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NEW DELHI, MONDAY OCTOBER 16, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3



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WEST ASIA PUSHED INTO AN ABYSS

Biden calls PM Netanyahu and President Abbas amid the crisis

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden reiterated the US' unwavering support for Israel and emphasised the need for humanitarian aid for the people of Palestine as he held separate phone calls with the Israeli and Palestinian leaders amid escalating tensions in Gaza, the White House has said.

In his first call with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas since Hamas' unprecedented assault on Israel a week ago, Biden stressed that the militant group "does not stand for the Palestinian people's right to dignity and self-determination".

Biden discussed with Abbas US' efforts to work with the United Nations, Egypt, Jordan, Israel and others to ensure humanitarian supplies reach civilians in Gaza.

The President also called Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, his fifth such call after Hamas' assault last week.

In both calls, Biden stressed the need to prevent the conflict from expanding.

He spoke to both leaders about coordination with the United Nations, Egypt, Jordan and other countries in the region to ensure access to water, food and

medical care for all civilians.

"Abbas briefed Biden on his engagement in the region and his efforts to bring urgently needed humanitarian assistance to Palestinian people, particularly in Gaza. Biden offered Abbas and the Palestinian Authority his full support for these important and ongoing efforts," the White House said on Saturday.

"This afternoon, Biden spoke with Netanyahu to reiterate unwavering US support for Israel. Biden updated Netanyahu on US military support and reiterated his warning against anyone seeking to expand the conflict," it said.

Biden affirmed his support for all efforts to protect civilians, it said. "As more information comes to light about Hamas' brutal atrocities committed over the past week, Biden reiterated the need for all countries to unequivocally condemn Hamas as a terrorist organisation that does not represent the aspirations of the Palestinian people," the White House said.

"Finally, Biden detailed US efforts to coordinate with partners to prevent the conflict from widening, and the two leaders discussed the need to preserve stability in the West Bank and the broader region," it said about Biden's meeting



A convoy of Israeli armoured personnel carriers (APC) head towards the Gaza Strip border in southern Israel on Sunday

PTI

with Abbas.

The United States has intensified its global engagement amid an imminent Israeli plan to send its foot soldiers to Gaza.

Palestinian militant group Hamas carried out a barrage of air strikes in Southern Israel on last week.

The Israel Defense Forces

(IDF) in response launched multiple attacks targeting Hamas' key infrastructure. So far, thousands of people have been killed in Israel and the

Gaza Strip in the biggest escalation in decades between the two sides.

Meanwhile, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke

with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi on Saturday.

"As part of the administration's intensive diplomatic engagements to stand with Israel and condemn the terrorist attacks by Hamas, the Secretary reiterated US support for Israel's right to defend itself and called for an immediate cessation of Hamas' attacks and the release of all hostages," the State Department said.

During the call, Blinken also discussed the importance of maintaining stability in the region and discouraging other parties from entering the conflict. US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin on Saturday directed the USS Dwight D Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group (CSG) to begin moving to the Eastern Mediterranean.

"As part of our effort to deter hostile actions against Israel or any efforts toward widening this war following Hamas' attack on Israel, the Strike Group includes the guided-missile cruiser USS Philippine Sea (CG 58), guided-missile destroyers USS Gravelly (DDG 107) and USS Mason (DDG 87), and Carrier Air Wing 3, with nine aircraft squadrons, and embarked headquarters staffs," Austin said.

The Eisenhower CSG will join the USS Gerald R Ford Carrier

Strike Group, which arrived earlier this week.

The Ford CSG includes the USS Normandy, USS Thomas Hudner, USS Ramage, USS Carney, and USS Roosevelt. Earlier in the week, the US Air Force announced deployment to the region of squadrons of F-15, F-16 and A-10 fighter aircraft, he said.

"The increases to US force posture signal the United States' ironclad commitment to Israel's security and our resolve to deter any state or non-state actor seeking to escalate this war," Austin said.

Austin spoke with Israeli Minister of Defense Yoav Gallant to continue consultations on Israel's response to Hamas' attacks, following his visit to Israel a day earlier.

During the call, he underscored the United States' unwavering commitment to Israel's security.

"During the call, he discussed the importance of adhering to the law of war, including civilian protection obligations, and addressing the worsening humanitarian crisis in Gaza while Israel continues its operations to restore security. Finally, he discussed Hamas' abhorrent taking of civilian hostages," the Pentagon said in a readout of the call.

BJP versus TMC in Parliament

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

BJP MP Nishikant Dubey on Sunday accused TMC's Mahua Moitra of taking "bribes" from a businessman to ask questions in Parliament and urged Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to constitute an "inquiry committee" to look into the charges against her.

Moitra hit back, saying she "welcomes any move against her after the Lok Sabha Speaker is finished dealing with pending charges against him (Dubey)".

The two MPs, known for their fiery parliamentary speeches and belligerent attacks on adversaries, have often exchanged blows over a host of issues over the years.

On Sunday, Dubey wrote to Birla under the subject "Re-emergence of nasty 'Cash for Query' in Parliament, Direct involvement of Mahua Moitra, Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) for serious 'Breach of Privilege', 'Contempt of the House' and a 'Criminal Offence' under Section 120-A of IPC".

Citing a letter he has received



from an advocate, Dubey said the lawyer has shared "irrefutable" evidence of bribes exchanged between the Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader and a businessman.

Hitting back, Moitra said on X, "Am using all my ill gotten cash & gifts to buy a college/ university in which Degree Dubey can finally buy a real degree." Tagging the Lok Sabha Speaker, she said, "Finish the enquiries against him for false affidavits & then set up my enquiry committee."

In his letter to the speaker, Dubey said 50 of 61 questions she asked in Lok Sabha till recently were focused on the

Adani Group, the business conglomerate which the TMC MP has often accused of malpractices, more so after it was at the receiving end of a critical report of short-selling from Hindenburg.

Dubey urged Birla to constitute an "inquiry committee" into the charges against her.

"There is not an iota of doubt about a criminal conspiracy hatched by Mahua Moitra to garner and protect the business interests of a businessman — Darshan Hiranandani — by asking Parliamentary Questions, which is reminiscent of 'Cash for Query' episode of 12 December, 2005,"

the BJP MP said.

Moitra posted several messages on X to hit back at Dubey without directly naming him and fired fresh salvo at the Adani Group.

"Multiple breach of privileges pending against fake degree-wala & other BJP luminaries. Welcome any motions against me right after Speaker finishes dealing with those. Also waiting for ED & others to file FIR in Adani coal scam before coming to my doorstep," she said.

"If Adani group is relying on dodgy dossier created by dubious Sanghis & circulated by fake degree wallahs to either shut me up or bring me down I would advise them not to waste their time. Use your lawyers wisely," the TMC MP added.

In his letter to Birla, Dubey alleged that Moitra's conduct marks the "reemergence of cash for query", a reference to the 2005 media expose of many MPs asking questions in Parliament in exchange for bribes.

Noting that membership of 11 MPs were quashed on the rec-

ommendations of an inquiry committee within 23 days of its constitution, he said Moitra should also be similarly probed and suspended from the House till the report is submitted.

Citing her vehement attacks on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, Dubey alleged that a "clever facade" was created in the past few years as she often references to the Adani Group while giving the impression that she was against the government.

In another post, Moitra said, "Also welcome CBI enquiry into my alleged money laundering right after they finish investigating Adani's offshore money trail, over invoicing, benami accounts. 'Adani may use BJP agencies to browbeat competition & buy airports but just try doing it with me.'"

In a post on X, Dubey said membership of 11 MPs were quashed by same Parliament and such brazen conduct will not be acceptable now too and also alleged the use of hawala money by her without naming Moitra.



Afghanistan stun England by 69 runs. Mubeen Ur Rahman with teammates celebrates the wicket of England's Chris Woakes during the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 match between Afghanistan and England, at Arun Jaitley Stadium in New Delhi, on Sunday

PTI

Tremors felt in Delhi NCR

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

An earthquake of magnitude 3.1 struck Faridabad in Haryana at 4.08 pm on Sunday, the National Centre for Seismology said.

It said the epicentre for the quake was nine kilometres east of Faridabad and 30 kilometres southeast of Delhi.

The quake triggered panic among people, with many in Delhi and the National Capital Region reporting vigorous shaking of furniture.

Several social media users shared visuals of people rushing out of residential buildings. The tremors woke up some people in Noida from their afternoon slumber.

"I was sleeping. Suddenly, I felt as if someone had climbed on my bed. I woke up only to find that it was an earthquake. A lamp and the fan in the room

were swinging," Ashwin Saxena, a resident of Prateek Wisteria in Noida, told PTI.

Several people who were in crowded places also felt the tremors. Sangeeta Sharma, who has put up a stall at the ongoing Handicrafts Exhibition at the India Expo Mart in Greater Noida was among them.

"I felt as if the floor of the exhibition area was shaking. I was told by those nearby that it could be because of activities on the upper deck or outside our hall. But soon we got to know of the earthquake," Sharma said.

Previously on October 3, strong tremors reverberated through parts of north India, including the Delhi-NCR, after a series of earthquakes, the strongest being of magnitude 6.2, jolted Nepal in quick succession.

India is located in a seismic-



ly active region. But with a lot of microearthquakes occurring every day, the stored-up energy gets released, according to Director O P Mishra of the National Centre for Seismology, Ministry of Earth Sciences.

Experts say the impact of a large-scale earthquake can be reduced if people and institutions strictly comply with the bylaws and codes to build resilient structures.

They say the resonant frequency of a building can play a critical role in determining the level of damage that it experiences during an earthquake.

Buildings have natural frequencies of vibration, also known as resonant frequencies, which are determined by their mass, stiffness and size.

The ground motion during an earthquake can excite these natural frequencies, causing

the building to vibrate at its resonant frequency.

If the frequency of the ground motion matches or is more than the resonant frequency of a building, the structure will experience significant amplifications of the ground motion, leading to more intense shaking and potentially causing significant damage.

In Afghanistan too a powerful 6.3 magnitude earthquake struck on Sunday, just over a week after strong quakes and aftershocks killed thousands of people and flattened entire villages in the same province.

The US Geological Survey said the latest quake's epicentre was about 34 kilometres (21 miles) outside Herat, the provincial capital, and eight kilometres (five miles) below the surface.

Save the Children said four people have died and that Herat Regional Hospital has received 153 injured.

Everything in the Baloch area of Rabat Sangi district has collapsed. Several villages have been destroyed, according to the aid group. Authorities have given lower casualty numbers.

Sayed Kazim Rafiqi, 42, a Herat city resident, said he had never seen such devastation before with the majority of houses damaged and "people terrified." Rafiqi and others headed to the hospital to donate much-needed blood.

"We have to help in any way possible," he said.

The earthquakes on October 7 flattened whole villages in Herat, in one of the most destructive quakes in the country's recent history.

More than 90 per cent of the people killed a week ago were women and children, UN officials reported Thursday.

Officials said the earlier quakes killed more than 2,000 people across the province.

15 killed, 23 hurt in 2 mishaps on Mumbai-Nagpur expressway

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In two more mishaps on the accident-prone Mumbai-Nagpur Samruddhi Expressway, at least 15 persons were killed and 23 other injured when a speeding mini tourist bus rammed into a stationary container at Vajapur in Aurangabad district...

The first mishap took place at around 00.30 hours. Of those killed were two minor children and eight women. The mini private bus with a permitted capacity of 17 passengers was carrying 35 passengers and it was on its way from Buldhana to Nashik via Aurangabad...

@SyedMoin9890 from Nanded". President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, Maharashtra Opposition leaders and others mourned those killed in the first mishap that claimed the lives of 12 persons and left 23 others injured.



accident, it's a murder," Danve said, after visiting the spot and meeting the patients at the hospitals. "The Samruddhi Expressway was built and inaugurated hurriedly without providing for proper facilities and Shinde and Devendra Fadnavis claimed full credit for, now the concerned ministers must take responsibility and should be sacked for this tragedy," Raut said.

August 1. The crane crash had come close on the heels of a gruesome tragedy that took place on July 1, 2023, as many as 26 persons were charred to death and seven others suffered severe burn wounds when a private sleeper-coach AC luxury bus caught fire off the Pimpalkhuta village along the Samruddhi Expressway...

Nashik district, a distance of around 80 km. With 600 km Expressway construction complete, the focus is now on the connection between Igatpuri and Mumbai - a distance of 101 km. The Samruddhi Expressway has earned the notoriety of being a 'killer highway' where there were earlier 30-odd mishaps on the Nagpur-Nashik stretch...

Poll year sees Ram Mandir theme in Durga Pujas

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Well ahead of Ayodhya, Bengal is getting its own version of Ram Mandir. The only mark of distinction between the two is the presiding idol. Here in Kolkata Mother Goddess Durga will be the presiding deity inside the 'Ram Mandir' instead of the Ram Lalla.

Like most other Durga Pujas which are patronized by one politician or the other, the Pujas at Santosh Mitra Square are organized by Sajal Ghosh, a BJP councillor and a party State committee member. The organizers of this multi-million budget Durga Puja promise a "complete Ayodhya-like atmosphere."



Minister Sujit Basu had constructed a replica of Burz Khalifa which had become an instant hit. Ghosh also said "Last year we had constructed the Red Fort to celebrate Amrit Mahotsav of Independence drawing lakhs of people... this time also we promise to do an encore."

the Mother appeared and blessed Lord Rama with victory and promised to leave Sri Lanka allowing Lord Rama to defeat Ravan in the battle. Rest is history. As the Puja started by Rama was in Autumn and not Spring it is called Akal Awakening of the Mother. Cut to Balurghat in North Bengal. Here the New Town Durga Puja committee patronized by local MP and Bengal BJP president Sukanta Majumdar too is modeled after "India's national temple."

however scoffed at the BJP leaders for "politicizing Durga Pujas" which he called a purely religious and social affair. "They have always blamed the TMC for using religion in politics but this is the best example to show how they are using religion to influence their politics... having failed to beat us politically, they are trying to bring Ram Mandir in the centre stage of politics well before the BJP as a party and its central governments bring it in January when the Prime Minister will inaugurate the Ram Temple to gain political mileage out of it in the elections," Ghosh said.

Shah to inaugurate 'Ram Mandir' facsimile at City of Joy today

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The breaking news is: Home Minister Amit Shah and not Prime Minister Narendra Modi will get the honour of inaugurating the just constructed 'Ram Mandir'. Come Monday, the Home Minister will inaugurate a facsimile version of the original Temple, at the City of Joy - -- thousand miles towards the East of Ayodhya --- months ahead of the original Ram Temple getting inaugurated by the Prime Minister at Lord Rama's own abode.

Durga Puja celebrations in Kolkata, Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee will no longer hold the monopoly of cutting the ribbons at Durga Puja pandals. "Amit Shah ji will inaugurate our Puja tomorrow... this year we have designed it after Ayodhya's Ram Temple and will try to create an exact ambience of what once was the Capital of Lord Rama's empire. Along with him our Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari is also likely to be present there," Sajal Ghosh, a powerful State committee member and a councillor of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation said.

Former CEC MS Gill dies after brief illness

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former chief election commissioner Missioner Manohar Singh Gill died at a south Delhi hospital on Sunday after a brief illness, according to people close to him. He was 86. Gill will be cremated here on Monday, they said.



CEC to have joined politics. Gill entered the Rajya Sabha as a Congress member and was made the Union sports minister in 2008. Gill is survived by his wife and three daughters. Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge condoled Gill's demise and lauded his contribution to the development of the nation.

Shri Manohar Singh Gill ji," Kharge said in a post on X. "As a valued colleague in the UPA govt and earlier as a civil servant, his contributions to the development of the nation in varied fields like sports, electoral processes and agriculture were long lasting," he added.

Libraries should be built to connect youth with country's history, language and culture: Shah

PTI ■ GANDHINAGAR

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said libraries should be built to connect the youth with the history, language and culture of the country, and urged teachers to encourage students to visit the facilities to gain knowledge in the subjects of their interest.



"Libraries should be built for the youth to connect to the country's history, language and culture," Shah said, stressing that had there not been a rich library in Mansa, he might be working as a businessman. "The library at Mansa gave me the opportunity to recognise

the children of Samau village, to speak in Gujarati for 35 minutes without using English. I assure you nobody will be able to do so because the youth are unaware of the repository of our words, grammar, and rich language. "As a minister in Gujarat, I had organised a competition in districts for youth to deliver a speech for 20 minutes without using the English language. Nobody could do so," the Union minister said.

"If we work to make them experts in the subject in which they have interest, then Gujarat and the country will get a proper citizen to make contribution for the country," Shah said. He said that while 12 martyrs from Mansa in Gandhinagar district sacrificed their life in 1857 for the country's freedom, there was no memorial in their name. "I wrote to Gujarat chief minister that the state government's Youth and Cultural Ministry should build a beautiful 'smarak' (memorial) and make arrangements for Tricolour hoisting so that when it is hoisted, it gives peace to their soul," he said.

Kerala CM welcomes first ever ship to Vizhinjam port

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Sunday welcomed the first ever ship at the Rs 7,700 crore inter-

national deep-water port at Vizhinjam here at an event which saw the Congress attribute credit for the project to late party stalwart Oommen Chandy.



event, said it was thanks to the initiative taken by Chandy that the project -- which was stagnant from 2004 to 2010 -- moved forward. Chandy ensured all studies were carried out and all approvals were received from the Centre during his tenure. Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) chief K Sudhakaran, in a statement, slammed Vijayan for not commemorating Chandy as was done by state Ports Minister Ahamed Devarkottar. Sudhakaran alleged that Vijayan was "unlucky" as he

Ltd -- in a post on social media platform X said that the project journey began in 2015 and the momentous occasion was due to the trust and love shown by all. "Our journey began in 2015 when the people of Kerala and Thiruvananthapuram entrusted us with their dream of this port. Today, as the 1st vessel berths at #VizhinjamPort, the trust & love shown by all have brought us to this momentous day. My heartfelt salutation to each one of you," he said.

Health Minister rejects India's low rank in Global Hunger Index

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Rejecting India's low rank in Global Hunger Index-2023, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Sunday said parameters that are currently being followed for evaluation are not based on conditions specific to the country. Interacting with students at IIT-Guwahati, he refuted reports of large-scale malnutrition in India. "Every country and its people have their own body and genetic structures, which also leads to a difference in how malnutrition is measured. What Europe considers as its parameter for determining malnutrition, it may not be applicable for us," he said.



applicable for us," he said, replying to a question from a student on India performing poorly in the Global Hunger Index. India ranked 111th out of 125 countries in the Global Hunger Index-2023, released on Thursday, with the country reporting the highest child wasting rate at 18.7 per cent. The Global Hunger Index (GHI) is a tool for comprehensively measuring and tracking hunger at global, regional, and national levels. Mandaviya delivered the 'Amrit Kaal Vimarsh Viksit Bharat @ 2047' lecture at IIT-Guwahati

on the topic "Transformation of Healthcare in Amrit Kaal". Soon after that, he participated in the interaction with the students. Responding to a query on how mental health issues can be addressed, the minister maintained that such problems were not a major concern in India earlier due to the societal setup, especially the presence of joint families. "Issues were mostly taken care of due to the joint family set up previously. We cannot be blindly following others as we have to understand that for someone in a European country, problems will be very different," he said. Mandaviya said that while the government is working on enhanced institutional help, societal remedies also have to be explored. In his speech, Mandaviya stressed the role of students in shaping the future of the country.

OFFICE OF THE CITY MAGISTRATE/MARRIAGE OFFICER GAUTAMBUDH NAGAR. NOTICE: A notice of intended marriage has been received from Mr. Shahenshah Alam S/o Mr. Abdul Rauf R/o House No. 181, Pawan Vihar, Koda Colony, Ghaziabad U.P.-201001 and Ms. Aditi Janet Khalkho D/o Mr. Arun Kumar Khalkho R/o House No. B-157, Rail Nagar, Sector-50, Noida, Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar (U.P.) in the office of the undersigned, any person interested therein, may file objections to it on any day upto 03-11-2023 in the office of the undersigned.

No support for terrorism in India: Birla

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Sunday said he has conveyed to his counterparts from G20 nations that India does not support terrorism or terror activities in any form. Birla was responding to questions on the bilateral meetings he had with Speakers of G20 nations during the Parliament 20 Summit that concluded here on Saturday.

tion on whether any Speaker from the G20 countries had raised the issue of presence of people in India who were pursuing separatist activities abroad. "It is a clear Government policy... terrorism, be it of caste or religion... terrorism is terrorism, and no form of terror will find any support in India. This is the clear Government policy," Birla said.

Birla said India also offered to set up an expert group on legislative drafting, an area where the Indian Parliament has considerable expertise and has organised training sessions for parliaments of several countries. He said the success of the G-20 Leaders' Summit, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, also reflected on the deliberations at the P20 Summit, which also led to a joint statement.



related to responsible AI development and data security. He further said that Artificial Intelligence should be credible and trustworthy and informed that the P20 countries agreed to form a group to enhance their domain knowledge for legislative drafting. He further told the media that the New Delhi P20 Summit

Chairpersons and leaders of delegations from 29 countries participated in the summit. Expressing satisfaction, Birla noted that from the historical point of view, the New Delhi P20 conference had the highest participation ever. He also pointed out that the Pan-African Parliament participated in the P20 summit for the first time since the African Union was admitted as a member of the G20.

the role of India as the mother of democracy. Birla also informed that in line with the Prime Minister's initiative, the conference agreed to promote women-led development. He said all the Presiding Officers welcomed the 'Nari Shakti Vandan Bill 2023' passed by the Indian Parliament.

Mission LiFE in the Parliaments of all the countries, and the message will be given to the entire world to adopt an environment-friendly lifestyle. By doing this, under the leadership of India, people from all over the world will unite to protect the earth, environment and nature.

Two flights bring back 471 Indians from Israel

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

As part of ongoing 'Operation Ajay' to evacuate Indian nationals willing to return home from Israel, two flights from Tel Aviv carrying a total of 471 Indians landed in the national Capital on Sunday morning.



On Sunday, two Ministers including Kaushal Kishore and General (retired) VK Singh welcomed the evacuees at the airport. The third flight from Tel Aviv arrived at the IGI Airport here around 4 am with 197 passengers.

Addressing questions on the Israel-Palestine conflict, which escalated last week after the Hamas group launched rocket attacks on Tel Aviv, MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi had said the government's prime focus was to bring back those citizens wanting to come back.

Congress pins hope on old guards

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

Congress on Sunday announced its first list of party candidates for the Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Telangana Assembly elections. While the party announced 144 party candidates for Madhya Pradesh elections, it announced 30 candidates for the Chhattisgarh polls and another 55 for Telangana assembly polls slated next month.

The ruling BJP has so far announced the names of its 136 candidates, including seven Lok Sabha members. These include three Union ministers - Narendra Singh Tomar, Prahlad Singh Patel and Fagga Singh Kulaste. In the 2018 assembly polls, the Congress won 114 seats in the 230-member House and formed a coalition government under veteran leader Kamal Nath with the support of the Samajwadi Party, the Bahujan Samaj Party and independent MLAs.



Chhattisgarh assembly Speaker Charan Das Mahant has been fielded from Sakti assembly seat. Pradesh Congress chief Deepak Bajj has been fielded by the party from the Chitrakot-ST assembly seat. He is currently the sitting Lok Sabha MP from Bastar.

The BJP has so far announced its candidates for 85 seats, including the 20 seats where elections will be held in the first phase. In the 2018 Chhattisgarh assembly polls, the Congress registered a landslide victory by securing 68 seats in the 90-member House and comfortably formed government.

Malkajgiri Parliamentary constituency. The party has also fielded its sitting Lok Sabha MP N Utam Kumar Reddy from the Huzurnagar assembly constituency. He currently represents the Nalgonda Lok Sabha seat in Telangana.

RDEs to be soon installed at 8 points across Indian borders

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

Radiation Detection Equipment (RDE) will soon be installed at eight land crossing points along India's borders with Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Nepal to check the trafficking of radioactive materials for its possible use in making nuclear devices.



Officials informed that work order for supply, installation and maintenance of Radiation Detection Equipment at eight operational ICPs has been awarded by the government through an agreement executed last year and the vendor

will supply and complete the installation process shortly. The central government has taken the initiative to install the RDE so that the trafficking of radioactive materials across international borders can be checked. The eight

ICPs are known to have a sizeable number of cross-border movements of people and goods. Any smuggling of radioactive material could be a challenge for India's security agencies as it could be used for making nuclear devices or radiological dispersal devices, said an official.

use the RDE to monitor cross-border cargo movement. "The RDE is equipped with raising separate gamma and neutron radiation alarms and generating video frames of suspected objects," the official added.

Training programmes organised for professors in Delhi University

PNS NEW DELHI

University Grant Commission - Malviya Mission Teacher Training Centre is organising teachers training programmes in Delhi University for the professors of higher education on the 'Indian Knowledge System' across the country from October 16-2.



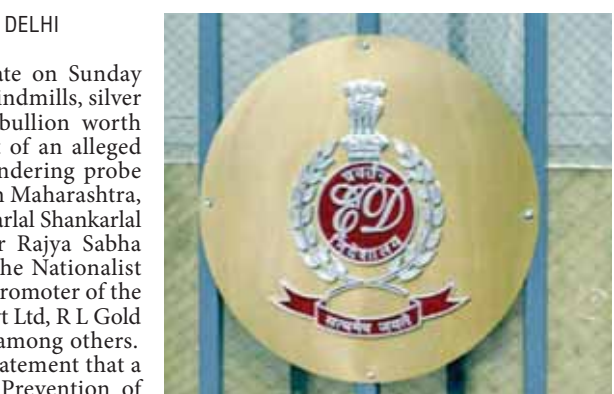
Talking about the objectives of the programme, Prof Geeta Singh, Director, CPDHE, said that under the "National Education Policy" the Indian knowledge System is of immense importance to further the objective of 'Bharat Consciousness'. Governor of Kerala Arif Mohammad Arif

Khan, Chairman UGC Jagadesh Kumar, are to speak at the event. The event will also be attended by Dignitaries like Padmabhushan Prof Kapil Kapoor, Dr Umashankar Pachauri, RSS leader Indresh Kumar, Eminent Thinker, K. Sanjay Murthy, Secretary of Higher Education.

₹315 crore assets attached in Maharashtra bank fraud case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate on Sunday said it has attached land, windmills, silver and diamond jewellery and bullion worth more than ₹315 crore as part of an alleged bank fraud linked money laundering probe against a former NCP MP from Maharashtra, his family and businesses.



the State Bank of India. "The promoters submitted 'fake' financials to avail such loans, the ED alleged. "The promoters also engaged in round tripping of transactions to inflate the financials and booking bogus sale purchase transactions in books of accounts of the accused companies to siphon off the loan proceeds for investments in real estate properties, in collusion with the auditors of the companies," it said.

In anticipation of future conflicts being centered on cyber warfare, the Centre has called upon the State Governments to establish a specialised and elite workforce known as "Cyber Commandos" to counteract the threat of cyber attacks. The manpower will be drawn from the police forces of States and Union Territories as well as from Central police organisations just like the elite NSG or SPG commandos are drawn.

Cyber commandos to battle online threats

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA NEW DELHI

In anticipation of future conflicts being centered on cyber warfare, the Centre has called upon the State Governments to establish a specialised and elite workforce known as "Cyber Commandos" to counteract the threat of cyber attacks. The manpower will be drawn from the police forces of States and Union Territories as well as from Central police organisations just like the elite NSG or SPG commandos are drawn.



deal with and counter cyber threats with larger responsibility for the nation's cyber infrastructure. The MHA letter has specified that the specialised new wing will counter threats to cyber security, defend the information technology network and conduct investigation in the cyber space.

Government institutions in India faced 82 cases of cyber attack, eight times more than in 2021. The new cyber unit in districts will keep eye on the activities of hackers from hostile countries and monitor ransomware threats too, said the officials, adding that the unit will have legal and administrative support.

SC to hear Congress leader Khera plea against HC order

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Monday a plea of Congress leader Pawan Khera challenging Allahabad High Court's refusal to quash criminal proceedings against him for allegedly making objectionable remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi.



On March 20, the top court clubbed three FIRs lodged against Khera in Assam and Uttar Pradesh for allegedly making objectionable remarks against Prime Minister Modi and transferred the matter to the Hazratganj police station in Lucknow while extending his interim bail.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Bombing positivity

The ongoing war in West Asia threatens Israel-Saudi peace deal and delays IMEEC

West Asia's delicate geopolitical balance has once again been disturbed by the ongoing war, casting a long shadow over the prospects of a historic Israel-Saudi Arabia peace deal and causing an indeterminate delay in the ambitious India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEEC) project. The recent unprovoked Hamas attacks and the swift Israeli retaliation threaten to upend long-anticipated diplomatic breakthroughs and economic connectivity. For some time, whispers of a secret thaw in relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia were circulating. The prospects of a formal peace accord between the regional power-houses had garnered international attention and hope for a more stable Middle East. Both nations have shared interests in countering Iran's influence in the region, and a peace deal could have had far-reaching consequences for regional politics, security and economy. But the new situation pushes it back by almost a decade, obliterating the good work done by diplomats on both sides. The war has shifted priorities as both Israel and Saudi Arabia have had to redirect their focus toward addressing the pressing security challenges. Diplomatic efforts, which had been cautiously progressing, have been relegated to the background.



Similarly, yet another fallout of the war in West Asia will be on the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEEC), a project that is crucial for India's economy and security. The Corridor is an ambitious infrastructure project aimed at enhancing economic connectivity among India, West Asia and Europe as an answer to China's 'Belt and Road Initiative'. The IMEEC could counter BRI's imperial designs effectively by providing an alternative route to the landlocked countries of Central Asia. It envisions the development of transportation networks, trade routes and energy pipelines to facilitate the movement of goods, energy resources and people across the region. But since it passes through West Asia, it has to now be delayed for safety reasons. The war's impact on IMEEC is two-fold. First, it has created logistical challenges in the region, making it difficult to continue infrastructure development. The war has disrupted traditional trade routes and the instability has hindered investment and planning for large-scale infrastructure projects, including those critical to IMEEC's success. Two, the war has introduced uncertainty into regional politics. With a potential shift in alliances and priorities among West Asian nations, India's calculations and investments need to be reworked. Amid these challenges, it is essential for all stakeholders to pursue a path toward de-escalation and resolution of the ongoing war which is affecting global economy, safety and security. But the maximum price would be extracted from the developing countries, who can ill afford it.

Europe as an answer to China's 'Belt and Road Initiative'. The IMEEC could counter BRI's imperial designs effectively by providing an alternative route to the landlocked countries of Central Asia. It envisions the development of transportation networks, trade routes and energy pipelines to facilitate the movement of goods, energy resources and people across the region. But since it passes through West Asia, it has to now be delayed for safety reasons. The war's impact on IMEEC is two-fold. First, it has created logistical challenges in the region, making it difficult to continue infrastructure development. The war has disrupted traditional trade routes and the instability has hindered investment and planning for large-scale infrastructure projects, including those critical to IMEEC's success. Two, the war has introduced uncertainty into regional politics. With a potential shift in alliances and priorities among West Asian nations, India's calculations and investments need to be reworked. Amid these challenges, it is essential for all stakeholders to pursue a path toward de-escalation and resolution of the ongoing war which is affecting global economy, safety and security. But the maximum price would be extracted from the developing countries, who can ill afford it.

PICTALK



Helicopters of the Indian Air Force's aerobatic team 'Sarang' during the 91st Air Force Day celebrations in Guwahati

The worsening financial crisis in the UK post-Brexit

While the debate leading up to the 2016 referendum for Brexit was rife with promises of prosperity and opportunities, the reality, has been far from rosy

The decision by the United Kingdom to leave the European Union, commonly known as Brexit, was a historic moment that promised to bring significant changes to the nation's economic landscape. But the reality has been quite different. The latest figures speak for themselves. Monthly real gross domestic product (GDP) is estimated to have grown by 0.2% in August 2023, following a fall of 0.6% in July 2023. Looking at the broader picture, GDP increased by 0.3% in the three months to August 2023, with growth in all sectors. Services output grew by 0.4% in August 2023, after a fall of 0.6% in July 2023, and was the main contributor to the growth in GDP in July. Output in consumer facing services fell by 0.6% in August 2023 following a fall of 0.2% in July. Production output fell by 0.7% in August 2023, following a fall of 1.1% in July 2023. The construction sector declined by 0.5% in August 2023, following a 0.4% decrease in July 2023. Brexit has undeniably contributed to a worsening finan-



cial situation in Great Britain, causing economic disruption, increased costs, and uncertainty for businesses and consumers alike. One of the most immediate consequences of Brexit was economic disruption. The UK was no longer part of the EU's single market and customs union, which meant new trade barriers and customs checks were introduced. This change led to increased paperwork, delays at ports, and disruptions in the supply chain. The sudden implementation of customs checks and additional regulations had a profound impact on British businesses, especially those that relied heavily on seamless trade with the EU. Many companies found themselves grappling with new red tape, extra costs, and the need to adapt to a new regulatory environment. This disruption has been particularly challenging for industries such as manufacturing, agri-

culture, and fishing, which had deep ties to the EU market. Another significant issue stemming from Brexit is the rising costs. A weaker British pound, influenced by uncertainty and the financial consequences of Brexit, made imports more expensive. This, in turn, has led to inflationary pressures on consumer goods. For example, the price of many food items, especially fresh produce and meat, has seen an increase due to new customs checks and tariffs. Likewise, some businesses have had to deal with escalating costs related to customs duties and increased shipping charges. The financial burden of these rising costs has been felt by both consumers and businesses, putting pressure on household budgets and eroding profit margins for companies. Brexit brought about an era of uncertainty that still lingers today. Businesses were left questioning the future trading relationship between the UK and the EU, which led to hesitancy in investment decisions. The financial sector, which was once a dominant contributor to the UK's econ-

omy, was also hit hard. Major banks and financial institutions began relocating some of their operations to EU member states to maintain access to the single market, leading to a loss of jobs and economic activity in the UK. Another concern that has emerged post-Brexit is the loss of talent. The free movement of labour between the UK and the EU has come to an end. As a result, many industries, including healthcare, education, and technology, are grappling with labor shortages. The country's previously vibrant arts and culture sector is also facing challenges in attracting international talent due to visa restrictions and immigration changes. While Brexit supporters argued that leaving the EU would provide the UK with more economic independence and control, the reality has been a different story. The challenges remain, and it is essential for policymakers to find innovative solutions to mitigate the adverse effects of Brexit.

(The writer is a veteran journalist based in London; views are personal)



SUBHASH CHOPRA

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(The writer is a veteran journalist based in London; views are personal)

West Asia erupts in flames again

Israel's all-out attack on Gaza, ostensibly to avenge Hamas' attacks, not only exacerbates the already volatile situation but will also have enormous human cost



WAIEL AWWAD

The world stands as a witness to the horrendous unfolding assault on Gaza, by Israel, the fifth strongest army in the world, unleashing all its might against the Palestinians with what turned out to be a collective punishment to the inhabitant Palestinians of the Gaza Strip, because of the surprise attack conducted by the militant group on Israel's military posts and settlements surrounding the besieged Gaza Strip since 2006. That attack took the intelligence apparatus of Israel by surprise and left scores of Israeli soldiers and settlers dead, injured, prisoners, and humiliated. This spread a wave of anger among the people of Israel in particular, and the western world in general, with most of the western Capitals condemning what had been done and giving the green signal to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to deliver an all-out assault on the Palestinians, aiming to end resistance in Gaza once and for all and erasing any Palestinian resistance to the establishment of a Jewish State in the heart of Palestine.

The Arab world extends from Morocco to Qatar. Due to its strategic location and rich natural resources, more than a century ago, the Arab world was conquered by western powers. The West decided that the Arabs should never unite this region. Instead, it was decided to create a Jewish State in the heart of Palestine to ensure that Israel would always be superior: militarily, politically, and economically.

The establishment of Israel was carried out in accordance with United Nations Resolution No 181 in 1947, which divided Palestine into three countries: "A Jewish State, an Arab State, an international governing region that includes Jerusalem and Bethlehem." The latest conflict will change the paradigm of the war between Israel and the Arab world. It may be seen as a war between Israel and the Hamas, but the end objectives are beyond what the headlines may teach us. It was 30 years ago that Israel signed the Oslo Agreement with the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), in which it



was agreed to an interim period of five years for the formation of a Palestinian State. This never happened due to the denial of Palestine being a legitimate State by successive Israeli Governments under the pretext that the Palestinians did not want peace with Israel; thus they isolated the Palestinian authorities and created the organisation as an alternative to PLO, which led to infighting. They later took control of the Gaza Strip and the former West Bank. Over the years, the Hamas grew in strength and became a leading militant force fighting for the cause of Palestinians and calling for the liberation of the whole of Palestine, denying any existence of Israel.

Israel's policy of divide and conquer led to continued confiscation of the lands of the Palestinian people. More than 1 million Palestinians went to jails after frequent raids, suppression and denial of equal rights as per the 1948 Israel-Arab accord. Repeated attacks on Gaza were carried out by Israeli occupation forces. The Hamas was preparing for revenge against Israel and that is what led to the October 7 attack. Israel won not only military wars against the Arabs and the Palestinians but also the global media war and deceived global public opinion for the last 75 years about its



MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE ISRAELI ATTACK ON GAZA:

- TO END THE RESISTANCE FORCES
- TO ERADICATE THE IDEA OF A 2-STATE SOLUTION.
- ETHNIC CLEANSING OF PALESTINIANS
- TAKING FULL CONTROL OF THE WEST BANK AND AL-AQSA MOSQUE.
- CONFISCATING PROPERTIES

own policy against the Palestinians. The attack's fallout on the ground will be devastating for the Palestinians in Gaza and the Palestinians living under occupation in West Bank and East Jerusalem. They will be subjected to more atrocities, attacks and revenge by the Israeli occupation forces and settlers. For Israel, there will be no question of the State's solution even in the remaining 7% area under Palestinian control. Cutting water, power and food supplies to more than 2.3 million people living in the largest open prison in the world would be a crime against humanity.

Egypt, on its part, sealed its border with the Gaza Strip, and it will not open a humanitarian corridor for the movement of Palestinians into Egypt to prevent a second catastrophe ('Nakba') against the Palestinians after 1948's first 'Nakba.' And if the ultra-nationalist parties go ahead with their plan of destroying the Al-Aqsa mosque to build Solomon temple at the same spot, it will lead to an all-out war against Israel. Israel declared this war on Gaza to dehumanise the Palestinians. It is a one-sided war as there are no army, navy or air forces in Gaza. The Defence Minister of Israel called them "human animals", a term used by the Nazis against Jews, slaves and

peoples of colour. The western world is encouraging Netanyahu to flatten the Gaza Strip along with its people. The number of deaths and injuries in Gaza is staggering and the number grows exponentially every day, mostly children and women with no hospital or medical aid available. They are simply seen as collateral damage because of the unabated bombardments. According to the International Criminal Court (ICC), Israel has committed a crime against humanity. This savage attack and revenge may end, but will the Israelis accept a Palestinian State?

These brutal attacks will never bring peace to the region, nor save Israel from future revolts by the Palestinians who oppose the occupation and apartheid policy. The only way forward is to stop sending warships to the region and let the world community implement UN Security Council resolutions to achieve comprehensive peace in West Asia and end the perpetual bloodshed; otherwise, the region will have more fronts and an all-out war between Israel and the Arab world.

(The writer is a South Asia-based senior foreign journalist and an expert on West Asia; views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

STEP OUT OF COMFORT ZONE

Sir—The Challenges are an inherent part of our journey, and if we wish to accomplish something colossal, we must step out of our comfort zone and confront these impediments. They arise when we start thinking big and act on a grand scale to achieve magnificent things. Hardships motivate us and also illuminate the path to the greatest heights in our lives. As the saying goes, "Hard work is the key to success."

If you remain confined to your complacency, you will miss significant opportunities in your life. Fill your mind with grand dreams, leaving no space for petty pursuits. Not everyone will support you on your path to greatness, but once you are determined and take substantial steps toward your goals, no one will be able to stop you. Distance yourself from those who attempt to belittle your ambitions. Small-minded individuals often engage in this, but truly great people will inspire you to believe that you, too, can achieve greatness. The greater the obstacle you accept in your life, the more glory you find in overcoming it.

Apurva Gargl Ujjain

UNHOLY WAR IN WEST ASIA

Sir—This The Israeli military's order for one million Palestinian people to relocate from North Gaza to South Gaza within twenty hours is a heartbreaking display of inhumanity. For half of the population in such a small area to be forced to move helter-skelter like desperate immigrants is a stain on our shared idea of civility. While the attack by Hamas on Israel is deplorable, Israel's retaliatory actions in Gaza are equally distressing. One act of terrorism cannot justify causing suffering to thousands of innocent civilians. The tragic truth is that this is not a clash between titans but a conflict between victims, if not slaves, to historical circumstances and the maneuvers of world powers. Both sides live in constant insecurity about their survival, but Palestine deserves sympathy for its long-

The UN must intervene in West Asia



The United Nations is an organisation that has largely remained unnoticed as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict rages on. It should have already taken steps to broker

peace in the area. Its formation was primarily intended to prevent wars, protect human rights, and promote stability and peace in the world. Unfortunately, it has fallen short of achieving these objectives and instead has become a battleground for capitalist and communist powers, led by the US and the USSR. Dag Hammarskjöld's iconic words, spoken over sixty-five years ago, still resonate today: "The UN was not created to take mankind to paradise, but rather to save humanity from hell." Regrettably, these words have done little to end conflicts like the Russia-Ukraine war and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The world cannot afford a war that has the potential to escalate into a mini-world war.

The UN should not serve as a tool for the powerful but rather as a beacon of hope for peace and justice. Its mission should extend beyond humanitarian aid through agencies like UNICEF and the Red Cross.

KV. Chandra Mouli | Mysuru

ing for lost sovereignty. India has responded to the issue maturely, condemning the Hamas attack while also expressing support for the Palestinian cause and standing against terrorism. World leaders must recognize that injustice in one place threatens the cause of justice everywhere. Israel and Palestine must find a lasting solution to their shared woes, with a win-win mentality as the ultimate goal.

Dr DVG Sankara Rao | Vizianagaram

SHRIDANANDA MURTHY IS NO MORE

Sir—The passing of veteran journalist K. S. Shridananda Murthy, affectionately known as Sachi among friends and in the media, is a profoundly saddening loss for Indian journalism. He was an outstanding journalist, a highly respected figure in mainstream Indian journalism, and an encyclopedia of state and national political developments. He played a pivotal role in shaping the

careers of numerous reporters. Murthy seldom made political predictions, but when he did, he consistently proved accurate. He distinguished himself in the realm of media and politics, always upholding the highest professional standards. He was one of the most prominent Kannadiga journalists in mainstream national media, based in New Delhi. K. S. Shridananda Murthy devoted nearly four decades to the Malayala Manorama group, working for their weekly magazine, The Week. With his passing, an era in Indian political journalism comes to an end. The nation is undeniably poorer without legends like Murthy, who will be remembered as a towering figure in the realm of Indian journalism. With his passing, a chapter of Indian journalism's glory has concluded.

Ramesh G jethwani | Bengaluru

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

UPFS ARE NOT WHAT MARKETERS SAY

Most ultra processed foods (UPFs) have salt, sugar and additives



SAKSHI SETHI

Why is it that 1 out of 10 is addicted to ultra-processed foods (UPFs)? Dieticians claim that 100% of what I ate yesterday was processed. What do you think foods such as oatmeal; almond milk; frozen berries; popcorn; foxnuts; pasta with canned tomato sauce; and dark chocolates seem to be? Well, they all seem to be nutrient-dense and healthy foods, but did you know that they are all processed? Unfortunately, the word 'processed' is extremely demonised and often found at the top of the list of foods to avoid but what is often not mentioned is that most of the foods that individuals eat are processed to some extent. It includes canned; frozen; packaged; chopped and roasted. Foods can vary anywhere from minimally processed to ultra-processed and what matters is that the individual gets to know its repercussions before and after its usage. In a recent study conducted, researchers have found that almost 57% of the average UK diet is made up of UPF and among children and poorer people, it can be as high as 80%. UPFs have gone through multiple stages of processing and contain many added ingredients that one would not find or be able to recreate in their kitchen. This family of foods includes artificial colours, flavours, and preservatives that promote shelf stability, reserve texture and increase palatability. UPFs have even become significant contributors to environmental, socioeconomic and nutritional issues in many countries across the world. These foods are becoming increasingly popular in developing countries within Latin America and South Asia where high quantities of food can be bought for a low cost. Not all but some of these products even tend to be low in fibre and nutrients. Sugar-sweetened beverages such as soda, fruit drinks, pre-sweetened tea and coffee mix, energy drinks, frozen meals and desserts, instant and canned soups, granola, and protein bars have the presence of artificial fragrances and chemicals; artificial colourings, vegetable oils; artificial sweeteners; and many more that are highly responsible for hurting one's gut. UPFs are marketed as cheap and ready to eat. Also, their delicious tastes are recognized as a contributor to diseases such as obesity, heart disease and type 2 diabetes.



In some cases, it has even led to an increase in mental problems such as anxiety, depression, and Alzheimer's. In another research, it has also been found that consuming ultra-processed foods can cause age-related cognitive decline, increased risk of cancer, increased risk of developing dementia, and even a shortened life span.

There is no denying the fact that nowadays life has become hectic for everyone and sometimes one needs to rely only on these so-called processed foods. Also, it is not possible to avoid ultra-processed foods, especially when they are cheaper, more convenient, and often tasty. So, one should try to limit these occasional treats rather than making them their regular ones in their diet. Remember bad oils; refined flour or sugar and toxic ingredients are the three foods that will destroy an individual's metabolism whereas foods such as squash; cabbage; spinach; wild salmon; beans; peas; raw nuts; berries; citrus fruits; tropical fruits and many more can be as generous as hormone building foods.

These products are often marketed as a healthy option but have a high content of hidden salt, sugar, and additives. Replacing these foods with a better nutrient composition such as the inclusion of whole meal bread, vegetable-based sauces, eating plenty of and variety of plant foods (such as fruits, and legumes); replacing saturated with unsaturated fats; controlling portion sizes and eating mindfully and when choosing processed foods, making a point to check labels to help identify those that are high in salt, sugar and fats along with the inclusion of some exercises are a few helpful tips that can be kept in mind to keep a healthy mind, body and soul.

(The writer is an educator; views expressed are personal)

Migration transforms lives and communities

While it is true that migration can bring challenges and hardships, it also offers opportunities for growth, prosperity, and cultural enrichment



BISWAJEET BANERJEE



Migration, a term often associated with images of death, poverty, and struggle, has long been entwined with narratives of despair and hardship. Newspapers and magazines frequently feature stories that highlight skewed employment opportunities and mass migrations driven by conflicts, climate change, and economic challenges. Indelible images of vulnerable families, including small children living by the roadside or in ramshackle tents, have become emblematic of this narrative. However, it is essential to recognize that these images represent real human lives, and their experiences must never be dismissed. Equally important is acknowledging that this is not the entire story. The reality of migration and its root causes are far more intricate and diverse. Former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, has consistently emphasized that migration possesses the potential to create bridges between peoples and cultures, enriching lives in both old and new homes. Nevertheless, harmful narratives surrounding migrants and migration have been on the rise in recent times, infiltrating political speeches, media outlets, and social media platforms.

Migration, as a concept, often evokes powerful emotions, often entangled with suspicion of differences and hostility toward those perceived as outside of our closely-knit "we" group. In an era dominated by fake news and deliberate misinformation, migration is particularly susceptible to distortion, with political agendas exploiting the issue on a global scale.

However, it is crucial to recognize that we can aspire to do better. Migration is not inherently a negative phenomenon. Throughout history, it has fostered global trade, shaped nations, fueled human endeavours, and enabled the exchange of skills and cultures across the globe. As world leaders recognized in the inaugural United Nations Global Compact on Migration in December 2018, migration is a source of prosperity, innovation, and sustainable development in our interconnected world. Even on a smaller, more personal scale,



MIGRATION, AS A CONCEPT, OFTEN EVOKES POWERFUL EMOTIONS, OFTEN ENTANGLED WITH SUSPICION OF DIFFERENCES AND HOSTILITY TOWARD THOSE PERCEIVED AS OUTSIDE OF OUR CLOSELY-KNIT "WE" GROUP

(Writer is political editor, The Pioneer, Lucknow, views are personal)

countless stories demonstrate how migration has generated employment opportunities and created thriving communities in unexpected places. Take the inspiring case of Ashok Rai, who migrated from the impoverished state of Uttar Pradesh to Chennai (Madras then) due to diminishing business prospects in Kanpur.

"After my father's death, the responsibility of supporting my family fell on my shoulders when I was just a teenager," Rai recounted. "I began supplying cotton scraps to paper mills, but my business suffered with the introduction of polyester, which could not be used for paper production. So, I decided to migrate to Chennai, where the quality of cotton scraps were cotton based and were of better quality."

Rai vividly remembers the initial struggles. It was the late 1970s and early 1980s, and he could hardly speak English or understand Tamil language. That was the time when anti-Hindi agitation was at its peak in Tamil Nadu and Hindi was the only language which he could speak. Money was scarce, and he and his children lived in humble shanties. The challenges seemed insurmountable, and he often contemplated returning home. However, he persevered.

Eventually, Ashok Rai established the Ashok Rai Paper and Pulp Industries. He not only employed people from his village but also encouraged them to leave behind deprivation. Rai acknowledges that he has brought over 300 people from his village to work in Chennai, some for education. "At present, over 100 people from Uttar Pradesh are working in my factory," he proudly stated. He successfully created a Hindi-speaking community in Chennai that contributed to the development of the Hindi language in that region.

Ashok Rai's story is not unique;

there are thousands of similar success stories resulting from migration that have transformed the lives of not just individuals but entire communities. Amidst the distorted narratives surrounding migration, it is essential to recognize that humanity has always been on the move. Migrations are the threads woven into the fabric of our shared existence, strengthening continents, countries, and communities for millennia. Movement within and across continents has been one of the primary drivers of human history. It has led to cultural exchange, economic prosperity, and the sharing of knowledge and skills. Migration has shaped the world as we know it today, contributing to the diversity and richness of human societies.

In recent years, the world has witnessed a wave of anti-migrant sentiments and policies in various regions. These attitudes stem from misconceptions and unfounded fears about the impact of migration on local economies, cultures, and security. However, research and experience demonstrate that well-managed migration can bring about numerous benefits, both for host countries and for the migrants themselves. One of the key advantages of migration is its role in filling labour gaps and contributing to economic growth. Migrants often take on jobs that local populations are unwilling or unable to perform, helping to sustain essential industries and services. In many cases, they become entrepreneurs, like Ashok Rai, establishing businesses that create employment opportunities for both migrants and locals.

Moreover, migration can lead to cultural enrichment and diversity, fostering creativity and innovation. When people from different backgrounds and experiences come together, they bring unique perspectives and ideas, leading to cultural

exchanges that benefit society as a whole. This diversity can enhance the cultural fabric of host countries and create a more inclusive and vibrant society.

Additionally, migration has a positive impact on remittances, as migrants often send money back to their home states or home countries. These remittances can significantly contribute to the development of the migrants' countries of origin, improving living standards and supporting local economies.

It is essential to dispel the myths surrounding migration and emphasize its positive contributions. Governments, civil society organizations, and the media play a crucial role in shaping public perceptions and policies related to migration. By promoting accurate information and highlighting success stories like Ashok Rai's, we can challenge harmful narratives and foster a more informed and empathetic understanding of migration. Furthermore, comprehensive immigration policies that prioritize human rights, dignity, and integration can lead to more successful outcomes for both migrants and host communities. Such policies should provide pathways for legal migration, protect the rights of migrants, and facilitate their social and economic integration.

In conclusion, migration is a multifaceted phenomenon with the power to transform lives and communities. While it is true that migration can bring challenges and hardships, it also offers opportunities for growth, prosperity, and cultural enrichment. To harness the full potential of migration, we must recognise its positive contributions, challenge harmful narratives, and implement policies that prioritise the well-being of migrants and host communities. By doing so, we can build a more inclusive and prosperous world.

Providing non-financial services to rural communities

SHG federations can be instrumental in providing banking to the 'unbanked' communities in rural areas

SHG federations, as promoted by the Government and non-government organisations, have long been recognisance and livelihood services to their members. In recent times, however, they have also been able to provide critical social services about health, education, and sanitation while also undertaking strong advocacy initiatives to demand better development facilities like roads, electricity, infrastructure, clean water supply etc. in their communities. Additionally, women-led federations are drivers of change for addressing gender and women's empowerment issues. However, while their role in promoting empowerment and livelihoods promotion is well known, not much has been



MADHU SHARAN

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highlighted about the SHG federation's work in providing non-financial and development services in their communities.

In the discourse on SHG federations expanding women's power in terms of the four disaggregated domains of 'power over', 'power to', 'power within', and 'power with', it is the last domain (i.e. power with) emanating from group solidarity and collaborations that is most effective in successful collective actions for achieving development goals.

In this regard, it is important to mention that the concerted efforts of NGOs, towards promoting a range of both financial and non-financial services through their large network of SHG federations termed as cluster level (CLNs)

and block level networks (BLNs) across the country, has been impactful. As of June 2023, the organization is working with a large network of 3.4 lakh SHGs comprising 3.5 million women who are federated in 1,708 CLNs (each representing a minimum of 10 SHGs i.e. 100 members) and 58 BLNs (each representing 10 CLNs i.e. 1,000 members). It is these strong and immersive federations that are agents of change for their SHG women and communities.

In Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, the SHG cluster networks have used their collective strengths to successfully address issues of water logging, improper drainage systems, lack of concrete roads, clean drinking water, construction of toilets, lack of

infrastructure in Government schools and PHCs, by getting the district administration to take cognizance of these issues and deliver results. The 100 'mothers collectives', comprising 1,000 women of children involved in mica mining and other forms of labour were trained on the importance of education, nutrition, and financial literacy and were supported with skill training, bank linkages and market tie-ups to develop sustainable livelihoods. These collectives became catalysts of social change in their communities by networking with village local bodies, child rights protection committees, school management committees and Government agencies to improve school enrolment and continued education in their

communities. These examples demonstrate that far from being restrictive, the SHG model is a flexible and comprehensive tool to steer holistic development services as opposed to only providing financial and livelihood services to SHG women.

To begin with, the SHG federations can work with the existing panchayat-level committees to contribute to the development process of the village to upgrade education, health, sanitation and infrastructure facilities. Taking advantage of their huge numbers and deep penetration in remote areas, the federations can work as agents of change to bridge the demand-supply gap in service delivery by creating demand and improving the supply of development

services and infrastructure facilities in their communities. On the demand side, the federation leaders can generate awareness of rights and entitlements of services among SHG women and communities while parallelly working with supply-side institutions like schools, Government hospitals and Banks to improve service delivery.

Here too, the women leaders can work as 'agents of supply-side institutions and generate awareness among their large masses on the Government's schemes and facilitate access to services to the last mile. The only thing to keep in mind is that in doing so, the SHG federations should work as 'partners' rather than as 'nitpickers.'

Finally, the federations should regularly engage with the block and district level administrations to fill the information gaps regarding needs in the villages as well as progress made. They can thus be seen as 'well-wishers' and change agents, which, in turn, may lead to their greater involvement in the village development process. The benefits of bonds of sisterhood, community engagement, community acceptance, scale, presence in far-flung areas, stakeholder management and alliance-building capacities of the federations need to be well harnessed if they have to go beyond the provision of financial and livelihood services to effect development and transformative changes at the grassroots.

Quarterly earnings, crude prices, to dictate market trends this week: Analysts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The ongoing second quarter earnings, movement of oil benchmark Brent crude and the uncertainty in the Middle East would dictate terms in the domestic markets this week, analysts said. Furthermore, the activities of Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) will also influence trading in the markets. "A slew of earnings reports from heavyweights expected this week will significantly impact market direction. The activities of Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) will be important, given their recent consistent selling streak," Santosh Meena, Head of Research, Swastika Investmart Ltd. Foreign investors have pulled out nearly Rs 9,800 crore from Indian equities this month so far owing to a sustained rise in US bond yields and the uncertain environment resulting from the Israel-Hamas conflict. It was a tumultuous week in the market, marked by significant events and high volatility. Despite this, the market closed on a positive note, largely attributed to strong domestic liquidity. Last week, the BSE benchmark climbed 287.11 points or



0.43 per cent. "The Indian market rebounded from the sluggish start, propelled by positive expectations on Q2 earnings and moderation in global bond yield despite concerns over the Middle East conflict continues to hover. "However, the release of higher-than-anticipated US inflation data and resulting increase

in treasury yields marginally offset the positive trend by the end of the week," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said. On the macroeconomic front, domestic factors such as a significant drop in Consumer Price Index (CPI) data and impressive industrial production helped to sustain the broad optimism, Nair added. According to official data, the country's retail inflation rates moderated to a three-month low of 5 per cent in September while factory output soared to a 14-month high of 10.4 per cent. However, a weak start to the



Rice traders seek flat export duty on parboiled rice

PTI ■ KOLKATA
Rice exporters have requested the Centre for a flat export duty of USD 80 per tonne for parboiled rice instead of the current 20 per cent duty to smoothen trade, a top official of the rice exporters' umbrella body said on Sunday. The Indian Rice Exporters Federation (IREF) has also requested the government to reconsider its export ban on white rice which was imposed in July and reduction in the minimum export price for basmati rice to USD 850 per tonne to prevent negative impacts on both export volumes and farmers. On Friday, the government had extended the 20 per cent duty on parboiled rice exports until March 24. "We request the government to replace the 20 per cent export duty with a fixed USD 80 per tonne export duty. This will eliminate ambiguity and invoicing issues in rice trade," IREF national president Prem Garg told PTI. The federation wants a dialogue with the government to reconsider the ban on white rice, he added. IREF also expects the government to release a notification for basmati rice proposing a minimum export price of USD 850 per tonne in contrast to the current rate of USD 1,200 per tonne. The annual non-basmati rice export value from India exceeds Rs 50,000 crore. These export restrictions have been imposed by the government to ensure adequate stock of rice and to control food inflation. Garg noted that the export restrictions have led to a 30 per cent increase in rice prices in the international market, benefiting competing countries like Pakistan and Thailand. IREF director general Sanjeev Ahuja said the world's largest rice exporter accounts for approximately 46 per cent of total rice exports, amounting to around 22 million tonnes annually. However, only 6.9 million tonnes have been exported so far, he added. Out of the 22 million tonnes, 5 million tonnes are basmati rice, while the rest comprises white and parboiled rice. The exporters' body expects that if the government restrictions continue, export volumes will be impacted this year. Garg emphasized that farmers are under pressure due to reduced demand from exporters. The Bharatiya Kisan Sangh has criticised the timing of the export ban announcement, stating that it sends a negative signal to farmers during the current planting season. IREF, which is just 100 days old and has 4,000 members, said they successfully resolved the issue with the government by clearing 90,000 tonnes of white rice in transit to export destinations after the ban announcement. These shipments were previously stuck at various ports, according to officials.

Yokohama bets on local production for sustainable business

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Japanese tyre maker Yokohama is betting on local production in India for a "sustainable and competitive" business model in the country, according to a top company official. Yokohama Rubber Company, which is present in the country through a wholly-owned subsidiary, is coming up with a new plant in Visakhapatnam in addition to its existing plant in Bahadurgarh, Haryana. In an interaction with PTI, Yokohama India Managing Director and CEO Harinder Singh said the company can manufacture tyres of up to 18 inches in diameter within the country and has plans to extend this capability to accommodate tyre sizes of up to 22 inches, to cater to the demand for bigger-sized tyres. "While we still import certain high-end tyres, like run-flat tyres commonly found on luxury vehicles from our overseas manufacturing bases, our commitment to localising production in India is unwavering," he added. Singh said the company supports the government's decision to ban tyre imports into the country. "Yokohama India supports this decision and recognises the importance of investing in local production. Our investment in the Vizag plant reflects our commitment to the Make in India initiative and positions the company to capture a larger share of the premium SUV market by offering locally manufactured, high-end tyres," he said. Local production also helps in reducing costs, lead times, and dependency on imports, contributing to a more sustainable and competitive business model, he added. The move towards faster and more economic localisation, combined with the capability to manufacture tyres up to 22 inches, positions the company to better serve the growing market demand for SUVs, MPVs, and premium vehicles in the country, Singh said. In 2020, the government imposed curbs on imports of certain new pneumatic tyres used in motor cars, buses, lorries and motorcycles in a move to promote domestic manufacturing. Tyre companies can now import only a small number of tyres into the country under a limited import licence, which was not the case before 2020.

IndianOil to invest ₹1,660 crore in joint venture with NPTC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Indian Oil Corporation, the nation's biggest oil firm, will invest Rs 1,660.15 crore as equity in a newly set up joint venture with energy major NTPC Ltd for setting up renewable energy power plants. In June, IOC and NTPC had formed a 50:50 joint venture company, IndianOil NTPC Green Energy Pvt Ltd, to set up renewable energy projects to meet round-the-clock power requirements of refineries of the oil company. In a stock exchanging filing, IOC said its Board in a meeting on October 13, "has accorded approval to the investment plan of the joint venture company for setting up of renewable energy power plants and approved the equity contribution of up to Rs 1,660.15 crore towards Indian Oil's share of 50 per cent in the equity share capital of the JVC." On June 2, IOC incorporated the joint venture company (JVC) with NTPC Green Energy Limited, (a wholly-owned subsidiary of NTPC Limited). "IndianOil NTPC Green Energy Private Limited will develop renewable energy-based power projects (viz. Solar PV, wind, any other renewable energy, energy storage or any combination of the same), to meet the round-the-clock (RTC) power requirements of new projects of Indian Oil Refineries," the firm had said at that time. The aim is to generate a mini-

'Prestige Group aims 55 per cent annual growth in sales bookings this fiscal'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Prestige Estates Projects Ltd expects its sale bookings to rise 55 per cent this fiscal to touch an all-time high of Rs 20,000 crore driven by strong demand for residential properties. Its sale bookings stood at Rs 12,931 crore in 2022-23. Buoyed by the company's performance in the first two quarters of 2023-24, Prestige Group Chairman and Managing Director Irfan Razack said guidance has been revised for this fiscal year to over Rs 20,000 crore from Rs 16,000 crore earlier. "We have done pre-sales of around Rs 11,000 crore in the first two quarters. We had guided around Rs 16,000 crore (for the entire 2023-24). But having done Rs 11,000 crore of sales in the first six months, the team is very confident. Once all the approvals come and launches happen, we should cross Rs 20,000 crore," Razack said on the sidelines of CREDAI-NAT-CON conference in Egypt recently. He sounded very bullish on demand of residential properties across all price brackets. "There is a huge demand for housing. We have a strong brand to capitalize it. The sector is going through consolidation. So, there is immense growth potential," Razack said. He said the company has an aggressive launch pipeline for the second half of this fiscal across all major cities including Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai and Mumbai. It also plans to launch luxury housing projects in Goa and Delhi. Razack exuded confidence that new launches and sustenance sales in ongoing projects would help the company in achieving the revised sales guidance of Rs 20,000 crore. Earlier this month, Prestige Estates reported more than two-fold jump in sale bookings to Rs 7,092.6 crore in the second quarter of this fiscal year. In terms of volumes, sale bookings rose 50 per cent to 6.84 million square feet during July-September quarter.

New investments worth ₹2,755 crore pledged with Indian Biogas Association

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
New investments totalling Rs 2,755 crore have been pledged with industry body Indian Biogas Association (IBA) during the recently held Renewable Energy India Expo 2023. Talking to PTI, IBA Chairman Gaurav Kedia said "Indian Biogas Association (IBA), an industry association comprising operators, manufacturers, and planners of biogas plants, has received a commitment of investment worth Rs 2,755 crore during the Renewable Energy India Expo 2023." The association has signed joint ventures (JVs), MoUs (memorandum of understanding) and received LoIs (letter of intent) commitments during the recently concluded Renewable Energy India (REI) Expo held at Greater Noida from October 4 to 6. The industry has made this promise, which is expected to be realised in the next three years, Kedia said. Kedia informed that there was a huge interest from companies from various countries like Germany, Sweden and Italy. "We have signed several MoUs amounting to more than Rs 1,000 crore of JVs and could get an interest for an additional 54 LoIs for setting up of com-

Rosmerta lines up ₹200 crore to set up 10 vehicle scrappage units

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Automobile technology and automation firm Rosmerta Technologies plans to invest Rs 200 crore to set up ten vehicle scrappage units over the next three years, according to a top company executive. The company currently operates a single vehicle scrapping facility in Manesar (Haryana) with a capacity of processing 30,000 vehicles annually. After the capacity addition, the company will be able to process up to 3 lakh vehicles annually. In an interaction with PTI, Rosmerta Technologies President Kartik Nagpal said that with the setting up of the scrappage centres, the company will be able to contribute to



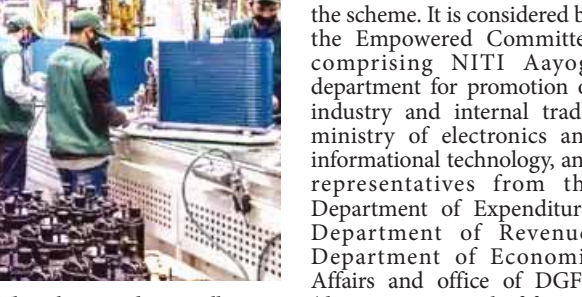
the circular economy by helping recycle three lakh vehicles each year. "With this regard, we plan on investing Rs 200 crore across India to leverage this situation and contribute to the circular economy," he added. The central government believes that the output from scrapped vehicle materials would save about 33 per cent on raw material costs and will bring down reliance on imported metals such as aluminium, copper as well as rubber. India, which is ranked fourth and sixth largest manufacturer of passenger and commercial vehicles respectively, imports metals worth USD 34.7 billion each year. In August 2021, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had launched the national vehicle scrappage policy to help phase out unfit and polluting vehicles and also promote a circular economy. While the government has financially incentivised scrapping old vehicles and replacing them with new ones, over 50 lakh light motor vehicles aged over 50 years (as per industry estimates) continue to ply unchecked.

'See eventual split in platforms for ICE, electric passenger vehicles'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Tata Motors sees an eventual split in the platforms for its conventional engine and electric passenger vehicles in order to make future products unique and remove the handicap of developing EVs on traditional platforms, according to its Global Head of Design, Martin Uhlarik. With electrification and connectivity fast gaining momentum, he also said interiors of cars of the future could become more "like a home" driven by minimalistic approach, as sophisticated customers seek material comfort, simplicity and ease of use. "We see an eventual splitting of ICE (internal combustion engine) and EV, which is simply driven by the platform. If EV has to carry over an ICE architecture, it will always be handicapped in terms of its full potential, in terms of range, in terms of battery layout," Uhlarik told PTI. Converting EV on an ICE product platform, which has provisions such as the traditional transmission tunnel and firewall, has limitations, he added. "So if you want to do a proper EV or do a pure EV platform, at some point you'll have to see the products split, not just visually but eventually you have to actually make it unique," Uhlarik said. He said the split is already happening in the industry for most competitors globally but declined to share the timeline for Tata Motors to follow suit. Tata Motors current EVs such as the Nexon EV, Tiago EV and Tigor EV are based on ICE platforms.

Empowered body in PLI scheme approves ₹1,000 cr disbursement to beneficiaries of electronics sector

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The Empowered committee in PLI (production-linked incentive) scheme has approved Rs 1,000 crore disbursement to beneficiary firms of the electronics sector, a top government official said. The government disbursed Rs 2,900 crore till March 2023, out of claims worth Rs 3,400 crore received under the scheme, which aims at boosting domestic manufacturing, creating jobs and supporting exports. "In the recent meeting of the committee, Rs 1,000 crore disbursements were approved under the PLI scheme for the electronics sector. Actual disbursement to the beneficiary companies would take a few more days," the official said. This would be the first disbursement of this fiscal.



The scheme is doing well in sectors such as electronics, pharma, and medical devices. As many as 32 beneficiaries had been approved under the PLI scheme for large-scale electronics manufacturing, including mobile phones and specified electronic components. The proposal for disbursement of incentives are presented by respective ministries/departments which are implementing the scheme. It is considered by the Empowered Committee comprising NITI Aayog, department for promotion of industry and internal trade, ministry of electronics and informational technology, and representatives from the Department of Expenditure, Department of Revenue, Department of Economic Affairs and office of DGFT (director general of foreign trade). The committee gives its recommendations for disbursement of incentive to the selected beneficiary under the PLI scheme. In sectors where PLI disbursement is low or if firms are not able to meet their performance thresholds, in such cases, respective departments are looking at course corrections in the scheme.

SAIL plans to begin trial production of special rails by month end: Chairman

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Steel maker SAIL plans to start the trial production of head hardened (HH) rails, used in metro rail and freight corridor projects, by month-end, its Chairman Amarendu Prakash said. The steel PSU was earlier looking to start the trial production of HH rails in August but deferred it due to the demand for normal rails like 880 grade from the Indian Railways, Prakash told PTI in an interview. "We have the technology. We had planned for it (HH rail production) but then...They (Railways) requested us to defer the trials and now it is at the end of October," the Chairman said.

HH rails are special rails used in high-speed freight corridors and metro rail projects. Such rails are manufactured using head hardening technology to bear about 50 per cent higher pressure compared to normal rails. SAIL has set up facilities for the production of HH rails at the new Universal Rail Mill (URM) at its Bhilai Steel Plant (BSP) in Chhattisgarh, and the cold trials for the same have already been completed. The PSU will be the second player in India to start the production of HH rails. Jindal Steel and Power Ltd (JSPL) produces HH rails at its plant located in Raigarh, Chhattisgarh. SAIL also produces forged wheels for the Railways at

Durgapur Steel Plant (DSP) in West Bengal, Prakash said. The rails and wheels are supplied to Indian Railways, he added. On the sourcing of coking coal, Prakash said "We source coking coal from various sources Australia, the US, Russia and Indonesia. We also have a JV company in Mozambique." SAIL sourced around eight cok-

ing coal shipments of 75,000 tonnes each from Russia during the April-September period of FY24. To increase coking coal supplies, there are plans to double the production capacity of Mozambique-based ICVL from 2 MTPA to 4 MTPA, he said, adding a detailed project report is being prepared in this regard. Mozambique-based ICVL is a special-purpose vehicle of SAIL, RINL, NMDC, CIL and NTPC for acquiring coal mines and assets overseas. On the rising prices of coking coal, the chairman said it will directly affect the input cost and build pressure on profit margins. From USD 230 a tonne in June-July 2023, the coking coal prices climbed to trade at USD 341 per tonne CFR (cost and freight) India in September end. On the EU's sanction of carbon border adjustment tax (CBAM) on exports, the official said, "It will add to the cost of supplies to Europe for Indian exporters. The exact impact and the quantum of impact is still to be assessed as Europe is still working on this."

SHUBHANKAR SHARMA FALTERS IN THIRD ROUND, SLIPS TO TIED-14

PTI ■ MADRID

Indian golfer Shubhankar Sharma faltered as he carded an underwhelming 1-over 72 and dropped from tied-second to tied-14th at the Acciona Open de Espana on Sunday. After two rounds of 66, Sharma struggled on the third day as he had three bogeys and a double bogey against four birdies. Sharma is now 9-under for three days and he needs some good results to ensure a berth in the season-ending DP World Tour Championships. Earlier, Manu Gandas missed the cut. Matthieu Pavon took a two-shot lead into the final round as he maintained his fantastic form with a 66 at the Club de Campo Villa de Madrid. The 30-year-old Frenchman has led the way since carding an opening 63 in the Spanish capital and produced a confident display of front-running to get to 16 under after 54 holes.



Pavon is still looking for a maiden win on the World Tour but has two victories on the Alps Tour and has finished second three times on each of the European Challenge and World Tours. England's Nathan Kimsey was his closest challenger after a 65, two clear of local favourite Alfredo Garcia-Heredia, French duo Romain Langasque and Mike Lorenzo-Vera and South African Zander Lombard. Kimsey has won both the Qualifying School and the Road To Mallorca but has yet to taste victory on the World Tour after losing out to Vincent Norrman in a play-off at Barbasol Championship. Dane Marcus Helligkilde, Spaniard Gonzalo Fernandez-Castano, Frenchman Julien Guerrier and England's Eddie Pepperell were then at 11 under, one clear of Dan Bradbury who made his third hole-in-one of the season with a 226-yard four iron at the third.

Andy Bean, 11-time PGA Tour winner, dies from complications of lung surgery

PTI ■ NEW YORK

Andy Bean, an 11-time PGA Tour winner and three times a runner-up in the majors, has died after complications from a double lung replacement surgery, the PGA Tour said. He was 70. Bean had lung replacement surgery in September. His friend, Alan Pope, posted on Facebook at the time that Bean's lungs had been damaged from COVID-19. Bean was a giant of a man on the PGA Tour at 6-foot-4, and he once earned the reputation for wrestling an alligator at Q-school, a story he explained a few years later was little more than swatting it on the tail while playing alongside a player who had never seen a gator. "I walked over to the gator, who was more scared of me than I was of him. I grabbed his tail, and he jumped back into the pond. That's all there was to it, but the story got out that I'd been wrestling this gator and threw him into the pond," Bean said at the Doral-Eastern Open in 1977. His best year was 1978, when he won three times, including back-to-back weeks at Quail Hollow



for the Kemper Open and the Danny Thomas Memphis Classic in a playoff over Lee Trevino. He finished third on the money list that year. His 11 victories - he also won twice on the Japan Golf Tour - covered 1977 to 1986. Bean also played on the Ryder Cup teams in 1979 and 1987. He made a late charge at Royal Birkdale in the 1983 British Open, finishing one shot behind Tom Watson. He was also runner-up by one shot to Payne Stewart in the 1989 PGA Championship.

Argentina reaches Rugby World Cup semifinals

PTI ■ MARSEILLE

Argentina's rugby team doesn't have a totemic figure like Lionel Messi to bind it like the national soccer team did when it was winning the soccer World Cup less than a year ago. What the rugby Pumas do have is a collective doggedness that lies dormant too often but erupts when it is least expected. That Pumas passion propelled them into the Rugby World Cup semifinals on Saturday when they were 12 minutes away from losing to Wales. They came from behind twice to win 29-17 in a raucous Stade Velodrome, where the Pumas' campaign started with a baffling loss to 14-man England. "We know it is not going to be perfect; life is not perfect," Pumas captain Julian Montoya said. "It's how you embrace the moment and fight for each other. "Two more weeks with this team (in the knockout stage). I don't want this to end ever. We need to be better, to be clinical in a lot of things. I know I can be more demanding but I am very proud of this team." They are going to Paris for the first time in the tournament for their first semifinal since 2015 next Friday against three-time champion New Zealand, which



knocked out top-ranked Ireland 28-24 later Saturday. Wales built its campaign around defense and being conditioned to play for 80 minutes. But just when it needed to hold on for a little longer, it conceded two game-ending tries to Pumas replacements Joel Sclavi and Nicolas Sanchez. In between those scores, Wales could have won the match in the 74th minute when zippy wing Louis Rees-Zammit was diving into the left corner but Matias Moroni, who was substituted into the game after half an hour, pulled off a quarterfinal-saving tackle. "The (fight) comes from our personality and the way that we train," Montoya said. "Nothing has been too easy for us for the last couple of years. We trust each other. We are a very tight group. I know you just see the

15 on the pitch or the 23, but there is a group of people behind us who are unbelievable. They work day and night. We are the fortunate guys who wear the jersey." Argentina and Wales came to France with few expectations and fought their way out of mediocre pools to meet in the Rugby World Cup knockout stage for the first time. Their quarterfinal didn't come alive until the end of the first half. Wales was 10-0 up after 21 minutes thanks to a try by retiring flyhalf Dan Biggar, who converted and added a penalty. Also by then, referee Jaco Peyper hurt his Achilles and was replaced by Karl Dickson. Biggar hooked his next penalty attempt and the Pumas were given more hope by Wales losing three consecutive lineouts, two of them overthrows.

The Pumas turned them into pressure and Wales succumbed. A couple of silky breaks by fly-half Santiago Carreras and a silly off-the-ball shoulder tackle by Wales' Josh Adams gave Pumas sharpshooter Emiliano Boffelli two easy penalties to slot at the end of the half. The Pumas trailed only 10-6 at the interval, during which Wales hooker Ryan Elias was dropped. "We spoke about how important discipline was and not giving them anything," Wales coach Warren Gatland said. "That allowed them to stay in the game." Argentina's surge ahead to 12-10 came from Boffelli's third and fourth penalties, the last of which was a stunner from 55 meters out. They led for the first time in the 49th. Wales retook the lead in the 57th out of nothing when replacement scrumhalf Tomos Williams dummied off an unguarded ruck and flew away. Biggar's extras made it 17-12. "The physicality of Argentina's forwards led by Facundo Isa forced Wales to replace backs Liam Williams and Nick Tompkins and they held out two lineout mauls but not a third from which new prop Sclavi scored. Boffelli's conversion put them in front 19-17 with 11 minutes to go.

IOC members urge Bach to seek third term as president

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Members of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) on Sunday urged the incumbent president Thomas Bach to stay on in his role after he completes his term in 2025. Bach, the former Olympian from Germany, is the ninth president of the IOC. He was elected to an eight-year term at the 125th IOC Session in Buenos Aires in 2013. In March 2021, Bach was re-elected IOC president for four years. The Olympic Charter restricts a president's term to 12 years, a norm that was put in place by

Jacques Rogge to avoid lengthy tenures. Bach had succeeded Rogge, who had served as the IOC chief from 2001 to 2013. On the inaugural day of the IOC's 141st Session here, most of its 99 members were of the opinion that Bach should stay on for a third term after his tenure ends in 2025, though it will require changes to be made to the Olympic Charter. IOC member Luis Mejia Oviedo said, "You have shown us the best way to go forward. We have to look after this (Olympic) movement. That is why I would like to put forward this approach."

F1 governing body FIA to review Hamilton's actions

PTI ■ LONDON

Formula One's governing body is reviewing a penalty given to seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton for crossing the track after climbing out of his car following a first-lap collision at last Sunday's Qatar Grand Prix. Hamilton tangled with his Mercedes teammate George Russell after making a flying start and went spinning off into the gravel trap when trying to overtake him. He jumped straight out of the cockpit and

crossed the circuit, which is a breach of regulations. Following a stewards' investigation, he was issued his first reprimand of the season and fined 50,000 euros (USD 52,560), with 25,000 euros (USD 26,280) suspended pending any further breach this season. But, given his role model status within the series, and the danger represented, governing body FIA feels this may not have been enough. Hamilton reached the inside edge of the Losail track shortly before Russell arrived at full speed having exited the pit

lane. "The FIA notes that Lewis was apologetic during the subsequent stewards hearing into the incident and acknowledged that the crossing was a serious safety breach," the FIA said in a statement Sunday. "However, in view of his role model status, the FIA is concerned about the impression his actions may have created on younger drivers." Hamilton is F1's record holder with 103 wins but has not won a race since the penultimate race of the 2021 season in Saudi Arabia. He is third in the F1

standings behind Red Bull drivers Sergio Perez and Max Verstappen, who clinched his third straight F1 title in Qatar. Hamilton's incident was the second of the race. Aston Martin driver Lance Stroll apologized to the FIA and received a written warning Friday for his conduct at the race, where he shoved a member of his team in frustration after an early exit in qualifying. Heat issues marred the race in Qatar with drivers feeling sick due to the extreme humidity.

At brim of saying goodbye: Javelin thrower Annu Rani

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian javelin thrower Annu Rani was so upset with a string of poor performances this year that she had decided to say goodbye to the sport just before the Asian Games. The 31-year-old from Uttar Pradesh produced a season-best effort of 62.92m to become the first Indian woman to win an Asian Games gold in javelin throw. "I have struggled a lot this year. I went abroad to practice. I went to learn from a foreign coach but my performance dropped. The whole year had gone waste. There was poor

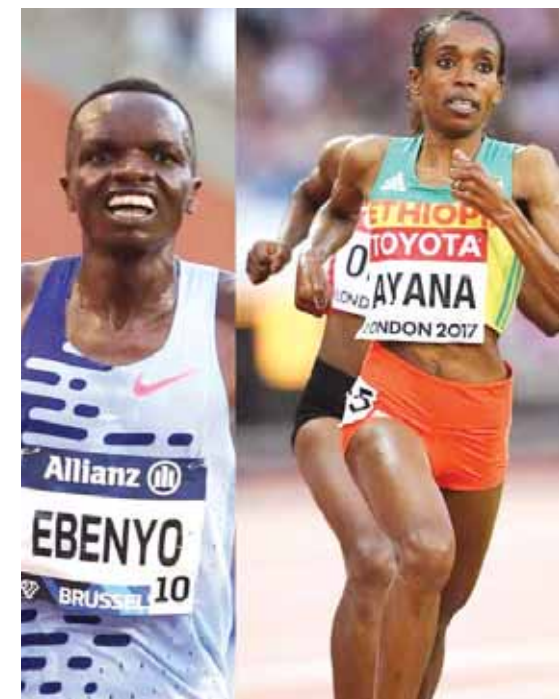
performance in every competition one after the other," Annu told PTI Bhasha in an interview. "I had decided before the Asian Games that I would leave sports. Despite so much effort, I was not able to win anything. The government and SAI had invested so much money in me but I was not able to perform. After the World Championships in Budapest, I had thought of quitting the sport." Annu stood 11th with a best throw of 57.05 meter and could not qualify for the finals in World Championship in Budapest in August. She finished 7th at the Diamond League in Brussels in September with a throw of 57.74m meters. She could not touch the 60 meter mark in the entire season. However, she won the gold medal at the Asian Games with a throw of 69.92 metres. Regarding changing her decision of retiring from sports, Annu said, "It came to my mind that I have come here after facing so many struggles, so I will take one last chance in the Asian Games. I worked hard and was confident that I would play well and win a medal. "The competition was tough



with World Championship medalists and Olympic medalists. I had come down thinking that the worst that had to happen has already happened and now what will get worse and I only wanted gold, not silver or bronze." Annu said that her childhood struggles inspired her to fight and she wanted to be an inspiration for girls in similar situations. "I inspired myself by remembering the circumstances of my family and where I started from. I also thought that I am not the only one struggling. People have to struggle in every field.

"I come from a society where people used to stop me even if I wore a lower t-shirt. The family had no knowledge of sports. Was scolded at home for wearing lower t-shirt for the first time. I didn't even have shoes and had to borrow them from a friend when I went to compete. Remembering the journey, the struggle that I faced to reach here, I thought that I will not accept defeat." Annu said now she is focusing on the Olympics. "Now the aim is to perform well in the Paris Olympics. I want to tell the players coming from the same background as me that they should not give up, they

should fight for themselves and girls can do anything. "Now we are getting support from government, SAI and federation in everything. If collaboration like TOPS and Khelo India continues, there will be a lot of medals in the next Olympics," she said. In the men's javelin throw event in the Asian Games, Olympic and world champion Neeraj Chopra won the gold medal and Kishore Jena claimed the silver. Annu believes that the future of javelin throw in India is very bright and this performance will inspire the youth to take up the sport.



Ebenyo, Ayana emerge winners at Delhi Half Marathon

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Kenya's Daniel Ebenyo and Ethiopian Almaz Ayana lived up to the expectations as they won the men's and women's elite races respectively at the Delhi Half Marathon here on Sunday. The 28-year-old Ebenyo, who won a silver medal in the 10000m race at the 2023 World Championships in Budapest, finished the men's race in 59 minutes and 27 seconds, ahead of fellow Kenyan Charles Matata (1:00:05) and Ethiopia's Addisu Gobena (1:00:51). Ayana, who won a 10000m gold medal at the 2016 Rio Olympics, topped the women's elite race in one hour, seven minutes and 59 seconds, ahead of Uganda's Stella Chesang (1:08:28) and Kenya's Viola Chepngeno (1:09:09). Abhishek Pal and Kavita Yadav were the fastest in the Indian men's and women's elite categories, clocking 1:04:08 and 1:17:42 respectively. The 31-year-old Ayana, winner of the Delhi Half Marathon six years ago, came close to her 2017 winning time of 1:07:11 in the women's race. Running in company of her country-mates Aberash Minsewo and Dessie Anchnalu as well as Kenya's Viola Chepngeno and Uganda's Stella Chesang, Ayana maintained her 16-minute pace for each of the 5km intervals. But she slowed down in the final phase of the race and ran alone as her nearest challenger Chesang was way behind her. Ayana went on to claim the top spot in 67:58 seconds. Chesang finished 28 seconds later for the second place while Chepngeno from Kenya completed the podium in 69:09. For Chesang, it was one place up from her last year's position in Delhi. "It was not an easy race and the weather was a bit hot as well. However, it was great to run at the Vedanta Delhi Half Marathon. I would like to thank the organisers for inviting me to the event and this race has helped me prepare for the events in future," said Ayana. In the men's elite race, a group of eight runners, mostly Kenyans, stayed together until the 13-km

mark when Ebenyo and his compatriot Charles Matata started breaking away from the rest. Matata, the runner-up in this year's Rock-n-Roll Half Marathon in Madrid, was pushing Ebenyo for another five kilometres. However, Ebenyo, the silver medallist in the World Half Marathon earlier this year, increased his pace at the right time to move at least half a minute ahead of Matata. While Ebenyo romped home in 59 minutes 27 seconds, Matata clocked 60:05 for the second spot while Addisu Gobena brought some cheer to the Ethiopian camp, crossing the finish line 46 seconds later for the third place. "It was amazing to run here, but I am disappointed with my timing. I was aiming for the event record but fell short. Hopefully, I will be able to break the event record next year," said Ebenyo. Meanwhile, Abhishek Pal reclaimed the Indian elite men's title after running neck and neck with Hangzhou Asian Games 10,000m silver medallist Kartik Kumar. Pal recorded a timing of 64:07, while Kartik missed the top prize by a fraction of a second and finished with 64:08. Sawan Barwal was third with a timing of 64:17. Pal was the 2018 winner with 64:13 and he bettered his timing in this edition. "Kartik and I have had a lot of close contests and today we had another one. It's great to clinch first place once again. Kartik and I train together and I am really happy about his achievement at the Asian Games. We'll definitely have another photo finish at the Vedanta Delhi Half Marathon next year," Pal said. Kavita Yadav clinched the first position in the Indian elite women's race in her Vedanta Delhi Half Marathon debut with a timing of 77:42, while Rima Patel (77:48) and Poonam Dinkar Sonune (77:49) finished second and third respectively. "The race got very close towards the end and I had to push hard in the last 400m to ensure that I finished first. It was a great experience to run in Delhi and I will certainly come back to defend my title," Kavita said.

