



OPINION 6

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WORLD 8

ISRAELI STRIKES IN SYRIA LEAVE 14 DEAD, MORE THAN 40 HURT

MONEY 10

STRONG GAINS IN FMCG, BANKING DRIVE SENSEX 376 POINTS HIGHER

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SC directs protesting doctors in West Bengal to return to work immediately

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Protest cannot be at the cost of duty," the Supreme Court observed on Monday as it directed the West Bengal doctors protesting over the rape and killing of a postgraduate medic at the State-run RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata to return to work immediately. A bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud directed the protesting doctors to get back to work by 5 pm on Tuesday and assured them that there will be no adverse action if they resume duty. "The State of West Bengal must take steps to create confidence in the minds of the doctors that their concerns regarding their safety and security are being duly attended to. In order to ensure this, all the district collectors and SPs (superintendents of police) shall take stock of the situation in all Government medical colleges and public hospitals and provide adequate safety. "We also direct that in the event the doctors return to duty on or before 5 pm (on Tuesday), no adverse disciplinary action should be taken against them. If there is continued abstention of work, there may be a likelihood of



A bench comprising Chief Justice of India (CJI) D.Y. Chandrachud, Justice J.B. Pardiwala and Justice Manoj Misra during the second day of hearing on a suo moto case related to the alleged sexual assault and murder of a postgraduate trainee doctor in Kolkata, at the Supreme Court in New Delhi, Monday, September 9, 2024. PTI Photo

adverse action," the bench, also comprising Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, said. The court said the protesting doctors cannot be oblivious to the needs of the general community. "Any protest cannot be at the cost of duty. The young doctors must now return and attend to the patients. We know what is happening on the ground. First, return to work. The district collectors and superintendents of police will ensure (your) safety. You have to now return to work," the bench said. Appearing in the court on behalf of the West Bengal Government, senior advocate Kapil Sibal submitted that 23

people have died in the State as doctors are on strike protesting against the rape and killing that has triggered nationwide protests. The Supreme Court also voiced concern over the absence of a key document that was needed for the postmortem of the medic raped and murdered at the RG Kar Medical College in Kolkata, and asked the CBI to investigate into it. The court also flagged that there was at least a 14-hour delay by Kolkata Police in registering FIR in rape and murder incident. The top court directed the CBI to submit a fresh report by September 17 on the probe in the case. The apex court also

directed immediate removal of photographs of the victim from all social media platforms to protect the dignity and privacy of the deceased. On the issue of security of medical institutions in the State, the Supreme Court said "All DMS, SPs in West Bengal to take stock of situation to ensure safety, security of Government medical colleges". The apex court also directed a senior officer of the West Bengal Government's Home department and a senior CISF officer to ensure all three companies of the CISF, which are deputed for security at the RG Kar Hospital, are given accommodation.



Youth tested Mpx positive, Centre urges to be vigilant

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
The Government on Monday said that the 26-year-old male who recently travelled from the country experiencing Mpx transmission has tested positive for the viral disease. However, in a bid to allay fears, the Union Health Ministry in a statement issued here stated that the virus is of the West African clade 2, not related to the current clade 1 public health emergency. The patient is currently isolated at a designated tertiary care isolation facility at Delhi Government's LNJP Hospital. "The patient remains clinically stable and is without any systemic illness or comorbidities," the Ministry said. It added that it is an isolated case, similar to the earlier 30 cases reported in India from July 2022 onwards. It is not a part of the current public health emergency reported by WHO which is regarding clade 1 of Mpx, it maintained. **Continued on Page 2**

Little hopes of alliance in Haryana as AAP declares first list

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

What could be the first indication of the failure of a poll alliance or pressure tactics on the Congress for an alliance, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Monday decided to go solo in the Haryana Assembly polls as it released its first list of 20 candidates. This comes amid days of hectic parleys between the two parties over seat-sharing arrangements that dragged on looking at the nomination window for the polls closing on September 12. This decision could complicate the potential alliance between the AAP and the Congress in Haryana and might impact the possibility of the two major INDIA bloc allies coming together for the Delhi Assembly polls next year. Interestingly, the AAP has fielded candidates from at least 12 seats including Naraingarh, Assandh, Samalkha, Uchana Kalan, Dabwali, Meham, Rohtak, Bahadurgarh, Badli, Beri, Mahendragarh and Badshahpur where the Congress has already announced its candidates. Interestingly, AAP has fielded its party's vice president of Haryana unit, Anurag Dhanda from Kalayat, which is considered to be a stronghold of former chief minister and veteran Congress leader Bhupinder Singh Hooda. Besides, this



AAP has fielded Kuldeep Gadrana from Dabwali, a bastion of the Chautala clan, Vikash Nehra from Bhiwani, Bijender Hooda is in the poll fray from Rohtak, which is considered as Hooda's stronghold. The Congress has so far announced 41 candidates for the Haryana Assembly polls to elect 90 MLAs, scheduled for October 5. The votes will be counted on October 8. The talks between the Congress and the AAP have been stuck over the number of seats to be contested by the latter, with Arvind Kejriwal-led party demanding 10 seats and the Congress offering five. The Haryana unit Congress leadership opposed alliance talks as they were not ready to accommodate AAP on these seats. Some of the seats AAP was demanding already had strong Congress candidates, State Leaders told the Central leadership. Hooda was against any seat-sharing pact with AAP. Hooda even reportedly walked out of one of the party meetings held on the matter in Delhi. In fact, State unit Haryana Congress Leaders were worried that an alliance might give a platform to AAP and help find its footing in the region. According to AAP insiders, the alliance seemed nearly sealed on Saturday and the delay from Congress in final confirmation led to an impasse, irking the AAP which had threatened to release the names of all 90 candidates if no final word is received from the grand old party till Monday evening. **Continued on Page 2**



The Ministry of Defence signed a contract with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited for 240 AL-31FP Aero Engines for Su-30MKI aircraft in the presence of the Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane and the Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal VR Chaudhari, in New Delhi on September 9, 2024. PIB

Defence Ministry contract to HAL, a major boost to Aatmanirbhar Bharat

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a major boost to the 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' initiative, the Defence Ministry on Monday signed a contract with State-run aerospace major Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) for 240 AL-31FP aero engines for Su-30MKI aircraft at a cost of over Rs 26,000 crore. Official sources said the aero-engines will be manufactured by the Koraput division of HAL and are expected to fulfil the need of the Indian Air Force to sustain the operational capability of the Su-30 fleet. The deal for the engines comes amid concerns over the depleting fleet of the IAF's fighter squadrons and delays in the supply of Tejas jets by HAL. The number of the IAF's fighter squadrons has come down to around 30 as against the authorised strength of at least 42.

The contract agreement was inked by senior officials of the ministry and the HAL in the presence of Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane and Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal VR Chaudhari. The HAL would supply 30 aero-engines annually as per the contractual delivery schedule. The supply of all 240 engines would be completed over the next eight years, according to the defence ministry. "During manufacturing, HAL plans to take support from the country's defence manufacturing ecosystem, involving MSMEs and public and private industries," said the official. "By the end of the delivery programme, HAL would enhance the indigenisation content up to 63 per cent to achieve an average of over 54 per cent," the defence ministry said. It said this would also help increase the indigenous content of repair and overhaul tasks of the aero-engines.

PM, Crown Prince talks take ties to next level

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday held wide-ranging talks with Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Khaled Al Nahyan focusing on boosting overall strategic ties between the two countries. The Crown Prince arrived here on Sunday. India and the United Arab Emirates inked four agreements to expand energy cooperation as well as focusing on boosting overall strategic ties. In their talks, Modi and Al Nahyan are understood to have also deliberated on pressing global challenges, including the situation in Gaza. MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said PM Modi and Crown Prince Al Nahyan discussed the multifaceted relations between India and the UAE with an aim to broaden the comprehensive strategic partnership. "The two leaders discussed the multifaceted India-UAE relations and avenues to broaden the comprehensive strategic partnership to new and emerging areas," Jaiswal said. After holding talks with Modi, the visiting leader paid tributes to Mahatma Gandhi at his memorial Rajghat. An Agreement for long-term LNG supply between Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) and Indian Oil Corporation Ltd and another agreement for Abu Dhabi onshore block-one between Urja Bharat and ADNOC. A



Prime Minister Narendra Modi meets Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan at the Hyderabad House, in New Delhi, Monday. Photo: Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

four pacts. Emirates Nuclear Energy Company (ENEC) and Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd (NPCIL) also inked an MoU for the operation and maintenance of the Barakah Nuclear Power Plant, according to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). The fourth pact is a production concession agreement for Abu Dhabi onshore block-one between Urja Bharat and ADNOC. A

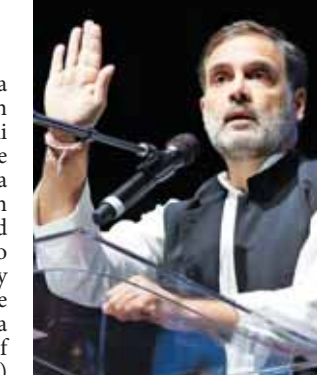
separate pact was inked between the Gujarat Government and Abu Dhabi Developmental Holding Company PJSC on setting up food parks in India. Following the landmark visit of Modi to the UAE in August 2015, bilateral relations were elevated to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. Both countries signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) in

February 2022 and a Local Currency Settlement (LCS) System in July 2023 to promote the use of Indian Rupee and AED (United Arab Emirates Dirham) for cross-border transactions. The two countries are among each other's top trading partners with a bilateral trade of about USD 85 billion in 2022-23, according to official data. The UAE is also among the top four investors in India in terms of foreign direct investments in 2022-23. About 3.5 million strong and vibrant Indian community forms the largest expatriate group in the UAE. The UAE was invited as special invitee for G20 during India's Presidency of the grouping. In Feb 2023, the India-UAE-France (UFI) trilateral was formally launched. With India's active support, the UAE joined SCO as dialogue partner in May 2023. The UAE also joined BRICS as a member on January 1 with India's support. The India-UAE defence cooperation has also witnessed a renewed momentum in the last few years. In January 2024, the first India-UAE bilateral army exercise 'Desert Cyclone' was held in Rajasthan. Nahyan also called on the President Draupadi Murmu at the Rashtrapati Bhavan during which she praised the UAE leadership for ensuring the welfare, particularly the special care taken during the difficult times of the Covid pandemic, of more than 35 lakh Indian citizens in the West Asian country. **Continued on Page 2**

BJP attacks Rahul Gandhi for US remarks

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

BJP on Monday launched a scathing attack on Congress leader Rahul Gandhi over his latest remarks in the United States, calling him a "black spot" in Indian democracy. The party accused Rahul Gandhi of trying to weaken Indian democracy with his remarks whenever he is abroad, in accordance with a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) reportedly signed between the Congress and the Chinese Communist Party during the UPA rule. BJP claimed that Congress had signed a "party-to-party MoU with China" during its rule. "The series of efforts that Rahul Gandhi has been making to weaken Indian democracy is the outcome of that MoU. If I am wrong, I dare Rahul Gandhi and (Congress president) Mallikarjun Kharge to make the MoU public," the party stated in its first reactions to the Rahul's recent visit abroad. "Everybody knows that Rahul Gandhi is an immature and part-time leader. But People have put a huge responsibility on his shoulders since he became the leader of opposition (in the Lok Sabha). But I feel sad to say that Rahul Gandhi is a black spot in Indian democracy. He does not even know what to talk about when he visits a foreign country," said Gaurav Bhatia, BJP's national spokesperson, at a Press conference at the BJP



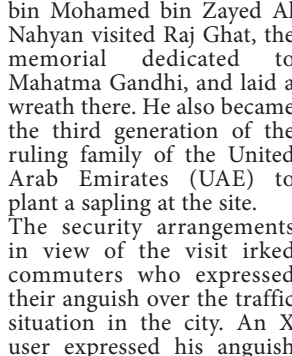
LoP in Lok Sabha and Congress MP Rahul Gandhi addresses the Indian Diaspora, at Dallas in Texas, USA. PTI

headquarters. He was replying to reporters' queries on Rahul's remarks against the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) at an event in the US. Love, respect and humility are missing from Indian politics, Rahul said in his address to the Indian-American community, where he also criticised the RSS for believing that India is "one idea". The Leader of Opposition made the remarks on Sunday in Dallas, during his first interaction with the Indian diaspora on his current visit to the US. During an interaction with students at the University of Texas in Dallas, Rahul also underscored the need to focus on manufacturing in India, saying India, the US and other countries in the West are facing the problem of unemployment while China is not as it is dominating global production. **Continued on Page 2**

Rain, traffic congestion, a nightmare for Delhiites

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Avast by a foreign dignitary to Rajghat along with rains lashing different parts of the national Capital made Monday a nightmare for commuters and office goers as vehicles were seen crawling at a snail's pace on the roads of the city due to traffic congestions, especially in Central Delhi. Security was tightened on the city roads with increased deployment of police authorities as Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Khaled



lot easier than giving Central Delhi a traffic heart attack whenever any foreign or domestic dignitary wants to pay their respects to Gandhi." **Continued on Page 2**

Interestingly, even the former Delhi Traffic Police Head commented on the situation of traffic in the city. Former Special Police Commissioner (Traffic) of Delhi Dr Muktesh Chander took to X and said, "Every morning there is a long traffic jam on the Delhi side of Kalindi Kunj bridge. What will happen when Jewar airport starts? Is there any plan? Never saw a senior Traffic Police officer on the choke point at the end of this bridge," he stated. **Continued on Page 2**

GST Council to reduce rates on Cancer drugs: FM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday said the GST Council has decided to reduce the rates on some cancer drugs to five percent from 12 percent. The Council also reduced the rate on namkeen to 12 per cent from 18 per cent, she said, adding that the Council will take a call on reduction in rate on health insurance at the next meeting in November. Sitharaman, who chaired the 54th meeting of the GST



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman with MoS Pankaj Chaudhary and others during the 54th meeting of the GST Council, in New Delhi. PTI

Council said that the revenue generated from online gaming has increased by 412 per cent in the last six months. "The Group of Ministers (GoM) on rate rationalisation and the GoM on real estate submitted status reports today. Status on online gaming and casinos was submitted. Revenue from online gaming has increased by 412 per cent at Rs 6,909 crore in six months," she said. **Continued on Page 2**

Kalindi Express train accident averted, sabotage not ruled out

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR / NEW DELHI

For the second consecutive day yet another major train accident was averted as the Bhiwani-Prayagraj Kalindi Express was brought to a screeching halt after hitting an LPG cylinder placed on the tracks. In what appears to be a sabotage, a bottle of petrol and matchboxes were also recovered from the site. Police said the incident occurred around 8.20 pm on Sunday when the train was running at a high speed.



Police and fire services personnel inspect an LPG cylinder after an attempt was allegedly made to derail the Kalindi Express, heading towards Bhiwani from Prayagraj, by placing the LPG cylinder on the tracks, in the Shivrajpur area in Kanpur, on Sunday night, September 8, 2024. Due to being hit by the train, the cylinder was thrown away from the tracks, according to officials.

An FIR has been registered in the matter and multiple teams have been formed to probe the incident. Deputy Commissioner of Police (West) Rajesh Kumar Singh said the Uttar Pradesh Anti Terrorist Squad (ATS) has launched an investigation separately. "An attempt was made to derail the Kalindi Express by placing the LPG cylinder on the tracks. Soon after receiving information about the incident around 8.20 pm on Sunday, senior officials rushed to the site and launched an investigation," police said. A forensic team was also called in and the Railway Protection Force (RPF) is also investigating the matter, they

said. Additional Commissioner of Police (Law and Order) Harish Chandra said the loco pilot saw that the LPG cylinder was placed on the tracks and applied emergency brakes. However, before it came to a halt, the train hit the cylinder, throwing it away from the tracks, Chandra said, adding the loco pilot informed the guard and the gateman about it.

The train remained at the incident site for about 20 minutes and was again stopped at the Bilhaur station for a check, the ACP said. The damaged cylinder has been recovered. A bottle of petrol and matchboxes were also recovered from the spot, Chandra said. On Sunday coupling of the Magadh Express from New Delhi to Islampur broke, splitting the train into two

between Turiganj and Raghunathpur railway stations in Bihar's Buxar district near Patna. However, no one was injured in the incident. An inquiry has been ordered to probe the exact cause of the incident. Railways is also probing several incidents of surfacing of big boulders placed on the railway tracks in last few months resulting many derailments in recent times.



Man killed, daughter injured after MCD truck hits motorcycle

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 45-year-old man was killed and his 16 year old daughter was injured after a truck of Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) mowed down their motorcycle in southeast Delhi on Monday. According to a senior police officer, police received a call regarding a motorcycle being hit by a MCD truck near Shiv Mandir red light on Mehrauli Badarpur road near Pul Prahladpur area at 1.06 pm. The police teams rushed to the spot and took Kuldeep and his daughter Anshika to All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Trauma Centre. "Second PCR call was received at 03:36 pm regarding Medico Legal Case (MLC) from AIIMS Trauma centre of the two patients.

Kuldeep was declared brought dead by the doctor and injured Anshika is under treatment," another senior officer stated. Moreover, the truck driver fled from the spot after the incident. The father and daughter were residents of Pul Prahladpur area. "The inspection of the spot was conducted by the Crime Team and the offending vehicle i.e. truck and accidental motorcycle have been taken in police possession," he said. An FIR has been registered under sections 281 (Rash driving or riding on a public way), 106(1) (Causing Death by Negligence) and 125 A (Act endangering life or personal safety of others) of BNS and further investigation is underway, the officer added.

MCD conducts special drive to check mosquito breeding



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) on Monday conducted a special drive to check for mosquito breeding at 290 construction sites across all of its 12 zones with mosquito breeding was found in 148 of them. A senior official from the civic body said that this drive was conducted in an ongoing effort to combat the spread of Vector Borne Diseases such as Dengue, Malaria, and Chikungunya. "During the drive, 290 construction sites were inspected, and mosquito breeding was found in 148 of them. The breeding were destroyed then and there, and 83 legal notices and 60 prosecutions were issued to the responsible

owners/builders," he added. He further said that the drive was conducted at construction sites because of their propensity for water stagnation which are potential breeding grounds for Aedes and Anopheles mosquitoes, which are the sole vectors for transmitting these diseases. "However, mosquito breeding can be easily prevented by taking simple measures such as channelizing water or treating stagnant water with diesel/kerosene oil," the officer stated. MCD officials emphasized the importance of cooperation from construction site owners and builders in preventing mosquito breeding and ensuring a safe and healthy environment for citizens.

Rajasthan: Bodies of four girls recovered from Parbati river

PTI ■ JAIPUR

The bodies of four girls who drowned while taking a dip in the Parbati river in Rajasthan's Dholpur district were recovered on Monday, police said. On Sunday, Mohini (14), Priya (12), Anjali (14) and Tanu (10) went to take a dip in the river on the occasion of Rishi Panchami festival. While one of the girls was taking a dip in the river, her

feet slipped and she drowned in the 20 feet deep water, Dholpur Superintendent of Police Sumit Meharda said. While trying to save her, three more girls drowned in the deep water, he said. On Monday morning, the SDRF and police team recovered the bodies of all four about 1.5 km away from the accident spot and handed them over to the family after post-mortem.

Delhi Police arrests 24 year old man for extortion

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police arrested a 24 year old man in connection with an extortion bid of Rs 50 lakhs where he threatened a cloth trader for his life in North Delhi's Lahori Gate. According to the police on Monday, the accused has been Aman Qureshi, resident of Uttar Pradesh's Muzaffar Nagar. "He used to visit the complainant's shop to purchase clothes at wholesale prices. He made this plan to extort money as he has borrowed money from different shopkeepers and needed money to maintain his lavish lifestyle," DCP

North Manoj Kumar Meena said, adding that two days police custody remand of Qureshi has been obtained to arrest the co-accused. "On August 4, Mohd. Abrar, resident of Dadri in Uttar Pradesh, who is dealing in readymade garments and having his shop in Katra Neel had received a mobile phone call for Ransom wherein he was asked to deliver Rs. 50 lakhs to the extortionist at Jama Masjid," Meena stated. Further, more ransom calls were received by him where the caller asked to give the money or to face life threatening consequences.



"Under extreme fear the matter was not reported to the local police, however the local police had learnt of the incident and after much

persuasion on his statement, a case under section 308(4) of BNS was registered at Lahori Gate police station and investigation has been taken up," the DCP said. He also added that the trader was provided with an officer for his security as he was extremely afraid and also closed his shop for a few days. During the course of investigation, it was revealed that the calls were made by two persons by borrowing it from labourers. "To mislead, the purported calls were made from Bahalgarh and Panipat, Haryana. Qureshi was apprehended from Khatauli, Mujaffar Nagar, Uttar

Pradesh, who during investigation has disclosed that he along-with his associates were behind this conspiracy, as they had credible information that Abrar was doing well in his business and would be a source for making some easy money. Teams have been formed and raids are being conducted in Delhi and other states to apprehend the co-accused and conspirators," the DCP shared. One Wagon-R Car which was used in the offence and an I-phone of the accused was recovered by the police and the investigation of this case is in progress.

Bike-borne gunmen shoot BJP member to death in Patna

PTI ■ PATNA

Bike-borne assailants gunned down a BJP member outside a restaurant in the Bihar capital Patna in the early hours of Monday, police said. The deceased was identified as Munna Sharma who was associated with the BJP for years. "Munna Sharma was shot at by three unidentified bike-borne armed assailants outside a restaurant when he was waiting for an autorickshaw. The armed men fled the spot after the shooting," Patna Rural Superintendent of Police Raushan Kumar told



reporters. He succumbed to his injuries in a government hospital. "Police registered a case and launched a manhunt to nab the gunmen. Forensic experts collected evidence from the spot. Officials are analysing CCTV footage of the area to identify the accused," he said. Leader of the opposition in the assembly Tejashwi Yadav of the RJD claimed that the

incident showed crime was flourishing under the NDA government in the state. "The state government, under the leadership of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, has miserably failed to check the deteriorating law and order situation in the state," the RJD leader posted on X. Union minister Chirag Paswan said it is a matter of serious concern. "Law must be enforced strictly so that people cannot even think of committing crimes. I am sure that police will soon nab the accused," said Paswan, also the Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) chief.

500 sniper rifle bullets seized in Moti Nagar, West Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A routine traffic check in West Delhi's Moti Nagar area has led to the seizure of 500 sniper rifle bullets while being transported on a motorcycle. According to police on Monday, the traffic police were checking vehicles on Saturday night when they signalled a motorcycle rider to stop. Instead, the rider picked up speed and tried to flee, leading to a chase, said a senior police officer privy to the probe into the matter. "While being chased, the man abandoned the motorcycle near a traffic stop and fled,"



the officer said, adding that when they searched the motorcycle they saw a bag in which they found 10 boxes containing 500 live cartridges of 7.62 calibre. "The Moti Nagar police station was informed about the matter and the cartridges were seized," the police officer said. An FIR under the Arms Act has been registered and multiple teams have been formed to identify the

accused. "We are checking CCTV footage and the route taken by the accused," the officer said. Another senior police officer, who requested anonymity, said 7.62 cartridges are used in AK-47 rifles, self-loading rifles (SLRs), light machine guns and also for sniper rifles. "These bullets are very pointed. When fired at someone, it leaves a small entry wound but causes maximum damage while exiting," said the officer. He said, "Recovery of such bullets is alarming. The accused will be nabbed soon as every bullet has its batch numbers marked."

PM, Crown Prince talks...

From Page 1

Murmu was also happy to note the high rate of participation and contribution of women in all aspects of Emirati society, a statement issued by the President's office said. "Both Leaders agreed that India and

the UAE have societies with a syncretic and multicultural heritage, and that the path of peace, tolerance, and harmony shown by Mahatma Gandhi and HH Sheikh Zayed, are deeply imbibed in our national character," the statement added.

BJP attacks Rahul Gandhi...

From Page 1

The former Congress chief also said there is no shortage of skills in India and the country could compete with China if it starts aligning itself for production. Reacting sharply, Bhatia said Rahul cannot "utter a single word or give a statement against China". "He weakens India...

He stands by China," the BJP leader said. Bhatia said that this was not the first time that Congress leader has demeaned the country while speaking on foreign soil but unfortunately he has also received thumbs up and support over his statements from certain quarters from abroad.

Youth tested Mpox positive, Centre urges to be vigilant

From Page 1

The case aligns with earlier risk assessments and continues to be managed according to established protocols, it said, adding that public health measures, including contact tracing and monitoring, are actively in place to ensure the situation is contained. "There is no indication of any widespread risk to the public at this time," the Health Ministry stated even as it urged states and Union territories to stay vigilant and avoid unnecessary panic. Authorities are advised to enhance surveillance, including screening, testing, and contact tracing, to manage the situation effectively and prevent further spread, said Union Health Secretary Apurva Chandra in a letter to States and Union Territories (UTs). The Centre has also advised them to ramp up surveillance including screening, testing and tracing contact of all suspect Mpox cases and identify isolation facilities in hospitals for both suspect and confirmed patients. Presently, three Centre-led hospitals in the national capitals have been designated for treatment of the Mpox cases if needed.

Chandra asked the States and UTs to review public health preparedness, particularly at the health facility level, identify isolation facilities in hospitals, and ensure the availability of required logistics and trained human resources at such facilities. The Secretary also called for the orientation of all key stakeholders with a focus on surveillance units under the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) at state and district levels to re-orient them on definitions of suspect, probable, confirmed cases, contact tracing and other surveillance activities. In the letter, Chandra asked all states to make people aware of the Mpox disease, its mode of spread, the need for timely reporting and taking preventive measures, besides reviewing the public health preparedness and isolation facilities for both suspect and confirmed cases. In the letter, Chandra said the World Health Organization (WHO) on August 14 declared the current outbreak of Mpox a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). Health units at points of entry

(airports) have been instructed to strengthen health screening of incoming travellers to detect any suspected case, the Union Health Secretary said, adding the laboratory network under Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has also been strengthened. Dr. Jugal Kishore, Director Professor and Head of Community Medicine at Vardhman Mahavir Medical College and Safdarjung Hospital, described Mpox symptoms as resembling those of chickenpox or smallpox, including sores, blisters, rashes, or pimples on the face or body, sometimes with yellow pus. Additional symptoms may include itching, vomiting, fever, headache, muscle stiffness, and lethargy. He said there was no need to panic but precautionary measures need to be taken such as avoiding crowded places, maintaining distance, washing hands frequently, and avoiding contact with immunocompromised individuals. He stressed the importance of consulting a doctor if Mpox symptoms appear, given the potential confusion with chickenpox.

GST Council...

From Page 1

Besides this, the Minister said that the revenue from casinos went up by 34 per cent in the last six months. On health insurance, Sitharaman said that the GST Council has decided to set up a new GoM on rate reduction, which will submit its report by October-end. "Two new GoMs have been decided. One is on the medical and health insurance. It will be the rate rationalisation GoM headed by the Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar but with newer members added for this limited purpose. We have told them that they will look into this matter and come up with a report by the end of October 2024. The GST council which will meet in November will finalise based on this report which will come from the GoM," Sitharaman said. Briefing reporters on the outcome of the 54th GST Council meeting, Sitharaman said it has decided to have a Group of Ministers (GoM) to look into the GST rate on life and health insurance. The GoM will be headed by Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary, who is currently heading the panel on GST rate rationalisation. Sitharaman further said that a GoM will also be constituted to deal with the issue concerning compensation cess which will cease after March 2026.

Little hopes of alliance in Haryana as AAP..

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Other party contestants include Kuldeep Chikara from Bahadurgarh, Randir Guliya from Badli, Sonu Ahlawat Sheria from Beri, Ravinder Faujdar from Ballabgarh, Dharmender Khatana from Sohna, Bir Singh Sarpanch from Badshahpur, Guralp Singh from Naraingarh; Narender Sharma from Pundri, Jaipal Sharma from Gharaunda, Amandeep Jundla from Assandh, Bittu Pahalwan from Samalkha, Pawan Fauji from Uchana Kalan, Kuldeep Gadrana from Dabwali, Happy Raina from Rania, Ranbir Guliya from Badli, Sonu Ahlawat from Beri and

Manish Yadav from Mahendragarh. On the issue of an alliance with the Congress, AAP's Haryana president Sushil Gupta said, "I want to say it very clearly that we have been preparing for all the 90 seats since day one. There is not much time left for the polls, the last date for filing nominations is September 12. So the wait is over." He asserted that the AAP is in a position to provide a strong alternative in Haryana, adding that the party's second list of candidates will also be released soon. Another AAP leader, Sanjay Singh, said the party will fight the Haryana polls with full strength.

Earlier in the day, Gupta had said the AAP would release the names of its candidates from all 90 seats if the Congress failed to seal the deal by the evening. Gupta said the countdown for the exit of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has begun in Haryana and added that "the AAP will not allow the BJP to benefit at any cost". He was replying to reporter's question on whether the AAP's decision to go solo will benefit the saffron party in Haryana. On the alliance prospects with the Congress, Singh said, "We do not have sufficient time. We are now engaged in finalising the candidates' names for the

remaining seats." On Sunday, AAP leader Raghav Chadha, who was holding talks with Congress leaders over a prospective alliance, said both parties were trying to form a coalition for the Haryana polls, keeping aside their individual aspirations. The Congress and the AAP had fought the Lok Sabha polls together in Delhi while they had contested the election separately in Punjab. In the general election, the Congress had given one seat to the AAP in Haryana, which it had contested unsuccessfully. In the 2019 Haryana polls, the AAP had contested 46 seats, but failed to taste success.

Rain, traffic congestion...

From Page 1

Metro delays were also witnessed with the trains getting delayed at various stations. A passenger who alighted the metro at ITO said that the metro police curtailed them from going out while releasing some of them in batches every 20 to 30 minutes. "We were being held at the ITO exit gate for over half an hour which made me get late for my office. What made the situation worse was that the

metro security curtailed us from going and released passengers in batches every 20 minutes," said a media professional. Presently, Delhi ranks as the 44th most congested city centre among 387 around the world in 2023, as per the 13th annual traffic index published by Dutch geolocation technology specialist, TomTom. Further, the situation was exacerbated with rains lashing

the city leading to traffic snarls in areas including Dhaura Kuan, Mundka, ITO, Sangam Vihar, Mehrauli-Badarpur road, Najafgarh, among others due to waterlogging. The Delhi Traffic police issued an advisory on the same and said, "Traffic is affected on Rohtak Road in the carriage way from Nangloi towards Tikri Border and vice versa due to potholes and water logging. Kindly avoid

Mundka and take alternate routes accordingly." Another commuter stated that it took him approximately two hours to cover a distance of 28 Kilometers. "Taking a jibe at the traffic jams in Delhi, a 30 year old Suhasini said, "Whenever there is stress, a hair spa is the best way to calm yourself. However, it is of no use since the traffic and pollution in Delhi will cause headaches again."

Delhi LG orders ACB probe into PWD corruption allegations

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has ordered a probe by the Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB) into serious allegations of corruption and misuse of public funds to the tune of nearly Rs 80 Cr. against the officials of the Public Works Department (PWD) in connection with the de-silting work carried out in Southwest Road-I and Southwest Road-II Divisions in Palam area. The Principal Secretary to Lieutenant Governor has written to the Chief Secretary conveying the orders.

In a complaint to LG's office secretariat on August 11, 2024, advocate and ward number 127 (Najafgarh) councillor Amit Kharkhari alleged that the officials involved in the project are engaged in serious irregularities, including misuse of public funds, blatant disregard for established tender norms, and other serious

corrupt practices.

"Keeping in view the severity, scale of the alleged irregularities supported with substantial proof of corruption in the complaint, Hon'ble Lt. Governor has desired that this matter may kindly be referred to Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB) for in depth investigation, so that further course of action be initiated, as per rules. It is also requested that an action taken report in the matter may be forwarded to this Secretariat, at the earliest", said the communication to the Chief Secretary from LG Secretariat. The complaint alleged that one single contractor namely Surender Singh was unduly favoured and given the contracts for de-silting of drains in violation of the laid norms and thus caused financial losses to the government. In his complaint, Kharkhari has alleged the irregularities which include corruption in de-silting of drains during



monsoon of 2022; Irregularities in installation of sewerage pumps at various vulnerable locations in Jafferpur; Irregularities in the measurement of work, double payment for the same

work; Fabrication of Non-existent work; Misuse of sub-division tenders; Violation of tender rules and facilitation of manual scavenging; Over inflation of tender rates and misappropriation of funds.

The complainant further alleged irregularities including fraudulent billing for consecutive four years; Obstruction of RTI requests and cover-up attempts; Corruption and manipulation of NIT process;

Financial misconduct and overbilling; Misappropriation and fraudulent payments; Favouritism, corruption and misuse of power in awarding contracts to Contractor Surender Singh. In his complaint, he has named Executive Engineer, Ashish Gupta, Junior Engineer, Ajay Kumar Meena, Assistant Engineer, Dharam Singh Meena along with the contractor, Surender Singh, and other PWD employees for being directly involved in the wrongdoings. Kharkhari also pointed out that, since both the divisions fell under the supervision of high-ranking PWD officials, including Superintending Engineers, Rajpal Shivrain and Shailander Mishra, as well as Chief Engineer, South (M), Manoj Kumar Aggarwal, it is likely that they were aware of such corrupt activities and may have even colluded with the above-mentioned Ex. Engineer and Assistant

Engineer to shield them from scrutiny. The complaint further added that there are several instances where the measures recorded by the above officials have been deliberately inflated to process higher payments to the contractor. These allegations, supported by various documents, suggest that the exchequer suffered significant financial losses due to the misconduct. Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva welcome the move saying that while Delhiites welcome the order of the Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena into complaint of desilting scam in Najafgarh Palam but they demand an order inquiry into desilting scam across the Capital. The decision of the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi V.K. Saxena ordering inquiry by Anti Corruption Bureau on the complaint filed by BJP Councillor Amit Kharkhari regarding desilting

scam in Najafgarh and Dabri Palam areas is welcomed," Sachdeva stated, expressing his pleasure with the decision of Saxena. Attacking the AAP ruled public departments, the BJP leader said, "Be it Public Works Department (PWD), Delhi Jal Board (DJB), Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) or Irrigation Department there has been violation of laid norms in giving desilting contracts by indulging in irregularities in measurement of works done, inflation of tender rates, double payments, payments for works not done in not only Najafgarh or Palam areas but across the city." Further, he alleged that the complaint involves barely two divisions of PWD and the scam amount is anticipated to be over Rs. 80 crores so it can be well assumed what would be actual amount if similar scams across Delhi are inquired into.

AAP Government banned production of firecrackers: Rai

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Monday announced that the AAP government has banned the production, sale and use of firecrackers in the national capital till January 1, 2025 to control air pollution in the coming winter season.

Rai, in a press conference, said that the ban is necessary to mitigate the seasonal surge in air pollution, which is worsened by firecrackers.

"In view of such a situation, like last year, this time also a complete ban is being imposed on the production, storage, sale and use of all types of firecrackers so that people can be saved from the pollution. There will also be a complete ban on online delivery or sale of any kind of firecrackers," he said. He added that there is a risk of increased air pollution in Delhi during the winter season. Burning firecrackers during this time further exacerbates pollution.

The senior AAP leader stated that to avoid any confusion, this ban applies to all types of firecrackers. "The ban will

remain in effect in Delhi until January 1, 2025, to provide relief to Delhiites from the pollution caused by burning firecrackers," he said. The minister announced that a joint action plan involving Delhi Police, the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC), and the Revenue Department will ensure strict enforcement of the ban, as the city ramps up efforts to protect public health. Highlighting the government's commitment to addressing air pollution, Rai stated that a 'Winter Action Plan' focusing on 21 key areas is being developed. This plan will include various campaigns aimed at controlling pollution, and the government will work closely with citizens to ensure its success.

"We urge all residents of Delhi to celebrate festivals by lighting lamps and sharing sweets instead of using firecrackers. Together, we can take responsibility for reducing pollution and protecting the environment. If every citizen becomes a 'Pollution Warrior,' we can prevent the health risks caused by air pollution," said Rai.

BJP'S REACTION

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva on Monday attacked the AAP government over the complete ban of fire crackers in the national Capital, accusing it of using 'the same old eyewash steps like ban on crackers' instead of encouraging people to use green crackers. "Experience of past years tells that crackers ban is not accepted by the people of Delhi and crackers are widely burnt so instead of bringing a total ban on crackers the Government should have shown sensitivity to encourage use of green crackers," Sachdeva claimed. Stating that there should be strict actions for controlling pollution, the Delhi BJP chief said, "The fight against pollution is important and stern steps need to be taken but it's surprising to see Arvind Kejriwal Government taking the same old eyewash steps like ban on crackers." He attacked the government over not talk-

ing to the AAP ruled Punjab over the issue of crop residue burning.

"The main source of increase in pollution levels in winter months is crop residue burning, construction and road dust and the Arvind Kejriwal government has till date spoken not a word on whether it has taken up the crop residue burning issue with Punjab Government but it has in haste banned the crackers," the BJP leader alleged. Further, he claimed that despite the ban in previous years, crackers are burnt widely in Delhi. "Experience of past years tells that crackers ban is not accepted by the people of Delhi and crackers are widely burnt so instead of bringing a total ban on crackers the Government should have shown sensitivity to encourage use of Green Crackers," Sachdeva stated. Meanwhile, Federation of Sadar Bazar Trades Association Chairman Paramjit Singh Pamma expressed displeasure over the ban on crackers and said,

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

St. Stephen's College on Monday approached the Delhi High Court challenging a single judge's order for granting admission to seven students on the basis of the seats allocated by the Delhi University.

The appeal is listed for hearing on Tuesday before a bench of Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela.

On September 6, the single judge had granted the relief to the seven students, saying the candidates were not at fault but had to face undue hardship due to an ongoing dispute between the institution and the university.

The court said the indecision on the part of the college part had left the petitioners in a state of uncertainty, preventing them from taking any further action at that stage. "On one hand, the petitioners faced the challenge of uncertainty over securing admission to their preferred college, St Stephen's, and on the other hand, they were also deprived of the opportunity to select and



opt for their second-choice college. "The prolonged 'under-process' status effectively blocked their participation in subsequent allocation rounds, causing them to miss out on other potential options for securing a seat," the single judge had said. The seven students had sought a direction to the college to provide them seats for the courses for which they have qualified. They had sought admission under the "single girl child quota" fixed by the DU. According to the university's

bulletin for admission information, one seat in each programme in every college is reserved under the "supernumerary quota for a single girl child". The petitioners had submitted that despite being allotted seats by the university in the college for the BA Economics (Honours) and BA programme courses, their admissions were not completed within the stipulated time. While the university had supported the petitions, they were opposed by the college. The college opposed the DU's stand that it was obliged to

admit all candidates who were allotted seats through the university's Common Seat Allocation System (CSAS). The college said it can admit students only within the sanctioned limit. The single judge, in the verdict, noted that the seat matrix for the current academic session was prepared and forwarded by the college itself to the DU. It said the seat matrix offered by the college clearly indicates that it had offered 13 different BA programmes, each with its own specific allocation of seats for various categories of students.

BJP MLAs letter on Constitutional crisis to President sent to Home Ministry

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Director in President's Secretariat Shivendra Chaturvedi on Monday wrote to the delegation of Delhi BJP MLAs who met the President Draupadi Murmu on August 30 with an appeal to dismiss the government given the "constitutional crisis plaguing" the Capital, stating that they have forwarded their demands to Ministry of Home Affairs. In his letter to the Leader of Opposition (LoP) in Delhi assembly Vijendra Gupta who led the delegation of BJP MLAs, Chaturvedi said, "This is to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated 30th August, 2024 addressed to the President of India jointly signed by seven other MLAs and one former MLA of Delhi Legislative Assembly." He added, "The said communication has been forwarded to the Home Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, for appropriate attention." Earlier, the Delhi BJP MLAs submitted a memorandum to



the President, where they stated, "We, the Members of the Delhi Legislative Assembly, approach Your Excellency with profound concern and utmost urgency regarding the ongoing constitutional crisis in the National Capital Territory of Delhi." They added, "The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government, under the leadership of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, has repeatedly and egregiously violated constitutional norms and principles, necessitating your immediate intervention to safeguard the democratic fabric of our nation's capital." The Delhi BJP members alleged that despite his impris-

onment, Kejriwal has refused to resign, creating an unprecedented situation that has led to a complete breakdown of governance in Delhi. "Kejriwal has made life of Delhiites miserable with no government department working effectively. The memorandum highlighted unprecedented governance paralysis, non-constitution of the sixth Delhi Finance Commission, violation of constitutional procedure: suppression of Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) reports, rampant corruption and financial irregularities and deliberate obstruction of Central government welfare schemes.

NGT slams Delhi Jal Board for delayed response

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed authorities to take "expeditious action" to complete the desilting of drains, including Barapullah, Kushak and Sunehri Pul, in Delhi. Observing that silt removed from a drain is kept by its side and flows back into it when it rains, the tribunal directed the authorities to take steps to remove it.

The green body, which was hearing a matter related to the discharge of effluent via drains into the Yamuna river and issues related to it, including establishment of sewage treatment plants (STPs) and desilting and dredging of drains, also imposed a Rs 20,000 fine on the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) for filing a late reply on the matter. On August 13, the tribunal

while considering the desilting of drains, had sought a response from the DJB within two weeks. In its order passed on September 4, a bench of NGT Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava, Justice Arun Kumar Tyagi and expert member A Senthil Vel noted that the DJB had filed its report belatedly and this obstructed proceedings. "It will be open to the competent authority of the DJB to find out the official responsible for causing the delay in filing the report and recover the cost from him," the bench said. Regarding the desilting of drains, the tribunal said, "Expedient action is required to be taken to complete the process of desilting. Undisputedly, the silt removed from the drain is kept by the side of the drain at some locations which on account of rains flows back to the drain.

ABVP releases candidate list for upcoming DUSU elections



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) on Monday released a list of nine probable candidates for the upcoming Delhi University Students Union (DUSU) elections slated for September 27. Their names include Rishabh Chaudhary, Rishiraj Singh, Aman Kapasiya, Bhanu Pratap Singh, Aryan Maan, Yash

Dabas, Kanishka Chaudhary, Himanshu Nagar, and Mitravinda. These probable candidates have started pre-election campaigning across various colleges of Delhi University. The campaigning will be held until September 12. During the campaign, the probable candidates will interact with the students, inform them about the accomplish-

ments of outgoing ABVP-led DUSU and collect information on any issues by them via Google forms. Based on the students' feedback during the pre-campaigning, the probable candidates will be selected by the election committee and a final list will be released later on. "The Delhi University Students' Union Elections are no less than a festival for the Delhi University Students. Today we have released a list of nine probable candidates who are going to colleges and informing about the accomplishments of ABVP led DUSU among the students and address their issues through different feedback mechanisms. This will provide us with a framework to address the students' needs and expectations. We will soon release a list of the final four candidates," ABVP Delhi State Secretary, Harsh Attri stated. The DUSU polls will be held on September 27 and resulting will be declared a day after.

High Court orders termination of pregnancy for minor rape victim

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has allowed a minor rape victim to undergo termination of her over 26 weeks pregnancy, observing that unwanted pregnancy constitutes a grave injury to the mental health of the survivor.

The court also directed the Safdarjung Hospital to preserve samples from the foetus for DNA testing which may be required for the pending criminal proceedings. The high court said the victim has the ultimate right whether to give birth to the conceived child or to terminate the pregnancy, and her opinion has to be given primacy.

"This court is of the considered opinion that the suffering of the victim who is aged about 16 years would be compounded if she is forced to continue the pregnancy at a tender age. Apart from above, the victim is bound to face social stigma which may not permit the scars left by defilement of her body to heal," Justice Anoop Kumar Mendiratta said. The court said it was cautious that though the pregnancy is of over 26 weeks of gestation but the risks associated with termination of pregnancy is not higher than the risk of delivery at full term of pregnancy. "Merely because there is no foetal abnormality, it cannot be held that the reproductive



choice of the victim may be curtailed. It may be underlined that unwanted pregnancy constitutes a grave injury to the mental health of the rape survivor/victim, as also confirmed in the opinion rendered by the medical board," it said. The court was dealing with a petition by the girl, filed through her guardian, seeking

permission to undergo medical termination of pregnancy and to direct the Safdarjung Hospital to preserve the terminal foetus for the purposes of DNA testing which would be required in the criminal case. The court was informed that the girl was over 26 weeks pregnant with an alleged his-

tory of sexual assault in March this year. The pregnancy was detected on August 27 when she complained of abdominal pain and was taken to a hospital. A case of rape and sexual assault was registered by police. The high court passed the order after the report of the medical board of Safdarjung Hospital clarified that carrying the pregnancy to full term is likely to adversely affect the physical health of the victim as well as her mental health. It was further informed that the victim and her mother have been counselled and informed of the procedural and medical aspects, including possible complications.

AAP opposes GST on research grants

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Finance Minister Atishi on Monday said that the decision of keeping research grants exempted from the Goods and Service Tax (GST) net in the 54th GST Council meeting is a blow to "tax terrorism" and a crucial step toward national development. She said that the Delhi government's fierce opposition at the 54th GST Council meeting has secured a major win for research and educational institutions. Atishi took to X and shared, "The AAP has continuously opposed GST

on research grants. Today, in the GST Council meeting, the Delhi and Punjab governments raised the issue that GST should not be levied on research grants received by educational institutions - whether it is a government grant or a private one. I am happy that today the GST Council has decided not to impose GST on research grants. This is a big step for the development of the country." Additionally, the Minister stated that in the meeting of the GST Council, the AAP governments of Delhi and Punjab strongly opposed the imposition of GST on

research grants received by educational institutions. "Taxing research grants of educational institutions is akin to tax terrorism. And we are happy that the central government and the rest of the state governments agreed on this issue," said the Delhi Minister. The senior AAP leader added that the issue which was repeatedly raised by the AAP governments of Delhi and Punjab that GST should not be imposed on research grants. "This is a big decision for our educational institutions which contribute to the development of the country through research," she added.

NIA files chargesheets against four in Bengaluru Rameshwaram Cafe blast



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Monday charge sheeted four accused in the high-profile Bengaluru's Rameshwaram Cafe blast case. The charge sheeted accused — Mussavir Hussain Shazib, Abdul Matheen Ahmed Taaha, Maaz Muneer Ahmed and Muzammil Shareef — were earlier arrested and are currently in judicial custody in the case, the NIA said in a statement.

The funds were used by the accused to perpetrate various acts of violence in Bengaluru, NIA investigations have revealed. "These included a failed IED attack at the State BJP Office, Malleshwaram, Bengaluru, on the day of Pran Pratishtha ceremony at Ayodhya on January 22, after which the two key accused had planned the Rameshwaram Cafe blast," the statement said. The charge sheet was filed in a special NIA court in Bengaluru. "The IED explosion, which took place on March 1, this year at the Rameshwaram Cafe, Brookfield, ITPL

Bengaluru, had left nine persons injured and extensively damaged the hotel property. NIA, which started investigation in the case on March 3rd, conducted several technical and field investigations in coordination with various state police forces and other agencies. "The investigations revealed that Shazib was the man who had planted the bomb. He, along with Taaha, had previously been absconding since 2020 after the Al-Hind module was busted, the NIA statement said. Extensive searches by the NIA had led to their arrest from their hideout in West Bengal 42

days after the Rameshwaram Cafe explosion. "The two men, hailing from Shivamogga District of Karnataka, were ISIS radicals, the probe agency. They were actively involved in radicalising other gullible Muslim youth to the ISIS ideology, and Maaz Muneer Ahmed and Muzammil Shareef were among such youth. "Taaha and Shazib had used fraudulently obtained Indian SIM cards and Indian bank accounts, and also used various Indian and Bangladeshi Identity documents downloaded from the Dark Web," the statement said. Investigations further revealed that Taaha had been introduced by an ex-convict, Shoaib Ahmed Mirza, to Mohammed Shaheed Faisal, an absconder in the LeT Bengaluru conspiracy case, it added. Taaha then introduced Faisal, his handler, to Mehaboob Pasha, an accused in the Al-Hind ISIS module case, and to Khaja Mohideen, Amir of ISIS South India, and later also to Maaz Muneer Ahmed, the NIA said.

Dharmendra Pradhan accuses CM Stalin of dividing States over NEP implementation



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Monday accused Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin of trying to pit States against each other to make a point about non-implementation of the new National Education Policy (NEP). Pradhan made the comments in response to Stalin's statement alleging that the

best performing States are being denied funds by the Centre under the Samagra Shiksha Scheme for refusing to implement NEP. "Healthy competition amongst the States is always welcome in a democracy. However, pitting States against each other to make a point goes against the spirit of the Constitution and the value of a unified India. NEP 2020 was formulated through wide range of consultations

and has the collective wisdom of the people of India," Pradhan said. The Education Minister questioned Stalin on the state's "principled" opposition to NEP. "Are you opposing education in mother tongue including Tamil? Are you opposing the conduct of exams in Indian languages including Tamil? Are you opposing the creation of textbooks and content in Indian languages including Tamil? Are you opposed to the holistic, multi-disciplinary, equitable, futuristic and inclusive framework of NEP?" he questioned. Stalin had shared a news report on social media about Samagra Shiksha funds being slashed by the Centre for the States refusing to implement NEP. "Denying funds to the best-performing States for refusing to bow to the #NEP, while generously rewarding those who are not delivering on the objectives - Is this how the Union BJP Government plans to promote quality education and equity? I leave it to the wisdom of our nation and our people to decide!" Stalin wrote.



CDS Gen Chauhan unveils joint doctrine for amphibious operations

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Chief of Defence Staff Gen Anil Chauhan on Monday unveiled a joint doctrine for amphibious operations in a key move in the National security domain. The doctrine, released at a meeting of the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC), came as the Government is looking at implementing the ambitious theaterisation project. The release of the key document came nearly three months after the unveiling of the joint doctrine for cyberspace operations. It was aimed at guiding military commanders in conducting cyberspace operations. "In a landmark event, Chief of Defence Staff Gen Anil Chauhan released the joint doctrine for amphibious operations during the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC) meeting," the defence ministry said. "The doctrine is a keystone publication which will provide guidance to the commanders for the conduct of amphibious operations in today's complex military environment," it said. The amphibious capability empowers the armed forces to conduct a multitude of operations in the Indian Ocean Region, both during war and peace. "These operations are a crucial component of multi-domain operations and serve as the best example of the cohesion and integration amongst the armed forces," the ministry said. The doctrine provides due focus on jointness and integration of armed forces in general and amphibious operations in particular. The Government has been focusing on boosting synergy among the armed forces as it looks at rolling out the theatre commands. Under the theaterisation model, the Government seeks to integrate the capabilities of the army, air force and navy and optimally utilise their resources for wars and operations. As per the theaterisation plan, each of the theatre commands will have units of the Army, the Navy and the Air Force and all of them will work as a single entity looking after security challenges in a specified geographical territory. At present, the Army, Navy and the Air Force have separate commands.



Culture Ministry announces 2nd International Buddhist Media Conclave

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Ministry of Culture announced on Monday that the second International Buddhist Media Conclave will take place on Wednesday with an aim to promote ethical journalism, mindful communication, and build a network of Buddhist media professionals across Asia. This event is being organized by the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) and the Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF), said a statement from the Ministry. The theme of the event will be — 'Mindful Communication for Conflict Avoidance and Sustainable Development'. It will be held at VIF. "Baichung Bhutia, former captain of the Indian football team will be the guest of honour, while Gurumurthy, Chairman of VIF, will deliver

the keynote address on the occasion. The event will be attended by representatives of the media from 18 countries, the ministry added. "The primary objective of the 2nd International Buddhist Media Conclave will focus on how Buddhist teachings can be assimilated into modern media practices to address global crises and enhance trust in media institutions," the statement said. "The first conclave brought together around 150 delegates, including Buddhist journalists and media personalities from 12 different countries and laid a strong foundation for integrating Buddhist principles into media practices, it added. "The conclave aims to foster ethical journalism, promote mindful communication, and establish a network of Buddhist media professionals across Asia," the statement said.

Indian Army, IAF sign agreement with Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Army and the IAF on Monday signed an agreement with Vadodra-based Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya (GSV), as Defence Minister Rajnath Singh described the collaboration as a "monumental partnership" towards further strengthening the logistics backbone of the armed forces in sync with the vision of 'Aatmanirbharta' in defence. The Memorandum of Understanding will enable the two Services to acquire higher expertise on logistics. It will ensure development of in-house expertise on various facets of logistics operations and contribute effectively towards the national development plans — PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan 2021 and National Logistics Policy 2022, the defence ministry said in a statement. The MoU was signed in the presence of Singh and Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw in New Delhi. The defence minister described the collaboration as "a monumental partnership towards further strengthening the logistics backbone of the armed forces in sync with the vision of 'Aatmanirbharta' in defence." He emphasised that logistics is no longer just a support function of the armed forces, but is emerging as an important factor in military



operations and national security. "An efficient logistics system plays a key role in quickly mobilising the forces and delivering resources to the right place in less time. Keeping in mind the conditions in which our forces operate, we need a seamless movement of troops, equipment and supplies. The MoU will prove to be very important in terms of how the needs of our forces can be fulfilled through knowledge, innovation and collaboration," Singh was quoted as saying in the statement. The defence minister asserted that the MoU will prove to be beneficial in achieving the government's vision of attaining self-reliance in defence sector. "If we need expertise in logistics, we should get it training from our own resources like Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya. If we need equipment, we should get it manufactured in India itself. The foundation of a strong India can be laid only

by being 'Aatmanirbhara,' he added. On the MoU's provision of experiential learning through real-world case studies, Singh exuded confidence that Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya, through the leadership, management, and operational experience of the armed forces personnel, will help shape a new generation of logistics experts and managers who will fulfil the dynamic needs of modern warfare. Vaishnaw expressed confidence that the Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya will serve as a vital partner in empowering the armed forces with cutting-edge logistics education, research, and innovation. The event was also attended by CDS Gen Anil Chauhan, IAF Chief Air Chief Marshal V R Chaudhari, Army Chief Gen Upendra Dwivedi, Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane, Chairman of the Railway Board and Vice Chancellor, Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya and other senior officers of both the ministries.

Health Secretary Apurva Chandra highlights HMIS Integration with RCH, portals

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Health Secretary Apurva Chandra on Monday highlighted the potential of integrating the Health Management Information System (HMIS) with the Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) and other health portals to enhance data efficiency. He was sharing his views during the release of the annual report 'Health Dynamics of India (Infrastructure and Human Resources) 2022-23', previously known as 'Rural Health Statistics'. "The annual publication is a valuable document furnishing much-needed information on manpower and infrastructure within the National Health Mission, helpful in policy-making, improving processes and problem-solving," said the Health Secretary. "Need to integrate the HMIS Portal with RCH and other portals of the Ministry to reduce the burden of work of health functionaries and to ensure that the data are uploaded timely and analysed carefully," he added. Chandra said that the document gives a cross-analysis across the states on the availability and deficiencies in manpower and infrastructure. The report released at the event showed that as of

March 31, 2023, As of March 31, 2023, the country has a total of 1,69,615 Sub-Centres (SCs), 31,882 Primary Health Centres (PHCs), 6,359 Community Health Centres (CHCs), 1,340 Sub-Divisional/District Hospitals (SDHs), 714 District Hospitals (DHs), and 362 Medical Colleges (MCs) serving both rural and urban areas. These healthcare infrastructures are supported by 2,39,911 health worker (male and female) at SCs, 40,583 doctors/medical officers at PHCs, 26,280 specialists and medical officers at CHCs, and 45,027 doctors and specialists at SDHs and DHs. Additionally, there are 47,932 staff nurses at PHCs, 51,059 nursing staff at CHCs, and 1,35,793 paramedical staff at SDHs and DHs across the country, according to the report. "This data is crucial for the stakeholders in the health sector as it supports effective planning, monitoring and management of the health infrastructure across the country," said Chandra. By providing a clear snapshot of the current state of healthcare infrastructure and human resources, the publication serves as a foundational tool for identifying gaps and addressing needs in various areas, including in rural, urban and tribal regions, he added.

Congress asks India's position on Brazil's wealth tax proposal at G20

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Monday asked the Government to spell out what will be India's position on Brazil's proposal of a two per cent wealth tax on dollar billionaires when it is debated at the November G20 Summit. Congress General Secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said India has been conspicuously silent on the matter which is not irrelevant for it since according to one new report, the country has 334 dollar billionaires worth over USD one billion. "Exactly a year ago, the annual G20 Summit began in New Delhi. The Presidency of the G20 rotates among its member countries every year. Two months from now the next G20 Summit will take place in Brazil, which has chosen to not create the hype and self-glorifying publicity like the non-biological PM did," Ramesh said in a post on X. "And what a difference a year has made. In September 2023



He was riding super high. Now he is still reeling from his personal, political, and moral defeat of June 4 2024," the Congress leader said. For the November 2024 summit, Brazil has floated a proposal for a two per cent wealth tax on dollar billionaires, he said. "This proposal has been supported already by France, Spain, South Africa, and Germany. India has been conspicuously silent on it. What will be our country's position on this proposal when it is debated?" Ramesh said. It is not irrelevant for us since according to one new report India has 334 dollar billionaires worth over one

billion dollars, he said. Brazil's G20 presidency has put the proposal on the table. Commissioned by the Brazilian G20 presidency, the report 'A Blueprint for a Coordinated Minimum Effective Taxation Standard for Ultra-High-Net-Worth Individuals' had said, "a minimum tax on billionaires equal to two per cent of their wealth would raise USD 200-250 billion per year globally from about 3,000 taxpayers." These revenues would be collected from economic actors who are both very wealthy and undertaxed today, the report prepared by French economist Gabriel Zucman had said.

No National TB guidelines for healthcare workers despite 2025 elimination goal: Study

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Despite India's ambitious goal to eliminate Tuberculosis (TB) by 2025—five years ahead of the global target—intriguingly there are no national guidelines for routine TB screening and surveillance among healthcare workers deeply involved in treatment, placing medical staff at a significantly higher risk of contracting multidrug-resistant TB strains than in the general population, flags a study. It reached this disturbing conclusion after analysing data from ten separate studies conducted between 2004 and 2024. It found an average prevalence of 2,391.6 cases per 100,000 healthcare workers in India, starkly contrasting with the 300 cases per 100,000 in the general population. The study "Prevalence of Tuberculosis Among Healthcare Workers in India: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis," also noted that inadequate ventilation, insufficient protective

equipment, and frequent exposure to MDR among others are severely affecting the well-being of medical staff with the infection. Given that TB remains a critical public health challenge globally, particularly in high-burden countries like India—accounting for approximately one-fourth of the global TB cases—the authors emphasised the need for guidelines specifically targeting high-risk groups such as medical trainees and those in high-exposure departments. Dr. Jugal Kishore, Director and Professor in the Department of Community Medicine at Safdarjung Hospital highlighted the alarming incidence of TB among healthcare workers (HCWs) as indicative of broader systemic vulnerabilities within healthcare infrastructure. Dr Ravindra Nath from Teerthanker Mahaveer University, Moradabad, Dr Pranav Ish, Dr Aninda Debnath, and Dr Nitin Panwar, from VMMC and Safdarjung Hospital, and Dr



Anirban Bhaumik from Dr Baba Saheb Ambedkar Medical College and Hospital, Delhi are other authors of the study. Dr Kishore lamented that despite the acknowledged risks, comprehensive epidemiological data on TB among HCWs in India is sparse and often inconsistent. This points to significant occupational hazards that are often overlooked in the healthcare

treatment but also highlight the critical need for stringent infection control measures in healthcare facilities. The study has also stressed routine TB screening for all HCWs, especially those in high-risk roles, to facilitate early intervention and reduce transmission besides, holding ongoing training programs to raise awareness about its risks and the importance of preventive practices. "For instance, despite the high threat, many HCWs do not consistently use PPE, such as N95 masks, particularly in high-exposure areas," said Dr Kishore. He emphasised that national guidelines should include investments in better ventilation systems and dedicated isolation rooms to curb TB transmission in healthcare settings and stressed the importance of providing adequate nutrition, mental health services, and support for managing work-related stress, which are crucial for reducing healthcare workers' vulnerability to TB.

Medics to decide on SC order post GB meet

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Hours after the Supreme Court fixed a deadline for the agitating junior doctors of Bengal to return to their hospital duty, the medics said they would take a decision in that regard only after the general body meeting.

The junior doctors of Bengal who have been demanding justice for their colleague who had on August 8 raped and murdered inside her workplace at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital on Monday expressed disappointment at not getting a favourable order and said that the Apex Court had been misled by the State Government which had not taken measures --- as directed by the Court --- ensuring security to the junior doctors. "We are very disappointed because we thought that some of our pertinent demands would be addressed ... for instance the Court had earlier directed the State to ensure security of the doctors' but hardly a thing has been done in this regard ... while CISF has been posted at RG Kar all the other colleges are vulnerable to attack by the



ruling party goons ... otherwise the vandalism would not have taken place at our neighbouring Sagar Dutta Medical College or for that matter our colleagues in Midnapore Medical College and other such institutions would not have been threatened and attacked by the vested interests," said K Karmakar one of the agitating doctors. "Another doctor said that the issue of a senior IPS officer offering money to the parents of the victim doctor to shut their mouth adding and "the demand that the Police Commissioner's role in the preliminary investigation be

brought under CBI scanner was too not addressed." "The Supreme Court had earlier passed an order directing the junior doctors to resume work by 5pm on Tuesday failing which it would not interfere with any (coercive) measures if taken by the State Government. "There is CISF in our college but what about other colleges ... these junior doctors are being threatened everyday ... this Government is waiting for the movement to subside ... then the faces of movement in various colleges would be harassed, heckled or even may be physically assaulted or murdered," said one of the

doctors saying, "if you talk about government taking measures it is all false ... the Government has only effected some transfers which it was forced to do but ... if you talk of my (RG Kar) college ladies' bathroom have not been constructed ... no CCTV have been installed in our department ... threats are continuing on daily basis." Another doctor referring to the Government report submitted before the Supreme Court said, "one wonders how a Government can lie on oath ... they are telling that 23 people have died on account of our agitation ... it is completely false ... the Government has misled the Apex Court ... because, house staff, intern and senior doctors are working overtime ... Emergency, Operation Theaters and indoor services are on and patients are being admitted ... all of us are unofficially assisting the senior doctors and helping out the patients ... in fact we are doing more work than before as we have in addition opened Abhaya Clinics to serve the patients ... we are extremely disappointed by today's order."

Didi dangles carrot, stick, asks junior doctors to join work

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday dangled carrots and put on exhibition a stick for the agitating doctors before asking them to return to work as she was "against taking strong measures" because she was not only "sympathetic" towards their demands but also wanted an "amicable" solution of the problem. The forum of junior doctors of Bengal had been on a cease work in demand for justice to 'Abhaya' one of their colleagues who was on August 8 raped and murdered inside the seminar hall of the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital. In an apparent backdrop of the Supreme Court order directing the doctors to return to work the Chief Minister said "I too am of the view that the doctors should resume work ... please return to the atmosphere of festivities as Durga Pujas are coming ... I do not want to take coercive measures and am open to talks ... no action will be taken against the doctors ... let 5 or 10 doctors come to me and we can always talk things out ... but this endless cease work cannot go on as the people are getting affected which the State cannot accept." While she

sounded accommodative for the doctors should they join duty and return to the talking table she left a tortuous message for them even as she asked the Health Secretary to tell the Chief Medical Officers of the districts to prepare lists of those who were not doing their duties. "I have reports that many doctors are rendering services to the private hospitals and earning money from there, living the poor patients at lurch in Government hospitals ... I ask you to find out the things and prepare the list," Banerjee said. The agitating doctors said that this direction to the Health Secretary and "the so called reports of the doctors practicing in private hospitals is for our consumption ... a message is being given to the district administration to falsely frame us ... if she does so then she will be inviting a bigger outrage that she will not be able to handle." The Trinamool Congress has been under tremendous pressure both from within and outside with a number of party leaders questioning the "insensitive way" the entire thing was handled by the Government provoking the civil society and the people in general to stage mass apolitical rallies.

I never offered cash to victim parents: WB CM

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Amid claims made by the family members of the raped and murdered junior lady doctor of the RG Kar Medical College Hospital that they were offered money by the powers that be, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday denied such reports saying false claims were being made against her. The junior doctors had been raped and murdered on the morning of August 8 kicking up a countrywide storm which was still blowing violently over Bengal with the junior doctors' cease work protest reaching almost a month on Monday. Asking for oral evidence of such offer if any the Chief Minister on Monday said that she had never made such proposal. "I never said that money should be offered. Please show me the proof where I spoke about money. These are all false allegations, conspiracy and untrue propaganda ... rather I told the parents of the victim that money can never be an alternative and that the State Government will always be by their side if need be," Banerjee said. Curiously the Chief Minister was silent about the allegations made on camera by the parents of the victim that they had indeed been



approached by a senior IPS officer who had offered a packet stuffed with cash. "Not only the police seemed to be in a hurry to cremate the body of my daughter ... they also did not cooperate with us ... tried to get a signature on a blank paper ... they also did not allow us to see the body for more than three hours during which we were sitting inside the hospital," the father of the victim said. The mother of the victim told a mass gathering of protesters in front of the RG Kar Medical College where she was doing her post graduation on chest medicine how the IPS officer tried to purchase their silence. "We were offered money ... not only this we were also made to tell in front of the camera that we were not offered money ... had they not offered us the money then why would they get such videography done," asked the mother of the victim.

Mehbooba Mufti questions funding for AIP campaign while Rashid is in jail

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Former Chief Minister and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Chief Mehbooba Mufti Monday raised pointed queries to ascertain who is funding the election campaign of Sheikh Abdul Rashid's Awami Ittehad Party (AIP) in Kashmir Valley especially when he is kept behind bars. Sharing her serious concerns Mehbooba Mufti also claimed after the proxy parties failed to bail out the ruling party they seemed to have revisited their strategy and supported the AIP candidates in the Assembly polls. Rashid defeated former chief minister and National Conference (NC) vice president Omar Abdullah from the Baramulla Lok Sabha constituency earlier this year. His brother Khurshid Ahmad Sheikh is set to contest the Assembly polls from Langate. Addressing the media persons in the Khanabal area of Anantnag district Mufti questioned how the AIP was organising resources and candidates when their chief was behind bars. "I want to know that Rashid is in jail. (PDP founder) Mufti (Mohammad Sayeed) took 50

years to form the party, we still do not have the resources to field candidates everywhere. Who is behind his (Engineer's) organization as their candidates are fielded everywhere, wherefrom is the funding coming? Where are they getting such courage to engage in hooliganism?" she added. In the same vein the PDP Chief said, "I want to ask the government if you have again come up with a proxy party, Engineer Rashid's party, when all your other proxy parties have failed, you have brought Engineer Rashid's party to the fore, and you are supporting them fully with funds and everything, then tell us clearly that others parties do not have to contest elections," she said. PDP candidate from south Kashmir's Shopian assembly segment Yawar Shafi Bandy was injured in an alleged attack by the workers of the Awami Ittehad Party (AIP) in the Balpora area of Shopian. "Our candidate was going to his constituency, some workers associated with AIP assaulted them, even our candidate Yawar Bandy was beaten and he is fighting for his life, his ribs broken, his condition is serious," Mehbooba claimed.

Congress announces nine candidates for Haryana Assembly Elections

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

The Congress party announced its second list of 9 candidates for the upcoming Haryana Assembly elections. Among notable contenders, Mohit Grover was nominated for the Gurgaon seat. The party also fielded fresh and young leader Vardhan Yadav against BJP's strongest candidate, Rao Narbir Singh, from the Badshahpur seat. Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) also released list's first list on Monday who nominated Bir Singh Sarpanch from Badshahpur assembly constituency and Dharmender khatana from Sohna assembly constituency. Apart from this, former BJP MLA Umesh Agarwal refused to contest Haryana assembly elections. Agarwal, had won the 2014 election from the Gurugram seat with the highest margin in the State that year, but was denied a ticket by the BJP in 2019. Later in March 2022 Agarwal had joined the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). Meanwhile, Mohit Grover had unsuccessfully contested 2019 Haryana assembly poll from Gurgaon seat as an independent candidate. He lost the elections against

BJP's Sudhir Singla. However, he received over 48,000 votes in his debut elections. Grover had recently joined the Congress party. Meanwhile, the Congress candidate Vardhan Yadav would contest his debut elections against Rao Narbir Singh of the BJP, who is a prominent ahir leader and have strong connection within the ahir belt. The saffron party however, declared three tickets using Gurgaon, Sohna and Badshahpur and put Pataudi assembly ticket on hold while the Congress party is yet to declare Pataudi and Sohna assembly constituencies candidates. Meanwhile, Congress, keeping in mind the large number of Punjabi voters in the Gurgaon seat, has now nominated Punjabi face Mohit Grover. Meanwhile, the BJP has fielded Mukesh Sharma, who is a Brahmin. If Naveen Goyal, a (vaishya) face who recently had parted his way from the BJP after denial his ticket contested the elections from Gurgaon seat as an independent candidate. The elections bettle for BJP's candidate would not be easy. Congress's Punjabi face, Dharamvir Gaba, had won the MLA election from this seat five times.

BMC denies pothole reports on Mumbai coastal road

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Amid reports in the print, electronic, and social media about the bad state of Mumbai's newly constructed coastal road, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Monday categorically stated that the prestigious road was completely "safe" and it had not developed potholes as was being claimed by motorists using this road. After a few leading newspapers went to town quoting complaints made by motorists in social, print and electronic media that the north-bound stretch of the Mumbai coastal road had developed potholes near Haji Ali junction, the BMC said: "The coastal road is completely safe and has not developed potholes as is being claimed by some citizens. The patches you see are actually a 'mastic coat' applied to prevent potholes on the Mumbai Coastal Road (MCR)". "Based on the photographs published or aired in the social, print and electronic media, some sections of people have complained that the coast road -- known officially as the 'Dharmaveer Swaraj Rakshak Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj Mumbai Coastal Road' -- has developed potholes. Questions



have been raised by the quality of construction. We appeal to the citizens not to lend credence to the misinformation being spread on the various media platforms," the BMC said in a statement issued here. "Denying that there was no basis for reports in that 'shoddy work' had been carried out on the toll-free Mumbai Coastal Road (MCR), the BMC said that 'mastic coat' applied to prevent potholes on the MCR and the road would be restored to its original position after the monsoon". "It may be recalled that It said that the north-bound arm (Chowpatty-Worli) of the MCR was opened in July 2024 as a tarred road, but an additional

coasting of mastic was applied at certain places to ensure the asphalt remains strong during the continuous and heavy rains witnessed in Mumbai during the monsoon months. "However, the mastic coating has not been applied on the south-bound arm (Worli-Chowpatty). This is because this stretch was opened in March 2024 and the asphalt got sufficient time to solidify before the monsoon, proving that there is no defect in the road construction. "According to the BMC, massive beams have been set up to link the MCR with the Rajiv Gandhi Bandra Worli Sea Link, but to complete the work, a temporary route has been pro-

vided to facilitate the traffic going to the sea bridge. "This alternative route comprises a road leading to the Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan Marg in Worli at the Worli Interchange, and once the direct access to the sea bridge is completed, it will be discontinued, and hence has nothing to do with the road quality of MCR, as speculated. "There have been posts, photographs and videos of cracks/potholes developed on the MCR. While some have slammed the BMC and compared it with the cracks that had developed on the approach route to the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link, 'Atal Setu' in June, and certain other projects.

Two heavily armed terrorists believed to be Pakistani neutralised by Indian Army



MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Two heavily armed terrorists believed to be Pakistani were neutralized by the troops of the Indian army while they were attempting to infiltrate inside the Indian territory in the Laam sector of Nowshera in the frontier district of Rajouri on Monday. Due to the ongoing election process in the region, the security grid has been kept in a state of high alert to prevent any untoward incident. J&K BJP Chief Ravinder Raina is in a straight fight with the National Conference candidate Surinder Choudhary from the Nowshera Assembly segment.

47, one M-4 rifle with sight, one pistol, eight grenades, assorted ammunition, personal clothing and miscellaneous war-like stores have been recovered. Surveillance is being maintained and operations are in progress". During the night-long operation, the Army troops illuminated the area and kept it under strict surveillance following the encounter in the forward area. The searches were launched early morning to recover the dead bodies of the terrorists. On August 29, three terrorists were gunned down by the alert troops in two separate anti-infiltration operations along the line of control in the Machhal and Tangdhar sectors of Kupwara. On August 19, a heavily armed group of Pakistani terrorists targeted an area domination patrol party comprising jawans of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and Special Operations Group of Jammu Kashmir Police (JKP) in the remote Duddu Basantgarh area of Udhampur in which one Inspector rank CRPF officer sacrificed his life in the line of duty.

Haryana polls: Kins of Haryana's three famous 'Lals' enter fray

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

Witnessing a clash between two grandchildren of late Bansilal. Anirudh Chaudhry, a former treasurer of Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), is the grandson of Bansilal and will cross swords with his cousin and former MP Shruti Choudhry -- the BJP candidate. "Shruti Choudhry is the daughter of BJP leader Kiran Choudhry and Bansilal's son late Surender Singh while Anirudh Chaudhry is the son of Ranbir Singh Mahendra. Mahendra, a former BCCI president, and Surender Singh were brothers. "Tosham assembly segment was represented by Kiran Choudhry, but she quit as MLA last month after which the BJP nominated her for the Rajya Sabha bypoll from Haryana, which she won unopposed. "Not just Tosham, the contest has become keen from Dabwali seat in Sirsa district too, a seat currently held by the Congress. "From Dabwali, Devi Lal's grandson Aditya Devi Lal, an INLD candidate, is taking on JJP's Digvijay Singh Chautala, great grandson of the former

deputy prime minister. "Aditya Devi Lal, who is son of Jagdish, youngest son of Devi Lal, quit the BJP and joined the INLD on Sunday and was fielded from Dabwali. "Before joining the Indian National Lok Dal, which is contesting the Haryana polls in alliance with the BSP, Aditya took the blessings of his uncle and former chief minister Om Prakash Chautala at the latter's Sirsa residence. "Digvijay Singh Chautala is JJP leader and former deputy chief minister Dushyant Chautala's brother. JJP, which is headed by Dushyant and Digvijay's father and former MP Ajay Singh Chautala, is

contesting the polls in alliance with Chandra Shekhar Azad-led Azad Samaj Party (Kanshi Ram). "From Adampur segment in Hisar district, BJP has fielded former chief minister late Bhajan Lal's grandson Bhavya Bishnoi. "Bhavya is at present the sitting MLA from Adampur. His father Kuldeep Bishnoi is a senior BJP leader. "From Rania seat in Sirsa district, interesting contest appears on cards after Ranjit Singh Chautala, son of former Devi Lal, who was Energy and Jails Minister, quit the BJP after being denied ticket recently and had said he will enter the fray as an Independent.



"INLD has fielded Devi Lal's great grandson Arjun Chautala from Rania, also in Sirsa district. Arjun's father is INLD senior leader Abhay Singh Chautala. "About JJP, Aditya Devi Lal told reporter, "The party used to tell people that this (Sirsa region) is their 'janam bhoomi' and 'karam bhoomi', but sometimes they head to Uchana (from where Dushyant is fighting), sometimes Bhiwani (from where Ajay Chautala has remained a MP), sometimes Dabwali. But people are wise, they know..." "After he joined INLD, Abhay Chautala urged a gathering in Chautala village to "give Aditya so much support that those who are pitted against him, before they file their nominations, they should be forced to think what fate awaits them in the electoral battle". "However, JJP's Digvijay Chautala is confident that he will win the Dabwali seat with a "big vote margin". "Arjun Chautala, meanwhile, said, "I have full belief that people of Rania will give their blessings and make our party victorious."



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PAPER WITH PASSION

India's bravehearts

India's stellar performance at the Paris Paralympics is a testament to resilience, grit, and the unyielding spirit of Indian para athletes

Former President APJ Abdul Kalam once remarked, "dreams are not what you see in sleep; dreams are those that keep you awake until they're fulfilled." The Indian squad for the Paris Paralympics has embodied this very spirit. With unwavering determination, they've shown that no dream is too big when fueled by the indomitable human will. The performance of Indian para-athletes has once again proved that sons and daughters of India have the mettle to take on the world against all odds. With the largest-ever contingent of 84 athletes, India soared to unprecedented heights, making the world sit up and take notice of the nation's sporting prowess. Their extraordinary performances went far beyond mere medal counts—they embodied the true spirit of sportsmanship and perseverance, transcending physical limitations to achieve the impossible. India's medal tally in Paris showcased a remarkable blend of talent and hard work. Winning medals across various disciplines, including athletics, archery, and badminton,



these athletes brought pride to the nation, igniting inspiration for future generations. Archery sensation Sheetal Devi, competing without hands, captured the world's attention with her sheer determination and skill, clinching a historic gold in the women's compound archery event.

Track and field athletes, always a strong suit for India, delivered breathtaking performances. The likes of Sumit Antil, who made a world record in javelin throw and Avani Lekhara, a champion rifle shooter who overcame spinal injuries to once again stand atop the podium, proved that India's strength in adaptive sports is only growing stronger. What stands out in the Indian contingent's performance is the remarkable spirit they embody. Every Paralympian carries a story of personal struggle and perseverance, but in Paris, these stories converged into one-a collective tale of breaking barriers. From training under adverse conditions to overcoming the societal stigma, these athletes have shown the world that true strength lies not in physical abilities but in mental tenacity. Athletes like Nishad Kumar in high jump, who continued to train despite financial constraints, and Bhavina Patel, a table tennis champion who overcame her polio-induced limitations, are emblematic of the fighting spirit that permeates the Indian contingent. The success in Paris is also a reflection of the increased support and recognition that para-athletes are finally receiving. Government initiatives, corporate sponsorships, and a growing awareness of inclusivity in sports have played a key role in fostering an environment where differently-abled athletes can thrive. But the success in Paris isn't just about winning medals—it's about breaking the boundaries of what para-sports can be in India. The inspiring stories of athletes like Mariyappan Thangavelu, Devendra Jhajharia, and others resonate with the idea that disability is not a limitation. They have sparked a national conversation about inclusion, diversity, and the importance of creating opportunities for all.

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PICTALK



Army jawans perform stunts during the closing ceremony of 'Know Your Army' programme in Ranchi

The onion price and poll dynamics

Soaring onion prices are causing concern for both consumers and politicians alike, with historical evidence showing that onion price can sway electoral outcomes



SHIVAJI SARKAR

Kya pyaj rulayega - Would the onion bring tears? - is the common refrain in poll-bound states of Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir and Maharashtra. And many a time it has hit not only the common man but even the political masters.

The rise in Indian onion prices is feared to spurt international prices and food bills. Could the prices come down to wipe off tears? Maybe not. Its support prices have increased manifold. The Centre is procuring onion at a price 74 per cent higher than last year in Maharashtra, the highest onion-growing state.

Last year, onion was procured at Rs 16.93 per kg. This year it is being procured at Rs 29.5 per kg through direct benefit transfer (DBT) to eliminate middlemen. The centre is not taking any chances. It is selling through NAFED outlets, mobile vans and others at Rs 35. For how long it could be sustained? Even at Rs 16.93 per kg procurement, national prices rarely came down below Rs 30 a kg. Onion prices hover around Rs 60 and 70 a kg. The overall national prices are unlikely to come down as the Maharashtra government is investing Rs 1500 crore to buy onion from the state to keep its farmers and traders happy to secure a political future. The government imposed a ban on onion exports in December 2023 to curb rising retail onion prices, ahead of the Lok Sabha election. It led to a fall in onion prices by approximately 40 per cent from Rs. 42.2 a kg in December 2023 to Rs. 24.5 kg in March 2024. On 23rd March 2024, the ban was extended indefinitely Lok Sabha election. Prices lowered.

The declining onion prices continued to create uproar among the farmers and traders. The government lifted the ban with the third phase of polling on May 4 to six countries - Bangladesh, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bhutan, Bahrain, Mauritius, and Sri Lanka. Historically, high onion prices have led to discontent among consumers, whereas lower onion prices have upset a large voting bloc of farmers,



making the onion market a crucial topic for the government, especially around elections.

India is one of the largest producers and consumers of onions and fluctuations in onion prices have large-scale socio-economic impacts on the domestic and international markets.

In 2023-24 yield came down by 15 percent to around 25.47 million tonnes (MT), compared to the previous year's production of about 30.21 MT, according to an official release. The production may further fall this year. Traders fear that despite the lifting of the ban with 40 per cent export duties Indian onion remains highly-priced at \$ 770 per MT (Rs 64 a kg). The Egyptian onion is sold at \$ 387 per MT, almost half of the Indian price making it uncompetitive. Countries such as Egypt, Pakistan and China compete with India in the Asian onion export market. The onion has been a political game-changer since the 1980 general elections when rising onion prices contributed to the return of Indira Gandhi to power wiping out the Janata Party.

Again because of high onion prices in 1998, the BJP lost to the Congress despite having changed its chief minister a few months before. In the 2024 Lok Sabha 2024 elections, the BJP has significant losses in



INDIA IS ONE OF THE LARGEST PRODUCERS AND CONSUMERS OF ONIONS AND FLUCTUATIONS IN ONION PRICES HAVE LARGE-SCALE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS ON THE DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL MARKETS

Maharashtra's onion-growing belt. Except for one seat, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) has been completely trounced in this crucial agricultural region. Out of the 13 Lok Sabha constituencies where the majority of onion farmers are concentrated, 12 have been won by the opposing INDIA bloc.

This is a stark contrast to the 2019 parliamentary elections, where NDA - comprising BJP and formerly united Shiv Sena - won 11 out of these 13 seats, with BJP alone securing seven. Since the extension of the export ban, there has been simmering anger among onion cultivators of Nasik, which has the largest Asian onion market at Lasangaon. The export ban led to significant financial losses for farmers, who struggled to recover their cultivation costs as wholesale prices nosedived. Other major constituencies with significant onion grower populations, such as Dhule, Ahmednagar, Nandurbar, Baramati, Beed, Latur, Maval, Shirur, Solapur, Shirdi and Osmanabad, also saw NDA's influence wane. The government has also decided to fill in the state emergency reserves with 500,000 tonnes of onions for the 2024-25 period.

This initiative aims to mitigate future price volatility and protect farmers from sudden market fluctuations. It is also planning to increase

27 per cent onion acreage during the kharif season for onion in addition to the rabi crop. According to food analyst Mintec Analytics of the UK, the BJP has historically invested more in manufacturing and infrastructural development than in agricultural growth. Agricultural exports reached \$ 48.9 billion in 2023-24, a decline of 8 per cent from \$ 53.2 billion in FY 2022-23. The export value in FY 2023-24 is significantly short of the ambitious target of \$ 60 billion set by the BJP government.

Also, the agri-exports during the last 10 years grew by 1.9 per cent since 2014 against the annual average growth rate of 20 during 2004-14. The onion is a staple vegetable for the poor, indispensable to many Indian cuisines and recipes, from spicy curries to tangy relishes. "In Maharashtra, if there are no vegetables or you can't afford to buy vegetables, people eat 'kanda bhakari' (onion with bread)," says a food historian Dr Mohseena Mukadam.

It is more than butter for politicians, whose success depends on how they can handle the onion. The cheers and tears of impending state elections are closely linked with onion.

(The author is a senior journalist; views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FRESH VIOLENCE IN MANIPUR

Madam — Manipur is back on the boil given to fresh ethnic conflagrations that erupted between Kuki and Meitei groups have disrupted peace and paralysed normal lives.

The recent rocket attack in Moirang village and brutal murder of six Meitei people after that by the suspected Kuki militants is a desperate attempt to derail the peace process initiated under the auspices of Home Minister Amit Shah who has been closely monitoring the law and order situation in the state with priority. Its been more than a year but the violence and hatred against each other still persist and so is the remedy of this conflict.

The Centre and State government' must find a possible and pragmatic solution to this problem with the stakeholders without any delay but first they need to ensure the safety of the Kuki politicians including people who have lost trust on Biren Singh's BJP regime.

Janga Bahadur Sunuwar | Jalpaiguri

KERALA AT THE FOREFRONT

Madam — What makes southern states a crown jewel of India than their northern counterparts is their will to take technology, growth, generate employment opportunities, to newer levels. Now, the southern most state of India Kerala is in for a major overhaul in terms of attracting foreign capital and industry which few year ago had seen a major setback.

Kerala where literacy rate is high is slowly marching forward for a conducive industrial environment in terms of attracting world class industries. The recent announcement by the Ministry of trade and commerce awarding top slot in ease of doing business reforms, has put Kerala on the world industrial pedestal. Surprisingly it has overtaken Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat while Tamil Nadu, India's most industrialised state does not even figure in the list.

In the sphere of Citizen centric reforms

Water woes of rural India



Residents of rural areas often face more health problems compared to those in urban areas, primarily due to the government's greater focus on urban development and well-being facilities. One of the major causes of poor health in rural regions is the

lack of access to clean drinking water. Millions of rural inhabitants are still forced to rely on contaminated water sources.

The PM Har Ghar Jal Scheme, launched in 2019, is still in progress, having achieved over 50% coverage across all states and Union Territories in terms of tap water connections. Notably, 100% coverage has been achieved in 11 states, including Punjab, Gujarat, Puducherry, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, among others.

However, the bigger issue lies in the lack of timely maintenance and repairs. Water systems often remain clogged for months or even years, which continues to create difficulties. The government should expedite the completion of this scheme and also ensure proper maintenance. This will prevent the wastage of funds and ensure that the benefits last longer.

Jakir Hussain | Kanpur

like paying taxes, obtaining permits and business centric reforms like employment exchange, public distribution system, single window clearance, etc, Kerala has shown remarkable growth. From 28th to 15th and now earning the rare distinction of leading the country's economic bandwagon, this is indeed a significant milestone that sets precedence for other states to follow suit.

However modern day challenges like low job growth, less incentive for private sector to grow, high migration rate of its educated people are areas that need attention. Nonetheless, high literacy rate, life expectancy, credible human right records etc has raised its stature to a developed state. To realise 21st century M.D.G's, the stage is already set. However, there is room for improvement in every sector.

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Nainital

NEERAJ PROVES HIS EXCELLENCE

Madam — Neeraj Chopra, a Javelin Juggernaut, has once again proved it. The Olympic champion has secured his

spot in the Diamond League final, the pinnacle of track and field competition. It's where the best of the best come together to battle for supremacy. And Neeraj, with his consistent brilliance, has earned his place among them. Every throw he makes is going towards the success.

This qualification marks a significant milestone for Chopra and Indian athletics. Beyond his athletic prowess, Chopra has become a symbol of inspiration for countless young athletes in India. His steadfast determination and dedication have not only propelled him to the top of the global javelin rankings but also motivated a generation to pursue their dreams in sports. As he heads to Brussels, the nation is eagerly awaiting his performance, hoping for another golden moment. Neeraj is one of the sports icon with a 'never say die' spirit. Wishing him all the best!

Anansha Godani | Ujjain

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Freedom for all: Breaking gender stereotypes

For decades, Indian households have upheld certain gender roles—men return to a home-cooked meal while women cook after returning home from work

My wife came across a feed on her social media, "Men come back home to a cooked meal; women come home to cook a meal. It is not the women who need freedom; it is the men who should have the freedom." The first half of the statement is something that we observe in almost all Indian households. It was the second part that I could not comprehend till I introspected. I was born in 1959, a few years after India gained independence. I was the firstborn in my generation. During those days, and even now in many parts of the country, young couples are blessed by family and friends to have a male first-born. My mother told me that my paternal aunt went to the terrace to announce my birth to the locality by banging a steel plate with a spoon, "A son is born." I was a cherished and much-loved child, and then an adult.



was not expected to enter the kitchen except to fetch a glass of water, and certainly not for cooking. My mother would insist on reheating the cooked food in case my wife had to go out for some work, till she could not do it any longer due to her medical condition. I was not alone in my generation to receive special treatment.

A friend would be served freshly made bread by his wife, however late he returned from the office, or however tired the lady was after a hectic day spent in the kitchen or running after the children. Almost all my friends from that era were pampered first by their

mothers, aunts, sisters, and even females from the extended family, and then by their wives and daughters. Many of us, from relatively better social milieu, have raised our children to question the age-old customs.

More women are going out for work. Men are also raised to help with household chores. Young couples make efforts to take care of each other. There is no gender bias. A friend's son-in-law loves cooking, especially preparing masala tea. It is almost a ritual for him to prepare tea whenever he and the daughter visit the parents. The maid and a few others were scandalized at this blatant display of deviation from the traditional, till they had tasted the special tea.

The change is slow, and only in certain sections of society. Women in many families are still expected to learn the art of looking after the household, husbands, and children, even after a tiring day at work. They are made to feel guilty for leaving their newborn child at home to resume

work.

Men still do not enter the kitchen, and more often are not permitted to enter the kitchen, even if they have an interest or an inherent desire to help the wife. Men need the freedom to make their choices without being judged by people. They also need the freedom to break the shackles of gender biases. Certain gender-specific roles and responsibilities were assigned based on the requirements of the times. Many of these may no longer be relevant.

It is for us to adapt to changing times, and we can. We have reached where we are because of the ability of humans to change. Welsh writer and critic Stephen Bayley expresses it well, "The assumption must be that those who can see value only in tradition, or versions of it, deny man's ability to adapt to changing circumstances."

(The writer is an author, speaker, coach, arbitrator and strategy consultant and conducts workshops on creative writing; views are personal)



SANJAY CHANDRA



FIRST COLUMN

REST IS ESSENTIAL FOR A BALANCED LIFE

True relaxation extends far beyond sleep. It is a must for rejuvenation



RACHNA LAKHPATI

In today's fast-paced world, many individuals believe that rest is limited to getting a good night's sleep. That is completely incorrect. Genuine relaxation is complex. Researchers highlight the importance of six different types of rest in maintaining overall well-being. By embracing each form of rest, individuals can achieve a more balanced and energised life. Our minds are constantly bombarded with information from various sources such as work, social media, and daily responsibilities.

With this ongoing situation, the mind will eventually succumb to fatigue and stress. To find peace of mind, it is important to detach oneself from an overwhelming fixation on the thoughts in one's head. Meditation, deep breathing exercises, or even taking quiet walks are some of the simple practices that can assist in clearing the mind and enhancing cognitive clarity. Taking regular breaks can have a positive impact on your mental well-being, boost your creativity, and improve your ability to make decisions. Additionally, it involves allowing your body sufficient time to recuperate from physical exertion. Naturally, getting sufficient rest is crucial, and it complements well with gentle physical activities, stretching, or even methods to alleviate muscle strain. Physical rest can be achieved through various methods, including sleeping, engaging in yoga exercises, or taking warm baths.

It's important to prioritise injury prevention, muscle recovery, and maintaining energy levels throughout the day. We often overlook a crucial aspect: our emotional boundaries. We strive to ensure the satisfac-



tion of those in our vicinity. Emotional rest involves acknowledging and honestly addressing your emotions. It's important to listen to your body and prioritise self-care when you're feeling exhausted and on the verge of emotional exhaustion. Discussing your thoughts with close friends or a therapist can play a crucial role in finding emotional solace. This type of rest is essential for preventing emotional overwhelm and enables you to genuinely respond to any challenges that come your way. Interacting with others is essential, although it can be quite tiring. Emphasising the importance of quality over quantity, social rest involves stepping away from large gatherings and focussing on personal well-being.

Spending time alone or with a few close friends can help you maintain a strong connection with your true self. This is about creating an environment that encourages solitude or meaningful conversations, rather than the shallow interactions that often occur in crowded places. Finding moments of spiritual rest allows us to re-establish a deep connection with the essence of life and the things that bring us fulfilment. For some individuals, this may have a religious connotation, while for others, it is more focused on nature, meditation, and mindfulness.

Experiencing spiritual rest doesn't always require a specific routine or ritual. It's more about feeling a profound connection to something larger than oneself, which can bring about a profound sense of tranquillity and harmony. In our modern society, it is rare for anyone to avoid the overwhelming amount of information and stimuli that bombard us through screens and notifications. Creating a peaceful environment for relaxation includes stepping away from electronic devices, dimming the lights, and enjoying some peace.

Reclaim moments of tranquillity to rejuvenate your senses: indulge in a good book, immerse yourself in nature, or bask in the blissful absence of sound. Rest is incredibly important to minimise strain on the eyes, ears, and nervous system. Discovering the harmony among these six forms of rest will enable you to rejuvenate yourself comprehensively, leading a life that is both balanced and satisfying.

(The writer is a motivator and a freelance writer; views are personal)

A roadmap for boosting India's agri-export



A S MITTAL

By incorporating cutting-edge food processing technologies and establishing globally recognised quality standards India can push its agri-exports substantially



In a bid to give impetus to strengthen the supply chain from farm to fork, foster collaboration among global and Indian food sector stakeholders, and support food processing units near farm gates to ensure better profits for farmers and reduce post-harvest losses, the Ministry of Food Processing Industries is taking the lead by hosting 'World Food India' from September 19-22 in New Delhi. In addition, the Union Budget for 2024-25 has allocated Rs 1.52 lakh crore to prioritise agricultural sector development. This funding will focus on climate resilience, productivity, innovation, and processed food exports.

This is crucial as agricultural product exports saw an 8% decline to \$48.9 billion in 2023-24 from \$53.2 billion in 2022-23. The average annual growth rate of agri-exports was just 2% during 2014-23. Notably, five products — rice, wheat, meat, spices, sugar and tea/coffee — account for over 50 per cent of total agricultural exports and sometimes face restrictions to match the domestic demands and supplies to control inflation. Only 25 per cent of our agro-exports are processed or value-added, a figure that has remained virtually unchanged over the last decade.

This is significant due to a need for more tech-based operational size and production capacity and for meeting international standards to tap the global market. However, the success of global giants like Nestle (Switzerland), with an annual turnover of \$111 billion in the processed food and beverages sector, shows us what is possible with technology and research. Notable Indian firms in domestic processed agriculture, such as AMUL, with a turnover of \$9 billion, are far behind in operational size, production capacity, and meeting international standards. Still, they can achieve similar success with the proper support and approach.

The Global exports of processed agricultural products are nearing \$1 trillion, with Germany (\$63 billion) at the top, the US (\$58 billion), the Netherlands (\$57 bil-



IN 2020, THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED AN AGRICULTURE INFRASTRUCTURE FUND OF INR 1 TRILLION TO PROVIDE MEDIUM-TO-LONG-TERM DEBT FINANCING FOR ESTABLISHING COLD CHAINS AND POST-HARVEST MANAGEMENT INFRASTRUCTURE AT FARM GATES AND AGGREGATION POINTS

lion), China (\$53 billion), and France (\$50 billion). Southeast Asian nations like Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand are also major exporters of processed agricultural products. While, India's value-added exports increased by \$6.5 billion over the last five years since the agro-export policy was introduced to boost value-added agriculture exports, taking the total to \$15 billion, it only marginally improved our global rank from 21 to 17.

This can be surely improved. The Economic Survey 2023-24, reveals that the annual output of fruits and vegetables in India is the world's second-largest at a substantial 300 million tonnes after China, yet the processing levels at 4.5 per cent for fruits, 2.7 per cent for vegetables, 21.1 per cent for milk, 34.2 per cent for meat, and 15.4 per cent for fisheries, compared to 25-30 per cent in China and 60-80 per cent in Western countries.

This deficiency in processing capacity leads to a substantial amount of produce going to waste in India. Estimates of post-harvest losses in the country vary from 18% to 25% across the entire supply chain, though they are thought to be much higher, at up to 45%, for fruit and vegetables. NITI Aayog estimated annual post-harvest losses of close to Rs 90,000 crore. To improve this situation, it is suggested to focus on proper sorting and grading near the farm gate and enhance processing capacity. Incentivizing Farmers: It's crucial to repurpose agricultural incentives to motivate farmers to reduce losses and waste on and near farms.

In 2020, the central government announced an agriculture infrastructure fund of INR 1 trillion to provide medium-to-long-term debt financing for establishing cold chains and post-harvest man-

agement infrastructure at farm gates and aggregation points. Tamil Nadu's recent unveiling of its food processing policy is a promising step toward reducing wastage and increasing the value of farm produce.

The policy encourages Farmer's Producers Organisations (FPOs) and the food processing industry to access financial support from central schemes.

However, it's important to note that Punjab has yet to make a similar move, despite the success of neighbouring states like Haryana with their dedicated Agribusiness and Food Processing Policy. Revisit the PLI Scheme: The Production Linked Incentive Scheme for the Food Processing Industry (PLISFPI) will be Rs 10,900 crore (\$1.25 billion) from 2021-22 to 2026-27, precisely to attract large globally competitive firms to produce in and export from India. This scheme aims to expand processing capacity, grow strong Indian brands, increase global market presence, create jobs, and boost farmer incomes. As of May 2024, 90% of the PLISFPI funds still need to be utilised. The government has disbursed only Rs 1,073 crore among 158 SME beneficiaries, using only 10% of the funds over half of the timeline expired.

This underutilisation highlights the need for more focused policy intervention. To achieve the twin objectives of the PLI scheme—global competitiveness and increased exports—these SMEs must form joint ventures with globally established 'anchor' firms. Over the past decade, India has attracted Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) worth Rs 500 billion, with 100% FDI being permissible. The Way Forward: Food processing is considered India's sunrise industry and plays a crucial role in the transformation to ben-

efit farmers effectively, a multi-pronged approach combining MSP, value addition and industry integration is essential for agricultural development due to its strategic importance in providing food security.

As the world's most populous country, we exert significant environmental pressure on Earth, resulting in ecological issues such as soil degradation, loss of biodiversity, and water depletion. Within the broader food systems, waste reduction stands out as one of the leading climate change mitigation solutions, contributing to reduced emissions throughout the food supply chain from farm to fork. By incorporating cutting-edge food processing technologies, establishing globally recognized quality standards, and opening up access to international markets, this focused strategy to attract anchor global firms will help achieve our goals. Apple serves as a prime example of the success of this targeted approach in the electronics sector; it manufactures 14 per cent of the world's i-Phones in India. Electronics exports, mainly intelligent mobile phones, have surged from under \$3 billion in 2020 to \$15.6 billion in 2023 and have led to the creation of over one lakh jobs. This same model should be replicated across various industries. The Ministry of Food Processing Industries should roll out a time-bound outreach program to attract anchor global firms and facilitate their partnerships with Farmer's Producers Organisations (FPOs) and SMEs.

(The Author is Vice-Chairman of Sonalika IITL Group, Vice-Chairman of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board, Chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council; Views expressed are personal)

Ravenshaw University renaming: A step toward decolonising India's education system

While the move may appear symbolic, it reflects the Govt's broader aim to reclaim India's intellectual heritage by dismantling British-era frameworks

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's proposal to rename Ravenshaw University in Odisha has sparked a much broader discussion about India's education system. Though the suggestion might seem symbolic on the surface, it indicates a larger governmental intent: reclaiming India's educational heritage and aligning it with Bharat's civilisational knowledge. The renaming is part of a wider effort to challenge the enduring influence of British-established institutions and the colonial educational framework that has shaped the country for over a century. The proposal is not without complexity. While a name change may grab headlines, the true challenge lies in the com-



PADMALOCHAN DASH

prehensive realignment of India's education system—a goal that can only be achieved through the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The success of this shift hinges on integrating the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) into modern educational practices, ensuring that India's rich intellectual heritage takes its rightful place at the core of the system.

Colonial Legacy in India's Education: India's education system continues to carry the imprint of its colonial past. British institutions like Ravenshaw University were not designed to foster intellectual growth or cultural preservation but to serve the Empire's administrative needs. The British created educational institutions to produce clerks and bureaucrats who could operate within the colonial system. Unfortunately, this utilitarian approach to education persisted even after India gained independence. The leaders of the newly formed nation failed to envision an alternative model that could replace the colonial framework with a system aligned with India's civilisational goals. As a result, the Indian educa-

tion system has remained tethered to its colonial roots, prioritizing skills for a global market over intellectual, spiritual, or scientific growth. This narrow focus undermines India's holistic knowledge traditions, reducing them to exercises in skill development rather than the broader pursuit of knowledge and self-reliance. The debate over renaming Ravenshaw University, therefore, becomes symbolic of a larger struggle: breaking free from the colonial mindset that continues to shape India's educational and intellectual landscape.

The British Model: A Tool for Control: The British education system in India was never intended to develop the intellect or spirit of the Indian people. Instead, it was designed to



produce a workforce literate in English and skilled enough to support the colonial administration. Lord Macaulay's infamous education reforms focused on turning India's vast and diverse traditional knowledge systems into utilitarian skills that could be exploited for colonial profit. As a result, India's once-thriving intellectual and cultural traditions were marginalized, forced into obscurity to serve the needs of the British Empire.

Even decades after independence, the colonial model remains entrenched. India's education system continues to prioritize skill development over fostering creativity, innovation, and intellectual growth. While skill development is undoubtedly important, the singular focus on it raises concerns about the broader vision and purpose of India's educational objectives.

Moving Beyond Skill-Building: To truly break free from its colonial past, India must shift its focus from mere skill-building to fostering holistic individual growth. Education should nurture creativity, intellectual curiosity, and the inherent potential of every individual, paving the way for self-reliance. A system that prioritizes intellectual

vibrancy over skill production will help India reclaim its rightful place as a leader in global thought and innovation. The British colonial mindset has left a lasting impact on Indian society, one that is deeply embedded in the psyche of its educational institutions. The British aimed not only to advance their economic interests but to reshape the very thought processes of the Indian population. Their goal was to replace India's ancient knowledge systems with Western paradigms, thus weakening the cultural and intellectual foundation of the nation. In this context, renaming institutions like Ravenshaw University becomes a step toward decolonizing the Indian mind.

A Forgotten Imperative:

Decolonizing Indian Minds The question arises: has India taken sufficient steps to decolonize its education system? The colonial indoctrination of Indian minds has lasted for generations, and its effects are still visible today. If India is serious about reclaiming its intellectual sovereignty, what concrete steps are being taken to dismantle the remnants of this colonial education system? The ultimate goal should be to create an educational framework that aligns with India's civilisational values and promotes intellectual independence.

(The author is an ICSSR-Post Doctoral Fellow, School of National Security Studies, Central University of Gujarat. The views expressed are personal)

Israeli strikes in Syria leave 14 dead, more than 40 hurt

AP ■ DAMASCUS/ WEST BANK

The number of people killed in overnight Israeli strikes in Syria has risen to 14 with more than 40 wounded, Syrian state media said Monday morning. Israeli strikes hit several areas in central Syria late Sunday, damaging a highway in Hama province and sparking fires, Syrian state news agency SANA said. The initial death count reported by the Masyaf National Hospital in western Hama province was four.SANA, citing hospital head Faysal Haydar, said 14 were killed and 43 wounded. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a UK-based war monitor, said at least four of those killed were civilians. One of the strikes targeted a scientific research centre in Maysaf and others struck sites where "Iranian militias and experts are stationed to develop weapons in Syria," the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. Local media also reported strikes around the coastal city of Tartous. There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military. Israel has carried out hundreds of strikes on targets inside government-controlled parts of war-torn Syria in recent years, but it rarely acknowl-

edges or discusses the operations. The strikes often target Syrian forces or Iranian-backed groups. Israel has vowed to stop Iranian entrenchment in Syria, particularly since Syria is a key route for Iran to send weapons to the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah. Hezbollah has been clashing with Israeli forces for the past 11 months against the backdrop of Israel's war against Hamas — an ally of Hezbollah — in Gaza. Meanwhile three Israelis were shot and killed at the border crossing between the West Bank and Jordan, Israeli officials said, in what appeared to be an attack linked to the 11-month-old war in Gaza. Israel's military said the gunman approached the Allenby Bridge Crossing from the Jordanian side in a truck on Sunday and opened fire at Israeli security forces, who killed him in a shootout. Israel's Magen David Adom rescue service said the three Israelis were men in their 50s and the military said they were civilians. Relatives identified the gunman as Maher al-Jazi, a retired Jordanian soldier from Athroh, a town in the impoverished Maan area. Jordan's state-run



Petra News Agency said he was transporting goods to the West Bank. The interior ministry said that, based on initial investigation results, the incident was an individual act. Jordan was investigating. The Western-allied Arab country made peace with Israel in 1994 but is deeply critical of its policies toward the Palestinians. Jordan has a large Palestinian population and has seen mass protests against Israel over the war in Gaza. Hundreds of Jordanians marched in Amman to celebrate the attack, chanting slogans in support of al-Jazi and burning the Israeli flag. "We bless this heroic operation carried out by this noble Jordanian hero," said Murad Adaleh, head of the local Muslim Brotherhood Party. The Allenby crossing over the Jordan River, also known as the King Hussein Bridge, is mainly used by Palestinians and tourists. The crossing has seen few security incidents, but in 2014 Israeli security guards shot and killed a Jordanian judge who they said had

attacked them. The crossing was closed, and Israel announced the closure of its land crossings with Jordan. It later said all would reopen on Monday. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu condemned the attack and linked it to Israel's larger conflict with Iran and allied militant groups, including Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon. The Israeli-occupied West Bank has seen a surge of violence since Hamas' October 7 attack on Gaza triggered the war there. Israel has launched near-daily military arrest raids into dense Palestinian residential areas, and there has been a rise in Israeli settler violence and Palestinian attacks on Israelis. Loved ones mourned Aysenur Ezgi Eygi, an American-Turkish woman shot dead on Friday in the West Bank. She had been demonstrating against Israeli settlements. The White House has said it was "deeply disturbed", while her family seeks an independent investigation. Her body remained at a hospital in Nablus. In Gaza, an Israeli airstrike killed five people, including two women, two children and a senior official in the Civil

Defense — first responders who operate under the Hamas-run government. The Civil Defence said the strike targeted the home of its deputy director for northern Gaza, Mohammed Morsi, in the urban Jabaliya refugee camp. There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military. The army says it tries to avoid harming civilians and only targets militants. Another Israeli strike hit the Eid family home in the Nuseirat refugee camp and killed at least two girls, according to an Associated Press journalist who counted the bodies and witnesses. Paltel, one of the territory's main telecom providers, said all household internet in central and southern Gaza was down because of ongoing attacks. Gaza's Health Ministry says over 40,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza since the war began. It does not differentiate between fighters and civilians in its count. The war has caused vast destruction and displaced around 90 per cent of Gaza's population of 2.3 million, often multiple times. Hamas-led militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, in their October 7 attack. They abducted another 250 and are still holding around

100 after releasing most of the rest in exchange for Palestinians imprisoned by Israel during a weeklong ceasefire last November. Around a third of the remaining hostages are believed to be dead. The United States, Qatar and Egypt have spent months trying to broker a cease-fire and the return of the hostages, but the negotiations have repeatedly bogged down. Also on Sunday, Netanyahu said government ministers may no longer visit Jerusalem's most sensitive holy site — revered by Jews as the Temple Mount and by Muslims as Haram al-Sharif — without his permission. Israel's far-right national security minister, Itamar Ben-Gvir, visited it again in July and has called for allowing Jewish prayer there. Tensions over the compound have fuelled past violence. Israel captured the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem — territories the Palestinians want for a future state — in the 1967 Mideast war. Israel withdrew soldiers and settlers from Gaza in 2005 but maintained control over its airspace, coastline and most of its land crossings. Along with Egypt, it imposed a blockade on Gaza after Hamas seized power from rival Palestinian forces in 2007.

Af's London embassy to be closed

AP ■ LONDON
Afghanistan's embassy in London is being shut down after it was disowned by the country's Taliban rulers, the UK government said Monday. The Foreign Office said the embassy is being closed following the dismissal of its staff by the Taliban. Britain does not recognise the Taliban government. Ambassador Zalmay Rassoul wrote on the social network X that the embassy would shut its doors on Sept. 27 "at the official request of the host country." Neither the UK government nor the ambassador said what would happen during the embassy's staff. Diplomats who served under Afghanistan's former Western-backed government were left in limbo when the Taliban seized Kabul and returned to power in August 2021. Many embassies in Europe and beyond have continued to operate, but have been accused by Kabul of failing to cooperate with the government. Afghanistan has sent Taliban-approved diplomats to some countries, including Pakistan and China.



Firefighters work against the advancing Line Fire in Mentone, Calif. on Sunday. AP/PTI

President Abdelmadjid re-elected in Algeria

AP ■ ALGERIS

President Abdelmadjid Tebboune has been named the victor in Algeria's presidential election, winning re-election in a landslide marred by low turnout and claims of irregularities and discrepancies in how results were reported. The country's independent election authority on Sunday announced that Tebboune had won 94.7 per cent of Saturday's vote, far outpacing his challengers Islamist Abdelali Hassani Cherif, who received only 3.2 per cent and socialist Youcef Aouchiche, who got just 2.2 per cent. After both of Tebboune's opponents questioned the results after they were reported on Sunday, the three campaigns jointly issued a statement accusing the country's election chairman of announcing results that contradicted earlier turnout figures and local tallies. In a country where elections have historically been carefully choreographed affairs, such



astonishing questions about irregularities shocked Algerians who expected Tebboune to win in a relatively uneventful fashion. It's unclear what will follow all three candidates casting doubt on irregularities and whether they will prompt legal challenges or delay the final certification of the result. The tally reported on Sunday gave Tebboune's a total vote share that was far more than the 87 per cent that Vladimir Putin won in Russia's March elections and the 92 per cent that Ilham

Aliyev got in Azerbaijan's February contest. But efforts from Tebboune and members of his government to encourage voter turnout to project legitimacy appeared to have fallen short, with less than one out of every four voters participating. Election officials on Sunday reported 5.6 million of the country's roughly 24 million voters had turned out to vote. Such high abstention rates, which remain unofficial, would surpass the 2019 presidential election when 39.9 per cent of the electorate participated. Officials did not explain why they had earlier announced 48 per cent voter turnout at the time of polls closing. Before the three candidates joined in questioning the discrepancy, both of Tebboune's challengers raised questions about it, citing their own tallies. Aouchiche called it "strange". Ahmed Sadok, Cherif's campaign manager, blasted delays and the way the figure was calculated. "It's a shame. It's an attack on the

image of Algeria, which will become the laughing stock of nations," Sadok said earlier in the day. He also said there had been a failure to deliver vote-sorting records to the candidates' representatives and that said the party had recorded instances of proxy group voting and pressure put on poll workers to inflate certain figures. Claims of irregularities cap off an election season that outraged activists and civil society groups. Human rights advocates railed against the campaign season's repressive atmosphere and the harassment and prosecutions of those involved in opposition parties, media organisations and civil society groups. Some denounced this election as a rubber stamp exercise that can only entrench the status quo. Amnesty International last week condemned Algeria's "brutal crackdown on human rights including the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association in the run up to

the country's presidential elections." Before the candidates questioned the results, Tebboune's supporters and detractors each had drawn conclusions from the results. Pro-Tebboune university professor Abdellouli Djazouli said on public television that the result was a resounding endorsement of Tebboune's program. "The President has more legitimacy to continue his action to better establish his project for the new Algeria," he said on public television. But his runaway victory fueled criticism from pro-democracy activists who have long seen elections as tools that the country's political elites have used to give off an appearance of popular support. Many said the loudest message to come out of the election came from those who chose to abstain out of fear that the election would only entrench and legitimise "le pouvoir" — a term used to describe the military-backed elites who run the country.

Pope cheers East Timor's recovery while acknowledging bishop's abuse scandal

AP ■ DILI

Pope Francis received a raucous welcome Monday as he arrived in East Timor to celebrate its recovery from a bloody and traumatic independence battle, even as he indirectly acknowledged an abuse scandal involving its Nobel Peace Prize-winning hero. Timorese jammed Francis' motorcade route into town from the airport, waving Vatican and Timorese flags and toting yellow and white umbrellas — the colours of the Holy See — to shade themselves from the scorching midday sun. "Viva el Papa!" they shouted as he passed by. The 87-year-old Francis seemed to relish the greeting, smiling broadly from the open-backed pickup truck and waving as he passed by billboard after billboard featuring

his image and words of welcome. The overwhelmingly Catholic East Timor, one of the world's poorest countries, had eagerly awaited Francis' arrival, which came on the heels of the 25th anniversary of the UN-backed referendum that paved the way for independence from Indonesia. It was a far different atmosphere than when the last pope visited. St. John Paul II came in 1989, when Timor was still an occupied part of Indonesia and fighting for its freedom. After Timorese voted overwhelmingly for independence a decade later, Indonesia's military responded with a scorched-earth campaign that destroyed 80 per cent of the country's infrastructure and shocked the world. Overall, as many as 200,000 people were killed during the 24 years of Indonesian rule.

John Paul's visit, which culminated with a massive Mass on the seaside near Dili, helped draw international attention to the plight of the Timorese people and shine a spotlight on the oppressiveness of Indonesia's occupation. Francis arrived in Dili from Papua New Guinea to follow in John Paul's footsteps and open the third leg of his trip through Southeast Asia and Oceania. President Jose Ramos Horta and Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao, two of East Timor's most revered independence heroes, greeted Francis at the airport and were meeting with him privately. In remarks to them and other dignitaries Monday, Francis applauded the Timorese people for having recovered from their "greatest suffering and trial" to put East Timor on the path of peaceful development. And he praised

them for having reconciled with Indonesia. But he said new challenges and problems were now confronting the country, Asia's newest, including emigration and poverty, as well as alcohol abuse and violence involving martial arts gangs. "Let us also not forget that these children and adolescents have their dignity violated," Francis said. "In response, we are all called to do everything possible to prevent every kind of abuse and guarantee a healthy and peaceful childhood for all young people." It was a generic and indirect reference to "abuse." But it nevertheless recalled the scandal involving Timorese Bishop Carlos Ximenes Belo who, along with Gusmao and Ramos Horta, is regarded as a hero for their efforts to support Timor's independence.

Third INDUS-X summit to boost US-India defence relations

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The third edition of the two-day INDUS-X summit will begin on Monday, during which India and the US will explore ways to strengthen partnerships in defence innovation, according to an official release. The India-US Defence Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X) Summit, themed: "Harnessing Investment Opportunities to Enhance Cross-Border Defence Innovation Ecosystems," will be held at Stanford University in Palo Alto, California from September 9-10, said a press release by the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF). It will focus on the critical role of private capital in advancing the defence innovation sector, bringing together leading defence policymakers from Washington and New Delhi. "The event will facilitate interactions between

American and Indian leaders in defence innovation, including startups, venture capitalists, academia, accelerators, and industry professionals, to foster co-production and investment opportunities," according to the press release. It will include sessions with leaders from the private and the public sectors touching on themes of "strengthening defence and advanced technology partnerships, funding defence innovation, and resilient supply chains". The summit will be co-hosted by the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) and Stanford University. INDUS-X, which stands for enhanced strategic and defence partnership between India and the US, was launched on June 21 last year by the US Department of Defence and the Indian Ministry of Defence during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's

state visit to Washington, DC. The India-US defence and strategic ties have been on an upswing in the last few years. The two countries have inked key defence and security pacts over the past few years, including the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) in 2016 that allows their militaries to use each other's bases for repair and replenishment of supplies. The two sides also signed COMCASA (Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement) in 2018 which provides for interoperability between the two militaries and also provides for the sale of high-end technology from the US to India. In October 2020, India and the US sealed the BECA (Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement) pact to further boost bilateral defence ties.

UN rights chief warns of 'strongman' politics

AP ■ GENEVA

The UN human rights chief is urging voters to be wary of "strongman" politicians and personalities "that throw glitter in our eyes" as more elections loom in a busy electoral calendar this year. Volker Turk didn't mention leaders or countries by name, but alluded to a schedule that includes votes to come in countries like Georgia, Tunisia and the United States. The rights chief spoke Monday in his traditional opening remarks to sessions of the Human Rights Council, which typically list a wide array of rights concerns globally. The 47-country body — whose membership changes each year — was opening a five-week autumn session. "I urge voters to ask themselves which of the political platforms or candidates will work for the human rights of everyone," Turk said. "And I urge all voters to be vigilant. Be wary of the shrill voices, the strongman types that throw glitter in our eyes, offering illusory solutions that deny reality." He denounced some politicians who "scapegoat migrants, refugees and minorities" around electoral periods in places like France, Germany, Hungary, the United Kingdom and the US. The Austrian-born UN veteran contrasted both hopeful and worrying developments. He noted a "positive trend" toward the abolition of the death penalty worldwide, but a rise in executions in Iran and Saudi Arabia. He hailed a shift toward decriminalization of same-sex relations in many places, but decried "a spate of laws" that aimed to penalise them in countries like Ghana, Indonesia, Iraq and Uganda.

Kerala-born Jinson Charls appointed minister in Aus Northern Territory

MELBOURNE ■ PTI

Kerala-born Jinson Charls, who defeated a sitting Labour minister in Australia's Northern Territory (NT) elections, will become the new minister for disability, arts, veterans and multicultural affairs in the regional government, according to a media report on Monday. Charls was among the two India-born politicians elected to the regional assembly last month. Khoda Patel of Gujarat descent, also won a seat. Their Country Liberal Party (CLP) secured a landslide victory in elections in the Northern Territory on August 24, claiming 17 of the Legislative Assembly's 25 seats. Charls, who worked as a regis-



tered nurse and in health leadership roles, will become the new minister for disability, arts, veterans and multicultural affairs. He will also manage the portfolios of youth, seniors and equality, as well as people, sport and culture, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) reported on Monday. "His appointment marks a historic occasion for the NT parliament, with the new government featuring the high-

est-ever representation of politicians of South Asian and South-East Asian heritage," it said in an earlier report. Charls and the new Casuarina MLA, Khoda Patel, were born in India, while the new Fong Lim MLA, Tanzil Rahman, has Bangladeshi roots, and the new Wanguri MLA, Oly Carlsson, is of Indonesian heritage. "I have been getting phone calls, messages, for the last few days, including the media back in India - they are excited as well," Charls, who topped a sitting Labour environment minister, was quoted as saying by the ABC. "A first-generation migrant coming over to a different country, to a different culture, and people up here supporting, because it's for the people's mandate."

Indian-American releases song to rally South Asians for Harris

WASHINGTON ■ PTI

To harness the power of Bollywood music, an Indian-American entrepreneur and a major fundraiser for the Democratic party has released a music video to mobilise South Asians in key battleground states to vote for presidential candidate and Vice President Kamala Harris in the November 5 election. The song, "Nacho Nacho", has been performed by Bollywood singer Shibani Kashyap and produced by Ritesh Parikh and his creative team is the brainchild of Ajay Jain Bhutoria, National Finance Committee member for Harris for President. "Nacho Nacho" isn't just a song, it's a movement.

Google faces new antitrust trial

AP ■ ALEXANDRIA

One month after a judge declared Google's search engine an illegal monopoly, the tech giant faces another antitrust lawsuit that threatens to break up the company, this time over its advertising technology. The Justice Department and a coalition of states contend that Google built and maintains a monopoly over the technology that matches online publishers to advertisers. Dominance over the software on both the buy side and the sell side of the transaction enables Google to keep as much as 36 cents on the dollar when it brokers sales between publishers and advertisers, the government contends in court papers. Google says the government's case is based on an internet of yesteryear, when desktop computers ruled and internet users carefully typed precise World Wide Web addresses into URL

fields. Advertisers now are more likely to turn to social media companies like TikTok or streaming TV services like Peacock to reach audiences. In recent years, Google Networks, the division of the Mountain View, California-based tech giant that includes such services as AdSense and Google Ad Manager that are at the heart of the case, actually have seen declining revenue, from USD 31.7 billion in 2021 to USD 31.3 billion in 2023, according to the company's annual reports. The trial over the alleged ad tech monopoly begins Monday in Alexandria, Virginia. It initially was going to be a jury trial, but Google maneuvered to force a bench trial, writing a check to the federal government for more than USD 2 million to moot the only claim brought by the government that required a jury. The case will now be decided by US District Judge Leonie

Brinkema, who was appointed to the bench by former President Bill Clinton and is best known for high-profile terrorism trials including September 11 defendant Zacarias Moussaoui. Brinkema, though, also has experience with highly technical civil trials, working in a courthouse that sees an outside number of patent infringement cases. The Virginia case comes on the heels of a major defeat for Google over its search engine, which generates the majority of the company's USD 307 billion in annual revenue. A judge in the District of Columbia declared the search engine a monopoly, maintained in part by tens of billions of dollars Google pays each year to companies like Apple to lock in Google as the default search engine presented to consumers when they buy iPhones and other gadgets. In that case, the judge has not yet imposed any remedies.

Death toll in Vietnam storm rises to 59

Spanish PM visits China

AP ■ HANOI

A bridge collapsed and a bus was swept away by flooding Monday as more rain fell following a typhoon in Vietnam that has caused at least 59 deaths in the Southeast Asian country and disrupted businesses and factories in the export-focused northern industrial hubs, state media reported.

Nine people died when Typhoon Yagi made landfall in Vietnam on Saturday before weakening to a tropical depression, and at least 50 others have died in the consequent floods and landslides, state media VN Express reported. The water levels of several rivers in northern Vietnam were dangerously high.

A passenger bus carrying 20 people was swept into a flooded stream by a landslide in mountainous Cao Bang province Monday morning. Rescuers were deployed but landslides blocked their



path. In Phu Tho province, rescue operations were continuing after a steel bridge over the engorged Red River collapsed Monday morning. Reports said 10 cars and trucks along with two motorbikes fell into the river. Three people were pulled out of the river and taken to the hospital, but 13 others were missing. Pham Trung Son, 50, told

VNExpress that he was driving on the bridge on his motorcycle when he heard a loud noise. Before he knew what was happening, he was falling into the river. "I felt like I was drowned to the bottom of the river," Son told the newspaper, adding that he managed to swim and hold on to a drifting banana tree to stay afloat before he was rescued. Dozens

of businesses in Haiphong province hadn't resumed production by Monday because of the extensive damage to their factories, reported state media Lao Dong newspaper. The report said that the roofs of several factories were blown apart while water had seeped into industrial units, damaging finished goods and expensive equipment. Some companies said they still didn't have electricity on Monday and that it would take at least a month to be able to resume production. Toppled electricity poles meant that Haiphong and Quang Ninh provinces were still without power on Monday. The two provinces are industrial hubs, housing many factories that export goods, including EV maker VinFast and Apple suppliers Pegatron and USI. Authorities are still assessing the damage to industrial units but initial estimates show that nearly 100 enterprises were damaged by the typhoon, resulting in losses amounting to millions of dol-

lars, reported the newspaper. Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh visited Haiphong city on Sunday and approved a package of USD 4.62 million to help the port city recover. Typhoon Yagi was the strongest typhoon to hit Vietnam in decades when it made landfall Saturday with winds up to 149 kph (92 mph). It weakened Sunday, but the country's meteorological agency warned the continuing downpours could cause floods and landslides. On Sunday, a landslide killed six people including an infant and injured nine others in Sa Pa town, a popular trekking base known for its terraced rice fields and mountains. Overall, state media reported 21 deaths and at least 299 people injured from the weekend. Skies were overcast in the capital, Hanoi, with occasional rain Monday morning as workers cleared the uprooted trees, fallen billboards and toppled electricity poles. Heavy rain continued in

northwestern Vietnam and forecasters said it could exceed 40 centimetres (15 inches) in places. Yagi also damaged agricultural land where rice is mostly grown. Before hitting Vietnam, Yagi caused at least 20 deaths in the Philippines last week and four deaths in southern China. Chinese authorities said infrastructure losses across the Hainan island province amounted to USD 102 million with 57,000 houses collapsed or damaged, power and water outages and roads damaged or impassable due to fallen trees. Yagi made a second landfall in Guangdong, a mainland province neighbouring Hainan, on Friday night. Storms like Typhoon Yagi are 'getting stronger due to climate change, primarily because warmer ocean waters provide more energy to fuel the storms, leading to increased wind speeds and heavier rainfall,' said Benjamin Horton, director of the Earth Observatory of Singapore.

AP ■ BEIJING

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez met with Chinese President Xi Jinping and other top officials Monday during his second trip to China in a year and a half that comes during a spat over electric cars. The official Xinhua News Agency reported the meeting at Beijing's Diaoyutai State Guest House but gave no details about what they discussed.

The centre-left Socialist leader also attended a business forum in Beijing for Spanish and Chinese companies before travelling to Shanghai later Monday. On Tuesday he is attending more business events and the inauguration of a Cervantes Institute, a centre that promotes Spanish language and culture.

Prior to holding talks and dining with Xi, Sánchez held talks with Chinese Prime Minister Li Qiang and the head of the ceremonial legislature, Zhao Leji. Sánchez

departed late Sunday and arrived Wednesday.

Sánchez visited China in March 2023 when Spain held the rotating European Union presidency. Spain was among the EU members that expressed support earlier this year for a 36.7 per cent tariff on Chinese electric vehicles. The Chinese government responded by launching an investigation into imports of EU pork.

EU exports of pork products to China hit a peak of 7.4 billion euros (USD 7.9 billion) in 2020 when Beijing had to turn abroad to satisfy domestic demand after its pig farms were decimated by a swine disease. EU pork exports to China have dropped since then, hitting 2.5 billion euros (USD 2.6 billion) last year. Almost half of that total came from Spain. The tension over pork has not stopped Spain from welcoming the plans of Chinese carmaker Chery to open a plant for electric vehicles in Barcelona.

Congress tackles China with bills on drones and drugs

AP ■ WASHINGTON

How to curb and counter China's influence and power — through its biotech companies, drones and electric vehicles — will dominate the US House's first week back from summer break, with lawmakers taking up a series of measures targeting Beijing. Washington views Beijing as its biggest geopolitical rival, and the legislation is touted as ensuring the US prevails in the competition. Many of the bills scheduled for a vote this week appear to have both Republican and Democratic support, reflecting strong consensus that congressional actions are needed to counter China. The legislation "will take meaningful steps to counter the military, economic and ideological threat of the Chinese Communist Party," said Rep. John Moolenaar, chair of the House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party and a Michigan Republican. "There's a bipartisan goal to win this competition." Advocacy groups worry about the impact, warning against rhetoric that hurts Asian Americans and could create "an atmosphere of guilt by association or fuel divisiveness," said Christine Chen, executive director of Asian & Pacific Islander American Vote. The Chinese Embassy in Washington called the legislation "new McCarthyism" that hypes the tensions in an election year. If passed, the bills "will cause serious interference to China-US relations and mutually beneficial cooperation, and will inevitably damage the US's own interests, image and credibility," spokesman Liu Pengyu said in a statement. Among the bills are efforts to reduce US reliance on Chinese biotech companies, ban Chinese EVs and drones, restrict Chinese nationals from buying farmland, toughen export restrictions and revive a program to root out spying on US intellectual property. If approved, the measures would still need to clear the Senate. Here's a look at the key legislation: A bill seeks to ban a group of five biotechnology companies with Chinese ties from working with anyone that receives federal money. The companies include those that work to help doctors detect genetic causes for cancer or do research and

manufacturing for American drugmakers, considered a key step in developing new medications. America's biotech companies have said the bill would disrupt their partnerships with Chinese contractors, resulting in delays in clinical trials for new drugs and higher costs. Supporters say the legislation is necessary to protect US health care data and reduce the country's reliance on China for its medical supply chain.

"American patients cannot be in a position where we rely on China for genomic testing or basic medical supplies," said Rep. Brad Wenstrup, an Ohio Republican who sponsored the bill. He called it "the first step" in protecting Americans' genetic data. BGI, one of the Chinese companies named in the bill, called it "a false flag targeting companies under the premise of national security." The company, which offers genetic sequencing for research purposes in the US, said it follows the law and has no access to Americans' personal data.

Another bill would dub drones made by the Chinese company DJI, which dominates the global drone market, "an unacceptable risk to US national security" and cut its products from US communications networks over data security concerns. The bill would protect Americans' data and critical infrastructure, said Republican Rep. Elise Stefanik of New York, who introduced it. "Congress must use every tool at our disposal to stop" China's "monopolistic control over the drone market," she said.

DJI argues that users have to "opt in" to share data such as flight logs, photos and videos with the company. If users don't do so, the company said it won't have data to share with any government when compelled. It also has rejected allegations that it is a Chinese military company and has aided the persecution of members of ethnic Muslim minorities. Adam Bry, co-founder and CEO of major US drone maker Skydio, told a congressional committee in June about losing business to China, where "the Chinese government has tried to control the drone industry, pouring resources into national champions and taking aim at competitors in the US and the West, tilting the playing field in China's

favour."

A challenge is likely against an attempt to revive a Trump-era programme described as a way to stop Chinese efforts to steal intellectual property and spy on industry and research. The bill would direct the Justice Department to curb spying by Beijing on US intellectual property and academic institutions and go after people engaged in theft of trade secrets, hacking and economic espionage.

The Trump-era programme, called the China Initiative, ended in 2022 after multiple unsuccessful prosecutions of researchers and concerns that it had prompted racial and ethnic profiling. Critics also say it chilled cooperation between the US and China in science and technology meant to benefit the greater good.

"Our colleagues in the Republican Party sought to reinstate this failed program because they wanted to look like they were solving problems. But in reality, they were only stoking fear and hatred," several Democratic lawmakers said in a statement in March, when they fought off another effort to restart the program. Another bill, which says it will protect US farmland from foreign adversaries, has raised concerns about discrimination. It would add the agriculture secretary to the US Committee on Foreign Investment, which reviews the national security implications of foreign transactions. The bill also flags as "reportable" land sales involving citizens from China, North Korea, Russia and Iran.

"Food security is national security, and for too long, the federal government has allowed the Chinese Communist Party to put our security at risk by turning a blind eye to their steadily increasing purchases of American farmland," said Rep. Dan Newhouse, a Republican from Washington state, who introduced the bill. The National Agricultural Law Centre estimates 24 states ban or limit foreigners without residency and foreign businesses or governments from owning private farmland. The interest emerged after a Chinese billionaire bought more than 130,000 acres near a US Air Force base in Texas and another Chinese company sought to build a corn plant near an Air Force base in North Dakota.

'Decision on Imran's military trial will be based on merit'

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD/KARACHI

Pakistan Information Minister Atta Tarar on Monday said that any decision about the military trial of jailed former premier Imran Khan would be made considering the merit of the case. Tarar said this at a press conference a day after the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leaders while addressing a public rally in Islamabad demanded the government to release Khan, who has been imprisoned in Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail for more than a year. "The decision of the military trial of Khan will be made on merit based on evidence," the minister said in response to a question. Top government officials have been indicating holding a military trial of Khan for his alleged involvement in the May 9, 2023, violence when alleged PTI supporters had attacked military buildings in reaction to his arrest. However, the issue of holding military trials of civilians is pending with the Supreme Court for final adjudication and the cases of more than a hundred civilians, who were handed over to military authorities after violence, have also lingered on. In the first public rally in Islamabad



after the February 8 elections, the PTI leaders asked the government to release Khan. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, belonging to PTI, went a step ahead and warned the government to set Khan free within two weeks or the party would forcibly get him released. "If the founder of PTI is not legally released within one to two weeks, we will have him freed ourselves," the chief minister said, declaring that he would take the lead and take the first bullet to get Khan out of jail. Khan's party on Sunday held a

power show, demanding his immediate release while slamming the government for its crackdown on the party as police fired tear gas to disperse the crowd.

The rally — postponed twice in the last two months — was held near Sangjani Cattle Market in the suburbs of Islamabad after the capital administration issued a no-objection certificate (NOC). Thousands of PTI supporters attended the rally, proving that the party's power base was intact despite several hurdles it faced, including the incarceration of its 71-year-old founder. Khan was arrested on August 5 last year after his conviction in the Toshakhana corruption case filed by the Election Commission of Pakistan. Since then, he has been in jail in different cases. On Sunday, Khan completed 400 days in prison.

13 POLICEMEN INJURED IN CLASH

At least 13 policemen were injured in Pakistan after they clashed with a mob protesting against the disappearance of a youth in the Badin district of the Sindh province, according to the police. The incident took place in the Allah Khan Magis

village on Saturday. "The policemen were injured after they tried to disperse a mob of angry tribesmen from the Magis clan who were protesting the disappearance of one of their youth," a senior police official said. The youth was picked up by the police in connection with a motorcycle theft and disappeared from the lock-up on Saturday. The mob got violent when the police claimed the youth was freed by a group of armed men, who took him with them.

"The mob attacked the police with bricks and sticks, and they also damaged the police station and vehicles parked at the station," Senior Superintendent of Police Zubair Ahmed said.

As the police tried to disperse the crowd of people, 13 policemen were injured and sent to hospital, he said.

AT LEAST 6 INJURED IN EXPLOSION

At least six people, including three policemen, were injured in a bomb explosion that targeted a vehicle carrying workers associated with the Pakistan Polio Programme in the country's restive northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

province, authorities said on Monday. The explosion resulted in injuries to three frontline polio workers and three policemen in South Waziristan district's Wana town. The injured were immediately shifted to a hospital and their condition is stated to be stable.

Police contingents rushed to the explosion site and launched a combing operation to arrest the accused. Authorities in Pakistan last week reported its first polio case in the capital Islamabad in the last 16 years, a setback to the national efforts aimed at eradicating the crippling virus from the country. The country came close to achieving zero poliovirus cases in 2021 when only one infection was reported. So far this year, 12 cases have been reported from Balochistan, three from Sindh, and one from Punjab and Islamabad each. Separately in Peshawar, the capital of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, a suicide vest was thrown by two motorcyclists when they were signalled to stop by police at Jameel Chowk, Ring Road. A bomb disposal squad has been called to defuse the jacket that has seven kilograms of explosives.

S Korean truth commission finds more evidence of forced adoptions in 1980s

AP ■ SEOUL

A South Korean commission found evidence that women were pressured into giving away their infants for foreign adoptions after giving birth at government-funded facilities where thousands of people were confined and enslaved from the 1960s to the 1980s. The report by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Monday came years after The Associated Press revealed adoptions from the biggest facility for so-called vagrants, Brothers Home, which shipped children abroad as part of a huge, profit-seeking enterprise that exploited thousands of people trapped within the compound in the port city of Busan.

Thousands of children and adults — many of them grabbed off the streets — were enslaved in such facilities and

often raped, beaten or killed in the 1970s and 1980s. The commission was launched in December 2020 to review human rights violations linked to the country's past military governments. It had previously found the country's past military governments responsible for atrocities committed at Brothers.

Its latest report is focused on four similar facilities in the cities of Seoul and Daegu and the provinces of South Chungcheong and Gyeonggi. Like Brothers, these facilities were operated to accommodate government roundups aimed at beautifying the streets.

Ha Kum Chul, one of the commission's investigators, said inmate records show at least 20 adoptions occurred from Daegu's Huimangwon and South Chungcheong province's Cheonseongwon in 1985 and 1986. South Korea

sent more than 17,500 children abroad in those two years as its foreign adoption program peaked. Ha said children taken from inmates at Huimangwon and Cheonseongwon were mostly newborns, who were transferred to two adoption agencies, Holt Children's Services and Eastern Social Welfare Society, which placed them with families in the United States, Denmark, Norway and Australia. Most of the infants were transferred to the agencies on the day of their birth or the day after, Ha said, indicating that their adoptions were determined pre-birth. While the facilities' records say some of the women submitted memos expressing their consent to give away their children, other records indicate women were being pressured to do so, Ha said. A 1985 inmate record from Huimangwon flags a 42-year-

old inmate with supposed mental health issues for "causing problems" by refusing to relinquish her child. Officials later note that she eventually did. "It's difficult to accurately determine how many more adopted children there might have been in other years," Ha said, citing the commission's limitations in staff. For Huimangwon, Ha said, the commission was only able to look through its inmate records from 1985 and 1986 and still found 14 adoptions. A further six adoptions were linked to inmates at Cheonseongwon. At their peak, Huimangwon had about 1,400 inmates and Cheonseongwon 1,200. That was still smaller than the population at Brothers, which exceeded 3,000. Holt and Eastern did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the commission's findings.

Van packed with migrants veers off road in Croatia; 14 hurt

AP ■ ZAGREB

A van apparently packed with migrants veered off a road and hit a lamp post in Croatia while speeding to escape police on Monday, injuring 14 people, police and doctors said. The accident happened around 3 am in eastern Croatia when police tasked with stopping illegal entry into Croatia spotted a van with Swiss license plates that had too many people inside and signalled the driver to stop, police said. Instead, the driver sped up, they said. A few minutes later, police saw the van by the side of the road after it hit a lamp post. Doctors at nearby hospitals reported that 14 people were hurt, including seven children, state HRT television said.

'Singapore committed to enhancing ties with China'

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

Balakrishnan, who is on a two-day official trip to Beijing, made the remarks in a meeting with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi. "Prime Minister Lawrence Wong is committed — and I send you his greetings — to enhancing and deepening our relationship with China," The Straits Times newspaper quoted Balakrishnan as saying. In the meeting at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse, Balakrishnan said the upgrading of the bilateral relationship in 2023 reflected "the unique, the longstanding and the very close ties between our two countries." Singapore and China upgraded ties to an "all-round, high-quality, future-oriented partnership" in April 2023, when then Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong met with Chinese President Xi Jinping in

Beijing. Balakrishnan also noted that 2025 will mark the 35th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between Singapore and China. Wang, who in his opening remarks earlier welcomed Balakrishnan as an "old friend," said the "current international situation is volatile, and our region is also faced with some causes of instability."

"So, China and Singapore, as two forces for stability, need to constantly strengthen our strategic coordination and communication," the report quoted him as saying.

"We are willing to further strengthen the alignment of our respective development strategies with Singapore and truly implement our new positioning of the relationship as an all-round, high-quality, future-oriented partnership," Wang said.

China announces joint naval, air drills with Russia

AP ■ BEIJING

China's Defence Ministry on Monday announced joint naval and air drills with Russia starting this month, underscoring the closeness between their militaries as Russia presses its grinding invasion of Ukraine.

The ministry said the "Northern United-2024" exercises would take place in the Sea of Japan and the Sea of Okhotsk farther north, but gave no details. It said the naval and air drills aimed to improve strategic cooperation between the two countries and "strengthen their ability to jointly deal with security threats." The notice also said the two navies would cruise together in the Pacific, the fifth time they have done so, and together take part in Russia's "Great Ocean-24" exercise. No details were given. China has refused to criticise Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, now in its third year, and blamed the US and NATO for provoking President Vladimir Putin. While China has not directly provided Russia with arms, it has become a crucial economic lifeline as a top customer for Russian oil and gas as well as a supplier of electronics and other items with both civilian and military uses.

Russia and China, along with other US critics such as Iran, have aligned their foreign policies to challenge and potentially overturn the Western-led liberal democratic order. With joint exercises, Russia has sought Chinese help in achieving its long-cherished aim of becoming a Pacific power, while Moscow has backed China's territorial claims in the South China Sea and elsewhere. That has increasingly included the 180-kilometre (110-mile) wide Taiwan Strait that divides mainland China from the self-governing island democracy that Beijing considers its own territory and threatens to invade. Based on that claim, the Taiwan Strait is Chinese.

Strong gains in FMCG, banking drive Sensex 376 points higher

PTI ■ MUMBAI
Benchmark Sensex bounced back from early lows and closed higher by nearly 376 points on Monday, snapping its four-day losing run following a rally in blue-chips ICICI Bank, HUL and HDFC Bank. The 30-share BSE Sensex rebounded 375.61 points or 0.46 per cent to settle at 81,559.54. The index opened lower and hit a low of 80,895.05 points in early trade. Later, it recovered from lows and jumped 469.43 points or 0.57 per cent to hit the day's high of 81,653.36. The NSE Nifty went up by 84.25 points or 0.34 per cent to finish at 24,936.40 after three days of fall. Among the 30 Sensex firms, Hindustan Unilever, ICICI



Bank, ITC, Kotak Mahindra Bank, IndusInd Bank, Axis Bank, UltraTech Cement and HDFC Bank were the biggest gainers. Tech Mahindra, Tata Steel, NTPC, Tata Motors, Power Grid and Titan were among the biggest laggards. "Despite a negative opening amidst weak global cues, the domestic market exhibited some recovery from last week's steep fall. The market

is currently attempting to gain stability between potential rate cuts and recession fears in the US," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services said. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled lower. European markets were trading higher. The US markets ended significantly lower on Friday. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 620.95 crore on Friday, according to exchange data. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 1.13 per cent to USD 71.84 a barrel. The BSE benchmark Sensex had tumbled 1,017.23 points or 1.24 per cent to settle at 81,183.93 on Friday. The NSE Nifty dropped 292.95 points or 1.17 per cent to 24,852.1.

Rupee slips one paisa against US \$

PTI ■ MUMBAI
The rupee traded in a narrow range and slipped 1 paisa to close at 83.96 against the American currency on Monday, as the support from a positive trend in equity markets was offset by a strong US dollar against major crosses overseas. Concerns over global economic growth weighed on investor sentiments, forex traders said, adding that investors remained cautious ahead of US CPI and European Central Bank (ECB) monetary policy this week. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.96 against the American currency. It rose to the intra-day high of 83.86 but pared gains to finally settle at 83.96 against the US dollar, down 1 paisa from its previous close. On Friday, the rupee gained 2 paise to close at 83.95 against the US dollar. "The Indian rupee strengthened marginally, supported by expected



intervention by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in the last few weeks. This was despite Asian currencies, which slipped on worries of a slowdown in the US after data released on Friday fanned slowdown worries in the US. "Market participants noted that the Indian central bank has been 'consistently supporting' the rupee to help it hold above 84," said Maneesh Sharma, AVP - Commodities & Currencies, Anand Rathi Shares and Stock Brokers. Globally, the focus remains on whether the Federal Reserve will deliver a 25- or 50-basis point (bp) rate cut at its policy decision next week, which may keep the dollar index tilted in favour of bears, traders said. Meanwhile, the rupee is expected to be supported by inflows related to local IPOs this week while also keeping an eye on US consumer

inflation data for August, due on Wednesday. Meanwhile, in the domestic equity markets, Sensex climbed 375.61 points or 0.46 per cent to settle at 81,559.54 points, while Nifty rose 84.25 points or 0.34 per cent to close at 24,936.40 points. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose 0.37 per cent to 101.54. Brent crude, the international benchmark, rose 0.97 per cent to 71.75 in futures trade. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Friday, as they offloaded shares worth Rs 620.95 crore, according to exchange data. Meanwhile, India's forex reserves jumped by USD 2.299 billion to a new high of USD 683.987 billion for the week ended on August 30, according to the RBI data release on Friday. In the previous reporting week, the forex reserves had jumped by USD 7.023 billion to a high of USD 681.688 billion.

FPI disclosure deadline approaches amid legal tussle with SEBI

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Some FPIs have sought legal avenue to avoid complying with rules requiring disclosure of ultimate beneficial ownership (BO) to the markets regulator Sebi as the deadline expires on Monday. Two Mauritius-based foreign portfolio investors -- LTS Investment Fund and Lotus Global Investment -- have reportedly approached the Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) to seek urgent relief from adhering to Sebi's new norms for foreign investors. These two FPIs were named in the January 2023 report on Adani Group by the US-based short-seller Hindenburg Research. They have asked SAT to direct Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) to give more time to meet these rules. Sebi set a deadline of September 9 for non-compliant FPIs that fail to provide detailed ownership

disclosures to sell off their excess holdings and correct their violations. On Friday, there were rumours that some overseas funds were rushing to sell their holdings ahead of Monday's deadline. "Even though Sebi's deadline for disclosure of beneficial owners in FPI holdings ends on Monday, September 9, it is learnt that two FPIs have moved the appellate tribunal SAT seeking time till March 2025 to meet these norms. Therefore, the verdict from SAT is awaited. "If the verdict comes in their favour, that will not impact the market. Otherwise there may be some selling pressure from these FPIs which might impact the market marginally. Sebi enforcing these norms is a healthy and desirable trend that will make FPI investment completely transparent," V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services, said. In August 2023, Sebi came out

with a circular, whereby it directed FPIs with over 50 per cent of their equity assets under management (AUM) in a single corporate group, or with total holdings in Indian equity markets exceeding Rs 25,000 crore, to disclose detailed information on all entities that have any ownership, economic interest, or control in the FPI. These regulations were introduced to prevent potential round-tripping by certain promoters through the FPI route. The move by Sebi had its genesis in the Adani issue where the markets regulator could not identify the beneficial owners of some foreign portfolio investments in Adani stocks since the existing regulations were lax in identifying the true owners of many investments. These framework, though effective from November 1, 2023, provided a time frame of 90 calendar days for existing FPIs to re-adjust their



holdings. It suggested that FPIs had time till January-end 2024 to realign their investment within the threshold prescribed in a bid to avoid providing the details of the beneficial owner as required. Going by the circular, FPIs whose investments continue to exceed the prescribed threshold after the expiry of the timeline will be given 30 trading days to make disclosures, after which their registration will become invalid. The FPI will then liquidate its

securities and exit the Indian securities market by surrendering its registration within 180 calendar days from the day the certificate becomes invalid, according to the circular. During these 180 days, the investee companies will restrict the FPIs' voting rights to its actual shareholding or its shareholding corresponding to 50 per cent of its equity AUM on the date its FPI registration is rendered invalid, whichever is lower. "Certain FPIs have been observed to hold concentrated portion of their equity portfolio in a single investee company/corporate group. Such concentrated investments raise the concern and possibility that promoters of such investee companies/corporate groups, or other investors acting in concert, could be using the FPI route for circumventing regulatory requirements," the Sebi circular stated. On Sunday, the Congress said

that Sebi investigation into "the Adani Group's brazen attempt" to bypass regulations is still languishing and the capital markets regulator has a lot to explain. "Two Mauritius-based foreign portfolio investors (FPIs), a part of the revelations in the still-unfolding 'Modani' mega scam, have now petitioned the Securities Appellate Tribunal, seeking urgent relief from complying with Sebi's new foreign investor norms before the September 9th deadline," Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh had stated. Both the FPIs are alleged to be violating rules that require investors to not be over-invested in a single stock, he had said. These rules are meant to ensure that black money routed through tax havens does not flood back into Indian capital markets, Ramesh had said, adding they must be upheld at all costs.

Life insurance premium surges by 22 per cent

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Life insurers have recorded a 22 per cent rise in underwriting new business with a premium collection of Rs 32,644 crore in August. The new business premium collection for the first five months of FY25 rose 21 per cent to Rs 1,54,194 crore from Rs 1,27,661 crore in the same period last year, as per the monthly data released by the industry body Life Insurance Council. New business premiums expanded from Rs 26,788.55 crore in August 2023 to Rs 32,644 crore in August 2024, with year-to-date collections growing even more from Rs 1,27,661 crore to Rs 1,54,194 crore this year, according to the council data. Despite the underlying demand for enhanced insurance protection from individual consumers and corporate clients alike, new



policy issuances decreased by 1.44 per cent to 23,94,007 in August 2024 compared to 24,28,895 policies sold in the same period last year. Life insurers made net additions of 1,08,147 individual life insurance agents in August 2024 alone, contributing to an overall 3.74 per cent growth in cumulative agent count against those at the start of FY24-25.

Agrochemical exports may touch ₹80,000 crore in four years: Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
India's agrochemical exports could increase to over Rs 80,000 crore in the next four years provided the industry is facilitated with conducive environment, according to a report by AFCI and EY. A report by Industry body Agro Chem Federation of India (ACFI) and EY titled 'Indian Agrochemical Industry: The Story, the challenges and the aspirations' noted that the exports of agrochemicals stood at Rs 43,223 crore in the 2022-23 fiscal. "India's Agrochemical exports outweigh the domestic consumption of the same. The Indian exports by agrochemical industry have witnessed commendable growth in recent times," said the report which was released

at the 7th AGM of ACFI held recently. ACFI said that the government must focus on facilitating a conducive environment which includes streamlining licencing norms and improving infrastructure for storage and sale, incentivise biopesticide production, streamline registration process for new molecules, enter trade agreements with countries with more relaxed MRL norms, introduce PLI-like scheme to attract investment from global players. "The USP of India's agrochemical industry is their quality and affordable prices which makes their products the first choice of millions of farmers across 130 nations. If facilitated a conducive environment, the sector shows the potential of

achieving exports of over Rs 80,000 crore in the next four years," the report said. The industry body also pitched for reducing GST from 18 per cent to 5 per cent. "The reliance on generic molecules, low agrochemical usage, the complex registration process for new molecules and heavy dependence on imports are some of the challenges that must be transformed into opportunities through the 'Make in India' initiatives," Parikshit Mundhra, Chairman, ACFI said. Given its role in enhancing agricultural productivity and export potential, he said the agrochemical industry will play a vital role in India's quest of becoming a global manufacturing hub ultimately resulting in a USD 5 trillion economy by 2025.

"India's agrochemical industry plays a pivotal role in its agricultural success, supporting increased crop yields and safeguarding food security. As the fourth-largest producer of agrochemicals globally, India faces a paradox: while it holds significant production capacity, it still imports significant amount of agrochemicals, primarily from China," ACFI Director General Kalyan Goswami said. The "Make in India" initiative provides a timely framework to transform these challenges into opportunities, enabling India to become a global manufacturing and export hub for agrochemicals, he added. Agrochemical usage (kg/ha) is lower in the Indian market.



830 exhibitors expected at global electronics showcase

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Around 830 exhibitors from 29 countries are expected to participate in the 2024 edition of 'electronica India' and 'productronica India' to be held from September 11-13. The event organised by global exhibitor Messe Muenchen India (MMI) will be held at the India Expo Mart Limited, Greater Noida, a statement said. In the last edition, the number of exhibitors was 589. The event will create a transformative platform that integrates the entire

electronics value chain. Bhopinder Singh, CEO of MMI said the upcoming event is a clear testament to the expanding global stature of the Indian electronics sector. This heightened global involvement not only emphasizes the growing opportunities for innovation and collaboration but also cements India's role as a key hub for technological progress and strategic partnerships in the industry, he added. Around 50,000 business visitors are expected in this edition, up from 39,133 in the last one, it said.

Auto industry breaks ₹20 lakh crore barrier in FY24, contributes high to GST revenue

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The Indian automotive industry has crossed Rs 20 lakh crore mark in FY24 and now contributes 14-15 per cent of the total GST collected in the country, SIAM President Vinod Aggarwal said on Monday. The auto sector also contributes significantly to the direct and indirect employment generation in the country, he said while speaking at the 64th annual ACMA session here. "The Indian automotive industry has crossed a landmark figure of Rs 20 lakh crore (around USD 240 million) in FY24...We are contributing almost 14-15 per cent of the total GST collected in the country," Aggarwal said.

The auto industry will contribute more and more to the GDP of the country from the current level of around 6.8 per cent, he noted. It is not just the growth numbers, but equally important is the transformation in the technology, he added. Aggarwal stated that globally also the standing Indian auto industry has risen. "We have become the third largest passenger vehicle market, the largest two and three wheeler market and third largest commercial vehicle market as the country marches towards Viksit Bharat by 2047," he noted. The automotive industry is poised to grow even faster and contribute immensely to the growth of the country, Aggarwal said.

He stated that the auto industry has identified 50 critical components for local production in order to reduce import dependence. Aggarwal said SIAM along with ACMA started the journey of enhancing indigenous manufacturing and has voluntarily set targets for increasing localisation. "It was committed to reduce import content by 60 per cent to 20 per cent by 2025 from the base 2019-20 levels, thereby targeting the reduced reports to the tune of Rs 20,000 to Rs 25,000 crore in five years. We have very well achieved the first phase of import reduction of 5.8 per cent in first two years," Aggarwal said at the ACMA annual session here. In order to go to the next level and commence



manufacturing of high tech critical items for which the industry has been dependent on imports, the industry has now identified a list of 50 critical components. "We are encouraging ACMA members to commence manufacturing them in India to enable the vehicle OEMs to source these items locally," Aggarwal said. Since most of these items are electrical or electronics, there is a need to develop capabilities and capacities in India for such high tech items, he added. Besides, having expertise in the conventional internal combustion engine technologies such as gasoline and diesel, the industry has now developed strong capabilities in multiple powertrains such as CNG and

electrified vehicles such as electric vehicles and hybrids, Aggarwal said. The industry is also developing hydrogen and fuel cell based technologies, he added. "Going forward, as the aspirations of the country grow we have to focus more and more aggressively on cleaner and safer vehicles," Aggarwal said. "We are also thankful to the Ministry of Heavy Industries for identifying the need to develop the third automotive mission plan from 2024 to 2047 which will lay down the broad controls of how the industry is expected to grow over these years in three distinct phases, from now to 2030 from 2030 to 2037 and finally, 2037 to 2047," he said. The automatic mission plan

will become a guiding document, not only for the entire automobile and the auto component industry for committing and planning the investments in the country, but will also serve as a ready reckoner for all the line ministries of the government of India, and also to many state governments for framing suitable policy measures that need to align with the growth and research for the auto sector, he noted. "We look forward to the final document on the automotive mission plan," Aggarwal said. Speaking at the session, Automotive Component Manufacturers Association (ACMA) President Shradha Suri Marwah said the industry is looking forward to the third version of the automotive mission plan.

INDIA THRASH JAPAN 5-1 FOR THEIR SECOND CONSECUTIVE WIN

PTI ■ HULUNBUIR (CHINA)

Sukhjeet Singh struck a brace as defending champions India thrashed Japan 5-1 in a league match to notch up their second consecutive win in the men's Hero Asian Champions Trophy hockey tournament here on Monday.

Sukhjeet scored in the second and 60th minutes while Abhishek (3rd), Sanjay (17th) and Uttam Singh (54th) were the other Indian goal getters.

Matsumoto Kazumasa pulled one back for Japan in the 41st minute.

Four-time champions India, who had beaten China 3-0 in their opening round-robin league match on Sunday, got two penalty corners as against five of Japan.

India were quick to get the lead with Sukhjeet scoring a brilliant field goal in the second minute of the match itself. It was Sanjay, hovering on the right side of the circle, lobbed in a cross that was swiftly deflected by Sukhjeet.

India extended the lead to 2-0 in the next minute with Abhishek dribbling past several Japanese defenders before rounding off the goalkeeper to score.

The onslaught continued in the second quarter with Sanjay converting a splendid penalty corner in the 17th minute. With 3-0 lead at half-time, India were in a comfortable position while Japan tried to shake off the early nerves and bounce back.

Japan, who finished third in the 2023 edition of the tournament, made amends in their attack to fetch a PC in the 21st minute. But Japan's drag-flick was finely blocked by the Indian rushers, enabling their team to launch a quick counter attack.



ASIAN CHAMPIONS TROPHY

Attacking from the right, Jugraj Singh got a nice turn and won a free hit. After a flurry of swift short passes, Indian forwards missed the goal-mouth by inches.

With one goal coming in the second quarter, India completely dominated with 67 per cent ball possession that led to 11 circle entries and three shots on goal.

Returning from the 10-minute half-time break, India looked to keep up the momentum. They played patiently, with discipline, to launch their first attack in the third quarter but Japan won the ball back.

Japan did well to build on a structured attack that eventually led to a field goal in the 41st minute by Kazumasa. India goalie Krishan Pathak could do little to stop Kazumasa from scoring.

Only minutes earlier, there was a brilliant opportunity for India but Vivek Sagar fell inches short of a fourth goal.

A fourth goal eventually came for India, thanks to good stick work by Jarnanpreet Singh who assisted Uttam Singh in converting a fine field goal.

Sukhjeet added another goal to his name in the 60th minute after a fine assist by Abhishek to end the match on a high.

"It was a complete team effort today and we stuck to basics. We produced good attack and ensured we were on target," Hero of the Match Abhishek said.

Harmjanpreet Singh-led India will meet last-edition's runners-up Malaysia on Wednesday, as Tuesday is a rest day.

After the round-robin league among the six teams, the top-four sides qualify for the semifinals to be played on September 16. The final is scheduled for September 17.

Jannik Sinner beats Taylor Fritz in the US Open men's final weeks after doping exoneration

AP ■ NEW YORK

Jannik Sinner started slowly at the US Open, dropping the first set he played after being exonerated in a doping case no one knew about until shortly before play began at Flushing Meadows.

If that episode initially hung over him during the tournament, Sinner was able to put it aside while on court. Was he ever. The No. 1-ranked Sinner beat Taylor Fritz 6-3, 6-4, 7-5 with his typical relentless baseline game to win the men's championship at Arthur Ashe Stadium on Sunday, less than three weeks after word emerged of his two positive drug tests.

"This title, for me, means so much," said Sinner, a 23-year-old from Italy, "because the last period of my career was really not easy."

He won the second Grand Slam trophy of his nascent career - the other was at the Australian Open in January - and prevented No. 12 Fritz from ending a major title drought for American men that has lasted 21 years.

Andy Roddick's triumph at Flushing Meadows in 2003 was the last Slam title for a man from the United States. The last before Fritz, a 26-year-old from California, to even contest a final at one of the four biggest tournaments in tennis also was Roddick, who lost to Roger Federer at Wimbledon in 2009.

"Being an American at the US Open is just incredible. Feeling the love all week. So thank you so much," Fritz said during the trophy ceremony. "I know we've been waiting for a champion for a long time, so I'm sorry I couldn't get it done this time. But I'm going to keep working and, hopefully, I'll get it at the next one."

Still, this tournament was a success in many ways for US tennis, with two women and two men from the country all reaching the semifinals for the first



time at a major since the 2003 US Open. Jessica Pegula reached the women's final before losing Saturday to Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus.

Sinner improved to 55-5 with a tour-high six titles in 2024. That includes a 35-2 mark on hard courts, the surface used at both the Australian Open and US Open. He's the first man since Guillermo Vilas in 1977 to win his first two Grand Slam trophies in the same season.

"So many big wins for me this season," said Sinner, who took full advantage of Week 1 exits by Novak Djokovic and Carlos Alcaraz. "But the work never stops."

The world found out on August 20 that Sinner had tested positive twice in an eight-day span for trace amounts of an anabolic steroid in March but was cleared because his use was ruled unintentional - the banned substance entered his system via a massage from a team member he later fired.

3-2 after 20 minutes.

Then again, that was pretty much the last significant highlight for Fritz until 3-3 in the third set, when he smacked an overhead winner to get to 15-30, punched the air and screamed, "Let's go!" People all around rose, applauding and shouting. After Fritz deposited a volley winner to earn a break point a minute later, he celebrated in the same fashion, and thousands in the seats went wild. Sinner then double-faulted, putting Fritz in front 4-3.

But when he tried to serve out the set at 5-4, Fritz buckled enough to let Sinner pull even by breaking. Sinner used a drop shot to lure Fritz to the front court, then slid a passing shot that Fritz volleyed into the net. Fritz bounced his racket off the court. Sinner loped to the towel box, not even smiling.

About 10 minutes later, the victory was Sinner's thanks to a closing four-game run. When it was over, Sinner raised his arms, threw his head back and closed his eyes.

He generally asserts himself during matches in what perhaps is best described as a rather casual way. His style is less spectacular than solid, less magical than metronomic. Either way, it was masterful, using his long limbs and squeaking, sliding sneakers to get to everything before aiming high-speed shot after shot right near lines - and usually succeeding.

Neither player seemed all that interested in venturing forward Sunday unless forced to, instead content to ply their forehands and backhands from the back of the court.

That's decidedly Sinner's territory. By the end, Sinner, the second Italian to win a singles title at the US Open, joining 2015 women's champion Flavia Pennetta, had an impressive ledger: just 21 unforced errors, 13 fewer than Fritz, and 23 winners.



Will Los Angeles 2028 be the moment when Paralympics conquer America?

AP ■ LOS ANGELES

Paris raised the game for the Paralympics, with more than 4,000 athletes as well as 2.4 million tickets sold, which was second only to the London Games of 2012. Now the challenge for US organisers is to top it with another breakout moment for para sports.

"We want to conquer America," said Craig Spence, a spokesman for the International Paralympic Committee.

Retired Army Lt. Gen. Reynold Hoover, CEO of the organizing committee for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics and Paralympics, is confident the Paralympics can do just that.

"We don't have the Eiffel Tower, we don't have the Grand Palais, but we've got the Coliseum and we've got the Rose Bowl and we've got SoFi (Stadium), and all these tremendous state-of-the-art venues," he said in an interview Friday as the Paris Games wound down.

The Paralympic venues for Los Angeles haven't been announced yet - ideally, they'll be finalized by the end of 2024. Since LA received the bid in 2017, several venues such as Crypto.com Arena and SoFi Stadium have either been re-envisioned or built.

With five new sports coming to the Olympics, and the addition of para climbing in the Paralympics, a record combined total of up to 15,000 athletes are expected to compete.

"We try to figure out what is the sport that is kind of new, engaging, emerging and can offer the Paralympians another avenue in which to show their intensity and commitment to sport," Hoover said.

If the Paralympics are to take a jump in popularity in the United States, several areas are generally considered key to that success.

Television As the Paris Games finished, the NFL kicked off and college football finished its second full week, dominating the U.S. Sports market.

Chris Hammer, a para triathlon veteran who won his first gold medal in the PTS5 classification for athletes with mild impairment, wouldn't be surprised if the attention in the U.S. Landed elsewhere - he said he's "guilty" of it, too.

"I love American football, that's what I watch on TV," he said. "We don't embrace the niche sports as much as Europeans do, so I think that is a challenge that we need to overcome if we want to replicate the success of Paris."

Since the London Games in 2012, Channel 4 in the United Kingdom has broadcast the Paralympics on live, linear television. France's national broadcaster, France Télévisions, had near continuous coverage of the games, but while NBC and Peacock's Olympic and Paralympic coverage has expanded, there is no guarantee Americans will pay for subscriptions when it's behind a paywall.

Aaron Phipps, a veteran of Great Britain's wheelchair rugby team, remembers U.S. Athletes excited about being on TV back in 2012: "I was thinking 'What are you talking about?' For us, it's just completely normalized."

Olympic Fatigue With the Olympics and Paralympics, there's several weeks of competition for people to pay attention and remain engaged. The Parisian crowds have done it, but can the Southern Californians?

Hoover said with new technology in the works to generate a more interactive experience, Olympic fatigue shouldn't be an issue. Instead, he thinks fans will be "more excited" because Los Angeles will act as a "home field advantage" for the United States.

True Stars With access to Hollywood, Spence said the organizing committee has a chance to make an impact that extends outside Los Angeles - he expects a global cultural shift when it comes to making Paralympic athletes true pop culture stars.

Visibility isn't a new issue. Scout Bassett, who competed in Rio de Janeiro and is on the athletes' commission for Los Angeles, thinks more work should be done together between Paralympians and Olympians to generate more awareness through already established stars.

"We are a country that celebrates winning, success, and until we start telling these stories and really giving these athletes the opportunities they deserve in that spotlight, that's the only way we're going to grow the Paralympics and change the perceptions about people with disabilities," she said.

Seasoned Paralympians noted most up-and-coming athletes went years without knowing of para sports programs available to them. They say that must change to grow the games.

"My hope is that LA is gonna be this moment for so many people with disabilities to say, 'Oh gosh, I could compete, there's something I could do,'" said Chuck Aoki, a veteran of Team USA's wheelchair rugby team. The U.S. Once again dominated the Summer Olympics medals table in Paris but, in the Paralympics, China has been the leading force since 2004.

"I think we need to go back to the drawing board," said Jessica Long, one of the most decorated Paralympic swimmers.

Long doesn't think the U.S. Reached its full potential in Paris and some Paralympians, who were a part of the three-year turnaround from Tokyo, have struggled.

"I think we need to really get on board, the whole U.S., just to showcase what we can do," she said.

Medalists from the United States do receive financial bonuses: \$38,000 for gold, \$23,000 for silver, \$15,000 for bronze.

As for Los Angeles, Aoki said reaching the top of the medal table would be tough, but anything is possible.

Ronaldo scores late winner as a substitute for Portugal

AP ■ LONDON

Cristiano Ronaldo is showing just why Portugal is persisting with him at the age of 39.

Make that a record-extending 132 international goals for the five-time world player of the year after Ronaldo came on as a halftime substitute and slotted home an 88th-minute winner for Portugal in its 2-1 victory over Scotland in the Nations League on Sunday.

Minutes earlier, Ronaldo had struck both posts within a matter of seconds. Indeed, he was an ever-present danger in Lisbon, demonstrating he is far from finished as a force in international soccer - especially against the likes of a struggling Scotland.

Ronaldo failed to score at all in five games at the recent European Championship, but Portugal coach Robert Martinez has kept faith with the country's greatest ever player and is reaping the rewards.

On Thursday, Ronaldo scored



his 900th career goal - spanning games for club and country - in a 2-1 win over Croatia.

The quest for 1,000 began three days later and he didn't disappoint, despite only playing one half.

In stoppage time, a spectator got on the field and attempted to get a selfie with Ronaldo, but was stopped by security. That happened repeatedly at Euro 2024.

Scotland went ahead through Scott McTominay in the seventh minute before an equalizer from the edge of the

area by Bruno Fernandes in the 54th.

Luka Modric turns 39 on Monday but, like Ronaldo, remains as integral as ever for his country.

The Real Madrid midfielder again demonstrated his enduring quality by clipping home an exquisite free kick from the edge of the box in Croatia's 1-0 win over Poland. It was Modric's 27th goal in 180 appearances for his country, which left him tied with former Spain defender Sergio Ramos as the second highest-capped European

players in men's international soccer - only behind Ronaldo with 214.

Robert Lewandowski, another veteran at age 36, hit the goal frame for Poland, which beat Scotland 3-2 in the first round of Nations League group games on Thursday.

Fabian Ruiz scored twice for Spain in its 4-1 win at Switzerland, with the recently crowned European champions emerging victorious despite playing the majority of the game with only 10 men.

Center back Robin Le Normand was shown a straight red card in the 20th minute for bringing down Breel Embolo as the last man, by which time Spain was leading 2-0 thanks to Joselu's header from Lamine Yamal's cross in the fourth minute and Ruiz's goal in the 13th after Nico Williams' shot was saved.

Zeki Amdouni pulled a goal back for the Swiss before halftime but substitute Ferran Torres set up Ruiz for his second goal then scored himself to clinch Spain's first

win of its Nations League title defense. The team drew 0-0 at Serbia on Thursday.

Swedish soccer fans paid tribute to one of the country's most famous coaches - and then celebrated the further blossoming of the team's new strikeforce.

There was a minute's silence before Sweden's home match with Estonia in honor of Sven-Goran Eriksson, who died on Aug. 26 after battling cancer. An image of Eriksson was shown on the big screens in the Strawberry Arena just outside Stockholm.

Sweden won 3-0, with Viktor Gyokeres - with two goals - and Alexander Isak scoring. They also each scored in a 3-1 win in Azerbaijan on Thursday, with the Swedes showing improved form after missing out on qualification for both the World Cup in 2022 and this year's Euros.

There was another Scandinavian win as Denmark beat Serbia 2-0 thanks to goals by Albert Gronbaek and Yussuf Poulsen.

India beating Australia in last two Test tours Down Under has made rivalry more intense: Khawaja

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
India beating Australia in the last two Test series in the latter's backyard has made the rivalry between the two teams more intense, feels senior batter Usman Khawaja ahead of the five-match battle beginning November 22. India had beaten Australia on their last two tours of Australia (2018-19 and 2020-21) with an identical 2-1 margin. In fact, India have won all the last four series of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, taking into account their home wins in 2016-17 and 2022-23 -- both also 2-1 results in a four-match contest. "For Indians it's always been the case to beat Australia. And more recently, you know, since the rise of India and IPL and everything else that happened, it's the same way with Australia against India," Khawaja said. "And particularly since India's beaten Australia in Australia the last two times they've come out of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. It just means a little bit more," he told Star Sports. The 37-year-old left-handed opener said that the rivalry between the two teams is huge. "We're world number one, world number two teams really over the last two years. We were there at the last World Test Championship together.



The rivalry has always been huge," said Khawaja who has 5451 runs from 71 Tests after making debut in 2011. "I take it as a sign of respect and I know it that Indians love beating Australia in any sort of form of cricket. And the tradition that Australia has had over so many years as being one of the dominating teams in world cricket has staked that reputation." The first Test begins in Perth on November 22 while fifth and the last will be played in Sydney from January 3. Another senior player Mitchell Marsh talked about "great friendships" complementing intense rivalry with Indian players. "If you look at recent history, we've won stuff, they've won

stuff. And I think that when it's back and forth like that, it builds that rivalry within yourselves. There's great friendships in the Indian team with our team, so there's no hatred. But it's a great on field rivalry, both teams want to win. "And Australia versus India, it's another opportunity to grow the game of cricket. Not that cricket needs growing in India, but worldwide. People tune into these big series," said all-rounder Marsh, who has been vice-captain of the team and currently skipper of the T20 side. Fast bowler Josh Hazlewood admitted that it's always a great challenge playing against India, especially since they are so used to the conditions Down Under. "Their top order, no matter who's playing, is unbelievable, their top six or seven. I played them in my debut series, obviously, and we got the win, that might have been the last time. A lot of the same players are still playing. I think I got Virat that game. "So a lot of our players, I guess, haven't beaten India in a Test series. The guys were playing, such as Travis Head, Cameron Green, guys like that. So, yeah, huge summer for us coming up and hopefully get that trophy back."



Pant on course to become all-time great in Tests Needs to improve in shorter formats: Ganguly

PTI ■ KOLKATA
Former India captain Sourav Pant is on course to become an all-time great in Test cricket but at the same time, the southpaw needs to raise his game in the shorter formats. Pant on Sunday returned to the Test side for the first time since his life-threatening car accident in December 2022. He is expected to start the first Test against Bangladesh beginning in Chennai on September 19. Since his return earlier this year following the accident, Pant has played T20s and ODIs and has done well. "I consider Rishabh Pant one of India's best Test batsmen. I'm not surprised that he's back in the side, and he will continue to play for India in Tests," Ganguly said at a promotional event here. "He will be an all-time great in Tests if he keeps performing like this. For me, he needs to get better in the shorter formats. With the talent he has, I'm sure with time, he will become one of the best." Indian selectors have opted to give Mohammed Shami more time to recover from an ankle surgery and have named uncapped left-arm pacer Yash Dayal and Akash Deep in the squad. Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj are the two frontline pacers. "I know Mohammed Shami is missing because of injury, but he will be back very soon since India is going to Australia. It's still a very good attack," Ganguly said.

"In India, you will see a lot more spin. In Chennai, you will see a lot more bounce. Ashwin, Jadeja, Axar, and Kuldeep are the four best spinners in the world at the moment -- it won't be easy. When you play in India, spinners have a lot more say in the game. But India are a very good team." "I am looking forward to their tour to Australia; that, for me, will be the real test for the squad. Then, when they tour England in July, these are the two most important tours, to be honest. I think the pace bowling department, with Bumrah and Siraj, and once Shami comes back, will be strong." He also hailed Bengal pacer Akash Deep and said he's one to watch out for. "Akash Deep is an outstanding young fast bowler. He runs in, bowls quick, and will bowl for long periods. I've seen him play for Bengal, taking wickets. "He will be as quick as Siraj and Shami, hitting high 140s. He is one to watch out for," he added. **TOUGH CHALLENGE VERSUS BANGLADESH:** Having conquered Pakistan, Bangladesh's next assignment will be a two-Test series in India. Ganguly said Rohit Sharma and Co will be a different "kettle of fish". "Going to Pakistan and beating them is never easy, so congratulations to the (Bangladesh) players. But India will be a different kettle of fish; India, whether at home or away, are a fantastic side with a very strong batting unit. "I don't see Bangladesh winning; India will win the series. But India must expect good and tough cricket from Bangladesh because they are coming into the series with a lot of confidence after beating Pakistan in Pakistan," he added. **GENUINE DEARTH OF TALENT IN PAKISTAN:** With Pakistan hitting a new low with a Test series loss to Bangladesh, Ganguly feels there is a "genuine dearth of talent" in the country and they are far from the glory days when players like Javed Miandad, Wasim Akram, Waqar Younis, formed the backbone of the team. "I see a genuine dearth of talent in the country. Every time we think of Pakistan, we remember Miandad, Wasim, Waqar, Saeed Anwar, Mohammad Yousuf, and Younis Khan. "That's the memory of Pakistan for us, but that doesn't win matches in the modern generation of cricket. Every generation has to produce outstanding players to win, and when I look at Pakistan in world cricket -- I saw them in the West Indies World Cup, in India during the World Cup, and now after the Bangladesh series loss -- there is a dearth of talent in that country. "The people connected with the sport in Pakistan will have to look into it. I'm not saying this with disrespect. Pakistan of the old had some great cricketers, which I don't see in this squad," Ganguly said.

For Vaishali, Global Chess League is opportunity to learn from Anand and visit London Eye

PTI ■ LONDON
Set to make her debut in the Global Chess League alongside the great Viswanathan Anand, Indian Grandmaster R Vaishali says doing well in the star-studded event is not the only target on her mind when she lands in the British Capital next month. Taking a ride on the London Eye also figures quite high on the agenda. The 23-year-old Grandmaster was among the top picks at the league's player draft held in August. The event's second edition will be held here from October 3 to 12 at Friends House. Speaking about playing alongside five-time world champion Anand for Ganges Grandmasters and against her brother R. Praggnanandhaa's team, Alpine SG Pipers, Vaishali said, "This will be a very special event for me to play alongside Vishy sir in the same team." "It is a wonderful opportunity for me. My brother Pragg is on Magnus



Carlsen's team, which is great as well. Of course, we won't compete against each other, but our teams are different." Anand has had a huge role to play in mentoring both Praggnanandhaa and Vaishali. In the tournament, each team will play a total of 10 matches in a double round-robin format, with the winner of each match being decided in a best-of-six board scoring system. Vaishali described it as an interesting and unique format. "To have many strong players in one team, we get to discuss a lot about the game and share ideas. It will definitely help players improve individually," she added. Away from the game, Vaishali has already planned her off-the-board adventures in the city. "The last time I visited London was five years ago. Back then, I missed going to the London Eye ride, so it's the best opportunity for me to visit this time," she signed off.



'Health of Indian motorsport has improved significantly over past five years'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The health of Indian motorsport has improved significantly over the past five years but a lot more can be done in terms of infrastructural support, says JK Tyre motorsport head Sanjay Sharma. Sharma's organisation has been supporting Indian motorsport for close to three decades. The tyre maker is running its national racing championship for the 27th consecutive season but seeing the bigger picture, this year the company has partnered with RPPL for the Indian Racing Festival (IRF). RPPL is the promoter of the FIA-sanctioned Formula 4 championship in India and could bring Formula 3 to the country as soon as next year. "The health of motorsport is improving considerably. If you just compare how things have changed in the last 8 to 10 years, everything is crystal clear. It's very unfortunate that in terms of infrastructure, we do lack a lot of support," said Sharma following round two of IRF. MotoGP hosted its inaugural race at the Buddh International Circuit last year but the round was dropped for the 2024 season and is expected to return in March next year. The premier two-wheel race needed changes to the track that hosted Formula 1 for three editions and now it



needs to be homologated again for four wheel racing. Sharma lamented the state of affairs in this context. "The only big F1 track which hosted MotoGP last year now even doesn't have a homologation to do car events. And they have their own set of little problems, but whatever they are, they are not available for the sport. "So this is one of the very major kind of setback, because even to our championship, because one of the reasons that we got together (RPPL and JKTyre) two like-minded people, was that we will come back with a package that was worth BIC standard with fast cars and good turnout. "However, having said so, if you see there are more promoters, more sponsors, more patronage for drivers, things are looking really good. In terms of government, I would say from the era where they didn't recognize us as a sport, we have come a long way. They are very receptive. "And the live example of that is street races in Hyderabad and now Chennai (held earlier this month)," said Sharma. The tyre major had brought Formula BMW to India back in 2011 but a decade and more later, Sharma feels the current Formula 4 championship in the IRF is a better package. "On paper, the Formula 4 does look a little better. But safety-wise, there is a whole lot of difference. These new generation cars are far ahead, carrying all the latest safety norms. Then coming to the program of the FIA, if you follow it also helps you later for the super license. "The structure is more formalised by the FIA (the world body). Unlike in the past, we don't need to race outside India anymore. Now everything is available in your own backyard, in your own pocket size. "With the kind of vigour and vision that our partner RPPL has, I think the story which now will unfold will be the best that India can ask for," Sharma added.

New Zealand-Afghanistan Test: Opening day called off without a ball being bowled

PTI ■ GREATER NOIDA
No play was possible on the opening day of the one-off Test between New Zealand and Afghanistan due to a wet outfield here on Monday. The match officials conducted multiple inspections through the day but the conditions were not fit enough for players to take the field. There was no rain on Monday but the ground, lacking a modern drainage system, has been impacted by heavy rain through the last week. With rain and thunderstorms forecast throughout the week,

it remains to be seen how many days of the Test is impacted. This is the first-ever Test between New Zealand against Afghanistan who got their Test status in 2017. Afghanistan, who have played 10 Tests so far, have endured defeats in their last three matches against Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Ireland. For New Zealand, this will be their first Test since March and it will kick off a busy couple of months in the subcontinent ending with a three-Test series against India in October-November.



Meghalaya's Myngken to meet Manipur's TGES in junior Subroto Cup final

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Banganson's hat-trick powered Myngken Christian HSS, Meghalaya's 7-0 rout of Govt. Secondary School, Arunachal Pradesh and their entry into the final of 63rd Subroto Cup junior boys international football tournament here on Monday. They will face T.G. English School, Bishnupur, Manipur in the summit clash at the Ambedkar Stadium on Wednesday. The TGES qualified for the final after edging Sri Lanka Schools Football Association by a solitary goal. Myngken were in cruise control from the start but it took them 21 minutes to break the deadlock through a fine solo run and finish by Banganson. The goal opened the floodgates as Banganson doubled the advantage in the 36th minute and three minutes later, Mebanlamiyit made it 3-0 from a deadly counter attack. Alicestar scored the fourth in the 44th minute after the striker slotted the ball into the empty net. Banganson completed his hat-trick in the 46th minute with a neat finish after stealing the ball from a defender. Alicestar piled on the misery for the Arunachal side, scoring his second goal and the team's sixth with a powerful left footer. Substitute Menatskheng completed the rout in the 65th minute, foxing two defenders and the goalkeeper to slot the ball into the empty net. In the second semifinal, Heroba's 27th minute strike against the Sri Lankan side was enough for TGES to enter the final. **RESULTS:** Myngken Christian HSS, Meghalaya - 7 (Banganson 21st, 36th, 46th, Mebanlamiyit 39th, Alicestar 44th, 51st, Menatskheng 65th) beat Govt. Secondary School, Yazali, Arunachal Pradesh - 0. T.G. English School, Bishnupur, Manipur - 1 (Heroba 27th) beat Sri Lanka Schools Football Association - 0.