories explaining their origins, aimed at preserving and promoting Hindi linguistic heritage.

The book was released here on Saturday at the fourth Akhil Bharatiya Rajbhasha Sammelan held on the occasion of Hindi Diwas. Addressing the programme, Shah said reading Agrawal's book will greatly improve his speaking abilities in the language. Agrawal, with a passion for language preservation, said the idea for the book came from his grandmother, and it took him 20 years to collect these proverbs from various sources, including books and the internet.

The first edition of the book, containing 5,400 proverbs, was released in 2021 by Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel. Agrawal said this expanded edition not only increased the collection but also enriched it with stories and pictures, illustrating the objects and origins of the proverbs. "The main objective of this was to preserve these proverbs for the coming generation. I believe that increased awareness of these sayings will further enrich the Hindi language and the vocabulary of the people," he said. In addition to his literary con-

tributions, Agrawal runs the website 'healthindi.in', which provides valuable information about common diseases and their prevention in simple Hindi, promoting health awareness. Looking ahead, Agrawal said he plans to include folk songs in future editions of the book, continuing his efforts to preserve India's cultural and linguistic heritage.

"In Hindi literature, apart from the work done by well known writers, there is a vast area of folk literature contributed by unknown people of society through ages. This was transferred verbally and has accumulated through the generations. This includes proverbs, idioms folklores, folk music and puzzles etc. Due to massive impact of social media, people are forgetting all this legacy of Hindi literature. These invaluable creations are now on the verge of being extinct," Agrawal said.

He said to preserve Hindi proverbs and to make them available for the common people, he has authored this book. This book also includes pictures of many things which are mentioned in proverbs but are unknown to the new generations. "This definitely is the largest collection of Hindi proverbs and the stories related to them," he said. The writer said to preserve other precious creations of folk literature, he has also collected a large number of lyrics of folk music, proverbs recited by children, Sanskrit proverbs, common proverbs written on transport vehicles and so many good old puzzles told to "us by our grandparents".

## BJP-led NDA to implement one nation, one election

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP-led NDA Government will implement 'one nation, one election' within its current tenure, sources said, exuding confidence that the reform measure would receive support across party lines. As the third term of the NDA government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi completes 100 days in office, the sources said the cohesion within the ruling alliance will continue for the rest of the tenure. "Definitely, it will be implemented in this tenure itself. It will be a reality," one source said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

In his Independence Day address last month, the prime minister made a strong pitch for 'one nation, one election', contending that frequent polls were creating hurdles in the country's progress. "The nation has to come forward for 'one nation, one elec-



tion," Modi had said in his address from the ramparts of the Red Fort. The prime minister urged the political parties "from the Red Fort and with the national tricolour as a witness to ensure the nation's progress". He also asked the parties to ensure that national resources are used for the common person and said, "We have to come forward to realise the dream of 'one nation, one election'." 'One nation, one election' is one of the key promises made by the BJP in its manifesto for the Lok Sabha elections. A high-level panel headed by

former president Ram Nath Kovind in March this year recommended simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha and state assemblies as the first step followed by synchronised local body polls within 100 days. Separately, the Law Commission is likely to recommend holding simultaneous polls for all three tiers of government -- Lok Sabha, state assemblies and local bodies like municipalities and panchayats -- starting with 2029 and a provision for unity government in cases like hung house or no-confidence motion.

## Panchayati Raj Ministry to hold national conference on PESA Act implementation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Panchayati Raj Ministry has come up with specialized training modules for effective implementation of the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act and is likely to hold a national conference later this month to discuss and advance the implementation of the law. The PESA Act of 1996 gives special powers to gram sabhas in a state's scheduled areas, especially for the management of natural resources.

It is aimed at recognising, empowering and promoting the social, economic, cultural and political way of life of the Scheduled Tribes. The ministry is likely to hold a national conference in Delhi on September 26 that will bring together policymakers, senior officers, panchayat representatives and other key stakeholders from the 10 PESA states to discuss and advance the implementation of the Act, an official said. The 10 states under the PESA



Act are Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan and Telangana. The fundamental spirit of the legislation for tribal areas under the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution is to devolve rather than delegate power and authority to gram sabhas and panchayats, paving the way for participatory democracy. To strengthen the ground-level institutions in these areas, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, in partnership with the PESA States and various NGOs, has

developed seven specialized training modules for the Fifth Schedule areas, an official said. With land alienation being one of the major issues faced by tribals living in these areas, the training programme provides a special focus on the matter, the official said. Land disputes and inadequate implementation of land reform policies are persistent issues in scheduled areas. Due to the lack of awareness about land rights, communities often struggle to assert their rights, thus being deprived of their traditional means of livelihood.

## Government begins decadal census preparations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The government has started preparations for conducting the decadal census, but a decision is yet to be taken on including a column on caste as part of the exercise, sources said on Sunday. Speaking on condition of anonymity, one source said that the decadal census will be conducted soon. India has conducted the census every 10 years since 1881.

The first phase of this decade's census was expected to begin on April 1, 2020 but had to be postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The implementation of the Women's Reservation Act, enacted by Parliament last year, too is linked to the conduct of the decadal census. The law reserving one-third of seats for women in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies shall come into effect after an exercise of delimitation is undertaken based on the relevant figures of the first census recorded after the Act has come into force. "This is yet to be decided," the source said when asked about inclusion of a column on caste in the decadal census.



The political parties have been making vociferous demands for conducting a caste census. In the absence of fresh data, the government agencies are still formulating policies and allocating subsidies based on the data of the 2011 census. The house listing phase of the census and the exercise to update the National Population Register (NPR) were scheduled to be carried out across the country from April 1 to September 30, 2020 but it was postponed due to the Covid-19 outbreak. The entire census and the NPR exercise is likely to cost the government more than Rs 12,000 crore, the officials said.

## SC expresses displeasure over false statements in convict release petitions

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Expressing displeasure over the lawyers repeatedly making false statements before the court as well as in the petitions to secure premature release of the convicts, the Supreme Court has said when it comes across cases like this, "our faith is shaken". A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Augustine George Masih in its recent order recorded its anguish and said that it has come across several cases in the last three weeks where false statements have been made in the pleading. "A large number of petitions are

being filed in this court where-in a grievance is made about non grant of permanent remission. During the last three weeks, this is the 6th or 7th case which we have come across where blatantly false statements have been made in the pleadings," the bench said in its September 10 order uploaded recently. It pointed out that on a miscellaneous cases hearing day in the apex court, there are 60 to 80 matters listed before every bench and it is not possible for the judges to go through each and every page of each and every case listed before the court, though an endeavour to go through every case very meticulously.



## Two Navy women officers to embark on global voyage

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Two Indian Navy women officers — Lt Commander Roopa A and Lt Commander Dilna K — would be embarking on an arduous blue-water voyage around the world soon. The duo will be undertaking the expedition of circumnavigating the globe on board Indian naval sailing vessel (INSV) Tarini, Navy spokesperson Commander Vivek Madhwal said on Sunday. The two women officers have been preparing for the 'Sagar Parikrama' expedition for the last three years, he said. "Sagar Parikrama would be a gruelling voyage requiring extreme skills, physical fitness and mental alertness. The officers have been training rigorously and gained thousands of miles of experience under their belts," Commander Madhwal said. The two officers are undergoing training under the mentorship of ace circumnavigator, and 'Golden Globe Race' hero, Commander Abhilash Tomy (Retired). The officers, as part of a six member crew, had participated in trans-oceanic expedition from Goa to Rio de Janeiro via Cape Town and back last year. Thereafter, they undertook a sailing expedition from Goa to Port Blair and back in double-handed mode. Further, the duo successfully undertook a sortie from Goa to Port Louis, Mauritius again in dual handed mode early this year.

## ICMR formalises MoAs with multiple sponsors under phase one clinical trials network

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Marking a ground-breaking entry into first-in-human clinical trials for four promising molecules, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has formalised Memorandum of Agreements (MoAs) with multiple sponsors under its Network of phase 1 clinical trials.

These include collaborative research over a small molecule for multiple myeloma with Aurigene Oncology Limited, partnering for Zika vaccine development with Indian Immunologicals Limited, coordinating seasonal influenza virus vaccine trial with Mynvax Private Limited, and CAR-T cell therapy advancement study for a new indication of chronic lymphocytic leukaemia with ImmunoACT. The initiative is a crucial step towards establishing India as



a leader in the clinical development of pharmaceutical agents, announced the Union health ministry. Union health and family welfare minister, J P Nadda, said that the strategic collaboration between ICMR and prominent industry and academic partners, is a key milestone in the pursuit of affordable and accessible cutting-edge treatments for all citizens. Dr. Rajiv Bahl, secretary, department of health research & director general, ICMR, commented, "This collaboration reflects our commitment to advancing clinical research in India through strategic public-private partnerships. Establishing phase 1 clinical trial infrastructure is

a key component in fostering the development of indigenous molecules and cutting-edge treatments. Our vision is to expand this network further, ensuring that India continues to lead in the development of innovative and affordable healthcare solutions." Dr. Bahl also highlighted the broader impact of ICMR's initiatives, such as the Network for phase 1 clinical trials, INTENT Network, and MedTech Mitra, aligning with the government's vision of a "Viksit Bharat" (Developed India). He cited ICMR's pivotal role in development of Covaxin in collaboration with Bharat Biotech as a testament to the organization's commitment to affordable and accessible healthcare for all. The ICMR Network for phase 1 clinical trials comprises four strategically located institutions across India—KEMH & GSMC, Mumbai; ACTREC,

Navi Mumbai; SRM MCH&RC, Kattankulathur; and PGIMER, Chandigarh—supported by a Central Coordinating Unit at ICMR headquarters, New Delhi. This network is designed to build and enhance India's capacity to conduct early-phase clinical trials, supported by robust infrastructure and dedicated manpower at each trial site, ensuring smooth and effective operations. The signing of these agreements reinforces the strong partnerships ICMR has cultivated with key industry players, said the Ministry. Marking a ground-breaking entry into first-in-human clinical trials for four promising molecules, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has formalised Memorandum of Agreements (MoAs) with multiple sponsors under its Network of phase 1 clinical trials.

## Rahul Gandhi congratulates AIMC leaders on 40th anniversary

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Sunday said the Women's Reservation Act is an opportunity for the Congress to nurture and support both established and aspiring women leaders. In his message on the 40th anniversary of the All India Mahila Congress (AIMC), Rahul said that during the Bharat Jodo Yatra and Bharat Jodo Nyaya Yatra, he met remarkable women across India determined to make a difference. "Many had the passion, perseverance and commitment to drive far reaching changes in society. Some of the fiercest and most fearless voices against injustice were of women," the former Congress chief said. In this day and age, there is no reason whatsoever to deny women meaningful opportunities in public life, he asserted.



Rahul congratulated Mahila Congress leaders and members, both past and present, who built this organisation brick by brick. AIMC has come a long way since the 1984 Bangalore Convention, he said, adding that over the last four decades, the AIMC has been a fearless voice for justice and has firmly established itself as one of the most active frontal organisations in the Congress party. "On this occasion, I would like to congratulate the AIMC on the launch of the nationwide online membership drive for

the first time," he said. "In a system often stacked against women, it is critical for each one of you to fight for and claim your rightful share of social, economic and political power. I am happy to know that the membership drive will be followed by a pan-India leadership training program," Rahul said. The Women's Reservation Act is an opportunity for the Congress to identify, nurture and support both established and aspiring women leaders, he said. "We have witnessed the radical change ushered in by the 73rd and 74th Amendment. This must inspire us to do more," he said. "I hope the AIMC continues to work towards ensuring greater political participation of women across caste, class and religious lines. Lastly, I salute your dedication to a cause greater than yourself, and wish the AIMC the very best in its future endeavours," Rahul said.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## India inundated

The unprecedented rains have wreaked havoc across the country, serving as a stark wake-up call for urban planning

India's major cities, including Mumbai, Delhi, and Bengaluru, are reeling from the aftermath of unprecedented rainfall, leading to widespread flooding, loss of life, property damage, and severe disruptions to daily life. As heavy monsoon showers continue to batter these urban hubs, residents are grappling with submerged streets, gridlocked traffic, and power outages, exposing critical flaws in the country's urban infrastructure. This year's torrential downpour has been particularly devastating. In Mumbai, water levels have risen to waist height in low-lying areas, while Bengaluru's once-bustling tech corridors resemble rivers. Over 100 lives have been lost in flood-related incidents across the country, with thousands displaced from their homes. Many families have seen their life savings washed away in a matter of hours as homes and vehicles succumb to rising waters. Besides, the northern cities like Meerut, which hardly ever reported water-logging, have been partially submerged. The economic toll is equally staggering. Shops, offices, and industries have faced forced shutdowns. Public infrastructure has borne the brunt of the floods. Urban centres in India are no strangers to traffic congestion, but the flooding has exacerbated an already dire situation. In Delhi, where rainwater has clogged major arterial roads, commute times has increased manifold.



The inconvenience is compounded for those who rely on daily wages for their livelihood, as the disruptions prevent them from working. The scale and intensity of these floods underscore the urgent need for India to rethink its urban planning. Many problems are rooted in poor drainage systems, encroachment on natural water bodies, and unregulated urban sprawl. In cities like Mumbai and Chennai, where floods have become an annual menace, experts have long warned of the consequences of unchecked development in flood-prone areas. Indeed the rains have been unprecedented but they have exposed the slackness of urban planning which is ill-equipped to deal with heavy downpours in the monsoon season. Drainage are clogged, necessary equipment is either unavailable or non-functional, and poor planning in executing operations only exacerbates the situation. City drainage across the country are either outdated or inadequate to handle the massive volumes of rainwater. Local governments must invest in upgrading this critical infrastructure, ensuring that water can be efficiently channelled away from residential and commercial areas. Besides the builder-bureaucrat nexus has stolen away the water bodies. Many lakes, rivers, and wetlands that once absorbed rainwater have been lost to unplanned illegal development. It goes without saying that urban planning should incorporate green spaces, permeable surfaces, and sustainable construction practices that allow water to seep into the ground rather than accumulate on the surface. This includes promoting rainwater harvesting and stormwater management solutions. Cities must build climate resilience into their long-term plans.

is therefore necessary to create a culture of effectiveness and an appreciation of the requirements to deliver. To deliver requires, to the extent possible, objective and manageable resource mobilization, skill availability, sensitive monitoring, and linking up with the results in the time set. If this is not done, effectiveness is impaired, and others who can organize themselves will surge forward, and then the institutional returns of the defaulting group will continue to diminish. It may ultimately reach a point where there may be no surpluses to distribute even for salaries or to administer. This is a point of view to which no exceptions can be made. Considering this in the current and growing crescendo on reservations is something that can be avoided only at the grave risk of creating further problems for oneself. Struggle for the decision-making process is often termed as 'politics' and political processes in a country like India are often determined by numbers. Hence, the push to enhance the numbers of one's following and pander to political rising waves, even though it may not be sustainable in the long run. This is such an obvious warning and caution that it cannot be over-emphasized. The tragedy is, not only that so many people seem to

## PICTALK



Caparisoned elephants participate in the 'pooram' festival as part of the Onam celebration, in Kochi

## The art of problem solving

Those in decision-making roles must be equipped with the necessary skills, attitudes, and awareness to meet the demands of their tasks

Problem-solving is more than an art. It is a matter of resources, teamwork, and timing. Behavioral interventions in problem-solving need to keep this in mind. This applies equally to training programs on problem-solving. Many training programs tend to believe that if their techniques are right the results will surely follow. This is a palpably comforting approach but with limited truth in reality. Amongst the foremost requirements of problem-solving is the need for all the people involved in the process to have the necessary skills to handle the job. The job itself has to be neatly reduced to manageable levels of skill clusters, and the persons allotted the responsibility for it must have the necessary attitude, skills, and approaches to handle the job. Unfortunately, not all in key decision-making situations have the competence to embrace this simple truth. They seem to have arrived in that position either through regular promotion, seniority, hierarchy, or indeed, simply by chance. While the logic that brought them there is understandable, it does not meet the requirements for getting the tasks done. The result is therefore all to see. Not only do accidents take place, but delays and ineptness also become the hallmarks of a situation. It is important to remember this while planning an activity. It is important to build this into training programs, and above all, it is important to remind those who control the resources to be conscious of this requirement. Even when all the skill columns and more are regularly accounted for, it stands to reason that the resources of the supply chain must be intact and in position. As it happens in organizational setups, the supply chain side and the engineering side need effective dialogue, communication, or exchanges with the human resources side, the skill formation side, and control and monitoring methodologies. Thus, it is that ineptness becomes an inevitable part of the scene in organizations not so well linked together on these dimensions. It

overlook this point. It appears, at times, that many otherwise knowledgeable people do it purposefully to gain political advantage. Little do they realize that what they gain on the swing, they will lose on the round. In this context, two observations need to be made, one concerning the constitution and the other concerning the practices of reservation for social equity in other parts of the world. The constitution in its initial draft was very clear and forthright on the reservation as a policy only for a limited period, even the period for which was indicated. Gradually, through political compulsions and otherwise, the focus of reservation-affected communities was expanded till the Supreme Court had to step in and say that not more than 50% of positions could be made in the reserved category. Pressure has been on for a while, in political terms, to loosen this limit. Should this happen, it could have implications, not just politically but also in terms of perhaps affecting the results of performance. This could jeopardize the total volume of resources, then, available for distribution. To consider the issue of social equity in other communities and countries beyond India may be worthwhile. Limited examples may be found across



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VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

the world where the total availability of jobs is parcelled off in reserved blocks. Some nations have a parallel stream for reserved categories and a definite stream where only talent could be a criterion for selection. This amalgam seems to have worked for both productivity and distributive justice. There is a clear case of streaming of jobs in India, being examined from this point of view also. Not to look at this option would be limiting the possibilities of growth with equity. That may be risky and unwise. The logic of preferential treatment has many caveats, and one of them is that preferential treatment could become a matter of habit and expectations, and when not granted, it could be seen as akin to 'rights' being violated. The time has come to seriously ask whether the slogan-mongering of several political groups may not be tantamount to throwing the baby out with the water. Every approach can be considered for and against, but the ultimate solution should preferably incorporate requirements of universal equity, and sustainability amongst various criteria of performance and results. (The writer is an internationally acclaimed management consultant. The views expressed are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## BAIL IS THE RULE, NOT EXCEPTION

Madam — It is indeed a welcome move on the part of the SC to quote Article 21 of the Indian Constitution which enables an Indian citizen protection of life and personal liberty and orders bail to the leaders with the often quoted words of SC "bail is a rule and jail is an exception. While one would not disagree with this ruling the SC may be reminded of the pending cases where several political leader's cases have been pending for more than two or three decades.

These leaders use the powers they wield and resources in their command and with the aid of the top most lawyers frustrate the system and ensure the trial is delayed for some decades. The pending DA cases of TN ministers and the verdict in the case of Jagdish tyler will vouch for this fact. SC should also lay guide lines for speedy trial in cases such as these while ordering bail. Gopalswamy J | Chennai

## PORT BLAIR IS NOW SRI VIJAYA PURAM

Madam — Reference: "Centre renames Port Blair as Sri Vijaya Puram" (the pioneer September, 14). Centre's decision to change the name of Port Blair to Sri Vijaya Puram showcases an indication that they want to acknowledge and celebrate the rich historical and cultural past of India. With reference to the former waterborne empire of Sri Vijaya, this plan is meant to laud the maritime heritage as well as regional pride within India. Nonetheless, such a name change trend would evoke some discussions that are wider in scope regarding modifying names with regard to more contemporary backgrounds. Some people would see it as a bidding to claim back lost histories while others think it disturbs ancestral practices and community memory too much. It is therefore important for the government would to balance them so as to keep themselves including everybody in their stories. Garima Singh | Kanpur

## CAGED PARROTS

Madam — The Supreme Court's scathing

## India's booming bioeconomy



In reference to 'Indian bioeconomy hits US \$151 billion, contributes 4.25% to GDP' (14 Sept), the remarkable growth in key sectors like biopharma, biofuel, and biotechnology could be further accelerated through enhanced government support in the form of funding, tax incentives, and mandatory policies on ethanol-blended petrol and biofuels in agriculture. Tier-II and Tier-III cities offer significant

comment on the CBI might as well apply to nearly all of the government's institutions (Ref: Supreme Court again compares CBI to caged parrot, p3, Sept. 14). The "caged parrot" remark, now made by Justice Bhuyan, was first made by the Supreme Court way back in 2013, during the investigation of the "Coalgate" scam. A lot of water has flown down the Ganges, but nothing seems to have changed on the ground. The reiteration of this sarcastic and stinging remark affirms that even the highest investigating agency in the country is beholden to the powers that be. The same remark may be extrapolated to other institutions to a greater or lesser degree. Take the police department as just one example. Cases are doctored, expedited, closed, or hushed up, depending on signals that originate from the political leadership in a particular state. The recent RGK hospital crime in Kolkata bears shameful testimony to this. No Investigating Officer dares to rub his political masters the wrong way by insisting upon following the rule book. Justice

opportunities for biofuels in the agricultural sector, reducing costs, creating jobs, and fostering local entrepreneurship through dealership networks. A strategic approach could also be applied to biofuel exports, particularly to neighboring countries. Additionally, there is vast potential for bio-based household products, such as cosmetics, provided there is proper standardization. Universities and research institutions should be encouraged to pursue innovative research in areas like marine biology, space, and vaccines.

The growth of the bioeconomy is a result of joint efforts by the corporate sector, industry, research institutions, and the government. This progress also aligns with India's goals for COP 28. Vinod Johri | Delhi

is given a short shrift because the department in question, in this case the police department, is a "caged parrot", much like the CBI. Sports and Education are no exceptions. The Brij Bhushan Saran Singh saga bears ample testimony to the fact that political bigwigs run their departments much like their fiefdoms. If sportsmen and sportswomen of repute have to resort to "dharanas" in the country's capital for the redressal of their grievances, the lot of the common man seeking justice can well be imagined. There is nobody to red flag the minister for higher education, M.P. when he rubbishes well established historical facts and claims that we had trade relations with America in the eighth century, even before Columbus discovered America in the fifteenth. The saddest part is, even the fourth estate is playing along, instead of questioning our elected representatives on our behalf. Sad and shameful, to say the least. Avinash Godbole | Dewas

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## Life's unplanned pathways: A journey through coincidences

Sometimes life unfolds in ways that we cannot foresee, shaped by a mix of choices, opportunities, and coincidences

I joined a premier engineering and science institute after my schooling. I quit two years later as I failed to secure an engineering seat. I joined another engineering college and then the prestigious railway services. My entry into the railways could also be attributed to good fortune as the organization increased the number to be inducted. My inability to join the civil services was a sore point with my parents. I would often tease them that I might have done much better had I continued to pursue science. They would retort that I might have been working as a clerk in some obscure government department. Who knows! I might have worked harder to clear the civil services examinations had I continued to pursue science in the premier institute or had I not been selected for the railways. My father often narrates the story of his friend, a civil engineering graduate from his college, who joined the state services. He was afraid that the



bridge that he had designed might collapse. He followed my father's advice to join academics. He is now an internationally recognized geotechnical engineer in America. My father is an electrical engineer who joined the engineering college a year into post-graduation. He had wanted to pursue his MSc and then enter academics if he could not join the prestigious IAS. My father does not regret his choices. He does have one memory that he regrets whenever he remembers about it. This also is from his college days. A few of them decided to indulge themselves with an evening out. My father went to the friend's room to take him along. This young boy appeared cheerful but refused to accompany

them. He had committed suicide by the time they returned. My father still ruminates, "Maybe, we could have saved him had we stayed back or pushed him to accompany us." I know an engineer who joined a famous engineering college.

The branch that he had joined was not considered well-placed. He was offered the branch of choice in another college a year later. He left the overnight without consulting anyone. He is extremely successful in his chosen profession. However, he has pangs of regret that his life would have taken a different trajectory had he not taken the impulsive decision and waited the night out to reconsider. The two of us recently bumped into another well-known engineer at Mumbai airport. This gentleman almost quit the structured and disciplined life of the engineering college which was in stark contrast to the relaxed environs of the science graduate course he had completed. He went to his friend's hostel room with

the admission forms for the postgraduate course, to realise that the studies were as structured and disciplined as his engineering course. He completed his engineering, joined the railway services, and successfully headed a leading metro rail organization in India at the time of his retirement.

We were walking to our car after a beautiful laser show in Connaught Place in Delhi a few years back. I was approached by a lady requesting if she could use my mobile phone to contact her husband. They had got separated in the crowd. The husband spoke to me to thank me for the courtesy. It turned out that we were together during training in my first job. Douglas Coupland, Canadian novelist and designer, said, "Every single moment is a coincidence." It is up to us to use this joker in the pack to play this game of life.

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



SANJAY CHANDRA



## FIRST COLUMN

## SPORTS BOOST MENTAL HEALTH

Engaging in sports strengthens emotional stability and cognitive growth



SAKSHI SETHI

Sports have since long been celebrated for their physical benefits, but their impact on mental health is equally profound. Engaging in sports activities is more than just a means to maintain physical fitness. It is one of the powerful tools to enhance mental well-being. In an age where mental health challenges are increasingly common, the role of sports in fostering a healthier mind is more relevant than ever. One of the most significant mental health benefits of sports is their ability to reduce stress and anxiety.

Engaging in various physical activities increases the production of neurotransmitters like serotonin and dopamine, which play a crucial role in regulating the mood and emotions of an individual and being consistent in sports routine can lead them to a more stable mood, thereby helping them in reducing symptoms of depression and promoting overall emotional well-being. Furthermore, achieving personal goals in sports, such as running a faster mile or mastering a new skill, provides a sense of accomplishment that boosts not only self-esteem but also confidence to a large extent. Sports such as basketball, soccer or tennis that involve strategy, coordination as well as decision-making require quick thinking and concentration can help improve cognitive skills over time. Studies too have shown that regular physical activity can enhance memory, problem-solving abilities as well as attention span, which are all critical components of mental health. By keeping the brain active and engaged, sports help in maintaining cognitive function and prevent age-related decline. Moreover, they also teach individuals how to handle failures, manage stress and push through adversity—skills that are invaluable in everyday life. Whether it is dealing with a loss, overcoming an injury or working hard to achieve a goal, sports challenge individuals to grow stronger



and mentally. This process of overcoming obstacles builds resilience and equips individuals with the mental fortitude to face life's challenges more effectively. Not only this, engaging in team sports, cycling and aerobic activities are particularly effective in reducing anxiety symptoms caused likely due to the combination of physical exertion and social interaction.

When talking about different stages of life, there is no denying the fact that sports play a crucial role in enhancing mental health across various stages of life—whether in school, college or professional settings. Schools can be a stressful environment for children due to academic pressures, social dynamics and extracurricular demands so engaging in sports offers an effective outlet for releasing stress and pent-up energy. Regular participation in the same helps manage stress by releasing endorphins and promoting relaxation, which leads to better focus and productivity in academic pursuits. Sports not only improve physical health but also boost mental acuity. This improved cognitive function can translate into higher productivity and better problem-solving abilities at work. Regardless of age or stage, engaging in sports provides a holistic approach to maintaining and enhancing mental health, making it an invaluable tool for personal well-being and development. Thus, the benefits of sports extend beyond physical fitness thereby contributing significantly to emotional well-being, cognitive development and social integration. By fostering resilience, enhancing emotional regulation and encouraging positive social interactions, sports provide a comprehensive approach to mental health care. In a world where mental health challenges are increasingly prevalent, the importance of sports as a tool for mental well-being cannot be overstated. Encouraging participation in sports at all levels, from casual play to competitive athletics, can be a powerful strategy for improving mental health across all age groups.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

## Nothing undemocratic about PM's visit to CJI's pooja



GOURAV VALLABH

In a nation where governance and justice work in tandem to uphold the Constitution, such an event signifies the harmony necessary for collective effort



The Prime Minister of India attending a Ganesh Pooja at the residence of the Chief Justice of India (CJI) is an act that should be seen as a symbol of respect and unity rather than an event warranting criticism. In the complex structure of Indian governance, where the judiciary and the executive function as distinct but interdependent pillars, such gestures are appropriate and reflective of the harmony essential for the nation's progress. To criticise this act would be to adopt a narrow-minded approach, ignoring the more profound significance of the occasion. The judiciary and the executive are two of the most important pillars of Indian democracy. While they are distinct in their functions, they share a common purpose: the preservation of the Constitution and the welfare of the people. The Prime Minister, as the head of the executive, and the Chief Justice of India, as the head of the judiciary, embody the leadership of two vital branches of government.

Their personal or religious event participation reflects mutual respect and understanding of their respective roles in the country's governance. The Ganesh Pooja, a significant religious event in India, represents the invocation of wisdom, prosperity, and the removal of obstacles. By attending such an event together, the two leaders are sending a message that they are united in their goals for the nation, seeking divine blessings for the common good. To view this act as inappropriate would be to overlook the fact that it is not merely a personal gathering but a reflection of shared responsibility in upholding the constitutional fabric of India. Critics of the Prime Minister's participation in the Ganesh Pooja at the Chief Justice of India's residence should remember that performing the Ganapati Pooja is not a crime, but a deeply ingrained part of India's cultural and historical heritage. The significance of Ganesh Pooja, especially when viewed through the lens of its revival by the great freedom fighter Bal Gangadhar Tilak, is a reminder of its deeper objectives—unity, nationalism, and collective strength. In this context, the Ganesh Pooja is not just a religious ceremony but a powerful cultural symbol that has historically promoted social



BY COMING TOGETHER AT A RELIGIOUS EVENT, THEY DEMONSTRATE THAT DESPITE THEIR INSTITUTIONAL SEPARATION, THEY WORK TOWARDS THE SAME LARGER AND GREATER GOAL—THE WELFARE OF THE PEOPLE AND THE STRENGTHENING OF INDIAN DEMOCRACY

cohesion, unity, and nationalism. By criticizing such an event, the critics undermine the values that Tilak sought to instil through this festival. In Indian tradition, the term "Karta" refers to the head or manager of a family, responsible for the well-being of the entire household. Similarly, the Prime Minister and the Chief Justice act as the 'Kartas' of their respective domains: the executive and the judiciary. While their roles are different, their objectives often align, especially concerning matters of national interest, law, and justice.

By coming together at a religious event, they demonstrate that despite their institutional separation, they work towards the same larger and greater goal—the welfare of the people and the strengthening of Indian democracy. As the Karta of the executive, the Prime Minister is responsible for running the government, implementing laws, and ensuring the country's development. The Chief Justice, as the Karta of the judiciary, ensures that justice is upheld and that the laws are interpreted and applied in a fair and just manner. These roles complement each other, and public gestures of respect and unity, such as attending a religious event together, only strengthen the understanding and coordination between these two pillars of governance. Only a narrow-minded perspective would find fault in the Prime Minister's attendance at the Ganesh Pooja. Such criticism is often rooted in a limited understanding of the executive and judiciary's roles in the country's broader governance. Criticizing such gestures of goodwill and unity overlooks the significance of collaboration between these branches, which is essential for a well-functioning democracy. By attending the Ganesh Pooja, the Prime Minister and the CJI are reinforcing their commitment to work together for

the nation's greater good. It is well-known that Congress, during its tenure in power, had multiple instances where it was accused of attempting to influence or interfere with the independence of the judiciary. One such example that comes to the mind of every informed citizen is when Chief Justice S.M. Sikri retired on April 25, 1973, the day after the Supreme Court's landmark Kesavananda Bharati judgment, which ruled that Parliament could not alter the "basic structure" of the Constitution. Displeased by this limitation on her plans for constitutional amendments, Indira Gandhi swiftly responded by superseding three senior judges—Justices K.S. Hegde, J.M. Shelat, and A.N. Grover—on April 26.

Justice A.N. Ray, who was less critical of the government's stance, was appointed Chief Justice. This supersession sent a clear message, influencing the Supreme Court's subsequent ruling in the ADM Jabalpur case (also known as the Habeas Corpus case). During the Emergency declared on June 25, 1975, which suspended fundamental rights including the right to life and personal liberty, a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court heard challenges to the presidential order. Attorney General Niren De argued that no judicial remedy could be sought during the Emergency. Justice Khanna questioned the Attorney General about remedies for severe abuses, like police killings, during the Emergency. The Attorney General admitted there would be no judicial recourse during this period. Despite this troubling admission, the majority ruled that citizens had no right to life or personal liberty during the Emergency. Justice Khanna dissented but was later superseded by Justice M.H. Beg as Chief Justice in January 1977. In November 1976, Congress passed the 42nd

Amendment, aiming to undermine judicial independence and establish a more authoritarian regime. The Prime Minister's participation in Ganesh Pooja at the Chief Justice of India's residence underscores mutual respect and recognition of each other's roles and powers.

Unlike Congress, which historically attempted to undermine judicial independence, this gesture reflects a healthy relationship between the executive and judiciary. It demonstrates that both leaders acknowledge and uphold the boundaries of their respective roles, ensuring a collaborative rather than confrontational dynamic in governance and judicial matters. The Prime Minister's attendance at a religious function does not imply interference in the judiciary's functioning or decision-making. There is a significant difference between engaging in respectful cultural or religious participation and attempting to subvert judicial independence for political gains, as seen during the Congress era. To equate the two is to distort history and misrepresent the present.

The Prime Minister performing Ganesh Pooja at the Chief Justice's residence is an act that reflects India's values of cultural unity, mutual respect, and inclusiveness. Only those with a narrow-minded view or divisive political motives would criticize such a gesture. This event represents the healthy relationship between the judiciary and executive, reaffirming their shared commitment to upholding the Constitution and promoting the welfare of the nation. Rather than being a cause for criticism, it should be seen as a celebration of the harmony and unity at the heart of India's democratic and cultural ethos.

(The writer is professor at XLRI and a BJP Leader; views are personal)

## The hidden toll of climate change: India's struggle with eco-anxiety and mental health

Rising temperatures and erratic weather patterns are not only threatening the nation's economy but also fueling anxiety, depression and trauma

India's diverse landscape is one of its greatest assets, but it also makes the country highly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. The consequences are increasingly evident in events like wildfires, violent storms, unseasonal rainfall, melting glaciers, air pollution, and heatwaves. These phenomena not only damage the environment but also have serious implications for public health. Heatwaves, for instance, have led to a 53.7% increase in heat-related deaths among people aged 65 and above between 2000 and 2017. Additionally, the growing heat stress could result in an estimated 34 million job losses, while air pollution is expected to cause 6.6 million premature deaths by 2050.



VARADA MADGE

Climate change poses a significant threat to India's economic stability as well. Implementing adaptation strategies will come at a staggering cost of ₹85.6 lakh crore (approximately \$1.065 trillion). While these economic challenges are daunting, the mental health implications of climate change are often overlooked. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth

Assessment Report, shifts in economic, social, and food systems triggered by climate change will lead to long-term mental health impacts, including rising levels of anxiety, depression, and stress.

One of the most alarming consequences of climate change on mental health is the rise of "eco-anxiety." Defined as a persistent worry about the current environmental crisis and the bleak future it suggests, eco-anxiety is affecting millions globally, especially the younger generation. A study by The Lancet across ten countries, including India, surveyed 10,000 young adults aged 16-25 years. The results were sobering: over half of the participants reported feeling 'sad', 'anxious', 'angry', 'powerless', 'helpless', 'insecure', and

'guilty' about climate change. Furthermore, 45% admitted that these emotions disrupted their daily lives, while 75% expressed serious concerns about their future. Most disturbingly, 83% believed that humanity had failed to take adequate steps to protect the planet. The Lancet Countdown report of 2022 further highlighted the mental health consequences for younger people, including increased levels of phobias, drug dependency, sleep disturbances, emotional dysregulation, and cognitive impairment. Children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable to eco-anxiety, as they are growing up in an era where the effects of climate change are becoming more apparent with each pass-



ing year. India has already witnessed numerous climate-induced disasters that have exacerbated mental health issues. According to the National Institute of Disaster Management, India experienced 1,058 climate-related events, including floods, cyclones, droughts, cold waves, and heatwaves between 1995 and 2020. These disasters often

result in severe psychological consequences. For example, the prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in flood-affected populations is estimated to be around 50%. Frequent droughts, for instance, have been linked to high suicide rates among farmers. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reported over 10,000 farmer suicides in 2019. A study also found that when temperatures rise above 20°C, a 1°C increase in a single day's temperature is linked to approximately 70 additional suicides. Over the past three decades, rising temperatures and droughts have contributed to the suicides of around 59,000 farmers in India, accounting for 6.8% of the overall upward trend in suicides.

The future also appears bleak in terms of water security. A 2018 report by Niti Aayog predicts that 21 Indian cities will run out of water by 2030, affecting 100 million people. By that time, 40% of India's population may lack access to clean drinking water, leaving communities stressed and insecure. The mental health impact of such crises is particularly severe for indigenous communities, whose lives and livelihoods are closely tied to their natural surroundings. Sadly, these communities and their experiences remain underrepresented in mainstream discussions about climate change, calling for more focused research to understand their specific vulnerabilities. Addressing these challenges

will require coordinated efforts across sectors. Communities, climate activists, organizations, policymakers, and mental health professionals must collaborate to develop solutions. Initiatives like planting trees, reforestation, and recycling can empower communities and provide a sense of agency, helping alleviate the psychological burden of eco-anxiety.

Policymakers must prioritise the environment by enforcing carbon emission reductions and investing in renewable energy. Mental health surveillance should be integrated into climate policies at every level of governance. (The writer is Fellow Environment and Health Assessment, TERI; views are personal)

# Will stake claim for CM post if BJP returns to power in Haryana: Anil Vij

PTI ■ AMBALA/CHANDIGARH

Senior BJP leader and former Minister Anil Vij on Sunday said he will stake claim for the chief minister's post if the party returns to power in Haryana after the October 5 Assembly polls. The six-time MLA's remarks come at a time when the party has already made it clear that Nayab Singh Saini will be the chief minister if the BJP returns to power. Saini is also the party's chief ministerial face in the polls. "I never sought anything from the party till today... People from Haryana are coming to meet me. Even in Ambala, people tell me that I am senior-most why I did not become CM. On demand of the people, and on the basis of seniority, this time I will stake claim to become chief minister," Vij

said. Whether the party makes me or not, it is up to them. But if they make me CM, I will change Haryana's 'takdeer and tasveer' (destiny and face of Haryana), the Ambala Cantt MLA said. When asked to clarify the remarks he made while interacting with reporters in Ambala, Vij later told PTI over phone, "I am the party's senior-most MLA and have won six elections and am contesting my seventh one. I have never sought anything from my party so far." "But people from across Haryana and people of my own constituency have been meeting me... I will stake claim for the chief minister's post," the 71-year-old Vij said. "It is up to the party high command to take a call," he said. When pointed out the Saini has already been declared chief



ministerial candidate, Vij said. "There is no bar on staking the claim. I will make my claim, let the party take a call." Asked about the timing of his decision with polls only a couple of weeks away, Vij said he took the decision after people came to meet him. "People have been regularly meeting me and asking me about this (that he is senior most and yet not become CM)," Vij said. Notably, in March, Manohar Lal Khattar was replaced by Saini as chief minister. Polling for the 90 assembly seats in Haryana will be held on October 5 and the votes will be counted on October 8. When BJP came to power in Haryana for the first time on its own strength in 2014, Vij along with few other BJP leaders including Ram Bilas Sharma, was frontrunner for the CM's post, but the party

went with Manohar Lal Khattar, a first-time MLA then, as its choice. Recently, BJP has faced resentment from some of its leaders who were denied tickets. BJP leaders including Ranjit Singh Chautala, Laxman Napa, Karan Dev Kamboj and few others quit the party. Former Minister Ram Bilas Sharma was also denied ticket from Mahendragarh this time. In March, Vij was said to be upset with the BJP for not keeping him in the loop when the party decided to replace Manohar Lal Khattar as the chief minister and bring Nayab Singh Saini in his place. He had then said he came to know about it only in the BJP MLAs' meeting here in which Saini's name was announced. Vij later also did not find a place in the cabinet led by Saini. The senior BJP leader had also kept away from Saini's

swearing-in ceremony in March. In April, while addressing a public gathering in Ambala, Vij, without taking any names, had said, some people have made him a stranger in his party. "Mana kuch logo ne mujhe meri party mein he begana bana diya hai, parantu kayee baar begane apno say bhi zyada kaam kar jaate hai, (It may be true that some people have made me a stranger in my party, but sometimes strangers do more work than own people)," Vij had then said. Vij, who held the home portfolio in the Manohar Lal Khattar government, was often at loggerheads with Khattar when he was the CM. Vij, has in the past maintained, that he is a dedicated worker of the Bharatiya Janata Party, but whatever he has to say he says it clearly.

## PM Modi accuses JMM-led coalition of patronising Bangladeshi, Rohingya infiltration

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMSHEDPUR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday accused the ruling JMM-led coalition in Jharkhand of patronising Bangladeshi and Rohingya infiltration for vote bank politics. He said infiltrators from the neighbouring country are a major threat to Jharkhand as they are changing the demography of the Santhal Parganas and Kolhan regions of the state. "Bangladeshi and Rohingya infiltrators have become a major threat to Santhal Parganas and Kolhan regions. The demography of these regions is changing fast. The tribal population is on the decline. The infiltrators are establishing control of the panchayat system, grabbing land, indulging in atrocities on daughters of the state...Each Jharkhand resident is feeling unsafe," the prime minister said while addressing the 'Parivartan Maharally' of the BJP at Gopal Maidan, He also alleged that the JMM was "supporting infiltrators" and the fact was that "illegal immigrants from the neigh-



bouring country managed to establish influence" over the ruling party in the state. Modi termed the JMM, RJD and the Congress as the "biggest enemies of Jharkhand", asserting that these parties were "power-hungry" and "indulged in vote bank politics". The PM also alleged, "The JMM-led government has been trained by Congress' school of corruption. It is time to bid farewell to the JMM that looted mines, minerals and Army land." Modi, who was scheduled to reach Jamshedpur via a chopper, had to travel to the steel city on the road as his heli-

copter could not take off due to inclement weather conditions. "No obstacles, including heavy rain, could prevent me from reaching you, I am touched by your affection," he said. He also asserted that the BJP is set to come to power in the state after the assembly polls due later this year. "If the BJP comes to power, it will launch a probe into deaths of aspirants during excise constable recruitment drive," he said. Modi accused the JMM-led coalition of targeting BJP leaders and framing false cases against them.

## 62 candidates in fray for four Assembly seats in Gurugram

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

Gurugram district is set to witness a crucial political contest as 62 candidates are in the fray for 4 assembly seats in the upcoming assembly elections. District Election Officer and Deputy Commissioner Gurugram Nishant Kumar Yadav said that election symbols will be allotted to the candidates who have filed nominations in all four assembly constituencies of the district namely Pataudi, Badshahpur, Gurgaon and Sohna on Sunday. He said candidates who are willing to withdraw their nomination papers. They can withdraw their nomination papers by September 16 after that the nomination papers will not be considered. Yadav said that to withdraw the nomination, it is very important for the concerned candidate to fill and submit Form 5. If the candidate is not there, then it is mandatory for the candidate, agent and proposer to take written permission from the candidate to fill Form 5. He informed that in the district, 8 candidates have filed their nomination papers in



Pataudi assembly, 15 in Badshahpur, 20 in Gurgaon assembly and 19 in Sohna assembly. The District Election Officer called upon all the candidates to ensure that they follow the instructions issued by the Election Commission. It is mandatory for the candidate to take permission from the administration for rallies, road shows and other programs. If any candidate violates norms, then necessary action will be taken against them under the rules laid down by the Election Commission. He informed that voting for the assembly elections will be held on October 5 and counting will be held on October 8, the result will be declared along with the counting.

Meanwhile, Haryana, is known for its politically charged environment, is expected to see intense competition, with various regional and national parties fielding strong candidates. The two major national parties BJP and the Congress are leaving no stone unturned in its quest to win the elections and cement its influence in the state. The BJP's campaign is led by top national leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. The BJP's strategy centres on highlighting development projects, promising better governance, and focusing on national security to appeal to voters in Haryana.

## Modi lays foundation stones of road over bridges at Chhota Govindpur, Barigora level crossings

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ JAMSHEDPUR

Falling under the Chakradharpur (CKP) Division of the South Eastern Railway zone, Modi laid the foundation stones of road over bridge (ROB) at Chhota Govindpur and Barigora level crossings and an underpass at the Salgajhari level crossing on February 26, 2024 and all the projects are within three kilometres range of the Tatanagar station. "For years residents waited for the ROB at Barigora, Govindpur and Salgajhari. This would have certainly given much relief to people, particularly the motorists of surrounding areas who take the route to reach the main city. But it was that elections and now this assembly polls ahead not an inch of work you can see. Now we feel all these projects are a poll jumla," said Sanjay Singh, a resident adjacent to Salgajhari Halt when The Pioneer visited to check status of the projects announced PM six months ago. Social and political outfits besides students' groups have been demanding ROB at the



three level crossings for around past one decade as these are crucial for further socio-economic activities as these projects fall on the main Howrah Tata Mumbai railway line that also bifurcates the rural and urban Jamshedpur industrial town. Mahendra Jha, a resident near the Govindpur Halt, also rued the fact that the project was limited only to the Lok Sabha sops announcement and it has remained only on the media clippings. "Even today we laugh when we see the foundation stone laying video clips on YouTube," Jha said. Interestingly after the projects were announced a lot of development activities took place ever since these projects were announced and thereafter foundation stone by PM.

## Kerala Me Too allegations has roots in turf war

PNS ■ KOCHI

The Me Too controversy plaguing Malayalam film industry with the disclosures made by a report prepared by the K Hema Committee that probed the professional difficulties of women artists and technicians had its roots in the turf war between various power groups in the Kerala Motion Picture Academy (Kerala Chalachitra Academy), a State Government undertaking. A war of nerves was brewing up in the Academy between the groups led by Ranjit and Bina Paul, the director of International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK), according to sources in the Academy. Ranjit, who was appointed by the Pinarayi Vijayan dispensation quit as chairman following an allegation made by Sreelekha Mitra, Bengali film actress that the former had misbehaved with her in 2009. The grapevine is that Ranjit, a graduate of the School of Drama in Calicut University tried to usher in changes in the film festivals which was not liked by the cartel controlling the Academy. Ranjit was appointed immediately after the resignation of Kamaluddeen, a controversial character who allegedly molested and abused wannabe artists. But till date no action has been taken against Kamaluddeen, known by his screen name Kamal. Irked by their sidelining from important positions, the group opposed to Ranjit devised a strategy to oust him from the Academy. It all began during the last IFFK held at Thiruvananthapuram when Ranjit, a hardcore SFI and CPI(M) activist despise his roots in a feudal Nair zamindar family, was booed down by a



section of the audience. Interestingly most of them were CPI(M) activists. "A thorough probe into the phone calls made by two persons (including a documentary film maker) to Mitra in the recent past. There were no justification behind the telephonic contacts between these persons and Mitra at this juncture," said a film professional with Doordarshan Kendra, Thiruvananthapuram. He is of the view that the unprecedented increase in the number of calls between the actress and Chalachitra Academy officials has no other justification. He also pointed out that though Ranjit was in the industry since 1985 and had his first directorial venture in 2001, this is the first time an accusation of this kind has been made against him. Though Ranjit is known for his arrogance, this scion of a feudal zamindar Nair family despite working with some of the divas have remained aloof from casting couch controversies till Mitra made her allegations. Mitra's allegations prompted many junior artists to come out with "Me Too" charges against many senior artists and they all quit their elected positions in AMMA, an industry body. The Investigation Team probing the a la Mitra issue has been left clueless over the timing of Mitra's charges.

## HM Shah to wrap up first round of high voltage campaign in Jammu

PNS ■ JAMMU

To wrap up the first round of the high-voltage election campaign Union Home Minister Amit Shah will be arriving in Jammu on Monday to address three back-to-back election rallies in Ramban and Kishtwar districts on the last day of the campaigning. The voting is scheduled to take place across 24 Assembly segments on September 18. A total number of sixteen (16) Assembly Constituencies of four southern districts of Anantnag, Kulgam, Shopian, and Pulwama districts and eight (8) assembly segments of three districts of Doda, Ramban, and Kishtwar will go to polls in the first phase. Prime Minister Narendra Modi Saturday generated momentum in support of the BJP by addressing an impressive rally in Doda. On the occasion, Modi reiterated his government's promise of restoring statehood to Jammu and Kashmir and cautioned



people against bringing the NC, Congress, and the PDP back to power. "Amit Shah will address 3 rallies at Ramban, Kishtwar, and Padder," BJP Spokesperson & Media Centre Incharge Arun Kumar Gupta said and added, "BJP is getting overwhelming response from the people across J&K and will form a government with the majority". This will be Amit Shah's second visit. Earlier, he made a two-day visit to Jammu, where he not only released the party's

manifesto but also addressed a large convention of party workers in Jammu city on the second day. Out of eight Assembly segments, the BJP is aiming to win the maximum seats and retain at least all four seats it won during the 2014 Assembly polls. On the other hand alliance partners Congress and National Conference are also working hard on the ground to improve their tally and give a tough fight to the BJP in Doda and Ramban.

## Rashid springs surprise by allying with banned Jel

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

Awami Ittehad Party (AIP) Supremo and parliamentarian Sheikh Abdul Rashid Sunday sprang a surprise by allying with the banned Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) ahead of the first round of polling on September 18. The alliance was announced by Engineer Rashid during a rally in the Tral area of South Kashmir. According to the agreement reached between the two, AIP would support banned JeI-backed candidates in Kulgam and Pulwama, and similarly, JeI will throw its support behind AIP candidates across Kashmir. In areas where both AIP and banned JeI have fielded candidates, the alliance has agreed to a "friendly contest," particularly in constituencies like Langate, Devsar and Zainapora.



Before making the formal announcement thorough deliberations were held between the two groups. AIP was represented in the joint meeting by Member of Parliament Er Rashid, and AIP Chief Spokesperson Inam Un Nabi, while the banned JeI delegation was led by Ghulam Qadir Wani. Prominent former JeI members were also present in the discussions, AIP spokesperson said. Under the terms of the alliance, in other constituen-

cies, mutual support will be extended to ensure a unified approach to the elections, AIP spokesperson said. He added both parties underscored the importance of unity in resolving the Kashmir issue and promoting a lasting and dignified peace in the region. They highlighted the rapidly evolving political landscape, both regionally and internationally, and stressed that neither the banned JeI nor AIP can afford to remain passive observers.

## IAF provides aid to Cambodia, Vietnam

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Air Force (IAF) has deployed its C-17 Globemaster transport aircraft to provide Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations in Cambodia (Vientiane, Laos) and Vietnam (Hanoi) following the severe flooding caused by Typhoon Yagi, officials said here on Sunday. Giving details, they said swift and efficient Loading and coordination was carried out by C-17 team at Hindan, Ghaziabad. Nearly 35 tons of aid comprising of water purification items, water containers, blankets, kitchen utensils, solar lanterns is for Vietnam. Ten tons of aid comprising genset, water purification items, hygiene supplies, mosquito nets, blankets and sleeping bags for Cambodia. These aircraft, known for their large cargo capacity and long-range capabilities, are typically used to transport relief materials, essential supplies, and personnel to disaster-affected areas.

## KEJRIWAL OFFERS TO QUIT AS...

From Page 1 Alleging the BJP tried to prove him corrupt, Kejriwal said the saffron party cannot provide good schools and free electricity to people because they are corrupt. "We are honest," he asserted. "They slap false cases against non-BJP Chief Ministers. If they are arrested, I urge them not to resign, but run the Government from jail," the Delhi Chief Minister said. "I didn't resign (after arrest in excise policy case) because I respect democracy and the Constitution is supreme for me," Kejriwal said and asserted that it is only the AAP that can stand up to the BJP's "conspiracies". Referring to him quitting the Chief Minister's post in 2014 over the Jan Lokpal Bill, just 49 days after

assuming power, Kejriwal said, "I resigned then for my ideals. I do not have a lust for power." Saying that the excise policy case would go on for long, the Chief Minister said he wanted to ask the people of Delhi whether he is honest or guilty. He asked people to vote in his favour only if they considered him honest. "For me, the BJP is not important, people are important," he said. "Our Leaders Satyendar Jain and Amanatullah Khan are still in jail. I hope they come out soon," the Chief Minister told AAP workers here as he thanked God "who was with us through difficulties". About his time in jail, Kejriwal referred to letters written by freedom fighter Bhagat Singh while in British captivity and said,

"I wrote only one letter to the Lieutenant Governor from Tihar and was issued a warning." "Our freedom fighters were allowed meetings with colleagues but my party colleague Sandeep Pathak was not allowed to meet me in jail," he said. Addressing AAP workers, Kejriwal said, "I had a lot of time in jail. I read a lot of books when I was inside jail like Bhagavad Gita... Today, I bought one book written by Bhagat Singh. When he was in jail, he wrote several letters to his comrades, family, sister, his childhood friends... and the Britishers sent those letters. I also went to jail and I wrote only one letter to LG Sahab. It was August 15." "I wrote a letter to LG Sahab three days before the Independence Day and asked him

to permit Atishi to host the Independence Day. I was given warning that if you write another letter, we will stop your meeting with family. I was thinking not even Britishers did such things," Kejriwal said. He said he did not resign as Chief Minister despite being arrested because he wanted to save democracy. "They have registered cases against (Karnataka Chief Minister) Siddaramaiah, (Kerala Chief Minister) Pinarayi Vijayan, (Bengal Chief Minister) Mamata didi (Banerjee). I want to appeal to non-BJP CMs, do not resign if they register cases against you. This is their new game," he said. AAP had returned to power in the national Capital by sweeping Assembly elections held in February 2020.



# Yemen missile hits Israel, triggers airport sirens

AP ■ JERUSALEM

A missile fired by Yemen's Iran-backed rebels landed in an open area in central Israel early Sunday and triggered air raid sirens at its international airport, in the latest reverberation from the nearly yearlong war in Gaza. There were no reports of casualties or major damage, but Israeli media aired footage showing people racing to shelters in Ben Gurion International Airport. The airport authority said it resumed normal operations shortly thereafter. A fire could be seen in a rural area of central Israel, and local media showed images of what appeared to be a fragment from an interceptor that landed on an escalator in a train station in the central town of Modiin. The Israeli military said it made several attempts to intercept the missile using its multilayered air defences but had not yet determined whether any had been successful. It said the missile appeared to have fragmented midair, and that the incident is still under review. The military said the sound of explosions in the area came from interceptors.



The Yemeni rebels, known as Houthis, have repeatedly fired drones and missiles toward Israel since the start of the war in Gaza between Israel and the Palestinian militant group Hamas, but nearly all of them have been intercepted over the Red Sea. In July, an Iranian-made drone launched by the Houthis struck Tel Aviv, killing one person and wounding 10 others. Israel responded with a wave of airstrikes on Houthi-held areas of Yemen, including the port

city of Hodeidah, a Houthi stronghold.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hinted at a similar response in remarks at a Cabinet meeting after Sunday's attack. "The Houthis should have known by now that we exact a heavy price for any attempt to harm us," he said. "Anyone who needs a reminder is invited to visit the port of Hodeidah." Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree, a military spokesman for the rebels, said they fired a ballistic missile tar-

## '3 hostages recovered months ago were likely killed in Nov airstrike'

Jerusalem (AP): The Israeli military says there is a "high probability" that three hostages found dead months ago were killed in an Israeli airstrike. The army on Sunday announced the conclusions of its investigation into the deaths of Cpl. Nik Beizer, Sgt. Ron Sherman and Elia Toledano. It said investigations had determined that the three were likely killed in a November airstrike that also killed a senior Hamas militant, Ahmed Ghandour. All three of the hostages were kidnapped in Hamas' October 7 attack. Their bodies were

recovered in December, but the cause of death was only recently determined. In its report, the army said there was a "high probability" they were killed in the strike, based on where the bodies were recovered, pathological reports and other intelligence. But it said, "it is not possible to definitely determine the circumstances of their deaths." The conclusions could add pressure on the government to strike a deal to bring home the remaining hostages held by Hamas. Critics say it is too difficult and dangerous to try to

getting "a military target" in Jaffa, which is part of Tel Aviv. Hashim Sharaf al-Din, a spokesperson for the Houthi-run government, said Yemenis will celebrate the birthday of Islam's Prophet Muhammad while "the Israelis will have to

be in shelters." Another senior Houthi official, Hezam al-Asad, posted a taunting message in Hebrew on the social media platform X. The Houthis have also repeatedly attacked commercial shipping in the Red Sea, in what

the rebels portray as a blockade on Israel in support of the Palestinians. Most of the targeted ships have no connection to Israel.

The war in Gaza, which began with Hamas' October 7 attack into southern Israel, has rippled across the region, with Iran and allied militant groups attacking Israeli and US targets and drawing retaliatory strikes from Israel and its Western allies. On several occasions, the strikes and counterstrikes have threatened to trigger a wider conflict.

International carriers have cancelled flights into and out of Israel on a number of occasions since the start of the war, adding to the war's economic toll on the country. Iran supports militant groups across the region, including Hamas, the Houthis and Lebanon's Hezbollah, its most powerful ally, which has traded fire with Israel on a near-daily basis since the war in Gaza began. Iran and its allies say they are acting in solidarity with the Palestinians.

The military said around 40 projectiles were fired from Lebanon early Sunday, with most intercepted or falling in open areas. The strikes along

the Israel-Lebanon border have displaced tens of thousands of people on both sides. Israel has repeatedly threatened to launch a wider military operation against Hezbollah to ensure its citizens can return to their homes. "The status quo will not continue," Netanyahu said at the Cabinet meeting. "This requires a change in the balance of power on our northern border. We will do everything necessary to return our residents safely to their homes."

Hezbollah has said it would halt its attacks if there is a cease-fire in Gaza. The United States and Arab mediators Egypt and Qatar have spent much of this year trying to broker a truce and the release of scores of hostages held by Hamas, but the talks have repeatedly bogged down. In recent weeks, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has insisted on lasting Israeli control over the Gaza side of the border with Egypt, which Israeli forces captured in May. He has said Hamas used a network of tunnels beneath the border to import arms, allegations denied by Egypt, which along with Hamas is opposed to any lasting Israeli presence there.

## US-China military leaders discuss SCS tensions

Bangkok (AP): Military leaders from the US and China met in Beijing for routine talks that only resumed in January after being suspended for two years as ties between the two countries soured. The meetings ended on Sunday and officials discussed ongoing issues such as Taiwan, the Russia-Ukraine war and clashes in the South China Sea. Michael Chase, deputy assistant secretary of defence for China, Taiwan and Mongolia led a delegation to engage in the bilateral Defence Policy Coordination Talks, which were last held in January. While the talks weren't expected to resolve long-standing differences in stances over issues ranging from South China Sea claims to Taiwan, the US has continued to push for the discussions as a way to avoid conflict.

The meetings were held after Chase attended the Xiangshan forum in Beijing, a defence forum that is China's answer to the Shangri-La Dialogue. Communication between the two militaries broke off in 2021, as US-China tensions ratcheted up over widening differences on issues such as Taiwan's sovereignty, the origin of COVID-19 and economic issues. Beijing has ignored US requests to engage in the past, especially over intercepts between US and Chinese aircraft and ships. While communications resumed after US President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping met in San Francisco last November, it is unclear whether the talks could continue as the US is poised for a presidential election. In the bilateral talks, the two sides discussed China's support for Russia during the ongoing Ukraine war, as well as China's actions in the South China Sea, said a US senior defence official briefing reporters on the meetings. On Sunday, the Philippine ship at a disputed shoal, BRP Teresa Magbanua, had left in order to resupply and provide medical care to its crew members. The defence official said that they were "watching further developments there very closely."



The United States Air Force Air Demonstration Squadron, the Thunderbirds, fly in formation at the Sound of Speed Airshow in St. Joseph, Mo., on Saturday. AP/PTI

## A least 8 die trying to cross English Channel, French authorities say

AP ■ NICE

At least eight people died during a failed attempt to cross the English Channel from northern France, French maritime authorities said on Sunday. The incident occurred Saturday just before midnight when authorities spotted a boat, carrying dozens, in distress near a beach in the northern town of Ambleteuse. A French rescue ship was deployed to the area and rescue services offered medical assistance to 53 migrants on the beach, a statement from the French maritime authorities in charge of the Channel and the North Sea said. "Despite the emergency care provided, eight people have died," the statement said. No people were discovered during the search at sea, it added. Six people were taken to hos-

pital "in relative emergency," including a 10-month-old baby with hypothermia, Jacques Billant, the Pas-de-Calais prefect, told French media on Sunday. He said survivors of the accident come from Eritrea, Sudan, Syria, Afghanistan, Egypt and Iran. Survivors of the tragedy have been taken to the sports hall in Ambleteuse, according to a statement from the prefecture of Pas-de-Calais region. Prosecutor's office in Boulogne-sur-mer has opened an investigation into the accident. The incident Saturday occurred nearly two weeks after a boat carrying migrants ripped apart in the English Channel as they attempted to reach Britain from northern France, plunging dozens into the treacherous waterway and leaving 13 dead, officials said. British officials were quick to

express sadness over another English Channel incident. "It's awful," Foreign Secretary David Lammy told the BBC. "It's a further loss of life." The new Labour Party government has pledged to crack down on criminal gangs plying the channel trade and had discussed with European partners "how we go after those gangs, in co-operation upstream." UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer will be in Italy on Monday for talks with counterpart Giorgia Meloni about her efforts to tackle the problem "and the way they have done, particularly, with Albania." Starmer is interested in the policy, under which Tirana will accept asylum seekers on Italy's behalf while their claims are processed. On Saturday, French coast guard and navy vessels rescued 200 people from the

treacherous waters in the Pas-de-Calais area, according to a report sent by French maritime authorities in charge of the Channel and the North Sea. They said they observed 18 attempts of boat departures from France to Britain on Saturday. Before Saturday's accident, at least 43 migrants had died or gone missing while trying to cross to the UK this year, according to the International Organisation for Migration. In July, four migrants died while attempting the crossing on an inflatable boat that capsized and punctured. Five others, including a child, died in another attempt in April. Five dead were recovered from the sea or found washed up along a beach after a migrant boat ran into difficulties in the dark and winter cold of January.

## Venezuela arrests 6 in alleged Maduro assassination plot

AP ■ BOGOTA

Three Americans, two Spaniards and a Czech citizen were arrested Saturday after Venezuelan officials accused them of coming to the South American country to assassinate President Nicolas Maduro. The arrests were announced on state television by Diosdado Cabello, the nation's powerful interior minister. Cabello said the foreign citizens were part of a CIA-led plot to overthrow the Venezuelan government and kill several members of its leadership. In the television program, Cabello showed images of rifles that he said were confiscated from some of the plotters of the alleged plan. The arrest of the American citizens included a member of the Navy, who Cabello identified as Wilbert Joseph Castañeda Gomez. Cabello said that Gomez

was a navy seal who had served in Afghanistan, Iraq and Colombia. Spain's embassy in Venezuela did not reply to a request for comment on the arrests of its citizens. The US State Department late Saturday confirmed the detention of a US military member and said it was aware of "unconfirmed reports of two additional US citizens detained in Venezuela." Any claims of US involvement in a plot to overthrow Maduro are categorically false. The United States continues to support a democratic solution to the political crisis in Venezuela," the statement said. The announcement of the arrests comes just two days after the US Treasury imposed sanctions on 16 allies of Maduro who were accused by the US government of obstructing voting during the disputed July 28 Venezuelan presidential election, and carrying out

human rights abuses. Earlier this week, Spain's parliament recognized opposition candidate Edmundo Gonzalez as the winner of the election, angering Maduro allies who called on the Venezuelan government to suspend commercial and diplomatic relations with Spain. Tensions between Venezuela's government and the US have increased as well following the election, whose result sparked protests within Venezuela in which hundreds of opposition activists were arrested. Venezuela's Electoral Council, which is closely aligned with the Maduro administration, said Maduro won the election with 52 per cent of the vote, but did not provide a detailed breakdown of the results. Opposition activists, however, surprised the government by collecting tally sheets from 80 per cent of the nation's voting

machines. The tally sheets collected by the opposition were published online, and they indicate that Gonzalez won the election with twice as many votes as Maduro. Despite international condemnation over the election's lack of transparency, Venezuela's supreme court, which has long backed Maduro, confirmed his victory in August. Venezuela's attorney general then filed conspiracy charges against Gonzalez, who fled to Spain last week after it became clear he would be arrested. Maduro has dismissed requests from several countries, including the leftist governments of Colombia and Brazil, to provide tally sheets that prove he won the election. Maduro, who has been in power since 2013, has long claimed the US is trying to overthrow him through sanctions and covert operations.

## Rising floodwaters trigger evacuations in Czech Republic and Poland

AP ■ PRAGUE

Another night of torrential rains pounded Central Europe forced massive evacuations in the hardest hit areas in the Czech Republic, where floods reached extreme levels on Sunday. Meteorologists have warned the situation still might get worse as waters in most rivers are rising, the flood wave made its way through the country and more heavy rains could return overnight. Authorities declared the highest flood warnings in almost 90 places across the country and in two northeastern regions that recorded the biggest rainfall in recent days, including the Jeseniky mountains near the Polish border. In the city of Opava, up to 10,000 people out of a population of some 56,000 have been asked to leave their homes for higher ground. Rescuers used boats to transport people to safety in a neighbourhood flooded by the raging Opava River. "There's no reason to wait," Mayor Tomas Navratil told the Czech public radio. He said the situation was worse than during

the last devastating floods in 1997, known as the "flood of the century." "We have to focus on saving lives," Prime Minister Petr Fiala told the Czech public television Sunday. His government was to possibly meet Monday to assess the damages. Thousands of others also were evacuated in the towns of Krnov and Cesky Tesin. The Oder River that flows to Poland was expected to reach extreme levels in the city of Ostrava and later in Bohumin. Towns and villages in the Jeseniky mountains, including the local center of Jesenik, were inundated and isolated by raging waters that turned roads into rivers. The military sent a helicopter to help with evacuations. Four people who were swept away by waters were missing, police said. About 260,000 households were without power Sunday morning in the entire country while traffic was halted on many roads, including the major D1 highway. A firefighter dies as Lower Austria declared a disaster zone A firefighter died after "slipping on stairs" while pumping out a flooded basement in the town of

Tulln, the head of the fire department of Lower Austria Dietmar Fahrafellner told reporters on Sunday. Authorities declared the entire state of Lower Austria a disaster zone. The situation remains tense, especially at the water reservoir of Ottenstein, which is expected to reach its maximum capacity on Sunday. Romania reports another flooding victim Romanian authorities said Sunday that another person had died in the hard-hit eastern county of Galati after four were reported dead there a day before following unprecedented rain. In Poland, one person was presumed dead in floods in the southwest, Prime Minister Donald Tusk said Sunday. Tusk said the situation was "dramatic" around the town of Klodzko, with some 25,000 residents, located in a valley in the Sudetes mountains near the border with the Czech Republic. In Glucholazy, rising waters overflowed a river embankment and flooded streets and houses. Mayor Pawel Szymkowicz said, "we are drowning" and appealed to residents to evacuate to high ground.

## Air Canada and pilots union reach tentative pact to avoid shutdown

AP ■ OTTAWA

Air Canada and the union representing its pilots have come to terms on a labor agreement that is likely to prevent a shutdown of Canada's largest airline. Talks between the company and the Air Line Pilots Association produced a tentative, four-year collective agreement, the airline announced in a statement early Sunday. The prospective deal recognises the contributions of the pilots flying for Air Canada and Air Canada Rouge while setting a new framework for company growth. The terms will remain confidential until ratification by union members and approval by the airline's board of directors over the next month, the airline said. The pilots association said

its Air Canada Master Executive Council voted to approve the tentative agreement on behalf of more than 5,400 Air Canada pilots. After review and ratification by a majority of members, the deal is expected to generate an additional \$1.9 billion for the pilots over the period of the agreement, the union said in a statement. "While it has been an exceptionally long road to this agreement, the consistent engagement and unified determination of our pilots have been the catalyst for achieving this contract," Charlene Hudy, the executive council's chair, said in the statement. "After several consecutive weeks of intense round-the-clock negotiations, progress was made on several key issues including compensation, retirement, and work rules." Federal Labor

Minister Steven MacKinnon confirmed the agreement on Sunday and lauded the company and the union. "Thanks to the hard work of the parties and federal mediators, disruptions have been prevented for Canadians," MacKinnon said in a statement. "Negotiated agreements are always the best way forward and yield positive results for companies and workers." The airline and its pilots have been in contract talks for more than a year. The pilots have sought wages competitive with their U.S. counterparts, but Air Canada continues to post record profits while expecting pilots to accept below-market compensation, the union said. The two sides could have issued a 72-hour notice of a strike or lockout beginning Sunday.

## UK royal social media accounts offer b'day wishes to Prince Harry

London (AP): Britain's royal social media accounts posted 40th birthday wishes Sunday for Prince Harry, marking the milestone celebration despite longstanding strains following the publication of his explosive memoir, "Spare." The Royal Family site shared an image of a beaming Harry with a birthday cake emoji and the caption "Wishing The Duke of Sussex a very happy 40th birthday today! The Prince and Princess of Wales shared the image, adding their own birthday wishes. The post from the royal family account marked the first public birthday message for Harry since 2021. The Duke and Duchess of Sussex



announced they were giving up royal duties in January, 2020. They moved to America and said they hoped to become financially independent, signing lucrative deals with Netflix and Spotify. Harry famously shared his story in the memoir, "Spare."

## Tech billionaire back on Earth after first private spacewalk

Cape Canaveral (AP): A billionaire spacewalker returned to Earth with his crew on Sunday, ending a five-day trip that lifted them higher than anyone has travelled since NASA's moonwalkers. SpaceX's capsule splashed down in the Gulf of Mexico near Florida's Dry Tortugas in the predawn darkness, carrying tech entrepreneur Jared Isaacman, two SpaceX engineers and a former Air Force Thunderbird pilot. They pulled off the first private spacewalk while orbiting nearly 460 miles (740 kilometers) above Earth, higher than the International Space Station and Hubble Space Telescope. Their spacecraft hit a peak altitude of 875 miles (1,408 kilometers) following Tuesday's liftoff. Isaacman became only the 264th person to perform a spacewalk

since the former Soviet Union scored the first in 1965, and SpaceX's Sarah Gillis the 265th. Until now, all spacewalks were done by professional astronauts. During Thursday's commercial spacewalk, the Dragon capsule's hatch was open barely a half-hour. Isaacman emerged only up to his waist to briefly test SpaceX's brand new spacesuit followed by Gillis, who was knee high as she flexed her arms and legs for several minutes. Gillis, a classically trained violinist, also held a performance in orbit earlier in the week. The spacewalk lasted less than two hours, considerably shorter than those at the International Space Station. Most of that time was needed to depressurise the entire capsule and then restore the cabin air. Even SpaceX's Anna Menon and Scott "Kidd"

Poteet, who remained strapped in, wore spacesuits. SpaceX considers the brief exercise a starting point to test spacesuit technology for future, longer missions to Mars. This was Isaacman's second chartered flight with SpaceX, with two more still ahead under his personally financed space exploration program named Polaris after the North Star. He paid an undisclosed sum for his first spaceflight in 2021, taking along contest winners and a pediatric cancer survivor while raising more than USD 250 million for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. For the just completed so-called Polaris Dawn mission, the founder and CEO of the Shift4 credit card-processing company shared the cost with SpaceX.

# Bharti Airtel leads the market rally

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Nine of the top-10 most valued firms together added Rs 2,01,552.69 crore in market valuation last week, with Bharti Airtel stealing the show, amid bullish investors' sentiment in equities. Last week, the BSE benchmark jumped 1,707.01 points or 2.10 per cent. The 30-share BSE Sensex hit its lifetime high of 83,116.19 on Thursday. Bharti Airtel's valuation jumped Rs 54,282.62 crore to Rs 9,30,490.20 crore, becoming the biggest gainer among the top-10 firms. The market capitalisation (mcap) of ICICI Bank surged Rs 29,662.44 crore to Rs 8,80,867.09 crore. Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) added Rs 23,427.12 crore taking its valuation to Rs 16,36,189.63 crore. The mcap of Hindustan



Unilever soared Rs 22,438.6 crore to Rs 6,89,358.33 crore and that of HDFC Bank zoomed Rs 22,093.99 crore to Rs 12,70,035.77 crore. The market valuation of Infosys climbed Rs 17,480.49 crore to Rs 8,07,299.55 crore and that of ITC rallied Rs 15,194.17 crore to Rs

6,42,531.82 crore. The valuation of Reliance Industries jumped Rs 9,878.19 crore to Rs 19,92,160.61 crore and that of State Bank of India went up by Rs 7,095.07 crore to Rs 7,05,535.20 crore. However, the mcap of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC)

declined by Rs 3,004.38 crore to Rs 6,54,004.76 crore. Reliance Industries was leading the chart of the top-10 most valued firms followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, Infosys, State Bank of India, Hindustan Unilever, LIC and ITC.

# 90 per cent of financial firms embrace AI, GenAI: Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ninety per cent of Indian financial institutions are focusing on artificial intelligence (AI) and GenAI (Generative Artificial Intelligence) as the primary technology enablers of innovation, according to a PwC India report. As per the PwC India report titled, 'Mapping the FinTech innovation landscape in India' data analytics also continues to emerge prominently across nearly 74 per cent responses, underscoring its integral role in driving insights and decision-making within the financial services (FS) sector. It said that 31 financial institutions consisting of banks, insurance firms and fintechs participated in the



survey. "Artificial Intelligence (AI) and GenAI (Generative Artificial Intelligence) emerged as the focus area for innovation for Indian financial institutions, with 90 per cent of the respondents citing them as the primary technology enablers of innovation," it said.

Further, 84 per cent of respondents stated that customer experience and engagement - acquisition, onboarding and servicing was the key area of focus for innovation initiatives. Additionally, over 50 per cent of the participants highlighted product distribution as a key area of innovation.

It can also be noted that the frequent references to risk management, operations and regulatory compliance across several responses highlight the sector's diligence in maintaining robust governance frameworks amidst ongoing technological advancements, the report said. As the fintech industry continues to evolve, it's clear that growth must be balanced with the critical challenges of digital security and regulatory compliance, Mihir Gandhi, Partner and Payments Transformation Leader, PwC India, said. "Fintech companies need to navigate an ever-changing regulatory landscape while building compliant partnerships to ensure sustainable success."

# HDFC Bank to double income of marginal farmers as CSR initiative

PTI ■ VARANASI

The country's biggest private sector lender HDFC Bank looks to increase the income of 5 lakh marginal farmers earning less than Rs 60,000 annually by 2025, as part of its corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative, Parivartan. "The bank's focus on rural development reflects our continued commitment to fostering sustainable growth and uplifting vulnerable communities. Since its inception in 2014, Parivartan has grown into one of India's largest CSR programmes, active in 28 states and 8 Union Territories," HDFC Bank Deputy Managing Director Kaizad M Bharucha said. Launched in 2014, HDFC Bank 'Parivartan' was established with the vision to contribute to the socio-economic development of communities across India. With a CSR expenditure of over Rs 5,100 crore over the last decade, Parivartan has



consistently aimed to empower individuals by creating sustainable livelihoods, fostering sustainable development, and creating real-life change. Besides, he said, the bank under its CSR initiative, plans to impart skill training for nearly 2 lakh individuals to equip them with capabilities that drive self-sufficiency. Bringing 2 lakh acres of unirrigated land under irrigation, fostering agricultural productivity and scholarships for 25,000 meritorious underprivileged students to improve access to

education are some other initiatives that the bank intends to undertake. Parivartan has made significant strides in key areas such as education, skill development, healthcare, and financial inclusion, aligning its efforts with nine of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), he said. "Economic and financial well-being of society is what every responsible lender should aspire for. Our commitment to this principle is underscored in our CSR programme. Unequivocally,

the business of banking is underpinned by trust and as a responsible lender, and the bank stands committed to contributing to nation-building," he added. HDFC Bank has reported a CSR spend of Rs 945.31 crore for the financial year 2023-24, an increase of nearly Rs 125 crore from the previous year. As per the Companies Act 2013, every company for which the CSR provisions apply must ensure that the firm spends in every financial year at least 2 per cent of its average net profits made during the immediately preceding three financial years as per its CSR policy. The bank's net profit increased by 38 per cent to Rs 60,812 crore on FY'24 from Rs 44,109 crore in the previous fiscal. Average net profit of the company for the CSR calculation comes out to Rs 47,294 crore taking into account net profit of Rs 36,961 crore for FY'22. So, the bank should be spending around Rs 950 crore during

the current fiscal. "With over 65 per cent of India's population residing in rural areas, we strongly believe that inclusive development can only be attained when the prosperity and livelihood in villages keeps pace with the growth. We prioritise rural areas for our programme and currently 70 per cent of our programmes are being implemented in such areas," said Nusrat Pathan, Head CSR, HDFC Bank. Bharucha further said that the bank is working towards becoming carbon neutral by 2031-32. As part of this initiative, he said, the bank is looking at reducing its emissions, energy, and water consumption. The bank will continue to incorporate and scale up the use of renewable energy in its operations. As part of the green initiative, he said, the bank has raised USD 300 million through its first ever sustainable finance bond issue in February this year.

# Tata Power Solar installs rooftop solar systems in Chhattisgarh

PTI ■ RAIPUR

The rooftop solar systems installations by Tata Power Solar Systems Ltd (TPSSL) have reached 600 in Chhattisgarh under an initiative, a company official said on Sunday. The company, which is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Tata Power Renewable Energy Ltd (TPREL), launched its rooftop solar system installation initiative after its success in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Kerala, the official said. Though the installation of rooftop solar systems under the initiative, 'GharGharSolar, Tata Power ke Sang', started in mid-this year in the state, it was officially launched by Tata Power Company Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director Praveer Sinha and TPREL CEO and MD Deepesh Nanda this week, the official said. The initiative intends to make



clean energy available to all households in the state, building on the commitment to promoting sustainable energy solutions throughout India, he said. Chhattisgarh has become a significant hub for TPSSL's activities and initiatives, with a catered portfolio of over 600 installations, equivalent to more than 250 MW capacity across residential, commercial, industrial, and direct projects. The initiative

will cover all 33 districts of the state, he said. In line with the PM Surya Ghar Yojana, residents can receive a central government subsidy of Rs 30,000 for 1kW, Rs 60,000 for 2kW, and Rs 78,000 for a 3-10kW system, he said. These subsidies aimed at making solar energy installations more accessible and affordable, enabling every household to shift to renewable energy without financial burden, he said.

# CEA urges banks to adapt changing customer preferences

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Chief Economic Advisor to the Centre, V Anantha Nageswaran has said banks should adapt to changing customer preferences and market dynamics in order to remain competitive. He highlighted the crucial role of agriculture in driving economic growth at an event organised by public sector Indian Bank here on Saturday. In his remarks on the topic 'Indian Economy and Banking: Growth and Trends', Nageswaran stressed on the importance of technological advancements in driving growth and innovation in the industry. The CEA, in a press release issued by the Bank, emphasised the need for



banks to adapt to changing customer preferences and market dynamics to remain competitive. He hailed the Indian Bank for its efforts to invest in knowledge sharing and excellence and lauded its initiative under the MSME Prerana programme which is aimed at training the entrepreneurs. In his address, Indian Bank

Managing Director and CEO S L Jain said, "We are delighted to have Dr Nageswaran sharing his insights on the Indian economy and its implications on the banking sector." The interaction would undoubtedly benefit all the participants and help them better understand the challenges and opportunities facing the industry, he added.

# India seeks investments from South Korea, Japan for shipbuilding, repair clusters

PTI ■ GOA

India is seeking investments and technology transfer from South Korea and Japan to establish shipbuilding and ship repair clusters to promote the domestic shipping supply chain in the country, according to a senior government official. Currently, India holds less than 1 per cent of the global shipbuilding market, dominated by China, South Korea, and Japan. "We are looking at South Korea and Japan for investments and technology transfer for establishing shipbuilding and ship repair clusters in India," TK Ramachandran, Secretary in



Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW), told a group of journalists here. Ramachandran was in Goa to participate in the 20th Maritime State Development Council (MSDC), where plans for a mega shipbuilding park, spanning multiple

states, were discussed. "We have communicated to them (South Korea and Japan) that you come with your technology and investments, we will provide you land for setting up shipbuilding and ship repair clusters," he said. Ramachandran also said that

proposed Rs 25,000 crore Maritime Development Fund (MDF) which looks at providing long-term, low-cost financial support and push towards indigenous shipbuilding will be basically equity funding. "The equity funding will come from the Centre, PSUs, pension funds and private sector," he noted. While pointing out that currently, 95 per cent of India's foreign trade happens through foreign-owned and foreign-flagged vessels, which results in an outgo of USD 110 billion annually from India, Ramachandran said almost 60 per cent of the country's ship repair work happens outside the country.

# Indian Overseas Bank bags Rajbhasha Kirti Puraskar

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Public sector Indian Overseas Bank has secured the Rajbhasha Kirti Pratham Puraskar first prize for the second consecutive year in the Official Language Implementation category for 2023-24 by the Ministry of Home Affairs. The recognition underscores the commitment of the city-headquartered bank in promoting the use of Hindi language and enhancing the implementation of official language policies across its operations. Union Home Minister Amit Shah presented the award to the bank's Managing Director and CEO Ajay Kumar



Srivastava in New Delhi at a function to mark the Hindi Day Celebrations and the Diamond Jubilee of Official Languages, a press release from the Bank said. Indian Overseas Bank currently has 3,264 branches, 3,500 ATM network and 7,251 business correspondents. It also offers its service in Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand and Sri Lanka. The Ministry of Home Affairs introduced the Rajbhasha Kirti Puraskar award scheme to encourage the implementation of the official language policy among ministries, departments, public sector undertakings, nationalised banks, among others.

# Inter-departmental panel to combat online gaming tax evasion

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

An inter-departmental committee with representatives from ED, RBI, tax and consumer affairs departments may be set up to combat the proliferation of online gaming platforms and ensure regulatory compliance, a DGGI report said. The GST intelligence wing of the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has initiated action against 118 domestic online gaming entities, and Show Cause Notices have been issued to 34 taxpayers involving tax amount of Rs 1,10,531.91 crore. The notices were issued to these gaming companies as they were not paying GST at 28 per cent rate. Furthermore, 658 offshore entities have been identified as non-registered/non-compliant entities and are being investigated by the DGGI. Also, 167 URL/websites have been recommended for blocking.

The Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI) annual report 2023-24 flagged that online money gaming is a "high-risk" industry for tax evasion, money laundering, cyber frauds, juvenile delinquency and various socio-economic evils. Despite the legal clarity with effect from October 1, 2023, bringing the gaming entities under the tax net continues to be an uphill task. Many such firms are set up in offshore tax havens (i.e. Malta, Curacao Islands, British Virgin Islands, Cyprus etc.) known for their opacity, thus making it difficult to ascertain their ultimate ownership. There are online gaming platforms which keep on changing their URL/website/apps to avoid tax compliance. Use of dark web or VPN based platforms for such supply further accentuates the difficulties in tax law enforcement, the DGGI said. "Therefore, a multi-



prolonged approach to deal with this sector is need of the hour. An Inter-department committee comprising CBIC, CBDT, ED, MeITY, MCA, MIB, RBI, Department of Consumer Affairs, and the like along with industry bodies may be

set up to develop comprehensive strategies and regulations to combat the proliferation of such platforms, ensuring regulatory compliance, consumer protection and national security," the DGGI said in its report released on

Saturday. In October 2023, the government clarified in the GST law that online gaming attracts a 28 per cent tax on the total sum deposited by the players with the entity. The online gaming industry has grown exponentially in the last few years, at a CAGR of 28 per cent, reaching Rs 16,428 crore in FY23-24 as per an estimate. This boost is largely attributed to factors like widespread smartphone penetration, improved internet connectivity, a growing youth population and the development of local gaming content. Several of show cause notice recipients have approached the court filing Writ Petition against the notices, and the matter is sub-judice before the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India. The notices have essentially contended that games like rummy, poker and others are games of skill and, therefore, cannot be classified as betting/gambling. The terms

'betting' and 'gambling' are not defined in GST law. "Sir William Raynell Anson, a renowned British jurist, has defined a wager or bet as 'a promise to give money or money's worth upon the determination or ascertainment of an uncertain event'. The Hon'ble Supreme Court's verdict on the matter shall have a significant impact on how the concept of online money gaming is understood," the DGGI said. Creating awareness and education among digital nagriks about safe and responsible gaming practices, promoting the use of legitimate platforms registered with MeitY or verified as permissible Real Money Gaming Platforms under the IT Rules, 2021, and entering into reciprocal arrangements with foreign governments for information sharing and tax enforcement may go a long way in effecting regulatory compliance in this industry, the DGGI said.

# Chopra finishes second in DL final, misses crown by 1cm

PTI ■ BRUSSELS

Star Indian javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra agonisingly missed the Diamond League crown by just one centimeter as he finished second for the second consecutive year with a throw of 87.86m in the season finale here on Saturday.

The 26-year-old Chopra, who had won the DL trophy in 2022 before finishing second last year, achieved his best throw of the day in his third attempt but that was 1cm short of eventual winner Anderson Peters' 87.87m effort.

Grenada's Peters, a two-time world champion, produced his best throw of the day in his opening attempt. Julian Weber of Germany was third with 85.97m.

Chopra, who added a silver to his Olympic medal tally in Paris following a historic gold at the Tokyo Games, thus ended his season on a high.

The Indian javelin throw superstar, who has a personal



best of 89.94m and season's best of 89.49m, had a series of 86.82m, 83.49m, 87.86m, 82.04m, 83.30m and 86.46m. The top three led the seven-

man field in the same order for the whole competition.

Peters will collect a Diamond League trophy and USD 30,000 for emerging as the DL

champion this season. Chopra will pocket USD 12,000 for his second-place finish in the grand finale which marked the end of the

prestigious Diamond League series after 14 legs, as well as the end of international athletics season. The Haryana lad remained

consistent throughout the season, though he won just one international event this season -- Paavo Nurmi Games in Turku, Finland on June 18.

He had made the Diamond League final cut after finishing fourth in the overall standings with 14 points from his two second-place finishes in DL one-day meets in Doha and Lausanne on May 10 and August 22.

Chopra has been struggling with his fitness this season and is expected to meet a doctor to rectify a groin injury that has affected him all season and came in the way of his quest to hit the 90m mark.

On Friday, national record-holding 3000m steeplechaser Sable had finished ninth in a 10-man field in his maiden DL final with a mediocre time of 8 minute and 17.09 seconds to end a largely disappointing season. He had finished 11th in the Olympic Games.

It was for the first time that a DL finale featured two Indians.



## In-form India clear favourites against Korea in ACT hockey semifinal

PTI ■ DFASFDSHULUNBUIR (CHINA)

Maintaining a clean slate, favourites India will fancy their chances when they take on a below-par but unpredictable Korea in the semifinals of the Asian Champions Trophy hockey tournament here on Monday.

Paris Olympics bronze medalist India have been in rollicking form in the tournament so far, registering five wins out of five league matches. The Harmanpreet Singh-led side started their campaign with a 3-0 win over hosts China and then trounced Japan and Malaysia 5-1 and 8-1 respectively.

India then beat Korea 3-1 before eking out a narrow 2-1 win over arch-rivals Pakistan.

It has been a commanding performance from the Indians as they excelled in every department be it forwardline, midfield or defence.

The most promising part of India's performance in the league stages has been the form of the strikers.

Scoring field goals was a major concern in Paris but here the young forwardline comprising Sukhjeet Singh, Abhishek, Uttam Singh, Gurjot Singh, Arajjeet Singh Hundal and others have exceeded expectations.

Young midfielder Raj Kumar Pal, too, has shown bright, scoring some fine field goals. Besides, veteran Manpreet Singh, vice-captain Vivek Sagar Prasad and Nilakanta Sharma has excelled in the midfield.

The Indian defence too has performed stoutly, conceding just four goals with goalkeepers Krishan Bahadur Pathak and Suraj Karkera not letting the team feel the void left by the retirement of the talismanic PR Sreejesh.

Harmanpreet, one of the best dragflickers in the world currently, has led from the front and has continued his good form of Paris, converting as many as five penalty corners. When India struggled for

field goals, Harmanpreet stood up with his penalty corner conversions.

Harmanpreet also has an able understudy in young Jugraj Singh, who is right now the fastest dragflicker in the world.

But a knockout game is a new beginning for any side and the Indians can ill afford to take Korea lightly as they can spring a surprise on their day, evidence of which was their last-gasp equaliser to draw 3-3 against Malaysia and keep their semifinal hopes alive.

The Indian defence will also have to be cautious about not conceding too many penalty corners as in Jihun Yang, the tournament's leading scorer with seven goals, Korea possesses a potent dragflicker.

In the other semifinal of the day, Pakistan will take on hosts China. FIFA coach capacity building workshop to be held at AIFF NCE in Kolkata

New Delhi, (PTI) The FIFA coach capacity building workshop, a vital component of the world football governing body's Women's League Development, which falls under the broader FIFA Women's Development Programme, will be held at the AIFF National Centre of Excellence (NCE) in Kolkata from September 16 to 18. The workshop will be conducted by FIFA experts Simon Toselli and Stephanie Spielmann.

Toselli, a FIFA women's football technical expert, had previously conducted the women's football strategy workshop in New Delhi in June this year. He has been collaborating with 25 countries on different projects and implementation of strategies (AFC, OFC, CAF and UEFA).

Spielmann, a former player, is a UEFA A-License coach and a FIFA and OFC instructor. She has been part of the FIFA coach mentorship programme with the Belgium women's national team.

## Argentina reaches Davis Cup Final after tense win over Finland

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Argentina clinched a berth in the eight-team Davis Cup Final with a tense 3-0 win over Finland.

The Argentines have reached the quarterfinals in Malaga, Spain, in November for the first time in five years.

They had to battle in Group D in Manchester after an opening loss to 2022 champion Canada. They beat host Britain on Friday and overcame a gritty Finland, a semifinalist last year but without its best player on Saturday.

Tomas Martin Etcheverry beat 703rd-ranked Eero Vasa 7-6(5) 6-3, then Francisco Cerundolo outlasted Otto Virtanen 6-7(4) 6-1 6-0. Argentina needed the doubles, and Maximo Gonzalez and Andres Molteni delivered against Patrick Kaukovalta and Harri Heliovaara 6-7(3) 6-4 6-3.

The result forces Britain to have to beat Canada 3-0 on Sunday to advance at Canada's expense. In Bologna, Brazil beat Belgium 2-1 after losses to Italy and the Netherlands in Group A.

Three-set wins by Joao Fonseca and Thiago Monteiro followed by a doubles loss took more than six hours to complete on the indoor hard-court. Brazil has a shot at advancing; the Netherlands must lose to unbeaten defending champion Italy 3-0 on Sunday. In Zhuhai, the United States earned a seeding in the Final by beating Germany 2-1 and topping Group C unbeaten.



AP ■ FORT LAUDERDALE (US)

Lionel Messi made a successful return after a lengthy absence, scoring two goals and assisting on the third to lead Inter Miami to a 3-1 victory over the Philadelphia Union.

The Argentine star winger and eight-time Ballon d'Or winner had not played with Inter Miami since June 1 because of national team commitments and a right ankle injury sustained in a 1-0 victory over Colombia in the Copa America final on July 14.

"A little bit tired because of the heat and humidity of Miami but I wanted to return so much after such a long time away," Messi said in Spanish on the Apple TV broadcast after the game. "I started training with the group and began to feel better."

Reilly Opelka saved two match points to beat Henri Squire 6-7(4) 7-6(9) 6-3 and Brandon Nakashima eased past Maximilian Marterer 6-4 6-2. The Americans dropped their first point in nine matches when Austin Krajicek and Rajeev Ram lost to Kevin Krawietz and Tim Puetz 6-1 7-6(4).

"We have a good chance against any team there (in Malaga)," Nakashima said. "There's a bunch of talented Americans playing really well right now."

In Group B in Spain, a tie between teams already out of contention saw 10-time champion France beat three-time champion the Czech Republic 2-1 sealed by a doubles win.

Both teams were already qualified for the Final but the US grabbed a seeding awarded to the group winners. Reilly Opelka saved two match points to beat Henri Squire 6-7(4) 7-6(9) 6-3 and Brandon Nakashima eased past Maximilian Marterer 6-4 6-2. The Americans dropped their first point in nine matches when Austin Krajicek and Rajeev Ram lost to Kevin Krawietz and Tim Puetz 6-1 7-6(4). "We have a good chance against any team there (in Malaga)," Nakashima said. "There's a bunch of talented Americans playing really well right now."

## Champions League starts bigger new era with Mbappe at Madrid and rematches of past finals

AP ■ GENEVA

The new Champions League format kicks off Tuesday after more than six years of planning, one failed proposal and one Super League launch fiasco.

In the end, storied clubs who pushed for change from UEFA and created turmoil in European soccer got most of what they wanted: More teams, more games and more of them against strong opponents, more money.

Now there are 36 teams instead of 32, each playing eight games instead of six, against eight different opponents instead of three.

Kylian Mbappe starts his quest for a first title with his third club, the record 15-time European champion Real Madrid that hosts Stuttgart. Mbappe reached the semifinals in 2017 with Monaco and was a beaten finalist in 2020 with Paris Saint-Germain.

Ultimately, all 36 teams will be ranked from top to bottom in a single league standings that finishes in January instead of traditional four-team groups that would end in December.

UEFA has cleared its midweek schedule to relaunch the marquee club event over back-to-back-to-back nights - six games each through Thursday. The league phase through January

is quite simple. Each team plays a balanced schedule of eight games - four at home, four on the road - earning three points for a win and one for a draw.

Eight different opponents were allocated in the draw last month by a software program picking two teams from each of four seeding pots. Seeding was based on a team's UEFA ranking over five years of results in European competitions.

Recent champions Madrid, Manchester City and Bayern Munich were among the top seeds. Low-ranked pot four included debutants Girona and Brest, and long-time absentees Aston Villa, Bologna and Stuttgart. Advancing to the knockout phase is more complex, and UEFA suggested teams will need eight points from eight games to stay involved.

The top eight in the standings on January 29 go direct to the round of 16 in March seeded Nos. 1-8.

Teams placed ninth to 24th in the standings enter a knockout playoffs round in February. Teams 9-16 will be seeded in the draw and play second legs at home against teams who placed from 17-24. The bottom 12 teams in the standings are eliminated.

The eight playoff winners advance as unseeded teams in the round of 16, which will be drawn into a set



bracket like a tennis tournament. That replaces the old system of separate draws for the quarterfinals and semifinals.

The new era starts with two early kickoffs featuring three European Cup winners from the 1980s - Juventus (1985) hosts PSV Eindhoven (1988) and Aston Villa (1982) travels to Young Boys. Both are first-time fixtures between the teams.

Also playing are the four teams with the most European Cup and Champions League titles in their 70-season history.

While Madrid plays Stuttgart, six-time winner Bayern hosts Dinamo Zagreb. The standout pairing is AC Milan against Liverpool at San Siro. Milan won the last of its seven European titles in the 2007 final against Liverpool.

### Man City-Inter meet

A more recent rematch of another Istanbul final features the current champions of England and Italy. Manchester City, riding Erling Haaland's hot start to the season, hosts an Inter Milan it beat 1-0 in the 2023 final and is unbeaten in Champions League home games for six years. It is also a night for fresh faces. Girona, which is in the same Abu

Dhabi-backed ownership group as Man City, will make its European debut at Paris Saint-Germain.

Bologna hosts Shakhtar Donetsk in its first game in the competition since a preliminary round exit 60 years ago. Bologna still plays in the Stadio Renato Dall'Ara that has been its home since 1927 and staged games at the 1934 World Cup.

Leverkusen and Atalanta, the Europa League finalists last season, now rise together to the bigger stage.

Bayer Leverkusen's only loss in a remarkable first full season under coach Xabi Alonso was that Europa final against Atalanta. Now Leverkusen returns to the Champions League at Feyenoord, whose coach last season Arne Slot took the job at Liverpool that was first offered to Alonso.

Atalanta hosts Arsenal which has lost captain Martin Odegaard to an ankle injury suffered playing for Norway on Monday.

La Liga leader Barcelona with 17-year-old star Lamine Yamal goes to Monaco and the most unlikely fixture of all 18 this week is Brest vs. Sturm Graz.

Brest, founded 121 years ago, has never played a European game and Sturm last played in the

Champions League 23 years ago. The game is being played at Guingamp, 110 kilometers east of Atlantic port city Brest, whose home stadium is not modern enough.

UEFA has put at least 2.5 billion euros (\$2.8 billion) into the prize money fund for the 36 clubs, a 25% raise on last season. The title winner in Munich on May 31 can expect to get more than 160 million euros (\$177 million).

Each team gets a basic 18.6 million euros (\$20.6 million), then 2.1 million euros (\$2.3 million) for each league-phase game won and 700,000 euros (\$780,000) per draw.

Each place in the standings is worth more money with shares of 275,000 euros (\$305,000) per place: 36 shares, or 9.9 million euros (\$11 million), goes to the team finishing top in January and a single share to the last-place team.

Bonuses escalate from 11 million euros (\$12.3 million) per team for advancing to each knockout round.

Another prize fund of 853 million euros (\$950 million) is allocated based on teams' historical record in UEFA competitions and the value of national and global broadcast deals.

# Khawaja relishes his on-field battles with Ashwin

PTI ■ MELBOURNE,

Australian opener Usman Khawaja has over the years relished his on-field battles with star Indian spinner Ravichandran Ashwin, who according to the southpaw is a man who always has a plan up his sleeve.

Ashwin (39 wickets) is the third-highest wicket-taker among Indian bowlers in Test matches in Australia, only behind Anil Kumble (49) and Kapil Dev (51) apart from topping the charts across all bilateral series (home and away) with 114 scalps which also includes seven five-for.

"Ravi is a very good bowler. He is very strategic. He always has a plan," Khawaja told Star Sports.

"He tries to figure it out and stay ahead of the game, which I respect. I respect his cricketing brain. It's always cool to play against him, and I look forward to the challenge," he was all praise for Ashwin's tactical nous.

This will be Ashwin's fifth Test tour of Australia, having been part of the sides that



played in 2011-12, 2014-15, 2018-19 and 2020-21 although on last two tours, he had injury issues.

Don't think India are favourites: Travis Head. Meanwhile, India's current nemesis Travis Head had

asserted that despite visiting team's dominance during last two Test series, he does not feel the visitors will be the

'favourites' this time around. "I don't feel like they're my favourite. I just feel like we play them enough, play them

(a) lot," he told Star Sports.

"And, I guess the last couple of years I've been in nice form. So yeah, being able to play well, it's always nice.

"It's not hard to get up for the contest. It's hugely competitive. Yeah, it's easier to get up for the game. So, I wouldn't say they're my favourite."

However, the 30-year-old warned that Rohit Sharma and Co. Will be a difficult lot to compete against and the Aussies need to be at their best, especially in a couple of games.

"They're extremely difficult but it's been nice to play well in a couple of games and looking forward to preparing well and being ready to go. And hopefully, I can contribute to what's a successful summer for us," he added.

The two teams will lock horns in the upcoming five-Test series in Australia starting November 22, as India defends the Border-Gavaskar Trophy it has won over past four bilateral engagements (home and away).



# Ramkumar-Balaji pair loses must win doubles

PTI ■ STOCKHOLM

Ramkumar Ramanathan and N Sriram Balaji could play well only in patches to lose the do-or-die doubles against Andre Goransson and Filip Bergevi as India succumbed to Sweden in the Davis Cup World Group I tie after conceding an unassailable 0-3 lead, here Sunday.

After losing both the singles on Saturday, India needed to win the third rubber to stay alive in the tie but Ramkumar and Balaji went down 3-6 4-6 in one hour and 19 minutes.

India's dismal record against Sweden in the Davis Cup continued as it was the team's sixth defeat in as many ties. The reverse singles have been rendered inconsequential.

India will now compete next year in Play-offs to keep place in World Group I.

The Indian pair had its first chance in game three in the opening set on Goransson's serve. Balaji and Ramkumar pocketed four straight points to earn a breakpoint but the home team averted the danger.

Ramkumar was, however, broken in the next game and Bergevi held his own to zoom to a commanding 5-2 lead.

Balaji served to stay in the set and managed to hold. The home team comfortably sealed the opening set with

Bergevi holding at love.

In the second set, Ramkumar had a fiery start, holding at love.

Bergevi though surprisingly struggled with his first serve as he committed two double faults to be at 30-all.

Sensing a chance, Ramkumar attacked Bergevi's second serve but could respond only with a feeble shot on the Swede's wishid cross court return. Standing at the net, it was an easy put away for Goransson.

Balaji was under pressure in the next game.

Serving at deuce, he fired an ace but Goransson hit a backhand volley winner on the next point to again make it deuce. The Indians soaked the pressure and eventually saved the game.

Balaji faced the heat again in the seventh game with both Swedish players finding service return winners with attacking shots.

Goransson earned a break chance with a volley winner from the net. Ramkumar hit a powerful forehand return following an exciting rally on that break point and later the Indians saved one more but on the third breakpoint Balaji netted a return. The lead stayed with the home team that served out the match in the 10th game. Ramkumar's causal forehand return landed outside the lines on the match point.

# Duleep Trophy: Bhui makes hundred in defeat against India A



PTI ■ ANANTAPUR

Ricky Bhui delayed the inevitable with a stubborn hundred, but spinners Shams Mulani and Tanush Kotian eventually brought India D to their knees as India A walked away with a 186-run win in the Duleep Trophy match here on Sunday.

Bhui, starting from overnight 44, made 113 (195b, 14x4, 3x6) but India D, overnight 62, were bundled out for 301, chasing 488.

The victory enabled India A to stay in contention for the title with 6 points. But they will have to get a favourable result against table-toppers India C (9 points) in their next match here from September 19.

India D, out of title race after two successive defeats, will be up against second-placed India B, who have 7 points.

On a pitch that gave copious assistance to the spinners, the 'D' batters needed to show tremendous application to hang around. But apart from Bhui none really showed the stomach for a fight.

Bhui's second-wicket stand with Yash Dubey (37) was worth 100 runs but Dubey got run out, and in his next over Mulani castled Devdutt Padikkal to push India D to 105 for three.

They managed to stitch two useful stands for two subsequent wickets - a 53 between Bhui and skipper Shreyas Iyer (41, 55b, 8x4) and a 62 between Bhui and Sanju Samson (40, 45b, 3x4, 3x6).

But their stands were more about aggression, and the approach was fraught with danger on a pitch where spinners called the shots.

Both Shreyas and Samson were cleaned up by Mulani, who was later adjudged player of the match. A sharply turned one accounted for Shreyas while Samson failed to connect a pull as the ball disturbed the timber.

While wickets were tumbling at constantly at the other end, Bhui was a picture of confidence and brought up his century in 170 balls.

Then off-spinner Tanush Kotian got into act, and started his demolition job by removing Saransh Jain (5), and six overs later he ousted Bhui, who holed out to Riyan Parag in the deep.

It ended the fight of India D even as Kotian went on to add two more wickets - Saurabh Kumar (22) and Harshit Rana (24).

Brief scores: India A: 290 and 380/3 declared beat India D: 183 and 301 all out in 82.2 overs (Ricky Bhui 113, Shreyas Iyer 41, Sanju Samson 40; Shams Mulani 3/117, Tanush Kotian 4/73) by 186 runs.

# Bangladesh arrive in Chennai, Shanto confident of good show

PTI ■ CHENNAI

A confident Bangladesh team arrived in India on Sunday for two Test matches and three T20Is with visiting skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto hoping that their historic 2-0 series win in Pakistan recently would hold them in good stead against the formidable hosts in the coming weeks.

The Bangladesh squad landed in Chennai, the venue for the opening Test beginning on September 19, on Sunday afternoon.

"It's definitely going to be a very challenging series for us," Shanto was quoted as saying at the pre-departure press briefing at the Dhaka airport.

"After a good series (vs Pakistan) there is definitely an extra confidence in the team, in the people of the country. Every series is an opportunity.

"We will play to win both matches. The things that matter to win, the process matters... Our aim will be to do the work properly. Good results are possible if we do our job properly," the Bangladesh captain added.

While India is on top of the World Test Championship (WTC) table, the Bangladesh



skipper believed that it will all boil down to how they perform during those five days and the result can come even in the last session.

"If you see the ranking, they are much ahead of us," Shanto noted. "We have been playing well lately. We have had a good series. Our aim will be to play well for five days.

"The result comes in the last session on the last day. If we play good cricket for five days, there is a chance for either team to win

in the last session," the skipper said just before boarding the flight to Chennai.

Adequate security cover for the visitors in Chennai

Usual security protocol was in place for Bangladesh team like it happens for all international teams with two police vans accompanying the team bus to the hotel.

Upon arrival at the hotel, the players were given a warm welcome as staff showered them with rose petals.

The entire team will be put on one of the floors, while armed security personnel will be present on the floor, which is a regular protocol.

The Tigers are visiting India after the tiny neighbours witnessed civil unrest for over a month. Following the students' protests last month that led to the ouster of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, there have been reports of communal clashes, with attacks on minorities, especially Hindus.



# Haryana, Karnataka, Punjab win in men National Junior Hockey Championship

PTI ■ JALANDHAR

Haryana, Karnataka and Punjab secured wins on day six of the 14th Hockey India Junior Men's National Championship here on Sunday.

Andhra Pradesh and Delhi played out a 5-5 draw. In the first match, Haryana thrashed Rajasthan 6-1. Rohit Rana (2nd minute), Sunil Maan (11th), Sahil Ruhul (17th) and Ami Khasa (60th) scored one goal each, while Navraj Singh (7th, 37th) struck a brace for Haryana.

Anurag Suthar (50th) scored the consolation goal for Rajasthan. In the second match, Karnataka also notched up a 6-1 win over Kerala

with Aryan Uthappa Mt (6th, 35th) and Sunil P B (8th, 45th) scoring a couple of goals each.

Vivek Ravi Bagade (22nd) and Dhanush Kaveriappa Ma (32nd) too scored one goal each, while in response, Anujith P (47th) scored the only goal for Kerala.

In the last match of the day, Punjab trounced Mizoram 7-1. For Punjab, captain Ujwal Singh (10th) opened the account before Harshdeep Singh (12th), Japnit Singh (15th), Om Rajnesh Saini (36th), Lovenoor Singh (40th), Jarman Singh (48th) and Abhishek Gorkhi (59th) joined him with a goal each.

In response, Akash Yadav (48th) scored the only goal for Mizoram.

# Lahiri slips to tied 12th at LIV Golf Individual Championship

PTI ■ CHICAGO

India's Anirban Lahiri went 11-over 71 in the second round and slipped to tied 12th in the 2024 LIV Golf Individual Championship here.

Lahiri carded two birdies but he also had three bogeys on the second day, and now he has a total of 2-under for 36 holes.

Lahiri began the tournament with a fine 3-under 67 that placed him inside the top-5. He had four birdies against one bogey in the opening round.

Jon Rahm entered this week's regular-season finale with a slim points margin over Joaquin Niemann.

The Legion XIII captain increased that advantage with a brilliant bogey-free 6-under 64 that now has him in position to claim two trophies after Sunday's final round at Bolingbrook Golf Club.

Rahm is at 7 under and owns a one-shot lead over Fireballs GC Captain Sergio Garcia on the leaderboard and a three-shot lead over Niemann, the Torque GC captain.

Rahm can still become Individual Champion even if he doesn't win the tournament.



Byrson DeChambeau's Crushers GC, winners last year in Chicago, have already clinched one of the three available seeds along with Rahm's Legion XIII.

The Crushers entered the final round tied for the tournament lead with Cleeks GC at 10 under and would clinch the No. 1 overall seed with a victory.

Niemann's one-shot advantage entering the day was erased in their first eight holes.

Playing in the same group for the second consecutive day, Rahm was 3 under while Niemann was 2 over.

At one point late in the round, Rahm was five strokes ahead of Niemann. But Niemann fought back down the stretch with birdies in three of the final four holes to shoot a 2-under 68 and stay within striking distance.

Hatton was on the verge of falling out of contention, opening with a 3-over 73 and

then playing the first 11 holes on Saturday at even par.

But then he found his game, playing the last seven holes in 5 under - a stretch that included a hole-in-one at the island green sixth hole.

First-round leader Brooks Koepka followed his opening bogey-free 8-under 62 with a 73 that included five bogeys in his first 12 holes.

But he made two late birdies and finished at 5-under and solo third. Team Cleeks are in the lead.

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