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PM Modi Unveils Bharat's Iron Strength

Warns the nation against perils of appeasement

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
KEVADIA (GUJARAT)/NEW DELHI

Marking the culmination of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav at Kartavya Path in Delhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said the celebration of about 1000 days became a people's movement and saw India notch up several achievements such as becoming the fifth largest economy and the passage of the Women's Reservation Bill.

Modi emphasised that the politics of appeasement poses the biggest obstacle to the country's development journey, and he warned about "a very large political class" that seems unable to engage in positive politics, often compromising the country's unity for their own selfish goals.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during an event marking the culmination of the 'Meri Maati Mera Desh' campaign, in New Delhi on Tuesday

and avoid taking strict action against anti-national elements. The appeasement mindset is so

dangerous that it reaches the court to save the terrorists. Such thinking cannot benefit

any community. This can never be of any benefit to the country," he said.

"In the last nine years, India's internal security has been getting challenges from multiple

fronts, but because of the hard work of security forces, the enemies of the country are not being able to succeed like they did in the past," Modi said. Modi said there is a "very large political class" in the country which does not see any way of doing positive politics. "Unfortunately, this political class is adopting such tactics which are against the society and the country. For this political class, their selfishness is paramount even if it means that the unity of the country breaks," he said.

gishness of the then government in the name of investigation," he said, adding that people should not let the country slide to that period. The people of the country need to know, recognise and understand, and be cautious of those who are attacking the country's unity, PM Modi said. Modi also referred to the abrogation of Article 370, which accorded special status to the erstwhile State of Jammu & Kashmir.

iPhone hack alert sparks row

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

A massive row erupted on Tuesday after several Opposition leaders claimed they received an alert from Apple, warning them of "state-sponsored attackers trying to remotely compromise" their iPhones.

party leaders Shashi Tharoor, Pawan Khera, KC Venugopal, Supriya Shrinete, and T S Singhdeo; Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra, CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury, and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav. Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Priyanka Chaturvedi, Aam Aadmi Party's Raghav Chadha, AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi, and some aides of Congress MP Rahul Gandhi also received the notification.

Apple ID. These attackers are likely targeting you individually because of who you are or what you do. If your device is compromised by a state-sponsored attacker, they may be able to remotely access your sensitive data, communications, or even the camera and microphone. While it is possible this is a false alarm, please take this warning seriously," it stated. Addressing a press conference on the issue in Bhopal, Vaishnav said the government takes the issue of protecting the privacy and security of all citizens very seriously and "will investigate to get to the bottom of these notifications."

which the Opposition has accused of creating monopolies in various sectors in the country. Moitra stated in a social media post that she will write to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, "requesting he follow Raj Dharma to protect Opposition MPs and summon Home Ministry officials on the issue of phones/email being hacked. Privileges Committee needs to take this up. Vaishnav (IT Minister), this is a real breach you need to worry about."

Kejriwal has also received the purported warning from Apple. PDP president Mehbooba Mufti alleged targeting AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal and TMC MP Mahua Moitra are signs of the BJP's nervousness about the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. The ruling BJP rejected Opposition leaders' allegations against the government as "baseless and false" and stated that it is up to the mobile company to explain the issue.

Gaza ceasefire matter of life and death: UN

AP UNITED NATIONS

The head of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees has told a UN emergency meeting that "an immediate humanitarian ceasefire has become a matter of life and death for millions," accusing Israel of "collective punishment" of Palestinians and the forced displacement of civilians. Philippe Lazzarini warned that a further breakdown of civil order following the looting of the agency's warehouses by Palestinians searching for food and other aid "will make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for the largest UN agency in Gaza to continue operating."



Palestinians look for survivors after an Israeli strike in Rafah in Gaza Strip on Tuesday

more than 8,300 people have been killed — 66 per cent of them women and children — and tens of thousands injured, the UN humanitarian office said. UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell that toll includes over 3,400 children killed and more than 6,300 injured. "This means that more than 420 children are being killed or injured in Gaza each day, a number which should shake each of us to our core," she said.

2019." And he stressed, "This cannot be 'collateral damage.'" Many speakers at the council meeting denounced Hamas' October 7 surprise attacks on Israel that killed over 1,400 people, and urged the release of some 230 hostages taken to Gaza by the militants. But virtually every speaker also stressed that Israel is obligated under international humanitarian law to protect civilians and their essentials for life including hospitals, schools and other infrastructure, and Israel was criticised for cutting off food, water, fuel and medicine to Gaza and cutting communications for several days.

Jehovah's Witnesses keep mum on blasts

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN KOCHI

In keeping with their traditional image as a silent religious group, the Jehovah's Witnesses chose not to react to Sunday's bomb blast at Kalamassery where the annual regional convention of the congregation was in progress. The tiffin box bomb powered with IED killed 3 persons and injured 60 others.

killed and at least 59 were injured. Over 2,200 people were in attendance at the event, including families and members of the public. All had gathered simply to benefit from free education about the Bible. Jehovah's Witnesses are very grateful for the authorities who are investigating this crime and providing protection for our places of worship. At this time, it is unwise for us to speculate about the perpetrator(s) or the motive," said Joshua David, national spokesman, JW. The JW also thanked the emergency medical personnel who promptly arrived on the scene to render aid, as well as hospital staff who are caring for the critically injured.

19 die on road every hour in India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

The number of road accidents in India surged by 12 per cent to 4.6 lakh in 2022, resulting in the death of 19 persons every hour. Additionally, 16,715 people lost their lives in road accidents last year due to not wearing seat belts, while 50,029 individuals met their demise in accidents where helmets were not worn. Out of these casualties, 35,692, or 71.3 per cent, were riding two-wheeled.

from a road safety standpoint, violations like overspeeding and driving on the wrong side are not solely attributable to human error, but may also be attributed to a lack of education and enforcement. Driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs, running red lights, and using mobile phones collectively accounted for 7.4 per cent of total accidents and 8.3 per cent of total deaths, according to the report. Union Minister Nitin Gadkari has set a target to halve the number of accidents and resulting deaths in the country by 2024. The annual report is based on data and information received from the police departments of States and Union Territories on a yearly basis, following standardised



formats provided by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) as part of the Asia Pacific Road Accident Data (APRAD) base project. In 2022, a total of 4,61,312 road accidents occurred, resulting in 1,68,491 fatalities and 4,43,366 injuries. According to the report titled "Road accidents in India 2022", "overspeeding" accounted for 72.3 per cent of the road accidents, 71.2 per cent of the deaths, and 72.8 per cent of total injuries. Among the casualties, 8,384 were drivers, the remaining

8,331 were passengers. The report revealed that 53 road accidents took place every hour in the country. It further mentioned, "A total of 4,61,312 road accidents have been reported by States and Union Territories (UTs) during the calendar year 2022, which claimed 1,68,491 lives and caused injuries to 4,43,366 persons. This marks an increase of 11.9 per cent in accidents, 9.4 per cent in fatalities, and 15.3 per cent in injuries compared to the previous year," as stated in the report. For the fourth consecutive year in 2022, the victims of fatal road accidents were predominantly young people in the productive age groups. The report stated, "Young adults in the age group of 18-45 years accounted for 66.5 per cent of victims

during 2022," and added that individuals in the working-age group of 18-60 years constituted 83.4 per cent of total road accident fatalities. According to the report, in 2022, a total of 4,61,312 accidents were recorded in the country. Out of these, 1,51,997 (32.9 per cent) took place on National Highways (NH), including expressways, 1,06,682 (23.1 per cent) on State highways, and the remaining 2,02,633 (43.9 per cent) on other roads. The report said, "Out of the total of 1,68,491 fatalities reported in 2022, 61,038 (36.2 per cent) were on national highways, 41,012 (24.3 per cent) were on state highways, and 66,441 (39.4 per cent) were on other roads." Regarding the vehicle cat-

egories involved in road accidents, two-wheelers, for the second consecutive year, accounted for the highest share in total accidents and fatalities during 2022. The report indicated that light vehicles, including cars, jeeps, and taxis, collectively came in a distant second place. In terms of road-user categories, it was reported that the share of two-wheeler riders in total fatalities was the highest (44.5 per cent) during 2022, followed by pedestrian road-users, accounting for 19.5 per cent of individuals killed in road accidents. The report stated, "Tamil Nadu recorded the highest number of road accidents in 2022 with 64,105 cases (13.9 per cent), followed by Madhya Pradesh with 54,432 cases (11.8 per cent).





Nation indebted to Sardar Patel: Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Led by President Draupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the nation paid rich tributes to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel on his birth anniversary...



ment to national integration continues to guide us. We are forever indebted to his service," he added. Dhankhar lauded contributions of the Iron Man of India and said successful integrations of all states was a great feat achieved by Sardar Patel...

INBRIEF

MUST INCULCATE IN US SARDAR PATEL VALUES: MP



Delhi: To truly feel Indian and live by the values/ideals established by Sardar Patel, we must incorporate the values of great legend into our personalities, Prof. Rakesh Sinha, Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha said on Tuesday...

CYCLOTHON 2023 FOR BREAST CANCER AWARENESS Noida: A cycle rally, "Cyclothon 2023" for breast cancer awareness campaign was organised by Hotel Crown Plaza here recently in collaboration with the Fortis Hospital Greater Noida...

Will appear before Ethics Committee tomorrow, demolish all lies: Mahua

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/KOLKATA

TMC leader and Lok Sabha MP Mahua Moitra on Tuesday said she would appear before the Lok Sabha Ethics Committee on Thursday and demolish all lies propagated in an attempt to silence her in Parliament.



Moitra said the Lok Sabha Ethics Committee is yet to frame its model code of conduct. "The committee didn't have any meeting since 2021. It is yet to frame its model code of conduct. No parliamentary standing committee has criminal jurisdiction. If there is any allegation of criminality, then law enforcement agencies need to investigate it," she said.

ICG delegation in Tokyo for 3rd Coast Guard Global Summit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



A two-member Indian Coast Guard delegation led by its chief Rakesh Pal is on official visit to Tokyo from 30 October-November 2 to participate in the 3rd Coast Guard Global Summit (CGGS). The summit is aimed to enhance the collaboration and cooperation among Coast Guards worldwide.

Manipur DGP among 204 cops to get MHA special operation medal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

More than 204 police personnel, including Director General of Manipur Police Rajiv Singh, were on Tuesday chosen for the Union Home Minister's Special Operation Medal for the year 2023.



The award is conferred for special operations in areas such as counter terrorism, border action, arms control, prevention of narcotics smuggling and rescue operations, the statement said.

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE

ICICI Bank symbolic possession notice. Includes borrower details, description of property, and terms of notice.

GURU ANGAD DEV VETERINARY AND ANIMAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY LUDHIANA

Advertisement for teaching and non-teaching posts at Guru Angad Dev Veterinary and Animal Sciences University.

8-year-old girl gets complex pulmonary valve implantation

Public Notice regarding property ownership. Includes details of the property and the individuals involved.

ICICI Bank PUBLIC NOTICE - TENDER CUM E-AUCTION FOR SALE OF SECURED ASSET

ICICI Bank public notice for an e-auction of secured assets. Includes details of the assets and the terms of the auction.

PHYSICAL POSSESSION NOTICE

ICICI Home Finance physical possession notice. Includes borrower details, description of property, and terms of possession.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Hospital (R&R) on October 7, 2022, the cardiac (pulmonary) valve used to be replaced through an open heart bypass surgery, which is not only extremely painful and cumbersome but also carries significant risk of morbidity and mortality as well as prolonged hospital stay, they explained.





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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Tell-all

### The A-G's contention that poll bonds are not for public purview is anathema to democracy

Democracy dies in darkness' is a popular phrase but India's Attorney General does not seem to believe it. In an affidavit to the Supreme Court in a case concerning public revelation of electoral bond details, A-G R Venkataramani has contended that citizens are not entitled to access information about financial support by an individual or an entity to a political party under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution. He countered the argument presented by the petitioners challenging the electoral bonds scheme, asserting that citizens do "not possess a general unrestricted right to know" every detail. He emphasised that the right to information, when essential for expression, must serve specific purposes or ends, rather than being absolute. The funding of political campaigns and elections enables parties and candidates to reach voters, spread their message and compete on a level playing field. However, the source of funding can significantly impact the integrity of the political process. To understand the gravity of the situation, savour this: Between March 2018 and July 2023, an approximate sum of Rs 13,000 crore was funnelled to various political parties. From 2018 to 2022, electoral bonds totalling Rs 9,208 crore were issued, with the BJP claiming 58 per cent of the total amount.

As reported by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) in March 2023, over 66 per cent of the total revenue for the seven national parties was derived from electoral bonds and undisclosed sources. There is strong reason to believe that most funding comes from the black money stacked with the individuals. So, while the political class would like to know about how a common citizen spends each of his pennies, they would not like to divulge the funding they receive, neither the source nor the amount. All you have is a total figure which tells nothing about the donors or the donations to the political party. Knowing the sources of funding allows voters to hold candidates and parties accountable. If large sums of money come from special interest groups or corporations, it raises concerns about whether those entities will have undue influence over elected representatives. If some big corporate funding is in public domain and that party after returning to power acts to promote its interest, a quid pro quo can be established and that is what the political parties will desist tooth and nail. The A-G's contention runs counter to the principles of transparency and accountability in a democracy. While there are arguments in favour of privacy in certain contexts, political funding is not one of them. The argument often made in favour of non-disclosure is the protection of free speech and preventing donor harassment. However, this stance assumes that disclosure necessarily leads to harassment, and it neglects the greater principles of transparency and accountability.

### PICTALK



BSF personnel during 'Rashtriya Ekta Diwas' celebrations on Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's birth anniversary, in Kevadia

## Gaming attracts Consumer attention

### By leverage interactive gaming, companies can secure an advantage over rivals as it is very effective in engaging consumers

The problem of plenty affects consumers today like never before. They are presented with a buffet of entertainment options, accessible across personal devices, such as phones and laptops, to shared platforms like smart TVs. Streaming services have overhauled the entertainment landscape, reshaping the way we engage with content. Take Amazon, for instance. Beyond shopping, its app offers a distinct viewing experience with Prime Mini TV, a standalone from its main OTT platform. And then there's the podcast evolution. While Spotify caters to audio podcasts, YouTube delivers podcast videos, providing a dual-sensory experience for its users.



forms users from passive observers into active participants. It establishes virtual realms where consumers can engage fully. This engagement extends to the exploration of intricately crafted worlds and forging connections with characters, often represented by players from different corners of the globe. Certain games even grant players the ability to shape their worlds, mirroring the sandbox creativity evident in titles like Minecraft. A similar dynamic exists in games such as Among Us, where real-time play is accompanied by voice chat interactions with fellow players. Essentially, consumers are presented with interactive gameplay that effortlessly sustains their interest over extended periods.

**Continuous re-discovery** Unlike other content, gaming offers limitless experiences, with new possibilities each time. Yet, there's a comforting familiarity that beckons players to return. Nir Eyal, in Hooked: How to Build Habit-Forming Products, highlights that products with sticky experiences are most likely to get user recommendations. Consequently, engaging gaming experiences spread from one user to another. This attachment not only prolongs gameplay but fuels positive word-of-mouth, as players eagerly share their immersive encounters. **Consumers across sectors** Gaming's allure spans demographics, uniting over 3 billion players globally, transcending age, gender, and location. This diverse potpourri obliterates language barriers, enabling connections between individuals, be they friends or strangers. Gaming's influence extends beyond its domain, venturing into various content types, even within news portals or streaming platforms. Gaming's impact prompts these content platforms to integrate gaming sections,

catalyzed by players like GameStop, known for seamlessly introducing games to non-gaming products. A recent Gamezop survey unveils that integrating games into non-gaming apps and websites can elevate engagement by 15-40%. Striking examples include products like Tata Play Binge, The Tribune, Samsung Internet, Amazon, and Royal Challengers Bangalore - all of which have dedicated gaming sections within their apps. These instances underscore gaming's potential to captivate audiences spanning a diverse spectrum. **The way forward** If companies leverage the interactive and sticky experiences of gaming, they secure an advantage over rivals. Gaming will continue to shape the way we consume content and interact with digital products. With its unmatched ability to create memorable and engaging experiences, gaming is set to transform the entire content business. It's an exciting time to be a part of this rapidly evolving industry. (The author is a co-founder of gamezop, views are personal)



GAURAV AGARWAL

# Politicisation of army: No pros, only cons

### The politicisation of armed forces would erode its core competence of being a professional defence force and reduce it to a crass unit obeying political masters



ASHOK K MEHTA

As a senior military veteran, I can say without hesitation that the Indian armed forces have undergone their most sustained spell of politicisation under the ruling establishment since 2014 with the apparent consent of the armed forces hierarchy. The Indian military has stood out for not yielding to its enduring principles of being apolitical, secular and professional. It has shone as a beacon of sound civil-military relations with the military under civilian control though more bureaucratic than political. When political authority is weak - civilian services predominate and vice versa. Unfortunately, the Indian political class largely due to its ignorance, intellectual lethargy and absence of strategic vision has let the bureaucracy call the shots though ultimate accountability lies with them. A strategic doctrine for the armed forces was ready thrice but the political leadership evaded its publication and the bureaucracy could not/did not persuade it to approve it.

Only last week the frontline paper carried pictures of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh in his stiffly starched dhoti performing Shastra Pooja in an Army unit near Tawang. It is not the first time he has applied vermilion on weapons and painted swastikas on aircraft. It is a gross violation of regimental practices and procedures where it is the prerogative of the Unit Commander and the priest to perform the ritual during Dussehra. Successive Army and Air chiefs have failed to tell him about it. He is the first defence minister to do so. This is not a colonial legacy but a recognised unit military practice. The Nepal Army does a grand parade in Tundikhel, Kathmandu where the Army Chief performs the Shastra Pooja in Tundikhel, Kathmandu while the President and Prime Minister watch the ceremony. In the guise of dismantling colonial practices, recruitment of Gorkhas from Nepal is suspended. This has upset Nepal and will eventually become another cause for anti-India sentiment.



The appointment of late Gen Bipin Rawat, whom this government has glorified on a scale no previous government has commemorated any other soldier, was made superseding two of his seniors, depicted merit trumping seniority. But that was only part of the scheme. On 6 December 2017, Rawat announced that "somehow military must be kept out of politics" adding that "in earlier days, women and politics were taboo in discussions". But later he was tempted to let his guard slip by indulging in activities that were political like going to Gorakhnath for a public event. Further, the Army was asked to spread mats for yoga and build bridges in Mumbai while RSS leaders pontificated on fighting in J&K, their mobilisation drills and castigated Muslims though many soldiers have won valour in battle. The government added the name of former Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar to IDSA without consulting the Executive Committee of a registered public institute and for the first time, a defence institution was named after a politician. The Defence Expo, which was always held in Delhi, was first shifted to Chennai when Nirmala Sitharaman became defence minister, then to Goa after Parrikar and finally to Rajnath Singh's constituency Lucknow, where it has remained. Rawat was appointed



AS STATE AND NATIONAL ELECTIONS APPROACH, THE MILITARY WAS ORDERED TO ASK SOLDIERS ON LEAVE TO PUBLICISE ITS DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS. LAST MONTH, THE GOVERNMENT ASKED ITS BABUS - JOINT SECRETARY AND BELOW - TO PUBLICISE THE PROJECTS

ed the first CDS. He was followed as COAS by Gen Narvane who announced at his first press conference, that the Army will be guided by its allegiance to the constitution and its core values in the preamble of justice liberty, equality and fraternity. Why Narvane was not made CDS following Rawat's tragic death seems to have been part of the government's grand plan of deep selection, a euphemism for appointing individuals of the government's choice. For the appointment of retired Lt Gen Anil Chauhan who was being groomed for his future appointment as CDS in the NSC Secretariat, the Army, Navy and Air Force Acts had to be amended to make retired Lt Gens and equivalents eligible for the post. In all democracies, CDS/CJS is one of the service chiefs, never a re-mustered three-star. Most of the government's unpopular schemes like Agniveer and the revision of disability pension, were endorsed by the CDS. Military budgets that have never crossed 2 per cent of the GDP (Minus pensions) have been deemed adequate by the service Chiefs while one of the government's ministers, a former COAS, leaked to the media that there were gaping holes in inventories. In 2018, Rawat called the budget 'adequate' adding 'it is merely a management problem'. But BJP's own former Minister

BC Khanduri, head of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Defence said an inadequate budget has severe implications for national security. He was sacked. The litmus test is defence allocation for modernisation and utilising it. As state and national elections approached, the military was ordered to ask soldiers on leave to publicise its development projects. Last month, the government asked its babus - Joint Secretary and below - to publicise the projects. MoD was asked to create 822 selfie points at war museums and war memorials with pictures of PM Modi to publicise government achievements. There has been widespread opposition to this by the Association for Democratic Rights and retired bureaucrats. Abundant is goodwill and good ideas but in symbolism-rakhi tying at Siachen, presenting Diwali sweets to troops, 'Meri Mati Mera Desh' and 'Shastra Pooja.' But veterans are still battling imperfect OROP, missing NFU and disability pension in court. Politicisation can only stop if Generals will end sycophancy, put their feet down and remain secular and professional. (The writer, a retired Major General, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, and founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff. The views expressed are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### RESTORE UNITY IN KERALA

Sir—The state is currently grappling with a multitude of challenges, all of which pose significant threats to its stability and social fabric. The Kalamassery blasts, which claimed innocent lives and left several individuals injured, have not only caused immense grief but have also raised serious questions regarding the adequacy of our safety and security measures. The tragic incident involving the unfortunate demise of a 12-year-old girl serves as a stark reminder of the urgency to promptly address these concerns. The recent political tensions, exemplified by the Bharatiya Janata Party's siege of the State Secretariat and the government's all-party meeting convened by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, signify the growing unrest and dissatisfaction among various stakeholders. Amidst these pressing matters, the need for unity, collaboration, and swift, coordinated actions becomes paramount. It is essential for all political factions, law enforcement agencies, and community leaders to come together, setting aside their differences to address the critical issues at hand. While the Sabarimala-related cases before the Kerala High Court signify broader societal concerns, it is imperative to navigate these issues with a sense of balance, respecting diverse sentiments while upholding the rule of law and fundamental rights. The gesture of solidarity for Palestine is noteworthy and showcases Kerala's commitment to global issues and international harmony. Initiatives that advocate for peace and solidarity are essential in a world troubled by conflicts. In this time of distress and political tension, it is crucial for all stakeholders to display maturity, restraint, and a collective will to resolve issues through dialogue, empathy, and an unwavering commitment to the welfare of the people of Kerala. Let us collectively strive to restore peace, harmony, and stability in our beloved state, Kerala. Maimul Safui | Howrah

### Role of the UN in keeping the peace



The primary role of any global organisation established through consensus is to halt ongoing violence against innocent civilians. It is unnecessary to scrutinise the reasons behind the violence or its justifications; any violence involving innocent children is unequivocally wrong. In this context, if the UN Secretary-General requested Israel to cease the violence, it was a just and necessary action. However, the Israeli representative's demand for the Secretary-General's resignation in response is concerning.

The United Nations relies on the economic support of America, which, in turn, supports Israel. Consequently, the Secretary-General may not receive assistance from many countries worldwide. Nevertheless, democratic and peace-loving nations, including America, must now consider the effectiveness of the United Nations in dealing with issues such as war. Over the past several decades, major powers have gradually eroded the global organisation for their own interests. Questioning the United Nations is, in essence, questioning the peaceful nature of the entire world, and Israel must reconsider its stance. The international community should take this matter seriously. N Mateeni | Mumbai

### REFORMING EDUCATION SYSTEMS

Sir—The education system in most countries is primarily designed to produce workers rather than thinkers. It places a greater emphasis on rote memorisation than on understanding and critical thinking, hindering the development of problem-solving skills. The outdated curriculum often lags behind changing societal needs, including global and technological advancements and industrial enhancements. Educational institutions should focus more on practical knowledge that learners can apply in the real world. Our current system heavily relies on high-stakes exams for assessment, which can stifle creativity in scholars. Adequate career counseling and guidance are often limited, resulting in students making uninformed choices. True education should be based on morality, practicality, and truism for students so that India can regain its status as a 'Vishwa Guru.' Tanisha Gupta | Ujjain

### RISING ONION PRICES

Sir—Onion prices have once again surged in many states, with some exceeding Rs 50 per kilogram. It is disheartening to witness the government's leniency in addressing this matter. High onion prices, juxtaposed with the dire situation of farmers in an agricultural country like ours, are truly shameful. This is not the first time onion prices have surged, and political disputes have arisen as a result. The common man has, time and again, shed tears over the escalating costs of onions. It is imperative for agricultural experts to develop innovative technology that boosts onion production in every state of our country. The government's policies, which have contributed to rising onion prices, should be revisited and improved to alleviate this issue. Ashraf | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



## FIRST COLUMN

## THE RIGHT CHOICE FOR BACKPAIN RELIEF

Make an informed decision about the backpain therapy and therapist



NISHANT GEMINI

Physiotherapists and chiropractors are skilled professionals who play a crucial role in supporting your musculoskeletal health. Though both techniques focus on managing pain, they differ in their approaches. While Chiropractors primarily target the musculoskeletal system through manual manipulation techniques, Physiotherapists address physical impairments and disabilities via exercises and manual therapy to enhance physical function.

**Understanding the Unique Approaches**

Physiotherapists excel in optimising physical movement, employing tailored exercises and manual therapy to address impairments and disabilities. Their expertise extends beyond treating pain, encompassing various domains like cardiac rehabilitation, respiratory conditions, and elder care. On the other hand, chiropractors specialise in diagnosing and treating neuromuscular problems, primarily focusing on manual manipulation techniques to alleviate pain and correct misalignments.

**Shared Objectives**

Physiotherapy and chiropractic care have similar objectives: easing pain, enhancing movement, and boosting overall health. The decision between the two depends on your specific condition and treatment preferences. Physiotherapy offers numerous benefits, such as:

**Customised Exercise Programs:** Physiotherapists offer tailored exercises to improve strength and flexibility

**Postural Correction:** Physiotherapy can address and correct poor posture, which is often a result of habits or imbalances. Through exercises and techniques, physiotherapists can help individuals improve their posture, relieving associated discomfort and preventing long-term musculoskeletal issues.

**Manual Therapy:** Manual physical therapy is ideal for addressing soft tissue issues and enhancing the mobility of joints, nerves, and soft tissues

**Recovery from Stroke:** Physiotherapists also assist stroke patients in strengthening affected body parts, enhancing balance, and refining movement to aid recovery



**Manage Lifestyle Disorders:** Targeted physiotherapy exercises and education can help manage lifestyle disorders, such as diabetes and osteoporosis besides helping prevent further complications

Likewise, Chiropractic care also offers several advantages, such as:

**Posture Correction:** Chiropractic treatment may help correct poor posture, especially due to prolonged sitting

**Spinal and Joint Manipulation:** It helps correct misalignments and relieves pain through targeted adjustments

**Nervous System Enhancement:** It promotes overall health by optimising nervous system function

**Non-invasive Treatment:** It is the safest non-surgical option for treating musculoskeletal conditions.

**Factors to Consider Before Choosing the Right Therapy**

**Identify the Condition:** Firstly, it is crucial to identify the nature of your condition. Musculoskeletal disorders may find relief through chiropractic care, as well as physiotherapy while physiotherapy proves beneficial in post-surgery recovery and movement enhancement.

**Preferences:** Individual treatment preferences play a crucial role. Those comfortable with manual manipulation may opt for chiropractic care, whereas individuals seeking a diverse range of treatment techniques may favour physiotherapy. When the chances of injuries relatively less.

**Consultation:** Seeking professional advice is essential to determine the most suitable therapy, as healthcare professionals can provide personalised insights tailored to individual health needs. Most important thing is to find the right professional and right approach.

(The writer is HOD-Physiotherapy, Primus Super Speciality Hospital, New Delhi, views are personal)

## How credible is the Global Hunger Report?



ASHWANI MAHAJAN

Once again India is ranked rather low in the Global Hunger Report, but how credible are the criteria and methods employed in evaluation?



Like previous years, once again a German organisation named Welt Hungerhilfe has released its 'Hunger Index' and the hunger ranking of the countries of the world based on the same, in their so-called Global Hunger Report 2023. In this ranking, India has once again been placed very low at 111th position. It is noteworthy that this year 125 countries have been included in this ranking. Last year in 2022, India was ranked 107th in the list of 121 countries and 2021, India was ranked 101st in the ranking of 116 countries.

What they mean by this hunger index is that not only, there is a huge problem of hunger prevalent in India, but the performance of other countries is far better than India. If we believe the report, the performance of countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka etc., which are dependent on food supplies from India, is much better than India. In such a situation, it is natural to raise questions on this report. Let us try to understand the reality of hunger and its indices in India.

**What is Welt Hungerhilfe's Hunger Index?**

There are 4 parameters to measure this Hunger Index - malnutrition, stunting in children, underweight in children, wasting (low weight for height) and child mortality (mortality rate in children under 5 years of age). The hunger index based on all these parameters is estimated. Welt Hungerhilfe says that in India this index is 28.7, which is considered very serious, whereas in Pakistan it is 26.6, due to which Pakistan is ranked at 102nd position, which is above India. Similarly, Bangladesh is ranked at 81st position with 19.0 points and Sri Lanka is ranked at 60th position with 13.3 points.

If we see the parameters and scales used in constructing this Hunger Index, there are question marks on the data on one hand and the methodology on the other. Not only the Indian government, but many other experts have summarily rejected this report.

**Child Mortality**  
According to that of Welt Hungerhilfe's methodology, child mortality has been a major determinant of the hunger index. While



AS FAR AS DATA ON MALNUTRITION IS CONCERNED, WELT HUNGERHILFE DOES NOT HAVE ANY FACTUAL DATA, AS THE HOUSEHOLD CONSUMPTION SURVEY BY THE CONCERNED OFFICIAL AGENCY HAS NOT BEEN CONDUCTED SINCE 2011

(The author is a Professor, at PGDAV College, University of Delhi)

estimating, the hunger index for the year 2023, surprisingly the child mortality rate data of 2020-21 has been taken. The report puts India's child mortality rate at 31 per thousand.

According to the data published by the Sample Registration System of India, the child mortality rate decreased from 35 per thousand in 2019 to 32 per thousand in the year 2020. If this rate of decline in child mortality is considered, then it is expected to reach 24.4 by the year 2023. In such a situation, there is no reason why the outdated data on the child mortality rate in India should be taken at 31 per thousand, to estimate the hunger index in India in 2023. According to the latest data, the infant mortality rate in Pakistan is 55.8 per thousand and the child mortality rate is higher than that. Despite this, India is placed at 111th position in terms of hunger and Pakistan is shown at 102nd position. The reason for this is that wrong data has been used in other scales of the hunger index too.

There are some errors in the data of other international agencies as well. While figures published by the Indian government were showing the infant mortality rate at 28 per thousand in 2020, international agencies are putting it at 29.848. It is noteworthy that it's not ethical or even legitimate to use any data other than the official data, by any foreign or Indian agency. But this World Hunger Report openly says that the data reported by the governments to the United Nations don't need to only be used in this report. The rapidly improving conditions in India may not be pleasing to the organisations working with their malafide intentions.

**Malnutrition**  
As far as data on malnutrition is concerned, Welt Hungerhilfe does not have any factual data, as the

household consumption survey by the concerned official agency has not been conducted since 2011. Therefore, malnutrition figures have been prepared based on a 'Gallup Survey' with a sample of 3000 people, the methodology of which is also questionable, which shows malnutrition at 16.6 per cent. It is worth noting that in reality, based on real-time health data of more than 7 crore children, the Poshan Tracker, published that only 7.7 per cent of children in the country were malnourished in February 2023. If we talk about production and availability of food, India ranks 35th in the world in the latest global ranking (2020) of 188 countries. The continuously increasing per capita production of food grains, milk, eggs, fruits, vegetables, fish etc. confirms that India is today producing surplus food, compared to demand.

**Stunting and Wasting**

Till recently, data on stunting and wasting assessed by only the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) was available in the country. However, due to the small sample size, the NFHS data was often questioned. Notably, a comprehensive nutrition campaign has been launched by the Ministry of Women and Children, Government of India, to tackle the problem of malnutrition in the country. While NFHS used to draw conclusions based on a relatively small sample, Poshan Tracker is publishing figures based on real-time data from more than 7 crore children, with wasting data consistently showing that only 7.2% of India's children were wasted, whereas Welt Hungerhilfe's Hunger Report (2023) used the wasting figure of NFHS 2019-21, that is, 18.7 per cent.

As far as stunting is concerned, experts believe that there cannot be a single standard of height for the

entire country. Not only stunting but wasting depends on many factors including geography, environment and genetics, apart from nutrition. If we see, the height of Punjabi children is several inches more than the children of the North-East. The World Health Organisation has also accepted this.

Not only this, the Indian Government's Nutrition Campaign (Poshan Abhiyan) is working hard to address the problem of malnutrition in the country, and assessing the outcome periodically, recognising the same, and the World Health Organisation has also started using the data published by Poshan Tracker. Though there are many objections to the methodology of the Welt Hungerhilfe report, even if the formula used by the agency is followed, to calculate the hunger index, and if the correct data is fed i.e. child mortality rate (under 5 mortality rate) of 24.4 per thousand; if wasting and undernourishment are considered to be 7.2 per cent and 7.7 per cent respectively (assuming other age groups too have similar nutrition outcome), as per the data collected by Poshan Tracker, and if stunting figures are discarded since they are not comparable, then hunger index estimated by the author of this article, comes out to be 9.528. Accordingly, as per the formula of Welt Hungerhilfe, India's ranking in the hunger index is not 111th but 48th.

It is natural that after the report of Welt Hungerhilfe, has been published, many opposition political parties have made hunger, an issue, based on this report. In such a situation, it is clear that this agency has consistently been trying to defame India by using questionable data and methodology, which is far from the reality. Strict action should be taken against all such agencies trying to defame India.

## Parenthood and surrogacy: Ethical and societal issues

The societal impact of surrogacy is very complex and needs to be addressed seriously

The recent Supreme Court ruling striking down the rule banning the use of donor gametes for women affected by the rare medical condition of Mayer Rokitansky Kuster Hauser syndrome, though bringing cheers to the affected couple is bound to have far-reaching consequences in society. Across the globe, the number of people having infertility issues is increasing. According to the recent WHO report Around 17.5% of the adult population - roughly 1 in 6 worldwide - experience infertility. This necessitates the need for the advancement of assisted reproductive techniques (ART), which includes in vitro fertilization and surrogacy. Surrogacy is sometimes perceived as a potential solution



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for infertility or as an alternative to adoption. Consequently, it is typically regarded as a cause for celebration, since it helps individuals accomplish their aspirations of becoming parents. Nevertheless, surrogacy entails a plethora of intricate ethical concerns about gender, employment, compensation, exploitation, and inequality. There are two main types of surrogacy, traditional surrogacy and gestational surrogacy. Traditional surrogacy involves artificially impregnating the surrogate mother with the intended father's sperm, resulting in her becoming both the genetic and gestational mother. In traditional surrogacy, the surrogate's eggs are used. This means the surrogate is genetically related to the child she carries.

Gestational surrogacy involves the transfer of an embryo, created by in vitro fertilisation, into the uterus of a surrogate mother who then carries and gives birth to the baby. In gestational surrogacy, the surrogate is not genetically related to the child. An embryo created from the genetic material of the intended parents or donors is implanted into the surrogate's uterus. Surrogacy can be categorised as either commercial or altruistic, based on whether the surrogate receives financial compensation for her pregnancy. Only very few countries in the world like India and Ukraine allow commercial surrogacy. Because of the low cost India has emerged as a popular hub for fertility tourism, drawing couples from overseas for



assisted reproductive techniques. The societal impact of surrogacy is very complex and needs to be addressed seriously. It encompasses a wide range of perspectives, including ethical, legal, emotional, and cultural considerations. Surrogacy can be viewed as an extension of reproductive rights, allowing individuals and couples to have children when they otherwise couldn't. It can provide

an option for those struggling with infertility, same-sex couples, and individuals who are physically unable to carry a pregnancy. Critics argue that surrogacy can lead to the commodification of women's bodies, particularly in commercial surrogacy arrangements where the surrogate is compensated. Concerns about exploitation, coercion, and unequal power dynamics between surrogates and

intended parents are raised. Surrogacy can have significant emotional and psychological consequences for all parties involved. This includes the surrogate, intended parents, and potentially the child. The dynamics of parent-child relationships in surrogacy can be complex. Questions about genetic connection, gestational connection, and the psychological bond between the child and the surrogate may arise. Surrogacy challenges traditional notions of family by involving multiple parties in the reproductive process. Usually, it is the women in the lower strata of society that fall at the receiving end. They have to sacrifice their life for fulfilling the desires of wealthy couples. During the period of surrogacy, they are made to

stay isolated from their family members to avoid the social stigma. More than that, carrying someone else's child in their body creates lots of psychological issues for the surrogate mother. Often there is an unhealthy nexus between the fertility clinics and middlemen, who exploit poor women, luring them with money, most of which will go to the middlemen. In case of any untoward health issues due to pregnancy neither the hospital nor the donor couple takes care of these poor women. Instead of considering poor women as breeding factories, we have to look for alternative methods like adoption or using technologies like artificial wombs to fulfil the parental needs of prospective couples.

Braverman hits out at 'hate marches'

UK Home Secretary Suella Braverman has hit out at the mass protests on the streets of the country in reaction to the Israel-Gaza conflict as "hate marches" and said she will not hesitate to change terror legislation if needed to tackle "utterly odious" bad actors operating beneath the criminality threshold.

protests across London and other cities over the past few weekends. "What we've seen over the last few weekends, we've seen now tens of thousands of people take to the streets following the massacre of Jewish people, the single largest loss of Jewish life since the Holocaust, chanting for the erasure of Israel from the map," she said.

Israeli ministry drafts wartime proposal to transfer Gaza civilians to Sinai

An Israeli government ministry has drafted a wartime proposal to transfer the Gaza Strip's 2.3 million people to Egypt's Sinai peninsula, drawing condemnation from the Palestinians and worsening tensions with Cairo.

form, and we consider it a red line that we will not allow to be crossed," Nabil Abu Rudeineh, spokesman for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, said of the report.

that conducts research but does not set policy — offered three alternatives "to effect a significant change in the civilian reality in the Gaza Strip in light of the Hamas crimes that led to the Sword of Iron war."



People look at photographs of hostages, mostly Israeli civilians who were abducted during the Oct. 7, unprecedented Hamas attack on Israel, in Tel Aviv, Israel Monday.

Israeli families of hostages taken to Gaza caught between grief and hope

As the weeks wear on and anew horrors from the Israel-Hamas war dominate TV screens, families whose loved ones were killed or abducted by militants in the terrifying October 7 raids on southern Israel say it is their mission to ensure the hostages are not forgotten.

Over 260 attendees were killed. "My every waking hour is spent going, going, going, doing everything and anything I can to bring her back," Scharf Schem told The Associated Press.

on street lamps, on empty walls. Hamas militants have released four Israeli captives following negotiations mediated by Egypt and Qatar. And Israel said Monday it had rescued a 19-year-old abducted Israeli soldier, Pvt. Ori Megidish, during a ground operation in Gaza.

Israeli tech CEOs call for Netanyahu's ouster

Negating the notion of "you do not switch (leadership) during war", several leading Israeli tech company leaders have called for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's ouster as soon as possible "to cut down losses".

business newspaper 'Calcalist', accusing the government of failing to operate in the wake of the deadly assault. "He's not fit to lead and needs to go," the tech leader said.

Police reportedly capture gunman who held post-office staff hostage

Japanese police have captured a gunman who holed up at a post office and have rescued a member of staff who was held hostage, NHK television reported Tuesday.

In a third suspicious case, police are also investigating a fire that broke out at an apartment building near the hospital in Toda around the time of the shooting.

COVID-19 inquiry

Johnson's enemy set to testify

London (AP): A former top aide who has accused ex-Prime Minister Boris Johnson of being unfit for office is scheduled to testify on Tuesday at Britain's public inquiry into the COVID-19 pandemic.

Spain's Princess takes another step towards becoming queen

The heir to the Spanish throne, Princess Leonor, is to swear allegiance to the Constitution on her 18th birthday Tuesday, in a gala event that lays the groundwork for her eventual succession as queen when the time comes.



underlining her growing popularity as the modern face of the future monarchy. The ceremony Tuesday was necessary for her to be able to succeed to the crown and become queen, if and when needs be.

tapestries for the ceremony, which was to be shown on national TV and on several giant screens set up in the capital.

King Charles III in Kenya for state visit

King Charles III is in Kenya for his first state visit to a Commonwealth country as monarch. He will acknowledge the "painful aspects" of the countries' shared history while underscoring his commitment to an organization that's been central to Britain's global power since World War II.

She is expected to use the same oath as her father did when, as prince, he turned 18 in 1986.

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Table with columns: Name of the Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s), Demand Notice Date and Amount with NPA date, Description of secured asset (immovable property). Contains multiple rows of financial data.

If the said Borrowers shall fail to make payment to PCHFL as aforesaid, PCHFL shall proceed against the above secured assets under Section 13(4) of the Act and the applicable Rules, entirely at the risks of the said Borrowers as to the costs and consequences.





# Renewable energy sources can meet 65% of world's power supply by 2030: Union Minister

As much as 90 per cent by 2050, he says

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Union Power and New & Renewable Energy Minister R K Singh on Tuesday said renewable energy sources can supply 65 per cent of the world's total electricity by 2030 and as much as 90 per cent by 2050. Addressing the inauguration of the Sixth Assembly of International Solar Alliance (ISA), Singh said "Renewable energy sources have the potential to supply 65 per cent of the world's total electricity by 2030 and decarbonise 90 per cent of the power sector by 2050." Currently, he informed that around 80 per cent of the

global population resides in countries that depend on fossil fuel imports, totalling a staggering 6 billion people. Singh, who is also president of ISA, stated that the recent G20 Summit in New Delhi also underscored the urgent need for a transition to clean energy. Singh also invited all member countries, ISA Partner Organisations and other organisations present to partner with ISA in making it a catalyst for the transformative change. "Our vision in mind when the ISA came into being was to create a sustainable world through the adoption of solar energy solutions," he stated. He stressed that the objective is to triple global renewable energy capacity by 2030, aligning with the countries' established targets and policies and expanding aspirations to include zero and low emission technologies, adopting more blended finance and



risk-sharing facilities in the renewable energy sector. So, he said, "let us approach this Assembly Session with a sense of duty, purpose, and optimism. I am confident that together, we can rise to the challenges of climate change before us." The Co-President of the Assembly, Chrysoula Zacharopoulou, France's Minister of State for Development, Francophonie and International Partnerships

said, "As a critical initiative to fight climate change, the International Solar Alliance has made progress towards being an efficient and results-oriented organisation that is actively engaged in implementing its programmes on a global scale, significantly impacting the worldwide solar energy landscape." Ajay Mathur, Director General, ISA said, "Encouragingly, investment in clean energy has seen a commendable 12 per cent annual growth rate since 2020, driven largely by solar and wind power projects." However, he said that this surge in investment is primarily concentrated in a handful of countries, leaving many developing economies, particularly in Africa. Ministers from 20 countries and delegates from across 116 Member and Signatory countries and 18 prospective countries joined the inaugural ceremony of the sixth ISA Assembly.

# Credit growth to industry decelerated, improved for agriculture in Sept: RBI

**PTI ■ MUMBAI**

The credit growth to industry decelerated in September while it improved in case of agriculture and services sectors, showed a Reserve Bank data released on Tuesday. Personal loan growth too decelerated to 18.2 per cent year-on-year in September 2023 (19.4 per cent a year ago), due to moderation in credit growth to housing, the central bank said. The credit to industry grew 6.5 per cent (y-o-y) in September 2023 as compared with 12.6 per cent in the year-ago month. Among major industries, annual credit growth to 'basic metal & metal products', 'food processing' and 'textiles' accelerated in September 2023 while that to 'all engineering', 'chemicals & chemical products' and 'infrastructure' decelerated. Growth in advances to agriculture and allied activities improved to 16.8 per cent (y-o-y) in September 2023 from 13.4



per cent a year ago. The Reserve Bank data showed credit to services sector grew by 21.3 per cent (y-o-y) in September 2023 from 20.2 per cent a year ago with 'non-banking financial companies (NBFCs)' and 'trade' being the major contributors. Data on sectoral deployment of bank credit for September 2023 has been collected from 40 select banks, accounting for about 93 per cent of the total non-food credit deployed by all scheduled commercial banks.



# Significant increase in demand for AI, blockchain, cyber security talent in India: Report

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

India's tech industry is going through a transformative stage and the growing demand for automation and technical skills like big data analytics and artificial intelligence has created the need for skilled talent in the industry, says a report. According to global recruitment firm Michael Page India, there was 28-30 per cent growth in the demand for Artificial Intelligence (AI), blockchain, Machine Learning (ML) and Cyber Security talent in the third quarter of 2023. "As AI continues to transform various sectors, companies are seeking top talent to harness the potential of this technology. The demand remains high for experienced talent at mid to senior levels," said Pranshu Upadhyay, Regional Director of Michael Page India. Demand remains high for experienced talent at mid to senior level. Observing the job postings volume on the Michael Page India website, a

significant surge in demand, ranging from 28-30 per cent, was seen in Q3 2023 compared to Q1 and Q2. "A noticeable shift is observed in the definition of a Chief Technology Officer (CTO), emphasizing visionary qualities and forward-thinking perspectives. A modern day CTO is not expected to just execute but ideate as much," Upadhyay said. Upadhyay further said that even at mid/junior level apart from hard skill sets in IT, soft skills such as good communication and interpersonal abilities are gaining prominence, underscoring the holistic approach required in the tech industry. Michael Page is a leading global recruitment firm specialising in permanent, contract, and temporary recruitment. Michael Page launched its India business in 2011 and has over 200+ specialist recruiters working on mid to senior level roles in 11 disciplines across offices in Mumbai, Delhi-NCR and Bengaluru.

# Colgate Palmolive gets ₹170 cr Transfer Pricing Order from Income Tax

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Leading oral care products maker Colgate-Palmolive (India) has received a Rs 170 crore Transfer Pricing Order from Income Tax authorities disallowing 'certain' international transactions. The Transfer Pricing Order is

for the financial year 2021-22. Transfer Pricing refers to the pricing of cross-border transactions between two related entities. The company will take this before the Dispute Resolution Panel and is awaiting completion of the assessment proceedings, Colgate-Palmolive



(India) Ltd said in regulatory updates on Monday evening. "The company is awaiting completion of the Draft Assessment proceedings and post the same, an application will be made before the Dispute Resolution Panel (DRP)," it said. The Assessing Authority has disallowed certain interna-

tional transactions of the company, it added. However, Colgate-Palmolive (India) also added that there is no impact on the financial, operation or other activities of the company due to this Transfer Pricing Order. The DRP is an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

mechanism for resolving disputes related to Transfer Pricing in international transactions. Last week, Colgate-Palmolive India reported a 22.31 per cent increase in net profit at Rs 340.05 crore for the September quarter. Its sales were up 6.09 per cent to Rs 1,462.38 crore.

# Markets snap 2 days gain; settle lower



**PTI ■ MUMBAI**  
Equity benchmark indices snapped two days of rally to settle lower on Tuesday amid unabated foreign fund outflows and escalating tensions in the Middle East. Besides, investors were cautious ahead of the US Federal Reserve's interest rate decision. The 30-share BSE Sensex declined 237.72 points or 0.37 per cent to settle at 63,874.93. During the day, it fell 300.12 points or 0.46 per cent to 63,812.53.

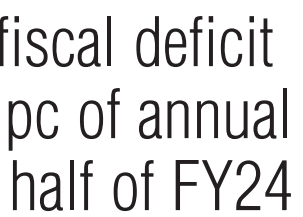
The Nifty dipped 61.30 points or 0.32 per cent to 19,079.60. Among the Sensex firms, Mahindra & Mahindra, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, IndusInd Bank, Reliance Industries, Axis Bank and HDFC Bank were among the major losers. Titan, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Asian Paints, HCL Technologies, Tech Mahindra, NTPC, Nestle and Power Grid were the major gainers. In Asian markets, Seoul, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled lower while Tokyo ended in the green.

European markets were trading in the positive territory. The US markets ended significantly higher on Monday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.93 per cent to USD 88.31 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 1,761.86 crore on Monday, according to exchange data. The BSE benchmark jumped 329.85 points or 0.52 per cent to settle at 64,112.85 on Monday. The Nifty advanced 93.65 points or 0.49 per cent to 19,140.90

# Government fiscal deficit rises to 39.3 pc of annual target in first half of FY24

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Central government's fiscal deficit touched 39.3 per cent of the full year target in the first half of the current financial year, slightly higher than 37.3 per cent recorded in the year-ago period. In actual terms, the fiscal deficit or the gap between expenditure and revenue worked out at Rs 7.02 lakh crore at the end of September 2023, showed data released by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA). In the Union Budget, the government projected to bring down the fiscal deficit to 5.9 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) in the current 2023-24 financial year. The fiscal deficit was 6.4 per cent of the GDP in 2022-23 against the earlier estimate of 6.71 per cent.



The tax revenue was at Rs 11.60 lakh crore or 49.8 per cent of the annual target. During April-September 2022-23, the net tax collection was 52.3 per cent of that year's annual Budget Estimate (BE). Centre's total expenditure was Rs 21.19 lakh crore or 47.1 per cent of BE of 2023-24, marginally higher than 46.2 per cent of BE 2022-23.



# Key infra sector growth slows down to 8.1 pc in September

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

The growth of eight key infrastructure sectors slowed down to 8.1 per cent in September 2023 against 8.3 per cent recorded a year ago, according to the official data released on Tuesday. Crude oil output dipped by 0.4 per cent in September as against a contraction of 2.3 per cent in the same month last year. The core sector growth in August was 12.5 per cent. The output growth of the eight sectors was also lower at 7.8 per cent in April-September 2023-24 against 9.8 per cent in the year-ago period.

# Bharti Airtel Q2 net profit falls 37.5 per cent to ₹1,341 crore

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Telecom company Bharti Airtel on Tuesday reported a 37.5 per cent drop in its consolidated net profit to Rs 1,341 crore for the second quarter ended September 30. The net profit stood at Rs 2,145 crore a year ago. For the just-ended quarter, the consolidated net income (before exceptional items) came in at Rs 2,960 crore, up by 44.2 per cent year-on-year. The quarterly revenue rose 7.3 per cent to Rs 37,044 crore, "backed by strong and con-

sistent performance in India operations", according to the company statement. "This has been yet another quarter of solid revenue growth and improved margins. Our India revenue continues to gain momentum and grew sequentially by 2.4 per cent. Our consolidated revenue, however, was impacted by the devaluation of the Nigerian Naira," Bharti Airtel managing director Gopal Vittal said. The company recorded 7.7 million 4G/5G net subscribers addition and exited the quar-

ter with an "industry-leading ARPU of 203", he added. "Our Postpaid and Homes businesses continued their strong growth trajectory as we added the highest ever net adds in both these segments in any single quarter. Our performance is underpinned by a simple and consistent strategy of focusing on quality customers and delivering the best experience to them in a seamless digital way," Vittal further said. Mobile ARPU increased to Rs 203 in Q2 2024 against Rs 190 in Q2 2023, Bharti Airtel said.

# CARS24 narrows loss to ₹468 cr; expects business to turn profitable in coming years

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Pre-owned vehicle sale, purchase and financing platform CARS24 has reported narrowing of loss to Rs 468 crore for the 2022-23 financial year. The company had reported a loss of Rs 1,093 crore in 2021-22 fiscal. Revenue from operations rose to Rs 5,535 crore in 2022-23 fiscal, as compared to Rs 5,136 crore in FY22, it said in its latest annual report. The company stated that with narrowing of losses in FY23, it expects to turn profitable in the coming years.

"We are committed to seizing the dominant position in India's used-car market and will persistently invest in cutting-edge technology and innovative solutions to deliver an unparalleled user experience," it noted. "The company said it has substantially reduced advertising expenses even as it maintains consistent growth. "In the used-car category, we've attained the highest level of brand awareness, powered by strong word-of-mouth that has enabled us to cut down on our marketing expenditure," CARS24 said. By solving for

process efficiency, automation and implementing these changes across the organisation, the company has achieved substantial cost reductions, it added. "These cost savings, in turn, have allowed us to reallocate resources to areas such as technology development, ensuring we're well-positioned for the long-term and can continue to provide exceptional value to our customers," the company said. CARS24 total operating expense in FY23 stood at Rs 947 crore, as compared to Rs 1,155 crore in FY22.

# Brazil offers to share ethanol production tech with India to resolve sugar-related dispute at WTO

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Brazil has offered to share its ethanol production technology with India as part of efforts to resolve a sugar related dispute between the two countries at WTO (World Trade Organisation), an official said. The South American nation in its proposal has stated that the ethanol production technology would help India to use surplus sugar in making ethanol. The offer can help India utilise its excess sugar output and ease competition for Brazil in the international sugar market. Brazil is the largest producer of sugarcane and ethanol in the world. It is a leader in the technology used for ethanol production. It is also the largest exporter of sugar in the world. India is the world's second-

largest producer. The proposal could benefit India as it aims to gradually increase the percentage of blending of ethanol in petroleum auto fuels and reduce dependence on imported crude oil. "Brazil has a flex technology. They do ethanol blending. That technology is good for India also. Brazil has argued that India can use its surplus sugar for ethanol production and through that India can deal with its fuel issue also and that surplus sugar would not enter into the global markets and not impact world prices," the official said.



"They have given a proposal. Discussions are happening," the official added. Ethanol is used to blend with oil to power vehicles. Use of

ethanol, extracted from sugarcane as well as broken rice and other agri produce, will help the world's third largest oil consumer and importing country cut its reliance on overseas shipments. Also, it cuts carbon emissions. India is dependent on imports for meeting 85 per cent of its oil needs. There is a target of 20 per cent ethanol blending with petrol by 2025. In 2019, Brazil, Australia and Guatemala dragged India into the WTO's dispute settlement mechanism alleging that New Delhi's support measures like Fair and Remunerative Price

(FRP) to sugarcane farmers are inconsistent with global trade rules. A WTO dispute settlement panel on December 14, 2021, ruled that India's support measures for the sugar sector are inconsistent with the global trade norms. In January 2022, India appealed against the panel's ruling at the WTO's appellate body, which is the final authority to pass rulings against such disputes. The appellate body, however, is not functioning due to differences among the countries on appointments of members of the body.

Several disputes are already pending with the appellate body. The US has been blocking the appointment of the members. The bilateral trade between India and Brazil increased to USD 16.6 billion in 2022-23 as against USD 12.2 billion in 2021-22. Trade gap is in favour of India. According to reports, Brazil is a leader in ethanol-blended gasoline and has achieved 25 per cent blending levels. Flex-fuel vehicles can run on either gasoline or ethanol now have cornered a big market in Brazil, accounting for over 80 per cent of new light vehicle sales in 2022.

## BUSINESS BRIEF

**'MORE THAN 42,000 CASES CAME FOR RESOLUTION UNDER INSOLVENCY LAW'**  
New Delhi: More than 42,000 cases have been brought for resolution under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), which has led to a behavioural change in the business landscape, encouraging companies to prioritise financial stability and sustainable practices, according to an official. At an event in Delhi on Tuesday, IBCI Whole Time Member Sudhaker Shukla also said that while competition and innovation are two things that drive a company, resolvability is a goal to cherish. "It ensures that companies remain sustainable and adaptable," he added.

**LUXURYCO.CLUB STARTS NETWORKING PLATFORM**  
New Delhi: Luxury Consultant Madhavi Advani introduced the LuxuryCo. Club, a premium networking platform, and celebrated excellence with the Luxury Awards. The event featured esteemed guests like H.E. Raunaq Yar Khan and singer Padamshree Penaz Masani, along with other notable personalities from various fields.

**POWERGRID HOLDS VIGILANCE AWARENESS WEEK**  
Gurugram: Power Grid Corporation of India Limited is organizing activities across its establishments in the country during Vigilance Awareness Week (VAW) 2023. CMD, Directors and CVO led a walkathon to spread awareness as part of VAW 23 celebrations on October 30, 2023 in which employees of Corporate Centre Gurugram participated.

**IMMERSIVE METAVERSE PLATFORM**  
New Delhi: With the urge to break boundaries, go beyond just music, and embrace new technologies, Bickram Ghosh and Metastar Media are set to launch their fully immersive Metaverse platform for music lovers to engage and interact with Bickram's art and legacy. "This is a fantastic breakthrough in fan engagement for all artists and for me in particular... Music lovers can take a deep dive into my music, life & artistic journey, including stories and anecdotes relating to every single award, album, and concert, which I've never shared before," said Bickram.

# MESSI WINS BALLON D'OR FOR RECORD 8TH TIME

**AP ■ PARIS**  
The list reads 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2015, 2019, 2021, and now 2023. Lionel Messi won the men's Ballon d'Or for a record-extending eighth time on Monday after fulfilling his life's ambition by leading Argentina to the World Cup title in Qatar last year. Adding to his silverware the one major trophy that eluded him in his storied career was the decisive factor in an otherwise quite mundane season — for his standards — at Paris Saint-Germain. The 36-year-old Messi won ahead of Manchester City forward Erling Haaland and his former PSG teammate Kylian Mbappe. Messi thanked his Argentina coach, teammates and staff for making his victory possible. "Tonight I'm enjoying myself. It's a pleasure that will never leave me, and I hope to be able to enjoy it for many years to come," Messi said through a translator. "Becoming world champion was the title we were missing. I'd like to thank everyone who helped make Argentina the world champion team." Messi also paid tribute to the late Diego Maradona, who also helped Argentina win the World Cup, back in 1986.

"This title and this trophy," Messi said, "I share them with you and all our Argentina comrades." Aitana Bonmati won the women's award for guiding Spain to victory at the Women's World Cup in August. She also helped Barcelona win the Women's Champions League and Spanish league. A year after missing out on the shortlist for the 2022 Ballon d'Or, and despite leaving top-level European soccer behind, Messi has recovered his crown. He won the sport's biggest individual prize due to his tremendous World Cup. In Qatar, Messi was involved in 10 goals for Argentina, scoring seven and assisting three. He scored twice in the final against France. His final season with PSG was less shiny. Although PSG won a record-extending 11th French league, it again exited the Champions League in the round of 16. Nobody else has won more than five Ballon d'Or. Cristiano Ronaldo has five, and Michel Platini, Johan Cruyff and Marco van Basten each won it three times. Since moving to Inter Miami in the United States, Messi has already picked up his first silverware there by inspiring the team

## SPAIN'S WORLD CUP-WINNING STAR BONMATI TAKES WOMEN'S PRIZE



to victory in the U.S. Leagues Cup. Messi's latest win marked the first time a Major League Soccer-based player got such recognition. Messi received the trophy from former Manchester United star David Beckham, who is one of the owners of his new club. "I'm very happy with the decisions I've made and to be with Miami," Messi said. He succeeded Karim Benzema. Mbappe hoped another Frenchman could win the Ballon d'Or after he scored a hat-trick in the World Cup final, though France lost in a penalty shootout. Haaland led City to a treble of trophies last season - Champions League, English Premier League, FA Cup - while scoring 52 goals. Bonmati had already been awarded UEFA best women's player and the Golden Ball for the top Women's World Cup player. She scored three times and assisted twice at the tournament. She followed in the footsteps of her teammate Alexia Putellas, who took the past two awards. Bonmati won ahead of Sam Kerr and Salma Paralluelo. "We are a country that lives football, intensely," Bonmati said. "We have a unique talent in Spain."

For the first time last year, the trophy awarded by France Football magazine was based on achievements from the past season. It was previously awarded based on performances through a calendar year. Stanley Matthews won the first Ballon d'Or in 1956. The women's trophy was created in 2018, and both were cancelled in 2020 because of the pandemic. In other awards, the best under-21 player was Jude Bellingham, while Haaland won the Gerd Muller award for the best striker of the year. The Lev Yashin award for best goalkeeper went to Emiliano Martinez. In addition to his trophy, the Argentina goalkeeper collected boos and whistles from the audience at the Theatre du Chatelet that included Mbappe and France coach Didier Deschamps. Martinez was criticized for the excessive tone of his World Cup celebrations. He carried a doll with Mbappe's face on it while standing alongside teammate Messi as Argentina paraded the trophy back home. Martinez, who also made a crude gesture after winning the Golden Glove award for best goalkeeper, was filmed mocking Mbappe in the team dressing room after the game.



## Coco Gauff and Iga Swiatek win their WTA Finals opening matches in straight sets

**AP ■ CANCUN (MEXICO)**  
U.S. Open champion Coco Gauff earned the first WTA Finals win of her career on Monday night, breezing past three-time major runner-up Ons Jabeur 6-0, 6-1 in a round-robin match interrupted for a little more than an hour by rain. Gauff, a 19-year-old from Florida, went 0-3 in singles at the season-ending championship in 2022. She quickly grabbed the first seven games against Jabeur - using a 9-0 advantage in winners to help accumulate a 29-10 edge in points - before play was halted because of the weather. When they resumed, Jabeur held serve to claim her first game and make it 1-1 in the second set. But she wouldn't gain another. After one shanked forehand in the second set, Jabeur spiked her racket off the temporary outdoor hard court that has drawn so much criticism from the players in Cancun. Later, she dumped a backhand return into the net and bounced her racket again. It wasn't until the last game that Jabeur finally earned a break point - three in all. Gauff saved each of those and then converted her fourth match point when Jabeur sent a forehand wide. Earlier Monday, Iga Swiatek climbed out of a deep hole against Marketa Vondrousova and dominated the second set for a 7-6 (3), 6-0 victory. Both women then added their voices to the chorus of complaints about the playing conditions. "For sure," Swiatek said, "it's not

comfortable." Swiatek, who won the French Open in June for her third Grand Slam title, is ranked No. 2 and has a chance to overtake Aryna Sabalenka at No. 1, depending on their results this week. Sabalenka is also among the players who have said the court built for the event is not satisfactory. Vondrousova called it "honestly very bad." The WTA said the court meets its standards. The left-handed Vondrousova, the reigning Wimbledon champion, broke in three of Swiatek's initial four service games en route to a 5-2 edge at the outset. Swiatek had trouble finding her range and was responsible for 13 of the match's first 16 unforced errors. Vondrousova served for that set at 5-2 and 5-4, but Swiatek began turning things around and grabbed 13 of 17 points in one stretch. What became a four-game run put Swiatek ahead 6-5. "I just wanted to be more precise and more solid and not play risky," Swiatek said. At 3-all in the tiebreaker, Swiatek took over for good. She smacked a big forehand winner, collected a service winner and hit her first ace of the evening to get to set point, before Vondrousova double-faulted to end it. That set took 64 minutes. The second lasted just 35, with Swiatek holding a 27-9 edge in points. "She was playing amazing," Vondrousova said, "and there was nothing much to do."

## Australia says it won't bid for 2034 FIFA World Cup; Saudi Arabia likely to host

**AP ■ MELBOURNE (AUSTRALIA)**  
Football Australia on Tuesday said it won't bid for the 2034 FIFA World Cup, clearing the way for Saudi Arabia to host the men's marquee tournament. The chances of Australia hosting the 2034 event appeared unlikely after the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) backed the Saudi bid on October 5. Indonesia's football association initially showed interest in a joint bid with Australia, potentially alongside Malaysia and Singapore, but that faded when Indonesia instead backed Saudi Arabia. "We have explored the opportunity to bid to host the FIFA World Cup and — having taken all factors into consideration — we have reached the conclusion not to do so for the 2034 competition," Football Australia said in a statement. Australia will instead attempt to secure hosting rights for the 2029 Club World Cup and the 2026 Women's Asian Cup. "We believe we are in a strong position to host the oldest women's internation-



al competition in the world, the AFC Women's Asian Cup 2026, and then welcome the greatest teams in world football for the 2029 FIFA Club World Cup," the FA statement said. Australia and New Zealand successfully co-hosted the Women's World Cup in July and August. Brisbane, Queensland state, is due to become the third Australian city to host the Olympics when it stages the 2032 Summer Games.

## Neeraj Chopra aims to work on his 'leg blocking' technique to breach 90m mark

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Olympic and world champion javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra on Tuesday made it clear that his best is yet to come and indicated that the elusive 90m mark could be breached next year if he makes improvement in his technique, especially concerning the leg-blocking. Chopra became world champion earlier this year, adding to his historic gold in the Tokyo Olympics, and then defended his Asian Games title in the Hangzhou recently. "I want to say this very clearly that my best is yet to come. I have not felt in a competition for a long time that I have done my best or done near my best," the 25-year-old Chopra said at a promotional event here. "6 cm is left to be achieved. It was 89.94m at Stockholm Diamond League (in June 2022). I was a bit behind the line that time. Had I thrown my javelin by moving a bit ahead, it would have been 90m," said Chopra at the event announcing his association



with top supplements brand 'Optimum Nutrition'. His top-class flexibility and arm speed made him Olympic and world champion but Chopra wants to perfect his leg-blocking technique. "My coach always says that it 60 per

cent legs and 40 per cent upper body. So leg work is very important. I have to do a lot of improvement in leg work," said the superstar javelin thrower. "I do a lot of things good. My flexibility is quite good, but personally I feel because of my arm speed, I am doing very well. "Next year, I feel I will improve on my technique, will work more on my strength and flexibility. If everything is all right, 100 per cent fit and my groin is all right, I will do very well in Paris Olympics." He admitted that his technique while winning the Hangzhou Asian Games gold was not up to the mark. "My technique was not going well during Hangzhou Asian Games. My leg-work was not that good, my blocking leg was bending. It was not that great but the important thing was that my arm was giving very good throw, my arm speed was very good." He also said that "in some way or the other," his preparations for Paris Olympics will be different, though he did not elaborate much.

## Shooter Shriyanka wins Olympic quota for India, finishes 4th in Asian Shooting C'ship

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Shriyanka Sadangi grabbed India's 13th Paris Olympics quota when she finished fourth in the women's 50m rifle 3 positions (3P) event at the ongoing Asian Shooting Championship in Changwon, Korea on Tuesday. Shriyanka shot 440.5, to bow out after the 43rd shot of the 45-shot final, equally distributed between the kneeling, prone and standing positions. Experienced Korean Lee Eunseo clinched the gold while reigning air rifle world champion Han Jiayu of China won silver. China also took the bronze through Xia Siyu. All Indian women shooters in the 3P competition were on top of their mark from the qualification stage itself. Sift Kaur Samra, the India number one, shot 592 playing for ranking points only (RPO) to soar to the top of the field. Ashi Chouksey shot 591 to take the first qualifying spot among contenders and second overall. Shriyanka and Ayushi Podder made the top-eight with scores of 588 and 587 respectively.



Manini Kaushik, shooting RPO as well, was 10th overall with a tally of 586. Shriyanka was the hottest off the blocks among the three Indians in the final beginning with a 10.9. She was second with 51.3

after the first five kneeling shots, while Ayushi and Ashi were lying sixth and seventh respectively. After 10-shots, Han and Lee were already 1-2 and at the end of it Shriyanka had replaced Ayushi in fourth, a position she would hold till the end. The prone position saw Ashi begin her move up while Shriyanka consolidated her fourth spot. Ayushi fell behind to seventh. Lee had taken over the lead from Han. The fourth shot in the standing position was telling for both Shriyanka and Ashi as the former shot a 10.8 while the latter an 8.7. An Indian quota was confirmed after the first 10-shots in the standing position when Korean Bae Sanghee and Ayushi bowed out in eighth and seventh respectively. Going into the final five single-shots in fifth and sixth positions, Shriyanka shot 10.1 to Ashi's 9.8 as the former confirmed the quota in her name. Arina Altukhova of Kazakhstan was out next, but she too had picked up one of the two available Paris quotas. With 1.6 between her and China's Xia, Shriyanka shot a 10.0 for her 43rd to finish a creditable fourth.

## Vidit crushes Niemann to join pack of leaders



**PTI ■ ISLE OF MAN (UK)**  
Indian Grandmaster Vidit Gujrathi crashed through the defences of Hans Moke Niemann of the United States to join the leaders' pack on 4.5 points after the end of the sixth round of FIDE Grand Swiss, a part of the world championship cycle, here. Having lost the first round itself, it has been a remarkable turnaround for Vidit, who recorded his fourth victory in last five games displaying some immaculate technique.

Arjun Erigaisi is the other Indian in the eight-way lead that includes American duo of Fabiano Caruana and Hikaru Nakamura, Russian Andrey Esipenko, Serb Alexandr Predke, Javokhir Sindarov of Uzbekistan and Yu Yangti of China. The next best Indians are a full point behind and need a lot of hard work in the last five rounds of USD 460000 prize money tournament. They are Aravinth Chithambaram, S.L. Narayanan and Nihal Sarin. In the sixth round Chithambaram held higher ranked Nodirbek Abdusattarov of Uzbekistan to a draw while Nihal could not break the ice with his Kerala state-mate Narayanan. After a stupendous run in the past few months, R Praggnanandhaa needs to get the steam back post the only rest day in the event. The Indian star is still looking for an elusive first vic-

# Dribbling Past Odds: Hockey star Vandana battles on and off the field

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Born to Dalit parents, Vandana Katariya had to endure snide remarks about her caste since childhood but even then it was hard to imagine that people would burst crackers in-front of her home in Roshnabad area of Uttarakhand's Haridwar district after India lost Olympics semi-final to Argentina. Vandana was still in Tokyo but a man called Vijay Pal and his friends were dancing in-front of her house and hurling casteist abuses at her family members. The man was arrested but she showed one and all, how difficult it is to rise through the ranks and wear national colours where deft stick work to outwit the opposition isn't the only criteria

for success. One also needs to learn to dribble past racism, casteism, poverty and social taboos that never quite stops chasing the shadows. On Wednesday, Vandana did that imaginary spade work past all hindrances for the 300th time when she took the field against Japan in the women's Asian Champions Trophy. Vandana always dreamt of becoming a hockey player since childhood. But she had to beat social stereotypes like grandmother's wish to learn household chores and get settled. Every rising star needs a hero and for Vandana, it was her father Nahar Singh Katariya — her pillar of strength. Nahar, who was a wrestler himself, fully backed her daughter



and went against the society and his family to help Vandana pursue her career in sports. "My father used to run here and there to arrange money so that I can continue to play hockey. I don't have any idea from where he got the money for my stay in sports hostel. There were seeds of doubt at times whether I would ever be good enough to

support my family but my father never stopped believing in me," Vandana had told PTI earlier. Her father, her biggest support system passed away just before the Tokyo Olympics and at that time it was her teammates who came in her support. Vandana overcame the adversities and performed her national duty, helping India finish a his-

toric fourth in Tokyo. She scored four goals, including a hat-trick against South Africa during the group stage. But as she cast personal tragedy, those casteist slurs were bleeding her thousand cuts. She bled but never stopped from doing her duty for the flag. In her initial days, Vandana did not even have proper equipments to train. But life changed when she came under the wings of her first coach Pradeep Chinyoti, who spotted her at a school tournament. Chinyoti soon asked her to shift her base to Meerut in 2004 and the hard work finally paid off when she was selected in the junior women's team two years later in 2006.

She rose steadily and soon displayed her skills and helped India to clinch a bronze medal at the 2013 Junior World Cup in Monchengladbach, Germany and also emerged as the country's top goal scorer with five strikes. Vandana is a true blue striker. A package of speed, skills and ability to break into the opposition defence makes her different from others. Her gradual progression also saw her lead the Indian women's team in the 2016 Asian Champions Trophy, where her under leadership the country won the title, defeating China 2-1 in the final. Vandana Katariya is one of the finest ever to have donned the India blues and her best is yet to come.

tory here as he split points for the sixth time in a row here, this time against Shant Sargsyan of Armenia. Also settling for a draw was P. Harikrishna against Aryan Chopra but in another shocker, D. Gukesh succumbed to yet another defeat in the event as Azerbaijan's Aydin Suleymanli proved stronger. Gukesh, who is clearly struggling with his form here, is completely out of contention and will look forward to some damage control in the remaining part of the event. Coming back to winning ways was the Indian trio of Abhijeet Gupta, Raunak Sadhwani and B. Adhiban. Gupta and Sadhwani reached a respectable 50 per cent post their victories while Adhiban inched himself up to 2.5 points. Vidit opened with the Ruy Lopez as white and quickly exchanged off both the rooks to reach a queen and minor pieces middle game. The position was riddled with a lot of complexities but Vidit navigated them in sheer style. Walking his Bishop to the base rank and Queen to the seventh to knock down a couple of pawns, the Indian ensured his King's safety at the same time and romped home in 53 moves. Arjun chose the Petroff defence to hold Yangyi easily. The pieces changed hands at a regular intervals and in less than thirty moves the players arrived at a drawn rook and pawns endgame. The draw was a just result. In the women's section, R. Vaishali had another good result as she played out a draw with top seed Alexandra Goryachkina of Russia. Vaishali moved to 4.5 points and remains in joint second position behind Anna Muzychuk of Ukraine, who defeated overnight leader Bisara Assaubayeva of Kazakhstan to take her tally to five out of a possible six.



# PAKISTAN PACERS RUN THROUGH BANGLADESH

PTI ■ KOLKATA

The express pace battery, led by Shaheen Shah Afridi, helped Pakistan bundle out Bangladesh for a below-par 204 in the World Cup here on Tuesday.

The 23-year-old rattled the Bangladeshi top-order and became the fastest Pakistani to reach 100 ODI wickets before ending with figures of 9-1-23-3. Mohammad Wasim Jr. Then cleaned up the tail returning with figures of 8.1-1-31-3 as Bangladesh failed to last the distance yet again to be bowled out in 45.1 overs.

Shaheen may have lost his pace a bit after recovering from a knee injury, but the 23-year-old bowled with clever variations and extracted swing on a flat Eden wicket.

Shaheen straightaway got into the action, trapping Tanzid Hasan leg before wicket with extra bounce and late swing. That happened to be his 100th wicket in ODIs. He became the fastest Pakistani to do so beating Saqlain Mushtaq's mark by a couple of innings.

A brilliant low diving catch by Usama Mir at forward short leg made it two in two overs for Shaheen.

It would have been worse for Bangladesh but Mahmudullah made a responsible 56 off 70 balls (6x4, 1x6) in a 79-run part-



nership with Litton Das (45; 64b). From 6/2 in 2.4 overs, Bangladesh were looking at yet another capitulation when Haris Raul dismissed Mushfiqur Rahim to reduce them to 23/3 before Mahmudullah came to his team's rescue.

The intent was clear from the Bangladesh perspective as they promoted Mahmudullah to No 5.

After Shaheen was taken off the attack, Pakistan also failed to build pressure from both ends, giving Litton and Mahmudullah enough opportunity to make a quick recovery.

The likes of Wasim Jr and Mir, who impressed with their tidy show against South Africa, gave a lot of freebies and the Bangladeshi duo was happy to pierce the gaps.

They welcomed Wasim Jr with a couple of boundaries while Mir too was hit for a four in his first over.

Bangladesh were looking in no trouble before off-spinner Iftikhar Ahmed (1/44) provided the crucial breakthrough dismissing Litton.

Shaheen was recalled and bowling around the wicket, he produced a gem of a delivery to end Mahmudullah's stay in the middle.

Skipper Shakib Al Hasan then tried to forge a partnership but frittered away his start and was done in by a short ball from by Haris Raul (2/36).

# Race to Semis: New Zealand takes on South Africa



PTI ■ PUNE

One side endured the agony of a close defeat and other felt the ecstasy of victory in a rip-roaring game but when New Zealand and South Africa clash in a World Cup game here on Wednesday both will start on an even keel.

The current edition of World Cup has featured mostly lop-sided games but if the two games stood out, one certainly was South Africa's one-wicket win against Pakistan in Chennai and New Zealand nearly pulled off a sensational chase of 388 against Australia before finishing five runs short.

With both teams firmly in contention for semi-final berths, one can expect good game of cricket where batters of both sides are expected to set the tone of the match.

For New Zealand (8 points from 6 games), the Dharamsala-leg after four straight victories didn't pan out on expected lines and another loss would give the likes of Afghanistan (6 points) and Pakistan (4 points) a shot at semi-final qualification.

On the other hand, if South Africa (10 points from 6 games) win, the 12 points will almost put them in the last-four bracket alongside India.

Hence, it would be one of the most high-stakes game of the league stage and a team like Pakistan wouldn't mind if New Zealand suffer a hat-trick of defeats.

Both teams have put up more than impressive batting performances in most of the games but the track at the Maharashtra Cricket Association ground in Gahunje hasn't exactly been a belter with spinners getting sufficient help like Afghanistan spinners did against Sri Lanka in their seven-wicket victory.

OLD VS NEW

The most interesting aspect of the contest is the form of batters from both sides which has been the reason of their success so far. Quinton de Kock (431), with three hundreds so far, has had perfect swansong tourney and would be determined to leave the ODI platform on a high.

As destructive as anyone on his day, De Kock has been rolling back years and showing what he is capable of.

If De Kock has pulverised the opposition with his game of power and timing, on the other end young Rachin Ravindra (406), with more of Sachin Tendulkar's flair and a bit of Rahul Dravid's grit, is setting the world stage on fire.

The left-hander has announced his arrival as New Zealand cricket's next batting sensation and the manner in which he plays the aerial shots is a visual delight. Add to it, his steady but unspectacular slow left-arm orthodox bowling, makes him a complete package.

What makes it difficult to choose between the sides is the performance of the batters — if Heinrich Klaasen (300 runs) is the power-hitting cum finisher for South Africa, New Zealand have their match in Jimmy Neesham, who nearly pulled off an improbable heist in fading lights at Dharamsala.

If David Miller's brute power gives an x-factor to Proteas, Daryl Mitchell's (322 runs) ability to take the game deep is an advantage for the Black Caps. Aiden Markram's skills could be countered by Glenn Phillips' talent as both bring another facet of their game — spin bowling to the table.

In fact, the batting similarities do not end there. Even the rival captains have similar batting styles. Both Temba Bavuma and Tom Latham, leading in place of an

injured Kane Williamson, are dogged accumulators, who once set, can be a thorn in the opposition flesh.

BOWLING UNIT

South Africa will expect that pace spearhead Kagiso Rabada is fit and raring to go after missing out on the Pakistan game in Chennai. Rabada has that aura which can always worry opposition and his presence certainly helps youngsters like Gerald Coetzee and Marco Jansen to up their game.

One department where South Africa hold a distinct advantage is having both Keshav Maharaj's orthodox left-arm spin and Tabraiz Shamsi's left-arm wrist spin.

While Shamsi won the 'Player of the Match' award against Pakistan, New Zealanders will not be too worried as they played Kuldesh Yadav comfortably in the opening game.

New Zealand have Mitchell Santner in their ranks but Phillips after his stellar under four runs in a 10-over spell has come up well as the second spinner with Ish Sodhi being confined to reserve bench.

TEAMS FROM:

**South Africa:** Temba Bavuma (c), Gerald Coetzee, Quinton de Kock (wk), Reeza Hendricks, Marco Jansen, Heinrich Klaasen (wk), Andile Phehlukwayo, Keshav Maharaj, Aiden Markram, David Miller, Lungi Ngidi, Kagiso Rabada, Tabraiz Shamsi, Rassie van der Dussen and Lizaad Williams.

**New Zealand:** Kane Williamson (c), Trent Boult, Mark Chapman, Devon Conway, Lockie Ferguson, Matt Henry, Tom Latham (vc & wk), Daryl Mitchell, Jimmy Neesham, Glenn Phillips, Rachin Ravindra, Mitchell Santner, Ish Sodhi, Tim Southee and Will Young.

# Latham counts on world-class bowling attack to tame in-form SA

PTI ■ PUNE

Stand-in New Zealand skipper Tom Latham on Tuesday called on his world-class bowlers to be proactive and understand the match-ups ahead of their crucial World Cup clash against a rampaging South Africa here.

It will be a battle between two formidable batting units when South Africa and New Zealand, who are currently at the second and third spots respectively, face off at the MCA stadium here on Wednesday.

"Yeah, I think it's just recognising situations as best you can and trying to be proactive as much as we can as well from a bowling point of view and I guess from a field placement point of view as well," Latham said during the pre-match press conference.

"Like every team we do our scouting, trying to find weaknesses from a batting point of view from South Africa, they're a team that's running pretty hot at the moment. They've got some guys in form from a batting point of view. So again, it's going to be another great challenge. And we have come to a different venue and we've got to adapt as quick as we can to this ground here in Pune."

South Africa have posted three of the six highest scores in this edition of the ODI World Cup and Latham said they will need to strike regularly to stop the Protea batters.

"Wickets are really important. That's the way to stem the run rate as best you can by taking wickets and that's not just at the top, that's through the middle as well. We've seen South Africa, they're running really hot at the moment. And they've got



a lot of power throughout the whole lineup. "I guess it's just trying to understand the match-ups as best you can. And we certainly know we've got a world-class bowling attack as well and when they're on song there and that's certainly very threatening."

"So if they bowl to the best of their ability then we'll certainly give ourselves a good chance and be it as I said on the back of that. South Africa has a lot of batters that are in form and it's going to be a great contest tomorrow."

Giving an update on the injuries to their key players, Latham said: "There's Lockie, Kane and Mark Chapman. We'll obviously get through hopefully a bit of work today and then we'll see how they pull up from a selection point of view."

"But yeah, obviously, Lockie went off in the last game with a bit of achilles' niggles, so fingers crossed he'll be fine for tomorrow."

While Lockie Ferguson suffered an achilles injury in the last game against Australia, Kane Williamson had fractured his thumb and couldn't take part in their last two matches. Mark Chapman too remains in doubt due to a calf issue.

While Lockie Ferguson suffered an achilles injury in the last game against Australia, Kane Williamson had fractured his thumb and couldn't take part in their last two matches. Mark Chapman too remains in doubt due to a calf issue.



# Hadn't thought that I'd score so many hundreds and runs: Virat

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

On the verge of equalling Sachin Tendulkar's record number of ODI centuries, star India batter Virat Kohli on Tuesday said he had never thought of accumulating so many runs and hundreds when he began his career. Kohli has been in terrific form with the bat in the ongoing ODI World Cup with one century and three half centuries in six matches. He scored 103 not out against Bangladesh in Pune on October 19 for his 48th ODI hundred, one short of Tendulkar's world record. He made 95 against New Zealand in Dharamsala on October 22, five runs short of matching Tendulkar's record 49 tons in ODI cricket.

"If we talk about cricket, I had never thought of achieving all, as in where my career is and how god has blessed me (with) such a career span and performances," Kohli told Star Sports. "I had always dreamt I'd do this, but I had never thought things would pan out this way exactly. Nobody can plan these things, the way your journey is going, and the way things unfold in front of you."

"I hadn't thought that I'd score

so many hundreds and so many runs in these 12 years." He said he had to change his "discipline and lifestyle" as he found himself lacking in professionalism at some point in his career.

"My only focus was that I should perform well for the team and win games for the team from difficult situations. For that, I made quite a few changes along the way regarding discipline and lifestyle."

"I always had the drive in me, but I lacked the professionalism. Now, I have a single-minded focus on how I want to play the game, and after that, the results I've achieved are from playing that way itself," he added.

Kohli, who made his India debut in 2008, said the effort put in by a cricketer is always recognised by the sport.

"The game recognises effort. Honestly, that's what I have learnt from my career."

"I've played cricket by giving my hundred per cent on the field, and the blessings I have got from it have been given to me by God, and I had never thought things would have unfolded this way," he said. Kohli will have the chance to equal Tendulkar's feat in India's next match against Sri Lanka in Mumbai on Thursday.

# Shreyas Iyer's short ball troubles focal point in India nets

PTI ■ MUMBAI

With his vulnerability against the short ball coming to the fore once again, India number four Shreyas Iyer trained with the aim of overcoming his longstanding struggles ahead of the World Cup game against Sri Lanka here on Thursday.

None of the top-order guns - captain Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli and Shubman Gill - were in attendance for the optional session. Iyer versus the short ball was the focal point.

The team's famed bowling attack, which delivered a fabu-



lous 100-run victory over England last Sunday, also opted for rest.

Perched at the top of the World Cup points table and with a spot in the semifinals virtually sealed for Rohit and Co, it is only

imperative that the team keeps ironing out the areas of concern along the way.

Iyer's troubles against the short ball, combined with the lack of big scores as the preferred No 4, is certainly something that the team management and the player want to overcome and it was evident as far as his approach to the session on Tuesday was concerned.

The right-handed batter, who is back to his homeground that he shares with skipper Rohit, Suryakumar Yadav and Shardul Thakur in this Indian squad for the World Cup, faced plenty of short balls from throwdown

# Trott wants Afghanistan batters to score centuries in World Cup

PTI ■ PUNE

The calm and collective batting effort of the Afghanistan team has found its own set of admirers in the ongoing World Cup and head coach Jonathan Trott has set the next target for his players — someone needs to bat deep and score a hundred in remaining three games. Enjoying their best ever performance, Afghanistan have been on a giant killing run in the ongoing 50-over showpiece with comprehensive wins over defending champions England, rivals Pakistan and 1996 winners Sri Lanka, proving that they can no longer be termed as minnows. "Nobody has got a hundred so far yet, so that's the next challenge. Someone accepts responsibility and batting for a longer period of time and make sure we get a hun-



dred," Trott said at the press conference after Afghanistan's seven-wicket win over Sri Lanka on Monday.

The likes of opener Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Ibrahim Zadran and Rahmat Shah have come close but haven't been able to reach the magical three figure mark in the ongoing event. "You see, a lot of hundreds are scored in the tournament. That's the next frontier, the next barrier. Gurbaz has scored a few hundreds recently, you know Ibrahim

has. "The middle order is in form, 3-4-5-6, as well. That's the next challenge and I have got no doubt that the players will be able to (get hundred) in the future. Hopefully, it starts with the next game," Trott added.

Armed with a potent bowling attack, Afghanistan initially felt more comfortable defending totals but their batters have shown maturity as they have taken the side to back-to-back victories, chasing totals.

"I think we've been working really hard at our batting and doing the basics. I know it's very cliché, but the way that we train, the way we think about our cricket, certainly with batting, the way that we accept responsibility at times as well, I think you're starting to see hopefully not the penny drop, but we're starting to see also the confidence in the players, in their own ability," Trott said.

# Bowling without Hasaranga has been challenging, says Theekshana



PTI ■ PUNE

Sri Lanka spinner Maheesh Theekshana says bowling in the absence of injured all-rounder Wanindu Hasaranga has made his job tougher since the onus is on him to be the strike bowler.

Sri Lanka's star spinner Hasaranga was ruled out of the tournament due to a hamstring injury. He and Theekshana have formed a dynamic partnership in the ODI format.

"It is a challenge because he is the main wicket-taking bowler we had. So, then we both had a partnership that some days I had to be the strike bowler, some days he will be the strike bowler. The other guy will keep pressure on the batsman," Theekshana said after Sri Lanka's seven wicket loss to Afghanistan on Monday.

"So, with our combination right now, there's only one spinner can play, the wickets are really good. So, there's no turn. So, it's actually a good challenge for me and I think it's an opportunity

for me as well," he added.

Asked if a change in combination, bringing in another spinner to bowl in tandem with Theekshana would help, the 23-year-old said, "We failed a lot in our middle order, so we cannot reduce it from the batting side. We cannot add spinners because the wicket is good."

"We only have Wellalage and Dushmantha. Although they have good experience, if the wicket is good, then it will negatively affect their confidence. In this kind of tournament, we can't just bring and add a player. As a team we cannot give a big responsibility to one such player because the wicket is good."

"If the other team collects about seventy runs for six to seven wickets, his confidence will be lost. It is difficult for us to take that kind of risk."

Sri Lanka's middle order has buckled under pressure in the ongoing showpiece, resulting in batting collapses.

"The main area that requires enhancement is our batting, particularly in the middle order. We have the resources, and we are determined to make those improvements in our upcoming matches. I do believe our fielding has shown considerable improvement."

"Our inability to secure the middle overs played a significant role in our inability to win (against Afghanistan). On the bowling front, we did create opportunities to take more wickets, but we couldn't capitalise on them as effectively as desired," he added.