



OPINION 6 SHOWDOWN OVER RAHUL'S REMARKS IN THE US

WORLD 8 'EXPLODING PAGERS WERE MANUFACTURED IN HUNGARY'

MONEY 10 PM-AASHA SCHEME EXTENDED WITH ₹35,000 CRORE OUTLAY

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HARRY KANE SCORES 4 GOALS IN BAYERN'S 9-2 11 SPORTS

Centre approves 'One Nation, One Election'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

The Centre has geared up to realise the dreams of having simultaneous polls as it went ahead in approving the high-level panel's recommendations on 'one nation, one election' plan for holding for the Lok Sabha, State Assemblies and Local Bodies elections simultaneously in a phased manner after a countrywide consensus-building exercise.



President Droupadi Murmu being presented a report on simultaneous elections in the country by former President Ram Nath Kovind who heads High-Level Committee (HLC) on 'One Nation, One Election', and Home Minister Amit Shah, at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi

Communist Party of India (Marxist) opposed the proposal, while the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the National People's Party (NPP) supported it.

While the Lok Sabha polls were held in May-June this year, States like Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh also went to polls along with the parliamentary election.

among the States that are scheduled to go to polls in 2025. The terms of the current assemblies in Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, and Puducherry will end in 2026, while the terms of the Goa, Gujarat, Manipur, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand assemblies will end in 2027.

The terms of the current Lok Sabha and the State assemblies that went to polls together this year will end in 2029.

About 60 per cent voting in J and K

This is first Assembly election after removal of Article 370

MOHIT KANDHARI JAMMU

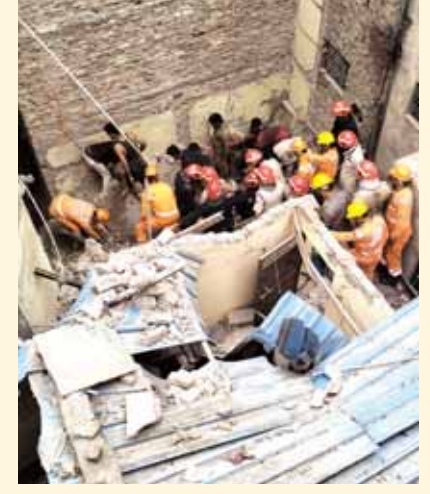
Close to 14 lakh electorate (around 60 per cent), belonging to different age groups and political beliefs, dressed in their traditional attire, demonstrated the superiority and priority of 'ballot over the bullet' on Wednesday as they queued up outside the polling stations.



Shopian: Voters wait in a queue at a polling station during the first phase of Assembly elections, in Shopian district of south Kashmir, Wednesday

Table with 4 columns: S. No., DISTRICTS, No. of ACs, Approximate Voter Turnout %

58.46 percent was recorded across five Parliamentary segments in Jammu and Kashmir in May 2024. CEO PK Pole said after the 2008 Assembly/ Lok Sabha polls, the voter turnout across 24 Assembly constituencies was the highest so far.



NDRF and Fire personnel conduct rescue operation as a house collapsed at Bapa Nagar (Karol Bagh) in New Delhi, on Wednesday

Four die, 14 injured as building collapses in Bapa Nagar

SAUMYA SHUKLA NEW DELHI

Four people died including two teenagers, two are in critical condition and 12 others suffered injuries following the collapse of a six-storey house in central Delhi's Bapa Nagar on Wednesday morning with the rescue operation lasting for more than eight hours.

Government announces Chandrayaan-4, Venus Orbiter missions

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

Bouyed over the success of earlier Space missions, the Centre on Wednesday approved a new moon mission "Chandrayaan-4" to develop and demonstrate technologies needed for landing of Indian astronauts on the moon and safely bring them back to Earth.



FILE PHOTO

While the total fund requirement for the technology demonstration mission "Chandrayaan-4" is Rs 2,104.06 crore, the Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has allocated Rs 1,236 crore for the mission, of which Rs 824 crore will be spent on the

development of the spacecraft by the Indian Space Research Organisation. ISRO will be responsible for the development of spacecraft and launch. The mission is expected to be completed within 36 months of approval with the

participation of industry and academia. All the critical technologies are envisaged to be indigenously developed. The 'Venus Orbiter Mission' to be helmed by the Department of Space will involve placing a scientific spacecraft in the orbit of Venus for better understanding of its surface and subsurface, atmospheric processes and influence of the Sun on the Venusian atmosphere.

Doctors refuse to work, say two demands still not met

SAUGAR SENGUPTA KOLKATA

The junior doctors of Bengal refused to end their cease work even two days after their talks with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee bringing "fruitful results" that included among other things removal of two senior IPS officers and health department directors who allegedly misled the investigation in RG Kar Medical College rape and murder case.



A delegation of junior doctors leaves for Nabanna (State Secretariat) by bus to meet West Bengal Chief Secretary Manoj Pant for a discussion on certain 'key unresolved issues' like security in hospitals, from their 'dharna' site outside Swasthya Bhawan in Kolkata, Wednesday

issues and further discussions with us would take place regarding its formulation and function. We would like to sit in a meeting with you and other members of the task force today regarding the same."

India serves notice to Pakistan for review of Indus Water Treaty



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

India has served a formal notice to Pakistan seeking a review of the Indus Water Treaty inked in 1960, arguing that "fundamental and unforeseen" changes in the circumstances require a reassessment of the pact.

exchange between the two sides on the use of the waters of a number of cross-border rivers. India's notification highlights fundamental and unforeseen changes in circumstances that require a reassessment of obligations under various articles of the treaty, the sources said.

EAC report on relative economic performance of states reflects Vaastu



RAJESH KUMAR NEW DELHI

Country's Vaastu seems to be reflected in a report titled "Relative Economic Performance of Indian States: 1960-61 to 2023-24" by the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) which clearly shows that western and southern Indian States are more prosperous.

Economic Performance of Indian States: 1960-61 to 2023-24' said the development of eastern part of the country remains a concern. Ancient Indian tradition mentions that south corner, even of the cities flourish more when compared to other periphery.

"In the north, States like Delhi and Haryana also stand out. Delhi has one of the highest per capita incomes throughout the study period. The divergent performance of Haryana and Punjab warrants further investigation to understand the underlying policy implications.



Trump: PM Modi will meet him during US visit

FORMER PRESIDENT Donald Trump has said Prime Minister Narendra Modi will meet him next week during his upcoming three-day visit to the US.

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Detailed report on Page 8



# If BJP comes in Delhi, all free schemes will be stopped: AAP MP Sanjay Singh

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

AP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh alleged on Wednesday that if the BJP comes to power in Delhi, it will stop all free government schemes, including free electricity, mohalla clinics and education, with the latter hitting back at Singh, accusing him of "misleading" people.

"The Kejriwal-led AAP Government has been providing free education, electricity, medicines through mohalla clinics, among other things, to the residents of Delhi. If Kejriwal is not there, all these facilities will be stopped by the BJP," he claimed.

Reacting to Singh's claims, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva accused the AAP leader of "misleading" people. He said only a few months ago, Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena said the free services, including electricity, water and ration, will continue. "After the double engine government comes to power, we will implement free electricity, free water and free health in Delhi. We will not cheat the people of Delhi by saying things are free but bills of thousands of rupees are reaching the slums. It will not happen after the BJP government comes to power," he stated. AAP leader said that BJP insult the people of Delhi by calling these things



freebies. "They say free facilities should not be provided to people. It is for the people to decide the future of the city," he said.

"Now, it is your time. You need to think that if Kejriwal is not there, what will happen to Delhi and its residents. The free education that your children get will be stopped. The mohalla clinics, free medical facilities, free bus travel for women, free pilgrimage tour for the elderly -- all this will be stopped by the

BJP," Singh said.

Alleging that the BJP has failed to build quality schools in their states, he claimed, "The BJP has been ruling in Gujarat for 27 years but not even one school has been constructed there where the prime minister can get himself photographed and show the condition of the school to people. He had to get a tent school set up during elections in Ahmedabad to show to people."

# Bullet lodged near heart for 16 years, man undergoes successful surgery

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 45-year-old man, who lived with a bullet lodged dangerously close to his heart for 16 years, has finally undergone a successful surgery to remove it at a private Max Super Speciality hospital.

Shailender Singh, a resident of Kanpur, was shot in 2008 and came to the hospital, Saket with chest pain and coughing up blood, according to the hospital statement. "Over the years, Singh had sought multiple opinions from specialists in Kanpur, but due to the bullet being lodged near the vital structures, including his heart and lungs, doctors advised against surgery," the statement said, adding that he received non-surgical treatment and remained symptom-free for years.

Elaborating on the case details, Dr. Shaiwal Khandelwal, Associate Director of Thoracic Surgery at Max Super Speciality Hospital, Saket, who removed both the bullet and the damaged section of Shailender Singh's lung, said, the patient remained



asymptomatic until the last year when he developed left-sided chest pain and began coughing up blood (hemoptysis). The quantity and frequency of blood in his cough progressively increased. "He then consulted us, and his CT scan revealed a bullet in the left lung hilum with collapse and consolidation of the lung. He was advised of surgery, but the patient went back to his hometown to get a second opinion. Soon after, he started coughing up a massive amount of blood, made a distress call, and was admitted

to hospital," Khandelwal said. "His bronchoscopy revealed the bullet was pressing upon the airway, causing active bleeding from the left upper lobe of the lung. An emergency surgery was performed to remove the bullet and the damaged part of the lung. His condition improved significantly after the surgery." Dr. Khandelwal said, pointing out that bullets located in dangerous areas and causing no symptoms are usually left untreated.

However, in some cases, these bullets may trigger foreign

body reactions, migrate, and invade vital structures, as happened with this patient. "It is extremely rare to see a long-standing impacted bullet cause life-threatening bleeding. As a life-saving measure, emergency surgery is performed, and sometimes the entire lung may need to be removed. In this case, we removed only the cause of the bleeding and the already damaged lung," he said.

Following a successful surgery, Singh has been discharged and is recovering at home, he added.

# Navy aircraft faces technical failure

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A High Altitude Long Endurance Remotely Piloted Aircraft (HALE RPA ) leased by the Indian Navy operating from INS Rajali, Arakonnam (near Chennai) encountered a technical failure at about 1400 hrs on Wednesday whilst on a routine surveillance mission which could not be reset in flight. The aircraft was navigated to a safe area over sea and carried out a controlled ditching at sea off Chennai. A detailed report has been sought from the original equipment manufacturer (OEM), navy said.

# Second wave of device explosions hits Lebanon, killing at least nine

AP ■ BEIRUT

Explosions went off in Beirut and multiple parts of Lebanon in an apparent second wave of detonations of electronic devices, Hezbollah officials and State media said Wednesday, reporting walkie-talkies and even solar equipment being targeted a day after hundreds of pagers blew up. At least nine people were killed and 300 were wounded, the Health Ministry said.

Several blasts were heard at the funeral in Beirut for three Hezbollah members and a child killed by exploding pagers the day before, according to Associated

Press journalists at the scene. An AP photographer in the southern coastal city of Sidon saw a car and a mobile phone shop damaged after devices exploded inside of them.

A Hezbollah official told the AP that walkie-talkies used by the group exploded. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to speak to the media. Lebanon's official news agency reports that solar energy systems exploded in homes in several areas of Beirut and in southern Lebanon, wounding at least one girl.

The new blasts hit a country still thrown into confusion and anger

after Tuesday's pager bombings, which appeared to be a complex Israeli attack targeting Hezbollah members that caused civilian casualties, too. At least 12 people were killed, including two children, and some 2,800 people wounded as hundreds of pagers used by Hezbollah members began detonating wherever they happened to be - in homes, cars, at grocery stores and in cafes.

In the first wave of bombings, it appeared that small amounts of explosives had been hidden in the thousands of pagers delivered to and remotely detonated. The reports of further devices exploding

suggested even greater infiltration of boobytraps into Lebanon's supply chain. It also deepens concerns over the attacks in which hundreds of blasts went off in public areas, often with many bystanders, with no certainty of who was holding the rigged devices.

The attacks, which Israel has not commented on, renewed fears that the simmering conflict between Israel and Hezbollah could escalate into all-out war. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Wednesday the US is still assessing how the attack could affect efforts to negotiate a cease-fire in the Israel-Hamas war in

Gaza.

Israel began moving more troops to its border with Lebanon on Wednesday as a precautionary measure, according to an official with knowledge of the movements who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to speak to the media.

Hezbollah and Israeli forces have exchanged fire almost daily since October 8, the day after a deadly Hamas-led assault in southern Israel triggered the war. Since then, hundreds have been killed in the strikes in Lebanon and dozens in Israel, while tens of thousands on each side of the border have been displaced.



# Child-lifting racket busted in Gurugram, three held

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Gurugram police has busted a child-lifting racket and arrested three people, including two women, in the case, police said on Wednesday.

The police also rescued a 5-year-old boy from the accused. The boy was kidnapped on Tuesday, they said.

According to the police, on Tuesday evening, a resident of Behrampur village filed a complaint that an unknown woman took his 5-year-old son while he was playing on the street.

Based on his complaint, an FIR was lodged under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. Two special police teams were formed to look for the boy, they said.

The police arrested the three accused, including two women, late Tuesday night from the Sector 52 area.

The accused were identified as Varsha (27), Ashah alias Sapna (23), and her husband Mukul (27), a senior police officer said.

"During interrogation, the accused revealed that both the women had come to Behrampur village to kidnap the child on Tuesday. Varsha kidnapped the boy while he was playing on the streets. She brought the child to Ghata village, where Mukul and Sapna brought the child to their rented room. They had planned to take the child to Bihar but police rescued him in time," he said.

The accused confessed that they had kidnapped the boy to make him beg on the streets, the officer said. He added that the accused confessed that they had kidnapped the child for begging.

Further investigation is underway, he added.

# About 60 per cent voting...

From page 1

Out of seven districts, Kishtwar recorded the highest voter turnout of 77.23 per cent followed by Doda 69.33 per cent and Ramban 67.71 per cent, PK Pole added. BJP is locked in a straight fight with the alliance partners — National Conference and the Congress party in the Chenab valley region.

Out of eight Assembly segments, the three Assembly seats of Inderwal, Kishtwar, and Padder Nagent witnessed a tough fight on ground zero. Inderwal Assembly segment recorded over 80 per cent voter turnout while the Kishtwar seat saw over

75 per cent and Padder Nageni 77 per cent voter turnout.

A polling station in Bagwan Mohalla in Kishtwar witnessed some clashes between the two rival candidates and their supporters during the polling. "There was some issue regarding identification, one person did not have an identity card. The situation is normal, voting has resumed," Kishtwar DM Rajesh Kumar Shavan said.

In Kashmir valley, the South Kashmir district of Kulgam recorded over 61.57 per cent voter turnout followed by Anantnag where 54.17 per cent voter turnout was reported till

6pm. Shopian and Pulwama, which remained hotbeds of militancy, recorded 53.64 per cent and 46 per cent polling. The highest voter turnout was attributed to the safe and secure environment prevailing across Jammu and Kashmir, the participation of a large number of candidates and reach out by the different political parties during the campaign, and the presence of independent candidates supported by the banned Jamaat-e-Islami.

One of the new entrants in the fray Sayyar Ahmad Reshi, an independent candidate supported by the banned Jamaat-e-Islami said, "I want to see a

peaceful environment in Kashmir. I want to end the barbarism and give a better platform to the youth. I urge voters to use their conscience while voting for your candidate".

PDP candidate from Pulwama Waheed-Ur-Rehman Para said this assembly election is a fight to reclaim whatever we have lost in August 2019 at the time of reorganisation of the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir.

He said the message is clear that the Kashmiris want to fight democratically and within the Indian constitution and through voting they want to express their anguish, anger and dissent.

# Doctors refuse to work...

From page 1

The doctors went on way to the State secretariat Nabanna when reports last came in. "We had a meeting with the Government led by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee at her residence in Kalighat where we place some specific demands ... while some of these have been fulfilled, some others are yet to be granted," Dr Debashis Haldar one of the leaders of the Junior Doctors' Forum said.

Doctors' cease work entered its 40 days on Wednesday. "Besides the removal of the Health Secretary we had also demanded an atmosphere free of fear and an improved infrastructure including a central referral system, adequacy of beds, installation of CCTV cameras, well-

guarded rest rooms for doctors and panic buttons so that the system is made nearly foolproof," the doctor said.

"We are not in the movement only for the doctors' interests but for the people's interest also as the inadequate infrastructure like lack of X-Ray and CT Scan machines, MRI, inadequate beds and lack of other infrastructural facilities often leads to misunderstanding between the doctors and the patients ... lack of centralised referral system only gives impetus to a dalal (broker) raj which involves selling hospital beds to patients ... the patients have to run from hospital to hospital for bed and lose vital time in treatment ... this often creates a misunderstanding between the public and the doctors ...

besides most hospital and medical college premises are controlled by (politicians) musclemen who with their contacts, exploit, extort and threaten the juniors and other doctors ... this system must end and we had raised all these issues in the Monday's meeting ... till these issues are solved we don't see the cease work ending," the doctor said.

Meanwhile, Trinamool Congress general secretary Abhishek Banerjee on Wednesday appealed to the doctors to return to their work saying he too supported their demands. "Since day one, I have supported the doctors in their concerns regarding safety and security, and I have always maintained that most of their concerns, barring a few, are valid, sensible and justified," he said.

# EAC report on relative economic...

From page 1

Conversely, Odisha, traditionally a laggard, has shown marked improvement in recent years. Overall, maritime States have clearly outperformed the other States, with the exception of West Bengal.

"Southern States emerged as top performers in terms of per capita income as well since the 1990s. The group of southern States - including Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu - has seen their per capita incomes grow faster than the national average, leading to a significant increase in their relative income levels. In 1990-91, all these southern States had per capita incomes below the national average, resulting in relative per capita incomes of less than 100. However, within the first decade following economic liberalisation, the relative per capita income of each of these States surpassed 100 and continued to rise rapidly thereafter," it said.

According to the paper, the trajectory of Uttar Pradesh has been similar. The relative per capita income of Uttar Pradesh has stabilised only in last few years after being on a downward trend since 1960s. It was 82.4 percent in

1960-61 for undivided UP. It began to decline and continued to do so even after bifurcation.

The relative per capita income for the divided State of Uttar Pradesh was 55.3 per cent in 2000-01, which further declined to 49.4 per cent in 2010-11.

It then flattened out before improving marginally in last few years. In 2023-24, Uttar Pradesh's per capita income was only 50.8 per cent of the national average, indicating that the average person in the State earns about half of what is typical across India. As in the case of Bihar and Kerala, household incomes may be higher than implied here due to remittances.

While Madhya Pradesh experienced a significant turnaround after 2010, reversing a five-decade decline in relative per capita income, Rajasthan's relative per capita income increased by 10 percentage points from 1960-61 to 1970-71, before experiencing a decline for the next three decades.

Among small States, Sikkim and Goa have demonstrated remarkable improvements. Sikkim, which had a relative per capita income of just 93 per cent of the national average in 1990-91, has surged to 319 per cent by 2023-24.

# India serves notice to Pakistan...

From page 1

"The Indian side has, therefore, also called for a reconsideration of the dispute-resolution mechanism under the treaty," the source said.

India has not cooperated with the Court of Arbitration process to resolve the dispute. New Delhi considers that the start of the two concurrent processes to resolve the dispute violates the provision of the three-step graded mechanism prescribed in the IWT. India has been pushing for the resolution of the dispute through the neutral-expert proceedings.

With this notification, India has called on Pakistan to begin Government-to-Government negotiations in order to review the treaty under the provisions of Article XII (3), the sources said.

These developments come in the wake of a prolonged controversy on the handling of the Ratle and Kishenganga hydel projects.

Indian officials believe that Pakistan has been compulsively obstructive about all projects on the Indian side and has taken undue advantage of India's generosity under the IWT.

# Four die, 14 injured as building...

From page 1

Authorities rescued a total of 18 persons, who were shifted to hospitals. "Four of them have been declared dead in hospital, while two remain critical, 11 are under treatment and 1 person has been discharged after treatment," he said, adding that the collapse also led to damage to the adjacent building.

"We are taking legal action under section 106 (Causing death by negligence) and 290 (Negligent conduct with respect to pulling down, repairing or constructing buildings etc) of BNS. Further

investigation is under progress," he said. A senior official of the MCD said that the area falls in Special Area category.

"The reason of collapse could not be ascertained. The building had not been found to be under dangerous condition during the pre monsoon survey done by the Maintenance Department. Neither any new construction was being taken up nor any building material was found around or in the collapsed premises," he added.

According to an official of the Delhi Fire Services (DFS), a call reporting the collapse was

received at 9.11 am following which five fire tenders were sent to the spot.

Earlier, Delhi Chief Minister-designate Atishi directed district officials to provide all help to the people residing in the locality. "I have also spoken to the MCD Mayor regarding the accident. There has been a lot of rain this year, my appeal to all the people of Delhi is that if there is any possibility of any accident related to construction, then immediately informs the administration and the corporation, the government will immediately help you," Atishi stated.

However, this is not an isolated case as recently, on September 13, one person died and two others were injured after a portion of a building collapsed in Delhi's Nabi Karim area. On August 2, at least three people were reportedly killed after a portion of a two-storey building collapsed in northwest Delhi's Jahangirpuri area.

Lashing out at the AAP government and the civic body, Delhi BJP Spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor demanded Rs. One crore compensation for the dead and Rs. 5 lacs for each of injured.

# Centre approves 'One Nation...

From page 1

Announcing the Union Cabinet's approval to the proposal, Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said an implementation group would be formed to take forward the recommendations of the panel headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind and detailed discussions would be held on various fora across the country over the next few months.

After the discussions are completed, implementation would follow in steps and it would be the Government's endeavour to build a

consensus over the next few months, Vaishnav said. Once the consultation process is over, the Government will draft a bill, place it before the cabinet and subsequently, take it to Parliament for simultaneous polls to come into effect, he added.

In its report submitted to the Government in March, just before the general election was announced, the panel recommended implementing "one nation, one election" in two phases -- simultaneous polls for the Lok Sabha and State assemblies in the first phase and elections for Local Bodies like panchayats and municipal bodies within 100

days of the general election in the second phase.

It also recommended a common electoral roll, which would need coordination between the Election Commission of India (ECI) and State election commissions. At present, the ECI is responsible for the Lok Sabha and Assembly polls, while the local body elections for municipalities and panchayats are managed by the State election commissions.

The panel has recommended a total of 18 constitutional amendments, most of which will not need ratification by State Assemblies. However, these would require certain

Constitution amendment bills that would have to be passed by Parliament.

Some proposed changes regarding the single electoral roll and single voter ID card would need ratification by at least half of the States. Separately, the Law Commission is also likely to come up soon with its own report on simultaneous polls, of which Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been a strong votary.

Sources said the Law Commission is likely to recommend holding simultaneous polls for all three tiers of the Government -- the Lok Sabha, State Assemblies

and Local Bodies like municipalities and panchayats -- starting 2029 and a provision for a unity Government in cases like a hung house.

The Kovind panel studied election processes in seven countries including South Africa, Sweden and Belgium, before recommending simultaneous polls for Lok Sabha and State Assemblies in India, according to the committee's report approved by the Union Cabinet on Wednesday. The other countries where simultaneous elections are conducted are Germany, Japan, Indonesia and the Philippines.



# MNREGA makes education accessible in rural C'garh

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) has not only created opportunities of employment to the rural population but is also paving the way to make education accessible by constructing interlocking roads to village schools.

It has brought revolutionary changes in the fields of rural development and social security in Chhattisgarh.

The scheme aims not only to provide employment to the poor in rural areas but also



to improve their quality of life. One such story is from Gram Panchayat Peepalbhara in Manendragarh-Chirmiri-

Bharatpur district where an interlocking road has been constructed under MGNREGA, directly benefiting students and teachers of the local school.

Peepalbhara, a village where access to schools and Anganwadi centres was extremely difficult for years, especially during the rainy season, faced significant challenges. The path from the main road to Majhapara Anganwadi and primary school was unpaved, making it nearly impossible for students and teachers to commute during monsoon.

The situation worsened with mud and water clogging, hampering school activities.

Eventually, this issue was resolved under the MNREGA scheme. The government sanctioned a Rs 8,69,571 to Gram Panchayat Peepalbhara for an interlocking road.

The primary objective of this project was to provide a safe and convenient route to Majhapara Anganwadi and primary school. As the construction began, smiles returned to the faces of the villagers, especially children.

The most significant impact of this road construction has been on the access to education facilities in the village.

Earlier, the inconvenience of reaching the school led to low attendance.

# Arson accused dies in judicial custody

STAFF REPORTER ■ KAWARDHA

An accused in the Lohardih Arson in Chhattisgarh's Kawardha, Prashant Sahu, died on Wednesday in judicial custody.

According to information, he was taken to a hospital by the police when he did not feel well on Wednesday afternoon and was declared dead by the hospital administration.

Congress leader and former Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel has blamed police brutality for the death.

Tension had prevailed in Kawardha since Sunday after a man, Kacharu Sahu, was found hanging from a tree in a village in neighbouring Balaghat district of Madhya Pradesh.



A mob of villagers suspecting the involvement of Raghunath Sahu, with whom Kacharu Sahu had some dispute, attempted to set ablaze Raghunath Sahu's house. An unidentified charred body of a man was later found from Sahu's house. The body

has not been identified. The police had saved Raghunath Sahu's wife and his two children.

Police later detained around 70 persons including the deceased Prashant Sahu. Prashant was produced in a court and sent to judicial custody.

# Union Minister opens world's tallest bamboo tower in C'garh

World Bamboo Day observed

STAFF REPORTER ■ BEMETARA

On the occasion of World Bamboo Day, Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari virtually inaugurated the world's tallest bamboo tower built in Chhattisgarh's Bemetara district on Wednesday.

Speaker Raman Singh also joined virtually.

At 140 feet, the tower weighs 7,400 kg and cost Rs 11 lakh. The tower has been built by the Bhavya Srishti Udyog to look like the Eiffel Tower.

Addressing the event, Gadkari suggested a policy to encourage the use of bamboo to improve the lives of tribals. He emphasised that if



design centres are set up to manufacture new designs of furniture and other materials from bamboo as per utility, then exportable products will also be prepared in the state.

# CAF jawan opens fire on colleagues, 2 killed

STAFF REPORTER ■ AMBIKAPUR

Two Chhattisgarh Armed Force (CAF) personnel were killed and two others injured after a fellow soldier opened fire at them in Balrampur district.

According to Inspector General of Police Surguja Range, Ankit Garg, the incident took place around 11 am on Wednesday at the camp of CAF's 11th battalion in Bhutahi Mod area, about 400 km from Raipur.

Constable Ajay Sidar allegedly fired at his colleagues with an Insas rifle. Constable Rupesh Patel died on the spot while another, Sandip Pandey, succumbed to injuries on the way to the hospital.



Two others, Ambuj Shukla and Rahul Baghel, were injured and admitted to a health centre in Kusmi. Shukla is being shifted to Ambikapur for further treatment.

The accused constable was quickly overpowered and

captured by his colleagues who rushed to the spot after hearing gunshots, an official said. Sidar has been taken into custody.

The reason for the shooting is not yet clear, the police official said.

# Government gears up to rehabilitate destitutes



STAFF REPORTER ■ BILASPUR

Authorities in Chhattisgarh's Bilaspur are taking steps to rehabilitate destitute people such as those engaged in roadside begging, an official communiqué said on Wednesday.

Collector Awanish Sharan has issued directions to lay out a detailed action plan. He

constituted a committee for this work. It will be led by Municipal Corporation Commissioner Amit Kumar.

He asked them to survey and locate such people and submit a proposal in 15 days.

The people will be provided the benefits of welfare programmes as per their eligibility. The destitute fund will also be used, if needed.



In a bid to inspire children to strive for prestigious institutions, the Durg administration in Chhattisgarh took tribal students of the Prayas Residential School on an educational tour of IIT Bhubaneswar on Wednesday.

# AIIMS-R hosts CME on patient's safety, adverse drug reaction

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

The All India Institute of Medical Sciences-Raipur (AIIMS-R) on Wednesday organized a Continuing Medical Education (CME) event centered on "Improving Diagnosis for Patient Safety" and "Building an ADR Reporting Culture for Patient Safety".

The event aimed at strengthening the understanding and application of patient safety protocols among healthcare professionals.

The CME was organized by Prof. (Dr.) Debendra Kumar Tripathy, Chairperson of the Patient Safety Committee, AIIMS Raipur. Speaking on this occasion,



the Executive Director and CEO of AIIMS Raipur, Lt Gen Ashok Jindal (Retd), highlighted the institution's commitment to fostering patient safety practices.

He said: "AIIMS Raipur is dedicated to implementing

these practices internally and extending our patient safety culture to other medical institutions across Chhattisgarh. By sharing knowledge and collaborating with healthcare providers, we strive to raise the standards of

care and safety throughout the region." The event featured several sessions on critical topics, including the Pharmacovigilance Program of India (PvPI), the Materiovigilance Program of India (MvPI), Adverse Drug Reaction (ADR) reporting, healthcare waste management, infection control, surgical safety, and the use of checklists to minimize errors.

The CME was attended by 400 delegates in person, with an additional 100 participants joining online.

Prof. (Dr.) Alok C. Agrawal, (Dean Academics, Prof. (Dr.) Renu Rajguru, (Medical Superintendent), Prof. (Dr.) Nitin R. Gaikwad, (Coordinator of the ADR Monitoring Centre) and other faculties attended the event.

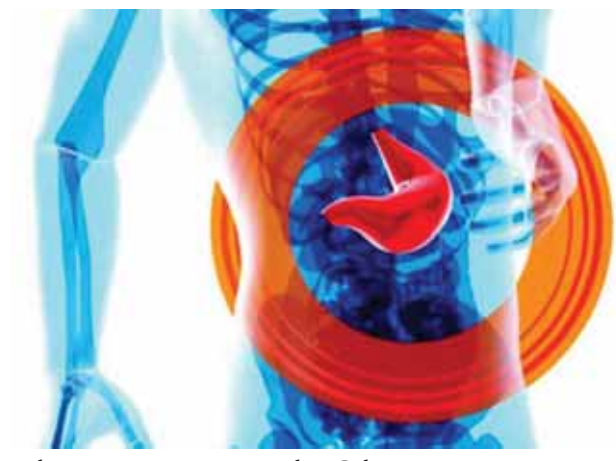
# Add meat, milk proteins in your diet to ward off gut tumours

AGENCIES ■

Eating meat and milk proteins act as antigens that prevent tumours from growing in human guts, specifically the small intestines, finds a study on Wednesday.

Experiments conducted by researchers led by the RIKEN Center for Integrative Medical Sciences (IMS) in Japan revealed how these proteins trigger the intestinal immune system, allowing it to effectively stop the birth of new tumours.

"Small intestinal tumours are much rarer than those in the colon, but the risk is higher in cases of familial adenomatous polyposis, and therefore the clinical use of elemental diets to treat inflammatory bowel disease or



other gastrointestinal conditions in these patients should be considered very carefully," said Hiroshi Ohno at RIKEN IMS. Familial adenomatous polyposis is a hereditary syndrome that predisposes you to develop

Colon cancer. The food antigens — along with the many others found in plants and beans — are generally considered foreign objects that need to be checked out by the immune system, according to the team.

They have previously reported that food antigens activate immune cells in the small intestines, and when activated by gut bacteria these cells are known to suppress tumours in the gut.

In the new study, published in the scientific journal *Frontiers in Immunology*, the researchers explored in mice studies whether food antigens suppress tumours in the small intestines.

In the first experiment mice fed with normal food or antigen-free food showed that normal food led to fewer tumours in the small intestines, but the same amount in the large intestines.

In the next, the team added a common representative antigen called albumin — found in meat —

to the antigen-free diet. This was done to ensure that the total amount of protein equaled the amount of protein in the normal diet.

When the mice were given this diet, tumours in the small intestine were suppressed just as they had been with normal food. This showed that tumour suppression was directly linked to not to the nutritional value of the food, the researchers said.

The diets also lowered T cells in Mice who had a plain antigen-free diet than those who got the normal food or the antigen-free food with milk protein.

However, the researchers cautioned that this could be risky and emphasised the need to follow such diets only with a doctor's recommendation.

# Study shows poor sleep may worsen fatty liver disease

AGENCIES ■

While a good night's sleep is known to be crucial for overall health, a new study showed it can also prevent cirrhosis among individuals with nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD).

Cirrhosis occurs when the liver is damaged for over a long duration and is replaced by scar tissue. The scarring prevents the liver from working properly, and can eventually lead to liver failure.

The study led by researchers from the Huazhong University of Science and Technology in China showed an association between a healthy sleep pattern and a decreased risk of cirrhosis among NAFLD patients. The study on 112,196 NAFLD patients found that poor sleep patterns were associated with an increased risk of progression to cirrhosis.



The benefits of good sleep were observed in participants, regardless of low or high genetic risk, according to the journal *Hepatology International*. The study provides "more evidence that sleep is really underrated," said Dr Abby Phillips, popularly known as LiverDoc, on social media platform X.

"You can't change your genetic profile and neither can everyone check their genetic profile. But what can be done is get some good sleep every night," he advised. The human body requires

an optimum sleep duration of 7-8 hours per night.

"Having a good night's sleep (at least 7-8 hours) has innumerable benefits on liver health and this is something not many are aware of," Phillips said.

Poor sleep is also known to be harmful to health and can lead to problems with memory and focus. It can also raise the risk of headaches, anxiety, and stress. Another recent study, published in the journal *Sleep* shows that sleeping late may also raise the risk of early-onset type 2 diabetes.

In the study, people who went to bed after midnight had a 1.46-fold increased risk of developing early-onset diabetes — under the age of 40. "Each one hour later in bedtime was associated with a 52 per cent increase in the risk of early-onset diabetes," the study showed.

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# Opposition opposes 'One Nation, One Election' proposal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Opposition parties on Wednesday opposed the "one nation, one election" proposal as a report of a panel on simultaneous elections, headed by former president Ram Nath Kovind, was approved by the Union Cabinet.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said "one nation, one election" is not practical and alleged that the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) comes up with such things to divert attention from real issues when polls approach.

"It is not practical, it will not work. When elections come and they (BJP) do not get any issue to raise, they divert attention from real issues," Kharge told a press conference here.

Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader Derek O'Brien called it a "cheap stunt" of the BJP and questioned why the Maharashtra polls were not announced with those in Haryana and Jammu and Kashmir if the government wants simultaneous elections. "One nation, one election is just another cheap stunt by the anti-democratic BJP. Why were the Maharashtra elections not announced along with the elections in Haryana and Jammu and Kashmir?" he asked.

"The Maharashtra



government announced the Ladki Bahin scheme in the Budget in June. The first tranche reached the bank accounts of women in August and the second tranche will reach the beneficiaries in October," he said. "You cannot do three states in one go and you talk about one nation, one election," O'Brien said. "He also sought to know how many Constitution amendments and curtailments of the terms of state Assemblies would be required for the implementation of the proposal. "And also tell us, how many Constitution amendments, including curtailing or extending terms of state

Assemblies, will be done! Classic Modi-Shah jumla," the TMC leader said in a statement. He also took to social media to share a letter written by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in January, opposing the proposal. "All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) chief Asadudine Owaisi said the proposed move will destroy federalism. "I have consistently opposed One Nation One Election because it is a solution in search of a problem. It destroys federalism and compromises democracy, which are part of the basic structure of the Constitution," he said in a social media post. Owaisi said multiple elections are not a problem for anyone

except Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah as they want to campaign in every election. "Multiple elections aren't a problem for anyone except Modi and Shah. Just because they have a compulsive need to campaign in every election. "Congress leader Harish Rawat said the BJP has realised that it is going to taste defeat in the ongoing and upcoming state polls, including in Maharashtra, and thus, is scared. "The BJP has realised that it will be defeated in the elections in Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Maharashtra and Jharkhand. After losing one state after another, the BJP is not in a position to sustain that pressure that

and Jammu and Kashmir. "They were incapable of holding simultaneous polls in four states and managed to hold elections in Haryana and Jammu and Kashmir. My submission is that when they are unable to hold simultaneous polls in four states, how is one nation, one election even possible?" he asked. "Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) MP Mahua Maji alleged that the BJP is pushing for simultaneous polls as it wants to be the only party to rule in India. "The BJP has been trying this since long. It wants only one party to rule the country. Recently, it broke the NCP and the Shiv Sena while the BJD has nearly been wiped out in Odisha. Similarly, it is trying to destroy the JMM in Jharkhand and it will try to destroy the regional parties using one nation, one election," she said. "Congress leader Harish Rawat said the BJP has realised that it is going to taste defeat in the ongoing and upcoming state polls, including in Maharashtra, and thus, is scared. "The BJP has realised that it will be defeated in the elections in Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Maharashtra and Jharkhand. After losing one state after another, the BJP is not in a position to sustain that pressure that

would result in the collapse of their coalition government (at the Centre). That is why the 'ghabrayi hui' (worried) government has opted for the one nation, one election formula," the former Uttarakhand chief minister said. "Senior Congress leader T S Singhdeo said, "It is only a strategy of political convenience, and what I can see is nothing beyond that. The same party which is governing the country as part of the NDA has been talking about this for the past few years."

"You see their intent. Had they really been proponent of this view that this will be a great benefit to the country and the society...What attempt did they make to ensure that Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana, Maharashtra and Jharkhand elections take place at the same time," he said. "The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the proposal for "one nation, one election" as recommended by the Kovind panel, Union minister Ashwini Vaishnav said. "The high-level committee has recommended simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha and state Assemblies as the first step, followed by synchronised local body polls within 100 days.



## Over 5.56 lakh FIRs filed under new criminal laws

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Over 5.56 lakh First Information Reports (FIRs) have been registered across the country under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) ever since its introduction on July one, a senior official said on Wednesday. For smooth implementation of the new criminal laws, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has also developed several mobile applications, including e-Sakshya for capturing, storing and retrieving evidence through videography and photography. The app has been adopted by 22 states and Union Territories and tested by 24 states and UTs. The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and the Bharatiya Sakshya Act

replaced the colonial-era Indian Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act of 1872 respectively. "Since July one till September three, a total of 5.56 lakh FIRs have been registered in the country under the BNS, the officer said, highlighting the achievements of the home ministry in the first 100 days of the Modi 3.0 government. "Software patches have been designed and deployed in the Inter-operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS) pillar applications to incorporate the new criminal laws. The key changes in the CCTNS (Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems) include e-Prisons, e-Forensics, e-Prosecution, use of audio-video electronic means and electronic communication among others as per the new criminal laws.



## India faces second hottest summer since 1970, one third population at risk

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Between June and August, India endured its second-hottest summer since 1970, with extreme heat impacting over one-third of the population, disrupting not only daily life and claiming countless lives but also posing serious risks to public health across the nation, according to a report by Climate Central.

This analysis coincides with official data revealing 41,789 suspected heat stroke cases and 143 heat-related deaths during one of the longest and most intense heat waves in the country's history. Analysing temperature impact on more than one billion residents in 72 countries that recorded their hottest June-August since at least 1970, the report by the Climate Central found that in India alone, over 426 million people encountered extreme heat for at least a week. It said, temperatures exceeded 90% of usual highs from 1991 to 2020. Over 20.5 million experienced high temperatures for at least 60 days. Scientists say that human-caused climate change and the El Niño natural weather phenomenon both have pushed temperatures to record highs in the year so far.

Climate Central's latest analysis sheds light on the local impacts of rising temperatures, detailing how states and cities are confronting an alarming increase in dangerous heat days. For instance, in India, several cities witnessed many days where temperatures were heavily influenced by climate change. Cities such as Thiruvananthapuram, Vasai-Virar, Kavaratti, Thane, Mumbai, and Port Blair were among the hardest hit, each enduring over 70 days of temperatures significantly intensified by climate change. Mumbai alone recorded 54 days of extreme heat linked to these changes. Additionally, Kanpur and Delhi faced prolonged spells of dangerously high

temperatures, with average readings exceeding 39 degrees Celsius, a scenario made four times more likely due to climate change, the report indicated.

Globally, more than 2 billion people worldwide faced at least 30 days of climate-change attributable temperatures above established health risk thresholds. These temperatures were made at least three times more likely by climate change. "High temperatures that were clearly influenced by climate change jeopardised the health of billions around the world during the past three months," said Andrew Pershing, vice president for science at Climate Central. Vaibhav Pratap Singh, Executive Director, Climate and Sustainability Initiative (CSI), warned that the impacts of climate change are becoming increasingly evident for people and businesses across the country. "Each year, we are experiencing more severe climate-related events such as floods, droughts, and heat waves, which are causing significant harm to lives and livelihoods. "It is crucial to conduct assessments of how different levels of global warming are affecting our environment and combine this with an understanding of how it impacts people, jobs, and industries, including agriculture. This will help us identify the specific adaptation needs for different regions," he said. According to a few reports, the extreme heat has jeopardized the health of billions, with India recording 41,789 suspected heat stroke cases and 143 heat-related deaths this summer. As the world grapples with increasing weather extremes, the combined effects of human-caused climate change and phenomena like the El Niño are expected to elevate temperatures globally, as per the report.

## Israel Ambassador condemns Khamenei remarks on Indian minorities as hypocritical

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Israel's Ambassador to India, Reuven Azar, on Wednesday strongly condemned Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's comments on the treatment of minorities in India, calling the remarks "ridiculous" and hypocritical. Azar pointed out that while Khamenei lectures other nations, Iran itself is accused of suppressing freedoms and violating human rights. "It is really ridiculous that this radical leader is trying to lecture others while he is killing his own population oppressing freedoms like freedom of religion, freedom of speech, human rights that

is completely outrageous and we hope Iranian people are going to be free one day from such oppression and tyranny coming from Khamenei," Azar told PTI. The Iranian leader, addressing a gathering of clerics in Tehran on Monday, talked about what he described as "suffering" of Muslims in Gaza, Myanmar and India. "The enemies of Islam have always tried to make us indifferent with regard to our shared identity as an Islamic Ummah. We cannot consider ourselves to be Muslims if we are oblivious to the suffering that a Muslim is enduring in #Myanmar, #Gaza, #India, or



any other place," he posted on 'X' as part of series of posts on the event. India on Monday strongly deplored the comments made by Iran's supreme leader on the condition of minorities in India, calling the remarks "misinformed and unacceptable".



Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) official spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the countries commenting on minorities in India should look at their "own record" before making any observations about others.

Azar briefly touched on the incidents reported in Lebanon on the use of pager blasts all over the country, stating the Israeli government is committed to ensuring the safe return of citizens displaced by recent Hezbollah attacks. "We are securing a diplomatic solution with the help of the US and other partners," he said. He was speaking on the sidelines of the India Water Week where he noted that the collaboration between India and Israel has become increasingly critical, particularly as India continues to tackle water scarcity and boost agricultural productivity.



## ICGS Sujay to strengthen ties with Indonesian Coast Guard

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Coast Guard's Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) ICGS Sujay with integral helicopter made a port call at Bali, Indonesia on Wednesday as part of its ongoing overseas deployment to East Asia, officials said here. Giving details, they said during the three-day visit, while undertaking the Operational Turn Around (OTR), the crew of ICGS Sujay will engage in professional interactions with BAKAMLA (Indonesia Coast Guard), focusing on Marine Pollution Response (MPR), Maritime Search and Rescue (M-SAR) and Maritime Law Enforcement. "Activities include professional interactions with BAKAMLA, cross deck training, joint yoga sessions and friendly sports events. The visit aims not only to strengthen ties between the Indian Coast Guard and their Indonesian counterparts but also to showcase India's ship building capabilities, supporting the concept of 'Atamnirbhar Bharat'.



## Centre sanctions ₹12,554 crore to States for disaster relief, fire services

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has sanctioned Rs 12,554 crore to various states this year so far for providing relief and rehabilitation to people affected by different natural disasters, officials said on Wednesday. Rs 890.69 crore has also been sanctioned to five states by the Union Home Ministry to help them in expansion and strengthening of their fire services under the Scheme for Expansion and Modernisation of Fire Services. "Approximately Rs 12,554 crore has been sanctioned so far from the National Disaster Mitigation Fund, National Disaster Response Fund, State Disaster Mitigation Fund and State Disaster Response Fund to various states for urban flood management, fire services, glacial lake outburst flood risk mitigation and other disaster mitigation, a senior official of the Union Home Ministry said listing the highlights of the first 100 days of the Modi 3.0 government. "Besides, under the Glacial Lake Outburst Flood Mitigation Programme for four states, Rs 150 crore has been given to Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh to adopt various structural and non-structural mitigation measures to address the risks of GLOF

(Glacial Lake Outburst Flood). An amount of Rs 2,514.36 crore has been sanctioned under the integrated urban flood management project and urban flood risk management programme to help the states in preparing the integrated solutions for urban flood management in cities and urban areas, the official said. "The Central government has also approved 'Yuva Aapda Mitra Scheme' as an extension of existing programme of 'Upscaling of Aapda Mitra Scheme' with an outlay of Rs 470.50 crore. "As part of an ambitious plan, 2.31 lakh volunteers exclusively from the National Cadet Corps (NCC), National Service Scheme (NSS), Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) and Bharat Scouts and Guides (BSG) and 1,300 trainers will be given training in disaster response under 'Yuva Aapda Mitra Scheme', another official said. "Major outcomes under the ongoing schemes are: approximately 1,00,000 community volunteers will be trained and equipped in 350 multi-hazards disaster prone districts covering all the states and UTs under 'Aapda Mitra Scheme'. "The Central government has also provided geographical based, instant alert on impending emergency and disaster through mobile phones.

## CDS General Anil Chauhan: India's position is of a Vishwa Mitra, Vishwa Bandhu in global world order

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan has stated that India's position is of a 'Vishwa Mitra' and a 'Vishwa Bandhu' in the global world order. He made this assertion while addressing a conclave for Foreign Service Attaches (FSAs) hosted by the Defence Intelligence Agency of Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff here on Wednesday. The CDS articulated the importance of Military Diplomacy, wherein the FSAs have a pivotal role to play. "In the most violent decade since World War II, there is a growing propensity amongst nations to use force to contain conflicts. The growing uncertainty and insecurity is



leading nations to renew their National Security Strategy and increase expenditure on Defence", the CDS said while highlighting four distinct areas of India's Defence viz operational preparedness, modernisation and indigenisation. "He emphasised the significance of Data Centric Warfare and the role of

Artificial Intelligence in revolutionising warfare. The CDS gave an insight into India's Atmanirbharta for defence capability development and strategic autonomy. "Director General Defence Intelligence Agency (DG DIA) Lt Genral D S Rana appraised the FSAs that India's Defence Diplomacy was expanding steadily in terms of the nature of activities as well as geographic coverage wherein security cooperation was a key component. "He highlighted the vision of Atmanirbharta and indigenisation in Defence and implored upon FSAs to gain first-hand experience in modernisation programmes. A holistic overview of India's strategic perspective was given to the FSAs by Defence Subject Matter Experts.

# Congress files complaint against NDA leaders targeting Rahul Gandhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Wednesday filed a police complaint over the recent statements of leaders belonging to the ruling NDA targeting Rahul Gandhi, alleging that they were aimed at jeopardising his security and disturbing peace in view of the polls in Jammu and Kashmir, and Haryana. In the complaint submitted to the SHO of the Tughlaq Road police station here by AICC treasurer and general secretary Ajay Maken, the Congress cited the recent remarks by BJP leaders Tarvinder Singh Marwah, Ravneet Singh Bittu and Raghuraj Singh, as well as that of Shiv Sena MLA Sanjay Gaikwad. Maken sought registration of

FIRs against the leaders. "Speaking with the media after filing the complaint, Maken said, "We all know that late Indira Gandhi ji and late Rajiv ji have sacrificed their lives for the country. Even after that, they are giving such threats." "Politics in India cannot stoop to a lower level than this, he said. Not just one BJP leader, but many leaders have said such things, but BJP did not take any action, he said. "Rahul Gandhi talks about SC, ST, OBC, tribal and minority people. That is why BJP people do not like his words. This is the reason why they are threatening him," he said. "But let me tell you -- this is the Congress party and we are not going to be scared or cowed down," Maken said. "In the police complaint,

It also cited Sena MLA Gaikwad's announcement of a bounty of Rs 11 lakh for anyone who will cut the tongue of the Leader of Opposition. The complaint cited Minister of State for Railways Ravneet Bittu's remarks, calling the Leader of Opposition the "number one terrorist of the country". "Bittu deliberately made the statement to provoke public hatred and outrage against Mr Gandhi, with the aim to incite violence and breach of peace. The said statement was widely publicised on TV channels and social media," the complaint said. "It cited Uttar Pradesh government minister Raghuraj Singh's remarks that Gandhi was the "number one terrorist of India".

Maken said, "On September 11, Marwah in a BJP event openly issued an assassination threat against Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi, wherein he said that 'Rahul Gandhi baaz aaja, nahi toh aane wale time mein tera bhi wohi haal hoga jo teri dadi ka haal hua (you better behave, or you will meet the same fate as your grandmother)".

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# India to spend ₹31,000 crore to fence entire India-Myanmar border

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The entire 1,643 km porous India-Myanmar border, known for the smuggling of arms, ammunition and narcotics, will be fenced at a cost of Rs 31,000 crore, officials said on Wednesday. On Tuesday, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said fencing work had been completed in 30 km of the border, which he termed the root cause of the ethnic violence in Manipur. The Cabinet Committee on Security has, in principle, approved the construction of border fencing and roads along the 1,643-km international border between India and Myanmar at an approximate cost of Rs 31,000 crore. About 10 km of fencing



Representative Photo

has already been completed near Moreh and work is underway to fence another 21 km of the border in other areas of Manipur. The India-Myanmar border

passes through Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. The Central government has already scrapped the India-Myanmar Free Movement Regime (FMR), which allows people residing close to the border to venture 16 km into each other's territory without any documents. It was implemented in 2018 as part of India's Act East policy. Home Minister Shah has been regularly reviewing the security situation in Manipur and necessary actions are being ensured, said officials. Two battalions of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) have already been deployed in Manipur. In addition, around 200 companies (about 100 personnel in one company) of central police forces were deployed in the restive states. The Manipur Government has started using 25 mobile vans as shops to provide essential commodities at fair prices to the general public. These shops on wheels are operating in all districts of Manipur, sources said. As a new initiative, the Kendriya Police Kalyan Bhandars (KPKB, police canteens) have been opened from Tuesday to provide essential commodities to the people of Manipur at fair prices, they said. In addition to the 21 existing such police canteens, 16 new stores are being opened. Of the 16 new police canteens, eight will be in the valley districts of Manipur, and the remaining eight in hilly areas.

## Indian army inks MoU with TMR to boost rescue operations in mountains

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Army on Wednesday sealed a pact with a premier organisation as part of efforts to boost its rescue and survival operations in mountainous terrains. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was inked with Tiranga Mountain Rescue (TMR) at the Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS) in the presence of Army Chief General Upendra Dwiwedi. "This understanding marks a pivotal step in advancing the Indian Army's rescue and survival operations in mountainous terrains," an official readout said. "The MoU stipulates that TMR will collaborate with the Indian Army in conducting customised training programmes for Army instructors, aimed at improving their ability to mentor troops in avalanche rescue and survival skills," it said.

In his remarks, the Army Chief commended the efforts of TMR and appreciated its collaboration with his force. General Dwiwedi acknowledged the TMR's efforts by awarding Chief of Army Staff Commendation Cards to two team members of the organisation. This MoU builds on the initial agreement made with the Northern Command in 2016 that established dedicated avalanche and rescue support by the TMR. Subsequent agreements with Eastern and Central Commands in 2021 and 2024 further expanded this collaboration, the Army said in the readout. The latest MoU will further utilise the TMR's expertise to boost the Indian Army's capabilities in executing effective rescue operations under demanding conditions, it said. "This partnership highlights a commitment to further enhance the readiness of personnel operating in mountainous terrain besides

enhancing the standards of training and rescue operations in high-altitude environments," the Army said. Major General Manish Luthra, Additional Director General Military Operations, signed the MoU on behalf of the Army, while Hemant Sachdev, a dedicated mountaineer inked it for the TMR. Lt Gen Tarun Kumar Aich, the Deputy Chief of Army Staff (Strategy), lauded the collaboration as a mutually advantageous agreement for both organisations. He further said for the past nine years, the TMR has done yeoman service in saving numerous lives by providing unwavering support in training and rescue efforts. In his remarks, Sachdev highlighted that 15 teams of TMR are already deployed in various regions alongside the Indian Army. He also mentioned that the rescue teams of TMR have been able to save a large number of precious lives in avalanche-prone areas.

## Centre created manmade flood in Bengal: Mamata

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday slammed the Centre for creating a "man-made" flood in Bengal even as she complained how the Damodar Valley Corporation had released huge amount of water inundating several districts of South Bengal. Banerjee who travelled extensively the Hooghly district said how "the Centre is responsible for this man made flood I have repeatedly told them for dredging the river bed instead of doing that they release water when the barrages in Jharkhand brim over ... this time they have released 3.5 lakh cusecs of water which is unprecedented this is clearly a man made flood ... the lower regions of Hooghly, Howrah and Burdwan are going under



water due to this." Many areas of Howrah, Hooghly, East and West Midnapore districts had been flooded following the release of water by DVC. The worst-affected blocks are Amta and Udaynarayanpur in Howrah, Pursura in Hooghly, Ghatat in West Midnapore and Panskura in East Midnapore, sources said. Eastern parts of India including Bengal and Jharkhand had been

witnessing heavy rains for the past one week or so leading to the rivers and barrages in the higher regions in Jharkhand to brim over. As a result the DVC which controls a network of dams released 3.5 lakh cusec of water. Though the rains had stopped on Wednesday the waters continued to flood the Bengal districts. "I have requested the DVC to release water slowly when they 79 or 80 percent full ... but they wait till the waters rich the danger level and then release them at once without warning they save their own States but inundate Bengal," an angry Chief Minister said. Meanwhile, several thousand people had been shifted to the safer areas including schools and other government offices, Chief Advisor to Chief Minister Alapan Bandopadhyay said.

## Yogi slams Congress, SP for dividing people on caste lines

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath Wednesday slammed the Congress and the Samajwadi Party, accusing them of dividing people on caste lines for narrow self-interests and harbouring intention to trigger conflict among classes. Addressing a programme here, he also hit out at the two parties for being only concerned about their "families" at the cost of the country and its people. "Be it Congress or Samajwadi Party, they are neither bothered about the country nor the society. They are not concerned about your faith, or the youth, they are just concerned about their families. These family-based parties have no responsibility and left towards the country, towards the society. They will divide the society, make people fight on the basis of caste just to secure their



narrow self-interests. They will create situation for class conflict and then allow rioters to loot, compromise safety of people," Adityanath alleged. Without naming Akhilesh Yadav and Rahul Gandhi, he also criticised Congress and Samajwadi Party, saying "Do ladkon ki jodi" (two boys) is talking about development in Uttar Pradesh and they have forgotten the history of the last 10 years when 'gunda' and 'mafia raj' were prevailing in the state. "Now UP is turning into a new Uttar Pradesh in which the businessmen and women

are secured. Youths are getting employment. Now Ghaziabad has become a smart city having airport, metro, rapid rail and better atmosphere of security due to which mafias have left the district or hooliganism," he said. The chief minister also accused the Samajwadi Party of cowering down to mafia and criminals during their rule in the state and "for calling religious leaders" as "mafia", referring to SP president Akhilesh Yadav's recent statement where he said "there is not much difference

between mathadheesh (head of a mutt) and mafia". "Samajwadi Party members used to rub their noses in front of notorious mafias and criminals. As per their culture, they call religious leaders mafias... Look at their nature, Aurangzeb's spirit has literally entered inside them," the CM said, addressing an event here. "They exploited the youth, forced farmers to commit suicide and traders were forced to migrate and incidents like the Kairana (exodus) happened because of them. Hindu traders had to move out of Kairana because of them. The safety of women was in danger," he added. But today, he said, the daughters and the traders are safe while there is employment for youth and at the same time farmers are living with dignity. "Aur humne pehle bhi kaha hai ki agar koi yuvaon ke bhavishya ke saath khilwad karega to Sarkar uske bhavishya ke saath khilwad karegi (And we have said this in the past also, if anyone plays with the future of the youth, then the government will play with their future)" Adityanath said. He said his government has started works to establish new businesses in the state through initiatives like 'One District One Product'. "In the coming few years, the government will provide interest-free loans of up to Rs 5 lakh and Rs 10 lakh to encourage young businessmen," Adityanath said. He participated here in a programme as part of his government's 'Mission Employment' initiative and to district job letters to over 10,000 youth and distribute tablets, smartphones to 6000 others besides disbursing loans worth Rs 327 crore to 632 young entrepreneurs. He also laid the foundation stone of 111 development projects worth Rs 757 crore, officials said.

## Three BJP candidates in Gurgaon never attended college

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

Three candidates fielded by the BJP from Gurgaon, Sohna and Pataudi assembly constituencies in Gurugram district have never attended college, according to the affidavits they submitted at the time of nomination. Also, two Congress party candidates from Sohna and Badshahpur have also not attended college, as per their affidavits. A total of 47 candidates are now in the fray for four assembly seats in the upcoming Assembly elections in gurugram as 15 nominations were withdrawn on Monday. BJP candidates Mukesh Sharma from Gurgaon seat has only 12th pass, Tejpal Tanwar from Sohna seat in his affidavit that his highest educational qualification is class 10 from a govt school in Badshahpur and Bimla Chaudhary from Pataudi assembly constituency is also Metric pass from an open school. The trio candidate have never



attended college. Likewise, Congress candidate Vardhan Yadav from Badshahpur seat has 12th pass from DPS School and Rohtash Khatna from Sohna seat has only passed Class 9, which he completed in 1973-74 at a govt school in Rithoj village. The main contest on the Gurgaon seat between BJP's Mukesh Sharma who is a dropped out after passing Class 12, Mohit Grover of Congress went overseas to

study MBA. While analysis of Gurgaon seat candidate affidavits found that six of them have master's degrees, five are graduates, and the remaining did not pursue higher education. Mukesh Sharma a native of Dundahera village here in Gurgaon is the co-convenor of Haryana BJP's sports cell. Sharma's key rival and Congress candidate Mohit Grover (31) has a postgraduate degree in business management from

the International Management Institute of Brussels, Belgium. Grover's affidavit showed that he got the degree in 2014. Naveen Goyal who quits BJP over denial of ticket and contesting the elections as an Independent from Gurgaon seat is a graduate from the University of Rohtak. Among others candidates Ankit Alag of Jan Sewak Kranti Party holds an MBA degree from the Indian Institute of Planning and Management (IIPM) and Independent candidate Akshat Gait is also an MBA postgraduate from Management Development Institute (MDI) in the city. Another Independent, Narender Kumar, is a retired post-graduate teacher (PGT). Sanjay Lal, an Independent who is fighting the election on behalf of a group of RWAs. Lal has a master's degree in history from the University of Mumbai. He is an entrepreneur and consultant. However, there is no law that the candidates have higher education qualification to contest and assembly

elections but people said parties should consider and check candidates past before selecting a candidate for an urban seat. Residents have expressed concern over the candidates' educational qualifications. "The Gurgaon city also known is cyber hub which also have offices of several IT companies, startup, corporate sectors and export houses. The city has also represented several international events here in the city. If a candidate who is not even a graduate how he can represent the city in future. Parties should check qualification before finalising candidates ticket," Nishant Verma, an IT professional said. "Education is important in life no doubt. BJP and Congress has fielded candidates which having never been to college and studied only upto school level which is quite shocking. Gurgaon district is much developed then other districts in Haryana here educated candidates should represent assembly constituencies," said Yug Vyas, a resident.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Indian scientists have developed a sustainable pheromone dispenser with a controlled release rate which could act as an innovative solution to substantially reduce the costs of pest control and management. To ensure that the innovation benefit farmers directly on a large scale, Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research JNCASR, Bengaluru and ICAR-National Bureau of Agricultural Insect Resources (ICAR-NBAIR) have entered into a Know-how license pact with Krishi Vikas Sahakari Samiti Ltd. (KVSSL), Haryana, recently. JNCASR is an autonomous institution under the Department of Science and Technology. Prof. M. Eswaramoorthy from JNCASR and Dr. Kesavan Subaharan from ICAR-NBAIR led the signing of the pact. Prof. Eswaramoorthy said, "This exercise will enable the



spread of technology across the country and at global level too. The benefit of the research moves from the lab to the field to benefit the farming community for pest management." "Currently, emphasis is laid on developing technologies that are clean and green. On this line, the technology developed on controlled release of semiochemicals (signalling substances such as pheromones) on transfer to firms will be able to scale up the production to cover a large area," Dr. Subaharan

added. Sustainable organic pheromone dispensers are not a new concept. In fact, polymer membrane or polypropylene tube dispensers that release pheromones already dominate the market. The released pheromones alter the behaviour of the target insect species and attract them to sticky traps. Their main drawback, however, is that the rate at which the pheromones are released into the air is not stable, said a statement here.

# Thrissur's tiger dance: A visual feast for Onam

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The main thoroughfare in Thrissur, Kerala's cultural capital came alive on Wednesday evening as hundreds of artists masquerading as tigers danced to percussion instruments to mark the grand finale of Onam 2024. Pulikali (tiger dance) is the iconic art form of Thrissur and it matches the splendour of Thrissur Pooram, the biggest cultural extravaganza of the State held in the month

of May every year. If it is elephants that enthrall the Pooram, Pulikali, a visual treat makes Onam in Thrissur unique. There are many Pulikali Sanghams in Thrissur and suburbs. What made the Tiger Dance 2024 unique is the participation of women dressed up as tigresses, described as the first such incident in the 300 year old history of Pulikali. R Bindu, Kerala minister for higher education and spouse of A Vijayaraghavan, polit bureau member of the ruling

CPI(M) claims it was she who played a major role in elevating Pulikali to the global arena. Bindu herself is known as the CPI(M) tigress of Thrissur who is feared by the RSS activists. Though it was announced by the Kerala Government that there would not be any State sponsored tourism festival and celebrations this time on account of the Wayanad natura disaster, by the time Onam festivities began the government's decision vanished into thin air. The



tigers who started their make-up by 7 am showed no signs of exhaustion and tiredness when they hit the roads accompanied by percussionists. Pulikali has nothing to do with Onam. It is an art form imported into Thrissur by Islamic soldiers of the British army. The region's residents assimilated the same as their own. Now you cannot visualize a Thrissur sans Pulikali," said Nandakishor, film artist, stand-up humorist and the local

historian. The artists paint their bodies like tigers with stripes of yellow, red and black and dance to the rhythm of traditional percussion instruments such as thakil, udukku and chenda. Raju Raphael, media person who is a movie maker says it is Pulikali which makes Thrissur distinct from other places in the State. By 8 pm, the tigers retreated to their dens, only to reappear for next year's Onam.





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PAPER WITH PASSION

## The next gen chief minister

By naming Atishi as Delhi's new CM, Kejriwal seeks to appeal to women voters and refresh the party's leadership

In a surprising but strategic political manoeuvre, Atishi, the dynamic and well-regarded education reformist, has taken over as the youngest Chief Minister of Delhi. This shift marks a significant moment not only in Delhi's political history but also in the larger context of Indian politics. Arvind Kejriwal's decision to pass the baton to Atishi is being viewed as a calculated move, one that signals both a generational shift and a fresh approach to governance. Kejriwal's choice of Atishi is rooted in multiple factors, each with its own political and administrative logic. Atishi has been one of the brightest stars in the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) since its inception, known for her innovative ideas and hands-on approach to public administration, especially in the education sector. Her work as the education minister has drawn national attention, with Delhi's government schools undergoing a transformative makeover under her leadership. Kejriwal's decision to elevate her comes at a time when AAP is facing multiple challenges. From managing Delhi's growing urban infrastructure needs to balancing the delicate relationship with the central government, the city requires fresh energy and innovative solutions. Atishi, with her administrative experience and public image as a reformer, presents a candidate who is capable of steering Delhi through these complex issues. Moreover, Kejriwal's move signals his willingness to let the younger generation of AAP leaders take charge. By elevating Atishi, he is not just preparing for Delhi's immediate future, but also laying the groundwork for the party's long-term vision, positioning AAP as a progressive and youth-centric force in Indian politics.



Atishi's rise to the position of Chief Minister brings with it a new wave of expectations. Her track record suggests that education and public welfare will remain key priorities. Delhi's residents can expect an expansion of the initiatives that have already borne fruit, such as the Mohalla Clinics, water and electricity schemes and the focus on improving healthcare and education. One of the most significant aspects of Atishi's leadership could be her ability to bring a new perspective to governance—one that is less confrontational and more collaborative. Atishi's rise to the highest political office in Delhi is a momentous event. But make no mistake, the real power still remains with Arvind Kejriwal. He is the one who would be making all the key decisions. But Atishi's rise in the party is for real. It does not matter that she would be the chief minister for only a few months as Delhi elections are round the corner and her tenure would be a talking point with women voters. Besides, for Delhi, it signals a continuation of the reforms initiated over the past decade, with the added promise of new energy and ideas that could redefine the city's future. It would indeed be a test of Atishi's leadership quality as she will be under constant scrutiny, with both her supporters and detractors closely watching her every move. Her ability to navigate these pressures will be crucial in determining the success of this bold experiment by Kejriwal.

### PICTALK



People perform 'pind daan' rituals at the bank of Falgu river on the first day of the Pitra Paksha, in Gaya

## Showdown over Rahul's remarks in the US



KALYANI SHANKAR

Rahul Gandhi's recent trip to the US has reignited the debate over whether Indian leaders should criticise their government while abroad



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's recent he United States has provoked a war of words between the ruling BJP and the main opposition Congress in India. Should the Indian leaders refrain from bad-mouthing the ruling BJP while abroad? Is there a red line, and has Rahul crossed it while he was in the US? The BJP claims yes, and the Congress says no. Rahul has taken potshots at the Indian government and PM Modi. Congress claims that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also bad-mouthing the Congress not once but continuously since he took over in 2014 and visited over 80 countries. The Congress cites many examples. Also, the BJP has misrepresented Rahul's statements. Rahul aims to engage the Diaspora through programs with the Diaspora, students, officials, and lawmakers in the US, demonstrating the strategic nature of his approach. Why does he want to woo the Diaspora? Modi also has never missed an opportunity to address the Diaspora in whichever country he visits. Rahul, too, wants to connect with the Indian American community. The influence of the Indian American community has increased. A decade ago, there was one Indian-American in the House of Representatives; now, there are five and one senator. The US has

an Indian-origin Presidential nominee Vice President Kamala Harris, and a vice-presidential candidate, JD Vance, who has an Indian wife. Education, affluence and awareness of the influence in the past two decades are behind the rise of Indian Americans, whose population is one per cent, and their representation in US Congress is now one per cent. Rahul commented on the RSS, India's democracy, Modi's China policy, and religious freedom in India, among other things. On the RSS, Gandhi said that the BJP's parent organisation believes India is "one idea", but the Congress considers it a "diversity of ideas." This criticism of the RSS, a critical ideological force behind the BJP, upset the BJP. In India, the BJP slammed Rahul's adverse comments and meeting with anti-India US Congresswoman Ilhan Omar. The BJP claims that it can be used for anti-India propaganda. Gandhi counters that she was part of the lawmaker's delegation, and how he could have declined to meet with the delegation. Rahul noted that Indian democracy has struggled for the past ten years but is improving. He also observed that 90% of India's population, including OBCs, Dalits, and Adivasis, are



IN INDIA, THE BJP SLAMMED RAHUL'S ADVERSE COMMENTS AND MEETING WITH ANTI-INDIA US CONGRESS WOMAN ILHAN OMAR. THE BJP CLAIMS THAT IT CAN BE USED FOR ANTI-INDIA PROPAGANDA

not able to take an active part in the democratic process. This has upset the BJP. While Rahul agreed with Modi's policies on Pakistan and Bangladesh, he felt Modi's China policy was flawed. Rahul pointed out, "We've got Chinese troops occupying land the size of Delhi in Ladakh. I think that's a disaster." The BJP fielded top leaders to refute Rahul's allegations, with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh leading the response. He rubbished Rahul's claim on China policy. He observed it was "extremely shameful" that the LOP is hurting the dignity of India by saying "misleading, baseless and factless things." Another controversial subject was the caste census. Rahul Gandhi supported the caste census and claimed that BJP was trying to end the reservation. Union Minister Amit Shah quickly responded that they would not allow anyone to abolish reservations or undermine the nation's security. Countering his remarks about the status of Sikhs in India, Senior Minister Hardeep Puri said, "I am a proud Sikh. I have been wearing a turban for over six decades and a kada for even longer..." The BJP takes Rahul's statements seriously, given that he is the LOP. His increased stature after leading the Bharat

Jodo' yatra and the Leader of the Opposition cannot be wished away. In the 2024 elections, much to the dismay of the BJP, Congress doubled its number. Second, after the 2024 polls, the opposition coalition INDIA was strengthened. The BJP had to form the government with the help of allies. Third, Rahul visited the US before Modi's scheduled visit on September 22. His trip was well received, which did not please the BJP. But Modi would have a grand welcome at the official and the community levels. At the end of his visit, Rahul clarified, "The fight for democracy in India is an Indian fight. It has nothing to do with anybody else. It's our problem. And we'll take care of it. We will make sure that democracy is secure." This clarification prevented the idea that he was inviting a foreign power to resolve Indian problems. There is some merit in the BJP saying dirty linen should not be wasted abroad. On an earlier occasion, foreign minister S. Jaishankar said, "I don't think taking national politics out of the country is in the national interest." But this is good for both sides, and both should follow it. (The writer is a popular columnist; views are personal)

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### MYANMAR: CHALLENGES FOR INDIA

Madam — Apropos of the well analysed article 'Myanmar Junta on the Blackfoot' (18th Sept), India faces multiple challenges in the existential crisis of the military junta in Myanmar for more than a decade. The worst crisis of refugee influx, the consequential fallout, unrest and instability in North Eastern states particularly Manipur and security threats from China along its North-eastern borders need top priority from security angle as diplomatic channels with the National League for Democracy or the Junta have not served our country's strategic interests. UNO does not appear and is no more an International Organisation capable of dealing with the crises in the countries having multiple stake holders. All its permanent members in Security Council have substantial stakes in all the wars and coups presently. The refugees crisis emanated from Myanmar is the most disturbing and destabilising factor for India. India is not party to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol. India has chosen not to sign the refugee conventions and protocol, and has historically cited national security interests and challenges to its sovereignty as key concerns. India, along with the governments of other South Asian countries, asserts that migration is a matter of bilateral and not multilateral relations, which should not be governed by international agreements. Sometimes it appears that refugee influx in India is a deliberate outcome of military coup in neighbouring countries. Peace and political stability in Myanmar appears a distant possibility and multiple stake holders namely China, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Myanmar itself know the vulnerability of Indian borders and some strategic areas sandwiched between some of these countries. Therefore, for the time being till political normalcy is restored in Myanmar, military options should be prioritised over diplomatic adventures.

Vinod Johri | Delhi

#### Atishi is the new Delhi CM



The selection of Atishi Marlena Singh as Delhi's new chief minister does not come as a surprise. Infact, any name as chief minister would not have turned heads because it is amply evident that the man holding all the aces, is still Arvind Kejriwal. Make no mistake, Kejriwal may have just returned from prison, but the clever former bureaucrat intends to turn the politically tricky situation into a massive support of strength. Since the Delhi assembly elections

are only a few months away, Kejriwal aims to divert the excise policy corruption issue by pitch-forking a party leader, with no real mass base, as the executive head of the state. However, Atishi's comparatively clean image, administrative experience and fighting spirit should come in handy for the AAP supremo who is sure to go the whole hog to retain power for the party in Delhi. That way, Kejriwal can intensify focus on the election campaign with little to answer on a "corrupt chief minister" holding on to his chair. Of course, the opposition will vociferously target the former chief minister who is perhaps the principal vote-getter for his party besides a handful of leaders like Manish Sisodia. The chief minister's seat will beckon Kejriwal if the party wins, and Atishi shall be relegated to the list of those chief ministers who held the post of chief minister for a few months.

Ganpathi Bhat | Akola

#### ONE HUNDRED DAYS OF MODI GOVT

Madam — For a government in power for the past 10 years now talking about its feats in 100 days is incorrect. It gives room for posing questions like why such actions were not done in the last 10 years and how just allocation of funds can be claimed as a feat and so on. If any assessment be made on the performance of the present government it should be for the period in power since 2014. Because nothing could be achieved in a short period of time like 100 days. In the case of the present government the claim on employment is not correct. Because it is only a matter of allocation of funds and announcement of a project. The working and success of the project needs to be assessed only after its completion. It is also to be noted that it is only a project to improve the skill and not a project to provide employment. Farmers' basic woes are not addressed and they continue to feel let down and the consumers also feel the same with the growing food inflation. Healthcare continues to be a commodity.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

#### TRAGEDIES AT GANESH VISARJAN

Madam — Ganesh immersion in the country turns tragic in several parts of India. Similar incidents have occurred throughout the country. While immersing an idol of Lord Ganesh, devotees got swept away by the river's powerful currents. Divers recovered his body afterwards but it was a sad end to a religious celebration. In another incident in Gujarat's Gandhinagar, eight people drowned while taking a dip in the Meshwo River. It is time for the people to exercise caution during religious events like Ganesh Visarjan. This tragic series of events serves as a reminder of the importance of safety precautions during religious ceremonies. It is crucial to take necessary measures to avoid such incidents in the future. Let us not take undue risks in the name of God and pay heavy price for that. Besides, there must be adequate security arrangements by the government to avoid such accidents.

Nikhil CK Maniam | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## Ozone: The earth's protective shield but also a threat

Ozone is a paradoxical element — it shields life from harmful UV radiation in atmosphere but is also a big pollutant on the ground

People often think of two different things when they hear the word "ozone": on the one hand, an essential shield in the atmosphere that protects life on Earth from the Sun's dangerous ultraviolet radiation; on the other, a pollutant that causes health problems and damage to the environment. Ozone is indeed a double-edged sword because its effect on human life depends on where it is and how much of it there is.

The "good" ozone in the upper atmosphere is significant, but the "bad" ozone at ground level is very bad for people and the world. This dual nature needs immediate care, new ideas, and cooperation worldwide so that people can continue to live. Ozone creates the well-known ozone layer high in the stratosphere, between 10 and 30 miles (16-48 km) above the surface of the Earth. This protective layer absorbs the bulk of the Sun's harmful ultraviolet (UV) radiation UV-C and UV-B. Ecosystems would almost certainly be unable to survive as they do now without this natural shield, which exposes life on Earth to haz-



ardous radiation levels. Although life depends on the ozone layer in the stratosphere, ground-level ozone, found in the troposphere, is a hazardous contaminant. This ozone, created by sunlight-induced chemical interactions between nitrogen oxides (NOx) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs), is mainly caused by human activity, including certain chemicals, industrial processes, and automobile emissions. This ozone will affect crop productivity and ecosystem dynamics. In the mid-20th century, scientists discovered that chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) were causing the systematic depletion of the ozone layer. In response to the pressing need, a global accord, the Montreal Protocol, was

adopted in 1987 to gradually eliminate the manufacturing of chemicals that cause the depletion of the ozone layer. The main objective of this accord was to eliminate progressively chemicals that cause erosion of the ozone layer, notably chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), which are extensively used in refrigeration, aerosols, and other industrial uses. India is also a signatory to this accord. Indian industries, especially those in the refrigeration, air-conditioning, and foam production sectors, were compelled to transition to ozone-friendly alternatives. The phasing out of CFCs initially led to the adoption of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), but attention soon shifted toward more environmentally friendly solutions, such as natural refrigerants, hydrofluoroolefins (HFOs), with lower global warming potential. Since the implementation of the Montreal Protocol, global emissions of ozone-depleting substances (ODS) have dramatically decreased. The ozone layer has shown signs of recovery, particularly over Antarctica, where the famous

"ozone hole" is gradually closing. This recovery is essential for shielding the planet from harmful UV radiation. In addition, the phase-out of CFCs and other ODS has had a measurable impact on global temperature regulation. This is significant when considering the urgency of limiting temperature rise to avoid catastrophic climate impacts. The Protocol has become a symbol of what international cooperation can achieve if people unite and work together to protect the environment. The illegal production of CFCs and incomplete phase-outs in some regions could slow progress. While ozone protects life and poses risks, its dual nature demands vigilant global action. Striking the right balance between preserving the protective ozone layer and mitigating harmful ground-level ozone is essential for humanity's and the planet's health. We can ensure a safe future only through international cooperation and innovative solutions.

(The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies; views are personal)



BIJU DHARMAPALAN





## FIRST COLUMN

## EMBRACING DIVINE SHELTER

God can help us succeed in life but we must seek his shelter by adhering to dharma



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

What a wonderful prospect! Yes, it is possible, if we take shelter of God and remain in it. Because God is everything. (Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad-Geeta 7.19) For that, we have to be engaged in activities according to the instructions of God. And we will benefit in many ways. How else can one remain motivated to pursue the spiritual path? In this process, God is pleased but does not benefit personally in any way, because God is 'purna' (complete in all respects).

I will cite three examples and a few reasons to substantiate this. But I will begin with some of the benefits of taking shelter from God and remaining there. God's instructions promote 'dharma' (highest moral and religious principles). Because dharma is the bedrock upon which the Creation is based. God even incarnates when there is a decline in dharma. (4.7) Those, who follow dharma in their behavior are rewarded by God's Divine Authority.

This is done according to the 'Karmaphala Principle', which is: "What we sow we reap." If one pleases God by spiritual practices additionally, God gets personally involved in the life of His devotee. His very first act is to begin guiding. I am experiencing it. It is simple. I face a challenge /problem. I pray for guidance and help. God gives me intuitions. As the connection with God becomes stronger, God begins helping too. This is a quantum jump because God is omnipotent. Problems get solved and life can go on smoothly. (18.58) Sometimes, we face non-cooperation from others; God even changes the hearts of people. Further progress on the spiri-



tual path helps us to qualify for becoming 'nimitta' (instruments) of God, as Arjuna did in the Mahabharata. (11.33) God, as Karta, begins to micromanage the lives of His dear devotees. Reformations begin; because we must help ourselves. And credit for success must also come to us; God does not need it.

Only rarely did God intervene directly, as Lord Krishna did to protect Draupadi from getting humiliated; no one had come forward. Similarly, Lord Krishna had to protect His devotee and friend (4.3) Arjuna after he was about to enter the fire for not being able to kill Jayadratha before sunset, as vowed him.

Lord Krishna brought the sun back and Arjuna was able to kill Jayadratha before the sunset. In these two instances, though the Lord got credit, He did not gain anything, Draupadi and Arjuna gained. God has a plan for whoever takes His shelter. How did the Lord help Goswami Tulsi Das? His wife opened his eyes when she told him, "You will attain success in life if you become devoted to Shri Rama instead of to me." Because Tulsi Dasji was at the threshold of becoming great by writing epics like Ramacharitmanasa. The conclusion is: get linked with God urgently.

There is so much to gain from God, who has plenty to give. Isn't God the owner of everything? God is self-sufficient. He creates without any help from anyone. God never gets attached to anyone. If He did, God would become dependent on others to do what He must to keep the Creation going.

I am gaining everything desirable. I could not have imagined what God can and does for me. The quality of my life is steadily improving. Please get started on the spiritual journey; you will never look back.

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

## Reclaim water bodies to ward off water crisis



SRIRAJ KOTA

India's lakes and wetlands, once lifeline for its cities, are vanishing at an alarming rate, driven by rampant corruption and unchecked construction



Urban lakes and wetlands are an integral part of our ecosystem. They perform critical environmental, social, and economic functions as they are a source of drinking water, recharge groundwater and support biodiversity besides providing livelihoods. But the life of these indispensable water bodies is ebbing under the relentless onslaught of population, corrupt administrations, and construction mafia. A study by Wetlands International has shown that two out of every five wetlands in India have been lost in the last 30 years, and of the remaining water bodies 40% are unable to support aquatic life due to loss of water quality. But this plunder of water bodies of India did not happen overnight but over some time.

Take the case of Bengaluru for instance. In the late 18th century, a British expedition tasked by Governor General Cornwallis to find an alternative route between Madras and Srirangapatna stumbled upon Bengaluru which was full of lakes and water bodies.

The captain heading the expedition thereafter referred to it as the Land of Thousand Lakes in his reports. However, today Bengaluru is a pale version of its once illustrious past. In 1960 Bengaluru had 262 lakes but today only 10 of them hold water.

The city saw a shocking decline in its water bodies as exploitation and population grew in equal measure. Lakes and water bodies are disappearing at an alarming pace at the city level and state level as well. According to the Union Jal Shakti Ministry report, Karnataka lost an astounding 13,000 water bodies in just one year between 2021 and 2022.

This is the case with every city in India. Ahmedabad for instance had 137 lakes in 2001 but as per recent reports, construction has been seen on 65 of them now. The national capital Delhi too is being robbed of its water bodies. According to a Delhi government report, nearly half



TODAY BENGALURU IS A PALE VERSION OF ITS ONCE ILLUSTRIOUS PAST. IN 1960 BENGALURU HAD 262 LAKES BUT TODAY ONLY 10 OF THEM HOLD WATER

(49.1%) of Delhi's official water bodies do not exist anymore – they have either gone "missing" or have been encroached upon.

The entire nation more or less presents the same depressing scenario. But recently a state government sat up, took notice, and acted. The Telangana state government's Hyderabad Disaster Response and Asset Protection Agency (HYDRAA) initiative to reclaim encroached land of water bodies in Hyderabad and surrounding areas has made national headlines. The HYDRAA team created in July this year and headed by an IPS officer was given a clear-cut mandate by the state chief minister Revanth Reddy to free the city water bodies of illegal encroachments and construction.

The Full Tank Level (FTL) was kept as the parameter by HYDRAA and any construction or encroachment within 30 meters of FTL was made subject to demolition. The agency has been given a free hand and made immune to political pressures with zero tolerance being practiced even if the encroachment belongs to prominent politicians or businesspeople of the city. Notably, even the chief minister's brother was served notice for demolition.

This drive conducted diligently and without bowing to any pressure was able to remove 262 unauthorised encroachments built-in water bodies, government lands, urban canals and parks in 23 locations in the city have been removed and 111.72 acres of land have been reclaimed to date. The state government has issued further instructions making it compulsory to take

HYDRAA NOC before commencing any construction near lakes.

The actions of HYDRAA have instilled a sense of confidence among the environmentalists not only in Telangana but also across India and are being seen as a case study in governance especially about safeguarding environmental assets such as water bodies. But as is expected with any groundbreaking initiative, the step taken by the Telangana government too has off late been soundly criticised for being inhuman due to the demolishing of houses of the poor and those who were paying loans for the same. Given this adverse feedback, the state government has issued clarifications to the effect that occupied houses will not be demolished.

The HYDRAA initiative is an example and a clarion call for the rest of the nation to wake up rescue and reclaim its water bodies. This is crucial in light of reports released by the United Nations and Niti Ayog which state that water demand will reach twice the available supply, and 40 per cent of India's population will not have access to clean drinking water by 2030. To prevent a grim and parched future, the central government in collaboration with state government and local environmental groups must establish a Wetland Task Force for every state.

The state-specific task force must have a clear mandate to reclaim every water body in its jurisdiction by clearing out encroachments, demolishing illegal construction and preventing changes in land use. Apart from enforcement duty, the task force must also have an enabling role that is

focused on replenishing and rejuvenating the wetlands and water bodies in its jurisdiction. For instance, the task force can encourage urban households and businesses to implement rainwater harvesting practices on their premises. The water harvested can be channelled towards improving the groundwater table and recharging the aquifers. Additionally, the government can, through the task force regulate the borewells in the urban areas. Indiscriminate and unregulated drilling for water in metropolitan areas has caused the drying up of the groundwater table. The task force team can save the city's water resources by ensuring that prior permissions are taken to drill borewells.

Furthermore, the task force team can install water meters to ensure that water extraction is done in a measured and quantified manner. Currently, there have been many instances where local leaders, with political affiliations "adopt" lakes and water bodies in the name of preserving them and slowly encroach the property.

After that, in connivance with builder mafia construction is done on the property which is then sold to unsuspecting citizens. The wetland task force can prevent this and play a pivotal role in ensuring that no individual or commercial company is entrusted with safeguarding the lakes and water bodies as this can result in manipulation.

Water bodies are India's lifelines. Reclaiming the lost ones and preserving the remaining can alone ensure a water secure future for our nation.

(The writer is a policy analyst, views expressed are personal)

## India's untapped ocean energy: A blueprint for powering the future

India's 8,000 km coastline holds the potential to generate a staggering 9.2 lakh TWh of clean energy annually

The 8000 km long Indian coastline has the potential to generate 9.2 lakh Trillion Watts hour per annum (TWh/annum) electricity, which is a manifold of what is generated as of date. This is at a time when India is struggling to meet its requirement of 4.5 Lakh MW power utilizing all sources of energy production.

According to Ocean Energy Atlas prepared by Hyderabad-based Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), a premier research and development organization under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, the Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea are the nation's



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

Akshayapatra of energy. "The Exclusive Economic Zone lying within the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal has oceanic energy potential of 9.2 lakh TWh/annum. This is the first time in the history of India the oceanic energy potential has been assessed and an atlas of this kind has been prepared," Dr T M Balakrishnan Nair, Group Director and lead sci-

entist, INCOIS, told The Pioneer. A bouquet of offshore renewable, offshore solar, offshore wind, wave, tidal, ocean thermal energy conversion, and salinity gradient represent the hitherto untapped potential of renewables. India's Ocean Energy Atlas has been released following the International Renewable Energy Agency's finding that the G-20 countries collectively account for 81 per cent of total renewable energy and about 100 per cent of ocean energy.

India's offshore wind energy remains untapped even as countries like Denmark, Britain and China have made giant strides in this sector. Dr Nair says there is wide scope to set up renewable energy power stations to tap salini-

ty gradients. Dr. T. Srinivasa Kumar, director, of INCOIS, said that the atlas would serve as a key resource for guiding policy and investment decisions in the energy sector.

An important element in this form of energy generation is that there would not be any kind of apprehension in the minds of the people about land acquisition, pollution and discharge of effluents. "This is the cleanest form of energy and many public and private sector enterprises have shown their interest in setting up renewable energy units," said M Ravichandran, secretary, ministry of earth sciences, Govt of India. INCOIS is playing a major role in the country's blue



economy sector by providing information to fishers about potential fishing zones and sharp weather forecasts. Dr Srinivasa Kumar and his team have developed a state-of-the-art tsunami warning system with which they alert countries along the rim of the Indian Ocean. Since its inception in 1999, INCOIS has been contributing to India's blue economy through its flagship pro-

grams like Potential Fishing Zones (PFZ), Ocean State Forecasts (OSF) and Tsunami Early Warning Services (TEW). INCOIS has also been the national and regional warehouse for oceanographic data spanning in-situ platforms, satellite sensors, and model-simulated products.

Taking advantage of the availability of such long-term scientific datasets, INCOIS has taken up the challenge of estimating the ocean energy potential from the Indian EEZ and prepared an Atlas for the first time in the country. The satellite data collected through hi-tech sensors about the regions where there are good catches are disseminated to fishers and this has made the job of fishermen

quite easy. All they have to do is rush to the areas identified as fishing zones by the INCOIS scientists. The Integrated Ocean Energy Atlas prepared by Team INCOIS is the first of its kind in the world.

Ocean energy assumes significance as scientific reports are galore about the fluctuations in solar power generation capabilities because of climate change. G M Pillai, director general, of the World Institute of Sustainable Energy (WISE), Pune, says that as of this date, solar power output is not encouraging because of changes in rain patterns. "The Rajasthan deserts could have been the powerhouse of states like Rajasthan, Punjab, Gujarat but the solar power

potential has come down and the deserts are becoming evergreen garden," said Pillai. The thorium-based nuclear reactor is yet to take off and the picture from nuclear power reactors is dismal. There was a time when former directors of the Indira Gandhi Center for Atomic Research (IGCAR) at Kalpakkam had claimed that India was the world leader in Fast Breeder Reactor technology, it all ended up as chest beating. The only hope is integrated ocean energy. India has a vast coastline of nearly 8000 km and this could offer a permanent solution to our energy needs.

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



# 'Exploding pagers were manufactured in Hungary'

AP ■ TAIPEI

A company based in Hungary was responsible for manufacturing the pagers that exploded in Lebanon and Syria in an apparent Israeli operation targeting Hezbollah's communications network, another firm whose brand was used on the devices said Wednesday. Pagers used by the militant group Hezbollah exploded near-simultaneously a day earlier in Lebanon and Syria, killing at least 12 people, including two children, and wounding nearly 3,000. Hezbollah and the Lebanese government blamed Israel for what appeared to be a sophisticated remote attack. An American official said Israel briefed the United States on Tuesday after the attack, in which small amounts of explosive hidden in the pagers were detonated. The person spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the information publicly. Hezbollah and Israeli forces have exchanged fire nearly daily since Oct 8, the day after a deadly Hamas-led attack in southern Israel triggered a massive Israeli counteroffensive and the ongoing war in Gaza. Since then, hundreds have been killed in the strikes in Lebanon

and dozens in Israel, while tens of thousands on each side of the border have been displaced. Tuesday's attack — and the fact that Hezbollah blamed Israel — renewed fears that the two foes could lead to all-out war. Despite periodic cycles of escalation, the two have carefully avoided that so far, but Israeli leaders have issued a series of warnings in recent weeks that they might escalate operations against Hezbollah in Lebanon. The AR-924 pagers used the attack were manufactured by BAC Consulting KFT, based in the Hungarian capital of Budapest, according to a statement released by Gold Apollo, a Taiwanese firm that authorized the use of its brand on the pagers. BAC appeared to be a shell company. "According to the cooperation agreement, we authorise BAC to use our brand trademark for product sales in designated regions, but the design and manufacturing of the products are solely the responsibility of BAC," Gold Apollo said in a statement. The company's chair, Hsu Ching-kuang, told journalists Wednesday that the firm has had a licensing agreement with BAC for the past three years. BAC Consulting

Kft, a limited liability company, was registered in May 2022, according to company records. It has 7,840 euros in standing capital, the records showed, and had revenue of \$725,768 in 2022 and \$593,972 in 2023. At the headquarters in a building in a residential neighbourhood of Budapest, Associated Press journalists saw the names of multiple companies, including BAC Consulting, posted on pieces of paper on a window. A woman who emerged from the building and declined to give her name, said the site provides headquarter addresses to various companies. BAC is registered to Cristiana Rosaria Bársony-Arcidiacono, who on her LinkedIn page describes herself as a strategic advisor and business developer. Among other positions, Bársony-Arcidiacono says on the page that she has served on the board of directors of the Earth Child Institute, a sustainability group. The group does not list Bársony-Arcidiacono as among its board members on its website. The AP has attempted to reach Bársony-Arcidiacono via her LinkedIn page and has been unable to establish a connection between her or BAC and the exploding pagers. The attack in Lebanon started Tuesday afternoon,

when pagers in their owners' hands or pockets started heating up and then exploding — leaving blood-spattered scenes and panicking bystanders. It appeared that most of those hit were members or linked to members of Hezbollah — whether fighters or civilians — but it was not immediately clear if people with no ties to Hezbollah were also hit. Hezbollah said in a statement Wednesday morning that it would continue its normal strikes against Israel as part of what it describes as a support front for its ally, Hamas, and Palestinians in Gaza. "This path is continuous and separate from the difficult reckoning that the criminal enemy must await for its massacre on Tuesday," it said. "This is another reckoning that will come, God willing." At hospitals in Beirut on Wednesday, the chaos of the night before had largely subsided, but relatives of the wounded continued to wait. Lebanon Health Minister Firas Abiad told journalists during a tour on hospitals Wednesday morning that many of the wounded had severe injuries to the eyes, and others had limbs amputated. Journalists were not allowed to enter hospital rooms or film patients.

## China sanctions US firms selling arms to Taiwan

Beijing (AP): China on Wednesday announced sanctions on American companies selling arms to the self-ruled island of Taiwan, which Beijing claims as its own territory and threatens to annex by force. Chinese state media made the announcement, citing the Foreign Ministry, but gave no details on the companies involved. Taiwan is awaiting deliveries of F-16 fighter jets, Abrams tanks and a range of missiles from the US. China has been upping its threats to attack Taiwan, whose 2.3 million citizens overwhelmingly favour their current status of de-facto independence. Despite their lack of formal diplomatic ties, the US has long been a key provider of armaments and is legally bound to ensure the island can defend itself. Along with buying weapons from the US, Taiwan has also been reviving its domestic arms industry. A fleet of submarines is underway, while mandatory military service for men has been extended to one year. China has previously demanded US companies end cooperation with Taiwan's armed forces, with no apparent effect.

## Portugal declares calamity as wildfires spread

AP ■ LISBON

More than 100 wildfires stretched thousands of firefighters to the limit in northern Portugal on Wednesday, with seven deaths since the worst spate of fires in recent years spread out of control over the weekend. Portuguese Prime Minister Luís Montenegro declared a state of calamity for the hardest-hit areas late on Tuesday, invoking powers to mobilise more firefighters and civil servants. He also called on police investigators to redouble their efforts to find those who started the fires and pledged help for those who have lost their homes or have been evacuated. "We are well aware that these difficult hours are not over yet," Montenegro told the nation in a televised address. "We have to continue to give everything we have and ask for help from our partners and friends so that we can reinforce the protection of our people and property." The hot, dry conditions behind the outbreaks in Portugal coincided this week with flooding in central Europe. The European Union said Wednesday that the juxtaposed extreme weather phenomena are proof of a "climate breakdown." Fellow European Union members Spain, France, Italy and Greece have committed two water-dropping aircraft each to



help Portuguese firefighters. Spain's military is also sending 240 soldiers and vehicles from its emergency response battalions specialised in combating fires across the border to its neighbour. Montenegro made a special call for security forces to pursue both arsonists and any individuals who started a fire out of negligence. Portuguese national police said that they have arrested seven men suspected of having started wildfires in recent days. Authorities have prohibited the use of heavy farming equipment to reduce the risk of inadvertently starting a blaze. Among the hardest hit areas is the district of Aveiro, south of the northern city of Porto, but several major blazes were also raging out of control in other wooded areas. Authorities have yet to release figures for property damage or the number of

evacuees, but Portuguese state broadcaster RTP has shown charred houses in rural villages and local residents trying to battle flames with buckets of water, hoses, and even large tree branches. Other televised images showed visibility reduced to a few metres as orange smoke enveloped the terrain. Three firefighters died in their vehicle on Tuesday, while another had succumbed to what authorities called a "sudden illness" while on duty over the weekend. Three civilians have also perished, according to civil protection authorities. Portugal was devastated by massive fires in 2017 that killed over 120 people. Experts link the fires to both climate change and the abandonment of traditional farming and forestry professions that helped keep rural areas clear of underbrush that is now fuel for fires.



Democratic presidential nominee Vice President Kamala Harris is greeted as she during an unscheduled stop to make remarks at Community College of Philadelphia, Tuesday in Philadelphia. AP/PTI

# Donald Trump calls Modi 'fantastic'

PTI ■ WASHINGTON/ NEW YORK

Former president Donald Trump has said Prime Minister Narendra Modi will meet him next week during his upcoming three-day visit to the US. While the Republican presidential candidate slammed India as an "abuser" on the issue of import tariffs, he described Modi as a "fantastic man". PM Modi will be visiting the US from September 21 to 23. Speaking on Tuesday at his first public appearance following the recent apparent assassination attempt, Trump said Modi will meet him next week when he is in the US. "So when India, which is a very big abuser. He (Modi) happens to be coming to meet me next week, and Modi, he's fantastic. I mean, fantastic man. A lot of these leaders are fantastic," Trump said, reiterating that India imposes heavy tariffs on imports.

The former president revealed the information as he spoke about trade and tariffs while responding to a question at a town hall meeting in Flint, Michigan. He went on to say, "These people are the sharpest people. They're not a little bit backwards... You know the expression, they're at the top of their game, and they use it against us. But India is very tough. Brazil is very tough... China is the toughest of all, but we were taking care of China with the tariffs." "So we're going to do a reciprocal trade. If anybody charges us 10 cents, if they charge us USD 2, if they charge us a hundred per cent, 250, we charge them the same thing. And what's going to happen? Everything's going to disappear, and we're going to end up having free trade again. And if it doesn't disappear, we're going to take in a lot of money," he said. In New Delhi, when asked about Trump's comment, the Ministry of External Affairs did not respond. Modi will begin his trip with the Quad Leaders' Summit being hosted by President Joe Biden in Wilmington, Delaware.

# Secret Service again faces scrutiny after another gunman targets Trump

AP ■ WASHINGTON

For the second time in more than two months, the Secret Service that protects the highest echelon of American leaders is under scrutiny - this time after a gunman hid in the shrubs along the fence of former President Donald Trump's golf course for 12 hours. The man didn't get a shot off, but critics question how he could be just several hundred yards away from Trump - especially after the Republican presidential candidate's security was beefed up after his near-death experience in July. Biden administration officials praised the agency's response, and former Secret Service agents say there are key differences between what unfolded Sunday and the security lapses at an outdoor rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, in which a gunman climbed onto an unsecured roof nearby and opened fire, clipping Trump's ear and leaving a spectator dead. Authorities say Ryan Wesley Routh camped with food and a rifle just outside the 27-hole Trump International Golf Course in West Palm Beach, Florida, where the former president was playing Sunday. A Secret Service agent ahead of Trump spotted the rifle's muzzle poking through the fence and opened fire. Routh fled and was later apprehended. It's long been known to law enforcement that places along the edge of the property leave Trump visible to those behind the fence, and some have questioned why it was not protected. But a sprawling golf course poses specific challenges, especially for a last-minute round, even with Trump's bolstered security, former Secret Service agents say. "A 400-acre golf course with miles of fence line is breachable. And the systems put in place to mitigate those threats worked. That's not to say they couldn't do more. But there are limits to what

## Ex-US Pres holds first event post-assassination attempt; Harris gives rare interview

Flint (AP): Former President Donald Trump on Tuesday made his first public appearance since Sunday's second apparent assassination attempt against him with an overflow crowd chanting "God bless Trump!" and "Fight, Fight, Fight" as US Secret Service agents surrounded the stage to protect the Republican presidential nominee. "It's been a great experience," Trump said in an evening town hall in Flint, Michigan, about holding events with thousands of supporters. But he also went on to call running for president "a dangerous business" akin to car racing or bull riding. "Only consequential presidents get shot at," he said. Earlier in the day, Vice President Kamala Harris struck a measured tone, even steering clear of mentioning Trump by name in an interview with Black journalists that starkly contrasted with the former president's own highly contentious appearance before the same group. The two candidates briefly put their differences aside in a phone call Trump described as "very, very nice" even as crowds booed when he mentioned Harris by her first name. "It was very, very nice, and we appreciate that," Trump told his supporters. Harris said earlier in the day that she told Trump "there's no place for political violence in our country." Both sides are ramping up campaigning with no changes to Trump's calendar despite the apparent assassination attempt at one of his Florida golf courses, which has renewed accusations by Republicans that Democrats' criticism against Trump is inspiring violent attacks. Democrats have accused Trump in the past for his long history of inflammatory campaign rhetoric and advocacy for jailing or prosecuting his political enemies.

is possible," said Paul Eckloff, a retired Secret Service agent who served on details protecting three presidents during his 23-year career. The Secret Service is trying to protect a growing number of high-profile people, from presidents to visiting dignitaries, in a vitriolic political environment. President Joe Biden and some Republicans are pressing for more resources for the agency still facing several investigations and whose director resigned after the first attempt on Trump's life. Acting Secret Service Director Ronald Rowe Jr. said Sunday's golf game was not on a formal

schedule or advertised ahead of time. That means agents may find out about it the day before or even minutes before it happens. Rowe emphasized that the gunman never had a line of sight on the former president and that security worked as it should. He said the edge of the property wasn't monitored ahead of time because Trump "wasn't supposed to have gone there in the first place." Rowe described how agents spread out in front of and behind Trump, looking for threats. Trump and his campaign have routinely praised the agents pro-

tecting him while expressing concerns about the agency more broadly, including that his detail isn't large enough given the threat level. But some have raised questions. During an interview Monday on Sean Hannity's Fox News show, Trump's son Eric questioned how the gunman was able to stay in that location for so long without being detected. "Those agents on the ground, they are remarkable," he said. "But there is a breakdown." Rowe a day earlier said, "The agent's hypervigilance and the details swift action was textbook." It's not possible for the Secret Service to shut down all traffic around the golf course, said Eckloff, who protected Trump while he was president, including at two of his golf courses in Florida. This course is in the middle of the city and taking such a step would have huge effects on residents. Trump loves to golf and owns three courses in Florida. Trump International is closest to his Mar-a-Lago home and is a place he likes to go with friends. While Trump was president, news photographers were often able to capture images of him on the green by finding gaps in the shrubbery. Security around Trump was dramatically beefed up after the July shooting. Trump now speaks from behind a bulletproof glass enclosure at outdoor rallies, and long guns are often spotted near locations where he's staying. The agency doesn't release specific information about his protection but Secret Service spokesman Anthony Guglielmi said Trump's detail now includes countersurveillance, a counter-sniper and counterassault resources. Before the Pennsylvania shooting, some of those assets were used depending on the event but now they're permanently part of his detail, Guglielmi said.

# Trudeau: More work to do, after by-election loss

AP ■ VANCOUVER

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Tuesday he's focused on the work ahead after the ruling Liberals lost in another by-election, raising more questions about his ability to lead the party into the next federal election. For the second time in recent months the Liberals lost in a former stronghold when the Bloc Quebecois won the vote in the electoral district of LaSalle-Emard-Verdun Monday in Montreal in a tight three-way race with the New Democratic Party. "Obviously it would have been nicer to be able to win... but there's more work to do," Trudeau said in Ottawa.

"The big thing is to make sure that Canadians understand the choice they get to make in the next election," Trudeau said. "That's the work we're going to continue to do." Election Canada results show the Bloc candidate Louis-Philippe Sauve finished with 28% of the vote. Liberals' candidate Laura Palestini collected 27.2% and finished just 248 votes behind the winner. The NDP collected 26.1% and was about 600 votes behind the winner. It's the second time in three months that Trudeau's party has lost a by-election in a riding they held for years. In June, the Conservatives narrowly defeated the Liberals in Toronto-St. Paul's.

The Liberals won every seat in Toronto and almost every seat on the Island of Montreal in the last election. Monday's loss "is a major blow for the Liberals," said Daniel Beland, a political science professor at McGill University in Montreal. "This is a riding we would expect them to win under normal circumstances," Beland said in an email. "Not only did this not happen, they lost by nearly 16 percentage points in popular votes compared to their score in the riding back in 2021, when they had easily won there." Andrew Perez, a longtime Liberal supporter and strategist, posted on social media that the loss is "yet another nail

in Justin Trudeau's coffin." "If Trudeau's Liberals can't hold this safe seat, it will spell even bigger trouble for the party's prospects in Quebec and across Canada in a critical election year," Perez said in a statement before the final vote. Beland doesn't believe Trudeau will step down as party leader before the next election, which is scheduled for next fall. "Some Liberals might try to convince him to step down but it's not sure at all he would," said Beland. Industry Minister François-Philippe Champagne was asked Tuesday if Trudeau should remain as prime minister. Champagne said there is "concern, there's anxiety" among Canadian voters. "They're

ready for a positive vision of the country," he said. "I think if there's someone who can really inspire Canadians, it's Justin Trudeau. Most polls show the federal Conservatives well ahead of the Liberals. Trudeau is also very unpopular with many Canadians. The NDP recently ended its supply and confidence agreement with the Liberals that helped keep the minority government in power. That led to speculation there could be an early federal election. Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre has said his priority is to put forward a non-confidence motion "at the earliest possible opportunity" in hopes of bringing down the Liberal government.

# Dutch govt, led by hard right, seeks to opt out from EU migration rules

Brussels (AP): The new Dutch government dominated by the far-right party of Geert Wilders officially asked the European Commission for an exemption from its migration obligations on Wednesday, seeking to fulfil a campaign promise to drastically reduce the number of immigrants in the nation. Dutch Migration Minister Marjolein Faber of Wilders' party wrote to the European Commission that the Netherlands wants out of regulations for accepting refugees. "I have just informed the EU Commission that I want a migration opt-out within Europe for the Netherlands. We need to be in charge of our own

asylum policy again!" Faber wrote in a letter Ylva Johansson, the European Commissioner for Home Affairs, posted on social media. On Tuesday, the government, which came to power in July, announced its policy blueprint for the coming year, including stricter policies to hold back or kick out migrants who don't qualify for asylum. The announcement came just a day after party leaders were publicly bickering over their plans, underscoring divisions within the four-party governing coalition. Even before the plan was made public, the European Commission warned the Dutch government that its

approach wouldn't work. "We have adopted legislation. It's adopted. You don't opt out of adopted legislation in the EU," spokesman Eric Mamer said last Friday. Earlier this week, the Dutch refugee settlement agency COA announced it was expecting a shortage of beds at the overcrowded asylum centre in the tiny village of Ter Apel in the northeastern Netherlands. The government is planning to declare an "asylum crisis" to pave the way for tougher measures, including reining in visas for family members of people granted asylum and making it easier and quicker to deport migrants.



Imran's crime enough to keep him jailed: Khawaja Asif

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Imran Khan's crimes alone are enough to keep him behind bars, Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has said, as he dismissed the former prime minister's accusation that the government was pushing to amend the constitution to keep him in prison.

Geo News quoted Asif as saying.

Khan should reflect on what chaos he created in the last four years, he said, adding there was an attempted rebellion against the state on May 9 last year.

Khan is facing several cases in connection with the May 9 violence in which supporters of his party allegedly attacked military installations following his arrest.

Asif said, "Since the PTI founder has been in custody, he has repeatedly — like three to four thousand times — said that he will talk to the establishment."

He also rejected the opposition parties' allegations of keeping the constitutional amendments under wraps, saying that the draft legislation was "a public document whose contents are not a secret".

what may. Defending the coalition government's move to make judiciary-centric constitutional amendments, Asif said that the changes are aimed at maintaining a balance of power among institutions, not just at ensuring accountability. Claiming that the PTI was willing to support the constitutional package, he said that "the former ruling party has requested the government to postpone the amendment until December."

In response to Asif's statement, PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan said: "Neither have we been involved in any discussions with Asif, nor has PTI assured support for the government's constitutional amendments until December," he said.

court from delivering its verdict in a case of alleged corruption against former prime minister Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi. The move comes after Khan and his wife petitioned the Islamabad High Court to stay the proceedings of the Al-Qadir Trust case and acquit them.

During the hearing, a two-member bench headed by Chief Justice Amir Farooq rejected the plea to stay the legal proceedings against Khan and his wife. However, in a relief to them, the High Court restrained the accountability court hearing the case from delivering its final verdict.

in this matter and this is clear in the new amendments that the National Accountability Bureau cannot investigate the decisions made in the federal cabinet. The lawyers of Khan and Bibi said that they should be acquitted from the case on which the court has issued notices to the parties made in these petitions.

Bangladesh's interim gov gives Army magisterial powers

AP ■ DHAKA

Bangladesh's interim government has granted magisterial powers to the Army for two months to improve law and order in the violence-hit country and prevent "subversive acts".

The Ministry of Public Administration issued a notification on the government's decision on Tuesday, saying it will be applicable with immediate effect.

The powers will be given to commissioned officers of the Army. The order will remain in force for the next 60 days. Home Adviser Lt Gen (retd.) Md. Jahangir Alam Chowdhury said on Wednesday that the people will get the benefit of bestowing magistracy power upon the army, state-owned BSS news agency reported.

(Ansar) officers and 25th batch sepoy recruits at the Bangladesh Ansar and VDP Academy in Safipur, Chowdhury said, "The Army has been given the magistracy power to ensure public service and maintain the law and order." He said that the law enforcement agencies lack manpower and the magistracy power has been given to the Army to fill up the gap.

acts and disrupted stability in several places, especially in the industrial areas across the country. Given the situation, Army personnel have been given magistracy power," Law Adviser Asif Nazrul said. He added that he believed the army personnel would not misuse this authority.

Chinese aircraft carrier comes closer than ever to Japan

Tokyo (AP): A Chinese aircraft carrier entered Japan's contiguous waters for the first time on Wednesday, leading Tokyo to convey its "serious concerns" to Beijing over China's increasingly assertive military actions around Japan, officials said.

coast of the disputed Japanese-controlled islets it calls the Senkakus, the ministry said. China claims the same islets, calling them the Diaoyus. Japan's Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroshi Moriya told reporters that "the latest incident is absolutely unacceptable from the perspective of the national and regional security."

Russia's Dy PM Overchuk in Pakistan on two-day visit

Islamabad (PTI): Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Alexei Overchuk on Wednesday arrived in Islamabad on a two-day visit during which he will hold talks with Pakistan's top leadership and discuss ways to enhance bilateral ties.

Maldives' ruling party team embarks on China visit

Male (PTI): A delegation of the Maldives' ruling party on Wednesday embarked on an eight-day visit to China to seek the strategies utilised by the communist state to achieve its current economic development and enhance bilateral ties.

port of call. "PNC revealed that the primary objective of the trip is to seek the strategies utilised by China, to achieve its current economic development, all while enhancing the bilateral ties between the two countries," the PSM News said.



A supermoon rises behind a horse statue atop of Triumphal Arc during a partial lunar eclipse in Moscow, Russia, Wednesday. AP/PTI

SL's bankruptcy officially to end today, says President Wickremesinghe

Colombo (PTI): Sri Lanka President Ranil Wickremesinghe on Wednesday said that the island nation's bankruptcy is officially due to end on Thursday, remarks aimed at boosting his re-election chances on the last day of the presidential election campaign.

election would end tonight and no election propaganda work would be permitted from midnight in terms of election laws. The Election Commission has said that this would mark the beginning of a silent period that will last until the election day on September 21.

Premadasa, the presidential candidate of Samagi Jana Balavegaya (SJB). He assured the bishops' conference, led by Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, that his government would impose the maximum punishment on those responsible. Premadasa criticized the spread of misinformation for political gain, particularly during the election period.

मध्यप्रदेश पुलिस आवास एवं अधोसंरचना विकास निगम
कार्यालय परियोजना घंटी, संभाग क्र. 1, भद्रभद्रा रोड, भोपाल
क्र./1145/तशा/प.चं./2024 दिनांक : 14.09.2024
विज्ञप्ति
इस कार्यालय द्वारा गुजरबंदीरिया (मंदसौर), मल्हारगढ़ (मंदसौर), साबाखेड़ा (मंदसौर), डिंडोरी एवं बड़नगर (उज्जैन) स्कूल में फर्नीचर प्रदाय एवं स्थापित करने का कार्य हेतु ऑनलाइन निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है।

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS
LOST & FOUND
PUBLIC NOTICE
Reg-Upper Ground Floor (without rooftop terrace rights), (with one reserve Car Parking at left side still area) said floor, Built up Property Bearing No. 11, area measuring 55 sq.yds., out of Khnasa No. 105/10, Situated in the area of Village Palam, Delhi State, Delhi, colony known as in Block-E, Vishwas Park, Uttam Nagar, New Delhi-110059.

BSES BSES Rajdhani Power Limited, New Delhi
TENDER NOTICE
Date: 19.09.2024
Sealed tenders under two parts (Un priced & priced) are invited for the supply of following materials from all bidders:-
NIT No. Brief Tender Description Estimated Cost (₹) Cost of EMD (₹) Due Date & Time of Submission Date & Time of Opening

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given that our client Sh. Arun Goyal has paid off all dues towards home loan availed from Piramal Capital & Housing Finance LTD (formerly known as DHFL LTD). Home loan account number UO 1290001272 App number 00816047.

Karnataka Bank Ltd.
CORRIDGENDUM
With reference to "Notice Regarding Locker Operation" advertisement of Karnataka Bank Ltd. Published in Pioneer (English & Hindi) Delhi Edition Newspaper - on 20-06-2024. In the advertisement it is wrongly mentioned as Locker Number 283 instead of 282.

CANCELLATION OF TENDER
Corrigendum for Tender Notice against E-Tendering of works contract vide Notice No.: 12-AMC-ETP-NJP-24, Dated: 04-09-2024 against the work- Comprehensive Operation and AMC of ETP with capacity 50 KLD at ROH/ New Jalpaiguri for a period of 02 (Two) years treated as cancelled on administrative ground.

NORTHERN RAILWAY
TENDER NOTICE
Invitation of Tenders through E-Procurement system.
Principal Chief Materials Manager, Northern Railway, New Delhi-110001, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites e-tenders through e-procurement system for the supply of the following items:-

NORTHERN RAILWAY
E-Auction Notice
Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager/PS, Northern Railway Delhi Division invites bids through e-Auction through IREPS (http://ireps.gov.in) for the allotment of under mentioned contracts at following Railway stations/locations:



# PM-AASHA scheme extended with ₹35,000 crore outlay

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**  
The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved continuation of the PM-AASHA scheme, with an outlay of Rs 35,000 crore, to provide better prices to farmers and also control price volatility of essential commodities for consumers. "The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved the continuation of schemes of Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshana Abhiyan (PM-AASHA) scheme till 2025-26 with an outlay of Rs 35,000 crore. Welcoming the decision of subsidy on P&K nutrients, Chouhan said in a social media post on X, "this will ensure availability of fertilisers to farmers at affordable rates." "The Integrated scheme of PM-AASHA will bring in more effectiveness in the implementation which would

be Rs 35,000 crore during the 15th Finance Commission Cycle up to 2025-26, it added. The government has converged the Price Support Scheme (PSS) and Price Stabilization Fund (PSF) schemes in PM-AASHA to serve the farmers and consumers more efficiently. Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan welcomed the Cabinet's approval to continuation of Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshana Abhiyan (PM-AASHA) scheme till 2025-26 with an outlay of Rs 35,000 crore. Welcoming the decision of subsidy on P&K nutrients, Chouhan said in a social media post on X, "this will ensure availability of fertilisers to farmers at affordable rates." "The Integrated scheme of PM-AASHA will bring in more effectiveness in the implementation which would



not only help in providing remunerative prices to the farmers for their produce but also control the price volatility of essential commodities by ensuring their availability at affordable prices to consumers," the government said. PM-AASHA will now have the components of Price Support Scheme (PSS), Price Stabilization Fund (PSF), Price Deficit Payment Scheme (POPS) and Market Intervention Scheme (MIS). Under the PSS, the procurement of notified pulses, oilseeds and copra at MSP will be 25 per cent of national production from 2024-25 season onwards. This would enable states to procure more of these crops at MSP from farmers to prevent distress sale. "However, this ceiling will not be applicable in case of tur, urad and masur

for 2024-25 season as there will be a 100 per cent procurement of tur, urad and masur during in 2024-25 season as decided earlier," the government said. The Centre has renewed and enhanced the existing government guarantee to Rs 45,000 crore for procurement of notified pulses, oilseeds and copra at MSP. This will help in more procurement of pulses, oilseeds & copra whenever prices fall below MSP in the market. The purchases will be undertaken by the Department of Agriculture from farmers at MSP including pre-registered farmers on eSamridhi portal of National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED) and eSamyukti portal of National Cooperative Consumers' Federation of India (NCCF).

# Indian economy size will double by 2030: NITI Aayog CEO

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
India could easily double the size of its economy by 2030, NITI Aayog CEO BVR Subrahmanyam said on Wednesday. At an event organised by the Public Affairs Forum of India (PAFI), Subrahmanyam added that climate change is an opportunity for India to become a leader in climate technology. "Our economy should easily double by 2030...India's ambition to become the third-largest economy by 2026-2027 necessitates a cohesive grand strategy," he said. Currently, in US dollar terms, India is the fifth largest economy with a size of about USD 3.7 trillion in nominal terms. "India will be a big dominant player, it already matters and it will matter much more in global affairs, by 2047," he said. Subrahmanyam said by 2047, India will be among the world's youngest nations demographically, poised for prosperity, with a projected per capita income of around USD 18,000 to USD 20,000. "This growth is significant as India is expected to emerge as a major global player, building on the substantial progress made over the past decade in addressing challenges such as natural disasters and poverty," he said.



Further, he said that there is a need to look at the green economy, and the Aayog is working on developing a pathway for net zero carbon emissions by 2070. "We have formed a task force and are working with the Central and state governments to achieve our targets," he added. The CEO of NITI Aayog stressed the importance of Global Value Chains (GVCs). He said that the government is working across sectors and services to build better strategies. Subrahmanyam added that urban development and infrastructure are crucial, with cities designed as economic hubs to drive growth. According to him, the private sector must lead in innovation and investment, supported by an enabling environment that attracts both portfolio and direct investments.

# Diamond industry faces severe crisis

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
India's diamond sector is facing a severe crisis as both imports and exports have sharply declined in the past three years, which has triggered defaults, factory closures, and widespread job losses, think tank GTRI said on Wednesday. It said that while export returns have surged, a large inventory of unprocessed rough diamonds is piling up due to reduced orders and growing competition from lab-grown diamonds. "This has triggered defaults, factory closures, and widespread job losses. Tragically, more than 60 people in Gujarat's diamond sector have committed suicide, reflecting the severe financial and emotional strain India's diamond sector is facing," Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) Founder Ajay Srivastava said. He said that immediate action is essential to address these problems and safeguard the future of the sector. According to the think tank data, a 24.5 per cent drop in rough diamond imports from USD 18.5 billion in 2021-22 to USD 14 billion in 2023-24 shows weaker global markets and fewer processing orders. After adjusting for re-exported rough diamonds, net imports declined by 25.3 per cent, from USD 17.5 billion to USD 13.1 billion, indicating reduced demand for processing in India. Exports of cut and polished diamonds fell by a higher margin of 34.6 per cent, from



USD 24.4 billion in FY 2022 to USD 13.1 billion in FY 2024, it said. "Additionally, the share of unsold diamonds returned to India increased from 35 per cent to 45.6 per cent during this period," it said adding that the net exports of cut and polished diamonds dropped by 45.3 per cent, from USD 15.9 billion to USD 8.7 billion, reflecting a weak market and rising unsold inventory. The gap between net rough diamond imports and net cut and polished diamond exports widened significantly, from USD 1.6 billion in FY 2022 to USD 4.4 billion in FY2024, signalling a large inventory buildup and a lack of sufficient export orders. It added that some challenges of the sector stem from regulatory issues and internal inefficiencies within the industry. It said the demand for polished diamonds has dropped sharply in key markets like the US, China, and Europe due to economic uncertainty, inflation, and geopolitical tensions, leading to reduced consumer spending on luxury goods,

including diamonds. "Fluctuations in global diamond prices have caused uncertainty, with buyers hesitant to purchase rough diamonds in anticipation of further price drops," Srivastava said. He added that the Russia-Ukraine conflict has also disrupted the global diamond supply chain, with sanctions on Russia, a major rough diamond producer, further complicating trade and slowing down the global diamond trade. Shifting the consumer preferences towards lab-grown diamonds, which are more affordable, ethical, and sustainable, are also impacting the demand for natural diamonds. On internal factors, the think tank said that many polishing units have large unsold inventories of polished diamonds, which discourages them from importing fresh rough diamonds as they cannot afford to take on more stock without selling their existing inventory. "Rising operational costs, including labour, energy, and materials, along with reduced margins in the global diamond trade, have made it difficult for many polishing units to remain viable, leading to shop closures and layoffs, especially in Surat," he said. The industry also heavily depends on financing, but tighter credit conditions and reduced lending from banks have made it difficult for companies to purchase rough diamonds, further stalling production, he said.

# Food ministry to boost wheat allocation under PMGKAY

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
The government on Wednesday announced an increase in wheat allocation to beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) from October onwards, in a bid to stabilise prices. Food Secretary Sanjeev Chopra, while highlighting achievements in 100 days of Modi 3.0 government, said a committee of ministers has approved an additional 3.5 million tonne of wheat under PMGKAY. This increased allocation will continue until March 2025, potentially making efforts to restore the wheat-rice ratio under the scheme, he said at a press conference. Asked if this increased quantity restores the wheat-rice ratio, the Secretary said, "It will still be lower by 1-2 million tonne from the normal quantity."



He also stated that the allocation could be reviewed based on future developments. In May 2022, the government reduced wheat allocation to 7.1 million tonne from 18.2 million tonne and increased the rice allocation under PMGKAY because of tight supplies due to lower domestic production. Chopra highlighted the current "ample wheat" availability, citing last year's bumper production of 112.9 million tonne. "Even by conservative and industry estimates, it was at least 40-50 lakh tonne higher than the previous year," he noted. The government's procurement stands at 26.6 million tonne against the actual production of 112.9 million tonne last year. Addressing market concerns, Chopra said there are no immediate plans to sell wheat under the Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS), given the stability in wheat and wheat product prices. However, he didn't rule out future OMSS sales. PMGKAY, which covers 80 crore poor beneficiaries, provides 5 kg of free foodgrain per person monthly. This enhanced allocation aims to address issues faced by beneficiaries following the previous reduction in wheat supply.

# Food secretary assures stable food prices during festive season

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Food Secretary Sanjeev Chopra on Wednesday said prices of essential commodities like sugar and edible oils are stable, and no spike is expected during the upcoming festival season. Chopra assured consumers that the recent hike in basic customs duty on some edible oils, aimed at supporting domestic oilseed farmers, would not lead to significant price rise. "We have been able to maintain prices at a reasonable level for consumers," Chopra said at a press conference. "The upcoming festival season is looking good. We are not anticipating

any kind of spike in prices of essential commodities." Effective September 14, the government raised the basic customs duty on crude soyabean oil, palm oil, and sunflower oil to 20 per cent from nil. The duty on refined variants was increased to 32.5 per cent from 12.5 per cent. Chopra explained that 1.3 million tonne of edible oils imported at zero duty are still in stock. The industry has been directed to sell this inventory at current prices until exhausted. "Even after this stock exhausts, the prices need not rise by 20 per cent with an increase in duty. International prices will come down slightly," Chopra added.

# RBI unlikely to cut interest rate in 2024: SBI Chief

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
The Reserve Bank is unlikely to ease the benchmark policy rate during 2024 given the uncertainty over food inflation, State Bank of India (SBI) chairman C S Setty has said. The US Federal Reserve's first cut in interest rates in more than four years is expected soon, triggering central banks in other economies to follow suit. "On the rate front, a lot of central banks are taking independent calls. While Fed rate cut would influence everyone, RBI would be mindful of the food inflation before taking a call on interest rate cut," Setty, who took over the reins of the bank recently, told PTI in an interview. "That is what our view is, and our view is also that the rate cut during the current calendar year may not happen, probably we may have to wait for Q4 (January-March 2025) unless there is a good improvement in terms of food inflation," he said. The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) headed by RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das is scheduled to meet during October 7-9 and take a call on interest rate. Retail inflation, which is being taken into consideration by the rate-setting panel MPC for its decision, rose marginally to 3.65 per cent in August, from 3.54 per cent in July. While the overall inflation is

below the RBI's median target of 4 per cent, the rate of price rise in the food basket was 5.66 per cent in August. The RBI kept the repo rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent in its August bi-monthly review amid risks from higher food inflation. This was the ninth consecutive MPC meeting which decided to maintain the status quo on the rate front. The Reserve Bank has kept the benchmark repo rate unchanged since February 2023. In the last meeting, four of six MPC members voted in favour of the status quo while two external members pitched for a rate cut. Earlier this week, Reserve Bank Governor Das also said the decision on interest rate moderation will be based on long-term inflation trajectory and not on the basis of monthly data. On monetisation of SBI's stake in some of its subsidiaries, Setty said, there was no thinking in terms of divestment of stake of any of the subsidiaries presently. "If these subsidiaries require (growth) capital, we will definitely examine," he said. At this point in time, he said, none of the large subsidiaries require capital from the parent to scale up their operations. The bank in fiscal 2023-24 had infused an additional capital of Rs 489.67 crore in SBI General Insurance Company Ltd.

# IP university identifies Indian rice varieties

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**  
Scientists of Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha (IP) University have identified Indian rice varieties and their genes for high phosphorus (P) and nitrogen (N) use efficiency. Finding one variety for both N and P use efficiencies is a great advantage, as farmers prefer all efficiencies to be delivered together in the same crop variety. A press statement by the IP University on Wednesday said in a discovery that could help save both fertilizer costs and pollution due to leftover fertilizers in croplands, Indian biotechnologists have identified rice traits and genes for both phosphorus (P) and nitrogen (N) use efficiency (PUE and NUE). They compared three popular rice varieties from different parts of India for both NUE and PUE and found 12 common 'phenotypic' traits and 5 common genes for both, facilitating

improvement. They also found that CR Dhan 301 from Eastern coastal India has the highest NUE and PUE, followed by Panvelli and Samba Mahsuri (BPT 5204) from Western coastal and Southern India respectively. This research was carried out by Bhumika Madan and led by Professor Nandula Raghuram, founder-Head of the Centre for Sustainable Nitrogen and Nutrient Management (CSNNM), School of Biotechnology, Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, New Delhi. Their findings have just been published as a research article in the international peer reviewed journal, 'Plants.' Their novel finding that over half of all the phenotypic traits are common for PUE and NUE is good news for anyone interested in crop improvement for sustainable agriculture, they informed. N and P are the largest and most expensive components of NPK fertilizers and cereals

consume most of them in India. NUE or PUE in cereals is measured as the grain yield per kg of N/P fertilizer supplied. India spends about Rs two lakh crores on NPK fertilizers, most of which being government subsidy. "Only 25-30% of the applied fertilizers are converted into harvested outputs, while the rest are lost to air and water pollution, affecting our health, biodiversity and climate change threatening our planet" said Professor Raghuram. "While some of this wastage can be reduced by legume-based crop rotations and better manure management, we must also undertake genetic improvement of the crop for nutrient use efficiency. India being a centre of origin of rice biodiversity, we have tens of thousands of rice varieties and our findings help in developing better cultivars through selection and breeding," he added.

# Steel Ministry to curb steel imports, in talks with Finance Ministry: HD Kumaraswamy



**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
The steel ministry is in discussions with the finance ministry to explore policy measures aimed at curbing the rising imports of steel, including imposition of a minimum import price and protecting the domestic industry, Union Minister H D Kumaraswamy said on Wednesday. Acknowledging that tackling imports of steel was the "main issue", the steel minister said efforts are also being made to strengthen the domestic alloy industry. Asked if we can expect a Minimum Import Price on steel, the minister said: "Definitely, we will convince the finance ministry. Already preliminary discussion is

going on. I have confidence we will convince. To strengthen (the industry) how we have to implement the duties that (decision) we will take." He also asserted that he is determined to breathe life into Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited, which has been facing protests from various parties against the proposed privatisation of its Visakhapatnam steel plant. The protest is going on in RINL since last 1.5 years but I'm trying to give re-life to RINL. I am not going to let down," said Kumaraswamy. The minister for steel and heavy industries was speaking on the sidelines of an event here.

# CIABC calls for Government aid to boost alcohol exports

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Support from the Centre and state governments will help the country to achieve USD 1 billion worth of alcoholic beverages exports in the coming years, the Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC) said on Wednesday. CIABC Director General Anant S Iyer also said that promoting ease of doing business for the sector is key at both the Central and state government levels. Easy and timely permissions for bottling and branding; transport permits; and promoting online paperwork are some of the areas which need special attention for the growth of the sector. "We need ease of doing business across the operations, besides easy tax structures and market-determined prices to boost the exports."

# INBRIEF

**HUBNER'S NAMMA FACTORY ACHIEVES MILESTONES**  
**BENGALURU:** HÜBNER Group has today announced that its Namma Factory in Bengaluru has achieved a milestone of the production and delivery of 2,000 gangways since the factory was commissioned at the beginning of 2023.

**GOVERNMENT ACCORDS APPROVAL FOR ASHVINI**  
**NEW DELHI:** The Government accorded approval to the Anushakti Vidhyut Nigam Ltd. (ASHVINI), a Joint Venture (JV) of NTPC Ltd. to build, own & operate nuclear power plants in India in accordance with provisions of the Atomic Energy Act.

**NEW DELHI:** The Development Commissioner (Handlooms), Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India, in collaboration with National Design Centre (NDC), is organizing the "Special Handloom Expo" themed "Sutraratnam - Gems of Threads" at Handloom Haat, Janpath.

**PFC RECEIVES RECOGNITION FROM UNION MINISTER OF RENEWABLE ENERGY**  
**NEW DELHI:** Power Finance Corporation (PFC) received notable recognition from Shri Pralhad Joshi, Union Minister of New and Renewable Energy at RE-INVEST 2024 for its outstanding contribution to India's renewable energy sector.



# UNIT OF INDIAN TEAM HELPED THEM PREVAIL IN ASIAN CHAMPIONS TROPHY FINAL: HARMANPREET

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Skipper Harmanpreet Singh credited India's recent success to strong team camaraderie, emphasising that their deep bond and willingness to "die for one another" helped them overcome China to win the Hero Asian Champions Trophy for a record-extending fifth time. India rode on Jugraj Singh's late strike to defeat China 1-0 in a tense final in Hulanbuir on Tuesday. Pakistan won the bronze medal with a 5-2 win over South Korea. "The final was really intense; the Chinese were breathing down our necks throughout the game and made it really difficult for us to create a clear goal scoring chance," Harmanpreet said in a Hockey India release. "But the team over the last year has built immense trust in each other. We are willing to die for one another. It was this sense of unity reassuring us that we will find a way to win the game together." Harmanpreet said India's successful run in last year has instilled a strong belief among players. "The gold medal in last year's Asian Champions Trophy in



Chennai, the gold medal in the Hangzhou Asian Games and the bronze from the Paris 2024 Olympics have instilled a deep camaraderie within the team.

Harmanpreet, who has been shortlisted for FIH's Player-of-the-Year Award after scoring 10 goals at Paris, once again led from the front as the team remained unbeaten in the competition. Out of India's 26 goals in the competition, Harmanpreet scored seven and all were

from penalty corners. Harmanpreet said it is now crucial for India to keep building on the success. "We are proud to have retained our title but the work doesn't stop now," he said. "We have areas we need to improve; we need to build depth in our squad as well. The team will head back to camp after a short break and start preparing for the tournaments ahead to make our supporters proud again," he added. India vice-captain Vivek Sagar Prasad said the Olympics bronze medal made India the "team to beat" in the tournament. "All the teams in the group stage were tough to play against. The bronze medal from the Olympics painted a target on our backs; we were the team to beat," he said. "But every single person on the team stepped up to make it seem like we were cruising past our opponents. The youngsters slotted in seamlessly, Krishan and Suraj alternated to bail us out of tricky situations." "The defenders remained reliable, and the midfielders and forwards ran riot on the pitch. All in all, it was very enjoyable," he added.



## Man United routs third division Barnsley 7-0 in English League Cup

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag savored the "perfect night" after routing third-division Barnsley 7-0 in the English League Cup. It was United's biggest margin of victory under the Dutchman, who has been in charge for more than two years. Marcus Rashford, Alejandro Garnacho and Christian Eriksen all scored two goals each in the third round match at Old Trafford, with Antony also on target. "Not for me, but for the team, this is the perfect night. I think we could do everything that we planned to do. We won, (we are in) next round, scored some great goals, entertained the fans and we worked on our game model, so we are happy," Ten Hag said. The size of the victory surpassed United's previous best under Ten Hag: 4-1 wins against Real Betis and Chelsea in his first season at the club. It was the biggest since a 9-0 win over Southampton under former manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer in 2021. Encouragingly for Ten Hag, Rashford's scoring touch appears to have returned after a troubled season last year when he managed just nine goals. Rashford's double came after he ended a 12-game barren run with a goal against Southampton over the weekend. "Football is football. Sometimes you have ups and sometimes downs, but we have to use these games to get momentum and consistency," Rashford said. Garnacho also scored in that 3-0 win in the Premier League and emulated Rashford by making it three goals in his last two games. Eriksen struck twice late on. Rashford blasted United in front after cutting inside Marc Roberts in the 16th minute. Antony doubled the lead when winning and then converting a penalty in the 35th. Garnacho poked home from close range in the second minute of first-half stoppage time. United overpowered Barnsley after the break with Garnacho scoring his second when racing through on goal in the 49th. Rashford scored again in the 58th. It was the first time Rashford has scored more than one goal in a game since February 2023. Eriksen's double came in the 81st and 85th. Bottom of the Premier League and without a point, Everton's troubled campaign went from bad to worse after it was eliminated by second-to-last Southampton - losing 6-5 on penalties. The Merseyside team had taken the lead through Abdoulaye Doucoure in the 20th at Goodison Park, but Taylor Harwood-Bellis evened the game in the 32nd. Southampton goalkeeper Alex McCarthy saved Ashley Young's penalty in sudden death to seal Everton's fate. Eberechi Eze struck the winner as Crystal Palace beat second-division Queens Park Rangers 2-1 and Brentford survived an early scare against third-tier Leyton Orient to win 3-1. Brandon Cooper fired Orient ahead in the 11th, but Fabio Carvalho, Mikkel Damsgaard and Christian Norgaard eased Brentford to victory.

# Harry Kane scores 4 goals in Bayern's 9-2

AP ■ MUNICH

Harry Kane broke Wayne Rooney's record for the most Champions League goals by an English player when the Bayern Munich striker scored four times against Dinamo Zagreb. It was one of several records broken as Bayern routed Dinamo Zagreb 9-2 in one of the highest-scoring games in Champions League history — and an emphatic start to European competition for new coach Vincent Kompany. "Amazing game, a bit of a crazy game for sure," Kane told broadcaster DAZN. "To score all those goals in the end was a great night." Kane took his tally to 33 in the competition by scoring in the 19th, 53rd, 73rd and 78th minutes - three of the goals were penalties - to surpass Rooney's record of 30. "To be honest, after the second

(penalty) I didn't really know what to do with the third one, but thankfully I was able to put it away," Kane said. Kane opened the scoring from the penalty spot to give Bayern the lead over the Croatian club after his teammate Aleksandar Pavlovic was fouled by Ronaël Pierre-Gabriel. That drew Kane level with Rooney's record of 30, and he scored his 31st on a rebound after goalkeeper Ivan Nevistic parried Joshua Kimmich's shot in the 57th. Kane scored two more from the penalty spot to extend his record. Four other Bayern players scored in the emphatic win and there were two goals for new signing Michael Olise on his Champions League debut after signing from Crystal Palace. Leon Goretzka's header in stoppage time made Bayern the first team to score nine goals in the Champions League era. Some teams, including Bayern, achieved that feat in the old



European Cup. It was the highest-scoring game in the competition in terms of total goals since Borussia Dortmund beat Legia Warsaw 8-4 in 2016, according to UEFA. The 31-year-old Kane has scored 12

Champions League goals since moving to Bayern a year ago and scored 21 before that for Tottenham. Kane now has 53 goals in 50 games in all competitions since moving to Bayern. Kane has scored nine goals in his last three games for club and country including two for England against Finland in his 100th international game and a hat trick Saturday for Bayern against Holstein Kiel in the Bundesliga. Kane and Kylian Mbappé were joint top scorers in last season's Champions League with eight goals each. Another record was broken when Thomas Müller came off the bench to play his 152nd Champions League game for Bayern. That's the most for a player for one club, breaking a tie with former Barcelona player Xavi Hernandez. Müller has made the joint fourth-most appearances in the competition of any player.



## Tvesa, Pranavi lead Indian challenge in Spain

PTI ■ DÉNIA (SPAIN)

Tvesa Malik and Pranavi Urs will spearhead the Indian challenge at the La Sella Open, starting Thursday, as the Ladies European Tour (LET) resumes action after a break for the Solheim Cup. Tvesa and Pranavi, who have had modest seasons, will be joined by Ridhima Dilawari and invitee Seher Atwal. Diksha Dagar has taken a break while Vani Kapoor and Amandeep Drall are playing on the domestic Hero WPG Tour. Seher, a winner on the domestic Hero WPGT like Tvesa, Pranavi and Ridhima, will go out with April Angurasarane of Thailand and Emily Penttila of Finland, while Tvesa plays with Blanca Fernandez of Spain and Tiffany Chan of Hong Kong at the La Sella Golf Resort. Pranavi tees off with Dorteia Forbrigg of Norway and Agathe Sauzon of France from the first tee with Ridhima Dilawari with Linda Osala of Finland and Kim Metraux of Switzerland. After the Solheim Cup took place at Robert Trent Jones Golf Club in Gainesville, in the United States, the Tour returns to Europe.

La Sella Open came on the LET calendar in 2023 and returns this year with the 72-hole stroke play competition taking place at La Sella Golf Resort. A field of 132 players will be teeing it up with a cut to the top 60 professionals and ties at the end of the second round. Defending champion Nuria Irturiz returns to the tournament where she won her fourth LET title in 2023. Irturiz, one of 15 Spanish players in the field this week, is joined by fellow LET winners Marta Martin, Ana Peláez Trivino, Carmen Alonso and Maria Hernandez. The field includes former LET Order of Merit winners Trichat Cheenglab of Thailand and Lee-Anne Pace of South Africa. Nine winners from the 2024 LET season are in town, including Order of Merit and Rookie of the Year leader Chiara Tamburlini. England's Annabel Dimmock won her last start at the KPMG Women's Irish Open and will be hoping to continue her form. Germany's Helen Briem is an invite this week and the teenager has already made history winning four times on the LET Access Series in 2024.

## Roma fires Daniele De Rossi after going winless in its opening 4 Serie A matches

AP ■ ROME

Roma fired coach Daniele De Rossi on Wednesday in a move that was surprising despite the Giallorossi going winless in their opening four Italian league matches. De Rossi, a former Roma captain, was hired in January to replace the fired Jose Mourinho and impressed so much during the second half of last season that he was given a contract extension in June through 2026-27. "The club's decision is made in the best interests of the team, to get back on the desired path as soon as possible at a time when the season is still in its early stages," Roma said. "A heartfelt thank you to Daniele, who will always be at home at the Giallorossi club, for the work done in recent months with passion and dedication." Roma added that "communication regarding the team's technical guidance will follow." Roma hosts Serie A leader Udinese on Sunday. One possible replacement for De Rossi could be former Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri,

who was fired for his ugly outburst toward the referees in the Italian Cup final at the Stadio Olimpico in May. Former AC Milan coach Stefano Pioli, who was reportedly close to signing with Al-Nassr — the Saudi Arabian club that Cristiano Ronaldo plays for — could be another option. After opening with a scoreless draw at Cagliari, Roma was beaten 2-1 at home by Empoli. Draws at Juventus (0-0) and Genoa (1-1) followed - leaving Roma with only three points and in 16th place. De Rossi had transformed Roma into a better attacking unit than Mourinho's defensive teams but this season has produced only two goals. Next week, Roma opens its Europa League campaign against Athletic Bilbao at the Olimpico. Romelu Lukaku's loan spell at Roma ended after last season but talented striker Paulo Dybala stayed with the club after considering a move to Saudi Arabia. Roma's American owners Dan and Ryan Friedkin have often made surprising decisions.

## FIFA teams up with UN health agency for campaign to educate world soccer about concussion

AP ■ GENEVA

FIFA teamed up with the World Health Organization on Wednesday for a campaign to educate the soccer industry about the risks of concussion injuries. "Concussion is a public health issue of concern at all levels of football, and many other sports, requiring greater levels of awareness and action," WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a statement. Ten years after the alarming case in the 2014 World Cup final of Germany player Christoph Kramer, world soccer governing body FIFA is sending a toolkit to each of its 211 national federations to help teach at all levels of soccer that symptoms of a head injury can take up to 72 hours to appear. Kramer continued to play in the final against Argentina for 14 minutes after being injured despite being in clear distress. Match referee Nicola Rizzoli later said he alerted Germany players after Kramer asked if he was playing in the final. At the 2022 World Cup, Iran goalkeeper Ali Beiranvand was treated for several minutes on the field after clashing heads with a teammate, then continued to play on against England before finally being replaced. FIFA favors letting teams make an extra substitution to remove immediately a player with a suspected head injury. That lets team medical staff

evaluate injuries at length without the pressure of trying to send players back into the game. At soccer's rules-making panel, known as IFAB, FIFA has consistently blocked proposals to allow temporary substitutions that would let injured players with a suspected concussion be assessed just for several minutes before potentially returning to the game. FIFA medical advice is that symptoms can take up to 72 hours to develop. "The symptoms of a concussion can change or evolve within the minutes, hours, days and even weeks after the traumatic event," FIFA said of the new "Suspect and Protect" campaign.

## Asian Games medallist Kiran fails dope test



### Punia missing from latest list of suspended athletes

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Asian Games bronze-winner shot-putter Kiran Baliyan has been provisionally suspended by the National Anti Doping Agency (NADA) for testing positive for a banned substance as a slew of athletes across sports figured in the latest list of dope offenders. Surprisingly, Olympic medallist Bajrang Punia's name is missing from the latest update though he figured in a previous list issued by the NADA recently. The NADA had, on June 23, suspended Punia for a second time, three weeks after its Anti-Disciplinary Doping panel (ADDP) had revoked his suspension on the grounds that he was not served a "notice of charge" by the national body. NADA had on April 23 suspended the Tokyo Olympics bronze-medallist wrestler for his refusal to give his urine sample for dope test during the selection trials held in Sonapat on March 10. The sport's global governing body United Wrestling World (UWW) had also suspended him.

Bajrang, who, along with Vinesh Phogat and Sakshi Malik, spearheaded a long protest against ousted Wrestling Federation of India President Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh for allegedly sexually harassing women grapplers, had appealed against the provisional suspension and the ADDP had revoked it on May 31 till NADA issues the notice of charge. The 25-year-old Baliyan, who had become only the second Indian to win a medal in women's shot put in the Asian Games at Hangzhou last year, returned positive for metandienone, an anabolic androgenic steroid banned at all times. She had won gold at the 2023 National Inter-State Championships and a silver in the 2024 Federation Cup. She stares at a maximum ban period of four years, if she is proven guilty. Hammer thrower Manju Bala, who had won a bronze in 2014 Incheon Asian Games, also figured in the list. She tested positive for dehydrochloromethyl-testosterone (steroid) and SARMS (ligandrol).

Shalini Chaudhary, who won silver at the Federation Cup this year, also tested positive for the steroid metandienone. Long-distance runner Chavi Yadav tested positive for drostanolone, an anabolic-androgenic steroid. Other top Indian track and field athletes like javelin thrower D P Manu, quarter-miler Deepanshi and middle-distance runner Parvej Khan have been serving provisional suspensions. In wrestling, 2023 U20 World Championships bronze medallist Arju tested positive for stanozolol. Badminton makes a rare entry with doubles player Krishna Prasad Garaga, a member of the Indian team that won gold in 2022 Thomas Cup, testing positive for Human Chorionic Gonadotropin (HCG). Wushu players T Menaka Devi, Manjinder Singh and Goutam Sharma figured in the list as the sport has seen a surge in doping cases recently. Bhupendra Singh Byadwal (pencak silat), Ashish Phugat (rowing) and Ribason Singh Ningthoujam (canoe) are also among those who have been provisionally suspended by the NADA.



# India look to spin a new story but tricky Bangladesh no pushovers

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Littered largely with lopsided contests, India's hopes of walking down that familiar path will hinge on sorting an uncharacteristic batting infirmity against spin when they face Bangladesh in a two-Test series starting here from Thursday. Bangladesh, who are fresh from a recent 2-0 drubbing of Pakistan, are no pushovers this time and this will add to India's list of concerns as they look to take that bold first step into a long season that features 10 Tests, including a possible berth in the World Test Championship Final. India's 40-4 (win-loss) home record in the last decade is awe-inspiring but there is an ever-little crack, which is getting more pronounced in the past three years, particularly in the case of star batter Virat Kohli. Kohli was a constant in India's bull run at home since 2015, crunching runs for fun against all comers. But since 2021, his numbers against spin have dipped - an average of 30 in 15 Tests in this period. This is not to hold against

Kohli's extraordinary qualities as a batter, but it's an area that the champion cricketer himself will certainly want to improve upon. Skipper Rohit Sharma has also been prolific in dismantling spin, especially since his promotion as an opener in 2017 against South Africa. He averaged over 90 against twerkers. But since 2021, it has come down to a less flashy 44 in 15 matches. KL Rahul, a batter who is backed by Rohit as equally proficient against spin and pace, offers a slightly bleaker picture. In the last three years, he has played five Tests at home but against the slower kind, the elegant right-hander's average has taken a beating and stands at 23.40. Collectively, these stats need to be taken as an indication of waning skills but, perhaps, also as a reminder to refocus on perfecting the art of playing spin, often the core strength of batters from this part of the world. Assistant coach Ryan ten Doeschate had stressed on this point recently after India's debacle against Sri Lankan



spinners in a three-match ODI series which they lost 0-2. There are bright points too in Rishabh Pant (five matches, average 70), Shubman Gill (10

matches, average 56) and Yashasvi Jaiswal (five matches, average 115). However, the numbers of Jaiswal and Gill are constituted

by their breakaway series against England earlier this year, but the Three Lions did not have an experienced spin attack to lean upon.

In contrast, Bangladesh have much more potent spinners in left-armers Shakib Al Hasan, Taijul Islam and off-spinner Mehidy Hasan Miraz, who can

hurt any opposition on their day. Here, India will bank on the firepower and innovative approach of Pant to unsettle and eventually take down the visiting spinners as the Delhiite is expected to return to Test cricket for the first time since his horrific car accident in 2022. In the bowling department, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj, R Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja are certain to figure in the first eleven, and it's as formidable a unit as one would get irrespective of conditions. India will ponder over whether to go with a third seamer in either Akash Deep or Yash Dayal, considering that the MA Chidambaram Stadium may offer a red-soil pitch, or field a third spinner in Kuldeep Yadav as is the prevailing trend in a home Test. India can also consider the option of giving another run to Axar Patel as it can give a fillip to late order batting against a Bangladesh attack that also has two express quicks in Nahid Rana and Hasan Mahmud. New head coach Gautam Gambhir too might have a small but significant personal goal in front of him, that is to

start the first Test series under his tutelage on a winning note, after returning from Sri Lanka with a tad underwhelming 1-1 record from a white ball tour. An obsessed pursuant of victory, he will want to set it right. Rohit might carry a contrarian view on such individual targets and dress rehearsals, but India's effort in this series, first in six months for them in the traditional format, will certainly be a strong pointer to the course for the season ahead. **TEAMS (FROM):** **India:** Rohit Sharma (C), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, KL Rahul, Sarfaraz Khan, Rishabh Pant (WK), Dhruv Jurel (WK), R Ashwin, R Jadeja, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohd. Siraj, Akash Deep, Jasprit Bumrah, Yash Dayal. **Bangladesh:** Najmul Hossain Shanto (C), Mahmudul Hasan Joy, Zakir Hasan, Shadman Islam, Momtaz Haque, Mushfiqur Rahim (wk), Shakib Al Hasan, Litton Kumer Das, Mehidy Hasan Miraz, Taijul Islam, Nayeem Hasan, Nahid Rana, Hasan Mahmud, Taskin Ahmed, Syed Khaled Ahmed, Jaker Ali Anik.



## Rishabh Pant braces for Test return after 632 days

PTI ■ CHENNAI

A harsh sun beating down on him, Rishabh Pant was engrossed preparing for his first Test in two years, taking down net bowlers in that unmistakably Pant-ish way. From getting tossed up some 40m into air off a toppled car to getting back to cricket field at the highest level is nothing less than extraordinary. It was hard to believe that 632 days have passed since Pant has played a Test match, and, coincidentally, his last five-day game was also against Bangladesh in 2022. Now, the same opposition awaits him on his return to Test cricket come Thursday at the MA Chidambaram Stadium, and while the cricketing landscape around him remains largely unchanged, though some worthy contenders have come up in the interim. Dhruv Jurel has impressed all with a gritty outing in front and behind the stumps during the home series against England earlier this year. None could have faulted the team management if they continued with Jurel for this match, but head coach Gautam Gambhir underlined the value Pant brings to the table. "We all know how destructive he can be (as a batter) and what he can do in Test cricket. Obviously,

it gives him the freedom to go out there and express himself. He has got runs everywhere around the world. "It is always good to have someone like him who can open the game for us and more importantly can bring a lot of impact as well," Gambhir said in the pre-match press meet here. Of course, Pant has made his return to international cricket through the white ball formats, and was a part of India's T20 World Cup winning squad too but the long-format matches offer a vastly different challenge in terms of skills and the duration of concentration. Pant showed his readiness for the grind of red-ball cricket while playing for India B in the recent Duleep Trophy match at Bengaluru. After a rather nervy 10-ball seven in the first innings against India A, Pant showcased his full range with a 47-ball 61 that contained nine fours and two sixes. He tumbled, shuffled across and went deep into crease during that knock, but the management could have been more eager to see how he responded to the task of wicket-keeping. Pant acted that test with flying colours, taking seven catches, five alone in the second innings, in that match. The 26-year-old flew around behind the stumps to latch on to catches way down the leg side,

a telltale sign of a wicket-keeper's anticipation and agility, and was in the right position when the spinners operated. Jurel played for India A, but it was clear that the match was more of an audition for Pant ahead of his reintegration into Test cricket, which was supported by a quick assessment by the NCA physios. Gambhir delved on Pant's role as a wicketkeeper. "Not only with his batting, he has been excellent behind the stumps as well. Probably his batting overshadows his keeping many times. "But actually, see what he has done in Indian conditions...it is never easy to keep against people like Ashwin, Jadeja and Kuldeep. So, what he has done behind the stumps has been remarkable. "Obviously, he brings a lot of good things to the Test side. Not only from the batting point of view, but from the keeping point of view as well," Gambhir detailed. Above all this, Pant gives a different angle to the whole game of cricket with his attitude. Ricky Ponting, who worked with Pant at Delhi Capitals, gave an insight. "He's an infectious character to have around the group. He loves his cricket. He's a winner. He doesn't just play to make a few runs and be out there for the fun of it," Ponting recently told Sky Sports.

## Important to build relationship with seniors to take Indian cricket forward: Gambhir

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Head coach Gautam Gambhir on Wednesday underlined the significance for him to build on the existing cordial relationship with the senior players like skipper Rohit Sharma and batting talisman Virat Kohli to take Indian cricket forward. Gambhir, who took over from Rahul Dravid after the T20 World Cup, has shared the Indian dressing room with the likes of Kohli, Rohit and Ashwin in the not-so-distant past. "It's still early days (for him as coach). But the good part is that I have played with those guys (seniors). At one stage we were sharing the dressing room as players, when they were younger, who

have now become experienced guys," Gambhir said in the pre-match press meet here. "When you have that kind of a relationship, sometimes it gets much easier than building a relationship. Obviously, now the roles are different. "The relationship we can build over a period of next couple of years. It's going to be very important, and now we should keep taking it a little bit forward because we've got massive challenges coming our way," he added. The spat between Gambhir and Kohli after an IPL match at Lucknow has often been portrayed in social media as an example of strained relation between them. But Gambhir did not buy those



assumptions. "Sometimes people have made a lot of hue and cry about these things. But that's not true. My relationship with everyone in the dressing room team has

been really, really good. "More importantly I think the heart needs to be in the right place. When the passion is there, I think a lot of things can ease. I think the desire to win each and every time when we walk onto the cricket field, it's there. So, I think we've started off really well," said Gambhir. To buttress his argument, the 42-year-old explained his rationale behind selecting the eleven for a particular match. Communication, for him, is the watch word here. "I think the most important thing is clear communication. See, we don't drop anyone. We only select the best playing 11. We think and do the job for that particular Test match."

## Ponting joins Punjab Kings as head coach on four year contract

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Australian great Ricky Ponting was on Wednesday appointed head coach of Punjab Kings, replacing compatriot Trevor Bayliss in the underperforming IPL franchise. The former Australian captain has made the switch to Punjab Kings from Delhi Capitals, a team he was part of for seven years. "We are delighted to have Ricky on to guide and build our team for the next four seasons. His experience is crucial to help us develop a squad to deliver on-field success," franchise CEO Satish Menon said. An IPL source added that Ponting will take a call on the rest of the support staff. Under Ponting, Delhi Capitals became a force to reckon with though the elusive title never came. The team reached the final in 2020. He has also coached Mumbai Indians. Punjab too have never won the IPL since the league's inception in 2008 and the four co-owners will be hoping the World Cup-winning captain takes them all the way. Punjab's sole final appearance came way back in 2014 and they are one team which is often criticised for frequent chopping and changing. They have failed to finish even in the top five in



the last seven editions and ended ninth out of 10 teams earlier this year. In a team statement, Ponting promised a different style of play going forward. "I am excited to take up the new challenge. I had great conversations with the owners and the management about the way forward and was truly elated to see the alignment of our visions for the team. "We all want to repay the fans who have stayed with the franchise over the years and we promise that they will see a much different Punjab Kings going forward," he said. Bayliss was in charge of the side for the past two seasons with now-retired Shikhar Dhawan as its captain. Sanjay Bangar was head of cricket development, Charles Langveldt, the fast bowling coach, and Sunil Joshi took care of the spinners. Prior to Bayliss, Anil Kumble coached Punjab Kings but success eluded them. Punjab have had a strong core including Arshdeep Singh, Jitesh Sharma, Kagiso Rabada, Liam Livingstone, Sam Curran and Jonny Bairstow but the results have not come. Uncapped Shashank Singh and Ashutosh Sharma were the standout players for Punjab Kings in an otherwise forgettable season this year.



## Duleep Trophy: Iyer, Samson, Parag enter final round with point to prove

PTI ■ ANANTAPUR

The likes of Shreyas Iyer, Sanju Samson, Riyan Parag and Rinku Singh will get another opportunity to enhance their red-ball credentials when the final round of Duleep Trophy matches begin here on Thursday. No knockout games are scheduled for the season opening event and the team with maximum points will lift the trophy. With nine points from two games, India C sit at the top of the points table, followed by India B (7), India A (6) and India D (0). Table leaders India C, captained by Rituraj Gaikwad, will take on Mayank Agarwal led India A, while Abhimanyu Easwaran led India B will face India D, whose captain is under-pressure Iyer. After being ignored for the Bangladesh series, Iyer had a point to prove but he has not been able to lead from the front thus far in the competition. With his team yet to earn a point in the tournament, he will be fired up to put an inspiring performance. The performance of India D batter Samson and pacer Arshdeep Singh will also be tracked by the selectors. In the India B camp, Rinku will be aiming to get big runs after low returns in the previous game. In the India A versus India C contest, the selectors will be expecting more runs from Agarwal, Parag and Sai Sudharsan. Parag has batted confidently thus far but needs to stay longer in the middle. Pacer Prasad Krishna, making a comeback from injury in the

previous round, would be looking to log in a significant number of overs while Shams Mulani will be fancying another match-winning effort in the prevailing conditions. Ishan Kishan, who made a memorable return to red ball cricket by scoring a hundred for India C, will need another epic knock to garner more attention from the selectors. **SQUADS:** **India A squad:** Mayank Agarwal (C), Riyan Parag, Tilak Varma, Shivam Dube, Tanush Kotian, Prasad Krishna, Khaleel Ahmed, Avesh Khan, Kumar Kushagra, Shaswat Rawat, Pratham Singh, Akshay Wadkar, SK Rasheed, Shams Mulani, Aaqib Khan. **India B squad:** Abhimanyu Easwaran (C), Musheer Khan, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Washington Sundar, Navdeep Saini, Mukesh Kumar, Rahul Chahar, R Sai Kishore, Mohit Awasthi, N Jagadeesan (WK), Suyash Prabhudessai, Rinku Singh, Himanshu Mantri (WK). **India C squad:** Rituraj Gaikwad (C), Sai Sudharsan, Rajat Patidar, Abhishek Porel (WK), Ishan Kishan, B Indrajith, Hrithik Shokeen, Manav Suthar, Gaurav Yadav, Vyshak Vijaykumar, Anshul Khamboj, Himanshu Chauhan, Mayank Markande, Aryan Juyal (WK), Sandeep Warrier. **India D squad:** Shreyas Iyer (C), Atharva Taide, Yash Dube, Devdutt Padikkal, Ricky Bui, Saransh Jain, Arshdeep Singh, Aditya Thakare, Harshit Rana, Akash Sengupta, KS Bharat (WK), Saurabh Kumar, Sanju Samson (WK), Nishant Sindhu, Vidwath Kaverappa.

## Malvika stuns Paris Olympics medallist Tunjung in China Open badminton tournament

PTI ■ CHANGZHOU (CHINA)

India's Malvika Bansod pulled off a sensational straight-game victory over Paris Olympics bronze medallist Gregoria Mariska Tunjung of Indonesia in the women's singles opening round of the China Open Super 100 badminton tournament here on Wednesday. The 22-year-old Indian, ranked 43rd in the world, displayed immense grit as she saved three game points in the opening game to defeat the world No. 7 Indonesian 26-24 21-19 in a 46-minute match, marking the biggest win of her career. Malvika, a B. Tech graduate in computer science from SRM University in Chennai, will next take on Scotland's Kristy Gilmour, a two-time Commonwealth Games medallist. She was the sole Indian bright spot in the women's singles as

compatriots Aakarshi Kashyap and Samiya Imad Farooqui exited in the first round. Aakarshi lost to Chinese Taipei's Chiu Pin-Chian 15-21 19-21, while Samiya was outplayed by Gilmour 9-21 7-21 in a one-sided contest. In other Indian results, the women's doubles pair of Treasa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand went down 21-16 15-21 to Chinese Taipei's Hsieh Pei Shan and Hung En-Tzu. The mixed doubles duo of B Sumeeeth Reddy and N Sikki Reddy lost 10-21 16-21 to Malaysia's Tan Kian Meng and Lai Pei Jing. A left-handed shuttler, Malvika, from Nagpur, transitioned to the senior international circuit in 2019, winning the Maldives International title and finishing runner-up at the 2022 Syed Modi International. She has been in good form this year, claiming the Azerbaijan International title.



Malvika, once coached by former India junior chief coach Sanjay Mishra, made headlines in 2022 when she defeated

2012 Olympic bronze medallist Saina Nehwal at the India Open, breaking into the world's top 30.

However, her progress was hampered by health issues as she contracted dengue and typhoid following her

participation in the Hangzhou Asian Games last year. After her recovery, Malvika consistently faced top-ranked players in early rounds of world tour events. Despite early exits, she managed to maintain her position in the world's top 50. She has played close matches against the likes of world No. 1 Akane Yamaguchi and former world champion Nozomi Okuhara. Currently training under coach Shrikant Vad at the Thane Badminton Academy, Malvika continues to push her game forward. "This is her biggest win, and she is extremely happy. She has been performing well, but lacks experience, and sometimes luck hasn't favoured her," her mother Trupti told PTI. "Sanjay sir was like a father figure to her, but once he took up his role as BAI secretary, we struggled to find a replacement."