

**OPINION 6**  
GANDHIAN APPROACH  
TO WORLD PEACE

**WORLD 8**  
GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN AVERTED  
AS BIDEN SIGNS FUNDING

**MONEY 10**  
GST MOP-UP RISES  
IN SEPTEMBER

NEW DELHI, MONDAY OCTOBER 2, 2023; PAGES 12 & 3



# the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

Published From  
DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR  
RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH  
DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

Late City Vol. 33 Issue 272  
\*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable



ALCARAZ SAILS  
THROUGH AT  
CHINA OPEN  
11 SPORT

# KANISHKA TO CANADA

## EAM Jaishankar eases ties with US amid row

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The India US relationship is at an all-time high and the two nations have moved to a position where they see each other as very desirable, optimal and comfortable partners, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said, stressing that like the Chandrayaan, bilateral ties will go to the moon and maybe even beyond.

Jaishankar made the remarks while addressing several hundred Indian-Americans who had gathered at the India House from various parts of the US to attend the 'Celebrating Colours of Friendship' event organised by the Embassy of India here on Saturday.

"There is one clear message today that our relationship is at an all-time high. But as they say in America, you ain't seen anything yet. So, we are going to take this relationship to a different level, to a different place," he said at the largest-ever gathering of Indian-Americans at the India House.

"In this changing world, I would say today that India and the US have moved to a position where we see each other as very desirable, optimal and comfortable partners with whom it's a natural instinct today to pick up the phone or if you meet someone and have a natural conversation," he said.

Jaishankar said the success of the G20 could not have happened without the support of the US.

"As the host, when things go well, the host always gets the credit. It's reasonable. But, the G20 could not have come together if all the members of the G20 did not work for its success," he said.

"The contribution, the support and the understanding that we got from the US to make a successful G20, I think that is something I would certainly like to recognise in public in Washington DC," Jaishankar said amidst applause from Indian-Americans.

"So, it may have been our success in a literal way, but I think it was the G20 (nations) success. To me, it was also a success of the India US partnership...please keep giving this partnership the support it needs, the support it deserves and the support it expects. And I can promise you that this relationship, like the Chandrayaan, will go to the moon, maybe even beyond," he said. Jaishankar said the human bond between the two countries makes the bilateral relationship unique.

"Countries do business with each other. Countries do politics with each other. They have military ties, they do exercises, and they have cultural exchanges. But when two countries have that deep human bonding,



that's a completely different ballgame. That is today the defining characteristic of our relationship," he said.

He said the people remember Rajiv Gandhi's visit to the US in 1985, Manmohan Singh's visit in 2005 and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's several visits.

"But I have to say that this one (PM Modi's recent state visit) was different, it was different in optics, and

if you ask me what has changed, I would say India and the US earlier used to deal with each other and now they work with each other," he said.

He recalled the recent collaborative endeavours between the two countries, all starting with the letter 'I'. These initiatives include the India-Middle East Economic Corridor, I2U2 (India, Israel, the US, the UAE), Indo-Pacific cooperation, and

the initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET).

"Alphabet 'I' is very good for the US, certainly," Jaishankar added.

He said the contribution of the diaspora in building the bilateral relationship is something fantastic.

"There are no words that can capture it. It is on that foundation that today we are looking ahead for...A new hope on the horizon...So, I think

when we look at the horizon, we see fantastic possibilities out there, and it's the community which is going to deliver on that," Jaishankar said.

He recalled that when PM Pandit Jawar Lal Nehru came to the US in 1949, there were 3,000 Indian Americans, when PM Indira Gandhi came in 1966, there were 30,000 Indian Americans, when PM Rajiv Gandhi came in 1985 there were 3,00,000 Indian Americans, when PM Modi came there were more than 3 million Indian Americans and it's grown to almost 5 million.

"If there is something unique about our relationship it is the human bond that we have. The role, responsibilities and commitment of the diaspora to the India US relationship is commendable," he added.

The Minister said the India of today is different from what it was earlier. "I want to share with you that this is truly a different India for which I speak. It is an India, which as you heard from others, is capable of the Chandrayaan-3 mission," he said. "It is an India which was able to pull off the most spectacular G20 and prove those who said that we will not be able to get 20, I don't want to say quarrelling nations but 20 countries with different positions, to come to the table together," he said.

This is an India, which showed during the Covid pandemic that it

could not only look after its people but could extend its hand to more than a hundred countries across the world," he said.

"I want to say in many ways, if there is a spring in our step, a confidence in our voice, a sort of squaring of our shoulders, there are very good reasons for it," he said.

"Because it is built today on 10 years of hard work...There are domains where our capacities have doubled or tripled," he said.

"The new India is an India of Chandrayaan, it's an India of CoWIN, it's an India of 5G. This is really what we are capable of, and it is this India today that the United States also sees. It is this India with which the United States actually has an appetite for working, much more closely," said Jaishankar.

Remembering Mahatma Gandhi ahead of his birth anniversary, he said calling him an extraordinary man would be the understatement of this century.

"He said so many things so tellingly. But at the end of the day, if we ask ourselves what was the message, the message at the end of the day was about doing the right thing, about doing the decent thing, and about leaving no one behind," he said. "Gandhi's message is very complicated, but its essence is very, very simple," Jaishankar said.

## Azad wants to serve people

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Putting all speculations to rest, the chairman of the Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) Ghulam Nabi Azad on Sunday urged the party workers not to pay heed to the latest political grapevine, doing the rounds of corridors of power, that he is going to occupy the chair of Lieutenant Governor of Jammu & Kashmir in the near future.

Addressing a gathering of party workers on the occasion of the first foundation day of the party in Jawahar Nagar Municipal Park, Srinagar, Azad made it clear he is not interested in becoming the Lieutenant Governor of Jammu & Kashmir.

Azad said he is not looking for employment but wanted to serve the people of J&K.

"I will request people not to trust the rumour mills which are working in overdrive... There is a fresh rumour here that Ghulam Nabi Azad is going to be the next LG. 'I have not come (to J&K) looking for a job, I want to serve the peo-



ple", he added. Azad observed some people were trying to give the impression that he is looking for rehabilitation.

"When I came here in 2005 (as Chief Minister), I left two prized (Union) Ministries — Housing and Urban Development and Parliamentary Affairs — to serve the people. It was not as if I was without work," he said, referring to criticism by some quarters that he returned to J&K politics at the behest of the BJP. Azad, who remained vocal

on the issue of the Abrogation of Article 370 and Article 35A, once again observed in front of the mass gathering that it was a "great mistake".

"There were some political mistakes over many years which have pushed the State backwards, instead of going forward. In the last nine years, another great mistake was made — Article 370 and Article 35A were removed.

"Article 35A, subsequently Article 35B, was not promulgated after Independence. It

was brought by the Maharaja (Hari Singh) in 1955. I said this in Parliament that had the BJP known that they would not have touched Article 370 and Article 35A. This mistake pushed us further back. There was an uncertainty whether the land will stay with us or not," he added.

The foundation day function in Srinagar was largely attended by the Kashmir-based leaders barring a few close aides of Azad from the Jammu region. After launching his political outfit in Jammu & Kashmir, Azad is concentrating on both the regions of Jammu & Kashmir to consolidate his support base ahead of the maiden Assembly polls.

Several former Congress leaders joined his bandwagon after quitting the Congress party.

Acknowledging the hard work done by his party workers in the last year of its existence, Azad on Sunday patted their back claiming his party has emerged as a 'political alternative' in a span of 12 months.

## INDIA CROSSES 53



Avinash Mukund Sable celebrates after winning the men's 3000-meter steeplechase final event at the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou, China, on Sunday PTI

# Defiant Didi marches to Delhi

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress which has dispatched to Delhi about 3,000 of its foot soldiers — allegedly in the garb of unpaid MNREGA workers — to participate in an anti-Centre rally seemed to concede roundly that corruption had indeed taken place in the implementation of the 100-days' work scheme.

While reminding Prime Minister Narendra Modi that his Government in the Centre "cannot browbeat the brave Trinamool Congress cadre into submission", TMC general secretary Abhishek Banerjee on Sunday said complaints of corruption should not be made the ground for withholding Central funds meant for the uplift of the poor.

"There may be a few corrupt people who should be punished... but why do the whole lot of people be punished for that... Why is Prime Minister Narendra Modi punishing 2.5 crore people of Bengal" for the offence committed by 20 people," Banerjee asked,

reminding how the Centre had released the funds to the Assam Government despite reports of corruption there.

"Have they not released funds to Assam Government where two corruption has taken place... if they can release funds for one State then why this discrimination against Bengal," Banerjee who is also the nephew of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said, reminding how the "poor workers of our State have been made to starve for about two years now" just because they voted against the BJP in 2021 Assembly elections.

"They can release ₹20,000 crore for the Prime Minister's house but they cannot release funds for the poor unpaid workers when the Central Act makes the payment mandatory within 15 days of the work getting done," Banerjee said reminding how the "Centre takes away the GST from the people of Bengal and refuses to return the money back to them."

While the TMC claims that the Centre has withheld about ₹15,000 crore of MNREGA funds which is



a small part of the total Central deprivation amounting to more than ₹1 lakh crore the Opposition BJP has hit back saying the "Mamata Banerjee Government is transferring the blame on the BJP whereas even after repeated reminders they have failed to account for the previous funds released to them."

BJP State president Sukanta Majumdar said his party would "soon expose the TMC through a statistic showing the amount of

money that has been misappropriated by their workers... About 15 lakh fake job cards have been cancelled... you can figure out the amount that has been lifted through those 15 lakh fake job cards... This is public money after all and cannot be released at will... and now they are trying to transfer the blame at our doors."

The TMC general secretary who had earlier promised to ferry two lakh people to Delhi on

Saturday and Sunday flagged off about 50 buses-loads of party men to take part in dharna in Delhi.

The buses were arranged in a hurry after the train to Delhi, the party had booked, was cancelled by the Eastern Railways on account of unavailability of rakes amid allegations of BJP's manipulations in providing trains to ferry their workers to the national Capital.

While the party grassroots, along with the unpaid job card holders, were left by buses the lesser leaders including panchayat, pradhans, district board members et al flew off to Delhi. The top leadership including Banerjee, his fellow MPs and the Ministers in the Mamata Cabinet and MLAs too went by air.

Banerjee, who is also the MP from Diamond Harbour, was likely to meet his party leaders on Sunday at the Lodhi Estate bungalow of former Union Minister and MP Saugato Roy, sources said. "Final strategies will be taken there in consultation with Mamata," a senior leader said.

In a related development, much

in the lines of the King of Righteousness Hammurabi's recommendations: "eye-for-an-eye" and "tooth-for-a-tooth", the top Trinamool Congress leadership has offered to use "baton-for-a-baton," back in Bengal should their workers are baton-charged by the "BJP-run" Delhi Police during their show of protest in the national Capital on Monday and Wednesday.

A day after TMC general secretary Abhishek Banerjee warned that "if even a single deprived worker going with us is touched in Delhi then there will be consequences in Bengal," an apparently charged up State Irrigation Minister Partha Bhowmick too let out a war cry warning, "If the batons are used there, the batons will be used here too." He would not however use the word BJP.

Banerjee had on Saturday reminded that "like in Delhi, the Bengal Government too has its own police and they too know how to act with purpose."

The TMC leaders' words of caution came after Bengal BJP pres-

ident Sukanta Majumdar said the "thieves" going to Delhi "should be arrested," while another saffron leader said that the Delhi Police was not as lacklustre as their Bengal counterparts. "They know how to keep the unruly crowds under control," he said.

The CPI(M) which has recently tasted a good jump in its vote bank — 21 per cent as against the BJP's 22 per cent — in the rural polls immediately said the two sides — the TMC and the BJP — were rattling sabers in public in order to create a binary.

"But the people of Bengal fell in that trap in 2019 and 2021... but they will not do so for the third time... they will do what they should do this time," CPI(M) Central committee member Sujan Chakrabarty said. The TMC and the BJP are playing a pre-scripted game, he said. "The poor people from Bengal have been taken there... they will be beaten up and jailed and then the TMC will encash sentiments in the elections by making it a BJP-versus-TMC affair," he said.

# Kept in dark about JD(S)-BJP alliance, says Ibrahim

KUMAR CHELLAPAN ■ KOCHI

The BJP leadership's decision to enter into a marriage of convenience with Janata Dal (Secular) has caused a political earthquake in Karnataka and Kerala.

While CM Ibrahim, former Minister and the incumbent State president of the party made it known on Saturday that he was kept in the dark about the JD(S)-BJP alliance and was not at all happy about the secularists forging any partnership with the Hindutva brigade.

By Sunday it was disclosed by sources close to Ibrahim that the leader has kept his options open and would not hesitate to dump the Deve Gowda family if they refuse to call off the alliance.

Meanwhile, Mathew T Thomas, Kerala unit chief of



the Dal(S) said on Sunday that he had called on Deve Gowda and informed him about the resentment in the party.

"We will never be part of the BJP-led alliance as it is unthinkable to have any kind of alliance with religious fundamentalists," Thomas told reporters at Thiruvananthapuram.

The JD(S) is a constituent of the CPI-M led LDF in Kerala and has two members in the

House which has an effective strength of 141 members.

K Krishnankutty is the party's representative in the council of ministers. Since he is completing his tenure of 30 months in office as part of a formula worked out by the party, it is the turn of Mathew T Thomas, the other MLA of the party to serve the people for the rest of the LDF term as a minister.

Chances are that the

Kerala unit of the Dal would remain as a separate organization so that it could patch up with Gowda and family once the Dal's all India leadership decides to dissociate with the BJP. It has happened in the past when Deve Gowda family had aligned with the BJP to anoint H D Kumaraswamy as Chief Minister in 2006.

Though the Kerala unit of the Dal cut off all ties with Deve Gowda family over the issue of alliance with the BJP, they returned to the parent fold once the BJP-Dal alliance collapsed within one year.

There is no JD(S) unit functioning in Tamil Nadu though at the time of Lok Sabha election party leaders would appear from nowhere to drum up support for the Fronts in which they are alliance partners.

# Modi attends BJP Central Election Committee meeting, focus on Rajasthan

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP's Central Election Committee members, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, met here on Sunday to finalise its candidates for the coming assembly polls as the party looks to conclude much of deliberations on the contestants before the election process formally begins.

For the first time in the current round of CEC meetings, candidates for the Rajasthan polls were discussed as senior party leaders from the state, including former chief minister Vasundhara Raje, joined the national leadership in the meeting.

With the party fielding three Union ministers, besides four other MPs, as candidates in the Madhya Pradesh assembly



polls, it may continue with the strategy in Rajasthan. Union ministers Jagendra Singh Shekhawat, Arjun Ram Meghwal and Kailash Choudhary are from the state where the BJP won all but one of the 25 Lok Sabha seats in 2019. Union ministers Rajnath Singh and Amit Shah, besides party president J P Nadda, are among the members of the CEC.

Chhattisgarh BJP leaders, including former chief minister Raman Singh and state

party chief Arun Sao, also arrived in the national capital as the CEC is expected to finalise the names for the remaining seats in the state.

Prior to Sunday's meeting, the CEC sat twice to finalise the party candidates for the current round of state polls and had discussions on Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh seats, especially those held by the Congress, its main challenger in the two states besides Rajasthan.

The BJP has so far named

79 candidates for the polls to the 230-member Madhya Pradesh assembly and 21 for the elections to the 90-member House in Chhattisgarh.

The development is a break from the past as the party generally names its candidates after the Election Commission's announcement of the poll schedule.

The advance exercise marks its decision to give candidates ample time to drive their campaigns, more so as it has so far concentrated on seats held by the Congress.

Of the five states going to polls, the BJP is in power only in Madhya Pradesh, while the Congress holds the reins in Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh. The BRS is in power in Telangana and the Mizo National Front in Mizoram.

# Competitive exams to be conducted in 22 Indian languages: Jitendra

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Union minister Jitendra Singh on Sunday said the Staff Selection Commission aims to conduct competitive examinations in 22 Indian languages in the future.

The intention is to provide a language-neutral level-playing field to all aspiring candidates, he said, addressing the valedictory session of the 'Bharatiya Bhasha Utsav: Technology & Bharatiya Bhasha Summit' here.

Singh said it was at the behest of Prime Minister Narendra Modi that from this year onward, SSC examinations are being conducted in 13 languages -- 11 regional languages and Hindi and English.

Before 2014, he said, candidates had no option but to choose either Hindi or English as the medium of examination.

Singh, the Minister of State for Personnel, said that before 2014, the translation of English to Hindi was also done very poorly, putting many students in a disadvantageous position.

He said that in the times to come, the SSC aims to conduct competitive examinations in all the 22 Indian languages mentioned in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution, according to a Personnel Ministry statement.

Singh said JEE, NEET and



UGC exams are also being conducted in 12 Indian languages and "this historic decision will give impetus to the participation of local youth, improve their selection prospects and encourage regional languages".

He said notable progress has been made in the last more than nine years under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi to promote Indian regional languages.

The minister that PM Modi has given a call to provide medical and engineering education in regional languages such as Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Gujarati and Bengali.

Singh said the prime minister has taken a historic decision in the new National Education Policy (NEP) by giving importance to the mother tongue of students in primary, technical and medical

education. Terming NEP as the biggest path-breaking reform in India since Independence, he said it will transform the country's education system to match global benchmarks.

"Twenty-nine institutes across 10 states in seven regional languages namely Bengali, Hindi, Gujarati, Kannada, Marathi, Tamil and Telugu have been identified for imparting engineering education in one or more disciplines," Singh said.

He said today, around 40 million Indians are in higher education, which is more than that in the US and EU combined, and the ambitious NEP seeks to double that number.

"NEP-2020 supplements the start-up ecosystem with the promise to open new career and entrepreneurship opportunities for students and youth in India," the minister said.

# Patna University's Wheeler Senate House renamed after Narayan

PTI ■ PATNA

Patna University's (PU) historic Wheeler Senate House has been renamed 'Jayaprakash Narayan Anushad Bhawan' after socialist leader Jayaprakash Narayan.

The senate house shed its colonial name days before Patna University completed 106 years. The university was established on October 1, 1917.

A ceremony to mark the 106th anniversary of the university was held at the capacious senate hall on Sunday, during which gold medals were presented to various department toppers.

The charming senate house with Doric columns framing its entrance was inaugurated on March 20, 1926 by the then governor of Bihar and Orissa province and Patna University chancellor Sir Henry Wheeler.

It was built using a generous endowment from Raja Devakinandan Prasad Singh of Monghyr (now Munger in Bihar). Sir Henry Wheeler had laid its foundation stone in 1925, according to archival records.

This iconic landmark in Patna has been a venue for many historic events since its opening.

The 97-year-old senate house has hosted innumerable convocation ceremonies of



PU, senate meetings, opening session of the Indian Science Congress in 1933 and several annual general meetings of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society (later Bihar Research Society) in the 1920s and 1930s, among other key events.

Traditionally, PU Foundation Day ceremonies have been hosted at this venue.

Days before the 106th anniversary of the university, a new plaque was installed on the right side of the senate house's facade stating that it has been renamed after Jayaprakash Narayan, popularly known as 'JP', a Patna University official said.

As guests streamed in on Sunday and walked through the hallowed portals of the refurbished senate house, not many noticed the new plaque.

The plaque, with the university emblem at the top, reads: "Patna University - on September 13, 2023, after

approval by Bihar Governor-Chancellor Shri Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar, Wheeler Senate House has been renamed 'Jayaprakash Narayan Anushad Bhawan'."

The senate house building has been refurbished, for which a sum of Rs 2.84 crore was sanctioned earlier, officials said. Bihar Governor Rajendra Arlekar and Chief Minister Nitish Kumar had on September 5 unveiled a plaque embedded on the left side of the facade of the senate house to commemorate the reopening of the renovated hall.

In his address on the occasion, Arlekar had suggested renaming the Wheeler Senate House, saying it was a colonial-era name.

Speaking about Rabinranath Tagore's visit to the Wheeler Senate House in March 1936, the governor had suggested that the hall could be named after the Nobel laureate.

# Sobti assumes charge as Deputy Chief of Naval Staff



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Vice Admiral Tarun Sobti on Sunday assumed charge as Deputy Chief of Naval Staff. He succeeds Vice Admiral Sanjay Mahindru, who retired after more than 38 years of illustrious service.

Sobti was commissioned into the Indian Navy on July 1, 1988, and is a navigation and direction specialist, officials said here on Sunday. In his career spanning over 35 years, he has held a variety of command and staff appointments -- both ashore and afloat. The flag officer has commanded INS Nishank, a missile boat, INS Kora, a missile corvette, and guided missile destroyer INS Kolkata.

In his staff tenures, Sobti served in the directorate of staff requirements and directorate of personnel, and as the naval attache at the Indian embassy in Moscow.

On promotion to the rank of Rear Admiral in 2019, he was appointed as the deputy commandant and chief instructor at the Indian Naval Academy, Ezhimala, and subsequently as the flag officer commanding of the Eastern Fleet.

On elevation to the rank of Vice Admiral in 2021, he took over as director general of 'Project Seabird' under which India is developing the Karwar naval base. Sobti was awarded the Vishisht Seva Medal in 2020 and the Ati Vishisht Seva Medal in 2022.

# CBI detains 4 for murder of 2 teenagers in ethnic clashes



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a joint operation with the Army and Manipur Police, the CBI on Sunday detained four people in connection with the murder of two teenage students in the State facing ethnic clashes since May, who had gone missing in July.

They said two men and as many women were detained by the CBI from Churachandpur district in Manipur.

Two children, who are juveniles, of one of the accused were taken along with the four as they were flown out of Manipur, the officials said. They added that the children are likely to be handed over to their relatives. The officials said the four suspects detained will be questioned and are likely to be placed under arrest. The CBI recently registered a case to probe the death of the two teenagers after photos of their bodies went viral last month, sparking violent protests in the Inphal valley.

# BJP engineered splits in parties started by Marathi people: Supriya

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Nationalist Congress Party leader Supriya Sule on Sunday claimed the Bharatiya Janata Party engineered splits in two political parties started by "Marathi people".

"Balasaheb Thackeray and Sharad Pawar started their own political parties, and they received the love and support of the Marathi people. They both have roots here in Maharashtra, and their umbilical cord is with the state's people. The BJP engineered split in both the parties," Sule said.

The NCP broke up into two factions on July 2 after Ajit Pawar and eight MLAs joined the Eknath Shinde government.

The Shiv Sena split in June last year after Eknath Shinde rebelled against then chief minister Uddhav Thackeray and brought down the Maha Vikas Aghadi government.

# Maken appointed new Congress treasurer

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday appointed senior party leader Ajay Maken as its new treasurer replacing Pawan Kumar Bansal. Maken is considered a close confidant of former party president Rahul Gandhi and was without any post ever since he resigned as Congress general secretary in charge of Rajasthan a few months back.

"Congress president has appointed Ajay Maken as the treasurer of the All India Congress Committee, with immediate effect," party general secretary K C Venugopal said in a statement.



The "same invisible hand in Delhi", an apparent reference to the BJP central leadership, caused losses to these two political parties, said Sule, who is Lok Sabha MP from Baramati and also working president of the faction headed by Sharad Pawar.

Attacking the BJP further, she said the party demoted the person who was chief minister of the state for five years. Devendra Fadnavis, who headed the government in Maharashtra between 2014 and 2019, was made deputy CM under Shinde by the BJP.

# Cong backs protest seeking restoration of old pension scheme

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday extended support to the central and state government employees demanding the restoration of the old pension scheme and claimed the large crowds gathered at the maharally in the national capital show that the BJP government's days are numbered.

"These OPS protests show the anger of our steel frame, the government officers, against the ruling regime," AICC general secretary, organisation, K C Venugopal said.

The rally at Ramlila Maidan was held under the banner of the Joint Forum for Restoration of Old Pension Scheme (JFROPS) and the National Joint Council of Action (NJCA). Organisers claimed that government employees from 20 states were participating in it.

"We implemented OPS in Congress-ruled states because it is their right. This crowd of 20 lakh people tells a story - the BJP's days are numbered," Venugopal said on X.

Congress leader and former Haryana chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda visited Ramlila Maidan and lent his support to the agitating employees, promising that if voted to power in Haryana the Congress will restore the old pension scheme in the state.

"Today, by going to Ramlila Maidan in Delhi, we fully supported the legitimate demand of the employee organisations associated with the National Movement for Old Pension Scheme (NMOPS)



to restore the Old Pension Scheme. The government should immediately accept the demands of the employees and implement OPS," he said on X.

"As soon as the Congress government is formed in Haryana, we will fulfil the demand of the employees for Old Pension Scheme as the first decision," Hooda also said.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal also supported the demand. He said his government has implemented the old pension scheme in Punjab and has written to the central government in this regard.

"We strongly support the demand of govt employees to bring back OPS. NPS is an injustice against employees. We have implemented OPS in Punjab and have written to the Centre for implementing it for Del govt employees. Some other non-BJP govt have also implemented OPS," Kejriwal said on X.

Protesters at the Pension Shanknaad Maharally voiced their opposition to the New Pension Scheme, saying they are worried about their post-retirement future.

"The employees who joined government service after January 1, 2004 are strongly opposing the New Pension Scheme."

# WCD Ministry to rank districts under Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a bid to speed up progress under the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative, the Women and Child Development Ministry is set to introduce a mechanism to rank the performance of districts and incentivise them according to it.

Launched in 2015, the initiative aims to bolster the Child Sex Ratio in India and empower girls and women throughout their life cycle. While the sex ratio at birth (SRB) has improved in the country from 918 in 2014-15 to 934 in 2019-20, it is still below the World Health Organization's international standard for natural sex ratio of 952.

The data shared in the operational manual issued by the ministry revealed that 516 districts have an SRB lower than the WHO standard and 169 districts still have SRB lower or equal to 918.

Allocation of funds to districts under the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative is based on their SRB status. Districts with SRB less than or equal to 918 receive additional support.

According to the manual, by maintaining this district scorecard, the ministry aims to assess and incentivise the progress made by districts in promoting the welfare of girls and women.

The scorecard, a critical feature of the manual, will be crafted based on data extracted from the Mission Shakti Management Information System. It will include separate sections for process indicators and outcome indicators, each



playing a vital role in evaluating district performance.

The outcome indicators will be categorised into broader themes encompassing a girl child's protection, survival, health, education, and overall development. The process indicators, on the other hand, will focus on the institutional mechanisms in place and capacity-building measures undertaken at various levels of scheme implementation.

Based on the district scorecard, the ministry will release the annual District Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Ranking. This data will also be aggregated at the state level to gauge overall state performance.

The manual also said a committee headed by the secretary of the Ministry of Women and Child Development will be established to oversee the implementation of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative. It will meet at least once a year, preferably in April, to monitor the progress of the scheme activities and the status of objectives achievement.

In states and Union territories, the implementation will be overseen by committees formed under the Mission Shakti framework, led by chief

secretaries. These committees will include officers from women and child development, social welfare and other relevant departments.

At the state level, the Mission Shakti State Hub for Empowerment of Women will facilitate coordination with central ministries and districts. At the district level, the Mission Shakti Committee, comprising officers from the women and child development and other nodal departments and headed by the district magistrate/district collector, will be responsible for implementing Beti Bachao Beti Padhao.

Districts will also have the flexibility to partner with civil society organisations, academic institutions, and external agencies for strategic interventions.

The Women and Child Development Ministry is developing a comprehensive web-based reporting system to enable real-time monitoring of the Mission Shakti initiative. This portal will provide easy access to information on service delivery structures, available institutions, services provided, human resources, financial resources, and beneficiaries while maintaining data confidentiality.



# Anti-India slogans on JNU walls

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Jawaharlal Nehru University's walls were defaced with anti-India and anti-Modi slogans on Sunday. The objectionable slogans like Azad Kashmir (Free Kashmir) Bhagwa Jalega (saffron will burn), 'Modi's grave will be dug', were found written on the walls of the university.

This comes after similar slogans were written on the walls of the educational institution in December last year. In a video going viral online, it is seen that several walls on the JNU campus were defaced with slogans like, 'Free Palestine', 'Free IOK', and 'Modi Teri Kabr Khudegi' (Modi, your grave will be dug) slogans.

However, the university administration does not yet have any information about the people who wrote the slogans. The administration says that it is currently being investigated who wrote these slogans and what is the whole plan behind this. So far, no individual or group has claimed responsibility for the incident.

The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad said it has written to the Jawaharlal Nehru University administration for an inquiry into a recent incident of "anti-



national" slogans being scribbled on the walls in the campus. The students' outfit has also demanded that the administration take immediate action to identify those responsible and fix accountability for not being able to stop such cases. "Being a student organisation, we are gravely concerned about the frequent anti-Bharat slogan-writing incidents on the JNU campus. Yesterday, some students captured pictures of slogans like 'Indian-Occupied Kashmir', 'Free Kashmir', 'Bhagwa Jalega', etc. On the School of Languages building wall," the letter read. The administration

Painted the walls clean on Sunday morning after it was brought to its notice and photos of the walls went viral, Vikas Patel, ABVP secretary for JNU, told PTL. The students' body has demanded that the chief security officer of JNU should be held responsible for failing to prevent such cases. According to JNU students, the matter first came to light on Sunday morning when some students saw controversial slogans written on the walls of JNU's School of Languages. On looking carefully, it looks like the names written in the controversial sentence, in blue ink, have

later been covered with red ink. University students have shared pictures of objectionable slogans written on the JNU campus walls. In these pictures, it can be seen that objectionable slogans like 'Free Kashmir' and 'IOK (Indian Occupied Kashmir)' are written on the wall in JNU's School of Language campus. At some other places, these slogans have also been written on the floor with blue paint. All these pictures with hate slogans are being said to be from School of Language of JNU. It is noteworthy that con-

troversial slogans have been seen on the walls of JNU earlier as well. Last year, caste-based slogans were written on the walls here. The name plates of some professors were blackened. As Jawaharlal Nehru University is one of the best universities of the country, a lot of conflict of political ideologies is seen here. University student Amit says "Till now conflicts, debates and discussions on political ideologies were seen. But this type of abusive language and sloganeering against the country shows mental frustration."

In February this year, the portrait of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj was damaged inside the university. Then there was violence between two groups of students. Before that, there was a lot of uproar in JNU regarding the screening of BBC documentary in January 2023.

In December last year, a similar incident was reported from Delhi's JNU wherein controversial slogans were written on the walls of several buildings located on the university campus, including the offices of several professors. Slogans against Brahmin and Vaishya communities were written on the walls of the School of International Studies-II building on the university campus.

# Ghaziabad cops sexually harass woman in front of her fiance

STAFF REPORTER ■ GHAZIABAD

In a shocking case, a 22-year-old woman from Noida, who went to visit Sai Upvan city forest in Ghaziabad with her 23-year-old fiance, was allegedly sexually harassed for hours and subjected to extortion by a constable, a home guard who were on duty at a police response vehicle (PRV) of the Ghaziabad police during an incident on September 16.

An FIR was registered on the basis of the woman's complaint as the suspects continued harassing her by way of phone calls and even visited her house after the incident. The incident came to light when the woman underwent a series of ordeal and dialled the police emergency number for help.

The police identified the three suspects as constable Rakesh Kumar, Digambar Kumar - a home guard, and, one other unidentified man who allegedly held the couple captive and harassed them for about three hours.

The police man pressured the young woman to engage in sexual activity and also demanded Rs 10,000 from the couple, deceitfully promising their release. The couple endured the torture for about three hours before finally managing to leave only after transferring Rs 1,000 to the officer



via the Paytm platform. "The accused even touched my private part," the woman alleged in her complaint.

The incident occurred on September 16, but came to light on September 28, after the couple struggled for 12 days to get the FIR registered against the accused cops. The couple are engaged and the two had met in the park for a quiet moment which turned into a nightmare.

The couple, a woman from Noida and her fiance who had come to meet her from Bulandshahr, went for an outing together to Sai Upvan city forest on September 16. They were sitting together in Sai Upvan, which is adjacent to the Hindon River metro station and alongside the GT Road.

Finally, an FIR was officially filed at the Kotwali Nagar Police Station, resulting in the immediate suspension of the constable from 112-PRV at Sai

Upvan. The woman in the FIR said that Rakesh Kumar also called her on September 19 of which she has a call recording and they also visited her house on September 22 when they heard that she had given a complaint against them.

Further actions are being pursued to hold the implicated home guard accountable and to investigate the third individual involved in this disturbing incident.

The Assistant Commissioner of Police (Kotwali Nagar police station) Nimish Patil, while divulging the details said that on September 28, an incident was reported in which a woman informed that within the jurisdiction of the Sai Upvan located in the police station's area, two police men from PRV 112 engaged in misbehavior, harassment, and demanded illegal money from her and her fiance.

# Vice-principal of school duped of ₹4 lakh, 1 held

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The driver of a Delhi Government school's vice-principal duped him of over Rs 4 lakh after taking the victim's mobile phone on some pretext. Police said the accused has been arrested and identified as Sandesh Chaudhary aka Sunny Chaudhary (23), a resident of Lal Kuan, Ghaziabad.

The official said that the accused after doing fraudulent transactions from his employer's mobile phone used to delete messages so to not get caught. The matter came to light after, the complainant, Mahesh Kumar Sharma (55), a resident of Babarpur, presently appointed as Vice Principal of a government school, Mandawali reported at Cyber northeast district police station that he received an SMS on his mobile phone regarding debit of Rs 33068 from his savings bank account with Punjab National Bank, Kamla Nagar, Delhi.

On suspicion, he obtained statement of his bank account from which it emerged that, since March to June 2023, 18 such transactions amounting to Rs 4,44,630 have been fraudulently made by some unknown person. "During detailed examination of the complainant, it emerged that the complainant often sought help of his driver namely, Sandesh for online transactions and other networking related jobs, but due to his suspected activities, he was terminated from the job in the end of June," said Deputy Commissioner of Police (northeast), Joy Tirkey.

During investigation, information was obtained from Punjab National Bank,



Kamla Nagar and Flipkart from which it came out that the fraudster had used that amount for purchasing of various items including 14 mobile phones, one LED TV, one refrigerator, one washing machine, bluetooth speakers & one wooden TV unit from Flipkart.

"Further, technical surveillance was mounted and on the basis of information collected, a raid was conducted at the possible hideout and team was successful in nabbing Sandesh," said the DCP. During interrogation, Sandesh revealed that he clandestinely obtained the ATM number of the complainant.

For online payment, OTP is essentially required. For obtaining OTP, he used to take mobile phone of his employer on some pretext and after successful payment of the ordered items from Flipkart, he deleted all the SMSs related to transactions," said the DCP.

"In this way, the accused made 18 such transactions of total amount for Rs 4,44,630 for shopping on Flipkart. He further disclosed that in order to avoid detection by the delivery agents, he used to give the vague address of his nearby locality and took delivery near some famous landmark near his rented house," said the DCP.

# Sulabh International organises 'Swachhta Hi Seva' campaign at 1,000 locations

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Country's premier sanitation organisation, Sulabh International on Saturday organised 'Swachhta Hi Seva' campaign at 1,000 locations in 300 cities and towns having active participation of 50000 citizen. The events were in tune Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call to action on cleanliness and creating awareness on "Garbage Free India".

Sulabh is working in collaboration with Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation in this "jan andolan" of paying



"swachhjanjali" to Babu on the eve of Gandhi Jayanti. The President of Sulabh International Kumar Dilip through a statement says, as an organisation we are deeply committed to the success of Swachh Bharat Abhyian (SBM-2.0) launched by our honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji."

# Modi for Swachchh, Swasth Bharat

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Fitness influencer Ankit Baiyanpuria, took part in the 'Shramdaan for cleanliness' programme with Prime Minister Narendra Modi as part of the 'Swachhata Hi Seva' campaign on Sunday, a day before Gandhi Jayanti.

Ankit, hails from Sonipat, is a former deshi wrestler and social media influencer, whose his followers on X reached 5 millions today. His father is a farmer and his mother is a homemaker. He has gained prominence for his promotion of traditional and indigenous workout methods.

Sharing a video of him with the fitness influencer on social media, Modi, wrote, "Today, as the nation focuses on Swachhata, Ankit Baiyanpuria and I did the same! Beyond just cleanliness, we blended fitness and well-being also into the mix. It is all



about that Swachh and Swasth Bharat vibe!"

In the video, Modi is heard asking Ankit how will the Swachhata mission help his fitness. To which, Ankit replies, "It's our responsibility to keep our nature clean. If it remains clean, we will stay fit." Ankit also said the people of Sonipat have started focusing on cleanliness.

Ankit started his career on YouTube by making funny videos in Haryanvi on his

# Bidhuri demands Kejriwal, Atishi's resignations

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Demanding the resignations of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Education Minister Atishi for their false claims, Leader of the Opposition in Delhi Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, on Sunday claimed that the number of students in the Government schools has decreased this year. Bidhuri said there has been a reduction of more than 30,000 students this year.

The Leader of Opposition said that Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Education Minister Atishi are continuously claiming that there has been an increase in the number of students in government schools, misleading the public.

Bidhuri stated that while the Chief Minister and



Education Minister boast about their education model being world-class, they are claiming that children are leaving public schools and enrolling in government schools.

"They assert that four lakh students have enrolled in government schools, whereas the truth is that in the academic year 2022-23, the total number of students in government schools was 17,89,385, which

has decreased to 17,58,986 in the year 2023-24, a reduction of 30,399 compared to the previous academic session," said Bidhuri citing RTI reply from the education department.

The Opposition leader mentioned that in the government schools of East Delhi, the number of students was 2,06,027 in 2022-23, which has reduced to 1,99,730 in 2023-24.

Similarly, in the government schools of North-East Delhi, the number of students was 2,86,298 in the year 2023-24, whereas it was more than three lakhs in 2022-23. Except for North West A and Central Delhi, there has been a decline in the number of students in government schools across all districts and regions. In the government schools located in North West A, the

number of students in the year 2023-24 is 1,87,596, while it was 1,81,450 in 2022-23. In Central Delhi's government schools, the number of students was 27,580 in 2022-23, which has increased to 28,922 in 2023-24.

He further stated that there is also a decrease in the number of students in the 12th grade in all subjects. In the Science subject, the number of students was 21,285 in 2022-23, which increased to 21,465 in 2023-24.

In the Commerce subject, the number of students was 33,006 in 2022-23, which decreased to 26,721 in 2023-24. The most surprising figures are in the Arts subject, where in the entire Delhi, the total number of students was 1,74,419 in 2022-23, which has decreased to 1,06,785 in 2023-24.



Children, along with the administrative staff of the National Bal Bhawan, participated in the 'Shramdaan for Swachhata' as part of the cleanliness drive campaign on occasion of Gandhi Jayanti

# Modi leads nation in hour-long 'shramdaan'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday pitched for blending fitness and well-being with cleanliness as he led a nationwide cleanliness drive in which thousands of people participated in an hour-long "shramdaan" across the country. Besides Modi, several other BJP leaders, including Union Ministers, took up cleanliness programmes in different parts of the country. Home Minister Amit Shah participated in Ahmedabad while BJP chief JP Nadda did so in Delhi. According to the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry, more than 9.20 lakh sites across the country were adopted for the mega drive, named as "Swachhjanjali" to Mahatma Gandhi on the eve

of his birth anniversary. People from all walks of life, from politicians to students, wielded brooms and took part in the 'Swachhata hi Seva' campaign, in response to the Prime Minister's appeal the cleanliness drive. Wielding a broom, Union Home Minister Amit Shah participated in a cleanliness drive in Ahmedabad. BJP chief JP Nadda also took part in the drive in Delhi's Jhandewalan area. Uttar Pradesh Yogi Adityanath participated in cleanliness drive 'Swachhata Pakhwada' in Sitapur. Taking part in the "shramdaan (voluntary labour)", Union Power Minister RK Singh told reporters, "We (Centre) have taken a resolve to make the country clean. It is a big challenge but we will do it." Union Ministers and BJP



leaders across the country grabbed brooms and took part in the 'Swachhata hi Seva' campaign. Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel participated in a cleanliness drive in Ahmedabad. BJP MP Dinesh Sharma, who also took part in a clean drive, said "swachhata (cleanliness) has become the face of the country." Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, urging people to join the drive, said in a post on X, "Come, let's create a new history! At 10 am today, let's volunteer for an hour, paying homage to Mahatma Gandhi through cleanliness." "Scan or visit local cleanliness programmes to join. Dream of a #GarbageFreeIndia Together, we'll make it happen," he said. Indian Air Force chief Air

Chief Marshal VR Chaudhari took volunteered for a cleanliness activity in New Delhi. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi said it held cleanliness drives at 500 locations across the national capital. Cricketers such as Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma also appealed to the people to come together for "Ek Tareekh, Ek Ghanta, Ek Saath" and join the largest citizen-led movement to strengthen the resolve towards cleanliness. Among the States, Uttar Pradesh adopted more than a lakh sites for cleanliness drives while Maharashtra will conduct the programme in over 62,000 locations, including the beaches, religious places, schools, colleges and water bodies. In Telangana, temples of historical significance were cleaned during the drive.

## Canada-based Lakhbir stepping up terror activities in Punjab: Intelligence

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the renewed focus on the Khalistani terrorists and their expanding arc of terror syndicate following the Indo-Canada diplomatic row, intelligence reports have flagged the increasing footprint of Canada-based gangster-turned-terrorist Lakhbir Singh alias Landa who has been jacking up terror activities in Punjab via an additional operational base in Portugal. Backed by the notorious Pakistani spy agency Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), Landa has been engaged in gunrunning from Pakistan to Punjab. Besides Canada, Portugal has emerged as a key operational base of Landa where a number of his cohorts are based and directing the terror operations against India.

Landa is the mastermind behind the RPG attack at the Intelligence Headquarters of Punjab police in Mohali on May 9, 2022 and at police station Sarhali Kalan in Tarn Taran on December 10, 2022. "Lakhbir Singh alias Landa has been deploying his foreign based associates for retrieving and disposing off consignments consisting of firearms, explosives and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) smuggled from Pakistan in collaboration with Pak ISI, into Punjab and carrying terror activities through their local contacts," reads a recent intelligence report. The report further said, "It has been discerned that Portugal has emerged as an important operational base of Landa's criminal network as some of his key associates have established themselves in Portugal from where they exercise control over the criminal syndicate." One of Landa's foreign based associates, Parminder Singh alias Pattu has emerged as a key member of Landa's criminal network, who is residing illegally on tourist visa in Portugal. Parminder Singh,



son of Tarlochan Singh, is a resident of Baghelewala village in Ferozepur district of Punjab. "It came to notice that recently he (Parminder Singh alias Pattu) arranged one AK-47 assault rifle, one MP-5 sub-machine gun, hand grenades, pistols along with live cartridges for the use of criminal syndicate in Punjab through his contacts in Pakistan," the report highlighted. On Wednesday, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) conducted multi-State searches following a similar intelligence input against another gangster and Landa's associate Lawrence Bishnoi, a criminal mastermind with a notorious track record. Bishnoi has been linked to several high-profile crimes, including the murder of renowned Punjabi singer Sidhu Moosewala and for issuing threats against Bollywood actor Salman Khan. Recent intelligence inputs warned of an alarming trend in Bishnoi's illicit activities who has established a direct line of communication with Nasir Khan, an ISI operative. "The connection suggests that Bishnoi and his gang might

be diversifying their criminal portfolio by procuring weapons with the help of Pakistan Intelligence Operatives (PIOs) and making use of these weapons for furthering gangster activities in the region," reads the Intelligence report. Bishnoi's gang is notorious for involvement in extortion and killings but the recent revelation of links with Pakistan-based entities suggests a "strategic shift in the gang's operational focus." "The gang's involvement in arms smuggling represents a significant escalation in their criminal activities and poses a considerable risk to the nation's security. The potential backing by Pak ISI operatives also indicates a concerning overlap between organized crimes and geopolitical adversaries, enhancing the threat profile of Bishnoi's operations," warned the report.

## Rajnath takes part in cleanliness drive



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

As part of 'Swachhata Hi Sewa' campaign, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday took part in a special cleanliness programme 'Ek Taarikh, Ek Ghanta, Ek Saath', organised by Controller General of Defence Accounts (CGDA) at its premises in Delhi Cantonment. Rajnath led the shramdaan activities, which included a cleanliness drive, beautification of common area and a plantation drive. The defence minister also interacted with the Safai Karamcharis and lauded their efforts in ensuring cleanliness in the premises. He motivated them to continue working with zeal and dedication and carry forward the mass social movement launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led Government to realise the dream of Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi of a 'Clean India'. Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan, Financial Adviser (Defence Service)/Rasika Chaube and CGDA S G Dastidar also participated in various cleanliness activities on the occasion. Rajnath also interacted with the Principal Controllers and Controllers of Defence Accounts heading the offices of PCDA (Army) Jammu,

PCDA (Air Force) Dehradun, PCDA (Army) Jaipur, PCDA (Pensions) Prayagraj, CDA (Army) Meerut, CDA Guwahati, CDA Jabalpur, CDA (Regional Training Centre) Bengaluru and CDA Chennai and reviewed the implementation of the 'Swachhata Hi Sewa' campaign in their respective jurisdictions. The 'Swachhata Hi Sewa' campaign, which began on September 15, 2023, will culminate on the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi on October 02. As part of the campaign, shramdaan activities are being undertaken through community participation as a prelude to the Swachh Bharat Diwas on Gandhi Jayanti. Over 20,000 officers and staff of Defence Accounts Department across more than 1,100 offices and residential colonies across the country have been undertaking cleanliness activities including removal of garbage, weeding out of files and awareness campaigns on the importance of proper sanitation and hygiene. Similar cleanliness drives have been launched at various other establishments of Ministry of Defence, Services and related organisations all over the country as part of the 'Swachhata Hi Sewa' campaign.

## India needs stronger Armed forces, says Minister

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday called for effective utilisation of financial resources as India needs stronger Armed forces with modern equipment to become a developed nation by 2047. "If we wish to create a developed nation, we will need stronger armed forces with modern arms and equipment. Therefore, it is necessary to effectively utilise the financial resources available to us," he said after launching several digital initiatives of the Defence Accounts Department (DAD) during its 276th annual day celebrations here. "There should be a fine balance between the demands of services and the allocation of available resources," the minister added. Describing the DAD as the "guardian of defence finance", he emphasised the need to bolster the internal vigilance mechanism so that any suspicious activity can be detected and reviewed immediately.



This, he said, will not only help in dealing with the problem quickly but also increase the trust of the people in the department. Rajnath also suggested to the DAD for the creation of an in-house standing committee that can research and study market forces and provide high-quality market intelligence to the field officers. He appreciated the organisation for its efforts towards enhancing the country's defence capabilities through a transparent and efficient financial system. Terming accounting as extremely important for an individual, organisation and the nation as a whole, he said, "Our wants are unlimited, but the available resources are limited." He commended the DAD for ensuring judicious use of resources while extracting optimum output. The digital initiatives launched included an integrated defence finance dashboard for the Ministry of Defence -- SARANSH (Summary of Accounts, Budget and Expenditure

for Raksha Mantralaya) and BISWAS (Bill Information and Work Analysis System and e-Raksha Awaas). While Rajnath lauded the DAD for coming out with numerous digital initiatives, he exhorted it to develop its professional capabilities to deal with the complexities arising out of the constantly-evolving times. He urged it to collaborate with reputable institutions such as Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) to develop and adopt customised training modules, as per requirements. The minister urged DAD officials to keep in mind two broad aspects while extending financial advice -- realistic assessment of the demand of the user agency and understanding of the product's market. He stressed the need to pay attention to the fact whether there is a need to buy a product or not and if a similar product of equal or greater effectiveness is available somewhere else in the market at a lower cost, according to the defence ministry.

This understanding will further increase the quality of financial advice, he said. To develop such an understanding, Rajnath suggested the creation of an in-house mechanism, a standing committee of experienced people who can research and study market forces and provide high-quality market intelligence to the field officers. "Big banks and financial institutions develop in-house economic intelligence and research teams. On similar lines, the DAD needs to develop an in-house team for market research and intelligence," he said. The defence minister also recommended collaboration with industry associations and business schools for extensive study of market conditions. Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan, Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal VR Chaudhari, Chief of Naval Staff Admiral R Hari Kumar, Financial Advisor (Defence Services) Rasika Chaube, Controller General of Defence Accounts S G Dastidar and other senior officials of Ministry of Defence were present during the event.

## Modi to visit Rajasthan, MP to launch development projects

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch multiple development projects in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh during his visit to the two poll-bound States on Monday. The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said he will launch and lay the foundation stone for development projects worth about Rs 7,000 crore in Rajasthan and around Rs 19,260 crore in Madhya Pradesh. During his visit to Chittorgarh in Rajasthan, he will inaugurate the Mehana-Bathinda-Gurdaspur gas pipeline, built at a cost of Rs 4,500 crore in yet another step to promote a gas-based economy, it said. Modi will also inaugurate Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited's (HPCL) LPG plant in Abu Road. This plant will bottle and distribute 86 lakh cylinders per annum, resulting in net reduction in running trucks carrying the cylinders by around 0.75 million kilometres annually. This will help to cut down about 0.5 million tons of CO2 emission per annum, it said.



Among the other projects, he will throw open a four-lane road on NH-12 (new NH-52) on the Darah-Jhalawar-Teendhar section, which has been constructed at a cost of more than Rs 1,480 crore. This will help ease the transportation of the produce of mines from Kota and Jhalawar districts, the statement said. Foundation stones for constructing and widening the railway overbridge from two lanes to four in Sawai Madhopur will also be laid. Modi will inaugurate several railway projects, tourism facilities and a permanent campus of the Indian Institute of Information Technology, Kota. During his visit to Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh, he will inaugurate the Delhi-Vadodara Expressway, which has been

developed at a cost of about Rs 11,895 crore. He will also lay the foundation stone for five different road projects worth over Rs 1,880 crore, the statement said. In line with his vision to ensure a pucca house for every family, the prime minister will initiate the 'grih pravesh' ceremony of over 2.2 lakh homes built under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Gramin, it said. Modi will also inaugurate the houses constructed under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Urban at a cost of about Rs 140 crore. As part of the Government's focus on providing safe and adequate drinking water, Modi will lay the foundation stone of Jal Jeevan Mission projects worth over Rs 1,530 crore in Gwalior and Sheopor districts. These projects will together benefit more than 720 villages in the region. He will also lay the foundation stone of nine health centres under the Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission and inaugurate and launch several other projects. Assembly polls in both Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan are expected to be held in November-December.

## Awareness programme on 'menstrual health' held



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Joining the Government's initiative on menstrual hygiene to promote women's health, 'Menstrual Health- One more step towards women's health', the Army Hospital (R&R) Delhi Cantonment here organised a menstrual health awareness programme 'Mahawari mein Swachhta' on Sunday. A lecture cum demonstration was organised at Army Hospital (R&R) and senior officers and women from all walks of life, including adolescent girls participated in the event, army officials said. The social taboos and myths associated with men-

struation, medical implications of good menstrual hygiene, and simple but effective ways to deal with menstrual issues were highlighted during the event. The lack of proper menstrual hygiene can be the source of genital tract infections which can later lead to infertility. It was also discussed how the ignorance about simple facts about menstrual hygiene can stall the overall growth of young girls, and become a hindrance to them getting a good education, and society as a whole needs to change its attitude about menstruation which is essentially a physiological process.

## Afghan Embassy in Delhi announces shut down of operations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Afghanistan Embassy in New Delhi has announced that it is ceasing operations from October 1 citing a lack of support from the host government, failure to meet expectations in serving Afghanistan's interests and reduction in personnel and resources. Making this announcement late Sunday night, the Afghanistan embassy in a statement said it regrets announcing the decision to cease its operations, effective October 1, 2023. "It is with profound sadness, regret, and disappointment that the Embassy of Afghanistan in New Delhi announces this decision to cease its operations," the statement said. The embassy said this decision, while deeply regrettable, was made after careful consideration, taking into account the historic ties and long-standing partnership between Afghanistan and India. The embassy statement also listed key factors affecting its ability to continue the mis-



sion effectively and said that they were the primary reasons for the "unfortunate closure". The embassy cited a "lack of support from the host government", alleging that it has experienced a notable absence of crucial support from the host government, which it said hindered its ability to carry out duties effectively. The mission also cited "failure to meet expectations in serving Afghanistan's interests" as one of the reasons. "We acknowledge our shortcomings in meeting the expectations and requirements necessary to serve the best interests of Afghanistan and its citizens due to the lack of diplomatic support in India and the absence of a legitimate functioning government in Kabul," the mission said. It also said due to unfore-

seen and unfortunate circumstances, there has been a significant reduction in both personnel and resources available to it, making it increasingly challenging to continue operations. "The lack of timely and sufficient support from visa renewal for diplomats to other critical areas of cooperation led to an understandable frustration among our team and impeded our ability to carry out routine duties effectively," the statement said. Given these circumstances, "it is with deep regret that we have taken the difficult decision to close all operations of the mission with the exception of emergency consular services to Afghan citizens till the transfer of the custodial authority of the mission to the host country," it said.

# Hour-long cleanliness drive launched in BLW, BHU

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Under the nationwide cleanliness campaign, named 'One Date, One Hour, One Time for Cleanliness' the drive was launched ahead of the 154th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi at various places in the city including Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) and Banaras Hindu University (BHU) here on Sunday. In BLW, under the leadership of General Manager (GM) Basudev Panda, the officers, employees and their families joined for a cleanliness mega campaign. The BLW set an example by doing mega shramdaan at 320 identified places in the entire BLW campus on the theme of 'Cleanliness is Service' on the call of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Under 'Cleanliness Fortnight' as per the guidelines of the Ministry of Railways, the campaign began at 10 am under the leadership of GM. Senior officers including Principal Chief Electrical Engineer SK Srivastava, Principal Chief Materials Manager Rajneesh Gupta, Principal Chief Medical Officer Dr Devesh Kumar, Chief Vigilance Officer Pramod Kumar Chaudhary, Chief Engineer VK Shukla, Financial Advisor and Chief Accounts Officer (TOT) Ajay Srivastava, Chief Mechanical Engineer (Service) Neeraj Jain, Chief



GM Basudev Panda and other officers offering shramdaan at BLW in Varanasi on Sunday.

Quality Assurance Manager Praveen Kumar, Chief Material Manager Tilok Kothari, Deputy Chief Personnel Officer, (Headquarters) Shyam Babu, Public Relations Officer Rajesh Kumar, members of Staff Council and others also offered their shramdaan in Surya Sarovar premises during hour-long drive.

The campaigns were also launched at Tagore Park and in the workshop areas. The students of BLW Inter College, Civil Defence, St John's Ambulance Brigade, members

of Bharat Scout Guide, members of different unions and others also participated in the cleanliness drive. The entire programme was conducted by Chief Safety Officer SB Patel.

In BHU, the campaign was launched at various places. At Sir Sunderlal Hospital (SSH), under the leadership of Medical Superintendent (MS) Prof KK Gupta, the doctors, officers, students and employees conducted a cleanliness campaign in the hospital premises. During this, Deputy Medical Superintendent Prof Ankur

Singh, Prof Amit Anand, Nursing Superintendent Prakash Sharma and others were present. At Mahila Mahavidyalaya (MMV), one the eve of birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi and Lal Bahadur Shastri, week-long 'Clean and Healthy India' campaign was launched. BHU Registrar Prof Arun Kumar Singh, Dean of Students Dr Anupam Kumar Nema, Joint Registrar (General Administration) Dr Nandlal and Principal Prof Rita Singh and many others were present.

# Massive drive held at Assi Ghat

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

On the call of the Prime Minister, under the joint aegis of 95 battalion Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Srijan Samajik Vikas Nyas, Nagar Nigam, Ganga Task Force and National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), a tribute was paid to the 'Father of the Nation' Mahatma Gandhi on the eve of his birth anniversary at Assi Ghat here on Sunday.

In the presence of UP Minister of State (Independent Charge) Ravindra Jaiswal, the participants pledged to fulfill the dream of clean India and keep the country clean with their actions.

Mayor Ashok Tiwari, MLC Hansraj Vishwakarma, Padma Shri Dr Saroj Choramani and many other dignitaries were also present to offer their shramdaan.



UP Minister Ravindra Jaiswal, others offering shramdaan at Assi Ghat in Varanasi on Sunday.

The programme was presided over by Transport Commissioner (UP Govt) Chandar Bhushan Singh.

Chief of Srijan Nyas Anil Kumar Singh, brand ambassador of Ganga Haritima Abhiyan, played an important role in making the programme

successful. Commissioner of Police (CP) Mukta Ashok Jain, Chief Development Officer Himanshu Nagpal, Municipal Commissioner Shipu Giri, Nagar Swasthya Adhikar Dr NP Singh, Deputy Commandant Navneet Kumar, Assistant Commandant Vinod

Kumar Singh, Praveen Singh and personnel of 95 CRPF Battalion, members of Ganga Task force, NDRF officers and personnel, BJP leaders including Saurabh Singh Patel, volunteers of Srijan, students of Brahma Vidyalaya and others were also present.

# MLA for maintaining environment

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

MLA from Varanasi Cantonment Saurabh Srivastava and Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) of Varanasi Division of North Eastern Railway (NER) Vineet Kumar Srivastava called upon the people, especially railway employees and passengers to maintain the environment. They were addressing a function organised at the second entry of Banaras railway station under the campaign 'One Date One Hour at 10' to pay homage to Mahatma Gandhi on the eve of his birth anniversary. Extensive cleaning was done through collective shramdaan offered from 10 am to 11 am. On the occasion, the branch officers including the DRM have also taken pledge of cleanliness.

On the occasion, extensive tree plantation was done in the park of Banaras station complex by the MLA, DRM and other officers for the purity of the environment. The Drug Free India and Swachhta Hi Seva Abhiyan rally organised under the aegis of Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India and it was flagged off by the MLA. On the occasion, the DRM and officers participated in the cleanliness drive organised at Banaras station. To stop single-use plastic, jute and cotton bags were distributed to the passengers by the DRM and the MLA. Other officers distributed pamphlets containing information to the passengers about adopting environment-friendly behavior and abandoning artificial resources.



MLA Saurabh Srivastava addressing a function at Banaras station in Varanasi on Sunday.

was organised in the entire country on the eve of Gandhi Jayanti in which the PM has underlined the importance of cleanliness. The basic objectives of cleanliness cannot be achieved without the participation of every section of the society. That is why for the success of the cleanliness campaign, Varanasi Division of North Eastern Railway along with the entire country participated in this countrywide campaign and contributed towards building a clean India.

Senior Divisional Mechanical Engineer (EnHM) Apoorva Swarnkar, Chief Medical Superintendent Dr RJ Chaudhuri, Senior Divisional Mechanical Engineer (C&W) Anubhav Pathak, Senior Divisional Signal and Telecommunication Engineer Rajat Priya, Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer (Traction) RN Singh, Senior Divisional Safety Officer Balendra Paul, Divisional Personnel Officer Vivek Sharma, Assistant Commercial Manager AK

Suman and other officers, station employees, voluntary organisations, children and teachers of Glenhill School, scouts and guides etc participated.

**AWARENESS RALLY TAKEN OUT:** On the eve of Mahatma Gandhi Jayanti, a joint meeting of Central Communication Bureau and Press Information Office (PIB), Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, Varanasi and Yuvak Mangal Dal, Dhanpalpur and Hariyali Foundation was held on Sunday at Panchayat Bhawan located in Dhanpalpur of Arazilines development block area. The programme of shramdaan was held apart from goshi, cleanliness rally, quiz competition, and street drama during 'One Day, One Hour' campaign. During the programme, the cleanliness public awareness rally was flagged off by chief guest Prashant Kakkar, media communication officer PIB along with career guru Ravindra Sahay

and gram pradhan Kailash Maurya. This rally went around Dhanpalpur village and spread the message of cleanliness from house to house apart from creating awareness. It ended again at the venue of Panchayat Bhawan. During the programme, Disha Creation Varanasi made people aware about cleanliness through street plays and songs at various places in the village. Ten winners were given prizes by conducting a quiz by Regional Publicity Officer Dr Lajji. All the guests who came to the programme were honoured with mementos by Hariyali Foundation. At the end of the programme, the people present there took a pledge of cleanliness. It was conducted by Nand Kishore Rajbhar. The programme was also attended by Mahesh Maurya, Ram Singh Verma, OP Singh, Chhotelal Gautam, Tarakeshwar Singh, Sandeep, Ramashray, Ajay, Rahul, Ravi Singh, Pradeep Singh, Ashutosh Aditya, Shivkumar etc.

# BJP leader praises PM for fulfilling dreams of Gandhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Regional Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president Dilip Singh Patel praised the Prime Minister Narendra Modi for fulfilling the dreams of Mahatma Gandhi by launching a nationwide cleanliness drive. He said that in 2014, when Modi became the PM, he himself started this cleanliness campaign from Kashi by sweeping the lane and ghat. "Today, this campaign has taken the form of a people's movement," he said, adding that recently, in the 105th episode of 'Mann Ki Baat', the PM had called for cleanliness and shramdaan in public places under 'One Date, One Hour Together' on Sunday. Cleanliness and shramdaan was done at Amrit Sarovar in view to pay a true tribute to Babu. "Cleanliness is the basic mantra of a healthy and peaceful life," he said.

In the morning itself, while addressing the people Patel said that the people were seen to be conscious about cleanliness in every nook and corner of the country. "Today, brooms were seen in the hands of



Regional BJP chief DS Patel and others at statue of Sardar Patel in Varanasi on Sunday.

common people including dignitaries who offered shramdaan by cleaning public places in their respective areas. The campaign was launched at Aditya Sarovar in Aditya Nagar Nevada under Ravidas Mandal. In this cleanliness campaign and Shramdaan programme which started at 10 am, Patel and other BJP leaders swept the floor, picked up the garbage,

cleaned the silt on the stairs near the lake, made people aware about cleanliness and garlanded the statue of Sardar Patel.

In the cleanliness campaign, Surendra Patel, Suresh Singh, regional co-media in-charge Santosh Solapurkar, Madhukar Pandey, Abhishek Mishra, Mandal President Shatrughan Patel, corporator

Garima Singh, former corporator Vineet Singh, Anil Srivastava, Dinesh Kalra, Shailensh Pandey, Rakesh Mohan Dixit, Amarnath Singh Patel, Anil Singh, Arun Singh, Sita Gupta, Jitendra Patel, Vijay Verma, Ratneshwar Modanwal, Shashank Prajapati, Sheshmani Devi, Salgu Patel, Shyam Bhushan Sharma and others participated in the campaign.

# CORE GM, others take part in 'shramdaan'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

On the call of Prime Minister, officers and employees under the leadership of General Manager of Central Organisation for Railway Electrification (CORE) Pramod Kumar took part in a 'shramdaan' related to cleanliness in the office premises and railway colonies. The cleanliness fortnight is being observed in the CORE from September 16 till October 2. To spread awareness about cleanliness among the employees of CORE, a large number of activities related to cleanliness have been carried out during Swachhta Pakhwada.

The swachhta pakhwada started on September 16 with the administration of cleanli-



ness oath by GM to the officers and employees of the CORE. Under the clean office campaign, extensive cleaning was

done in all departments and premises of the office on September 18 and 19. From September 20 to 22,

cleanliness campaign was conducted in all residential colonies under Swachh Residential Complex. Under the Swachh Neer Abhiyan, all water treatment and filtration plants, overhead tanks, water bodies and drinking water systems of the CORE complex were inspected from September 25 to 26.

Posters, standees and banners were put up at all major places of CORE to create awareness for overall cleanliness, ban on single-use plastic and encourage use of cloth bags and messages were also displayed through social media. The CORE has always been striving towards cleanliness and is making an important contribution in making the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan successful.

# Mahakumbh 2025 to be grand in many ways

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

From expanding its size to enhancing facilities, the Mahakumbh 2025 would be grand in more than one aspect.

The size of the mega religious event will be expanded by around 800 hectares from 3,200 hectares of Kumbh 2019. It will have five more sectors (25) as compared to 20 in 2019 and spread towards Phaphamau side (Rasulabad) of Ganga and downstream of Sangam (Chhatnag). Moreover, to ease the movement of around 40 crore expected devotees and

tourists there will be 30 pontoon bridges over Ganga and Yamuna. Kumbh 2019 had 22 pontoon bridges and was visited by around 25 crore people.

All these issues were discussed during the 15th board meeting of the Prayagraj Mela Authority, chaired by divisional commissioner Vijay Vishwas Pant, Kumbh Mela Adhikari Vijay Kiran Anand.

"This time, 30 pontoon bridges will be built for easy movement of devotees and the mega religious event will be held in 25 sectors," said Anand. Also, a huge pandal with a

capacity to hold 10,000 people at one go will be set up.

Around 1.45 lakh toilets will be set up in the vast mela area and 10,000 sanitation workers deployed. There will be 25,000 dustbins, 800 cleaning gangs and an ICT based monitoring system would be put in place. All these proposals have been approved in principle by the Board and will be sent to the Apex Committee for approval. "Efforts to give the message of clean Mahakumbh will start from Magh Mela 2023-24 itself. After the mela, 100 FRP toilets will remain

here throughout the year so that filth does not spread and the mela area is kept clean," said Anand. The state government of Prayagraj has approved a budget of Rs 23.48 crore for the widening and construction of new roads leading to the Maha Kumbh-2025. The funds will be used for road widening and the construction of a link road and a new road to decongest the gathering of devotees. Additionally, funds have been allocated for the construction of three ghats. With the approval of funds, the work will be expedited.

# Stress on adopting cleanliness

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

A cleanliness drive was organised throughout the district on Sunday. At Deewan Ghat of Vindhachal MLA Ratnakar Mishra, Principal Secretary, Social Welfare and nodal officer, Dr Hari Om and DM Priyanka Niranjan led the drive in which the locals participated on a large

scale. In the premises of DIG office DIG RP Singh himself took the command himself along with PAC and police personnel. On the occasion he said it is the need of the hour that we adopt cleanliness in daily routine. At Police Lines Superintendent of Police (SP) Abhinandan cleaned the premises. He was accompanied

by police personnel. Union Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Anupriya Patel and MLC Shyam Narain Singh 'Vineet Singh' conducted cleanliness drive near Patel Chauraha located at Bharuhna.

**MEETING:** District Magistrate Priyanka Niranjan while presiding over the meeting of Udyog Bandhu at the Collectorate on Saturday

proper action should be taken by the departments and in case any application was rejected, proper reason should be told to the applicant. The LDM submitted the report regarding the target under different schemes, its achievements and the reason behind the pendency as well as rejection. The DM concluded the meeting with the direction to the officials that the problems of the entrepreneurs were to be taken seriously.

**DRIVE:** Under the direction of DM Priyanka Niranjan the team led by additional district magistrate (ADM/Finance & Revenue) Shiv Pratap Shukla challan of 51 vehicles has been done during the period from September 12 to 30. Giving details of the drive against tax evasion and overloading senior mines officer Shailendra Singh said revenue of Rs 43.50 lakh will be realised. He said under the drive 27 vehicles had been handed over to the police across the district and 24 vehicles challaned online.

**11 COUPLES REUNITE:** Under 'Project Milan' programme 11 couples reunited through the Family Counselling Centre (FCC) located at Police Lines on Sunday. The couples were living separately due to misunderstanding over trivial issues and the cases were brought to the police. The police had referred them to the FCC and after sep-

arate sittings the couple agreed to live together. The counsellors and staff wished them a successful life and a bright future. On the day incharge of the centre sub-inspector Shashi Tiwari, head constable Savitri Devi, constables Pinki Jaiswal and Sapna, counsellors Nirmala Rai and Dr Krishna Singh along with others were present during the counselling.

**MAN DIES:** One person found in an unconscious state near the treasury office died in a hospital on Saturday. The guard of the treasury informed the PRV 112 that about the person lying on the ground near the treasury office under the City Kotwali area. He was brought to the divisional hospital.

The police had recovered a used syringe near the place where the person was lying and a toxic substance from his pocket. According to the police it seemed that the man became unconsciousness due to the overdose of the drug which led to his death in the hospital. On information Station House Officer (SHO) City Kotwali Bal Mukund Mishra reached the spot. On the basis of the photograph of the deceased was identified as Deepak Giri (29) of Vijapur under Dehat Kotwali police station. The SHO said the cause of death can be said clearly only after the post-mortem.



DIG RP Singh cleaning his office premises by doing 'shramdaan' (voluntary labour) along with police personnel



www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

PAPER WITH PASSION

## Resilient

### Taking on challenges from the West, India walks with confidence to strengthen ties with the US

Amid the diplomatic brouhaha following the killing of India-branded terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Canada, India has embarked on a determined and nuanced offensive to present its side of the story on the global fora. During an interaction with Indian journalists in Washington DC, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar criticised Canada for "normalising" violence, threats and intimidation against our diplomats and missions. Tensions between India and Canada have escalated following Justin Trudeau's allegations of Indian involvement in the killing of Nijjar, a Khalistani extremist. Jaishankar highlighted ongoing issues with Canada's "permissiveness" toward terrorism and extremism, as well as the lack of response to extradition requests. He emphasised the need to address the larger issue, rejecting the idea that threats and intimidation should be justified as freedom of speech. The Minister, at an Indian community event in Washington DC, also highlighted the resilience and growth of the India-US relationship, emphasising the need for continued collaboration between the countries. He underscored the unprecedented trajectory of the India-US partnership, describing it as "desirable, optimal and comfortable". Jaishankar expressed optimism regarding the future of bilateral ties, drawing a parallel to India's historic Chandrayaan mission. He praised the US for its "invaluable support" in ensuring the success of the G20 Summit. The Minister said he believed that the partnership would continue to soar, "possibly even beyond the moon".



Amid diplomatic discussions, he dismissed Trudeau's allegations of the Indian Government's involvement in Nijjar's murder as "inconsistent with India's policy". Jaishankar's stance sought to vindicate India's position on the matter. In a separate meeting with US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin, the two explored avenues for strengthening bilateral defence ties, including the co-production of defence items. Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, a meeting of the Indian High Commissioner with the Indian community was disrupted by a few persons with anti-national credentials, bolstering Jaishankar's claim that hardline anti-India elements have taken roots in the West and they get all the leverage to carry out activities against India's interests in the name of freedom of speech. The West must realise that such elements are not fighting for anybody's rights or freedom, they have amassed ill-gotten wealth and wield significant power by claiming to fight for a "just cause" against India. But the fact is that their ideology is based on exclusion, intimidation and violence and that they have no support base in India. An ordinary Punjabi does not identify with them or subscribe to their views. The West must be wary of their presence and activities as these go against its own democratic principles. The Indian External Affairs Minister is doing the proper thing in taking up the cudgels to unmask these elements and show the world that they are just a bunch of desperadoes masquerading as freedom fighters.

India's policy". Jaishankar's stance sought to vindicate India's position on the matter. In a separate meeting with US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin, the two explored avenues for strengthening bilateral defence ties, including the co-production of defence items. Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, a meeting of the Indian High Commissioner with the Indian community was disrupted by a few persons with anti-national credentials, bolstering Jaishankar's claim that hardline anti-India elements have taken roots in the West and they get all the leverage to carry out activities against India's interests in the name of freedom of speech. The West must realise that such elements are not fighting for anybody's rights or freedom, they have amassed ill-gotten wealth and wield significant power by claiming to fight for a "just cause" against India. But the fact is that their ideology is based on exclusion, intimidation and violence and that they have no support base in India. An ordinary Punjabi does not identify with them or subscribe to their views. The West must be wary of their presence and activities as these go against its own democratic principles. The Indian External Affairs Minister is doing the proper thing in taking up the cudgels to unmask these elements and show the world that they are just a bunch of desperadoes masquerading as freedom fighters.

### PICTALK



A sand sculpture created by sand artist Sudarsan Pattnaik on the 'Swachhata Pakhwada at Puri beach

# Gandhian approach to world peace



RAJDEEP PATHAK

### Mahatma's ideas of nonviolence act as lighthouse in the modern day world where storms of hatred and factionalism rage

In a world marked by conflict and division, the pursuit of global peace remains an enduring aspiration of humanity. It is a quest that has been championed by leaders, thinkers, and activists throughout history. One of the most prominent figures in this quest was Mahatma Gandhi, whose philosophy of nonviolence continues to inspire people around the globe. The concept of nonviolence stands as a beacon of hope and a path toward sustainable peace.



As the world commemorates the International Day of Nonviolence and celebrates Mahatma Gandhi's birthday on October 2, it is crucial to move beyond the celebration and understand it as a solemn commitment that global leaders must undertake (read acknowledge) for the betterment of humanity, which in future can offer a transformative vision that should guide us through the turbulent waters of our times.

Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy, of Satyagraha (truth-force), emphasized the power of truth and love to transform societies and resolve conflicts. Gandhi's influence extended far beyond the borders of India, leaving an indelible mark on the global struggle for peace. Historian Eknath Easwaran captured Gandhi's significance when he wrote that "Gandhi's teachings on nonviolence and his fearless commitment to justice resonate not as relics of the past but as timeless lessons for a world still grappling with violence and injustice."

The universality of Nonviolence stems from the fundamental recognition of human dignity and the shared aspiration for peace. Drawing inspiration from diverse religious and philosophical traditions, Gandhi synthesised the principles of 'Ahimsa' (non-harm) and 'Satyagraha' (truth force) into a powerful tool for social and political change, demonstrating the efficacy of nonviolent resistance.

Gandhi's influence resonated globally, inspiring figures like Martin Luther King Jr., who championed Civil Rights in the United States. King's commitment to nonviolent resistance was deeply rooted in his Christian

faith and the teachings of Gandhi. In his famous "Letter from Birmingham Jail," King wrote, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere," underscoring the interconnectedness of humanity and the necessity of nonviolent action in the face of injustice. He went on to state that "Nonviolence is a powerful and just weapon which cuts without wounding and ennobles the man who wields it."

Similarly, Nelson Mandela had unquestionable faith in the power of nonviolence. To him, "Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence and the truth is the only lasting legacy we have. All other political systems have failed. Ours is the only approach that can guarantee world peace because it is the only approach that can guarantee that mankind will be relieved of the curse of war."

Further, Desmond Tutu's struggle against apartheid in South Africa showcased the transformative power of non-violence. Tutu emphasized that nonviolence was not just a tactic but a way of life. To him, "Forgiveness and reconciliation are not just ethereal, spiritual things. They have concrete, pragmatic applications." The International Day of Nonviolence observed on the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi, serves as a reminder



THE UNIVERSALITY OF NONVIOLENCE STEMS FROM THE FUNDAMENTAL RECOGNITION OF HUMAN DIGNITY AND THE SHARED ASPIRATION FOR PEACE

of the global significance of this philosophy. The United Nations, recognising the importance of nonviolence in resolving conflicts and promoting peace, has actively championed this day. The UN has recognised the intrinsic connection between peace and sustainable development in its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In a world grappling with complex geopolitical tensions, the efficacy of nonviolence as a strategy for conflict resolution cannot be overstated. Peace activist and granddaughter of Mahatma Gandhi, Ela Bhatt underscored this connection. She believes that "Without peace, development is impossible, and without development, peace is not achievable."

In recent years, nonviolent movements have emerged as powerful forces for change in various parts of the world. From Rosa Parks, who refused to give up her bus seat, to Malala Yousafzai, who stood up for girls' education in the face of violence, to 'The Arab Spring' in the Middle East, to 'The Umbrella Movement' in Hong Kong, and the global climate strikes led by Greta Thunberg are examples of how nonviolent resistance remains relevant in contemporary global struggles. The protests, fuelled by a desire for

democracy, social justice and environmental concerns for leaders to awake from their slumber, demonstrated that the collective power of non-violent action could challenge established norms and demand change.

The birthday of Mahatma Gandhi and the International Day of Nonviolence is a clarion call for action. In a world grappling with diverse challenges, the principles of non-violence offer not just a historical legacy but a roadmap for the future. As Mahatma Gandhi himself had declared, "Nonviolence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind."

Without exaggeration, it can be said that education stands as a formidable tool for nurturing the values of nonviolence from an early age. Nelson Mandela's insight, from his "Long Walk to Freedom" that people must learn to hate but can also be taught to love, underscores the transformative potential of education. Curricula that incorporate teachings on conflict resolution, empathy, and understanding lay the foundation for a more peaceful and tolerant world.

(The writer is a programme executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### TROUBLE OVER POETRY

Sir — Rashtriya Janata Dal MP, Manoj Jha, is under attack for the mere recitation of the poem, "Thakur ka Kuan," during the recently concluded special session of Parliament. Poet Om Prakash Valmiki laments, "Oven is made of mud, mud is from the pond, the pond belongs to the Thakur." Munshi Premchand's story by the same title was the inspiration for poet Valmiki. The main character in the story, Gangi, a lower caste, makes a vain attempt under the cover of darkness to fetch some 'clean' water from a Thakur's well for his ailing wife, Jokhu. Manoj Jha read the poem to capture the upper caste dominance over all aspects of life in a village. We read Thakur is a title used by feudal landlords in the past.

It is a fact that cruelty towards people belonging to lower castes is on the rise in new India. Social ostracism and discrimination based on caste refuse to disappear. It was reported recently that in Kantasan village in Patan district of Gujarat, a ration shop owned by a Dalit faced a boycott from the Thakur community. In an inaugural function in a temple in Kannur district of Kerala, a priest refused to pass on the small lighted lamp to Kerala Minister for Temple Affairs, K Radhakrishnan, who belongs to the Scheduled Caste community, to light a bigger traditional lamp. RJD MP Professor Manoj Jha's recital of the poem in Parliament and the DMK Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin's caustic comment on the prevailing social injustice and inequality in Sanatana Dharma emerged from a multitude of such incidents in the country. Mahatma Gandhi wanted to dismantle the caste system "root and branch."

Haridasan Rajan | Kozhikode

### RBI EXTENDS DEADLINE FOR 2K NOTES

Sir — The recent decision by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to extend the deadline for the deposit and exchange of Rs 2,000 denomination banknotes until October 7, 2023, is a welcome move. This decision comes after the initial deadline of

### 'Annadata' Dr Swami Nathan is no more



The progress in agriculture should be measured not on the basis of agricultural income or growth, but on the basis of the increase in the income of the farmers. Dr Swami Nathan Commission maintained this opinion. In 1966, Nathan created a high-yielding wheat variety by hybridizing wheat seeds from Mexico with local wheat from Punjab. Similarly, the cultivation of improved varieties of rice, the staple food of India, was always striving for the economic upliftment

of poor farmers. Poverty disturbed by the failure of farmers' agriculture due to inadequate credit and the vagaries of nature, the commission headed by Dr. Swami Nathan, concerned with the suicide of farmers in debt, said that the progress in agriculture should be measured on the basis of farmers' income and not on the basis of agricultural income or growth. Dr. Swami Nathan aimed to achieve the objectives of food security, easy supply to agriculture, development of dryland farming, increase in profit by increasing agricultural productivity, reduction of imports, adjustment of prices of agricultural products to the global market, and preservation of the environment and ecosystem, among other things. His efforts were valuable. Dr. Swami Nathan was truly the "Annadata" of Indians.

Dattaprasad Shirodkar, | Mumbai

September 30 had passed, providing much-needed relief to citizens who may still possess these notes.

The RBI's decision to review the situation and extend the deadline demonstrates a considerate approach to the circumstances of the people. It recognizes that some individuals may still hold these notes, and it ensures that they have a fair opportunity to exchange or deposit them.

Furthermore, the clarification that banks will cease accepting Rs 2,000 banknotes for credit to accounts or exchange into other denomination banknotes from October 8 is essential information for the public.

The provision allowing people to approach the 19 RBI Issue offices to exchange the Rs 2,000 banknotes, up to a limit of Rs 20,000 at a time, is a practical solution for those who may have a significant amount of these notes. The option to send the banknotes through India Post for crediting respective bank accounts, subject to relevant regulations and due diligence, adds a convenient avenue for compliance. The article's background on the introduction of the Rs 2,000 denomination cur-

rency note in 2016 and the cessation of its printing in 2018-19 provides valuable context for readers. It highlights the RBI's goal to ensure an adequate supply of currency in other denominations.

Maimul Safui | Howrah

### HC STOPPED FROM HOLDING MEETING

Sir — High Commissioner, Vikram Doraiswami, was reported to have been stopped from entering a Gurdwara by Khalistani extremists in Glasgow. It is shocking and outrageous. It is an insult to us. Of late, the rising of anti-India forces on foreign soil is a matter of concern. Reports of desecration of temples in Canada, Australia, the USA, and the UK are on the rise. The breeding of terror on foreign soil is unacceptable. It needs to be condemned. Respective governments should not allow such unlawful activities on their soil. India should take up the matter at the highest political level.

Sravana Ramachandran | Chennai

## Tourism as a green investment for the future

### Green investments in the tourism sector are needed for sustainable economy that strikes a balance between growth and environmental protection



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

Tourism is intricately connected with aesthetics. Aesthetics in the context of tourism refers to the appreciation and experience of beauty, whether it's in natural landscapes, architectural marvels, cultural expressions, or artistic creations. It is the only sector where the public wants nature to be preserved, unlike other sectors where people support the destruction in the name of development.



times tourists act as a destructive force in polluting the environment. We can see plastic bottles and bags floating in the Dal Lake.

To promote global awareness of the importance of tourism and its social, cultural, political, and economic value World Tourism Day is celebrated on September 27th under the auspices of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

Each year, World Tourism Day is celebrated on a specific theme, chosen by the UNWTO, to highlight different aspects of the tourism industry. These themes often revolve around current global issues, trends, and challenges facing the tourism sector. The designated theme for the year 2023 is "Tourism and Green Investments". This emphasises

the necessity for increased and more precise allocations of resources towards the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN.

When we mention green investment in tourism, we're talking about building and taking care of places that are friendly to the environment. This involves things like eco-friendly hotels and lodges, and using less polluting vehicles like electric or hybrid cars. Tourism and green investment are interconnected in several important ways. Green investment in the context of tourism refers to allocating financial resources towards sustainable and environmentally friendly practices within the tourism industry.

This can involve initiatives that aim to minimize negative environmental impacts, conserve natural resources, and promote sustainable development.

Tourism and biodiversity conservation are closely linked, and when managed responsibly, tourism can play a significant role in the protection and preservation of natural ecosystems and biodiversity. For this, we have to

take the local community into confidence. Usually, people in rural places want their place to develop like a metros. They forget that changing the geography will badly affect their economic prosperity. Engaging local communities in tourism activities can lead to a sense of ownership and stewardship over natural resources. When communities see direct benefits from conservation efforts, they are more likely to be supportive.

Ultimately, green investments in the tourism sector are necessary for the creation of a sustainable and resilient economy that strikes a balance between economic growth, environmental protection, and the well-being of local communities. It incentivises a change towards more environmentally conscious and socially responsible tourism practices that are beneficial to both the natural world and the sustainable growth of the tourism industry.

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



## FIRST COLUMN

## MAGIC OF MUDRA PRANAYAMA

The science of 'mudras' is intrinsically related to the esoteric knowledge of Yoga



RAVI VALLURI

The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali is a collection of sutras on the theory and practice of yoga as elucidated in his treatise. The sutras are known for their reference to Ashtanga or the eight elements of practice culminating in samadhi. The eight limbs are yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi. Pranayama is the fourth principle of Ashtanga Yoga as delineated by Maharishi Patanjali. Pranayama should be coupled with mindful eating and breathing.

## The yogic science of mudras

Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita says, "There is nothing as sacred as knowledge." Knowledge can be acquired by the human mind through the 5Ds- dedication, determination, dynamism, devotion, and discipline and one H- Humility. The human mind can harness this potential only if it is in the present moment. By practising proper breathing techniques, like Sudarshan Kriya and Nadi Shodhan pranayama and through regular meditation the mind becomes alert to delve deep into knowledge. It is indeed efficacious to learn about mudras. The practice of mudras is not just in the domain of dancers, painters, and artists, even stock individuals who have nothing to do with the art world ought to learn about mudras.

The science of mudras, is intrinsically related to the esoteric knowledge of yoga and which can be further segregated into the five elements, the five life forces (or subtle forces of energy called the pranas) and the three doshas. The five elements are namely - Akash (ether or space), Vayu (air), Agni (fire), Jal (water) and Prithvi (earth), and the five life forces or pranas are prana, udana, samana, apana and vyana and the three doshas are vata, kapha and pitta. Humans unconsciously practice mudras. For instance, a young child begins learning to walk with his thumbs raised



which is called the Meru Dand mudra. An infant in a deep slumber, his index finger would involuntarily touch the thumb and the other three fingers are on the base of the palm (Chinmaya mudra). The universe in its auto-mode conjures these processes to take place. We are oblivious to the occurrence. Some other mudras which need to be practised are:

## (a) Jnana mudra

This is performed to increase brain power, improve memory and for the removal of negative thoughts. Thereby one attains peace and bliss.

## (b) Prithvi mudra

This helps in balancing the five sense organs, improves blood circulation and enhances our energy levels. Practising this mudra assists in increasing our alertness.

## (c) Apana mudra

This facilitates an improved elimination process, revitalizing the digestive system, improving the gums and strengthening immunity.

## (d) Prana mudra

This mudra addresses the problem of fatigue; it provides essential vitamins to the body besides increasing stamina and vigour. It also helps in maintaining the health of our eyes.

## (e) Dhyana mudra

Essentially, this mudra helps in making us mindful and wakeful. Over a period, we attain peace of mind.

## (f) Shunya Vayu mudra

The practice of this mudra helps in combating problems of flatulence and gastric ailments. The gut houses our solar plexus, which is also referred to as the second brain. We need to take adequate care of our abdomen as most human ailments arise from this part of the body. Thus, there is enormous merit and wisdom in the adage, that your health is in your hands.

(Ravi Valluri is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. and is a faculty of the Art of Living; views expressed are personal)

## India's space Odyssey: To Moon and beyond



UTTAM CHAKRABORTY

India has taken a formidable lead in Moon exploration, though it would be a while before Moon's resources would be available for development purposes

India is riding high on the success of India's Chandrayaan-3, which scripted a glorious history worldwide. It is not only a matter of national pride but has larger implications on varied dimensions. It has opened up further deliberations on technological capability, resource exploration, international collaboration, scientific contributions, space exploration and diplomacy, geopolitical landscape, global leadership and cooperation.

The success of Chandrayaan-3 has redefined the relationship between national prestige and technological capability. Successfully launching and operating a lunar mission showcases a country's technological prowess and capabilities. It can boost national pride and reputation on a global stage, potentially influencing how other countries perceive and engage with that nation. International collaboration is now buzzing around. Lunar missions often involve collaboration with other countries and space agencies. The use of space missions, including lunar explorations, as a means of advancing diplomatic ties is referred to as space diplomacy. The development of international partnerships for space exploration can open up chances for discussions, disagreements, and alliances with other nations, potentially having more significant geopolitical repercussions. These partnerships can foster diplomatic ties and strengthen international relationships, leading to potential geopolitical advantages.

## SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS

Without scientific contributions, India's mission could not have been possible. Lunar missions contribute to scientific advancements by conducting experiments and collecting data about the Moon's geology, atmosphere, and other characteristics. Sharing such data and findings can position a country as a leader in scientific research and innovation. Resource Exploration is another area that can be discounted in India's journey in space. If future lunar missions, including Chandrayaan missions, discover valuable resources on the Moon, such as rare minerals or water ice, they could have significant economic implications.

## SPACE VOYAGE &amp; GEOPOLITICS

Control or access to these resources could influence a country's geopolitical standing. The ability to conduct space missions, including lunar missions, can be used as a tool for diplomacy. It can open channels for negotiations, discussions, and partnerships with other nations interested in space exploration, which can have broader geopolitical implications. Furthermore, a long-running space race may pick up speed in response to the successful lunar mission, which follows Russia's failure. India became the first nation to land a spacecraft on the south pole of the moon. As the Chandrayaan-3 spacecraft successfully touched down on the lunar south pole last week, India became just the fourth nation to perform a soft landing on the moon. That area of the moon has not yet been visited by any other country. The trajectory of the Chandrayaan-3, which blasted off from southern India more than a month ago, has captured the attention of the Indian public and dominated headlines for days.

Soft Power Projection is something that India is going to capitalize on. Successfully



conducting ambitious space missions can enhance a country's soft power - its ability to influence others through cultural, technological, and scientific achievements. The successful completion of ambitious space missions has the potential to increase a country's soft power, which is defined as its ability to sway others through achievements in the arts, sciences, and technology. This phenomenon can help to shape how people view the country and have an effect on how well-known it is abroad. This can create a positive image of the country and influence how it is perceived by the international community.



THE UNITED STATES, RUSSIA, CHINA, JAPAN, AND FRANCE ARE JUST A FEW OF THE NATIONS THAT HAVE CONGRATULATED INDIA ON CHANDRAYAAN-3'S SUCCESSFUL LANDING

(The writer is HoD-Digital Marketing and Associate Professor at the School of Management, Presidency University Bangalore, views are personal)

possibility that other nations could use the region of the lunar south pole as a base for further space exploration in the future. The United States established the Artemis Accords in 2020, which seek to foster space cooperation through shared rules and principles, possibly in anticipation of such competition. Several allies and partners, including India, joined. Russia and China have not. The way people on Earth view the moon—and beyond—could change as geopolitical competition in space is set to heat up.

## MOON ECONOMY

Limiting climate change's harmful effects and ensuring a transition to sustainable energy sources have become the two biggest problems the world community has been facing recently. The lack of critical minerals, which are crucial elements of the transition to renewable energy, as studies suggest, makes the transition less seamless than anticipated. Considering the moon economy's importance and potential sources for these essential minerals is necessary in this context. Along with this, a country typically gains a tactical advantage from a space mission when operationalizing satellite communication, in addition to a variety of other benefits. This includes enabling and supplying consistent satellite data, which aids in forecasting many things, including the monsoon and can greatly aid defence forces in maintaining surveillance on other nations.

The moon is a rich source of raw materials, so it should be noted that this will be a geopolitical region where future conflict and cooperation may occur. It is necessary to take a comprehensive look at the essential minerals that have grown in significance recently. According to an ISRO study, the Moon, especially the South Pole, is currently home to enormous amounts of water. A significant amount of hydro-energy could be

produced if this were to be investigated.

Similar to this, a report by Popular Science Magazine titled "The elements we might mine on the moon" suggests the presence of other critical minerals, including plutonium and helium 3, which can be used for the fusion of nuclear energy, as well as cobalt, lithium, titanium, and other critical minerals. In a similar vein, the Energy Information Administration, in its numerous reports, has made predictions of these vital minerals that can be sourced for the RE sector.

The countries that establish bases on the moon first will have the first-mover advantage to benefit from a variety of space projects and businesses on and around the Moon. The geopolitics of lunar colonialism are still unknown, but we do know that they will have an impact on world politics. In a few decades, India may be one of the few nations in charge of the largest portion of the moon economy. A PwC report states that the lunar economy encompasses all of the activities involved in the production, use, and exchange of lunar resources on the Moon's surface, in lunar orbit, and on Earth.

The United States, Russia, China, Japan, and France are just a few of the nations that have congratulated India on Chandrayaan-3's successful landing. These nations are all interested in space exploration and are probably closely observing India's development.

These responses demonstrate the widespread acclaim and admiration that India has received for its performance on Chandrayaan-3. It is a significant accomplishment for India and evidence of its expanding space exploration capabilities.

Other nations may be inspired to pursue their space exploration programs as a result. Now, the moon is India's ventured place. Let's wait and watch on the world's relations with India to shape up the journey in the space.

## Growing need for awareness about mental health

Approximately every fifth person across the globe experiences mental health issues at some point during his lifespan

In 1992 the World Federation of Mental Health recognised the need to be more vocal about mental health issues as people with mental illness often suffer silently, fearing social stigma, lack of understanding and discrimination.

Approximately every fifth person across the globe experiences mental health issues at some point during their entire lifespan. While Depression and Anxiety disorders are the most common mental health conditions, suicide is one of the leading causes of premature and untimely deaths. It is a serious concern for mental health professionals for timely intervention. The space of student suicides in Kota (Rajasthan) speaks volumes of the gravity of the situation and



RC JILOHA

(The writer is a retired professor of psychiatry from the University of Delhi and Jamia Hamdard, views are personal)

the urgent need to address the issue.

Mental health refers to overall mental well-being, a holistic concept that is also about physical and social well-being. Promotion of mental health through understanding, support, and access to mental health resources is crucial to de-stigmatizing mental illness and breaking down the negative attitudes and beliefs surrounding it.

Unfortunately, public health developments during recent years have adversely impacted the mental health of elderly and the children alike. It becomes important to make children understand that sound mental health is vital to their emotional development. It is evident from the studies that since the COVID-19 pandemic

began, more children are reporting higher levels of anxiety and depression than ever before. That makes now the perfect time to break down the stigma connected with mental illness by openly discussing the issue.

The recent United Nations Human Rights Report highlights that people with mental health conditions and those with psychosocial disabilities experience disproportionately higher rates of poor physical health and reduced life expectancy. Discrimination, harmful stereotypes and stigma in the community, family, schools and the workplace prevent meaningful relationships, quality social interactions and the inclusive environments needed for the well-being of individuals with men-

tal illness. These issues hurt a person's ability to cope with life situations.

There is a need to educate the public to create a society where everyone feels comfortable seeking help and support without prejudice and discrimination. It is the responsibility and obligation of the State and the global organizations to ensure access to mental health services, which can no longer be ignored. Access to better living conditions, security, food, shelter and housing are all human rights issues necessary for people's mental health. Mental health is a universal right of all citizens of the world and consistent with the 1948 founding principles of the World Federation of Mental Health (WFMH).

Mental Health Day reaffirms every year the commitments made and the action taken. While last year's World Mental Health Day theme was 'Make mental health and well-being for all a global priority', 2023's theme is to celebrate the power of community kindness.

Mental Health Day 2023 is an opportunity for people and communities to renew their commitment to the theme 'Mental health is a universal human right' to improve knowledge, raise awareness and drive actions that promote and protect everyone's mental health as a universal human right. Mental health must be placed in a human rights framework to re-cast the aspiration for sound mental health as a fundamental human right.

By doing so a better, more

accepting and supportive society can be created where the mentally ill stay included in the larger society with comfort and confidence. Active participation in the events that support World Mental Health Day such as walks, runs, workshops, or panel discussions helps create awareness and clarify misconceptions that often prevent people from seeking available help. Donations to the organization or charity that provides resources and support to those struggling with mental health issues must be made. Devoting and investing time and working voluntarily with the welfare organizations that support mental health can go a long way in creating awareness within a community. Money is needed to carry out these

activities for which funds can be raised by organizing one's event or participating in a fund-raising challenge.

One also needs to self-educate about mental health and the various issues surrounding it through reading books, attending workshops, or simply having conversations with others or following some of the social media accounts that provide genuine information.

This year's theme highlights a range of issues to involve a variety of stakeholders and global citizens to work together to ensure that a clear message is delivered and an effective campaign to support World Mental Health Day 2023 is carried out on 10th October, particularly when we celebrate WFMH's 75th Anniversary year.

# Govt shutdown averted as Biden signs funding

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The threat of a federal government shutdown suddenly lifted late Saturday as President Joe Biden signed a temporary funding bill to keep agencies open with little time to spare after Congress rushed to approve the bipartisan deal.

The package drops aid to Ukraine, a White House priority opposed by a growing number of GOP lawmakers, but increases federal disaster assistance by USD 16 billion, meeting Biden's full request. The bill funds government until Nov. 17.

After chaotic days of turmoil in the House, Speaker Kevin McCarthy abruptly abandoned demands for steep spending cuts from his right flank and instead relied on Democrats to pass the bill, at risk to his own job. The Senate followed with final passage closing a whirlwind day at the Capitol.

"This is good news for the American people," Biden said in a statement.

He also said the United States "cannot under any circumstances allow American support for Ukraine to be interrupted" and expected McCarthy "will keep his commitment to the people of Ukraine and



secure passage of the support needed to help Ukraine in this critical moment."

It's been a sudden head-spinning turn of events in Congress ahead of the midnight funding deadline after grueling days in the House pushed the government to the brink of a disruptive federal shutdown.

The outcome ends, for now, the threat of a shutdown, but the reprieve may be short-lived. Congress will again need to fund the government in coming weeks risking a crisis as views are hardening, particularly among the right-flank lawmakers whose demands were ultimately swept aside this time in favor of a more bipartisan approach.

"We're going to do our job," McCarthy, R-Calif., said before

the House vote. "We're going to be adults in the room. And we're going to keep government open."

If no deal was in place before Sunday, federal workers would have faced furloughs, more than 2 million active-duty and reserve military troops would have had to work without pay and programs and services that Americans rely on from coast to coast would have begun to face shutdown disruptions.

"It has been a day full of twists and turns, but the American people can breathe a sigh of relief: There will be no government shutdown," said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y.

The package funds government at current 2023 levels until mid-November, and also extends other provisions, including for the Federal Aviation Administration. The package was approved by the House 335-91, with most Republicans and almost all Democrats supporting. Senate passage came by an 88-9 vote.

But the loss of Ukraine aid was devastating for lawmakers of both parties vowing to support President Volodymyr Zelenskyy after his recent Washington visit. The Senate

bill included \$6 billion for Ukraine, and both chambers came to a standstill Saturday as lawmakers assessed their options.

"The American people deserve better," said House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York, warning in a lengthy floor speech that "extreme" Republicans were risking a shutdown. For the House package to be approved, McCarthy was forced to rely on Democrats because the speaker's hard-right flank has said it will oppose any short-term funding measure, denying him the votes needed for his slim majority. It's a move that is sure to intensify calls for his ouster.

After leaving the conservative holdouts behind, McCarthy is almost certain to be facing a motion to try to remove him from office, though it is not at all certain there would be enough votes to topple the speaker. Most Republicans voted for the package Saturday while 90 opposed.

"If somebody wants to remove me because I want to be the adult in the room, go ahead and try," McCarthy said of the threat to oust him. "But I think this country is too important."

The White House was tracking the developments on

Capitol Hill and aides were briefing the president, who was spending the weekend in Washington. Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell, who has championed Ukraine aid despite resistance from his own ranks, is expected to keep pursuing US support for Kyiv in the fight against Russia.

"I have agreed to keep fighting for more economic and security aid for Ukraine," McConnell, R-Ky., said before the vote.

Late at night, the Senate stalled when Sen. Michael Bennet, D-Colo., held up the vote, seeking assurances Ukraine funds would be reconsidered. "I know important moments are like this, for the United States, to lead the rest of the world," Bennet said, noting his mother was born in Poland in 1938 and survived the Holocaust. "We can't fail." The House's quick pivot comes after the speaker walked away from the debt deal they brokered earlier this year that set budget levels. Catering to his hard-right flank, McCarthy had made multiple concessions including returning to the spending limits the conservatives demanded back in January as part of the deal-making to help him become the House speaker.

slipping away every minute," said one senior Republican, Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart of Florida. The federal government had been heading straight into a shutdown that posed grave uncertainty for federal workers in states all across America and the people who depend on them — from troops to border control agents to office workers, scientists and others.

Families that rely on Head Start for children, food benefits and countless other programs large and small were confronting potential interruptions or outright closures. At the airports, Transportation Security Administration officers and air traffic controllers had been expected to work without pay, but travelers could have faced delays in updating their U.S. passports or other travel documents. The White House has brushed aside McCarthy's overtures to meet with Biden after the speaker walked away from the debt deal they brokered earlier this year that set budget levels. Catering to his hard-right flank, McCarthy had made multiple concessions including returning to the spending limits the conservatives demanded back in January as part of the deal-making to help him become the House speaker.

# Suicide bomber detonates device in Turkiye

AP ■ ANKARA

A suicide bomber detonated an explosive device in the heart of the Turkish capital, Ankara, on Sunday. A second assailant was killed in a shootout with police, the interior minister said.

The attack occurred hours before Parliament was set to reopen after its three-month summer recess with an address by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Two police officers were slightly injured during the attack near an entrance to the Ministry of Interior Affairs, minister Ali Yerlikaya said on X, the social media platform formerly known as Twitter. The assailants arrived at the scene inside a light commercial vehicle.

"Our heroic police officers, through their intuition, resisted the terrorists as soon as they got out of the vehicle," Yerlikaya later told reporters. "One of them blew himself up while the other one was shot in the head before he had a chance to blow himself up."

"Our fight against terrorism, their collaborators, the (drug) dealers, gangs and organized crime organisations will continue with more determination," he said. The minister did not say who was behind the attack and there was no immediate claim of responsibility.

Kurdish and far-left militant groups as well as the Islamic State group have carried out deadly attacks throughout the country in the past. Last year, a bomb blast in

a bustling pedestrian street in Istanbul left six people dead, including two children.

More than 80 others were wounded. Turkiye blamed the attack on the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, as well as Syrian Kurdish groups affiliated with it.

Security camera footage on Sunday showed a vehicle stopping in front of the ministry, with a man exiting it and rushing toward the entrance of the building before blowing himself up. A second man is seen following him.

Earlier, television footage showed bomb squads working near a vehicle in the area, which is located near the Turkish Grand National Assembly and other government buildings. A rocket launcher could be seen lying near the vehicle.

Turkish authorities later imposed a temporary blackout on images from the scene. Justice Minister Yilmaz Tunc said an investigation has been launched into the "terror attack."

"These attacks will in no way hinder Turkiye's fight against terrorism," he wrote on X. "Our fight against terrorism will continue with more determination."

Police cordoned off access to the city center and increased security measures, warning citizens that they would be conducting controlled explosions of suspicious packages. The two police officers were being treated in a hospital and were not in serious condition, Yerlikaya said.



Turkish security forces cordon off an area after an explosion in Ankara, Sunday. A suicide bomber detonated an explosive device in the heart of the Turkish capital, Ankara, on Sunday, hours before parliament was scheduled to reopen after a summer recess. A second assailant was killed in a shootout with police. AP/PTI

# Pak Army chief vows to eliminate terrorism

Islamabad (PTI): Pakistan's Army chief General Syed Asim Munir has vowed to eliminate the menace of terrorism from the country through "unabated" military operations against militants following Friday's twin suicide attacks that have killed 65 people.

A total of 60 people were killed and more than 60 others were injured in a grisly suicide blast on Friday in Balochistan that targeted a procession to celebrate Prophet Muhammad's birthday near the Madina Masjid in Mastung, an official said.

In the second bomb attack that took place in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Hangu, targeting a police station's mosque, five people were killed, and 12 others were injured as the mosque's roof collapsed in the explosion's impact, it said.

The Chief of Army Staff visited Quetta on Saturday where he was briefed on recent terrorist attacks, the Army's media wing said in a statement on Saturday night.

Munir said that the heretics who have nothing to do with Islam were carrying out such attacks with the "backing of state sponsors of terrorism."

"These terrorists and their facilitators, having no link with religion and ideology, are proxies of the enemies of Pakistan and its people," he said, without giving more details.

The Army chief added: "These forces of evil will continue to face the full might of the state and security forces backed by a resilient nation."

"Our operation against terrorists would continue unabated and the Armed Forces, Intelligence and Law Enforcement Agencies shall not rest till the menace of terrorism is rooted out from the country."

No group has claimed responsibility for the attack in Balochistan so far however, the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), responsible for some of the bloodiest attacks in Pakistan, denied its involvement.

# Serbia's prez denies troop build-up near Kosovo

AP ■ BELGRADE (SERBIA)

Serbia's president on Sunday denied US and other reports of a military buildup along the border with Kosovo, complaining of a "campaign of lies" against his country in the wake of a shootout a week earlier that killed four people and fuelled tensions in the volatile Balkan region.

Both the United States and the European Union expressed concern earlier this week about what they said was an increased military deployment by Serbia's border with its former province, and they urged Belgrade to scale down its troop presence there.

Kosovo's government said on Saturday it was monitoring the movements of the Serbian military from "three different directions".

It urged Serbia to immediately pull back its troops and demilitarise the border area. "A campaign of lies ... has been launched against our Serbia," President Aleksandar Vucic responded in a video post on Instagram.



"They have lied a lot about the presence of our military forces ... In fact, they are bothered that Serbia has what they describe as sophisticated weapons." Tensions have soared following the violence in northern Kosovo last Sunday involving heavily armed Serb gunmen and Kosovo police officers.

The clash was one of the

worst since Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008 and prompted NATO to announce it would beef up a peacekeeping force stationed in the country.

John Kirby, spokesman for the White House National Security Council, said on Friday that US officials were monitoring a large deployment of Serbian troops along the border with Kosovo, describing it as an "unprecedented staging of advanced Serbian artillery, tanks and mechanized infantry units".

Vucic has several times over the past months raised the combat readiness level of Serbian troops on the border with Kosovo.

Serbia also has been reinforcing its troops with weapons and other equip-

ment mainly purchased from Russia and China.

"We will continue to invest in the defense of our country but Serbia wants peace," the president said on Sunday. "Everything they said they made up and lied, and they knew they were making up and lying." Last weekend's shootout near the village of Banjska followed months of tensions in Kosovo's north, where ethnic Serbs are a majority of the population and have demanded self-rule.

Dozens of soldiers from the NATO-led peacekeeping force known as KFOR were injured in May in a clash with ethnic Serbs protesting the Kosovo police presence in the area.

Fearing wider instability as the war rages in Ukraine, Washington and Brussels have sought to negotiate a normalisation of relations between Serbia and Kosovo, but the two sides have failed to implement a tentative agreement that was recently reached as part of an EU-mediated dialogue.

# Azerbaijan issues arrest warrant against former separatist leader

AP ■ YEREVAN

Azerbaijan's prosecutor general issued an arrest warrant for ex-Nagorno-Karabakh leader Arayik Harutyunyan on Sunday as the first United Nations mission to visit the region in three decades arrived in the former breakaway state.

Harutyunyan led the breakaway region, which is internationally recognised as part of Azerbaijan but was largely populated by ethnic Armenians, between May 2020 and last month, when the separatist government said it would dissolve itself by the end of the year after a three-decade bid for independence.

Azerbaijani police arrested one of Harutyunyan's former prime ministers, Ruben

Vardanyan, on Wednesday as he tried to cross into Armenia along with tens of thousands of others who have fled following Baku's 24-hour blitz last week to reclaim control of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Harutyunyan and the enclave's former military commander, Jalal Harutyunyan, are accused of firing missiles on Azerbaijan's third-largest city, Ganja, during a 44-day war in late 2020, local media reported.

The clash between the Azerbaijani military and Nagorno Karabakh forces led to the deployment of Russian peacekeepers in the region.

The arrest warrant announcement by Prosecutor General Kamran Aliyev reflects Azerbaijan's intention

to quickly and forcefully enforce its grip on the region following three decades of conflict with the separatist state.

While Baku has pledged to respect the rights of ethnic Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh, many have fled due to fear of reprisals or losing the freedom to use their language and to practice their religion and cultural customs. In a briefing Sunday, Armenia's presidential press secretary, Nazeli Baghdasaryan, said that 100,483 people had already arrived in Armenia from Nagorno-Karabakh, which had a population of about 120,000 before Azerbaijan's offensive.

Some people lined up for days to escape the region because the only route to

Armenia — a winding mountain road — became jammed with slow-moving vehicles.

A United Nations delegation arrived in Nagorno-Karabakh Sunday to monitor the situation. The mission is the organization's first to the region for three decades, due to the "very complicated and delicate geopolitical situation" there, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric told reporters Friday. Local officials dismissed the visit as a formality. Hunan Tadevosyan, spokesperson for Nagorno-Karabakh's emergency services, said the UN representatives had come too late and the number of civilians left in the regional capital of Stepanakert could be "counted on one hand."

# Scotland gurdwara condemns Khalistani extremists

PTI ■ LONDON

The gurdwara in Scotland, which was the scene of disruption by Khalistani extremists who blocked a planned visit of Indian High Commissioner to the UK Vikram Doraiswami, has strongly condemned the "disorderly behaviour" and said that the local police are investigating the matter.

In a statement issued on Saturday night, the Glasgow Gurdwara Guru Granth Sahib Sikh Sabha said the "unknown" and "unruly" individuals disturbed the peace at a place of worship and attempted to disrupt the personal visit of the envoy facilitated by a member of the Scottish Parliament.

It followed the High

Commission of India in London's statement that said the UK Foreign Office and Metropolitan Police have been upraised of the "disgraceful incident" after violent force was also used at the diplomat's car during the disruption on Friday afternoon.

"Certain unknown individuals from outside the Glasgow area attempted to disrupt the visit, following which the visiting party decided to leave the premises," the gurdwara statement noted. "After the departure of the visitors, these unruly individuals continued to disturb the gurdwara congregation. Police Scotland was in attendance thereafter and have taken cognisance of the matter. "Glasgow Gurdwara strongly condemns such dis-

orderly behaviour to disrupt the peaceful proceedings of a Sikh place of worship. The Gurdwara is open to people from all communities and backgrounds, and we welcome everyone openly as per our principles of faith," it said.

Earlier on Saturday, the Indian High Commission said that three people from areas outside Scotland disrupted the planned interaction to discuss community and consular issues.

One of the three radical elements attempted to "violently force open the HC's car door" and it was due to the quick reaction of one of the organisers, who physically intervened at the car door, that a "bigger incident was avoided."

# Contemporary retelling of 'Mahabharata' premieres on London stage

PTI ■ LONDON

A new contemporary retelling of the Mahabharata opens in London on Sunday, incorporating several Indian musical and dance art forms and bringing together a worldwide cast of characters.

The UK premiere of the musical extravaganza, which runs at the Barbican Theatre until next weekend, follows a critically acclaimed world premiere in Canada by Toronto-based Why Not Theatre and Indian-origin co-creators Miriam Fernandes and Ravi Jain.

The production is presented in two parts: Karma setting out the origin story of the rival Pandava and Kaurava

clans and Dharma capturing a great battle that destroys the planet leaving the survivors behind to rebuild.

"The two parts are bridged by a community meal, which is called 'Khana and Kahani'. So, if you do the whole experience it's a seven-hour journey; and we start all the way from Bheeshma's vow at the very beginning of the story and we go through to the war until Yudhishtir goes to heaven," said Fernandes, Why Not Theatre Co-Artistic Director who also plays the narrator in the production.

"We are a small strand among a great lineage of storytellers who have weaved this epic of the 'Mahabharata' over the ages. These stories have been passed from storyteller to



audience for thousands of years and span the earth, travelling in the memories and imaginations of the South Asian diaspora.

"Though first composed in an ancient time, the themes of greed, revenge, ecocide and privilege feel acutely relevant in our globalised world," she said. Almost 40 years since Peter

Brook's legendary international production of the great Sanskrit epic, Why Not Theatre's adaptation also explores the act of storytelling itself.

The staging evolves from ancient and intimate — a storyteller around a fire and classical Kathakali dance — to a

modern spectacle with projection, dynamic soundscapes and poetic stage design.

There is also a new opera for the most revered portion of the epic, the 'Bhagavad Gita', with a live onstage band creating the musical score featuring traditional instruments such as Lord Krishna's favourite flute.

"We spent a lot of time looking at how to contemporise this, especially as values have changed in such a big way, and culturally values clash. Canadian culture is very different from Indian culture," said Jain, Founder of Why Not Theatre and co-writer of the production.

"One of the ways that we addressed the issue was we really have been conscious about our casting, with women

playing some men roles. So, women find themselves in the story in a very different way than they are traditionally portrayed. The casting is really exciting," he said.

Jain, whose parents hail from Delhi, launched Why Not Theatre in 2007 with a show featuring his mother's not-very-successful attempts at arranging his marriage. Since then, the company has grown in its mission to tell diaspora stories and challenge the status quo.

"As a student in London, I watched the world masters dazzle audiences on the Barbican stage. Twenty years later it's a dream come true to share this complex work we're so proud of at this truly special venue," added Jain.

# 24 Pak beggars held

Lahore (PTI): Twenty-four alleged Pakistani beggars disguised as pilgrims were offloaded from Saudi Arabia-bound flights and arrested for trying to travel to the Gulf Kingdom to indulge in begging, according to a media report on Sunday.

The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) late on Saturday night offloaded eight alleged beggars in the disguise of Umrah pilgrims from a Saudi Arabia-bound flight at the Multan airport, Dawn newspaper reported. This was the second incident in as many days at the Multan airport in Punjab province. Two days ago, the FIA offloaded 16 persons, including a child, 11 women and four men,

from a Saudi-bound flight at the Multan airport. They

were travelling on Umrah visas. The Umrah is an Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca that can be undertaken at any time of the year.

According to a statement issued by FIA immigration officer Tariq Mehmood after the second incident, it transpired during the immigration that the group was travelling to Saudi Arabia for the "purpose of begging".

"They said they would beg there and half of the begged amount would be handed over to the sub-agent," the FIA statement said, adding that statements of the group along with their passports were seized and the said passengers were sent to FIA's Anti Human Trafficking and Smuggling Wing in Multan for further legal action.



# Populist ex-premier leads his party to victory

AP ■ PRAGUE

A populist former prime minister and his leftist party have won early parliamentary elections in Slovakia, staging a political comeback after campaigning on a pro-Russian and anti-American message, according to almost complete results.

Former Prime Minister Robert Fico and the leftist Smer, or Direction, party had 22.9 per cent of the votes, the Slovak Statistics Office said early Sunday after counting 99.98 per cent of the votes from some 6,000 polling stations.

Saturday's election was a test for the small eastern European country's support for neighboring Ukraine in its war with Russia, and the win by Fico could strain a fragile unity in the European Union and NATO. Fico, 59, has vowed to withdraw Slovakia's military support for Ukraine in Russia's war if his attempt to return to power succeeds.

The country of 5.5 million

people created in 1993 following the breakup of Czechoslovakia has been a staunch supporter of Ukraine since Russia invaded last February, donating arms and opening the borders for refugees fleeing the war.

Slovakia has delivered to Ukraine its fleet of the Soviet-era MiG-29 fighter jets, the S-300 air defense system, helicopters, armoured vehicles and much-needed demining equipment. The current caretaker government is planning to send Ukraine artillery ammunition and to train Ukrainian service members in demining.

Winning approval for sending more arms to Ukraine is getting more difficult in many countries.

In the US Congress, a bill to avert a government shutdown in Washington, DC, excluded President Joe Biden's request to provide more security assistance to the war-torn nation.

In other countries, including Germany, France, and

## SLOVAKIA ELECTIONS

Spain, populist parties skeptical of intervention in Ukraine also command significant support.

Many of these countries have national or regional elections coming up that could tip the balance of popular opinion away from Kyiv and toward Moscow. With no party winning a majority of seats in Slovakia, a coalition government will need to be formed.

The president traditionally asks an election's winner to try to form a government, so Fico is likely to become prime minister again. He served as prime minister in 2006-2010 and again in 2012-2018.

A liberal, pro-West newcomer, the Progressive Slovakia party, was second, with 18 per cent of the votes.

Its leader Michal Simecka, who is deputy president of the European Parliament, said his party respected the result. "But it's bad news for Slovakia," he

doesn't mean such a coalition can't be created," he said.

Another potential coalition partner, the ultranationalist Slovak National Party, a clear pro-Russian group, received 5.6 per cent. Those three parties would have a parliamentary majority if they joined forces in a coalition government.

Fico opposes EU sanctions on Russia, questions whether Ukraine can force out the invading Russian troops and wants to block Ukraine from joining NATO.

He proposes that instead of sending arms to Kyiv, the EU and the US should use their influence to force Russia and Ukraine to strike a compromise peace deal. Fico's critics worry that his return to power could lead Slovakia to abandon its course in other ways, following the path of Hungary under Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and to a lesser extent of Poland under the Law and Justice party.

"It can't be ruled out that he will be looking for a partner

who uses similar rhetoric, and the partner will be Viktor Orbán," said Radoslav Stefančík, an analyst from the University of Economics in Bratislava. Orbán welcomed Fico's victory.

"Always good to work together with a patriot," he posted on X, the former Twitter. "Looking forward to it!"

Hungary has been sanctioned by the EU for alleged rule-of-law violations and corruption, while EU institutions say Poland has been on a slippery slope away from the EU's rule-of-law principles.

Fico has threatened to dismiss investigators from the National Criminal Agency and the special prosecutor who deals with the most serious crimes and corruption.

Hungary also has — uniquely among EU countries — maintained close relations with Moscow and argued against supplying arms to Ukraine or providing it with economic assistance.

# 2 terrorists, 1 cop killed in attack on patrolling post in Pak's Punjab

**Lahore (PTI):** Pakistan's security forces on Sunday claimed to have thwarted a terror attack on a police post in Punjab province, killing two most-wanted terrorists of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

One policeman also died in the attack on the Kundal patrolling post in Mianwali during the early hours of Sunday, Punjab police chief Usman Anwar said in a statement. "Kundal Punjab Highway Patrolling Post, Mianwali (some 300kms from Lahore), in an operation assisted by the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) of Punjab, police successfully thwarted an attack by 12 to 15 terrorists last night at approximately 23:45 hours," he said.

During the operation, Head Constable Haroon lost his life. Multiple terrorists sustained injuries and following a

# British training of Ukrainian soldiers could move into Ukraine

**London (AP):** Britain's new defence secretary has suggested that British military training of Ukrainian soldiers, which currently takes place at UK bases, could move into western Ukraine. In an interview with the Sunday Telegraph, Grant Shapps said he was in discussions with the British army about "eventually getting the training brought closer and actually into Ukraine as well".

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak was quick to rule out speculation of an imminent deployment of British soldiers to Ukraine. Shapps' suggestion was not for the "here and now", Sunak told reporters, but a possibility "for the long term".

"There are no British soldiers that will be sent to fight in the current conflict. That's not what's happening," Sunak said. Russian politicians immediately criticized the pro-

posal. Former President Dmitry Medvedev, who is deputy secretary of Russia's Security Council, claimed Shapps was actively pushing "towards a Third World War".

The British minister "will be turning his instructors into a legal target for our armed forces, knowing perfectly well that they'll be mercilessly destroyed — not as mercenaries, but as NATO specialists," Medvedev wrote on social media.

Since Russian President Vladimir Putin sent troops into Ukraine more than 19 months ago, Medvedev, a law school graduate, has emerged as one of the most hawkish Russian officials, regularly issuing blustery remarks that combine Latin mottos and legal expressions with four-letter words. Observers have interpreted Medvedev's rhetoric, which sounds

tougher than the statements of even old-time Kremlin hardliners, as an apparent attempt to curry favour with Putin.

Yury Gagin, advisor to the head of the Russian-occupied part of eastern Ukraine's Donetsk region, also dismissed Shapps' idea but without Medvedev's fiery warnings.

"Even if British instructors do organise training for Ukraine's armed forces inside Ukraine, it won't bring any results," Gagin told Russian state news agency RIA Novosti.

"Ukraine's failed counter-offensive has already shown the level of such training," he added. More than 23,500 recruits from Ukraine have received combat training at army bases across the UK since the start of 2022, receiving instruction on skills that include weapons handling and battlefield first aid.

# Ukraine aid dropped from govt funding bill

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Congressional supporters of Ukraine say they won't give up after a bill to keep the federal government open excluded President Joe Biden's request to provide more security assistance to the war-torn nation. Still, many lawmakers acknowledge that winning approval for Ukraine assistance in Congress is growing more difficult as the war between Russia and Ukraine grinds on. Republican resistance to the aid has been gaining momentum in the halls of Congress.

Voting in the House this past week pointed to the potential trouble ahead. Nearly half of House Republicans voted to strip USD 300 million from a defence spending bill to train Ukrainian soldiers and purchase weapons.

The money later was approved separately, but opponents of Ukraine support cel-

ebrated their growing numbers.

Then, on Saturday, House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., omitted additional Ukraine aid from a measure to keep the government running until November 17. In doing so, he closed the door on a Senate package that would have funneled USD 6 billion to Ukraine, roughly a third of what has been requested by the White House.

Both the House and Senate overwhelmingly approved the stopgap measure, with members of both parties abandoning the increased aid for Ukraine in favour of avoiding a costly government shutdown.

The latest actions in Congress signal a gradual shift in the unwavering support that the United States has so far pledged Ukraine in its fight against Russia, and it is one of the clearest examples yet of the Republican Party's movement toward a more isolationist stance. The exclusion of

Ukraine funding came little more than a week after lawmakers met in the Capitol with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who sought to assure lawmakers that his military was winning the war, but stressed that additional aid would be crucial for continuing the fight.

After that visit, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said that one sentence summed up Zelenskyy's message in his meeting with the Senate: "If we don't get the aid, we will lose the war," Schumer said.

Yet, McCarthy, pressured by his right flank, has gone from saying "no blank checks" for Ukraine, with the focus being on accountability, to describing the Senate's approach as putting "Ukraine in front of America."

He declined to say after the vote on government funding whether he would bring aid for Ukraine up for a House vote in

the coming weeks.

"If there is a moment in time we need to have a discussion about that, we will have a discussion completely about that, but I think the administration has to make the case for what is victory," McCarthy said. Biden said in a statement after Congress averted a shutdown that "we cannot under any circumstances allow American support for Ukraine to be interrupted."

He called on McCarthy to "keep his commitment to the people of Ukraine" and push through "the support needed to help Ukraine at this critical moment."

In the Senate, both Schumer and Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky pledged to move quickly to try and pass the full White House request. But it was clear that goal will be increasingly difficult as more rank-and-file GOP senators have questioned the

aid or demanded that it be attached to immigration policy that would help secure the southern border — echoing similar demands in the House.

Florida Sen. Rick Scott, a Republican who voted for the spending bill after the Ukraine aid was stripped out, said that Congress needs to have "a conversation with the American public." He said he was optimistic after seeing the money taken out of the bill.

"In my state, people want to be helpful to Ukraine, but they also want to be helpful to Americans," Scott said. "And so they want to really understand how this money has been spent." Democrats said they were disappointed by the lack of Ukraine funding, but expressed determination that they would get the aid to the war-torn country. "We will not stop fighting for more economic and security assistance for Ukraine," Schumer said after the bill passed.

# Sharif's party to approach court for bail before he arrives in Pak

**Lahore (PTI):** Former prime minister Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party will approach the Lahore High Court (LHC) for his bail before he arrives in the country later this month, a media report said on Sunday.

Nawaz, 73, recently said that he is excited to return to Pakistan on October 21, ending a four-year "self-imposed exile" and to lead his party in the election likely to be held in January 2024. The decision to approach the LHC for bail was taken to avoid Nawaz's arrest at Lahore airport because he was declared a proclaimed offender, Geo News reported.

It said it was unclear when the party would exactly approach the court for bail.

Citing PML-N officials, Geo News said the party's legal team would approach LHC for bail a week before the three-time prime minister's return to the country. The PML-N leaders said that the decision to approach the court was dis-

cussed with Nawaz, his younger brother Shehbaz Sharif and his daughter Maryam Nawaz in recent meetings held in London.

Citing sources, it said that a protective bail application may also be submitted in the court just two days before Nawaz's return in which it would be urged that the PML-N supremo should not be arrested for seven days and he would surrender himself before the relevant court. If the bail is approved then Nawaz would not go to jail immediately on his return home and he would also be able to address the public gathering planned at Minar-e-Pakistan grounds, sources said. PML-N President Shehbaz on Saturday said that the main goal and agenda of Nawaz will be to provide relief to the masses, rescue them from the miserable situation and eradicate economic darkness. He made the comments during a party meeting to review preparations for Nawaz's return to Pakistan.

# Imran, Qureshi named 'principal accused' in cipher case

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's former prime minister Imran Khan and his close aide Shah Mahmood Qureshi have been named "principal accused" in a case related to the alleged disclosure of state secrets, a media report said on Sunday. The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on Saturday filed a charge sheet in the Special Court established under the Official Secrets Act, declaring Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chairman Khan and Vice Chairman Qureshi "principal accused" in the case, Dawn newspaper reported.

Both Khan and Qureshi are currently detained in jail on judicial remand. Khan, 70, was arrested in August after the case was filed against him for allegedly violating the Official Secrets Act by disclosing a secret diplomatic cable (cipher) sent by the country's embassy in Washington last year in

March. Qureshi, 67-year-old former foreign minister, was arrested under the Official Secrets Act for violating the secrecy of the official cable sent by the Pakistani embassy in the US to the foreign office when he was the foreign minister.

Khan and Qureshi have been placed in column 3 which describes the names and addresses of the accused sent for trial, the paper said.

The FIA invoked in the charge sheet sections 5 and 9 of the Official Secrets Act which may lead to a death sentence, or two to 14 years' imprisonment if proven. While the investigation agency cited 27 witnesses in the charge sheet, the paper said that about a dozen of them would be produced in the witness box.

The FIA has also attached the transcript of Khan and Qureshi's speeches made on March 27. The cricketer-turned-politician is charged with the violation of the

Official Secrets Act in connection with the leakage of a confidential diplomatic cable from Pakistan's embassy in Washington.

In March last year, ahead of the vote of no-confidence that resulted in his ouster, Khan pulled out a piece of paper - allegedly the cipher - from his pocket and waved it at a public rally in Islamabad, claiming it was the evidence of an "international conspiracy" being hatched to topple his government. However, during the interrogation with the joint investigation team (JIT) in the jail on August 26, Khan denied that the paper he waved at a public gathering last year was the cipher. He also admitted to losing the cipher, saying he couldn't recall where he kept it.

His principal secretary Azam Khan stated before a magistrate and the FIA that the Khan used it for his "political gains" and to avert a vote of no-confidence against him.



A portrait of Chinese President Xi Jinping is placed in front of Hong Kong activists living in Taiwan during a protest on China's National Day in Taipei, Taiwan, on Sunday. AP/PTI

# UK museum to sign pact for Shivaji's 'Tiger Claws' journey to India

PTI ■ LONDON

The Victoria and Albert (V and A) Museum is all set to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Maharashtra government next week, which will see 17th-century 'Tiger Claws' weapon believed to have belonged to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj make a journey back to India for an exhibition.

During a protracted military engagement in 1659, the legendary Maratha leader held metal claws, or wagh nakh, concealed in his hand and is said to have disembowelled his opponent Afzal Khan — the commander of the opposing Bijapur army.

It is believed, though unverified, that the set of claws then came into the possession of James Grant Duff, an officer of the East India Company who was appointed Resident or political agent of the Satara state in 1818 and gifted to the

V and A by a descendant.

"The V and A looks forward to welcoming senior leadership from the Maharashtra government, to sign a memorandum of understanding," a V and A spokesperson said.

"The story of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's triumph over Afzal Khan is legendary, so we are delighted that the 'Tiger Claws' will return to India as part of the 350th anniversary events where they can be enjoyed as part of the celebrations. We hope that their display might also enable new research into their history and look forward to working in partnership with colleagues in the months ahead as we develop plans for their display," the spokesperson said.

The MoU, expected to be signed on Tuesday, coincides with Maharashtra's 350th anniversary celebrations of the coronation of Chhatrapati Shivaji. It is then expected to be dispatched to India later this

year for an agreed period.

According to the V and A, the weapon is accompanied by a fitted case made after Grant Duff returned to Scotland. The inscription on the case reads: "The 'Wagnuck' of Sivaje with Which He Killed the Moghul General. This Relic was given to Mr. James Grant-Duff of Eden When he was Resident at Satara by the Prime Minister of the Peshwa of the Marathas".

According to historical accounts, Shivaji and Afzal Khan had arranged a truce after political upheavals in order to meet in a tented enclosure, virtually alone.

The V and A description of the history of the 'Tiger Claws' explains: "Both came armed: Shivaji wore mail under his clothes and metal skull protection under his turban. He also held a metal 'Tiger Claws' weapon concealed in his hand. The two men fought, and Shivaji disembowelled his opponent.

# Federal agency sues Chipotle after Kansas manager rips off an employee's hijab

**Kansas City (AP):** A federal agency has sued the restaurant chain Chipotle, accusing it of religious harassment and retaliation after a manager at a Kansas location forcibly removed an employee's hijab, a headscarf worn by some Muslim women.

In a lawsuit filed Wednesday, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission alleged that in 2021, an assistant manager at a Chipotle in Lenexa, Kansas, repeatedly harassed the employee by asking her to show him her hair, despite her refusal. After several weeks, the harassment culminated in him grabbing and partially removing her hijab, according to the complaint. The manager's "offensive and incessant requests" that she remove her hijab, and his attempt to physically take it off, were "unwelcome, intentional, severe, based

on religion, and created a hostile working environment based on religion," the complaint alleged.

Chipotle's chief corporate affairs officer, Laurie Schalow, said the company encourages employees to report concerns, including through an anonymous hotline.

"We have a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination of any kind and we have terminated the employee in question," she said in an emailed statement.

The harassment began in July 2021, when the manager began asking the employee, who was 19 at the time, to remove her hijab, but she refused to do so. She refused on every occasion, saying she wore it because of her religious beliefs.

# Maldives opp candidate Muiz wins presidential runoff: Media

AP ■ MALE

Opposition candidate Mohamed Muiz won the Maldives presidential runoff on Saturday, securing more than 53 per cent of the vote, local media reported.

The election has turned into a virtual referendum on which regional power — India or China — will have the biggest influence in the Indian Ocean archipelago nation.

Mihaaru News reported that incumbent President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih had received 46 per cent of the vote and that Muiz had won by more than 18,000 votes. Official results were expected on Sunday.

"With today's result we have got the opportunity to build the country's future. The strength to ensure the freedom of Maldives," Muiz said in a statement after his victory. "It's time we put our differences aside and come together. We need to be a peaceful soci-

ety." Muiz also requested that Solih transfer former president Abdulla Yameen to house arrest from prison.

It was a surprise win for Muiz, who entered the fray as an underdog. He was named only as a fallback candidate closer to the nomination deadline after the Supreme Court prevented Yameen from running because he is serving a prison sentence for money laundering and corruption. Yameen's supporters say he's been jailed for political reasons. "Today's result is a reflection of the patriotism of our people. A call on all our neighbours and bilateral partners to fully respect our independence and sovereignty," said Mohamed Shareef, a top official of Muiz's party.

He said it was also a mandate for Muiz to resurrect the economy and for Yameen's release. Neither Muiz nor Solih got more than 50 per cent in the first round of voting earlier in

September.

Solih, who was elected president in 2018, was battling allegations by Muiz that he had allowed India an unchecked presence in the country. Muiz's party, the People's National Congress, is viewed as heavily pro-China. Solih has insisted that the Indian military's presence in the Maldives was only to build a dockyard under an agreement between the two governments and that his country's sovereignty won't be violated. Muiz promised that if he won the presidency, he would remove Indian troops from the Maldives and balance the country's trade relations, which he said were heavily in India's favour. Ahmed Shaheed, a former foreign minister of Maldives, termed the election verdict as a public revolt against the government's failure to meet economic and governance expectations rather than concerns over Indian influence.

# GST mop-up rises 10 per cent to over ₹1.62 lakh cr in September

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Helped by improved compliance, GST collections increased by 10 per cent to over Rs 1.62 lakh crore in September, crossing the Rs 1.6 lakh crore mark for the fourth time during current financial year.  
Gross GST revenue collected last month was Rs 1,62,712 crore. Of this, Central GST was Rs 29,818 crore, State GST was Rs 37,657 crore, Integrated GST was Rs 83,623 crore (including Rs 41,145 crore collected on import of goods) and cess was Rs 11,613 crore (including Rs 881 crore collected on import of

goods). The revenue in September 2023 was 10 per cent higher than the GST revenue of Rs 1.47 lakh crore in the same month last year, the finance ministry said in a statement on Sunday.  
"During the month, the revenues from domestic transactions (including import of services) are 14 per cent higher than the revenues from these sources during the same month last year. It is for the fourth time that gross GST collection has crossed Rs 1.60 lakh crore mark in FY 2023-24," it said.  
Gross GST collection in the first half (April-September) of



FY24 stood at Rs 9,92,508 crore, an increase of 11 per cent from the year-ago period.  
Average monthly gross collection in April-September FY24 was Rs 1.65 lakh crore, 11 per cent higher than the year-ago period, it said.  
As the normal period of limitation for FY17-18 ended on September 30, some of this increased collection could be linked to businesses having settled issues with payment of taxes for the said period, KPMG Indirect Tax Head Abhishek Jain said.  
While Rs 1.6 lakh crore plus seems to be the new normal, this could see a further uptick with

the festive season round the corner, he said.  
According to Deloitte India partner M S Mani, the September GST collections augur well for the coming months of the festive season and is in line with the other high frequency indicators which reflect an uptick in the economy.  
EY Tax Partner Saurabh Agarwal said increased GST collection indicates that the economy continues to be on a stable growth trajectory and rising collections from domestic transactions is an indicator that 'Make in India' policies of the government have started showcasing its impact.



## 'Resolutions under insolvency law likely to touch 300 this fiscal'

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

The number of resolutions of stressed assets under the insolvency law is likely to touch 300 this financial year, after rising 80 per cent in the last fiscal, and efforts are on to speed up the process for faster resolutions, senior officials said on Sunday.  
Corporate Affairs Secretary Manoj Govil said the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) ecosystem needs to be prepared to deal with 1,000 resolutions.  
Under the IBC, which provides for a market-linked and time-bound resolution process of stressed assets, creditors have witnessed recoveries of nearly Rs 3 lakh crore so far and the recovery amount stood at more than Rs 51,000 crore in 2022-23 financial year.  
The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) Chairperson Ravi Mital said the number of resolutions rose 80 per cent to 180 in the last financial year and is likely to touch 300 this year (2023-24 fiscal) and added that till August 2023, the resolutions stood at around 135.

ecosystem should have the capacity to deal with at least 1,000 resolutions.  
Efforts are on to make the resolution process faster and more smooth. This can be done by filling up posts, improving processes and regulations, among others, he noted.  
As many as 300 resolutions will be good but the ecosystem should be prepared to deal with 1,000 cases, Govil said.  
NCLT President Chief Justice (Retd) Ramalingam Sudhakar stressed on pre-packaged insolvency resolution process in the context of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).  
"Post Covid, it has been shown very evidently that MSMEs are in great distress... The next phase of evolution in the IBC should be to fine tune... Pre-packaged insolvency," he said.  
Further, Sudhakar said an incremental approach is proposed for the development of a comprehensive and overarching platform for the insolvency ecosystem.  
"The system should be AI-enabled with a proper decision support system and must have technology... For an integrated case management system... AI will be considered for suitable deployment as part of future contours in the insolvency ecosystem," he said.  
Sudhakar also mentioned the need for developing an AI-enabled centralised e-platform for case management before the NCLT.  
An AI-enabled platform of the NCLT that will handle all processes, including delivery of notices and fixing of hearings, with minimal human interface is another area of focus, he added.

Govil said efforts are on to speed up the resolution process and that the government is willing to take up amendments to the IBC to make the resolution process faster.  
Mentioning about the pace of resolutions under the IBC, Govil said this financial year, the expectation is that the number of resolutions will go up to 300 and also wondered whether that is 'sufficient' to unclog the pipeline.  
Citing a study, he said that around 5,000 new cases are filed every year under the IBC and added that the IBC

Further, he urged insolvency resolution professionals to speed up their efforts in resolving the cases.  
Speaking at the event in the national capital to mark the seventh annual day of the IBBI, a key institution in implementing the IBC, Mital said the law is a factor in the reduction of non-performing assets.  
He also stressed that the law is not a recovery mechanism but a resolution mechanism.  
Govil said efforts are on to speed up the resolution process and that the government is willing to take up amendments to the IBC to make the resolution process faster.  
Mentioning about the pace of resolutions under the IBC, Govil said this financial year, the expectation is that the number of resolutions will go up to 300 and also wondered whether that is 'sufficient' to unclog the pipeline.  
Citing a study, he said that around 5,000 new cases are filed every year under the IBC and added that the IBC

## Tata Motors total sales in domestic market rise 2 per cent to 80,633 units in September

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Tata Motors Ltd on Sunday reported a 2 per cent rise in its total domestic vehicle sales at 82,023 units in September, as against 80,633 units in the same month last year.  
Passenger vehicle sales in the domestic market, including electric vehicles, were down 6 per cent at 44,809 units last month, as compared to 47,654 units in September 2022, Tata Motors said in a regulatory filing.  
Electric vehicle sales, including in international markets, were at 6,050 units as compared to 3,864 units in the year-ago month, a growth of 57 per cent.  
"Passenger vehicle sales remained strong in Q2 FY24 driven by new launches and pre-festive offerbacks. Tata Motors posted quarterly sales of 1,38,939 cars and SUVs in Q2 FY24, about 2.7 per cent below our highest ever quarter, Q2 FY23," Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles Ltd and Tata Passenger Electric Mobility Ltd Managing Director Shailesh Chandra said.



He further said, "Our EV business continues its strong momentum and has posted growth of about 55 per cent year-on-year."  
In Q2 FY24, the company extended the innovative twin-cylinder CNG offering to Tiago, Tigor and Punch, which have been received well by the market, Chandra added.  
The company said its total commercial vehicles sales were higher by 12 per cent at 39,064 units in September 2023, as compared to 34,890 units in September 2022.  
Tata Motors Executive Director Girish Wagh said the company's commercial vehicles domestic sales stood at 99,178 in Q2FY24, 6 per cent higher than Q2FY23.  
"Medium and heavy commercial vehicles segment saw a strong growth of 24 per cent over Q2 of FY23, fuelled by continued government infrastructure push, robust replacement demand, and growth in core sectors, along with sustained growth from the e-commerce sector," he added.

## Electronics industry body seeks PLI scheme for non-semiconductor sectors

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Electronics industry body ELCINA has requested the government to come up with a production linked incentive scheme for non-semiconductor or computer chips sector which is dominated by imports, a senior official of the organisation said.  
According to Electronic Industries Association of India (ELCINA) report, total electronic component market in the country was estimated to be around USD 39 billion, of which



68 per cent requirement was met through imports in 2021-22.  
While speaking at 48th ELCINA Award Ceremony, organisation's new President Atul B Lall said that the government's scheme for devices has been hugely successful and the

incentive scheme for semiconductor sector is seeing a lot of traction and some investments have started flowing in.  
"Our humble submission and perseverance is going to be to do the same for non-semiconductor component sector also. For which we request government's intervention," said Lall, who is Vice Chairman & Managing Director of Dixon Technologies.  
ELCINA is the oldest electronics industry body of the country established in 1967.  
According to the industry

body, mobile phones, consumer electronics and industrial electronics account for the major demand (85 per cent) for electronic components in India. This is followed by computer hardware.  
ELCINA said that strategic electronics and lighting industry contribute to the balance of the market and industries like mobile phones, industrial electronics (due to the advent of electric vehicles) and strategic electronics are expected to witness substantial growth in the near future.

## 'India has scope for 130-150 more wide-body aircraft'

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

India's fast-growing civil aviation market has the scope to have 130-150 more wide-body planes as airlines expand their operations and there is also the potential for more such aircraft to be deployed in dense domestic routes, GE Aerospace South Asia CEO Vikram Rai said.  
GE Aerospace, a leading aircraft engine maker, sees a "great potential" in India, which is also the world's third largest aviation market and domestic airlines have nearly 1,500 aircraft on order.  
While emphasising that "India is a focus market and a

priority market for GE Aerospace", Rai said that in his view, domestic airlines would consider having more wide-body planes in their fleet and also deploy them in dense domestic routes. "I see wide-body aircraft as a growth path for us and the airlines which is a win-win (scenario)," he told PTI in a recent interview.  
Currently, India has around 700 commercial planes in operation and out of them, there are only about 50 wide-body aircraft. Air India has around 49 wide-body aircraft in its fleet while IndiGo has two wet-leased wide-body planes in operation.



In the current wide-body fleet, there would be replacements required. So, there is "scope to add 130-150 wide-body planes in India," Rai said and added that rising interna-

tional passengers from the country also augur well for the wide-body segment.  
With rising air passenger traffic, the government is also working on ways to develop international aviation hubs in India so that domestic carriers can ferry passengers directly to various overseas destinations.  
Currently, a majority of the people flying from India to international destinations travel by connecting flights operated by foreign carriers.  
"We have to get to a point where we can get end-to-end carrying our passengers. That is the next step of growth we are talking about," Rai said.

## Average office rent in top 7 cities at \$0.4-2/sq ft: Vestian

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Average monthly rentals for prime office space in India's top seven cities are very low at USD 0.4-2 per square feet, which is one of the major factors driving demand for workspace from global firms, according to Vestian.  
Real estate consultant Vestian on Sunday released rentals data for major cities globally, which showed that

average rent in New York, London, Miami, Seattle and Boston is USD 40-80 per sq ft per month.  
Rentals in Hong Kong, Singapore and Shanghai are USD 3-8 per sq ft a month.  
Vestian said the demand for office spaces in the medium to long term would remain strong in India's seven big cities because of cost-effectiveness.  
Shrinivas Rao, CEO, Vestian, said: "Indian office mar-

ket has grown leaps and bounds in the past decade due to robust demand from large multinational companies. These companies set up their operations in India to reap the cost benefits."  
The demand for office spaces in India is expected to be buoyant amid current macro-economic uncertainty across the globe as companies are majorly focusing on optimizing operational costs for their businesses, Rao added.

As per the data, the average per square feet monthly rentals in New York is USD 60-80, London USD 60-70, Miami USD 55-65, Seattle USD 45-55, Boston USD 40-50, Hong Kong USD 6-8, Singapore USD 6-8, Shanghai USD 3-4.  
Among Indian cities, Mumbai commands an average monthly rentals at USD 1-2 per square feet, Delhi USD 0.5-1.5, Bengaluru USD 0.8-1.2, Pune USD 0.7-1.1, Chennai USD 0.6-

0.9, Hyderabad USD 0.6-0.9 and Kolkata USD 0.4-0.7 per square feet.  
In Mumbai's BKC and Delhi's central business district (Connaught Place and adjoining area) the average rent is USD 3-4 per square feet a month.  
Vestian noted that several multinational corporations have set up their offices in India to effectively manage and execute real-time tasks across the globe from their Indian base.

"This preference is chiefly driven by substantial cost advantage associated with operating from India, as the cost of occupancy and overall operational expenses in India are notably lower in comparison to many other countries," the consultant said.  
The availability of high-quality talent pool at an affordable rate is also an important factor for MNCs to set up offices in India, it added.

## Luminous Power aims to double growth in 4 years; to invest ₹2,000 crore

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Energy storage solutions company Luminous Power Technologies aims to double its growth in the next four years, and is looking at solar energy vertical as a major growth enabler, where it is investing substantially, CEO Preeti Bajaj said.  
Luminous Power, now completely owned by French engineering company Schneider Electric, has plans to invest around Rs 2,000 crore in capacity expansion of its existing plants, a solar greenfield project, research and development (R&D), digitisation, brand building and channel engagements.  
The company sees solar as a "growing market" and reach an "inflection" point in the next 2-3 years in terms of cost, as demand for clean energy sources is going to rise, where Luminous Power aims to be a leading company in this transformation journey here, she said. "Our vision is that solar will be a substantial part of our business," said Bajaj.  
With the rise in per capita income and increase in power

consumption due to multiple appliances in urban households, the demand is shifting towards higher capacity inverters, batteries and residential solar adoption. It is in the process of opening a PV (photovoltaic) module factory at its Rudarpur plant in January, which will have 500 MW to 1 GW (expandable) solar production capacity.  
"For the organisation, the growth engines to increase market capitalisation include a stronger focus on solar products. Solar is important towards sustainable and profitable growth," she said.  
The company is making "forward-looking investments" to build capacity for solar products and create an ecosystem, which Bajaj sees "as a manufacturing imperative and an opportunity."  
"We believe in this market and it is growing at 25 per cent. We want to play a part in that and to that effect, we are bringing new products to market," said Bajaj.  
Besides, Luminous Power in collaboration with its channel partners is providing solar solutions to its customers as well.

## Maruti Suzuki posts highest ever monthly sales in September

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) on Sunday said its total wholesales increased 3 per cent year-on-year to 1,81,343 units in September, its best ever in a month.  
The country's largest carmaker had dispatched 1,76,306 units to dealers in the same month last year.  
Total domestic passenger vehicle sales rose to 1,50,812 units last month, up 2 per cent from 1,48,380 units in September 2022, MSI said in a statement.  
In the April-September period, the company's total sales crossed the 10-lakh sales mark.  
MSI dispatched 10,50,085 units in the first half of the cur-

rent fiscal as compared with 9,85,326 units in the same period of last fiscal.  
It is for the first time that the company surpassed the half-yearly sales mark of 1 million units, the automaker noted.  
In September, the company said the sales of its entry level cars -- Alto and S-Presso -- stood at 10,351 units, down 65 per cent from 29,574 units in the year-ago period.  
Sales of compact cars also declined to 68,552 units last month from 72,176 units in September 2022.  
Utility vehicle dispatches, however, witnessed a jump of 82 per cent to 59,271 units last month from 32,574 units in September last year.

## BYJU'S targets to reach break-even by March, hive off Epic

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Etech major BYJU'S has set the target to become profitable by March 2024 on account of consolidation and restructuring of the organisation and settlement on USD 1.2 billion loan, sources aware of the development said.  
The company has undertaken exercise to reduce workforce by about 3,000-3,500 this month by ending duplication in roles across the organisation.  
"Think and Learn Private Ltd (TLPL) restructuring will see the current operations spread across several business units streamlined into four core areas of K-12, test prep, online and

hybrid. The business restructuring, aimed at matching resources with cash flows, will see the company achieve break-even by coming March, in fourth quarter of current fiscal," a source said.  
BYJU'S declined to comment on a query sent in this regard.  
TLPL operates under BYJU'S brand name.  
BYJU'S had earlier set the target to become profitable by March 2023. BYJU'S booked a loss of Rs 4,588 crore for fiscal year ended March 31, 2021, 19 times more than the preceding fiscal.  
The losses in the 2020-21 fiscal widened from Rs 231.69



profit or loss numbers for that year.  
The company has convened a meeting of shareholders in the second week of October to finalise its delayed financial results for 2021-22.  
"BYJU'S is in talks with investors to hive off EPIC to help settle USD 1.2 billion Term Loan B. The company wants to dispose it off within 150 days. The proposal has gone to lenders and their response is awaited," the source said.  
Another source said that if required, BYJU'S may hive off Great Learning too, but it expects that the money raised through EPIC sale will meet its requirement.

## Hyundai reports highest ever monthly sales in September at 71,641 units

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Hyundai Motor India on Sunday said its total wholesales increased 13 per cent year-on-year to 71,641 units in September, its highest ever in a month.  
The country's second largest carmaker had dispatched 63,201 units to dealers in September last

year. Domestic sales last month rose to 54,241 units, up 9 per cent from 49,700 units in September 2022, Hyundai Motor India said in a statement.  
Exports were higher at 17,400 units last month from 13,501 units in September 2022, an increase of 29 per cent.  
"While the industry grew by 2 per cent last month, our



domestic dispatches were up 9 per cent. The share of SUV sales in our overall volumes continues to grow," Hyundai Motor India COO Tarun Garg told PTI.  
The ongoing festive season has resulted in strong sales momentum, helping the automaker achieve 9 per cent growth, he added.

"Our strong SUV portfolio has received a further boost with the exceptional customer response to the newly launched Extar," Garg said.  
The company has garnered over 80,000 bookings for its recently introduced micro SUV Extar, he added.  
Garg said SUVs now contribute more than 65 per cent to

the company's domestic sales. He said that despite enhanced competition in the market, Creta continues to lead in the mid-sized SUV segment.  
Garg noted that despite various challenges like high interest rates and inflation in the market, the automaker remains positive about its sales performance this year.

# Alcaraz, Sabalenka sail through at China Open

AFP ■ BEIJING

Top seeds Carlos Alcaraz and Aryna Sabalenka both breezed into the next round of the China Open with routine victories on Sunday. Alcaraz sealed a place in the men's quarter-finals with a smooth 6-2, 6-2 victory over Italy's Lorenzo Musetti in Beijing. The world number two overpowered his opponent and seized the first set when Musetti whacked a baseline backhand into the net. The Spaniard then broke serve twice in the second set and saw out a comfortable match with an unreturned serve. He will next face Casper Ruud after the world number nine came back to beat Argentina's Tomas Etcheverry 1-6, 7-5, 7-6 (9-7). "I feel great, honestly. It was a good performance against a really tough opponent," Alcaraz said at a post-match press briefing. "(My level) didn't (go) up and down. I stayed at a high level, high quality, during the whole match," the 20-year-old said. A sticking point in the tournament's early rounds has been the match balls, which Alcaraz's main challenger Daniil

Medvedev described on Saturday as "like a grapefruit". Alcaraz said Sunday he had also felt the distinct quality of the balls -- allegedly quick to fluff up -- "since day one". "It's something tough, but tennis players have to get used to the balls in every tournament," he said in response to a question from AFP. "Here, in just one or two games, the balls become really different from (when they're) new. It's a kind of different (style of) play," he said. Also on Sunday, world number seven Jannik Sinner obliterated Japan's Yoshihito Nishioka 6-2, 6-0. The Italian will play a quarter-final against either fourth-ranked Holger Rune or Bulgaria's Grigor Dimitrov, who play each other on Sunday evening. **SUPER SABALENKA** Earlier, world number one Aryna Sabalenka sailed into the second round of the women's draw with an imperious 6-1, 6-2 defeat of American Sofia Kenin. The Belarusian pummelled Kenin with a succession of mighty serves and groundstrokes and wrapped up the opening set with an ace after just 23 minutes.



The 25-year-old broke serve twice more in the second set as Kenin -- playing with heavy strapping on her left thigh -- failed to muster a response. Sabalenka sealed the match with yet another unreturned serve to set up a tie against either Magdalena Frech or Katie Boulter in the next round. "Honestly, I didn't expect to play that good on my serve -- in practice, it didn't work very well," Sabalenka said at a post-match briefing. "But I was super hyped that I was able to bring that level on my serve today. I think it helped a lot," she said. "I think that was the key of today's match." The China Open is taking place for the first time since 2019 after Beijing ended its isolationist zero-Covid policies. All of the eight top-ranked men are taking part except tennis legend Novak Djokovic, while all of the women's top eight are in action. The women's tournament is also the first since its global governing body ended a boycott of China this year. The embargo had been declared after Chinese player Peng Shuai made sexual assault accusations against a top government official.



## Jerome Boateng trains with Bayern Munich

AFP ■ MUNICH (GERMANY)

Germany defender Jerome Boateng trained with Bayern Munich on Sunday, amid reports the centre-back may be set to make a return to the Bundesliga champions. The club wrote on its website that Boateng was "among those involved" in Sunday's session, adding the defender "will continue to train over the coming days". Free since the expiry of his contract with Lyon in June, Boateng, 35, could serve as a backup solution for Bayern coach Thomas Tuchel. Bayern currently have only three recognised central defenders -- Dayot Upamecano, Kim Min-Jae and Matthijs de Ligt -- with the latter having missed his side's 2-

2 draw with RB Leipzig on Saturday due to injury. Tuchel was also forced to play midfielder Leon Goretzka and wing-back Noussair Mazraoui in central defence in Bayern's Cup tie against Muenster on Tuesday, which the German champions won 4-0. Boateng played for Bayern from 2011 to 2021, winning the 2013 and 2020 Champions League titles, as well as the 2014 World Cup with Germany. Boateng is also currently undergoing a continuing court procedure in Bavaria for domestic violence. A German court last month threw out the assault conviction against Boateng for attacking his ex-girlfriend in 2018 and ordered a new trial.

## PSG players apologise for anti-Marseille chants

AFP ■ PARIS

Four Paris Saint-Germain players on Sunday apologised for offensive chants aimed at rivals Marseille after a Ligue 1 game, saying they "sincerely regretted" their words. French internationals Ousmane Dembele, Randal Kolo Muani, and Layvin Kurzawa and Moroccan Achraf Hakimi were filmed singing an



insulting song towards Marseille fans after a 4-0 victory at the Parc des Princes on September 24. "We let ourselves get carried away by the euphoria and we sincerely regret the words we should not have said and would like to apologise," the four said in identical posts on social media. "We are well aware of the impact of our actions and our words on the public, notably the youngest who

dream watching a football match," they continued, adding "in the future, we will do everything to further respect our duty to set an example". Homophobic chants were also sung during this match by Parisian supporters for several minutes. The club and its four players will appear before the French football league's disciplinary committee next Thursday, the day after PSG's Champions League trip to Newcastle.

## Kudermetova beats Pegula to win Pan Pacific Open



AFP ■ TOKYO

Russia's Veronika Kudermetova won the Pan Pacific Open in Tokyo on Sunday, upsetting tennis world number four Jessica Pegula in straight sets. The 19th-ranked Kudermetova overwhelmed the American 7-5, 6-1 in an hour and 24 minutes. "I knew it would be a tough final... I need to fight for every ball and today it worked really well," she said. "I'm really happy that I managed to win my second title," said the 26-year-old, who won her first WTA singles title

in Charleston in 2021. She beat Pegula in three sets on the clay in Madrid this year. "I played better today than in Madrid," Kudermetova said, adding that Pegula "always fights and plays solidly every match". "Today I followed my game and my plan" to play aggressively, she said. Kudermetova had a tough semi-final, needing three hours and 25 minutes to defeat Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova. She stunned four-time Grand Slam champion Iga Swiatek in the quarters. Pegula was aiming for her

second title of the season following victory last month in Montreal. Kudermetova "put a lot of pressure on me at the beginning so it made it very tough", the American said. "Luckily I was able to get back to the first set but I just don't think I was serving well enough... She was a better player today." The 29-year-old went into the US Open dreaming of a first ever Grand Slam title, but her campaign came to an abrupt halt as compatriot and close friend Madison Keys recorded a dominant win in just 61 minutes.



## VAR officials stood down after Liverpool goal error

AFP ■ LONDON

The match officials at fault for a botched VAR call that cost Liverpool a goal in their 2-1 defeat at Tottenham on Saturday have been removed from duty for the rest of the Premier League weekend. Referees' body the PGMOL admitted a "significant human error" had meant Luis Diaz's strike, when the game was level at 0-0, was not awarded by a VAR review after being flagged offside. VAR official Darren

England was due to be fourth official at Sunday's Premier League match between Nottingham Forest and Brentford. And his assistant VAR Dan Cook was to be assistant referee for Monday's west London derby between Fulham and Chelsea. Spurs struck in the 96th minute through Joel Matip's own goal to edge a highly controversial encounter. Liverpool were reduced to nine men as Curtis Jones and Diogo Jota were sent-off either

side of half-time. "I never saw a game like this with the most unfair circumstances, crazy decisions," said Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp. PGMOL chief Howard Webb apologised to the Reds after the match for the error that ruled out Diaz's strike. "This was a clear and obvious factual error and should have resulted in the goal being awarded through VAR intervention, however, the VAR failed to intervene," the PGMOL said in a statement.

# Martin 3 points off Bagnaia with wet Japan MotoGP win

AFP ■ MOTEGI (JAPAN)

Jorge Martin narrowed the gap on championship leader Francesco Bagnaia to just three points with six races left on Sunday after winning a Japan MotoGP cut short by rain. Starting from pole, the Spaniard had already cut the difference to Italy's Bagnaia to only eight points on Saturday with his third straight sprint victory and fifth of the season. Ducati's Bagnaia came second in the race, giving the defending world champion 319 points compared to 316 for Martin from Ducati satellite team Pramac. Marc Marquez took third. The 24-lap race began under overcast skies and light rain quickly intensified once the race started in mountainous Motegi. This made for treacherous conditions with slippery turns and

a sea of spray, and most riders came into the pits early on to change tyres. Martin and Bagnaia worked their way back to the top of the field before organisers suspended the race with 12 laps to go. They attempted a restart but the red flags quickly came out again and the riders were awarded full points according to their positions at the stoppage. "I was committed to do a great result today," Martin said afterwards. "I felt really good with the rear grip and I was able to overtake all of them (after the pit stop) and make this gap to win today," he added. "I'm so so happy. Luckily everybody's away but it was too dangerous to keep going," he added. Bagnaia said he was happy with the result but said he thought



he could have overtaken Martin. "I was hoping to do more laps to catch Jorge because I was trying to gain (on him) lap by lap without pushing too much," he said. "Unluckily, we didn't have time to finish the race... I think, with the time management, I was quite competitive in the last part of the race," he said. Looking ahead, Bagnaia said competition was turning more "difficult" and "intense" as he duelled with Martin for the championship. "I think it will be interesting. Could be a great fight. For sure, it's more intense right now. It's more difficult," he said. Six-time world champion Marquez on Honda made his first podium finish of the year at the home circuit of the Japanese brand. He started from the third row, but as rain caused other riders to go wide or even into gravel, the

Spaniard saw an opening to race to the podium. "I enjoyed (it). In the beginning of the race I was very calm, just tried to understand the tyres," Marquez said. "When I saw that there was water on the track, I started to attack and I was increasing the speed step by step," he said. South African Brad Binder on KTM crashed out early in the race. He set a lap record on Friday, before Martin renewed it on Saturday. Johann Zarco also crashed and was not allowed to return to the race after he took a shortcut to get back into the pit lane. Last weekend, Martin had already narrowed the difference to 13 points in India in Greater Noida. 1 seconds later by Bagnaia, and 0.353 seconds by 2022 Japanese GP winner Jack Miller on KTM.

# Sable becomes 1st Indian to win 3000m steeplechase title

PTI ■ HANGZHOU

Avinash Sable became the first Indian man to win the gold medal in 3000m steeplechase at the Asian Games while shot-putter Tajinderpal Singh Toor defended his title with an amazing final throw to beat back the challenge from his Saudi Arabian rival here on Sunday.

Sable, the 29-year-old national record holder, earned India its first gold medal in athletics, completing the race in 8:19.50 seconds.

Sable rewrote the previous Asian Games record of 8:22.79 held in the name of Iran's Hossein Keyhani set at the 2018 Jakarta Games.

Sudha Singh had won a gold in women's 3000m steeplechase in the 2010 Asian Games in Guangzhou.

Toor, the 2018 Jakarta Asian Games gold medallist, came up with a mighty throw of 20.36 metres on his sixth and last attempt to overhaul his Saudi rival Mohamed Daouda Tolo's distance of 20.18 metres.

Toor, however, could not break his own Asian Games record of 20.75m set in 2018 Jakarta. But the 28-year-old's final throw was way too good for his Saudi rival to overhaul in his final attempt.

In the 1500m for women, India's Harmilan Bains won a



silver while Ajay Kumar Saroj and Jinson Johnson won silver and bronze respectively in the men's 1500m.

Earlier, the toast of the nation in the last edition, Indian heptathlete Swapna Barman's one "last shot" at

glory at the Asian Games turned into a nightmare as she struggled with injuries to virtually go out of medal reckoning after the javelin throw event.

The defending champion, who boasts of a personal best

of 52.55m in javelin throw, managed a throw of just 45.13 in the penultimate event of the gruelling two-day competition.

Javelin throw was one of the two events Swapna had won in 2018 en route to

becoming the first Indian heptathlete to win an Asian Games gold.

Overall, Swapna was ranked fourth with 4840 points, 11 points behind her nearest rival Jingyi Liu of China ahead of the 800m

## India floored by China in basketball; qualify for quarterfinal

PTI N HANGZHOU (CHINA)

The Indian women made it to the quarterfinal despite being pummeled by China in their 5x5 basketball final group-stage match in the ongoing Asian Games here on Sunday.

Indian team suffered a crushing 53-111 defeat, which was its maiden loss in the sport this term, having won the previous two matches versus Indonesia (66-46) and Mongolia (68-62).

The quarterfinal qual-

ification in the sport is earned by the combined ranking of the teams in the tournament post-completion of the group stage, i.e. The top eight-ranked sides, where the Indians are currently ranked sixth.

It is India's fifth appearance in the competition in this sport, having finished ninth in the previous edition in Jakarta-Palembang 2018, whereas its best performance came in its first appearance in New Delhi 1982, finishing fifth.

race, which is the last segment of the seven-event competition.

The other Indian in the fray, Nandini Agasara notched a personal best of 39.88m in javelin throw that took her overall ranking to fifth place.

Earlier in the day, Swapna Barman leapt 5.71m in the long jump, while Nandini Agasara had a season-best

5.94m jump.

With her career ravaged by a spinal injury, the six-toed Indian athlete had contemplated retirement last year. But she took one last shot at glory and came to Hangzhou in her title defence bid.

This year she won the Inter-State meet and also bagged a silver medal in the build-up to the Asian Games. She also avoided surgery so as

to ensure that she does not miss her training despite a bad back.

"But her body condition could not cope up and she failed to get a good start," her coach Shubash Sarkar told PTI.

"She was expecting a good result in high jump but a fourth place finish shattered her and she couldn't recover from there," he added.

Swapna had a jump of 1.70m, which was nowhere close to her personal best of 1.87. "The poor start has affected her morale and it showed in today's javelin throw event. It's as good as over," Sarkar said of Swapna's prospects this time.

Earlier, India's Amlan Borgohain finished at the third position after clocking 21.08 seconds in the men's 200m heats and advanced to the semifinal.

The first three athletes in each heat make the cut for the semi-finals. The top four times from all the heats who have not made the cut will also advance to the semifinals.

The sprinter from Assam, currently the country's fastest, holds both the men's 100m and 200m national records.

However, Jyothi Yarraji failed to make the cut for the women's 200m final. The Indian had a timing of 23.78s.

Yarraji, however, is in contention for a medal in women's 100m hurdles.

# India sign off with first-ever team silver after losing to China

PTI ■ HANGZHOU

Injured HS Prannoy's absence hurt India as they went down fighting 2-3 against badminton powerhouse China to sign off with their first-ever silver medal in the men's team championships at the Asian Games here on Sunday.

After world No. 7 Prannoy was ruled out due to a back injury, Lakshya Sen produced a gutsy show in the first singles and doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty then bossed over their opponents to put India 2-0 ahead.

So, it was once again left to Kidambi Srikanth to carry the team on his shoulders. The former world No. 1, who had produced a gritty show against South Korea in the semifinals, couldn't go the distance this time despite a healthy lead and multiple game points as China fought back to make it 1-2.

The defending champions then won the remaining two matches to maintain their hegemony in the Asian Games. With Prannoy missing the summit clash, Sen was handed the responsibility of leading the Indian charge. Sen recovered from a mid-game



slump to erase a five-point deficit in the decider and put India ahead with a 22-20 14-21 21-18 win over world No. 6 Shi Yuqi in an 83-minute opening slugfest.

World No. 3 men's doubles pair of Satwik and Chirag then went on a smashing spree to outclass world No. 2. Liang Wei Keng and Wang Chang 21-15 21-18 in 55 minutes to extend the lead to 2-0.

Srikanth, however, squandered an 18-14 lead and multiple game points in the first game to go down 22-24 9-21 against All England champion Li Shifeng in the third singles to expose India's weakest link -- the second doubles and third singles matches.

Scratch pair of Dhruv Kapila and Sai Pratheek Krishna Prasad then lost 6-21 15-21 to world No. 8 Liu Yu Chen

and Ou Xuan Yi, while Prannoy's replacement Mithun Manjunath, ranked 53, went down 12-21 4-21 against world No. 20 Weng Hong Yang in the third singles as India finished second best. Despite the loss, it is a creditable performance from the Indian team as it sealed India's second silver medal in badminton at the continental championships with two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu winning the first in women's singles in the 2018 edition.

The last time the Indian men won a badminton medal in the team championships was at the 1986 edition in Seoul where Sen's mentors Prakash Padukone and Vimal Kumar played a crucial role.

India now has 11 badminton medals in the Asian Games, including three individual singles medals, one silver and three bronze in the men's team, two women's team bronze and one medal each in men's doubles and mixed doubles.

Up against Shi Yuqi, Sen dictated the pace of the rallies to lead 11-6 at the interval. The duo played some exciting rallies with Sen keeping the pressure on his Chinese rival with his resolute defence to lead 15-10.

# Nikhath signs off with bronze

PTI ■ HANGZHOU

Two-time world champion Nikhat Zareen's long winning streak came to an end as she signed off with a bronze medal while Parveen Hooda grabbed a Paris Olympic quota at the Asian Games here on Sunday.

Competing in the women's 50kg category, Zareen lost a fiercely contested 50kg semifinal battle 2-3 to two-time world championships medallist RakSAT Chuthamat of Thailand.

Parveen, who won the bronze medal in the 63kg at the 2022 World Boxing Championships, moved past Uzbekistan's Sitora Turdibekova by unanimous verdict to move the 57kg semifinal and confirm India a medal.

The in-form Zareen, who has dropped down from her preferred 52kg weight class as it doesn't feature in the Paris Olympic, hasn't lost a bout since October's National Championships in 2021. She had even out-punched Chuthamat at the world championships earlier this year. But on Sunday, Chuthamat



came well prepared for the Indian pugilist, who has stamped her authority in the international arena.

After losing the first round on three cards, the Thai boxer cramped Zareen and resorted to clinching every time the Indian tried to mount an attack.

Zareen has enjoyed an incredible run in the past couple of years, winning the prestigious Strandja Memorial boxing tournament, two world championships and the Commonwealth Games.

She returns home with not only a bronze but also an

Olympic quota.

Parveen and wins quota, Jaismine crashes out

Parveen, the reigning Asian champion was in her elements from the word go, using her long arms to throw punches from a distance and control the proceedings.

She switched between the left jab and the right cross to unnerve the 21-year-old Uzbek. Parveen fought a strategic bout as after going on the offensive in the opening round, she waited for Turdibekova to come forward, only to pummel her with accurate scoring punches.

# Slow bowling issue but can't rule them out

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Never judge a book by its cover and rule out an Australian cricket team from title contention at your own peril, are the two old concrete jungle sayings.

The five-time ICC ODI World Cup champions, at least on paper, can't be rated ahead of India and England during this edition of the tournament.

But the quality of this team is such that one won't be surprised if it pulls a rabbit out of the hat at some point in time

during the tournament. Australia begin their campaign against India in Chennai on October 8.

Here's the SWOT Analysis STRENGTH

The strength of this Australian team is certainly its batting, which does have a lot of depth with capable hitters right down till No. 9 in the line-up. David Warner is no doubt playing his last ODI tournament and has been in ominous form during the pre-cursor against India.

The maverick southpaw would like one final hurrah and

a second 50-over silverware in his cabinet before calling time on his illustrious career. Travis Head's injury has given Mitchell Marsh a chance to open and the big all-rounder has taken to the role like fish to water. Steve Smith, Cameron Green, Glenn Maxwell and Marcus Stoinis are all big hitters and good players of spin bowling, which is an advantage.

WEAKNESS

The real weakness of this side is the spin bowling department which only has one specialist spinner Adam Zampa.



Missing Ashton Agar's restrictive wicket to wicket bowling in sub-continental conditions is going to affect them on tracks

where there would be some turn on offer and the odd ball will be gripping off the surface.

Maxwell's part-time off-spin is likely to come in handy as it was evident in Rajkot during the third ODI last week. But expecting 10 overs on most days from Maxwell will be a bit too much and Zampa's form since the tour of South Africa has tapered off a bit. He has been pretty expensive in the past few games.

OPPORTUNITIES

The number of all-rounders in the Aussie ranks gives them the chance to create opportuni-

ties like no other team. Green, Stoinis, Maxwell, Marsh (if he bowls) give the team a multi-dimensional look and there remains a lot of cover in case one of them has an off-day.

Not to forget when Travis Head gets fit, he can also bowl some part-time spin. Also the experienced skipper Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood is possibly on par with Pakistan and India if not better. Left-arm Starc could be inconsistent but the day he gets deliveries to dart in, most top batters find him unplayable.



# India, South Korea play out 1-1 draw in women's hockey

PTI ■ HANGZHOU

The Indian women's hockey team was held to a 1-1 draw by South Korea but the Savita Punia-led unbeaten side still continued to lead its pool in the Asian Games here on Sunday.

Navneet Kaur (44th min) scored the equaliser for the higher-ranked India after Cho Hyejin (12th) had put South Korea ahead at the Gongshu Canal Sports Park Stadium.

Thanks to the draw, the Indian team, currently ranked sixth in the world, held onto the top spot in Pool A by goal difference over 12-ranked Korea.

The top two teams from each pool will qualify for the semi-finals.

India crushed Singapore 13-0 in the opener before notching a 6-0 win over Malaysia.

Both teams looked to score from the word go but the Koreans had the first opportunity of the match when Cho Hyejin shot at the goal. However, Deep Grace Ekka effected a fine save to keep India from going behind.

The Koreans, though, took the lead minutes later as Cho Hyejin scored off a penalty stroke after she was fouled by Udita inside the circle. The first quarter ended with Korea 1-0 ahead with the Indians lacking the finishing skills upfront.

Desperate to find the equaliser, India earned a few penalty corners but none of them resulted in a goal as the first half ended with South Korea leading by a goal.

The third quarter also went along similar lines until Navneet found the back of the net off a penalty corner.

# Floored by Rohit's talent, fascinated by Singham: Shadab

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Tackling a marauder like Rohit Sharma is right at the top of leg-spinner Shadab Khan's check-list but when the Indian skipper doesn't occupy his mind-space, the Pakistan vice-captain doesn't shy away from expressing his love for Bollywood movies and local food.

Ajay Devgn would have little clue about how big an impression he had made on Shadab.

Glancing at the top cop from Hyderabad police manning the media conference room, the leg-spinner couldn't

help saying: "Singham bhi aaye hain yaha pe. (I see Singham is also present here)."

The reference of super-hit Bollywood cop movie wasn't lost on anyone as Shadab spoke with a lot of warmth about how the 'City of Nizams' have received their cricket team with open arms.

"The welcome was fantastic at the (Hyderabad) airport and also a lot of people have been thronging the team hotel and hospitality wise it's been really good," Shadab told mediapersons during the first official media conference organised by the team.



Hyderabad food is meant to tickle everyone's taste buds and Shadab is no different.

"The food has been really tasty and the support staff (all South Africans) are worried that we end up increasing our fat percentage (laughs). Hope, we

get the same love in Ahmedabad where we play India (laughs)," said Shadab referring to his team's much-awaited clash against the arch-rivals on October 14.

As the discussion turned towards cricket, the reverence for Rohit was there to be seen. He also picked up Kuldeep Yadav as the most dangerous Indian bowler.

"I admire Rohit Sharma a lot and among the leading batsmen in the world he is the most difficult to bowl to. Once he gets set he becomes very dangerous. Among the bowlers, since I am a leg-spinner, it will be Kuldeep

Yadav given his recent form," said Shadab.

"We have learnt from our Asia Cup mistakes"

Pakistan failed to defend 346 against the New Zealand and have plenty to think about in the bowling department including the form of premier spinner Shadab who did not bowl in the warm-up but had a forgettable Asia Cup. The next warm-up game is against Australia on October 3.

His form is key for Pakistan in the middle-overs and the 24-year-old had no qualms in admitting that he did not have the best of times in Asia Cup