

**OPINION 6**  
IS THE IDEA OF  
PAKISTAN DEAD?

**WORLD 9**  
RUSSIA CONFIRMS PRIGOZHIN  
DIED IN PLANE CRASH

**MONEY 10**  
STOCK EXCHANGES SLAP FINES  
ON IOC, ONGC, GAIL

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# CHANDRAYAAN SPIRIT OF NEW INDIA: PM

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**  
Mission 'Chandrayaan-3' has emerged as the symbol of the spirit of a 'New India', which wants to emerge victorious under any circumstances, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in the latest edition of his monthly radio broadcast — 'Mann Ki Baat' — on Sunday.  
India entered the record books as the first country to successfully place a lander on the Moon's uncharted South Pole last week and the successful conduct of what was the maiden lunar landing mission of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) also put India in an elite club of nations featuring the US, Russia, and China.  
In his radio programme, the Prime Minister spoke on a range of issues including the country's big strides in the field of sports as also the prestigious forthcoming G-20 Summit in the national Capital.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his radio programme 'Mann Ki Baat'. File photo

The main focus of his talk, however, remained the historic soft landing of the Vikram space module on the South Pole of the Moon.  
"On August 23, our Chandrayaan-3 mission proved to the world that the dawn of revolution and resolve can also light up the dark side of the Moon. Mission Chandrayaan has become a symbol and the spirit of a 'New India'. This is an India, which wants to emerge victorious at all costs. It wants to break new grounds regardless of the circumstances," Modi said. "India wants to break new grounds regardless of the circumstances," said the Prime Minister. Without referring to the Opposition parties' comments on the issue, Modi said a discussion on India's maiden lunar landing mission would

struggle to do justice to the enormity of its success.  
"The success of Chandrayaan-3 has seen the entire country immerse itself in unbridled celebrations. It has been more than three days since our lunar lander, 'Vikram', touched down on the Moon's surface. Such is the enormity of the mission's success that any discussion on it seems futile," Modi said. The PM also lauded the key role played by the women scientists at ISRO.  
"The key role played by ISRO's women scientists in the successful conduct of the daunting lunar landing mission is a classic illustration of women power. India's daughters are not only shattering glass ceilings but also challenging Space, which is

mission a success. This is the biggest success of our mission." Modi also spoke about the September 9-10 meeting of G-20 in New Delhi and said next month the world is going to witness the potential of India.  
Heads of 40 countries and many global organisations are coming to the national Capital to participate in the event.  
"This will be the biggest participation ever, in the history of the G-20 Summit. During her presidency, India has made G-20 a more inclusive forum. The African Union also joined the G-20 on India's invitation and the voice of the people of Africa reached this important platform of the world. Friends, since India took over the presidency of the G-20 in Bali last year, so much has happened that it fills us with pride," he said.  
"Moving away from the tradition of holding big events in Delhi, we took them to different cities. About 200 meetings related to this were organised in 60 cities across the country. Wherever the G-20 Delegates went, people warmly welcomed them. These delegates were very impressed, seeing the diversity of our country and our vibrant democracy," he said.  
"They also realised that there are so many possibilities in India," he said. "Our presidency of the G-20 is a People's Presidency, in which the spirit of public participation is at the forefront. Among the 11 Engagement Groups of G-20, i.e. academia, civil society, youth, women, our parliamentarians, entrepreneurs and people associated with urban administration played an important role. In one way or the other, more than 1.5 crore people are associated with the events being organised across the country regarding

## Khalistanis deface Delhi Metro

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a major security lapse in the run up to the G20 Summit next month, unknown suspects, allegedly associated with the US-based banned terror outfit Sikhs For Justice (SFJ), defaced the walls of Metro stations in the national Capital with pro-Khalistan slogans like "Delhi Banega Khalistan" (Delhi will become Khalistan)" and "Khalistan Zindabad (long live Khalistan)", prompting the Delhi Police to register a case and launch an investigation.



A slogan on the walls of Shivaji Park Delhi Metro station. Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

A purported video was released simultaneously by the Pakistan-backed SFJ in which its chief Gurbatwant Singh Pannu is seen talking about the graffiti. "The battle of G20 Pragati Maidan has started today... (Prime Minister) Modi and India are targets. G20 nations, when you will be meeting in Delhi on September 8, we will be organising a Khalistan referendum in Canada," he said in the clip. The organisation said their members went to four to five Metro stations and sent a message to G20 nations with the graffiti. In the pictures shared by Delhi Police, slogans are seen inscribed on the walls of Metro stations.

extended to them from the DMRC's side," said Anuj Dayal, Principal Executive Director, corporate communication, DMRC.  
"Sikhs For Justice (SFJ) also released raw footage of Delhi Metro stations which were defaced with pro-Khalistan slogans," a senior police officer said.  
This also comes just two days after a special NIA court in Delhi ordered the confiscation of a property of absconding pro-Khalistan terrorist Lakhbir Singh Sandhu alias "Landa" in a village in Tarn Taran district of Punjab.  
SFJ has long been involved in reviving the Khalistani separatist movement at the behest of their Pakistani masters in the Pakistan Army-ISI combine.

Police sources identified the Metro stations as Shivaji Park station, Madipur, Paschim Vihar, Udyog Nagar, Maharaja Surajmal Stadium, Government Sarvodaya Bal Vidyalaya Nangloi, Punjabi Bagh and the Nangloi Metro Station as being the ones which were spray-painted with several pro-Khalistan slogans.  
The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) said the issue has been reported to the law and order agencies concerned.  
"Some objectionable graffiti has been observed on the outer walls of some of our metro stations on the Green Line. The issue has been reported to the law and order agencies concerned. All necessary cooperation is being

This is not the first time that graffiti with slogans in support of the separatist Khalistani movement have surfaced in Northern India. Earlier, such instances have been reported from places in Haryana and Himachal Pradesh.  
The Union Home Ministry had earlier banned SFJ for its anti-national activities. The fringe organisation, run by a few radical Sikhs of foreign nationality in the US, Canada and the UK was declared an unlawful association under the provisions of Section 3(1) of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.  
In July, SFJ founder Gurbatwant Singh Pannu's close aide Hardeep Singh Nijjar, head of the Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara Sahib was liquidated in Surrey, Canada by unknown assailants.  
He was the chief of the separatist organisation Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF).  
SFJ is mostly active via online platforms and has more than two lakh supporters around the world but its physical presence is minuscule with just eight to 10 active members.  
On January 19, ahead of the Republic Day celebrations in Delhi, "anti-national" and "Khalistan-related" graffiti appeared on walls in some areas of west Delhi, including Vikaspuri, Janakpuri, Paschim Vihar, and Peeragarhi police said.  
The walls were painted with slogans like "Khalistan Zindabad" and "Referendum 2020".  
The Delhi Police's Special Cell arrested two men in connection with the incidents.  
The G20 summit which will be held in the national Capital from September 9 to 10 is likely to be attended by more than 40 Heads of States and top officials from the European Union, guest countries, and 14 heads of international organisations who have been invited for the landmark summit.

## India scripts history at relay, enters World Championship final



The Indian 4x400m men's team poses for photographers after the historic race. PTI

**PTI ■ BUDAPEST**  
The Indian 4x400m men's team ran a lightening fast 2-minute 59.05 seconds race to qualify for the finals of the World Championships for the first time in history and rewrite the Asian record of 2:59.51 seconds held by Japan, on Saturday. The Indian quartet of Muhammed Anas Yahiya, Amoj Jacob, Muhammed Ajmal Variyathodi and Rajesh Ramesh finished second in heat number one behind the US (2:58.47) to make it to the final to be held later in the night on Sunday.  
The top three finishers in each of the two heats and the next two fastest qualified for the final. The earlier Asian record of 2:59.51 was in the name of the Japanese team. The earlier national record was 3:00.25 set in 2021. The Indians gave the world record holders Americans a run for their money, finishing closely behind them. India eventual-

ly finished second overall also after the two heats, behind the US, but ahead of strong teams like Great Britain (3rd; 2:59.42) and Jamaica (5th; 2:59.82). Rajesh Ramesh, who worked as a ticket collector at Trichy in 2018, ran the anchor leg and almost overtook his American counterpart. He was nudged physically by the US runner who didn't want to budge. Mohammed Anas, the 400m national record holder, gave India a good start as the rest of the runners kept the tempo up. Amoj Jacob, who has been plagued with injuries since the 2018 Commonwealth Games, would be a relieved man. As Amoj and the rest took to the field in Budapest his family was fervently praying for the race to go well.  
Amoj's mother Mary Kutty, the head nurse at the Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hospital, was naturally ecstatic to see her son on the world stage. Mary was so

happy that she was at a loss for words. "What can I even say? It feels amazing to see my son do so well. He has a tough time. You should talk to his Dad, he speaks well," Amoj's mother said.  
Ramesh, who ran the anchor leg, was the standout performer. It's hard to fathom that in 2018 he almost quit sports entirely and worked as a ticket collector in Trichy, Tamil Nadu. The Federation Cup at Ranchi in May this year was his comeback event where he showed his mettle beating seasoned runners for the title.  
Earlier, talking about Ramesh, his coach Raj Mohana MK had said, "He has great potential and I can tell you that he is among the handful who we expect to run below 45 seconds by the end of this year. He has a smooth-running technique that almost looks effortless. He also has a great presence of mind and has learnt the art of pacing his race."

## Ramanujan's poetry comes to life 3 decades after death

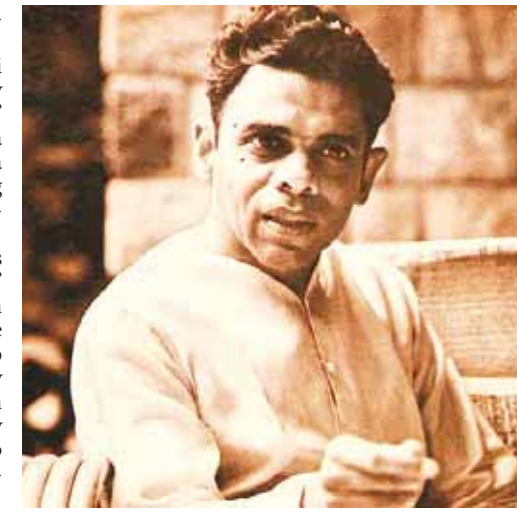
**PNS ■ KOCHI**  
Three decades after his demise, TAK Ramanujan, noted Left-wing poet who had courted controversy through his essay "Three Hundred Ramayanas" is making a "comeback" next month. A collection of his hitherto unpublished poems is being brought out by Penguin Random House and the literary world is anxiously waiting for the same.  
Titled "Soma", the poems were discovered and collected by Guillermo Rodriguez, a Spanish intellectual who was infatuated with Ramanujan's avant-garde style of writing and Krishna Ramanujan, son of the late poet, while sifting through

Ramanujan's archives.  
Peter Modoli, Associate Vice-President, Penguin Random House, said in a release on Saturday that the series of unpublished 'Soma' poems differed in style and theme from Ramanujan's earlier works. Soma is the mysterious plant used by vedic priests to extract ambrosia, an intoxicating drink. Much has been written about the significance of Soma in Rigvedic ritual and Ramanujan used the "divine concoction" to elaborate the culture as he perceived under the drink.  
Ramanujan was no ordinary scholar and had proficiency in English, Tamil, Kannada, Telugu and Sanskrit. The poems he

wrote had smooth sailing through the waters of conventional literature as well as modern poetry (where many poets fell by the wayside). 'Soma' has, besides the poems, a collection of essays and an interview the late poet had with Malayalam literature's enfant terrible K Ayyappa Panicker.  
The occasion assumes significance because it is rare nowadays for even connoisseurs of literature to remember the post-modern writers within years of their death. "Puritans are likely to disown Ramanujan for his stance on Ramayana but the truth is that he was bold enough to travel in an untested field," said Sreekrumar, Assistant Professor of Sanskrit, Sree Sankara Sanskrit University.

An author who portrays Sri Rama and Seetha as siblings and makes the critics fall in line is not an ordinary person, he pointed out. Interestingly, other than Valmiki Ramayana, Rama Charitha Manas and Kamba Ramayana, all other forms of the epic failed to cut any ice with the readers. That's what makes Ramanujan distinct from others.  
While Soma focuses on Ramanujan's experimental poems and his creative mindset as an expatriate in America in the 1970s and early 1980s, it also provides a glimpse into a fascinating period in Western Indology when Indian philosophies and traditions were debated, some of which became so ingrained that

they influence contemporary culture to this day.  
The decision by Delhi University to remove the essay 'Three Hundred Ramayanas' from the syllabus had created a furor in academic circles with a section of intelligentsia launching an agitation across India demanding freedom of expression.  
Ramanujan's essay 'Hummel's Miracle: The Search for Soma' explores the connections between the poems and the quest for the plant's identity from the 1960s to the present. "The 'Ordinary Mystery' Trip: Soma in Ramanujan's Poetry" by Guillermo Rodriguez dives deep into Ramanujan's layered perspective on Soma.



**PROBE INTO MADURAI TRAIN FIRE BEGINS**  
**MADURAI:** Commissioner of Railway Safety, Southern Circle, A M Chowdhary commenced his inquiry into the train compartment fire accident here on Sunday. Chowdhary, while answering a question, told reporters that at present, he did not see any conspiracy angle. The senior official said he held enquiries with passengers, who were treated here for their injuries, and he had even recorded their statements about the fire that killed nine people.

### CAPSULE

**TEMP GRAPH OF LUNAR SURFACE RELEASED**  
**BENGALURU:** ISRO on Sunday released a graph of the temperature variation on the lunar surface with increase in depth measured by the Chandrayaan-3's Vikram lander module. According to the space agency, ChaSTE measured the temperature profile of the lunar topsoil around the South Pole, to understand the thermal behaviour of the surface.

**SECURITY TIGHTENED IN NUH FOR YATRA**  
**Gurugram:** Security arrangements have been stepped up and outsiders will be barred from entering Nuh district and other areas following the Sarv Jatiya Hindu Mahapanchayat's call for a 'Shobha Yatra' on Monday, despite the authorities denying permission for the procession. Meanwhile Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Sunday asked the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Bajrang Dal to not carry out their Jalabhishek Yatra on Monday and urged people to instead worship in local temples but the VHP has defied the directive and has said they would go ahead with the procession on Monday in Nuh district.



# Security tightened in Nuh for 'shobha yatra'

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM/NEW DELHI

Security arrangements have been stepped up and outsiders will be barred from entering Nuh district and other areas following the Sarv Jatiya Hindu Mahapanchayat's call for a 'shobha yatra' on Monday, despite the authorities denying permission for the procession.

Meanwhile Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Sunday asked the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Bajrang Dal to not carry out their Jalabhishek Yatra on Monday and urged people to instead worship in local temples but the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) has defied the directive and has said they would go ahead with the religious procession on Monday in Nuh.

Permission has not been granted for the 'yatra', Khattar said in Panchkula on Sunday, referring to the Nuh violence



that took place a few weeks earlier.

Instead of the 'yatra', people can visit temples in their areas for 'jalabhishek', he said and asserted that it is the State Government's responsibility to maintain law and order. Khattar's remarks came days after the two groups insisted that they would go ahead with their planned procession.

It is the same religious procession that could not be concluded on July 31 when it came under attack from a mob. On July 31, a religious procession organised by VHP came under

attack in Nuh. Five people, including two Home Guard personnel, were killed. The violence then spread to nearby Gurugram district where mosques and shops were attacked and a Muslim cleric was killed.

In light of the VHP's defiance, security has been beefed in Nuh and internet and bulk SMS services have been banned in the district. It has also imposed prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the CrPC, preventing the assembly of four or more people in an area, till Monday. Gurugram police has appealed people not to join the Yatra.

Officials said security personnel, including those from paramilitary forces, have been deployed to keep a strict vigil. Security at inter-State and inter-district borders has also been tightened, they said. A few locals said they have no objection to holding the religious procession if it is allowed but asserted that there should be no provocative sloganeering during the yatra.

August 28 is the last Monday of the holy month of Shravan. As a precautionary measure, the district administration has ordered the closure of educational institutions and banks on the day, suspended mobile internet and bulk SMS services, and imposed prohibitory orders in the communally-sensitive district. It has also imposed Section 144 of the CrPC, prohibiting the assembly of four or more people in an area, till Monday.

Multiple layers of barricades have been erected by

police at various points and vehicles entering Nuh were thoroughly checked by security personnel.

The Haryana Chief Minister is learnt to have held a meeting with Director General of Police (DGP) Shatruijeet Kapur in Chandigarh on Sunday to take stock of the situation. ADGP CID Alok Mittal was also present at the meeting.

Meanwhile, the Board of School Education, Haryana, on Sunday announced the postponement of the diploma in elementary education exam in Nuh. The exam, which was to take place on Monday, will now be held on September 4.

It said the decision to postpone the exam was taken in the wake of the imposition of prohibitory orders and the closure of schools in Nuh on Monday. The government has also announced the suspension of mobile internet from August 26 to 28.



## 6.75 lakh pots of flowering plants, shrubs to adorn roads for G20

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 6.75 lakh pots of flowering plants and evergreens will adorn the 61 roads and venues of Delhi during the G20 Summit.

According to Raj Niwas officials, the major locations that have been beautified with potted plants include Sardar Patel Marg, Mother Teresa Crescent, Teen Murti Marg, Dhaura Kuan-IGI Airport Road, Palam Technical Area, India Gate C-Hexagon, Mandi House, Akbar Road roundabout, Delhi Gate, Rajghat, and ITPO among others.

After a preparatory meeting headed by Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena, directions were issued identifying agencies who would under-

take this drive and they were tasked with procuring a specific number of plants/pots, preferably from their own nurseries, officials said.

This resulted in seamless coordination between five departments/agencies undertaking the procurement and placement of these potted plants with the LG personally monitoring the progress of work and inspecting different corridors in the last couple of months, said an official.

While the Forest Department and the Delhi Parks and Garden Society placed 3.75 lakh plants (1.25 lakh foliage and 2.5 lakh flowering), the PWD placed 50,000 (35,000 foliage and 15,000 flowering), the DDA 1 lakh (85,000 foliage and 15,000 flowering), the NDMC 1 lakh

and the MCD 50,000 pots, the official added.

While 4.05 lakh potted foliage have already been placed along the 61 roads, the remaining potted flowering plants will be put up in the first week of September so that the plants are in full bloom during the duration of the G20 Summit, officials said.

According to officials, Delhi residents and foreign delegates will be able to see the 54 roundabout and key avenue roads in full bloom.

Commuters will be able to witness visually appealing arrangements of flowering plants that can withstand high temperatures, such as vinca, zinnia, celosia, gladiolus, gomphrena, portulaca, cosmos, sunflower and balsam, they said.

## G20 beautification programme in city funded by Centre: Sachdeva

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva has said the city beautification programmes which Delhi is witnessing for the G20 summit preparations are funded by the Centre.

Even the wall painting concept has been introduced by the Centre first at the Pragati Maidan tunnel and later in the NDMC area.

Delhi BJP president said Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his Ministers are shame-



lessly trying to steal credit for Delhi's makeover by making social media posts.

Sachdeva challenged the Delhi Chief Minister to cite even one project of beautification or development done by his government in Delhi for G

20 preparations.

Delhi BJP will soon hold a Press conference and present a full list of only G 20 related development projects in Delhi funded by the Centre.

Delhi BJP spokespersons and office bearers through small videos will take Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government contribution in Delhi's makeover to the people.

The Leader of Opposition Ramvir Singh Bidhuri also slammed the AAP Government for not releasing funds for G 20 projects.

## Declare Raksha Bandhan on August 31, traders' body urges Centre

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As the brother-sister bond festival: Raksha Bandhan: scheduled on August 30, the traders' body on Sunday urged the Centre to declare the festival for August 31 as the original date falls in Bhadra Kaal, which is considered inauspicious in the Hindu traditions.

In a communication sent to the Ministry of Culture, the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) has urged that most inauspicious : Bhadra Kaal: is falling on August 30

and the celebration of Rakhi during this period will be inauspicious.

Many people are confused about whether Raksha Bandhan is on August 30 or August 31st this year. According to Vedic Astrology, Raksha Bandhan festival is always celebrated in the period without Bhadra.

Every year, Rakhi is celebrated on the last day of Sawan, which is a full moon day, and this year due to Bhadra Kaal people are confused about whether Raksha Bandhan is on August 30 or 31.

## Recruitment of principals tainted: BJP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Alleging wrongdoing in the recruitment of 334 principals for Government schools in the national Capital, the Delhi BJP on Sunday demanded proper cross verification of documents of the selected candidates.

Making this claim here, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said the recruitment of principals is as tainted as the JBT recruitment scam seen in Haryana in the year 2000.

He also called for a probe into alleged massive misuse of SCERT funds by Delhi's Education Department for

political promotion of AAP's agenda.

Sachdeva said he has written to the Lt. Governor of Delhi that as per the facts brought to his knowledge Delhi Government sent a request for recruitment of 334 principals in Delhi Government schools and there are lots of flaws in the recruitment process.

Sachdeva said it is also learnt there are discrepancies in the documents submitted by over one third of the selected 334 principals.

He claimed that due to the connivance of Delhi Government's education department officials under the

pressure of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Education Minister Atishi forged documents have been submitted by many selected principals.

The basic education degrees submitted by many selected Principals are forged, similarly the caste certificates, economic status certificates, experience certificates too have been forged. Crores of rupees have exchanged hands in this corrupt process, Sachdeva said.

Delhi BJP president also drew the attention towards the rampant misuse of SCERT funds by the education department officials of Delhi Government.

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August Presence  
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# Modi calls for global framework for ethical use of AI

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**  
Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday called for a global framework for ethical use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as he flagged concerns surrounding bias in such modern technologies and their impact on the society. Days ahead of the G20 Summit, the Prime Minister also made a strong case for developing an integrated approach to deal with issues concerning cryptocurrencies.

Modi, addressing B20 Summit India 2023 organised by CII, said India is preparing a global framework for Green Credit and urged industry leaders to adopt life and business with emphasis on planet positive actions.

Highlighting issues concerning climate change, energy sector crisis, food supply chain imbalance, water security, Modi said such matters have a big impact on business

and to combat these challenges, there is a need to increase common efforts. "Now, there is a challenge related to cryptocurrencies. There is a need for more and more integrated approach in this matter. I think, a global framework should be created for this, in which all stakeholders are taken care of," Modi said at the gathering attended by global and domestic business leaders.

A similar approach, he said, is needed regarding artificial intelligence as well. "Today, the world is showing a lot of excitement regarding AI. But amidst the excitement there are also some ethical considerations. Regarding skilling and re-skilling, concern is being raised about algorithm bias and its impact on the society. Such issues also have to be resolved together," he added.

Modi called business communities and governments to work together to ensure usage of ethical AI as "we have to

sense the potential disruptions in different sectors. This problem has to be solved under the global framework."

The Prime Minister asked for a reconsideration of the traditional approach to business, stating they should go beyond brand and sales. "As a business, we also have to focus on creating an ecosystem that will benefit us in the long term," said the PM.

Modi stressed that businesses should focus on improving the purchasing power of more and more people as a self-centric approach will harm everyone.

Referring to a similar challenge of uneven availability and universal need in critical material and rare earth metals, Modi said, "If those who have them do not look at them as global responsibility then it will promote a new model of colonialism."

He also underlined that a profitable market can be sustained when there is a balance



Modi stressed that businesses should focus on improving the purchasing power of more and more people as a self-centric approach will harm everyone.

ers to give thought to making businesses more consumer-centric. "Every year, all global businesses come together to pledge themselves for the good of the consumers and their markets?", the prime minister asked.

Modi suggested the global business to fix a day to talk about the interest of the consumer. "When we talk about consumer rights, should not we also be mindful of consumer care as it will automatically take care of many consumer rights issues? We should definitely think about a system for International Consumer Care Day. This will help in strengthening trust between businesses and consumers," he said.

He elaborated that consumers are not confined to retail consumers within a particular geography but also the nations that are consumers of global trade, global goods and services.

Referring to the success of the Chandrayaan-3 mission, he

said India's festive season advanced to August 23, and the country is in a celebratory mood. He also acknowledged the role of the industry in the mission as many components of Chandrayaan-3 were provided by the private sector and MSMEs. "This is a success of both science and industry", he said.

Referring to G20, he said they have invited the African Union for a permanent seat at G20. Talking about lessons learnt from Covid-19 pandemic, Modi said it has taught a lesson that there is a need to increase investment in "mutual trust". Emphasizing the attractiveness of partnership with India for the global business community, the prime minister mentioned India's young talent pool and its digital revolution. "The more your friendship deepens with India, the more prosperity will accrue to both", he said.

Questioning the efficiency of the global supply chain that

ceased to exist when the world required it the most, Modi underlined that India is the solution to the disruptions that the world is dealing with today. He said half of the issues will be reduced when both the lifestyle and the businesses are pro-planet.

He added businesses have successfully gone beyond borders and boundaries and now it's time to take businesses beyond the bottomline. It can be carried out by focusing on supply chain resilience and sustainability.

The Business 20 (B20) is the official G20 dialogue forum with the global business community. B20 Summit India brings policymakers, business leaders and experts from across the world to deliberate and discuss the B20 India Communiqué. The B20 India Communiqué includes 54 recommendations and 172 policy actions for submission to G20. The G20 summit is scheduled for September 9-10 here.

# Shah to chair 26th Western Zonal Council meet today

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**  
Union Home Minister Amit Shah will chair the 26th meeting of the Western Zonal Council at Gandhinagar, Gujarat on Monday.

The Zonal Councils hold discussions on a wide range of issues including infrastructure, mining, water supply, environment and forests and State-restructuring, as well as direct benefit transfer (DBT), wider expansion of telecommunications/internet and issues of general regional interests.

Many issues of national importance are also discussed in each meeting of the Zonal Councils. These include speedy investigation of cases of sexual offence/rape against women and children, implementation of the scheme of Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs) for expeditious disposal of rape and POCSO Act cases, facilitation of banks/India Post Payment Bank branches within 5 km in each village, address-



ing malnutrition among children through Poshan Abhiyan, reducing drop-out rate of school children, participation of government hospitals in Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana and issues of general interest at national level.

The Western Zonal Council comprises the States of Gujarat, Goa, Maharashtra and the Union Territories of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman

Advisors and other senior officers of the State governments and Union Territories and Union Home Secretary, Secretary Inter State Council and other senior officers of the Central Government will also participate in the meeting, the Home Ministry said in a statement.

Five Zonal Councils were established in 1957 under Section 15-22 of the States Reorganization Act, 1956. Union Home Minister is the Chairman of these five Zonal Councils, while the Chief Ministers of the States are included in the respective Zonal Council and the Administrator/Lieutenant Governor of the Union Territories are its members.

Two more ministers from each state are nominated by the Governor as members of the council. Each Zonal Council has also constituted a Standing Committee at the level of Chief Secretaries.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has stressed the need to

leverage cooperative and competitive federalism for the all-round development of the country. In the spirit that strong States make strong nations, The Zonal Councils provide a platform to enhance cooperation through a systematic mechanism for regular dialogue and discussion on issues affecting two or more states or the Centre and the States, according to the statement.

Shah has stressed on the need for cooperative federalism approach to empower States and promote better understanding on the policy framework between the Centre and the States. He has advocated using Zonal Councils to resolve disputes and promote cooperative federalism.

Under the chairmanship of the Union Home Minister, meetings of all five Zonal Councils were organized last year. This year, all meetings of the respective standing committees have been held prior to the meetings of the Zonal Councils.

# Modi to distribute job letters to 51K recruits in Rozgar Mela today

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**  
Prime Minister Narendra Modi will distribute over 51,000 appointment letters to newly-inducted recruits on Monday via video conferencing. The Rozgar Mela will be held at 45 locations across the country, the Prime Minister's Office said in a statement.

Through this Rozgar Mela event, the Union Home Ministry is recruiting personnel in various paramilitary or central armed police forces (CAPFs) such as the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Border Security Force (BSF), Shashtra Seema Bal (SSB), Assam Rifles, Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) as well as the Delhi Police.

Modi will distribute more than 51,000 appointment letters to newly inducted recruits



on Monday at 10:30 AM via video conferencing. Modi will also address the appointees on the occasion, the statement said. The new recruits, selected from across the country, will be joining the various positions such as constable (general duty), sub-inspector (general duty) and non-general duty cadre posts in various organisations under the Home Ministry, it said.

Strengthening of CAPFs as well as the Delhi Police will help these forces to play their multidimensional role more effectively like aiding in inter-

# 5 MiG-29, special commandos join exercise in Egypt

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**  
The Indian Air Force (IAF) deployed a battery of five MiG-29 fighter jets, six transport aircraft and a group of its special forces commandos at a 21-day multilateral war game in Egypt that began on Sunday.

The biennial tri-services exercise, Bright-Star 23, is taking place at Cairo (West) Air Base and the militaries of the US, Saudi Arabia, Greece and Qatar besides of the host country and India are participating in the multilateral exercise, officials said.

It is for the first time that the IAF is participating in the exercise.

"The IAF contingent will consist of five MiG-29, two IL-78, two C-130 and two C-17 aircraft. Personnel from the IAF's Garud special forces, as well as those from the Numbers 28, 77, 78 and 81 squadrons will be participating in the exercise," the IAF said in a statement.

Around 150 personnel from the Indian Army are also part of the Indian contingent who was airlifted by the IAF.

"The objective of the exercise is to practice planning and execution of joint operations. Besides leading to the formation of bonding across borders, such interactions also provide a means to further strategic relations between participating nations. IAF contingents to flying exercises abroad are thus no less than Diplomats in Flight Suits," the IAF said in its statement.

"Besides leading to the formation of bonding across borders, such interactions also provide a means to further strategic relations between participating nations," it said.

It said India and Egypt have had "exceptional relationship and deep cooperation wherein the two jointly undertook development of aero-



engine and aircraft in 1960s and training of Egyptian pilots was done by Indian counterparts.

The relations between the two countries were elevated to the level of strategic partnership during Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi's visit to India in January.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Egypt in June during which the two sides reaffirmed their resolve to strengthen their overall strategic partnership.

The defence and strategic cooperation between India and Egypt has been on an upswing in the last few years.

The Indian and Egyptian armies conducted the first ever joint exercise in January this year.

Egypt has already shown interest in procuring Tejas light combat aircraft, radars, military helicopters and other platforms from India.

In July last year, the IAF participated in a month-long tactical leadership programme in Egypt with three Su-30 MKI jets and two C-17 transport aircraft.

In September last year, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh undertook a three-day visit to Egypt.

"The relationship between the two civilizational countries was further strengthened with the recent visits by the Chief of Air Forces of the two countries and Indian Defence Minister and Prime Minister to Egypt. The two countries have also enhanced their joint training with regular exercises between their Armed Forces," reads the IAF statement adding,

# MVA holds meets amid Sharad's vague signals over INDIA

**DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI**  
Amidst the vague indications from Sharad Pawar-led NCP whether to be part of the Opposition parties bloc called INDIA or not, the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) comprising the Shiv Sena (Uddhav), the Congress and the NCP have held series of meetings during the weekend to leave no stone unturned in "concretising" the third meeting beginning this Friday at Mumbai.

While a logo with some slogans are to be unveiled during the meet as earlier reported by The Pioneer, the MVA, as host of third meeting has formed several committees to plan various aspects of the meeting on August 31 and September 1.



The Opposition meeting will also be watched by the BJP and its NDA partners as the race for the 2024 General Elections is gearing up. Besides, NCP stalwart Sharad has created confusion with each passing day with his comments on the breakaway faction led by his nephew Ajit Pawar who is part of NDA and a Deputy CM in Maharashtra but the patriarch Pawar maintained that his party was never ripped off albeit a few MLAs are on other side. Sharad is oscillating between NDA as well INDIA.

While 26 Opposition parties alliance as of now is confirmed, the Mumbai meet may see expansion with some more

regional outfits joining. The INDIA bloc's first meeting was held in Patna in June, while the second one took place in Bengaluru in mid-July. The Bengaluru conclave had finalised the name of the bloc - Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA).

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Sunday said a few more political parties were likely to join the Opposition INDIA bloc during its upcoming meeting.

However, the JD(U) leader, who played an instrumental role in bringing together different parties opposed to the BJP, did not reveal the names of the likely entrants but said poll-related modalities such as seat-sharing will be discussed at the meeting.

"We will discuss the INDIA bloc's strategies for next year's general elections during the upcoming meeting in Mumbai. Issues such as seat-sharing will be discussed and several other agendas will be finalised. A few more political parties will join our coalition. I wish to unite the maximum number of parties before the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. I am working in that direction... I have no desire for myself," Nitish said in Patna.

Shiv Sena (Uddhav Thackeray faction) leader Sanjay Raut too indicated last week that there is a possibility that new political parties, especially from northeast India, will take part in the two-day gathering.

"The INDIA (alliance) logo will be unveiled (during the meeting). Discussions are on

for the same. We are trying to reach out to 140 crore Indians. The logo will symbolise the country, its unity, and reflect the energy needed to keep the country together," Raut said.

Sources said the Congress will handle media and publicity, while the NCP will take care of transport and Shiv Sena to look after accommodation with two leaders from these parties in each committee.

The management is being supervised by Congress leaders Milind Deora, Naseem Khan and Varsha Gaikwad, while former Maharashtra Chief Minister and senior leader Ashok Chavan will be overall in charge of the organising committee. A Press conference has been scheduled on Thursday to announce details of the meeting.

# Rahul: Creating industrial hubs, implementing single GST rate imperative for shielding MSMEs

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**  
Shared a video of his recent visit to a chocolate-making factory at Ooty in Karnataka, former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi on Sunday said creating industrial hubs and implementing a single GST rate are imperative measures to shield MSMEs which collectively possess the power to drive India's growth engine.

Rahul Gandhi, who is currently visiting Srinagar with his mother and former Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, had visited "one of Ooty's most celebrated brands" - Moddys Chocolates - earlier this month while on his way to his parliamentary constituency Wayanad after his Lok Sabha membership was restored.

Nestled amidst the picturesque Nilgiris lies a globally renowned Indian industry - the chocolate-makers of Ooty, a statement issued by the

Congress said. "On my way to Wayanad, recently, I had the delightful experience of visiting one of Ooty's most celebrated brands: Moddys Chocolates. The entrepreneurial spirit of the couple behind this small business, Muralidhar Rao and Swati, is inspiring," Rahul Gandhi was quoted as saying in the statement.

Equally remarkable is the all-women team which works alongside them, he said. "This dedicated team of 70 women crafts some of the most exquisite



ite couverture chocolates I've ever tasted," he said. "However, like countless other small and medium businesses across India, Moddys is grappling with the burden of the same adversary - the Gabbar Singh Tax," he said. "In a landscape where the government appears to favour larger corporations to the detriment of the MSME sector, it is the pure grit of hardworking Indians like the women I met here that sustains India's growth," he said.

# SC to hear plea relating to demolition of 'illegal' constructions near Krishna Janmabhoomi

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Monday a plea relating to the demolition drive to clear alleged illegal constructions near the Krishna Janmabhoomi in Uttar Pradesh's Mathura.

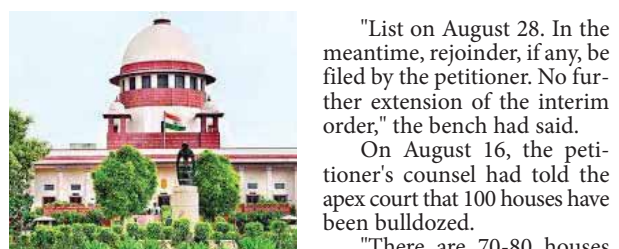
As per the cause list of Monday uploaded on the apex court website, the plea would come up for hearing before a bench comprising justices Aniruddha Bose, Sanjay Kumar and SVN Bharti.

The matter pertains to demolition of settlements near the Krishna Janmabhoomi.

While hearing the matter on August 16, the apex court had halted for 10 days the demolition drive being carried out by the railway authorities to clear the alleged illegal constructions.

It had issued notices to the Centre and others seeking their responses on a plea filed by petitioner Yakub Shah.

"Let there be an order of status quo as regards the subject premises for a period of 10 days from today. List after one week," the bench had said in its August 16 order.



"List on August 28. In the meantime, rejoinder, if any, be filed by the petitioner. No further extension of the interim order," the bench had said.

On August 16, the petitioner's counsel had told the apex court that 100 houses have been bulldozed.

"There are 70-80 houses left. Whole thing will become infructuous. They conducted the exercise on a day when Uttar Pradesh courts were closed," he had argued.

**SC rejects plea seeking setting up of national level agency to deal with organised crimes**

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
The Supreme Court has dismissed a plea seeking a direction to the Centre to set up a national level agency to deal with organised crimes like smuggling, inter-state trafficking, cyber crimes and political violence. The plea had also sought setting up of a National Internal Security Coordination

Council (NISCC) under the control of a committee constituted by the President on the recommendation of the Chief Justice of India.

The petition came up for hearing before a bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud which said directions sought in the plea pertained to the legislative and policy domain.

# CM Yogi honours artistes at G20 cultural event

# DM hears problems of people

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

District Magistrate Sanjay Kumar Khatri reached three police stations of the district. The DM while listening to the problems of the public in Tharvavi police station gave instructions to dispose of all complaints a timely. The DM reached the Phaphamau police station and listened to the problems of the people. A total of four complaints were received and all were disposed of on the spot. A total of eight complaints were received at Soraon police station out of which four complaints were disposed of on the spot.

The DM immediately sent the team of the Revenue department and the Police department to the spot for redressal of complaints on the Samadhan Diwas and gave instructions for their quality redressal. He directed the officers present that negligence will not be pardonable. DCP Gangapar Abhishek Bharti, sub-divisional magistrate (SDM) Phulpur Saurabh Bhatt, SDM Soraon Ganesh Kanaujia

and other officers were present on the occasion.

**FIR AGAINST SHAISTA, OTHERS :** The Prayagraj police lodged an FIR against slain gangster Atiq Ahmed's wife Shaista Parveen and other relatives and associate Guddu Muslim for failing to turn up before the court and investigating officer (IO) probing the Umesh Pal murder case.

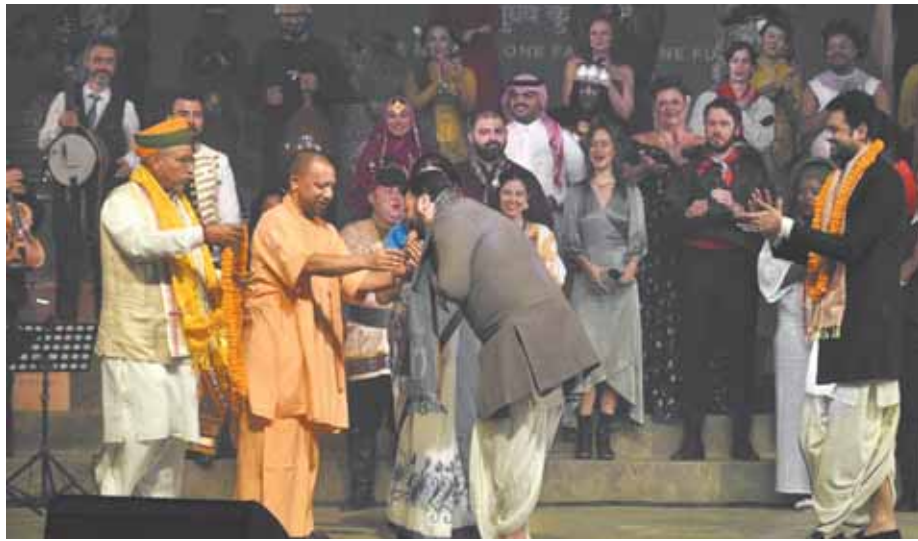
A local court had on July 26 passed an order under Section 82 of CrPC and notices were pasted on the houses of Shaista Parveen, Ruby alias Jainav (wife of slain gangster Khalid Azim alias Ashraf), Guddu Muslim, Sabir, Arman in Prayagraj and Ayesha Noori (wife of Akhlaq) and resident of Meerut.

The notices gave the accused a stipulated time to present themselves before the court failing which legal action leading to the attachment of their property will be initiated. The development is seen as another step forward for the police to initiate proceedings related to attachment of property of individuals evading police questioning after being

named as accused in a criminal offence.

Inspector (Dhoomanganj) Rajesh Kumar Maurya in his FIR claimed that these persons were wanted by Dhoomanganj police in connection with a case registered under Sections 147, 148, 149, 302, 307, 506 and 120 B of IPC, Section 3 of explosive act, 7 CLA and Section 3(2) 5 of SC/ST Act regarding the killing of Umesh Pal. Pal, the prime witness in BSP MLA Raju Pal murder case, and two of his police gunners were shot dead in Sulemsarai area on February 24 this year.

SHO said these persons have neither appeared before the court concerned nor the IO despite fixing a stipulated date and time and made contempt of court. Following this an additional FIR under Section 174 A of IPC (whoever fails to appear at the specified place and specified time as required by a proclamation published under sub-section (1) of section 82 of the CrPC was lodged with Dhoomanganj police. All the persons named in the FIR are still elusive and carry reward on their head.



CM Yogi Adityanath felicitating an artiste during G20 meeting in Varanasi on Saturday night.

sented realising the concept of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam', the ancient tradition of India. In order to promote sustainable development, the message of environmental protection was also given through the cultural programme.

The artistes from G20 countries as well as eight invited countries (Bangladesh, Mauritius, Netherlands, Oman, Singapore, Spain, Nigeria, UAE) also took part in the international cultural programme 'Sur Vasudha'. Six international organisations also participated. Such programmes were earlier organised in Saudi Arabia, Italy and Indonesia when the G20 Summits were organised under their respective presidency. UP Tourism Minister Jaiveer Singh, Union Secretary (Culture) Govind Mohan, Chief Secretary (UP) Durga Shankar Mishra and representatives of G20 countries were present in the function.

On the occasion, the CM handed over the G20 Orchestra baton to Brazil's Quinn Beaten as the next G20 Summit will be held under the Brazil Presidency. The CM also attended the dinner organised

in honour of the guests of 20 CWG. The function was also attended by Union Minister of State for Law and Justice

(Independent Charge) Arjun Ram Meghwal and Union Minister of State for Culture Meenakshi Lekhi. Yogi honoured the composer of Sur Vasudha by presenting angavastram. The cultural programmes were pre-

# CS inspects progress of ropeway project

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Chief Secretary (CS) Durga Shankar Mishra inspected the progress of the ropeway project at Bharat Mata Mandir here on Sunday. During the inspection, company officials informed the CS about the current progress of the project. The company officers said that at present load and pile testing work is going on there where a station of ropeway project is being constructed. During the inspection of the 'dream project' of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the CS directed the concerned company officers to speed up the progress of the project by taking utmost care.

Prior to this, Mishra inspected the Phulwaria four-lane in the morning and reviewed the progress of this ambitious project. During the inspection, he said that the project is already running late from its scheduled time, so he directed the concerned officers to complete the project by September this year. During the inspection, Divisional Commissioner (DC) Kaushal Raj Sharma and District Magistrate (DM) S Rajalingam were also present.

The CS along with other senior local officers also conducted a site inspection of the Divisional Office to be built in the Commissionerate com-



ound. He sought the detailed information about the proposed project. The construction of the Divisional Office is being done by Varanasi Development Authority (VDA) and its Vice Chairman (VC) Abhishek Goyal gave details about the progress to the CS.

During his stay, Mishra also visited the International Hindu School located in the Assi area and speaking on the occasion, he recalled his childhood days. He called upon the children to learn good manners while remembering the values given by the teachers in their childhood. Praising the functioning of the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister, the Chief Secretary described the CM as a 'Karmayogi'. He also inspected the laboratory, building etc located in the school. He asked to make presentations on the vacant walls of the school for the learning of the children. School chairman Dr Suman Kumar Mishra and secretary Revati Mishra welcomed the CS and gave detailed information about the school.

## रक्षा बंधन

### के पावन पर्व पर

### हार्दिक शुभकामनाएं

“रक्षाबंधन के पावन अवसर पर सभी देशवासियों को हार्दिक शुभकामनायें।”  
- नरेन्द्र मोदी

इस अवसर पर हरियाणा सरकार की ओर से बहनों के लिए विशेष उपहार

हरियाणा राज्य परिवहन की बसों में सभी महिलाओं एवं 15 वर्ष तक के बच्चों के लिए निःशुल्क यात्रा सुविधा

29 अगस्त, 2023 दोपहर 12 बजे से 30 अगस्त, 2023 रात्रि 12 बजे तक\*

\*यह सुविधा केवल हरियाणा राज्य परिवहन की साधारण बसों में हरियाणा में स्थित किसी भी एक स्थान से दूसरे स्थान तक आने-जाने के लिए उपलब्ध होगी जिसमें दिल्ली व चण्डीगढ़ भी सम्मिलित हैं।

भौई-बंधन के प्यार का अटूट बंधन

## राज्य परिवहन, हरियाणा

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### Notice

- The applicant above-named has made an application before the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission, New Delhi for determination of Transmission Tariff from DOCO to 31-03-2024 for **Petition-1:** Transmission Asset: Replacement of 1x315 MVA,400 /220KV ICT (ICT-1) at 400/220KV Ludhiana (PG) Substation with 1x500MVA, 400/220 kv ICT under "Replacement of 1x315 MVA 400/220kv ICT (ICT-1) at 400/220 kv Ludhiana (PG) S/s with 1x500 MVA 400/220kv ICT. **Petition-2:** Transmission Asset: Replacement of 1x250 MVA,400/220 kv ICT at 765/400/220 kv Moga (PG) Substation with 1x500 MVA, 400/220KV ICT along with associated works at 220kv level under "Replacement of 1x250 MVA,400/220 kv ICT at 765/400/220 kv Moga(PG) Substation with 1x500 MVA, 400/220KV ICT along with associated works at 220 kv level.
- The beneficiaries for Combined Assets of the above-mentioned Transmission system are: (1) Ajmer Vidyut Vitran Nigam Ltd. (2) Jaipur Vidyut Vitran Nigam Ltd. (3) Jodhpur Vidyut Vitran Nigam Ltd. (4) Punjab State Electricity Board. (5) Haryana Power Purchase Centre (6) Power Development Deptt, Govt of Jammu & Kashmir. (7) Uttar Pradesh Power Corporation Ltd. (8) BSES Yamuna Power Ltd. (9) BSES Rajdhani Power Ltd. (10) North Delhi Power Ltd. (11) Chandigarh Administration. (12) Uttaranchal Power Corporation Ltd. (13) North Central Railway (14) New Delhi Municipal Council. (15) Himachal Pradesh State Electricity Board.

S.No	Particulars	Petition-1	Petition-2
1	Approved apportioned capital cost of the project. (Rs. In Cr)	29.19	29.52
2	Authority which has approved the Capital Cost	Board of Directors	Board of Directors
3	Scheduled date of commercial operation	27.05.2024	27.05.2024
4	Date of commercial operation	Asset-1 : 27.05.2023	Asset-1 : 26.05.2023
5	Capital cost on DOCO for all assets (Rs. In Crs)	1.91	0.32

- Details of tariff: (Rs. in lakhs)

Petition	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Petition-1	-	-	-	-	310.19
Petition-2	-	-	-	-	248.71

- A copy of the application made for determination of tariff is posted on the website of the applicant at [www.powergrid.in](http://www.powergrid.in)
- The suggestions and objections, if any, on the proposals for determination of tariff contained in the application be filed by any person, including the beneficiary before the Secretary, Central Electricity Regulatory Commission, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Chandernagore Bhawan, 36 Janpath, New Delhi -110001 (or other address where the office of the Commission is situated), with a copy to the applicant at the address of its corporate office within 30 days of publication of this notice.

Sd/-  
Date: 18.08.2023  
Senior General Manager (Commercial)

POWER GRID CORPORATION OF INDIA LIMITED

(A Government of India Enterprise)

Corp. Off.: "Saudamini", Plot No. 2, Sector-29, Gurgaon-122001 (Haryana), Ph. No.: 0124-2822999  
Regd. Office: B-9, Outer Institutional Area, Katwaria Sarai, New Delhi-110016. Ph. No.: 011-26560112-15  
Website: [www.powergrid.in](http://www.powergrid.in), CIN: L40101DL1989G01038121

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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Slowdown

Amid slumping corporate profits and the US squeeze, China is going through a rough patch

China's economic prowess has been a remarkable global phenomenon over the past few decades, transforming it into the world's second-largest economy. However, recent signs of a slowdown, notably reflected in the declining profits of Chinese companies, have prompted economists and policymakers to reevaluate the trajectory of China's economic growth.



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As China grapples with these challenges, India, its neighbour and fellow emerging market, could seize opportunities to advance its economic interests. As global companies diversify their supply chains to mitigate risks associated with relying heavily on China, India could position itself as an attractive alternative manufacturing hub.

### PICTALK



Devotees carry an idol of Lord Ganesha ahead of Ganesh Chaturthi festival, in Mumbai

# Is the idea of Pakistan dead?

Pakistan has taken many blows in recent times which put a question mark on its future



PRAFULL GORADIA

Recently, former Congressman Ghulam Nabi Azad stated publicly that six hundred years ago, there were no Muslims in Kashmir. This is well known, but a distinguished politician should say this is historic.



As if this was not enough, a few weeks ago, Afghanistan's Taliban rulers even more bluntly said "The idea of Pakistan is dead".

Over these 83 years, the sub-continent of India has turned a full 180 degrees. The secession of Bangladesh from Pakistan was the first blow. It proved that their religion could not hold a country together.

A very unexpected development in due course was the coming of Narendra Modi to power at the Centre. Initially, it was not

expected to be a very different phenomenon from what had been seen earlier, and Pakistan as well as its terrorist proxies in the Kashmir Valley continued with their infiltration and violent attacks.

The next blow was the abrogation of Article 370, which, for all practical purposes, drove virtually the last nail in the coffin of the so-called Kashmir dispute.

Even more than the Balakot strike, what has hurt Pakistan is demonetization,

carried out by the Modi government in 2016. Previously, Pakistani as well as Indian currency notes were supplied by the same printer in Britain, giving Islamabad free access to Indian currency.

In light of the total of these developments, Ghulam Nabi Azad's statement about Islam being no older than

1,400 years in the Kashmir Valley may well be pregnant with vision. It may be calling for a revolution in the thinking of the community's clergy.

But while the churn in the community merits our attention and study, its attendant turmoil in the neighbourhood, particularly what was advertised and sold as the New Medina, must immediately occupy the attention of our rulers and policymakers,

(The writer is a well-known columnist, an author, and a former member of the Rajya Sabha. The views expressed are personal)



THE NEXT BLOW WAS THE ABROGATION OF ARTICLE 370, WHICH, FOR ALL PRACTICAL PURPOSES, DROVE VIRTUALLY THE LAST NAIL IN THE COFFIN OF THE SO-CALLED KASHMIR DISPUTE

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### SMART CITY AWARDS NEED TO BE SCRUTINIZED

Sir — Smart city awards in the country were announced recently. The awards include Indore in Madhya Pradesh, Surat in Gujarat in second place, and Agra in Uttar Pradesh in third place in the country.

Shantaram Wagh | Pune

#### PRESIDENT RULE IN PUNJAB?

Sir — Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann was threatened by Governor Banwarilal Purohit to impose President's rule in the state under Article 356, while his counterparts in Manipur and Haryana are observing silence on the law and order situation there.

#### Putin skips BRICS summit



Even as Russian President Vladimir Putin was conspicuous by his physical absence from the BRICS Summit, just concluded in Johannesburg, South Africa, where PM Modi welcomed six new members including Argentina, Iran, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, and Egypt to the BRICS, his spokesperson in the Kremlin, Dmitry Peskov, announced on Friday that the President is not going to attend the G20 summit on

September 9 and 10 in New Delhi either, citing his 'busy schedule'. The format of his participation in the high-profile event will be declared later, while the focus on Special Military Operations in Ukraine still assumes significance as the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war has completed as many as eighteen months now.

Azhar A Khan | Rampur

The governor claims law and order in the state is not good. Did the Haryana governor write any letter to Khattar? No, because their government is also ruling at the Centre. In his latest communication on Friday, the governor indicated he was upset over not getting any reply to his previous letters and told the Punjab Chief Minister that he could send a report to the President on the failure of constitutional mechanisms in the state.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

#### RELEASE OF RADIOACTIVE WATER

Sir — Japan's release of treated radioactive water is a step forward in decommissioning the facility that suffered a meltdown during the 2011 Tsunami. But this has

sparked protests in its neighborhood; protestors were arrested in South Korea while China has banned imports of seafood from Japan. The initial release has not detected any anomalies, so in the coming 17 days, approximately 7800 tons of treated water will be released into the ocean.

Arka Goswami | Durgapur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## Strive for personal freedom and reproductive empowerment

Open conversations, accurate information dissemination, and accessible support are crucial to achieving reproductive health



DEBANJANA CHOUDHURI

As India commemorates its 77th year of independence, notable strides have been taken in comprehending the concepts of personal freedom and reproductive empowerment. A notable shift is observed in the increasing candidness surrounding discussions about reproductive well-being.



reluctance persists among individuals to engage openly in dialogues regarding their reproductive choices. This apprehension stems primarily from the fear of societal judgment. The conventional link between family planning and marital unions has fostered the misconception that family planning holds no relevance for the unmarried.

A study by Lancet helps in understanding the degree of the problem globally — with 16 crore women and adolescents having an unmet need for contraception. In India the problem is more complex. For the majority of married women, the prerogative is to make contraceptive choices independently, as decisions about contraception primarily rest with their husbands.

quate access to quality reproductive healthcare. Privatisation and corporate involvement in healthcare, coupled with lax regulation, have further compromised healthcare quality, accessibility, and affordability, disproportionately affecting girls, women, and marginalised communities.

The cost of birth control pills is also not accessible and can be financially burdensome for lower-middle-class individuals. Similarly, access to safe, top-tier abortion services, inclusive of information, counselling, and post-abortion care, remains insufficient. Moreover, the adverse effects of early marriage on reproductive health and rights stand inadequately addressed.

Affordability is a key-stone in ensuring sexual and reproductive health services are accessible to all. Equitable cost considerations for essential goods and services, encompassing elements influencing sexual and reproductive health, are pivotal in averting undue healthcare expenses on individuals and families.

reproductive health services are accessible to all. Equitable cost considerations for essential goods and services, encompassing elements influencing sexual and reproductive health, are pivotal in averting undue healthcare expenses on individuals and families. Ensuring vulnerable groups possess the means to access and disseminate health-related information, coupled with the right to partake in decisions influencing their health, necessitates careful policy crafting.

Reproductive health transcends mere contraceptive solutions; it encompasses agency and the quality of one's reproductive health. Such decisions are inherently personal. It is imperative to foster a shared understanding that sexual health services and contraceptives extend beyond select individuals. Open conversations, accurate information dissemination, and accessible support are crucial to facilitating decisions that align with individual well-being.

(The writer works with MSI Reproductive Choices-Foundation for Reproductive Health Services India; Views are personal)



## FIRST COLUMN

## WOMEN ARE DIVINE DIRECTIVE

Women are superpower beings who are elegant yet strong



SAKSHI SETHI

India is the land of powerful women. Since ages, the status of women in society has been determined by several factors including economic, social and political factors. The existence of human life is possible only with the equal participation of both men and women as both of them are equally responsible for the survival of the human race on this planet.

Today, a lot of men aspire to have a good woman in their lives until it requires them to be a better man. It's time to admire women who take the high to hold their heads high, maximise compliments, focus on their lane and are actively improving not only vulnerably and compassionately but also relatable. These are the real ones who inspire through their actions and words and the day is not far when they will be the only ones who will challenge and change the mindset of the society that a girl is a liability from the grassroots level by spreading awareness about the same.

Today's youth culture encourages females and males to have freedom of expression. In a world that does not sometimes but always glorify negativity or try to bring down the strength of a woman, these women shine as beacons of positivity and resilience. These are the ones who consistently remind us about the incredible strength within while demonstrating the transformative power of kindness and understanding.



It is believed that every woman on this earth is beautiful, no matter how young or old; small or big; short or tall they may be. Every one of them is unique and it just adds to their beauty. There is no denying the fact that a woman of today believes that She is the happiness; She is the sadness; She is the love; She is the lust; She is the one who can turn a house into a home, a hell into heaven and a bad into good. She has the power to organize; the power to change and lead the world as per her terms. In other words, she is an absolute success in all her endeavours taken up. Not only this, a woman is powerful from her inner side and has the supremacy of being bold and loving nature.

Without a woman, there is no existence in this world. Behind her silence, She has a loud mind that can crush anyone; Behind her beauty, She has dignity and courage that can amaze anyone; Behind her skimpy clothes, She has nerves of steel that can break anyone; Behind her body and mind, She has a spark that can burn anyone and Behind her colour and flesh, She has the wisdom that can confound anyone.

A woman gives protection, nurtures and enriches life. Her love is like an art; like a sculptor applying the chisel or like a skilled painter enlivening the brush. As a woman, one must cherish the very element of being 'A Woman' who is not only independent, courageous, and confident but also at the same time courteous.

Every human being- be it a man or a woman, crave attention. Every woman is a unique snowflake in her special way. She is out there to expand her wings, fly high and see the silver lining amongst the darkest cloud. Nothing can stop a woman from following their dreams. What is required is the strength to forget about society and their age-old school thinking and at the same time to start putting themselves first.

Remember, where there is a woman, there is magic. The woman is not an identity. She is a Divine directive; Woman is not a feeling. She is a responsibility and Woman is not a commodity. She is a specific and unique expression of God.

(The writer is an educator)

## India needs an integrated approach to flood management

A long-term flood disaster management strategy must be developed writes Yashobanta Parida, Joyita Roy Chowdhury &amp; Prakash K Sahoo



Heavy rain triggered by the monsoon has devastated many parts of Indian states, causing disastrous floods and landslides. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs report, 332 districts have been affected due to floods and landslides, and 87,457 houses are partially or fully damaged. In addition, 485334 hectares of crop area have been affected, 137134 electric poles and pillars have been damaged, and around 1053 people have died due to floods and landslides in 28 states and three union territories of India. Bihar experienced the highest number of deaths (342), followed by Himachal Pradesh (166), Madhya Pradesh (77), Gujarat (63), Punjab (46), Haryana (36), Maharashtra (35) and Uttarakhand (32) due to floods and landslides. According to the Himachal Pradesh government report, the state has experienced economic losses worth 8,000 crore rupees due to floods and landslides.

Indian states experience different types of natural disasters each year, but floods are the most common calamity in the country. Due to its unique geo-climatic conditions, the country is highly vulnerable to floods, witnessing a rise in frequencies, damages, and fatalities from floods. According to the Central Water Commission report, deaths due to floods increased from 37 in 1953 to 1815 in 2020. In contrast, economic losses measured in terms of damage to crops, houses, and public utilities increased from 52 crores to 21,189 crore rupees.

During this period, on average, 1676 human lives were lost yearly, economic losses were around 6428.6 crore rupee, 1213606 houses were damaged, and 4.05 million hectares of crop area were affected due to floods. The data shows that the current flood management policy is inadequate to minimize flood-related damages and deaths. Other reasons include unprecedented rainfall due to rapid climate change, unplanned urbanization, deforestation, and lack of flood forecasting and warning systems. Moreover, frequent breaching of river embankments due to lack of proper



IMMEDIATE IMPACTS OF FLOODS LEAD TO THE LOSS OF HUMAN LIVES, THE DESTRUCTION OF CROPS, AND DAMAGE TO PROPERTY AND OTHER PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURES

(Dr. Parida and Dr. Roy Chowdhury are Assistant Professor in Economics at FLAME University, Pune &amp; Dr. Sahoo is Lecturer in Economics at Vikram Deb University, Jeypore, Odisha; Views are personal)

maintenance and deposit of silt on the river beds obstruct natural water flow. In addition, Indian cities are also prone to floods due to encroachment on waterways in cities, illegal constructions, unplanned development, and inadequate waste management, which further aggravate the situation by clogging drains and canals, leading to growing urban flooding.

Immediate impacts of floods lead to the loss of human lives, the destruction of crops, and damage to property and other physical infrastructures. Floods disrupt people's lives and displace thousands who live in slums and low-lying areas. According to the Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID), 2023, published by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), around 32.6 million people in the world were displaced in 2022 due to natural disasters, which is 41 per cent higher than the annual average of the past 10 years. Out of this, 31.8 million people were displaced because of weather-related events. Among them, 19.2 million people (60.35 per cent) were displaced by floods. As per the report, India ranked 4th in internal displacements in 2022 due to natural disasters, with 2.4 million people being displaced due to floods.

Frequent floods hurt employment opportunities in the rural agricultural sector, leading to inequality, poverty, and a food crisis. Flood damage also adversely impacts the country's economic development and increases the fiscal pressure on the central and state governments for reconstruction, relief, and rehabilitation activities. Per official statistics, India loses around 0.46 per cent of its gross domestic product annually (Parida et al., 2020).

Moreover, poor town planning, unauthorized and illegal construction, and inadequate urban infrastructure expose Indian cities to flooding. Furthermore, the catastrophic flooding has hit the tourism, business, and manufacturing industries. In addition, frequent flooding also creates health hazards in both rural and urban areas.

Revamping the flood management policies and increasing the budgetary allocation for pre and post-flood mitigation measures is essential to minimize the flood risk. Moreover, improved flood warning and forecasting systems, especially in coastal districts using advanced technology such as satellite and remote sensing equipment, may enable prompt action and reduce the impact of disasters. The government should emphasize the Internet of Things (IoT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) based flood monitoring and rescue systems to reduce flood risk and improve water management. Flood fatalities and damages can be reduced by adopting better flood management policies, such as building disaster-resilient measures, including maintaining river embankments and constructing canals and minor dams. Improving river connectivity, as well as constructing multipurpose shelters in low-lying areas, can also help to minimize flood risk.

Moreover, providing housing to poor and needy households under Pradhan Mantri Gramin Awas Yojana can minimize the disaster risk for those living in low-lying and flood-prone areas. Increased budgetary allocation on restoration, mitigation, and evacuation measures during floods by the disaster management authorities can help to reduce flood fatalities. In addition, loss of life

and damage increased in cities in India. To minimize the impact of urban flooding, local district administration can implement an urban flooding action plan proposed by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) in 2010. Also, massive community awareness campaigns related to environmental issues, disaster prevention, and mitigation measures are required.

In 1980, for the first time in India, Rashtriya Barh Ayog (RBA) estimated the state-wise area liable to flood-prone areas. According to official data, as highlighted above, the number of people killed and damages caused by floods has increased over the period from 1953 to 2020. This necessitates the government to constitute a committee to undertake taluk, district-wise, and state-wise flood inundation mapping using advanced techniques. Adequate policies must be implemented to reduce the growing climate-induced displacements with a better framework and sustainable solution.

To ensure a sustainable development action plan, a long-term disaster management strategy must be developed to limit the flood impact in terms of loss of both human and physical capital. In short, India must adopt an integrated approach to flood management by considering flood risk management in conjunction with land use, agriculture, urban planning, and the conservation of natural resources. In addition, the government must prepare a district and block-level disaster database to help government and academicians devise better flood management policies. Finally, better coordination between district administrators, state, and central government is essential for preventing disaster impact.

## Forest fires are devastating, must be controlled

Forest fires in the hills not only harm the environment but also play havoc with people's lives

While visiting the mountains, one may frequently encounter the sight of flickering lights in the distance, prompting thoughts about whether they signify distant lights or just an illusion. Unfortunately, more often than not, these flickers turn out to be forest fires, a recurring phenomenon each year before the onset of the monsoon. Uttarakhand, boasting a substantial forest cover spanning 53.48 lakh hectares, grapples with the challenge of forest fires, which escalated to a staggering 2,131 incidents in 2022 alone. These blazes ravaged over 3,348 hectares of land, resulting in a financial loss amounting to Rs 87.31 lakh.



DOLLY GADIYA

(The writer is a student from Pothing village in Bageshwar, Uttarakhand)

away from the Kapkot block in the Bageshwar district of Uttarakhand, nestles Pothing village in the foothills of the Himalayas. With a population of slightly more than 2,000 people, Pothing is known for its abundance of natural resources. However, continuous forest fires have become a source of distress for the residents, and even the animals are succumbing to diseases. The smoke rising from the forest fires is proving to be highly detrimental for the people, and it is adversely affecting the environment as well.

Pooja, an adolescent girl from the village highlights how the smoke emanating from the forest fires pollutes the entire village. "We are having difficulty breathing.

Due to the outbreak of fires, a blanket of fog has enveloped the entire village. New diseases are emerging among people and animals," Pooja expressed.

Although periodic fires are required to maintain ecological balances, recurring fires have a larger implication for the weather as they lead to the melting of Himalayan glaciers apart from increasing diseases among humans and animals.

Khakhauti Devi, a 65-year-old woman from the village, holds the belief that a significant number of these fires are human-induced. She pointed out that it's often individuals within the village itself who deliberately ignite these fires, particularly those who own substantial herds of



cows, buffaloes, and goats. Their rationale is rooted in the notion that after the forest is burnt, fresh grass will emerge, providing a more abundant source of fodder for their livestock. Moreover, Khakhauti Devi noted that smokers also contribute to the occurrence of forest fires. In

her observation, when people venture into the forest to gather firewood or forage, some engage in smoking. Unfortunately, in the process, lit matchsticks or bidi ends are sometimes carelessly discarded, inadvertently sparking forest fires.

Neha, another adolescent girl from the village, expressed that they are not even aware of the diseases that are spreading among the cattle. According to her, these diseases occur due to the increased heat from the fires. Supporting Neha's statement, Shanti Devi, 47, a woman from the village highlights due to smoke and the heat, small lesions form on animals. Once these lesions burst, they ooze blood, making the animals ill. "It's time

for sowing crops, but the animals are falling sick. In such a situation, farming is incurring the most damage. Apart from this, there is also a shortage of firewood for cooking. Earlier, groups of women used to go into the forests where fodder, flowers, fruits, and firewood were easily obtainable. However, this year, a fire broke out in the forest, turning everything into ashes," Shanti highlighted.

Apart from human activities, forest fires are also caused naturally due to excessive heat and low moisture as dry branches catch fire after they rub against one another. However, according to Pushpa Devi, more incidents of forest fires are breaking out in Pothing due to human neg-

ligence. "Due to a lack of awareness, people unknowingly are destroying the forest with their own hands. They are not aware of its adverse consequences. Similar to cities, pollution levels here have started to rise," Emphasized Pushpa Devi, the Sarpanch of the village.

However, addressing forest fires requires more than just raising awareness among people. Out of the total forest land in Uttarakhand, 26 per cent is covered by Chir Pine trees. While human activities undoubtedly play a significant role, it is crucial to delve further into identifying alternative species that can be cultivated to replace Chir Pine, as this particular tree species creates conditions that are conducive to fires.







# Stock exchanges slap fines on IOC, ONGC, GAIL

## Firms fined for failure to meet listing regulations

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Stock exchanges have slapped fines on state-owned oil and gas firms including IOC, ONGC and GAIL for their failure to meet listing requirements of having a requisite number of independent directors and women directors.

In separate filings, the companies detailed the fines imposed by the BSE and NSE but were quick to point out that appointment of directors was done by the government and they had no role in it.

Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) was slapped a Rs 3.36 lakh fine, while Indian Oil Corporation

(IOC) was asked to pay Rs 5.36 lakh fine. Gas utility GAIL was slapped Rs 2.71 lakh fine, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) Rs 3.59 lakh, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) Rs 3.6 lakh, Oil India Ltd Rs 5.37 lakh and a fine of Rs 5.37 lakh was imposed on Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd (MRPL).

Except for IOC which was slapped with the fine for not having the required one woman director on the board, all the companies were fined for violating the norm of having the required number of independent directors.

IOC said the power to

appoint directors (including independent and women directors) vests with the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Government of India.

"And hence the non-appointment of women independent directors on the Board during the quarter ended June 30, 2023 was not due to any negligence / fault by the company," it said. "Accordingly, Indian Oil should not be held liable to pay the fines and the same should be waived-off."

IOC said it regularly takes up the issue with the ministry, for appointment of requisite number of independent directors (including



Woman independent director, to ensure compliance with corporate governance norms.

"We would also like to inform that the company had received similar notices from the BSE and NSE in the past imposing fines and waiver requests from the company was considered favorably by the exchanges," it said.

HPCL made a similar filing and cited past record of

stock exchanges waiving such fines.

ONGC said it has requested the government for nomination of the requisite number of independent directors on the board of the company.

"Since the appointment of directors is beyond control of the company, request letters have been submitted to stock exchanges for waiving off the fine levied," ONGC said.

BPCL said it had complied with the requirements for the financial year 2022-23 and till April 30, 2023.

But the appointment of a full-time directors with effect from May 1, 2023 led to BPCL having five whole-time Directors, two nominee directors of the government and six independent directors.

As per norm, BPCL should have had seven independent directors - equal to the executive directors (five whole-time directors and two government nominee directors).

BPCL said it has requested the Government of India from time to time for the nomination of one independent director. As the directors are appointed after receipt of nomination from Government of India, BPCL has no control over the appointment of Directors.

The firm said it will be approaching BSE Limited and National Stock Exchange of India Limited for waiver of the fines. "Similar letters were received earlier from the stock exchanges for which waiver request was made by BPCL

and the same was considered favorably by the stock exchanges," the filing said.

Oil India Ltd (OIL) said the non-compliance was beyond the control of the company as it is a government enterprise and directors are appointed by the administrative ministry, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

MRPL said it is following up with the government from time to time for appointing the required number of directors on its board.

GAIL said, "all the directors on the board of GAIL (including independent directors) are nominated/appointed by the Government of India. As such, appointments are outside the purview/control of the GAIL's management."

## Markets to focus on macro data, global trends, foreign investors activity: Analysts

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Macroeconomic data announcements, global trends and trading activity of foreign investors would dictate the equity markets this week, analysts said.

Marketmen will also focus on the Annual General Meeting of Reliance Industries Ltd which will be held on Monday.

"This week's focal point is the eagerly awaited Reliance Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Monday, August 28. This event is poised to have some impact on the market's trajectory. Shifting to the macroeconomic landscape, India is set to reveal its Q2 GDP figures on Thursday, shedding light on the nation's economic performance.

"Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) data will be disclosed on Friday," said Santosh Meena, Head of Research, Swastika Investment Ltd.

He further added that Friday will feature the disclo-

sure of the US unemployment rate and nonfarm payroll statistics.

Cues from China, foreign investor activities, and fluctuations in the dollar index and US bond yields will play a pivotal role in shaping market dynamics throughout the week, Meena said.

Auto companies would remain in focus on Friday amid monthly sales data announcement.

"Global and domestic macroeconomic data, trends in global stock markets, crude oil prices, global cues, movement of the rupee against the dollar, and investment by FIIs and DIIs will be in focus.

"Some macroeconomic key events that will drive the market in the coming week are US GDP data, US unemployment rate, US manufacturing PMI, initial jobless claims, India's GDP, RIL AGM," said Arvind Singh Nanda, Senior Vice President, of Master Capital Services Ltd.

Equity benchmark indices may face volatile trends amid the monthly derivatives expiry on Thursday.

Last week, the BSE benchmark declined 62.15 points or 0.09 per cent and the Nifty dipped 44.35 points or 0.22 per cent.

## Govt unlikely to infuse capital in PSU general insurers in FY24

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
The four public sector general insurance companies are unlikely to get capital funding from the government in the current fiscal, a senior official said.

He said one of the PSU non-life insurance companies is likely to give a dividend to the government in the current fiscal and they will be able to meet their solvency margins.

The government last year provided Rs 5,000 crore capital to three insurers -- National Insurance Company, Oriental Insurance Company and United India Insurance Company.

The Budget 2023-24 has not provided for the capital infusion for insurance companies.

"We do not think there is a need for capital infusion as of now. In fact, one of the general insurance companies may give a dividend this year," the official said.

Currently, there are four general insurance companies in India -- New India Assurance, United India Insurance, Oriental Insurance and



National Insurance Company. Of this, only New India Assurance is better placed than the rest.

Insurance companies are mandated by regulator IRDAI to maintain extra capital over and above the claim amounts they are likely to incur. It acts as a financial backup in extreme situations, enabling the company to settle all claims.

According to rating agency ICRA, most PSU insurers are expected to witness a high combined ratio resulting in net losses, though it will be lower compared to the last few years.

The capital requirement of three PSU general insurers (excluding New India) is estimated at a sizeable Rs 17,200-17,500 crore to meet solvency of 1.50x as of March 2024, assuming 100 per cent forbearance on FVCA (fair value change account), ICRA said in a report in May.

During 2020-21, Rs 9,950 crore was infused in three public sector general insurers by the government, out of which Rs 3,605 crore was infused in United India Insurance, Rs 3,175 crore in National

Insurance and Rs 3,170 crore in Oriental Insurance.

With regard to a committee report on stalled real estate projects, the official said the SWAMIH fund corpus is yet to be utilised fully and banks can put in money in the stalled projects to make them viable after taking permission from the RBI.

A 14-member committee chaired by former NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant, which was constituted to examine stalled real estate projects and recommend ways to complete them, submitted its report on

August 21 to the government.

The committee concluded that the main reason for the stress in these projects was the "lack of financial viability," which had led to cost overruns and time delays.

"We will take only those projects which could be made viable through the SWAMIH fund. The report has two parts -- developers will be given money, if there is a stalled project, through the SWAMIH fund and banks can also put in money after taking permission from RBI.

Secondly, individuals whose loan is stuck and can't repay money, for them also we have made provision to classify it as standard asset," the official added.

The fund corpus has not been utilised fully, he added. As on March 17, 2023, the government has released Rs 2,646.57 crore to the SWAMIH fund, which provides funding to stressed/stalled mid income and affordable housing projects across India, subject to certain conditions. The fund is sponsored by Ministry of Finance and is managed by SBICAP Ventures Ltd.

## Saint Gobain investing ₹8K cr in India

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Saint Gobain India, a leading glass maker and a player in housing solutions business, is investing Rs 8,000 crore in 4-5 years to fund capital expenditure and acquisitions to fuel growth, its chief B Santhanam said.

The company, which recently acquired stone wool manufacturer Rockwool India and glass wool maker Twiga still has an appetite for inorganic growth here.

Saint Gobain India, a subsidiary of the French glass-maker, expects around 10 per cent volume and mix-led growth from the Indian market, where it is witnessing a demand surge.

"Saint-Gobain India is performing very well in India in terms of growth, profitability, expansion, sustainability, digital and people talent. All our businesses be it in building and construction or industrial solutions are performing well," Saint Gobain CEO of Asia Pacific and India region and Chairman, Saint-



Gobain India, Santhanam told PTI.

"We are close to the annualised rate of Rs 13,200 crore... Comparing FY24 to FY23 we will be 8-10 per cent more in terms of growth," he said.

He added that India is the third most profitable country in the Saint-Gobain global business.

Over the investments, Santhanam said most of its businesses are undertaking

capacity expansion.

"What we believe is that in a 4-5-year cycle, we will invest about Rs 8,000 crores with over 90 per cent focused on capex.

"As our scale goes up, we will re-evaluate our Capex needs," he said.

Saint Gobain India is financing the investments through its internal accruals, said Santhanam adding "We are debt-free and have ade-

quate internal funds to fuel our growth appetite."

When asked about outlook for the Saint Gobain's business here, Santhanam said it is "favourable" in the long term as people are investing money in better solutions that combine aesthetics, functionality, comfort, and sustainability.

Saint Gobain India offers solutions for facades, partitions, ceilings, and bathrooms; ceramics for infrastructure industries like steel, cement, and aluminium and glazing solutions for mobility.

"Our long-term growth can be two times the GDP growth rate," he said adding there is a "strong appetite" for Saint Gobain's solution for facades, windows, ceilings, partitions, shower enclosures, office, home interiors and construction chemicals.

Even in the industrial space, there is a strong demand from auto, auto components, steel, aluminium, glass, and infrastructure industries, he added.

## 'Interest in generative AI ventures high'

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
AI meeting assistant Fireflies.AI founder Co-founder and CEO Krish Ramineni said the company is building on top of its transcription offering with generative technology and may consider raising funds early next year to support expansion plans.

Ramineni, during his India visit spoke to PTI about the rapid growth in AI and startups in India and the Silicon Valley. He said at present there is a lot of interest and appetite for generative AI startups.

Fireflies.AI helps you to transcribe, summarize, search, and analyze voice conversations.

On its fundraising plans, Ramineni said, "We have potential plans to look into it at the start of next year. There's definitely a lot of interest and appetite for generative AI startups right now, but we're operating well and we're pretty capital efficient, so we have plenty of runway," he added.



Launched just before the pandemic in January 2020, the San Francisco-based company has raised USD 19 million until now. Fireflies.AI operates in 20 nations and has offices in Delhi, Hyderabad and Bengaluru in India.

"The perfect catalyst was Covid and the remote work push that happened in 2020. So we raised our seed round in 2019, and then in 2020 January we launched the company. A few weeks later COVID started, everyone was on Zoom or some sort of video conferencing platform. That was a huge accelerator for us then," he said.

Ramineni said the company is building on top of its transcription offering with generative technology.

"With the generative AI hype and all that's happening

with Chat GPT, we're seeing how transcription is just the foundational layer and you can do so much more on top of it. People can get meeting notes, summaries... write an email based on what was said in the conversation," he said.

Everyone now has a digital assistant, and Fireflies is trying to create not just meeting assistants but work assistants for people, he added.

Ramineni noted that unlike other technologies, AI "is showing change in a span of six months."

Even though customers have taken well to generative technologies, Ramineni admitted that enterprises are concerned if their data is being used to train their algorithm.

On the aspect of data privacy, he said, "That might work well for individuals and they might not care as much, but enterprises, it's a no go. So we took a very strong stance from our early days that if we're going to bring AI, it has to be ethically implemented."

## Govt decides not to allow basmati rice exports below \$ 1,200/tonne

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
The government has decided not to allow exports of basmati rice below USD 1,200 per tonne to restrict possible "illegal" shipment of white non-basmati rice in the garb of premium basmati rice.

In a statement on Sunday, the commerce ministry said it has directed trade promotion body APEDA not to register contracts below USD 1,200 per tonne.

Existing contracts below USD 1,200 per tonne have been kept in abeyance.

A committee under the chairman of APEDA will be set up to evaluate future course of action. Seeking to control retail prices of rice, the central government has been taking several steps to boost domes-



tic supply.

In September last year, it banned exports of broken rice, while last month it imposed restrictions on non-basmati white rice. Last week, a 20 per cent export duty was slapped on par-boiled non-basmati rice.

With these curbs, India has now imposed restrictions on all varieties of non-basmati rice.

According to the statement of the commerce ministry, the government has

## Digital Public Infrastructure can help in climate adaptation, mitigation: Nilekani

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
The approach of Digital Public Infrastructure, which has gained global prominence, can also help in the area of climate adaptation and mitigation going forward, Chairman and Co-Founder of Infosys and the founding Chairman of UIDAI, Nandan Nilekani said on Sunday.

Nilekani, speaking at the B20 Summit India organised by CII, further said India has found a "balance" between responsible regulation and innovation due to its participatory model, as he showcased the country's success story on digital public infrastructure (DPI), which has accelerated inclusion in the country.

India's DPI is gaining global recognition, Nilekani said, noting there is a major



building more resilient homes, in anticipation of higher sea levels etc. And you can do that using DPI or using ONDC (Open Network for Digital Commerce), another great innovation to create an open network for commerce, we can create a circular economy where things get recycled," he said.

Hence, not only has DPI helped so far, it will also be useful in the future.

The digital public infrastructure issues a challenge for societies, he said, adding that other countries today are fighting the question of how to balance regulation and innovation, something that India has successfully manoeuvred.

While the US, a hotbed for innovation, is now looking at approaching regulation, Europe has plenty of regulations, but not enough innovators.

## 'Tata Steel plans to scale up usage of hydrogen in steel making process'

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Tata Steel plans to scale up the usage of hydrogen in the steel making process after the successful completion of the pilot project at its Jamshedpur plant, in Jharkhand, the company's CEO and MD T V Narendran said. In April 2023, Tata Steel commenced the first of its kind experiment injecting hydrogen gas using 40 per cent of the injection systems in E-blast furnace at its steel plant in Jamshedpur, Jharkhand.

"It was very successful, we will scale it up. But eventually we need to have green hydrogen available in Eastern India that will determine how it can be used," Narendran told PTI in reply to a question on the results of the trials. However, he did not tell the quantum in which the company plans to increase the usage of hydrogen.



Injection of hydrogen in blast furnaces helps reduce consumption of coal leading to reduction in carbon footprint.

"This is the first time in the world that such a large quantity of hydrogen gas is being continuously injected in a blast furnace," he said.

Speaking on the company's operations in the Netherlands, Narendran said the business there is moving from coal to gas to hydrogen and the transition is important for that nation because Tata Steel Netherlands will become one of the biggest consumers of hydrogen there.

# MBAPPE DOMINATES ON HOME RETURN



AFP ■ PARIS

Kylian Mbappe dominated his first home start of the season, scoring twice as Ligue 1 champions Paris-Saint Germain defeated last season's runners up Lens, 3-1, on Saturday. In a meeting of two teams winless in their first two league matches, PSG emphatically put their season back on track. The victory lifted them to fourth, two points behind leaders Monaco, who drew on Friday, and Marseille who won earlier Saturday. "I'd always like things to go the way they did tonight, but in foot-

ball there are always surprises," said PSG coach Luis Enrique. "There was a Champions League rhythm," the Spaniard said. "My players were very brave and against a team that defends well. We created a lot of chances." Mbappe, making his first home start since being reinstated to the team following a contract dispute, posed a threat from the start. In the first half, he had one shot saved by goalkeeper Brice Samba and another cleared off the line by Kevin Danso before Marco Asensio scored his first goal for the club in the 44th minute.

PSG's Portuguese midfielder Vitinha surged up the field before moving the ball on to Warren Zaire-Emery who passed to Asensio just outside the box. The Spaniard curled a left foot shot in off the base of the post. Mbappe added a ferocious second after 51 minutes, meeting a return pass from Lucas Hernandez with a first-time side-foot shot from the edge of the box that rocketed past Samba. Mbappe forced another good save from Samba as PSG dominated possession. On a rare Lens counter-attack, Elye Wahi, the club's

record signing, who came on after 57 minutes, outpaced the home defence and forced a sprawling save from Gianluigi Donnarumma. Ousmane Dembele, making his first PSG start since moving from Barcelona, lashed an opportunity for a first goal for the club wide. Mbappe added a second in the 90th minute with a shot from near the penalty spot that took two deflections on its way into the net. As PSG's defence relaxed, Wahi forced another flying save from Donnarumma before Morgan Guilavogui scored with the last kick

of the match, his shot deflecting in off Milan Skriniar. "In the second half, we opened up and if you open up against this team, things happen too quickly. We didn't give up but there was too much difference between the two teams," said Lens coach Franck Haise. Earlier, Marseille jumped to second place after ending visiting Brest's winning start to season with a lacklustre 2-0 victory. Knocked out of the Champions League in the third qualifying round by Panathinaikos at the start of the month, Marseille's rebuilt squad had a week to prepare. The hosts started brightly when Chancel Mbemba opened the scoring with a header from Jordan Veretout's impeccable free kick after three minutes. Brest, who had opened the season with two wins, dominated the rest of the half and squandered a string of chances. "In the first half we weren't organised properly, we lost too many balls and Brest were better," said Marseille coach Marcelino, who took over in the summer. The introduction of Vitinha from the bench lifted Marseille who stretched their lead after 65 minutes. Ismaila Sarr met a cross from Renan Lodi to score for the first time since arriving from Watford in the summer. Vitinha created two golden chances for Veretout and Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, who was wasteful throughout. "It got better in the second half and after the second goal, we were the Marseille we want to be," said Marcelino. "If we'd been bad throughout, I'd be worried."



## Pulisic on target again for Milan

AFP ■ MILAN

Cristian Pulisic continued his bright start at Serie A leaders AC Milan with another goal in Saturday's 4-1 win over Torino, while Roma slumped to a 2-1 defeat at Verona. A second strike in as many games by Pulisic since signing from Chelsea in the 33rd minute got Milan on their way to their second straight win, this time in front of a packed San Siro watching a new-look team for the first time this season. Olivier Giroud was also on target with a penalty in each half while Theo Hernandez struck with a brilliant finish as Milan put on an entertaining display. "You can see on the pitch how much we have fun," said Giroud to DAZN. "We can compete in both competitions, in Serie A and the Champions League. We have a lot of quality, we have a lot of weapons and attacking solutions." USA forward Pulisic rolled in the opener after a brilliant exchange of passes with fellow former Chelsea star Ruben Loftus-Cheek, before Peer Schuurs stunned the home supporters by diverting Samuele Ricci's wayward shot past Milan goalkeeper Mike Maignan. However Giroud then put Milan back in the lead from the penalty spot after Alessandro Buongiorno was penalised for handball -- while pushing the France striker in the back -- fol-

lowing a VAR check. Theo Hernandez then extended Milan's lead in first half stoppage-time by dinking over Vanja Milinkovic-Savic from a tight angle following brilliant combination play with Rafael Leao. Torino already had little chance of victory by that point and coach Ivan Juric shook his head on the touchline when another VAR check ended with another debatable spot-kick for Milan for a foul on Leao. Giroud stroked in his third goal in Milan's opening two matches to put the hosts three ahead midway through the second half and put to bed a largely one-sided contest. VERONA SINK ROMA Ondrej Duda and Cyril Ngonge struck in the first half to keep Verona level on a perfect six points with Milan with a surprise win over Roma, who are waiting to see if Romelu Lukaku will sign on loan from Chelsea. Lukaku's potential arrival has Roma fans excited but their team looked in need of more than just a goalscorer after conceding two sloppy strikes to lose at the Stadio Bentegodi. Jose Mourinho's side have collected one point from their first two games in the absence of their suspended coach and have only won one of their last 10 Serie A matches. Injury-prone talisman Paulo Dybala was forced to leave the field with a thigh problem in the second half, more bad news for a team which seems to make every match a hard slog.



## Messi comes off bench to score as Miami win

AFP ■ NEW YORK

Lionel Messi came off the bench and scored as Inter Miami began their push for the Major League Soccer playoffs with a 2-0 win at New York Red Bulls on Saturday. After a week in which Miami won the Leagues Cup and reached the final of the US Open Cup, Messi was left on the bench by coach Gerard "Tata" Martino but came into the game on the hour mark. The Argentine World Cup winner had limited involvement after entering with former Barcelona team-mate Sergio Busquets but made his mark on his regular season debut with an 89th minute goal. Jordi Alba acrobatically hooked the ball into the box to Messi who twisted and turned then slipped a sublime pass with the outside of his foot to Benjamin Cremaschi whose low first-time cross was tapped in by the seven-times Ballon d'Or winner. Messi has now scored 11 goals in nine appearances in all competitions since joining Inter Miami. "He's unbelievable, every day it's something new, on and

off the field," said Miami's 19-year-old defender Noah Allen. "He's an amazing person to play with and I am so blessed to play with him." Martino had indicated that several of his players were in need of a break after an intense run of eight games inside a month and stuck to his word with his team selection, to the disappointment of the capacity crowd at Red Bull Arena. A makeshift Miami had taken the lead in the 37th minute when Noah Allen played in a cross from the left and Paraguayan Diego Gomez was given time to turn and then slot home a left-foot effort. Miami keeper Drake Callender had to make a series of saves to keep his side in the lead but with Red Bull pressure mounting, Martino opted to bring on his star man and the momentum of the game inevitably shifted. The win lifts Miami off the bottom of the Eastern Conference and reduces the gap to the last playoff spot to 11 points with 11 games remaining. Eastern Conference leaders Cincinnati bounced back from their US Open Cup last four loss to Miami on Wednesday.

## Sevilla players pay 'It's Over' tribute to Hermoso

AFP ■ BARCELONA

Sevilla players paid tribute to Spanish women's team star Jenni Hermoso and the country's other top female footballers ahead of their 2-1 defeat by Girona on Saturday in La Liga. Hermoso, 33, was forcibly kissed on the lips by Spanish football federation chief Luis Rubiales at the Women's

World Cup final medal ceremony on Sunday. World football governing body FIFA suspended Rubiales on Saturday, while on Friday 81 Spain players including Hermoso said they would not play for the women's national team while the current "leadership" continued. Sevilla players wore warm-up t-shirts with the phrase "It's Over" written on



the front in Spanish, which several Spain women's players and Hermoso herself had used on Friday on social media and in statements, apparently referring to Rubiales' reign in Spain. La Roja's World Cup final goalscoring hero Olga Carmona watched the match from the presidential box at Sevilla's Ramon Sanchez-Pizjuan stadium, less than a

week after she netted the winning goal against England in Sydney, only to find out after the game her father had died. Jose Luis Mendilibar's Europa League winners have now lost their opening three matches in a dismal start to La Liga, in which they are bottom. Earlier Cadiz players came out for their 1-1 draw against Almeria with a banner reading "We are all Jenni".

## Baez downs Lehecka to win ATP Winston-Salem Open

AFP ■ WASHINGTON

Argentina's Sebastian Baez won his first ATP hard court title with a 6-4, 6-3 win over Czech Jiri Lehecka in the final of the Winston-Salem Open on Saturday. The tournament victory was the third this year for the 22-year-old following his wins on clay at the Austrian Open earlier this month and the Cordoba Open in his homeland in February. Baez was 3-1 down in the first set but won three straight games to take control. Lehecka, playing in his first ATP final, broke Baez's first service game of the second set, but the Argentine immediately broke back and never looked in danger from that point. It was an impressive performance from Baez who had played late on Friday in a gruelling 3 hours, 20 minute three-set battle against top-seed



Croatian Borna Coric, while Lehecka had a walkover against Sebastian Korda who withdrew with injury. Baez struck 28 winners and saved five of seven break points and the win means he moves up 10 places in the world rankings to 32nd ahead

of next week's US Open. Baez also becomes the first Argentine since Juan Martin del Potro to win three titles in the same season. The victory was the perfect preparation for Baez's US Open first-round match, which will pit him against Coric again.

## Andreescu withdraws from US Open

AFP ■ NEW YORK

Canada's Bianca Andreescu withdrew from the US Open on Saturday, the 2019 singles champion missing the event for the second time since winning in her debut at 19, organizers announced. She will be replaced in the draw of the year's final Grand Slam tennis tournament by a qualifier or lucky loser when the tournament begins on Monday. Andreescu revealed earlier this month that she had been diagnosed with a "small stress fracture" in her back. She also withdrew from last week's final major US Open tuneup at Cincinnati. Andreescu said she began to feel pain at the Washington Open and worked to play at Montreal the following week, but struggled in a first-round loss to Italy's Camila Giorgi. In the US Open draw, Andreescu had been slated to open against 2018 US Open quarter-finalist Lesia Tsurenko of Ukraine.

## World champs gold rush for Lyles, Richardson and Kipyegon

AFP ■ BUDAPEST

Noah Lyles and Sha'Carri Richardson, the two faces of the World Athletics Championships, won their third and second golds respectively by anchoring the United States to 4x100m relay triumphs in Budapest on Saturday. On an enthralling night's action Armand 'Mondo' Duplantis and Faith Kipyegon rubberstamped their authority in their events. Charismatic Swede Duplantis retained his pole vault title, although he fell short of bettering his own world record, whilst Kenyan Kipyegon became the first woman to achieve the 1500 and 5,000m double, when she won the latter. It was a night of firsts for Canada, who had earlier in the championships swept both the men's and women's hammer titles. Marco Arop and Pierce LePage became the first Canadians to win the men's 800m title and decathlon respectively.

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# Djoker, Alcaraz poised for US Open collision

AFP ■ NEW YORK

Novak Djokovic and Carlos Alcaraz are on a US Open collision course as the final Grand Slam tournament of season gets under way on Monday with American teenager Coco Gauff chasing a breakthrough first major title. A little more than six weeks after world number one Alcaraz defeated Djokovic in an enthralling finale to the Wimbledon championships, the two men could meet again at Flushing Meadows if the

seedings go to play over the next fortnight. Djokovic and Alcaraz whetted the tennis world's appetite for another blockbuster showdown at the Cincinnati Open last week, with 23-time Grand Slam singles winner Djokovic downing the 20-year-old Spaniard in a four-hour classic. Djokovic, 36, is making a long-awaited return to the US Open this year after his refusal to be vaccinated against Covid-19 meant he was unable to gain entry to the United States. In Djokovic's absence at last year's tournament, Alcaraz

announced his arrival on the world stage with a brilliant run to his first US Open crown. Second seed Djokovic, who opens his campaign on the Arthur Ashe main arena against France's Alexandre Muller on Monday, says Alcaraz's relentless, swashbuckling style is reminiscent of Rafael Nadal, the 22-time Grand Slam singles champion who misses this year's US Open due to injury. "Each point is a hustle. Each point is a battle. You feel like you're not going to get maybe in total five free points in the entire match," Djokovic said of Alcaraz.



"You've got to basically earn every single point, every single shot, regardless of the conditions." Alcaraz, who faces Germany's Dominik Koepfer in the first round on Tuesday, said he is flattered by the Nadal comparison. "It's great that he knows that every time he's going to play against me, it reminds him playing against Rafa or against the best ones because that means we are in a good path," he said. Djokovic will reclaim the world number one ranking with a victory over Muller on

Monday, regardless of how Alcaraz performs in the tournament. The Spaniard, meanwhile, must navigate a tricky route to the final that could include 2021 US Open champion Daniil Medvedev and Italy's Jannik Sinner. GAUFF CHASING BREAKTHROUGH In the women's tournament meanwhile, all eyes will be on the in-form 19-year-old Gauff, who is chasing a first Grand Slam title that would make her only the fifth Black woman in

the open era to win the US Open. After struggling in the early part of the season, Gauff felt she had hit rock bottom after exiting in the first round at Wimbledon. But the addition of veteran guru Brad Gilbert to her coaching team has sparked a transformation in her form and fortunes. She won the Washington Open in early August, reached the quarter-finals of the Canadian Open in Montreal and then scored a superb victory in the Cincinnati Open -- her first WTA 1000 title.

# I wasn't even able to express myself: Iyer

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Pain, often excruciating, was Shreyas Iyer's constant companion as he dealt with a back injury, and when it refused to subside even after undergoing surgery, he "panicked" thinking that his career could be on the line. Prior to the surgery, Iyer was suffering so much so that he "wasn't even able to express myself properly" about what he was going through. However, the 28-year-old stylish batter eventually recovered and returned to the Indian team for the upcoming Asia Cup. Now that he is back, he is taking it one step at a time. Recalling the days of his struggles because of the injury, Iyer told the BCCI: "To be precise, I had this nerve compression, basically a slip disc, which was compressing the nerve, and the pain was going all the way down to the bottom of my tiny toe. And, it was horrendous then. "I was in excruciating pain. I wasn't able to express myself properly about what I'm going through. "But yeah, this was the feeling that I was having then and it was hard to communicate with everyone. I had this issue for a while, but I was taking injections, and I was going through various routes to see to it that I am steady and playing many more matches." The batter then realised that surgery was the only answer to his problems. "It reached a saturation point where I realised that 'okay, now I have to get surgery'. And, the physios and the experts told me that it is important that you go under the knife and get this done with.



"Straight after the injury, I went back home after being hospitalised for two days. I gave myself rest for almost 10 days. The middle-order batter has thanked all his teammates for showing compassion during his most difficult phase and also after his comeback to the fold. "Feeling ecstatic, to be honest, to join the team and see happy faces all around. The compassion shown by all the players was fantastic, and I am thrilled to be back." Iyer's last outing was in March during the final Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, which India won 2-1 before his injury kicked in. It also forced him to miss out on leading Kolkata Knight Riders in IPL 2023. "At that period, one of the doctors had come to check my toe strength. He said that you can

manage, but at the same time, the surgery will also be required. "So, I thought the best decision would be to get the surgery done because I have long years ahead to play. And yeah, I am truly happy with my decision. After the surgery, the surgeon also said that it was a great decision that you decided to go for the surgery. "Post surgery, I was there for three weeks in London because the doctor had to check the progress over some time. So, after three weeks, he was happy, and he asked me to come back (return to India). And then, the physios took over at the NCA." Iyer further said that recovery post surgery was not easy either as it took time for the pain to subside, and he had also panicked at one point. "It was a roller-coaster ride. The pain was there until three months, and then after that, it started subsiding. "But, at the same time, the physios were focused on getting the range back of my hamstring and glutes and everything. When you are going through a rehab, especially as a professional athlete, it is tough when the pain is not subsiding. "Thankfully, I had a great set of friends around me and support staff and also my family. They were the ones who calmed me down in this situation, and I was panicking as well. "But, patience is the key at this point, especially. So yeah, I'm truly happy to be where I am right now because I never imagined that I would recover so fast." Speaking about the "testing phase" at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) here, Iyer termed

it as his toughest period. "The testing phase was the toughest period to go through, and the physios and the trainers were pretty confident about me coming back strong. But, in my mind, I could feel the pain. "So, I was pretty oblivious at that point of time whether I would pass the test or not. But, over some time, I realised that the pain is subsiding and my strength is improving in my leg," he said. "So gradually, as we started doing some running sessions, the first session was extremely tough. I was a bit perplexed then. "Second session, I was progressing. I did some trial yo-yo tests, and gradually, after some time, I played a match, and then, I was gaining that momentum. Then, in the yo-yo test, I surprised myself as well." Iyer will be looking to bounce back in style during the upcoming Asia Cup, keeping in mind the ICC World Cup, to be played in India in October-November. However, he is not thinking too far ahead and prefers staying in the present. "For me, it is important right now to be in the present and do my routines right. I don't want to think what is going to happen beyond and what has happened in the past. "I am ticking all the boxes day by day. In terms of preparation, I had a fantastic two days of practice with the boys, and also, it was competitive. So happy to be embracing every moment," concluded Iyer. India's Asia Cup contingent is undergoing a week-long conditioning camp in Bengaluru from August 23-29 and will open their campaign on September 2 against Pakistan.



## Pak whitewash Afghanistan 3-0

PTI ■ KABUL

Pakistan rose to the top of the one-day international rankings with a 59-run win against Afghanistan in the third and final match in Colombo on Saturday, claiming a 3-0 series whitewash. Pakistan were helped to 268-8 in 50 overs by a solid 79-ball 67 from Mohammad Rizwan and an 86-ball innings of 60 from skipper Babar Azam. They then dismissed their opponents for 209 in 48.4 overs with number nine Mujeeb Ur Rahman top-scoring for Afghanistan with a 37-ball 64 for his maiden half century. Rahman smashed five sixes and as many boundaries, racing to a new Afghan record for the fastest ODI fifty off just 26 balls before he stepped on to his stump and was out hit wicket off Shaheen Shah Afridi. Rashid Khan was the previous record holder for Afghanistan with a 27-ball fifty against Ireland in Abu Dhabi last year. Rahman and Shahidullah Kamal (37 off 65 balls) shared a valiant stand of 57 for the eighth wicket to give some respectability to the total after their team were reeling at 97-7. Rahman also added 45 for the ninth wicket with Faeed Ahmad Malik who scored 17. Pakistan won the first match by 142 runs and by one wicket in the second -- both games played in Hambantota. Pakistan had been at number two in the International Cricket Council ODI rankings before the series but the 3-0 triumph lifted them above Australia. Pakistan were briefly number one earlier this year. Pakistan medium pacer Faheem Ashraf removed Rahmanullah Gurbaz, who made a century in the last game, for five and Ibrahim Zadran for an 11-ball duck to finish with 2-43. Pakistan rested frontline bowlers Harris Rauf and Naseem Shah in four changes but they were still good enough with the ball as spinners Shadab Khan (3-42) and Mohammad Nawaz (2-45) shared five wickets. "Yes, we are number one," said Azam, who is also the number one batsman in the ODI rankings. "All credit to boys. We have worked hard for the last of couple of months and it has taken us to this point, so I am really happy." Afghanistan skipper Hashmatullah Shahidi admitted his team was not up to the mark. "We didn't apply ourselves," said Shahidi. "We are disappointed with the performance but there is a lot of learning." It was Rizwan and Azam who anchored Pakistan's innings after they won the toss and batted. The two teams will now feature in the six-nation Asia Cup starting in Multan from August 30.



## Janat returns after six years for Afghanistan

PTI ■ KABUL

All-rounder Karim Janat on Sunday returned to Afghanistan's ODI squad after a gap of six years and the selectors also included seasoned left-handed batter Najibullah Zadran in the 17-member squad for the upcoming Asia Cup. Hashmatullah Shahidi, a solid left-handed batter and who is known for anchoring the



innings, will lead the team in the tournament which will be played from August 30 to September 17 in Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Mohammad Saleem Safi and Abdul Rahman, two fast bowlers, who were part of Afghanistan's recent home ODI series against Pakistan, have retained their spots in the squad, but Faeed Ahmad and Wafadar Momand have been left out. Azmatullah Omarzai, a

seam-bowling all-rounder, has been ruled out of the competition due to a side strain. Zadran, who missed the recently-concluded Pakistan series due to a knee injury, has been included in the team and is expected to recover from the injury prior to the start of the event. Shahidullah Kamal, who had replaced him in the series against Pakistan, has been left out of the Asia Cup squad. The 25-year-old Janat, who has been a part of the national T20I team, made his ODI debut in February 2017 against Zimbabwe at the Harare Sports. But since then, Janat has not played a single ODI, although he has represented Afghanistan in one Test and 49 T20Is. In 42 List A matches, Janat has scored 1664 runs at an economy rate of 5.47 with a five-wicket haul to his name. **AFGHANISTAN TEAM:** Hashmatullah Shahidi (captain), Rahmanullah Gurbaz (wk), Ikram Alikhil (wk), Ibrahim Zadran, Riaz Hassan, Rahmat Shah, Najibullah Zadran, Mohammad Nabi, Karim Janat, Gulbadin Naib, Rashid Khan, Abdul Rahman, Sharafuddin Ashraf, Mujeeb Ur Rehman, Noor Ahmad, Mohd Saleem Safi, Fazal Haq Farooqi.

## Clean sweep over Afghans will inspire us, provide us momentum: Babar

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Pakistan skipper Babar Azam believes the recent thumping 3-0 ODI series win over Afghanistan will "inspire" his side and provide much-needed momentum heading into the Asia Cup, starting Wednesday. The Asia Cup is set to be hosted in a hybrid model by Pakistan and Sri Lanka from August 30 till September 17. Pakistan came up with a terrific performance against Afghanistan, clean sweeping the latter 3-0 in the just-concluded ODI series just before the continental showpiece. On Saturday, Pakistan triumphed over Afghanistan by 59 runs in the third and final ODI at the R Premadasa Stadium here. "We are thrilled heading into the Asia Cup. How we have won the (ODI) series against Afghanistan will be an inspira-

tion for us in the tournament," Azam was quoted as saying by PCB. "It was never easy against Afghanistan as most people would have thought. Everyone knows how terrific they are on spin-friendly conditions. "The momentum from this series will give us confidence during the Asia Cup. We hope to produce good cricket for our fans," he added. The series sweep has allowed Pakistan to leapfrog Australia and reach the summit of the ICC ODI team rankings. Azam credited the achievement to team effort. "When you attain the No. 1 spot, you get a lot of satisfaction. It is all due to the efforts of the entire squad along with the support staff," he said. "We had been at the top of the ODI rankings earlier. But, we came back down to No. 2 after losing a fixture," he signed off.

## 'Big opportunity for India to lift WC in home conditions'

PTI ■ SRINAGAR

Former captain of Indian women's cricket team Mithali Raj on Sunday said 'Men in Blue' have a big opportunity to lift the ICC World Cup in home conditions later this year. The global showpiece event will be played in India across October and November, and the hosts are aiming to bag another World Cup after winning it in 1983 and 2011. "As an Indian cricket fan, I would want India to play in the final. It is a big opportunity. We are the host nation and the conditions are in our favour. "If they (team) do well, we will get another opportunity to lift the World Cup," Mithali, who was here to witness the Women's Premier League final, told reporters. Mithali, the highest run-scorer in WODIs with 7805 runs, said women's cricket has a lot of potential to grow in the



valley. "For past two to three years, the BCCI has been making lot of efforts to promote the women's game and women players. "The WIPL this year has also gone well and it is good for the sports profile. We hope that many players will come up from the state in the next two to three years," she said. Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir Manoj

Sinha rated the tournament a very good initiative. "I watched the match. I have said time and again that there is no dearth of talent (in the state). The Jammu and Kashmir Administration is making efforts to help girls progress in every field. "I am sure that the next phase of development in Jammu and Kashmir will be led by women," he added.

## India announce U-16 SAFF squad for championship

AFF ■ NEW YORK

The AIFF on Sunday announced India's U-16 squad comprising 23 members for the upcoming SAFF Championship to be played next month. India's men's U-16 head coach Ishaq Ahmed has named Rohit, Aheebam Suraj Singh and Arush Hari as goalkeepers for the tournament to be held in Thimpu from September 1-10. Ngariyambam Abhijit, Mohammed Kaif, Yaipharemba Chingakham, Usham Thougamba, Vumlensal Hangshing, Chingham Renin Singh and Karish Soram will be India's defenders. In the midfield, Newton Singh, Kangujam Yoienba Meitei, Lewis Zangminlun, Bobby Singh, Abdul Salha, Ngamgouhou Mate, Vishal Yadav, Manbhakpur Malngiang and Md Arbash have been named. India have been clubbed alongside Nepal and Bangladesh in Group A.

## Indian women beat Thailand 5-4 in Asian Hockey 5s WC Qualifier

PTI ■ SALALAH

India continued their unbeaten run in the Women's Asian Hockey 5s World Cup Qualifier after registering a hard-fought 5-4 win over Thailand in their third match of the tournament here on Sunday. For India, skipper Navjot Kaur (1st minute), Monika Dipi Toppo (1st, 7th), Mahima Choudhary (20th) and Ajmina Kujur (30th) were on target. Thailand's goals were scored by Piresram Anongnat (3rd), Aunjai Natthakarn (10th, 14th) and Suwapat Konthong (19th). On Sunday, India got off the blocks at a rampaging pace, putting pressure on the Thailand defenders from the word go. Navjot opened the scoring in the first minute of the game through a field goal. India doubled their lead in no time when Monika found the back of the net from a field effort. Thailand pulled one back through captain Anongnat two minutes. Monika soon scored her second goal of the day to make the score-line 3-1 in favour of India. With five minutes remaining in the first half, Natthakarn's strike got Thailand back in the game. With a minute remaining in the first half, Natthakarn found the back of the net again for Thailand to level the scores. India came out attacking in the second half and held most of the ball possession. India continued to make dangerous runs inside Thailand's striking circle, particularly from the left flank. However, it was Thailand who took the lead through Konthong four minutes after the change of ends. India immediately equalised through in-form Mahima as she flawlessly converted a challenge goal. With five minutes left on the clock, India started showcasing urgency to get back their lead. Monika created an opportunity from the left flank, but the ball just went wide. With just a minute left in the game, Kujur scored the winner for India.

## 'Asia Cup will test bowlers' readiness for 50-overs cricket'

PTI ■ DUBAI

Pakistan bowling great Wasim Akram on Sunday said the upcoming Asia Cup will test readiness of subcontinental bowlers for 50-overs cricket ahead of the ODI World Cup, but refused to pick any favourites for the tournament. The Asia Cup begins on Wednesday with Pakistan taking on Nepal in the tournament-opener in Multan, but all eyes are fixed on the mega clash between arch-rivals India and Pakistan in Kandy on September 2. "Be it India or Pakistan or Sri Lanka, we will find out if the

bowlers are able to deliver 10 overs or not, now-a-days they are all used to bowling four-overs (per game)," Akram told reporters here during a tournament sponsor's event. The competition will revert to 50-overs format in this edition after being organised in T20 version last year, and Akram welcomed the change. "This is a good idea by ACC to have a 50-over Asia Cup because right after it we have the World Cup," he said. Akram said all teams will be challenged on the parameters of fitness and game plans.

"It is a long tournament -- not a one-off that you can enter the semifinals after winning one game," he said. "You have to win games to get on top. You have to take it game by game. Also, it is a 50-over competition (this time) not T20, which means different mindset and fitness will be required." The legendary pacer refused to predict any favourites but said the road will be tough for all sides. "Last time we had predicted an India versus Pakistan final but Sri Lanka won the competition. All three teams are dangerous -- anyone can win on their day," Akram said. "There are other teams competing too. Last time Sri Lanka won the title, India even failed to make it to the final. "India versus Pakistan is very important, we know about so much support (teams get), so many eyeballs, so many people (following). But other teams are also here to play so you cannot minus Sri Lanka or Bangladesh," he added. Akram said India have a balanced squad for the Asia Cup. "I think they are trying different things, new players especially in the T20 format, also a new cap-

tain. They have a balanced squad. But it will not be easy for India or any team," he said. Asked if Pakistan could have taken a strong stand against India for not travelling to the neighbouring nation for the Asia Cup, Akram played it safe. "The Pakistan government has given permission that Pakistan (team) can travel to India," he said. "I have always maintained and said that politics and sports should be apart from each other. People to people contact is very important and the average Indian and Pakistani, they do respect each other. I hope eventually sanity prevails." The second highest ODI wicket taker with 502 dismissals, Akram termed the Asia Cup as the "second biggest tournament" in the world. "It is the second biggest tournament in the calendar of the cricketing world. (The) World Cups and then the Asia Cup, two giants, India and Pakistan then Sri Lanka, the previous Asia Cup champions last year in Dubai -- what a success that was," he said. "All six countries are looking forward to seeing their players. This is a prep tournament before the big one, the World Cup."

