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# INDIA GOES BALLISTIC ON TERROR

## Crackdown on Khalistani terrorists; NIA seizes Pannun's properties

**RAKESH KUMAR SINGH ■ NEW DELHI**

Tightening its noose around Canada-based 'designated individual terrorist' Gurbatwant Singh Pannu, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Saturday confiscated the house and land of the self-styled general counsel of the outlawed Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) outfit in Amritsar and Chandigarh.

This is the first time that the NIA has confiscated the properties of an absconding accused under a relevant section of Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

The action, which comes as a big boost to the country's crackdown on the so-called Khalistani "terror and secessionist network being operated from various countries", including Canada, followed confiscation orders passed by the NIA Special Court, SAS Nagar, Mohali.

Pannu has been on NIA's radar since 2019, when the anti-terror agency had registered its first case against the terrorist, who has been playing a major role in promoting and commissioning terror acts and activities, and spreading fear and terror in Punjab and elsewhere in the country through his threats and intimidation tactics, the agency said.

Non-bailable warrants of

arrest were issued against Pannu by the NIA Special Court on February 3, 2021, and he was declared a "Proclaimed Offender (PO)" on November 29 last year.

NIA investigations have revealed that Pannu's organisation, Sikhs for Justice, was misusing cyberspace to radicalise gullible youth and to instigate them to undertake terrorist crimes and activities.

It further emerged during the NIA investigations that Pannu was the main handler and controller of the SFJ. Sikhs for Justice was declared as an "Unlawful Association" by the Government of India, vide a notification dated July 10, 2019.

"Pannu, who was declared a 'designated individual terrorist' by the Centre through a notification dated July 1, 2020, has been actively exhorting Punjab-based gangsters and youth over the social media to fight for the cause of independent state of Khalistan, challenging the sovereignty, integrity and security of the country," the NIA said in a statement.

Recently, Pannu has been in the news for issuing blatant threats to senior Indian diplomats and government functionaries in public forums. He had also threatened Canadian Hindus a few days back, asking them to leave Canada and claiming that they had adopted a "jingoistic approach" by



House of Gurbatwant Singh Pannu, chief of banned outfit Sikhs for Justice (SFJ), after the National Investigation Agency (NIA) confiscated his immovable properties in Chandigarh on Saturday

siding with India.

The properties confiscated on Saturday include 46 kanal agricultural land situated in Village Khankot, Amritsar, and 1/4th share of House Number 2033, Sector 15/C, Chandigarh.

These properties were earlier attached following orders passed by the government in

two different cases. The properties have now been confiscated on the court's orders under section 33(5) of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), 1967, in the case RC-19/2020/NIA/DLI dated April 5, 2020, registered under sections various sections of the Indian Penal Code and relevant provisions of the Unlawful

Activities (Prevention) Act.

The case was originally registered as FIR number 152 dated October 19, 2018, at Police Station Sultanwind, Amritsar (City) and later transferred to the NIA.

A total of 10 accused, including Pannu, have so far been charge-sheeted in the case.

## Pakistan is haven for terrorists: India at UN

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/ AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/ UNITED NATIONS**

Rejecting Pakistan's caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar ul Haq Kakar's statement on Kashmir, India has termed that country as "home and patron" to the largest number of proscribed terrorist entities and urged Islamabad to take action against perpetrators of the Mumbai terror attacks.

Making this assertion in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) late on Friday, First Secretary in India's Permanent Mission to the UN Petal Gahlot also asked Pakistan to refrain from engaging in "technical sophistry."

She enunciated India's stand in its Right of Reply in the UNGA after Kakar raised the Kashmir issue in his address at the General Debate during the high-level 78th session of UNGA.

"Pakistan has been the home and patron to the largest number of internationally proscribed terrorist entities and

individuals in the world. Instead of engaging in technical sophistry, we call upon Pakistan to take credible and verifiable action against the perpetrators of the Mumbai terror attacks, whose victims await justice even after 15 years," Gahlot said in the scathing response.

She said Pakistan needs to take three-fold action for there to be peace in South Asia. "First, stop cross-border terrorism and shut down its infrastructure of terrorism immediately. Second, vacate Indian territories under its illegal and forcible occupation, and third, stop the grave and persistent human rights violations against the minorities in Pakistan."

In his address earlier, Kakar said Pakistan desired peaceful and productive relations with all its neighbours, including India. "Kashmir is the key to peace between Pakistan and India," he said.

Gahlot reiterated that the Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh are an integral part of India. "Matters

pertaining to the UTs of J&K and Ladakh are purely internal to India. Pakistan has no locus standi to comment on our domestic matters."

The Indian diplomat asserted that as a country with one of the world's worst human rights records, particularly when it comes to minority and women's rights, Pakistan "would do well to put its own house in order before venturing to point a finger at the world's largest democracy."

India stressed that Pakistan has become a "habitual offender" when it comes to misusing the august forum of the United Nations to peddle "baseless and malicious" propaganda against India.

The First Secretary in India's Permanent Mission to the UN said the member states of the United Nations and other multilateral organisations are well aware that Pakistan does so to "deflect the international community's attention away from its own abysmal record on human rights".

## ABVP dominates DUSU polls

**RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI**

The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) won three out of four seats contested in the 2023 Delhi University Students Union (DUSU) elections held on Friday, while a candidate of the Congress-affiliated National Students' Union of India (NSUI) won the race for DUSU vice president post.

ABVP's Tushar Dedha won the post of DUSU president, defeating NSUI's Hitesh Gulia by 3,115 votes. Dedha received 23,460 votes, while Gulia received 20,345. Dedha had previously won the election for college cultural coordinator at Satyawati College in 2016. He was also an executive council member at DUSU.

Dedha, attributing the victory to ABVP's positive campus activism, said, "ABVP's dedication to issue-based campaigning resonated with the diverse student body of Delhi University."

NSUI's Abhi Dahiya secured the position of vice-president. Dahiya received 22,331 votes and defeated ABVP's Sushant Dhankar by a margin of 1,829 votes. Dahiya, currently pursuing a Master's degree in Buddhist Studies, received 22,331 votes, defeating his closest competitor, ABVP's Dhankar, by 1,829 votes.

ABVP's Aparajita and Sachin Baisla won the positions of secretary and joint secretary,



ABVP's Tushar Dedha (president), Aparajita (secretary) and Sachin Baisla (joint secretary) and others after they won in the DUSU election in New Delhi on Saturday

respectively. While Aparajita defeated NSUI's Yakshana Sharma by a margin of 12,937 votes, Baisla defeated the NSUI's Shubham Kumar Chaudhary by a margin of 9,995 votes.

Hailing from Jaunpur in Uttar Pradesh, Aparajita completed her BA (Honours) degree in history from Dyal Singh College. She is pursuing a Master's degree in Buddhist Studies. Baisla graduated from Ramanujan College and is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Buddhist Studies.

As the results were announced, students from the metro station to the campus released balloons into the air, broke out in dance, and showered the winners with flower petals. Security at both DU

campuses was heightened, and barricades were deployed as preventive measures to avoid any untoward incidents.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah congratulated the winning candidates of the ABVP. "Hearty congratulations to all the workers of the council on the landslide victory of ABVP in the Delhi University Students Union elections. This victory reflects the faith of the young generation in the ideology that puts national interest first. I have full confidence that the workers of the council will continue to work with determination to keep the ideals of Swami Vivekananda and the spirit of nationalism alive among the youth," Shah posted on X.

Union Minister Kiren

Rijiju also posted on X, congratulating the ABVP. He wrote: "#ABVP sweeps #DUSU. Rahul Gandhi campaigned in Delhi University Students Union election which helped ABVP to increase its vote share! Congratulations to all the Winning Candidates of ABVP, its cadres as well as all the well-wishers!"

BJP MP and party youth wing president Tejasvi Surya posted, "Congratulations to Team ABVP on winning the DUSU elections. A clear indication of the ideological positions that our students and young people are taking in the country. Vande Mataram."

The DUSU election was conducted after a gap of three years. The DUSU elections were last held in 2019. The polls could not be held in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19, while possible disruptions to the academic calendar prevented their conduct in 2022. The students' union election recorded a voter turnout of 42 per cent. A total of 24 candidates were in the running for the four positions of DUSU president, vice-president, secretary, and joint secretary. The election took place on Friday, with around one lakh students eligible to vote. The counting of votes for the DUSU's central panel positions of president, vice-president, secretary, and joint secretary concluded on Saturday evening.

## UP women constables seek gender change for inclusivity

**BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW**

In an unprecedented development, five women constables of the Uttar Pradesh Police have submitted applications to the office Director General of Police seeking permission for gender change. Among these applicants is a female constable currently stationed in Gorakhpur, a revelation that has raised concerns and prompted discussions among officers.

While this marks the first instance of its kind in the police department, authorities are now exploring how to address this complex issue.

Reports indicate that the Allahabad High Court had previously declared gender change



a constitutional right in a similar case, adding a legal dimension to the matter.

However, the DGP's office has taken a proactive approach by requesting that letters be

issued to police district captains where these women constables are deployed, facilitating counselling sessions for them to better understand their circumstances and decisions.

One of the constables, Karishma (name changed), is posted in Gorakhpur. She revealed that she submitted an application to the DGP's office, where she also underwent enquiries about her situation.

Karishma cited gender dysphoria as the primary reason for her request, and she attached a medical certificate to support her application.

As of now, there has been no official decision from the Lucknow headquarters regarding this matter.

However, Karishma

expressed her intent to pursue legal action if a favourable resolution is not reached, emphasising her desire to undergo gender transition. Karishma, a resident of Ayodhya, joined the Uttar Pradesh Police force in 2019 and was initially posted in Gorakhpur.

Her journey towards gender transition began in February 2023, when she approached various authorities, including the Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Additional Director General (ADG), and the Gorakhpur headquarters.

She explained that her experiences included the gradual realisation of changes in her hormone levels, prompting her desire to transition from female to male.



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# Haryana CM chairs meeting with Administrative Secretaries, Deputy Commissioners, reviews several schemes

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

In a move to enhance the road network connectivity in Haryana, Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Saturday chaired a key meeting with the Administrative Secretaries and Deputy Commissioners to discuss the pivotal initiatives aimed at road development and the comprehensive review of various state government projects and schemes.

During the meeting, Khattar said that the present state government is committed to improving connectivity between villages and cities, hence roads with a width of more than three karam will be paved to facilitate smoother transportation.

A statement issued here said that the Chief Minister was apprised that out of the total approved 1647 roads, tenders for strengthening of 1632 roads floated. Apart from this, the work allotment of 1378 has been done and the allocation



process for the remaining roads is underway.

During the meeting, Khattar also reviewed several ongoing state government schemes and projects, encompassing areas such as SVAMITVA Yojana, Meri Fasal Mera Byora, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Jab Samvad portal, CM announcements, procurement, and the availability of essential agricultural inputs like urea and DAP.

Directing the Deputy Commissioners to ensure the execution of every scheme and project in a time-bound manner, he said 'Well begun is half done',

therefore every Deputy Commissioner ensure that all government schemes and projects are executed within stipulated timeframes, with a focus on meticulous implementation.

Addressing the issue of road damage due to recent rains, Khattar directed the Deputy Commissioners to conduct a survey of all such roads and share a compiled report as to repair work of how many roads have been taken up on their own and how many have been sent for the approval of the headquarters. He further directed the Deputy Commissioners to

ensure Quality monitoring of every work that has been started.

The CM was also apprised that the Deputy Commissioners can get the repair work upto Rs. 20 lakh at their level while any work above this are sent to the headquarters for final approval. While giving directions regarding the work of the roads measuring 5 karmas, the Chief Minister directed that the Deputy Commissioners should ensure the demarcation of the roads to ensure that work on these roads can begin in a time-bound manner. He directed the

DCs to closely monitor the resolutions and demands received during the Jan Samvad, which serves as a platform for public interaction.

"All the complaints received in the offices of the Deputy Commissioners and Additional Deputy Commissioners should also be closely monitored and resolved. Deputy Commissioners should closely oversee the feasibility and cost estimates associated with demands related to Panchayats," Khattar directed.

The Chief Minister while emphasizing the issue of smuggling of Bajra from the Border States directed the Deputy Commissioners, who are also the nodal officers of the procurement to ensure stringent border controls through police checkpoints. "We have taken 2.5 lakh MT Bajara procurement permission from the Centre hence special attention should be paid to keeping a check on the smuggling from the borders by setting up police check posts. Check Posting and border checking should be strength-

ened. Besides, this mandatory check should be done on last year's stock. Stocking in the Mandis should also be done before the procurement so that no one tries to sell the stocked crop in the new procurement," said Khattar.

Chief Secretary, Sanjeev Kaushal, Additional Chief Secretary and Financial Commissioner, Revenue and Disaster Management Department, T.V.S.N Prasad, Additional Chief Secretary, Medical Education and Research Department, Dr. Sumita Misra, Additional Chief Secretary, Finance Department, Anurag Rastogi, Principal Secretary to Chief Minister, V Umashankar, Advisor to Chief Minister (Irrigation), Devender Singh, Principal Secretary, Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Department, Vijayendra Kumar, Additional Principal Secretary to Chief Minister and Director General, Information, Public Relations, Language and Culture Department, Dr. Amit Agrawal, amongst others attended the meeting.

## Over 36,000 jobs given in past 18 months in Punjab, says CM Mann



PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Saturday said his government has given 36,524 appointment letters of government jobs to the youth in the past 18 months of being in the office.

Addressing a gathering during a function to hand over appointment letters to 427 recruits in power, education, forest and other departments, Mann said it is a rare feat as none of the previous governments have achieved this milestone in such a short span of its tenure. He said in the last 25 days, the state government has given appointment letters to 7,660 youth in the state. A fool-proof mechanism has been adopted for the entire recruitment process due to which not even a single appointment out of these 36,524 have been challenged so far in the court, an official statement quoting Mann said.

These youths have been given government jobs completely on the basis of merit, he claimed, adding that the sole aim is to ensure that Punjab's youth become active partners in the social and economic growth of the state. By giving

these jobs in the first 18 months of its tenure, the state government has set a record of providing government service to 2,000 youth every month, he said.

The chief minister exhorted the newly recruited youth to serve people with missionary zeal as now they have become an integral part of the government. As runways at airports facilitate airplanes for its smooth take off, in the same manner, the state government is helping youth to realise their dreams, he said. Every effort is being made to give wings to the ideas of youth and no stone is being left unturned for this, Mann said. Slamming the previous governments, he said during the earlier tenures, these runways were merely used by affluent people to set up their own families. Now these runways have been opened for the youth of common families by his government, he added.

During the previous regimes, people used to be scared of success as the earlier rulers used to pressurise them to put their share in ventures, he alleged. These leaders looted the masses, especially the successful industrialists, alleged Mann.

## Actor Aamir Khan donates Rs 25 lakh towards Himachal state disaster relief fund

PNS ■ SHIMLA

Film star Aamir Khan has donated Rs 25 lakh towards the Aapada Rahat Kosh to provide succor to the rain-affected families in Himachal Pradesh, the state government said in a statement on Saturday.

Expressing his gratitude to the Hindi film actor, Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu said that the assistance will "undoubtedly support the relief and rehabilitation efforts aimed at helping the affected families to recover from the aftermath of the disaster." He said the fund will be judiciously utilised and they will ensure that it reaches those in dire need.

Earlier, Sukhu had donated all his savings worth Rs 51 lakh towards the Aapada Rahat Kosh to extend a helping hand to the disaster-affected people of the state. The governments of Haryana, Bihar, Odisha, Tamil

Nadu, Karnataka, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh had also provided help of over Rs 65 crores to the state to meet out the relief and rehabilitation measures. Besides temple trusts, NGOs and individuals have also come forward to help. Heavy rains in the months of July and August have caused huge damage to the road infrastructure, water supply schemes, buildings and other private and public property.

A total of 287 people have died in rain-related incidents since the onset of the monsoon on June 24 till September 22. The Chief Minister had claimed that the state suffered losses to the tune of Rs 12,000 crore.

Himachal Pradesh Vidhan Sabha had on Wednesday adopted a resolution by voice vote, urging the union government to declare recent calamity in the state as a national disaster and declare a special relief package of Rs 12,000 crore for the state.

## Meri Maati-Mera Desh campaign is a matter of pride for Haryana: Dr. Agrawal

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Additional Principal Secretary to Chief Minister, Haryana and Director General, Information, Public Relations, Language and Culture Department, Dr. Amit Agrawal on Saturday said that the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, had launched the 'Meri Maati - Mera Desh' campaign as part of the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav and Amrit Bela.

This campaign is a matter of immense pride for Haryana and under this initiative, programmes will be organised at the block level on October 2, Mahatma Gandhi's birth anniversary, where soil will be collected from all villages and wards.

Dr. Agrawal said that the first phase of the 'Meri Maati - Mera Desh' campaign was completed on August 15. In

Phase 2, soil will be collected through the Amrit Kalash Yatra. He emphasised that Haryana's farmers feed millions and its athletes elevate the pride of the state and the country by playing on the soil of their homeland. The brave soldiers of Haryana sacrifice their lives to protect their motherland. Therefore, this program aims to connect every resident of the state with the significance of soil and the proud stories of Haryana through these initiatives. He added that the Amrit Kalash of soil will be sent to the national-level programme in Delhi. The Amrit Kalash, representing different regions, will be dedicated to the Amrit Vatika in honour of the brave heroes of our nation. This programme serves as a tribute to the profound connection between the people of Haryana and their soil, showcasing their contributions to the nation's pride.

## BRIEFS

### HIMACHAL CM CALLS ON GOVERNOR



Shimla: Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Saturday called on Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla at Raj Bhavan. A statement issued here described it as a courtesy call.

### PUNJAB GOVT TO DISTRIBUTE RS. 4.64 CR TO 58 ATHLETES WHO WILL BE PARTICIPATING IN ASIAN GAMES

Chandigarh: India's 653-member contingent will participate in the Asian Games to be held in Hangzhou from September 23 to October 8, in which 48 players are from Punjab. Apart from this, 10 Punjabi para players will participate in the Para Asian Games which are being held in Hangzhou from October 22 to 28 next month. Under its new sports policy, the Punjab Government has given Rs. 4.64 Crore cash to 58 sports-people for preparation. Punjab Sports Minister Gurmeet Singh Meet Hayer while congratulating the Indian players for the Asian Games expressed hope that these players will bring laurels for the state as well as the country in the coming two weeks. Hayer said that Punjab became the first state to give cash money for the preparation of the Games. He said that the Punjabi players who won Gold, Silver and Bronze medals in the Asian Games would get Rs. 1 Cr, Rs.75 lakh and Rs.50 lakh respectively as prize money.

### HARYANA APPROVES WATER ACTION PLANS TO BOOST URBAN LIVING

Chandigarh: The Haryana State High-Powered Steering Committee (SHSPC), chaired by Chief Secretary, Sanjeev Kaushal on Saturday approved the Haryana State Water Action Plans (SWAPs) for the first phase of the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) 2.0. These SWAPs encompass projects aimed at providing universal piped water supply with household water tap connections and achieving universal coverage of sewerage and septage management in AMRUT cities, while also promoting a circular water economy. In total, the SHSPC has given its approval to City Water Action Plans (CWAPs) for 57 towns, with a combined budget of Rs. 1,727.36 crores. The CWAPs are strategically focused on key sectors, such as water supply, sewerage/septage management, and the revitalization of water bodies, including green spaces and parks. The estimated cost for the first phase SWAPs amounts to Rs. 1,727.36 crores, with the state contributing Rs. 984.65 crores and the central government providing Rs. 742.71 crores in support. The SHSPC has greenlit a City Water Action Plan (CWAP) for 48 towns, with a total budget of Rs. 1,443.74 crores, where in the state will contribute Rs. 795 crores, and the central government will provide Rs. 648 crores. These projects will strengthen, augment, and renovate water supply schemes in these towns.

### CHAIRMAN AND EMPLOYEES OF PUNJAB WAREHOUSE CONTRIBUTE RS 37.95 LAKH IN CM RELIEF FUND

Chandigarh: The Chairman and employees of Punjab Warehousing Corporation on Saturday contributed Rs 37.95 lakh and PSEB Engineers Association contributed Rs 36.29 lakh in Chief Minister's relief fund by handing over the cheque to Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann. The Chairman of Corporation had contributed his one month's salary whereas the employees had given their one day's salary for the cause. Similarly, the PSEB Engineers Association also contributed their one day's salary worth Rs 36.29 lakh for the fund. Lauding this gesture, the Chief Minister said these donations will go a long way in extending a helping hand to the needy people. Mann appreciated the services rendered by these employees in harsh conditions during summer, winter and rainy season.

### DRONE MAPPING OF OVER 7.100 REVENUE ESTATES TO BE COMPLETED BY DEC: HARYANA CHIEF SECY

Chandigarh: Haryana Chief Secretary Sanjeev Kaushal said that the work to map 7,102 revenue estates using drones would be completed by December. Presiding over a review meeting here of the Haryana Large Scale Mapping and Svamitva schemes, Kaushal said that the drone mapping work has been completed in Karnal, Sonapat, Kaithal, Jind, Panipat, and Panchkula districts. Under the large-scale mapping project, 40,372 square kilometres has been mapped so far, out of a total area of 44,212 square kilometres in the state. "Large-scale mapping enhances the accuracy of land records, reducing disputes and conflicts related to land ownership. It helps in maintaining a comprehensive and up-to-date database of land parcels, which is crucial for land-related transactions," the statement said.

## Pb govt credited Rs. 119 crore in farmers' bank accounts: Minister

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Revenue, Rehabilitation and Disaster Management Minister Bram Shanker Jimpa on Saturday said that Punjab Government has credited Rs. 119 crore in the bank accounts of farmers as crop damaged relief till September 23. He said that an amount of Rs 188.62 crore has also been released to flood-affected districts of Punjab to compensate for the damage to paddy saplings and other crops.

"This is the first time that a government is giving compensation of Rs. 6800 per acre for damaged paddy saplings," he said, adding that Rs. 33.50 crore was released as advance relief as soon as reports of flood risk were received in the month of July. After this, relief funds have been released to the affected districts from time to time. The Minister further said that instructions had already been issued to all the Deputy Commissioners that the relief compensation should be distributed to the deserving farmers in a transparent and hassle-free manner.

## CM Khattar interacts with parents of children of playway schools

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

In a move to prioritise early childhood education, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar had unveiled an initiative to establish 4,000 play-way schools across the state. This project, aligned with the New Education Policy 2020, aimed to nurture the cognitive and intellectual abilities of children aged 3 to 6 years has finally borne results as around 40,000 students have taken admissions in these schools.

The Chief Minister shared this information while interacting with the parents of the children who have taken admission in these schools during the audio conferencing held here.

"One of the central objectives of this initiative is to ensure that quality education is accessible to children from all socio-economic backgrounds. I am happy that at present these Playway schools are poised to provide educational opportunities to approximately 40,000 children. However, now we have planned to open an additional

4,000 schools within the next two years. To facilitate this expansion, 2,500 suitable locations have already been identified," said Khattar.

Responding to the suggestions shared by parents during the interaction, Khattar directed officers to address the concerns and improve the education system, especially in areas where the strength of children is high. He directed the officers to ensure the provision of suitable rooms in the play schools having high strength of children and also directed them that, if needed, Anganwadis should be upgraded into play-way schools. He also directed the Deputy Commissioners to conduct a comprehensive survey of play-way schools in their respective districts so as to collect data on existing facilities, resources, and requirements, allowing for decision-making regarding necessary upgrades and room allocations.

The CM said that a recent survey conducted by the state government highlighted notable progress in children's language skills but identified a gap in

mathematical proficiency among children aged 3 to 5. In response, the present state government is gearing efforts towards strengthening mathematical skills in this age group. An annual survey will be conducted to track progress and make data-driven improvements.

He said that while recognizing the need for childcare services, the government has upgraded Anganwadi centres to serve as play schools for younger children. Furthermore, 165 crèches have been established to support working mothers, with plans to open an additional 335 crèches in identified locations.

Khattar said that under the umbrella of the New Education Policy, Haryana is diligently working towards creating educational institutions that offer a seamless educational journey from Kindergarten (KG) to Postgraduate (PG) levels, all within a single institution. Currently, admissions have been initiated under the KG to PG scheme in four prominent state universities, he added.

## Himachal Assembly passes Stamp Duty Bill in amended form amid walkout by BJP

PNS ■ SHIMLA

Himachal Assembly on Saturday passed the Indian Stamp (Himachal Pradesh Amendment) Bill 2023 seeking a hike in stamp duty in amended form amid a walkout by the opposition BJP.

The original Bill had proposed a uniform stamp duty of eight percent for both sexes for properties valued at above Rs 50 lakh against four percent and six percent for women and men earlier. The opposition members opposed the amendment saying that an eight percent stamp duty for women for property valued over Rs 50 lakh was unfair.

Intervening in the matter, Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu said the government would bring an amendment to change the clause. Later, the bill was passed in an amended form increasing the

limit of four per cent stamp duty for women for properties up to Rs 80 lakh but BJP was not satisfied with the change and staged a walkout. Taking exception to the walkout by BJP, Sukhu said that we accepted the suggestion of the BJP and increased the four per cent stamp duty for women up to Rs 80 lakh but still they staged a walkout.

CM Sukhu said that in the past 10 months, a large number of cases have come to notice where properties were sold through Power of attorney and this needed to be checked. Revenue Minister Jagat Singh Negi, who introduced the Bill said that the financial position of the state was grim and the debt burden was over Rs 75,000 crore. Resource mobilisation was imperative but still, the stamp duty was on par with neighbouring state of Haryana, he added.

BJP MLA Randhir Sharma

said that a steep hike in stamp duty would put a burden on the people. Instead of giving Rs 1,500 per month to women, the government was increasing the stamp duty. Trilok Jamwal of BJP said that the increase in stamp duty was 100 percent and the government should reconsider it.

### No government office to be shifted out of Shimla Himachal asserts CM

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Saturday said the government will not be shifting any government office from state capital Shimla to some other place to reduce congestion. In a written reply to a question by Congress leader Kewal Singh Pathania, the CM told the Vidhan Sabha that neither any decision had been taken by the government, nor any suggestion been received

from any department in this matter. Pathania had asked whether the government was considering shifting some offices from Shimla in view of congestion in the city and loss of life and property during the monsoon.

Replying to another question by Congress leader Rajendra Rana, Sukhu said that an increase has been witnessed in cyber crimes with eight new cases surfacing every month on average and 49 cases registered from January 1 to August 31 this year. Asserting the government is serious about curbing cybercrime, Sukhu said the government has opened one cyber police station each in Shimla, Mandi, and Dharamshala ranges and started a cyber crime helpline number 1930. Sukhu said his government is running awareness programmes about cyber crime in schools and colleges.

## Will withdraw plea from SC if governor ensures release of pending RDF by Centre: Punjab FM

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema on Saturday said the state government will withdraw its petition in the Supreme Court on the pending rural development fund (RDF) if the governor gets it released from the Centre.

Cheema was responding to Governor Banwarilal Purohit's letter to Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Friday in which he had stated it would be appropriate to wait for the decision of the Supreme Court on the state government's plea.

Chief Minister Mann, in a letter on Thursday, had asked the governor to take up the issue of the pending RDF worth Rs 5,637.40 crore with the president and the prime minister. The state government had moved the Supreme Court in July on the

RDF issue.

On the governor's statement that the state's debt rose by Rs 50,000 crore under the AAP dispensation, Cheema asked him not to talk about debt as it was inherited from previous governments. Responding to the governor's response on the RDF issue, the finance minister said the Punjab government had written letters to the central government several times for the fund's release.

"Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann himself met the Union minister and demanded this. But because of no response from the central government, the Punjab government was forced to approach the Supreme Court," he said. Cheema also reminded the governor that the state government even had to go to the Supreme Court for calling the budget session of the assembly.

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# Can't give exact dates: Pak's poll body

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's top election body has said that it is not possible to give an exact date for general elections due to technical reasons, a day after the country's political parties demanded an exact polling date from the election commission.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has come under fire for its failure to announce a specific date for the upcoming elections after it announced on Thursday that polls would be held in the "last week of January 2024."

A senior ECP official said that it was "not technically possible" to make an official announcement for the date of the general elections.

He said that doing so will demand a kick-start to a formal process that must follow specific timelines in the lead-up to the election, the Dawn newspaper reported on Saturday.

Elaborating on this justification, the official said that under Section 57 of the Elections Act, the announcement of a polling date should be followed by issuing an election schedule, which sets the entire electoral cycle in motion.

This 'cycle' involves the filing of nomination papers,

## Military's manipulation absolutely absurd: Pak PM

**United Nations (AP):** Pakistan's interim prime minister said he expects parliamentary elections to take place in the new year, dismissing the possibility that the country's powerful military would manipulate the results to ensure that jailed former premier Imran Khan's party doesn't win.

In an interview with The Associated Press on Friday, Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar said it's the Election Commission that is going to conduct the vote, not the military, and Khan appointed the commission's chief at the time, so "why would he turn in any sense of the word against him?"

Pakistan has been in deepening polit-

ical turmoil since April 2022 when Khan was removed from office following a no-confidence vote in Parliament. He was arrested in early August on corruption charges and sentenced to three years in prison, later suspended though he still remains in jail. The country is also facing one of the worst economic crises in its history and recovering from last summer's devastating floods that killed at least 1,700 people and destroyed millions of homes and farmland. The commission announced on Thursday the elections would take place during the last week in January, delaying the vote which was to be held in November under the constitution.

Kakar resigned as a senator last month after outgoing Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and opposition leader Raza Riaz chose him as caretaker prime minister to oversee the elections and run the day-to-day affairs until a new government is elected. Kakar said that when the commission sets an exact election date his government "will provide all the assistance, financial, security or other related requirements."

Asked whether he would recommend judges overturn Khan's conviction so he could run in the elections, the prime minister said he wouldn't interfere with decisions by the judiciary.

## Major terror bid foiled in Pakistan

PTI ■ LAHORE

Pakistan's law enforcement agencies foiled a major terror plot to target key installations in the Punjab province and arrested 13 terrorists, mostly belonging to the banned Islamic State (ISIS) and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), police said on Saturday.

According to the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) of Punjab police, it conducted 83 intelligence-based operations in different districts of the province to effectively deal with any untoward incident of terrorism and arrested 13 suspected terrorists with weapons, explosives and other prohibited materials.

The CTD said the arrested terrorists belong to ISIS (Daesh), TTP, Tehreek Jafariya Pakistan and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi militant groups.

The arrests were carried out during intelligence-based operations in Rawalpindi, Attock, Bahawal Nagar, Lahore, Jehlum, Sheikhpura and Bahawalpur districts of Punjab, the counter-terrorism police said. Police recovered nearly 5 kgs of explosives, one IED bomb, 29 detonators, 49 feet protective fuse wire, prima cards, one pistol, one SMG rifle with 80 bullets and banned literature from the possession of the terrorists.

The CTD said the terrorists had planned sabotage across the province and wanted to target important installations, which was, however, foiled by the law enforcement agency.

Police have registered eight cases against the arrested terrorists and shifted them to an undisclosed location for interrogation.

## WORLD BRIEFS

### LEBANESE TROOPS RESCUE 27 FROM SINKING BOAT

**BEIRUT:** The Lebanese army and the country's civil defence recused early on Saturday 27 migrants whose boat was sinking off the coast of north Lebanon, the military said in a statement. The army did not say where the migrants were heading nor did it give their nationalities. Over the past years, thousands of Lebanese, Syrians and Palestinian migrants took the dangerous trip from Lebanon across the Mediterranean seeking a better life in Europe. Such migrations intensified since the country's historic economic meltdown began in October 2019. Lebanon has hosted refugees for years. It has some 805,000 UN-registered Syrian refugees, but officials estimate the actual number to be between 1.5 million and 2 million. Lebanon is also home to tens of thousands of Palestinian refugees and their descendants, many living in 12 refugee camps scattered around the country.

### 5 DEAD, OVER 100 INJURED IN TAIWAN FACTORY FIRE

**BEIJING:** A fire and subsequent explosions at a golf ball factory in southern Taiwan killed at least five people and injured more than 100 others, and five people are still missing. The fire began on Friday night at the factory in Pingtung county and raged overnight. Three firefighters were among the dead, authorities said. Rescuers were still looking for four factory workers and one firefighter who remained unaccounted for, officials said. More than 100 people were taken to the hospital with injuries. Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen in a speech in Taipei on Saturday expressed her condolences to the families of the victims and said she would travel to Pingtung to visit those affected by the disaster, according to Taiwanese news outlet Focus Taiwan. Tsai said the Pingtung county government had set up an emergency operation centre to offer assistance to those impacted by the fire.

### UYGHUR SCHOLAR SENTENCED FOR LIFE IN CHINA

**BEIJING:** A prominent Uyghur scholar specialising in the study of her people's folklore and traditions has been sentenced to life in prison, according to a US-based foundation that works on human rights cases in China. Rahile Dawut was convicted on charges of endangering state security in December 2018 in a secret trial, the San Francisco-based Dui Hua Foundation said in a statement Thursday. Dawut appealed but her conviction was upheld, the foundation said. "The sentencing of Professor Rahile Dawut to life in prison is a cruel tragedy, a great loss for the Uyghur people, and for all who treasure academic freedom," John Kamm, executive director of the Dui Hua Foundation, said in a statement. Dawut was a professor at Xinjiang University and founder of the school's Ethnic Minorities Folklore Research Centre. She disappeared in late 2017 amid a brutal government crackdown aimed at the Uyghurs, a Turkic, predominately Muslim ethnicity native to China's northwest Xinjiang region. For years, her exact status was unknown, as Chinese authorities didn't disclose her whereabouts or the nature of the charges against her.

### INDIAN GETS JAIL TERM FOR MONEY LAUNDERING

**WASHINGTON:** An Indian national has been sentenced to 10 years in prison for conspiring to commit money laundering, the US Attorney's Office for the District of Colorado has said. Dhruv Jani, 40, has also been ordered to pay USD 1.1 million restitution, a media release issued on Friday said. According to the plea agreement, starting in January 2020, Jani was part of a conspiracy to launder funds obtained through a government official imposter scheme. Victims in the US were contacted by telephone and coerced into believing that they were under investigation by 'agents' of federal law enforcement agencies. Federal prosecutors said the victims were told that their identities had been connected to a criminal incident, that their imminent arrest and/or deportation from the United States had been ordered by law enforcement and that the only way to avoid arrest and/or deportation was to pay the 'government' large sums of money. The 'agent' then convinced the victim to package and ship the cash to alleged government officials via Federal Express or United Parcel Service. Many of these victims were also directed to mail packages of cash to individuals in other states.

### 9 CROATIAN SOCCER FANS DETAINED FOR VIOLENCE

**ZAGREB:** Croatian police have arrested nine soccer fans sought on European warrants for involvement in deadly violence last month in Greece, state television station HRT reported on Saturday. Greece has issued arrest warrants for 10 fans of Croatia's Dinamo Zagreb soccer club, but one of them remains at large, the report said. Croatia's Justice Ministry said in a statement it had been informed of the warrants by the Croatian police. The fans, members of the so-called Bad Blue Boys fan group, are suspected of taking part in the August violence in Athens that killed one person. Dozens of other Croatian soccer fans already have been detained in Greece over the violence, during which a 29-year-old Greek fan was stabbed to death outside AEK Athens' stadium, prompting the cancellation of a Champions League qualifier against Dinamo Zagreb. Amateur video of the attack showed dozens of youths wielding bats and iron bars running past the stadium as flares and firebombs exploded. Ten people were injured.

### 'AIR STRIKES KILLED MANY REBELS IN CONGO'

**KAMPALA:** Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni said on Saturday that recent airstrikes against rebels with ties to the Islamic State group in eastern Congo have killed "a lot" of the militants, possibly including a notorious bomb maker. The statement issued by the president's office didn't provide details on the September 16 airstrikes targeting the Allied Democratic Forces, or ADF, a shadowy extremist organisation blamed for regular violence targeting civilians from bases in Congo's volatile east. The airstrikes targeted four ADF camps located between 100-150 kilometres from the Uganda border, according to Museveni's statement. Uganda and Congo launched joint military operations against the ADF in 2021. Meddie Nkalubo, a Ugandan bomb maker with the ADF, was likely killed in the airstrikes, according to the statement.

### YEMEN'S LEADER RENEWS CALL FOR SEPARATE STATE

**UNITED NATIONS:** The head of Yemen's Southern Transitional Council, an umbrella group of heavily armed and well-financed militias, has said that he will prioritise the creation of a separate country in negotiations with their rivals, the Houthi rebels. Aidarous al-Zubaidi's comments, in an interview with The Associated Press on Friday, come days after the conclusion of landmark talks in Riyadh between the Houthi rebels and Saudi Arabia, which leads a coalition fighting them in the country's civil war. The remarks signal that his group might not get on board for a solution without inclusion of a separate state's creation. Al-Zubaidi has a dual role in Yemeni politics — he is vice president of the country but also the leader of a separatist group that has joined the internationally recognised coalition government seated in the southern city of Aden. His trip to the high-level leaders meeting of the UN General Assembly was aimed at amplifying the call for southern separatism, which has taken a backseat to discussions aimed at ending the wider war. Earlier this year, the head of the country's internationally recognised government brushed aside the issue.

### JUNTA ACCUSES UN CHIEF OF BLOCKING PARTICIPATION

**ABUJAI:** The military government that seized power in Niger has accused United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres of "obstructing" the West African nation's full participation at the UN's annual meeting of world leaders in order to appease France, Niger's former coloniser, and its allies. The decision to not allow the junta's envoy to speak at the UN General Assembly in New York could "undermine any effort to end the crisis in our country," Col Maj Amadou Abdramane, a spokesman for the officers who deposed Nigerien President Mohamed Bazoum in a July coup, said late on Friday. The junta had wanted Niger's former ambassador to the United Nations, Bakary Yaou Sangare, who was made foreign minister after the coup, to speak on its behalf at the General Assembly. However, Bakary did not receive credentials to attend after the deposed Nigerien government's foreign minister sent the world body a letter "informing of the end of functions of Bakary as permanent representative of Niger to the United Nations," Stéphane Dujarric, Guterres' spokesperson, said.

# Nawaz to return home as planned: Shehbaz

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Insisting that there was no change in party supremo Nawaz Sharif's plan to return to Pakistan next month, former prime minister and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) president Shehbaz Sharif has said his elder brother would present an 'agenda of progress' on October 21, media reports

said here on Saturday.

Ending his self-imposed exile in London, 73-year-old Nawaz, also the three-time prime minister, is expected to return to Pakistan on October 21 and lead the PML-N party in the general election declared to be held in January 2024. He had left Pakistan on 'medical grounds' in 2019.

"Nawaz Sharif will return to a

resounding welcome in Lahore, and will then address the nation at a rally at Minar-i-Pakistan where he will present the party's plan to tackle poverty, unemployment and improve the economic situation," Shehbaz told reporters after a meeting with Nawaz, party vice president Maryam Nawaz and former finance minister Ishaq Dar at London, the Dawn newspaper report-

ed.

The increase in political activity in the PML-N camp comes after the September 15 Supreme Court of Pakistan's ruling that scrapped the recent amendments to the country's anti-graft laws and restored corruption cases against several public office holders, including Nawaz

# Ukraine targets key Crimean city

AP ■ KYIV

Ukraine on Saturday morning launched another missile attack on Sevastopol in occupied Crimea, a Russian-installed official said, a day after an attack on the headquarters of Russia's Black Sea Fleet left a serviceman missing and the main building smoldering.

Sevastopol was put on air raid alert for about an hour after debris from intercepted missiles fell near a pier, Gov. Mikhail Razvozhayev wrote on the messaging app Telegram. Ferry traffic in the area was also halted and later resumed.

Loud blasts were also heard near Vilne in northern Crimea, followed by rising clouds of smoke, according to a pro-Ukrainian Telegram news channel that reports on developments on the peninsula. Crimea, illegally annexed by Russia in 2014, has been a frequent target for Ukrainian forces since Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered a full-scale invasion of the neighboring country almost 19 months ago.

Ukraine's intelligence chief, Kyrylo Budanov, told Voice of America on Saturday that at least nine people were killed and 16 injured as a result of Kyiv's attack on the Black Sea Fleet on Friday. He claimed that Alexander Romanchuk, a Russian general commanding forces along the key southeastern front line, was "in a very serious condition" following the attack.

Budanov's claim could not be independently verified, and

he did not comment on whether Western-made missiles were used in Friday's strike. The Russian Defense Ministry initially said that Friday's strike killed one service member at the Black Sea Fleet headquarters, but later issued a statement that he was missing.

Ukraine's military also offered more details about Friday's attack on Sevastopol. It said the air force conducted 12 strikes on the Black Sea Fleet headquarters, targeting areas where personnel, military equipment and weapons were concentrated. It said two anti-aircraft missile systems and four Russian artillery units were hit.

Crimea has served as the key hub supporting Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. Sevastopol, the main base of Russia's Black Sea Fleet since the 19th century, has had a particular importance for navy operations since the start of the invasion of Ukraine.

Ukraine has increasingly targeted naval facilities in Crimea in recent weeks while the brunt of its summer counteroffensive makes slow gains in the east and south of Ukraine, the Institute for the Study of War said. Military experts say it is essential for Ukraine to keep up its attacks on targets in Crimea to degrade Russian morale and weaken its military.

Elsewhere, Ukraine's military said Saturday that Russia launched 15 Iranian-made Shahed drones at the front-line Zaporizhzhia region in the southeast.

**Mexico City (AP):** Mexico's top diplomat Alicia Bárcena has said that President Andrés Manuel López Obrador wants to travel to Washington DC in early November to meet with US President Joe Biden about immigration, development aid and drug trafficking.

The statement comes after a surge in migrants moving through Mexico forced the closure of some US-Mexico border crossings and led Mexico's largest railway company to halt about 60 train runs because so many migrants were hopping aboard freight cars. Most appear to be Venezuelans, and many said they had crossed through the jungle-clad Darien Gap that connects Colombia and Panama.

Bárcena told a news conference in New York Friday that migrant shelters in Ciudad Juárez, across from El Paso, Texas, are 95 per cent full and that the Mexican government is 'very worried' about the border closures and the migrant surge, especially given Mexico's rocky relationship with Texas



Migrants who crossed the Rio Grande from Mexico to the US work their way through concertina wire on Friday in Eagle Pass, Texas

Gov. Greg Abbott.

In the past, Abbott has tightened border truck inspections and strung a series of floating barriers in the Rio Grande to try to deter migrants.

Bárcena suggested that more should be done to stem the flow of migrants through the Darien Gap, and that lifting US economic sanctions against Venezuela 'could also help us return some people to their home countries.'

There were signs that some

in Mexico, too, were getting overwhelmed by the surge in migrants.

Bárcena said about 1,400,000 migrants were waiting to register for transit or asylum papers in the southern Mexican city of Tapachula, near the border with Guatemala, adding 'we need reinforcements, because it is impossible to process 1,400,000 people.'

And early Friday, a few dozen residents who live near an overcrowded migrant shelter in Mexico City briefly

# China an existential threat to US: Haley

**Washington (PTI):** Describing China as an 'existential threat' to the US and the world, Indian-American Republican presidential aspirant Nikki Haley has claimed Beijing is 'preparing for war'.

China has spent half a century plotting to defeat America and in some respects, the Chinese military is already at par with the US armed forces, Haley said in a major policy speech on the economy in the key early primary State of New Hampshire on Friday.

Her speech comes two days after her India-American Republican rival Vivek Ramaswamy delivered a foreign policy speech on China in Ohio. Both Haley and

Ramaswamy have emerged as popular GOP candidates after former US president Donald Trump.

'Strength and pride are essential to our national survival, especially in the face of Communist China. China is an existential threat. It has spent half a century plotting to defeat us,' Haley said.

She alleged that China has taken America's manufacturing jobs.

"It's taken our trade secrets. Now it's taking control of critical industries, from medicines to advanced technology. In record time, China has gone from an economically backward country to the second biggest economy on earth," she said.

"It has every intention of being the first. And the Communist Party's motives are clear. They're building a massive, cutting-edge military, capable of threatening America and dominating Asia and beyond," the former two-term South Carolina governor said.

"In some respects, China's military is already equal to the US armed forces. In other areas, they're beating us. China's leaders are so confident, they're sending spy balloons into our skies and building a spy base just off our shores in Cuba.

"Make no mistake: The Communist Party is preparing for war. And China's leaders intend to win," she claimed.

# 95 million Pakistanis under poverty: World Bank

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Poverty in Pakistan shot up to 39.4 per cent as of last fiscal year, with 12.5 million more people falling into the trap due to poor economic conditions, the World Bank has said, as it urged the cash-strapped country to take urgent steps to achieve financial stability. The Washington-based lender on Friday unveiled draft policy notes that it prepared with the help of all stakeholders for Pakistan's next government ahead of the new election cycle, The Express Tribune newspaper reported.

Poverty in Pakistan rose within one year from 34.2 per cent to 39.4 per cent, with 12.5 million more people falling below the poverty line of the USD 3.65 per day income level, according to the World Bank. About 95 million Pakistanis

now live in poverty, it said.

"Pakistan's economic model is no longer reducing poverty, and the living standards have fallen behind peer countries," said Tobias Haque, the World Bank's lead country economist for Pakistan.

The global lender urged Pakistan to take urgent steps to tax its 'sacred cows' — agriculture and real estate — and cut wasteful expenditures in an effort to achieve economic stability through steep fiscal adjustment of over 7 per cent of the economy.

Pointing out that the increase in poverty was consistent with ground realities, the World Bank identified low human development, unsustainable fiscal situation, over-regulated private sector, agriculture and energy sectors as the priority areas for reforms for the next government.

It proposed measures — immediately increase the tax-to-GDP ratio by 5 per cent and cut expenditures by about 2.7 per cent of GDP — aimed to put the unsustainable economy back on a prudent fiscal path.

The lender's note on strengthening government revenues showed a host of measures to improve the revenue-to-GDP ratio by 5 per cent through the withdrawal of tax exemptions and increasing the burden of taxes on the real estate and the agriculture sectors. The World Bank is deeply concerned about the economic situation of today," Haque said.

He added that Pakistan is facing serious economic and human development crises, and is at a point where major policy shifts are required.

"This may be Pakistan's moment for significant policy

shift," said Najy Benhassine, the country director for Pakistan at the World Bank.

Pakistan has the capacity to collect taxes equal to 22 per cent of the GDP, but its current ratio is only 10.2 per cent — showing a gap of more than half, according to the World Bank note. The lender proposed reducing distortive exemptions to generate taxes equal to 2 per cent of the GDP. It wanted an increase in taxes on land and property to collect another 2 per cent of GDP in revenues and generate another 1 per cent of the GDP from the agriculture sector.

The World Bank proposed a mandatory use of CNIC (Computerised National Identity Card) for transactions, particularly of assets.

It also proposed reducing energy and commodity subsidies, implementing a single

treasury account, and imposing temporary austerity measures in the short term to save about 1 per cent of the GDP equivalent expenditures.

In 2022, the government's deposits in commercial banks amounted to over Rs 2 trillion, and due to its sovereign borrowings in the absence of use of this idle cash, an amount of Rs 424 billion was paid in interest, the World Bank said.

For the medium term, it proposed reducing federal development and current expenditures on provincial nature projects, reducing spending on loss-making entities, and improving the quality of development spending to save about Rs 1.4 trillion. The cumulative impact of these short- to medium-term savings is 2.7 per cent of the GDP.

Pakistan is heavily subsidising the agriculture sector,

leading to low productivity, the global lender said, adding that the government can reduce Rs 328 billion in spending by winding up ministries that fall in the provincial domain.

It said that another Rs 70 billion can be saved by devolving the Higher Education Commission to the provinces, and Rs 217 billion savings can be ensured through cost sharing of BISP (Benazir Income Support Programme) with the provinces.

This comes as inflation soared to 27.4 per cent in August after the cash-strapped country received USD 1.2 billion from the Washington-based International Monetary Fund in July, a part of the USD 3 billion bailout programme for nine months to support the government's efforts to stabilise the country's ailing economy.

# Two big semiconductor proposals under process, says Vaishnaw

PTI ■ SANAND

Two big semiconductor proposals are under process and expected to take shape in the coming few months, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said on Saturday.

Without divulging specifics of the proposals, the minister said the projects will focus on a special area where India can emerge as a leader at the global level.

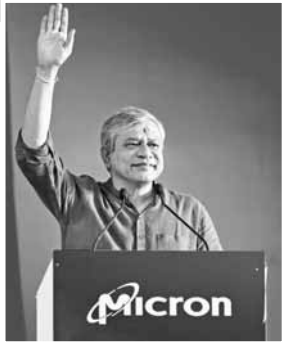
While speaking with PTI on the sidelines of the ground-breaking ceremony of Micron's semiconductor plant, Vaishnaw said that the global semiconductor company is noticing the progress made by India in the segment and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's capability to execute large and complex policy decisions.

"This has developed India as a major trusted geography in which global industry players want to come. We can see in the coming few months at least two more large semiconductor proposals taking shape," Vaishnaw said.

He said that there are some specific areas where India can take the lead and the focus of the semiconductor projects will be



Union Minister for Railways and Electronics & Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw, leaders and officials from Micron Technology and Tata Project during a 'Ground Breaking Ceremony' at Micron Technology, in Sanand, Gujarat. (Insert) Vaishnaw addresses during the 'Ground Breaking Ceremony'



in areas that can help the country export technology to other parts of the world.

The minister said that the

Micron plant, for which construction has started, will start producing the first chip from December 2024 onwards.

Memory chip maker Micron in June announced setting up a semiconductor assembly and test plant in Gujarat entailing a total investment of USD 2.75 billion (around Rs 22,540 crore). Micron will invest up to USD 825 million in setting up

the plant in two phases and the rest of the investment will come from the Centre and the state government.

The company has roped in Tata Projects for phased construction of the new assembly and test facility in Sanand.

Phase 1 will include 500,000 square feet of planned clean-room space, and will start to become operational in late 2024.

The minister said semiconductor demand is expected to grow to Rs 5 lakh crore in coming years from about Rs 2 lakh crore.

"India is already a very large design hub. With manufacturing coming to India, the entire process and value chain will come to our country and Bharat will become a major semiconductor hub in coming years," Vaishnaw said.

Micron Senior Vice President Gursaran Singh at the event said that the company has boarded the first set of 34 employees for the plant.

Five suppliers of Micron including SIMTEC are evaluating possibilities to set up their plant in India, according to government officials.

Minister of State for Electronics and IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar said that the Micron facility in Gujarat marks the beginning of an exciting journey in India's semiconductor ecosystem, in making India a semiconductor nation. "Micron's state-of-the-art modern facility will serve as a beacon for all investors, manufacturers, and participants in the global semiconductor ecosystem, encouraging them to partner with India," Chandrasekhar said.

# TRAI moots PLI scheme to spur telecom gear production

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

TRAI has mooted 'concurrent PLI scheme' focussing on components and sub-assembly manufacturing to facilitate collaborated production activities, as it released an extensive set of recommendations to promote manufacturing of networking and telecom gear in India through tax benefit, dedicated master fund and other sweeteners.

With a sharp gaze on goals of scaling domestic production and local value addition in global value chains, TRAI in its recommendations favoured additional two per cent benefit under the design-led PLI scheme for product lines meeting a certain criteria, while also talking of a dedicated 'Networking and Telecommunications Equipment Development' fund.

In order to spur innovation and encourage industry's drive towards beneficially owned resident Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs), lower corporate income tax has also been recommended. This would apply if the enterprise is continuously engaged in R&D driven manufacturing and attains half of its turnover based on IPRs owned, TRAI said in its recommendations.

A dedicated Telecom Soft-



ware Development Fund with initial committed corpus of Rs 1,000 crore should be established under Public-Private Partnership mode with Rs 3,000 crore minimum corpus, by seeking participation from venture capital funds, TRAI said.

"In context of PLI scheme, TRAI has recommended that there should be a concurrent PLI scheme focussing over components and sub-assembly manufacturing to facilitate collaborated manufacturing activities. Further, the schemes should imbibe local value addition norms in its future-format and higher incentives proportionate to value addition should be available," a TRAI release said.

Under the design-led PLI scheme, it said, beyond the one per cent benefit, another slab of additional two per cent benefit

be introduced for such product lines that yield minimum local value-addition of 75 per cent where the components by value terms, used in the manufacturing of the specific end products are manufactured in India.

Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) should be nudged to deploy indigenously manufactured equipment by reducing their Applicable Gross Revenues on annual net basis, by an amount equivalent to the aggregate certified value of such indigenous products deployed in respective telecom networks during a financial year.

This shall widen market access for indigenous manufacturers, TRAI reasoned.

Apart from the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme and Preferential Market Access (PMA), the formula suggested by the sector regulator to the government also touched upon areas like catering to financing requirement, tax relief, promoting entrepreneurship, telecom products development clusters, and treating 'telecom software' as a separate product category.

"To spur innovation and to encourage industry's drive towards beneficially owned resident Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs), lower corporate income tax has also been recommended.

## PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that our client intends to enter into a transaction with Elan Limited and certain other land owning / collaborator / developer entities in relation to lands situated at Sector- 66, 67, 70, 84 and 106 Gurugram, Haryana (mentioned in schedule below).

If any person / entity / Bank or Financial Institution having or claiming any right, title, claim, benefit, estate, share, demand or interest of any nature whatsoever in respect of these lands or any part thereof by way of sale, transfer, exchange, assignment, charge, gift, covenant, trust, license, tenancy, share, sub-tenancy, inheritance, claim, let, lease, sub-lease, lien, mortgage, easement, devise, bequest, hypothecation, encumbrance, possession, development rights, possession in part performance, partnership, family arrangement/ settlement, its pendents, decree or order of any Court of Law or otherwise howsoever by operation of law or otherwise, is hereby called upon to make the same known in writing, with notarized documentary proof, to the undersigned within 15 (fifteen) days from the date of publication of this notice, failing which it shall be presumed that no adverse right, title, interest, share, claim or demand of any nature whatsoever exists into or upon or in respect of the these lands and the title and possession of the owners mentioned below to the these lands is clear and marketable.

### SCHEDULE

**Project Elan Empire** (RERA registration number 37 of 2021) being developed on plot Commercial 1 in Project Marbella having land area measuring 1.4625 acres at Sector - 66, Gurugram (Village Maidawar, Tehsil Badshahpur) comprised in Rectangle No. 17 Killa Nos. 4/21(min (0-5), 7/2 (4-10), 13(min (2-9), 14/1(min (2-5) and 14/2/1(min (2-5) owned by Elan City LLP [part of License No. 97 dated 18.11.2010 issued by DTCP Haryana].

**Project Elan Epic** (RERA registration number 30 of 2018) having land area measuring 4 acres at Sector-70, Gurugram (Village and Tehsil Badshahpur) comprised in Rectangle No. 78 Killa Nos. 17/2 (2-4), 17/1 (5-16), 18(min (6-10), 23/1 (2-1), 23/2 (4-16), 24/1 (2-1) 25/1 (3-16) and 24/2 (4-16) owned by Elan Limited [part of License No. 148 dated 02.08.2008 issued by DTCP Haryana].

**Project Elan Town Centre** (RERA registration number 23 of 2018) having land area measuring 1.733 acres at Sector- 67, Gurugram (Village and Tehsil Badshahpur) comprised in Rectangle No. 123 Killa Nos. 17/1 (4-19), 17/2 (0-19), 24/3 (0-14), 18/1 (0-16.67), 24/1/1 (0-9), 24/1/3 (0-10) and 24/2 (5-10) owned by Elan Buildcon Private Limited [part of License No. 84 dated 28.08.2012 issued by DTCP Haryana].

**Project Elan Miracle** (RERA registration number 190 of 2017) having land area measuring 5.91875 acres at Sector- 84, Gurugram (Village Hayatpur and Tehsil Gurugram) comprised in Rectangle No. 64 Killa No. 23/2 (2-7), Rectangle No. 65 Killa Nos. 3/3 (3-4), 4 (7-6), 7 (6-18), 8 (8-0), 13 (3-18), 21/2 (6-4), 3/1 (4-11), 9/1 (4-19) owned by Elan Buildcon Private Limited [part of License No. 34 dated 12.06.2014 issued by DTCP Haryana].

Land measuring 24.43 acres at Sector - 106, Gurugram (Village Pawla Khusrupur Tehsil Kadipur) comprised in Rectangle No. 18 Killa Nos. 21 (8-0) and 22/2 (4-0), Rectangle No. 19 Killa Nos. 24 (8-0), 25 (8-0), 16/2 (4-0), 23 (8-0), 22/2 (4-0) and 22/1 (3-1), Rectangle No. 21 Killa Nos. 5 (5-12), Rectangle No. 22 Killa Nos. 4 (8-0), 13 (8-0), 3 (8-0), 18/2 (3-5), 8 (8-0), 14 (8-7), 1/1 (6-5), 1/2/1 (0-12), 2/1/1 (1-0), 2/3 (3-5), 9/1 (4-8), 12/2 (5-3), 18/3 (1-3), 5 (7-3), 6 (8-0), 15/1 (4-0), 27 (0-17), 7 (8-0), 1/2/2 (1-3), 2/1/2 (0-10), 2/2 (2-7), 9/2 (3-12), 10 (5-16) and 12/1 (2-0), Rectangle No. 23 Killa Nos. 1 (8-0), 2 (8-0), 3 (4-7), 9/2 (3-9) and 10 (7-13) owned by Elan Avenue Limited [part of License No. 80 dated 17.8.2012 issued by DTCP Haryana].

Land measuring 5.45 acres at Sector - 106, Gurugram (Village Pawla Khusrupur Tehsil Kadipur) comprised in Rectangle No. 17 Killa Nos. 20/2 (1-18), 21/1/1 (1-18) and 21/2/1 (4-12), Rectangle No. 18 Killa Nos. 16/1/2 (2-7), 16/2 (4-9), 24 (4-0), 25/1 (6-5) and 25/2 (0-17), Rectangle No. 23 Killa No. 5/2 (3-16) and Rectangle No. 24 Killa Nos. 10/1 (6-4) and 1 (8-0) owned by Elan Avenue Limited [part of License No. 79 dated 17.08.2012 issued by DTCP Haryana].

Land measuring 1.075 acres at Sector - 106, Gurugram (Village Pawla Khusrupur Tehsil Kadipur) comprised in Rectangle No. 24. Killa Nos. 9/2 (5-4) and 21/1 (3-8) owned by Elan Avenue Limited [part of License No. 11 dated 12.03.2013 issued by DTCP Haryana].

Land measuring 10.7206 acres at Sector - 106, Gurugram (Village Pawla Khusrupur, Tehsil Kadipur) comprised in Rectangle No. 17 Killa Nos. 20 (6-2), 21/1 (0-2) and 22/1/1 (0-3-7), Rectangle No. 18 Killa Nos. 16/1 (0-4), 16/2 (1-0), 24 (2-13), 14 (7-2), 18/1 (7-6), 15/1 (3-6), 13/2 (1-5), 17 (8-0), 23 (6-0) and 27 (1-7), Rectangle No. 19 Killa Nos. 19/1 (5-12), 20 (8-0), 21/1 (7-16) and 21/2 (0-4), Rectangle 20 Killa Nos. 16 (8-0) and 25 (8-0), Rectangle No. 22 Killa Nos. 26 (0-17) and 22/1(min (0-7) Rectangle No. 23 Killa No. 4/1 (2-0), Rectangle No. 24 Killa Nos. 21/2/1 (0-11) and 21/2/2 (0-16) and lands comprised in Village Daulatabad, Tehsil Kadipur in Rectangle No. 48 Killa No. 5/15 (1-9-1) owned by Elan Avenue Limited.

Agricultural lands measuring 5.06875 acres at Sector - 106, Gurugram (Village Pawla Khusrupur, Tehsil Kadipur), comprised in Rectangle No. 23 Killa No. 6/1 (6-4), 6/2 (1-16), 7 (5-15), 14/3 (2-0), 15 (8-0) 16 (5-5), 27 (0-11) and Rectangle No. 24 Killa No. 10/2 (1-16), 11/1 (7-0), 20/1 (2-4) owned by Kay Towers Limited Liability Partnership.

Vaibhav Suri / Shivani Panda (Advocates)

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## TRAI recommends measures to boost telecom infra in North Eastern States

TRAI has issued recommendations for bolstering telecom infrastructure in North East, suggesting parleys with the state governments to harmonise their respective 'right of way' policies with related Central rules, as well as favouring provision of electricity to telecom sites on priority at utility tariffs.

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) noted that while a number of initiatives have been taken by the government to improve telecom connectivity in the northeastern states, there is still a lack of high-speed mobile-based internet and fixed broadband connectivity, mainly due to the inadequate transmission bandwidth (optical fibre, Microwave and satellite). "The Northeast states continue to grapple with a significant digital divide due to various reasons such as inhospitable terrain conditions, poor availability of power supply, transmission media related limitations, poor return of investment

prospects for TSPs, and Right of Way (RoW) related issues," the sector regulator said in a release.

The Northeastern Region (NER) comprises the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura - together they form part of the East Himalayan region.

The latest recommendations by TRAI assume significance given that while average tele-density of India (as of April 2023) stood at 84.46 per cent, the teledensity in Assam state is 71 per cent and that of Northeast Licensed Service Area consisting of six states of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Tripura is 79.6 per cent.

"The digital divide hampers the region's socio-economic growth, restricts access to essential services and information, and exacerbates the developmental gap between the Northeast and the rest of the country, TRAI noted.

## US Treasury Secy: India needs to grow at 8% to make transformational changes in lives of people

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India has the potential and should aim to grow at 8 per cent annually to bring about transformative changes in the lives of millions of people by around 2050, said noted economist and former US Treasury Secretary Larry Summers here on Saturday.

India's GDP growth in 2022-23 was 7.2 per cent as against 9.1 per cent in 2021-22. According to the Reserve Bank of India's projections, India's GDP will likely grow 6.5 per cent in the current fiscal year.

Summers clarified that 8 per cent growth was not his forecast on



the basis of current policy, but added, 'given India's potential, even in a more challenging world economy, I believe that it is an imaginable goal.'

"...An eightfold expansion in the economy is transformative in the lives of hundreds of millions of people.

## Updater Services garners ₹288 cr from anchor investors ahead of IPO

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Integrated facilities management company Updater Services Ltd on Friday said it has raised Rs 288 crore from anchor investors days before the launch of its initial public offering (IPO).

The firm has allotted 96 lakh equity shares to 18 funds at Rs 300 apiece, which is also the upper end of the price band, according to a circular uploaded on the BSE website late Friday night.

Among the anchor investors that participated in the bidding are Nomura Singapore, Citigroup Global Markets Mauritius Pvt Ltd, BNP Paribas Arbitrage, Societe Generale, ICICI Prudential Mutual Fund (MF), Bandhan MF and Aditya Birla Sun Life Insurance Company.

The initial share sale, with a price band of Rs 280-300 per share, will be open for public subscription during



September 25-27.

The Rs 640-crore IPO will comprise a fresh issue of equity shares aggregating up to Rs 400 crore and an Offer for Sale (OFS) of up to 80 lakh equity shares by a promoter and existing shareholders.

Under the OFS, Tangi Facility Solutions Private Ltd, India Business Excellence Fund-II, and India Business Excellence Fund-IIA will be selling shares of the company.

The IPO is expected to fetch Rs

624 crore and Rs 640 crore at the lower end and upper end of the price band respectively.

Proceeds from the fresh issue will be used for payment of debt, funding working capital requirements, pursuing inorganic initiatives, and general corporate purposes.

About 75 per cent of the issue size has been reserved for qualified institutional investors (QIBs), 15 per cent for non-institutional investors, and the remaining 10 per cent for retail investors. Investors can bid for a minimum of 50 equity shares and in multiples thereof.

The company offers integrated facilities management services and business support services to its clients. It caters to customer segments across sectors such as FMCG, manufacturing and engineering, BFSI, healthcare, IT/ITES, automobiles, logistics and warehousing, airports, ports, infrastructure, and retail.

## Respond to intimation of past tax demands for faster refund: I-T dept to taxpayers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The income tax department on Saturday asked taxpayers to respond to intimation from the I-T department regarding outstanding demands of previous years to facilitate faster clearance of refunds for 2022-23 fiscal.

With some taxpayers taking to social media about receiving intimation from the I-T department regarding past unsettled tax demands, the department in a post on 'X' said, this is a taxpayer-friendly measure where an opportunity is being provided to assesses in line with "principles of natural justice".

## SIDBI signs pact with DLAI to boost fintech sector

The Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) on Saturday said it has inked an agreement with the Digital Lenders Association of India (DLAI) to boost the country's fintech sector. SIDBI and DLAI have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to this effect.

The MoU aims for collaborations with SIDBI to develop standard protocols to expedite the adoption of digital lending partnerships including alliances between banks and Lending Service Providers (LSPs), co-lending

collaborations among others, according to a statement. SIDBI will also provide resource support to eligible DLAI member NBFCs and also explore Assignment and Securitisation transactions, it added.

"We are happy to work with the Industry on other important aspects like standard protocols, customer protection, grievance redressal, among others to facilitate faster adoption of digital lending," SIDBI CMD Sivasubramanian Ramann said.

As a part of its business strategy,

SIDBI is using digital technology and partnerships to directly reach out to micro enterprises and will explore offering its credit products through the DLAI members, he added.

Under the agreement, SIDBI and DLAI will explore partnerships for its 'Prayaas' Scheme for informal enterprises, co-lending, GST Sahay, Express loan, green financing, and other direct credit schemes. "This partnership signifies an important step in India's fintech journey for enhancing their role in financing the MSME sector.



**PUNJAB STATE POWER CORPORATION LTD.**  
(Regd. Office PSEB Head Office, The Mail Patiala)  
Corporate Identification No. U40109PB2010SGC033813  
website: www.pspcl.in (Contact No. 96461-22185)

**Tender Enquiry No. 288/SS(D)-355/Spares**      **Dated: 22.09.2023**

Dy.CE/ Substation Design/ TS Organization, PSPCL, C-1, Shakti Vihar, PSPCL, Patiala invites E-tender for Design, Manufacture, Testing at firm's works & at PSPCL site and supply of 2 nos. (Each) 'Prime mover/ Puller/ Truck of reputed make suitable for pulling trailer along with 62MT Pay Load' and Trailer for transportation of Heavy Power Transformer/ other material with maximum Payload Capacity of 62MT from one place to another in Punjab state complete with all accessories (ready for use in field) along with all the requisite Govt. clearances, RCs and set of Mtc. tools & tackles. For detailed NIT & Tender Specification please refer to <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from **26.09.2023 (11:00 AM onwards)**.  
**Note:** Corrigendum and amendments, if any, will be published online at <https://eproc.punjab.gov>.

**C-67/23**  
**76155/12/2251/2023/28150**      **Dated CHD :- 9/22/2023**

**कार्यालय नगर पालिका परिषद् धार जिला धार म.प्र.**

**Email- cmodhar@mpurban.gov.in**

**क्रमांक/5186/लो.नि. शाखा/2023**

**धार दिनांक 21.09.2023**

**:: पंचम ई-निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना ::**

**NIT NO: UAD\_2023\_310513\_1**      **Dhar Date: 22.09.2023**

Online bid are invited from registered contractors/reputed firm for work of water supply scheme under **AMRUT 2.0** for Nagar Palika Parishad Dhar (M.P.)

S. No.	Name of Work	Probable Amount (In lacs)	Completion Period In months including Rainy Season
1.	Work of Augmentation Water Supply Scheme of Dhar town under AMRUT 2.0	3471.60	24 Months


Interested Bidder can view the detailed NIT on website [www.mptenders.gov.in](http://www.mptenders.gov.in) last date of purchase is **07.10.2023** time **17.30 Hrs** further details would be published on website only, and not in Newspaper.

अध्यक्ष  
न.पा. परिषद् धार

उपाध्यक्ष  
न.पा. परिषद् धार

सभापति, लो.नि. समिति  
न.पा. परिषद् धार

मु.न.पा. अधिकारी  
न.पा. परिषद् धार



**Office of the Superintending Engineer**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> Circle, Public Works Department, Pithoragarh**  
**Email : sepwdpth@rediffmail.com**

**Letter No. : 5741 / 962C-03(Yata 'C')/2023**

**Dated : 22/09/2023**

**National Competitive E-Tender Notice**

The Superintending Engineer, 3rd Circle, Public Works Department Pithoragarh invites tender through E-Tendering (**Two Bid System**) on behalf of Hon'ble Governor of Uttarakhand for following works. All other information will be available from date **04-10-2023 at 5.00 Pm** onward on website <http://www.uktenders.gov.in>

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Earnest Money (in Lac)	Cost of Tender (₹)	Validity of Tender (day)	Period of Completion (months)	Contractor's Category of Registration
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Construction of Chandak-Bans-Awalaghat-Gangolihat Motor Road with bridge under State Sector Constituency Gangolihat District Pithoragarh.	9.54	5000.00 +G.S.T.	120	18	Category A & higher for road & bridge works, in state Govt./ Govt. of India

**I N B R I E F**

**VIT-AP UNIVERSITY HOSTS 3RD CONVOCATION**

**AMARAVATI:** VIT-AP University, a renowned institution dedicated to excellence in education, announced the successful culmination of its 3rd Convocation ceremony, celebrating the academic accomplishments and achievements of the Class of 2023. The event took place on Sept 23, 2023 at the university's picturesque campus, marking a significant milestone in the journey of the graduating students. The convocation ceremony was a momentous occasion attended by distinguished guests, esteemed faculty members, Staff, proud parents, and the graduands themselves. The ceremony was graced by Dr Justice B Siva Sankara Rao — Chairman, the Judicial Preview Committee, Govt of AP — as the Chief guest, and Ashish Sharma, Director, Microsoft, attended as the Guest of Honour. Speaking on the occasion Justice Rao said the hard work and dedication are indisputably the cornerstones of student success, and Convocations serve as a day to mark the culmination of their accomplishments. The day serves as an inspirational reminder of the power of commitment and diligence, motivating students to pursue their ambitions with assurance.

**ISLRTC OBSERVES SIGN LANGUAGE DAY**

**NEW DELHI:** Sign Language Day with the theme 'A World Where Deaf People Everywhere Can Sign Anywhere!' was celebrated by the Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre under the aegis of DEPwD, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.



# Hangzhou Asian Games opens with futuristic ceremony

PTI ■ HANGZHOU

Blending elements of artificial intelligence and eco-friendly technology, the Hangzhou Asian Games began here on Saturday with a one-of-a-kind opening ceremony, headlined by a futuristic light show and a digital torch relay.

The dazzling programme, held amid a diplomatic row over the denial of entry to three Indian athletes from Arunachal Pradesh, was a melange of technology, cultural history of China, and the spirit of the continent's unity.

In keeping with the main theme of 'Tides Surging in Asia', the ceremony was about the intermingling of China, Asia and the world in the new era, as well as the unity, love and friendship of the Asian people.

The water element through the surging tide of Qiantang river — which flows through Hangzhou — was the underlying theme of the grand evening which lasted more than two hours.

The ceremony sought to portray a distinctly Chinese and an uniquely Asian flair, capturing the country's cultural heritage and romantic imagery through the blending of its thousands of years old civilization and modern technology, through stunning visuals.

It portrayed the efforts of China's path to modernisation in a presentation that combined Eastern aesthetics and a viewpoint that connects with a global audience.

The technological might of China was written all over with the lighting of the cauldron — the Games' Flame — being done in a unique way.

Digital technology was utilised as torchbearers in the virtual and physical worlds joint-

ly lighted the cauldron.

3-D dual aerial performance technology was also used for the first time in a major stadium while depicting the tidal bore of the Qiantang river. Two performers, one male and one female, danced in the air and closely interacted with the tidal bores which appeared on the LED ground display.

A variety of tidal bores, including a scissor-shaped bore, a lineal bore, a back-flowing bore, and a bore resembling the scales of a fish, rose and fell on the LED ground display.

Chinese President Xi Jinping declared the Games open as more than 12,000 athletes from 45 countries gear up to fight for top honours till October 8.

The Olympic Council of Asia's (OCA) acting president Randhir Singh, International Olympic Committee (IOC) head Thomas Bach, heads of several countries, officials of National Olympic Committees and host of other dignitary were present on the occasion.

Singh urged the athletes to respect fellow athletes and the judges, and take part in the Games in the spirit of friendship and fair competitions.

The Games are being held belatedly due to a surge in Covid cases in China last year.

In keeping with the concept of 'Green Asian Games' or carbon-neutral Games, the opening ceremony used digital fireworks instead of real ones. It, nevertheless, created a thrilling atmosphere.

The nearly-packed 80,000 capacity 'Big Lotus' stadium was decked up elegantly for the occasion and welcomed the athletes from the participating countries, including India, with loud cheers.

After three wushu players



from Arunachal Pradesh were denied visa by the Chinese government, India had cancelled the visit of its sports minister Anurag Thakur. Indian Olympic Association President PT Usha was not present as she is currently in Paraguay as part of a Parliamentary delegation, though other officials attended the ceremony.

Loud cheers greeted the nearly 100 Indian athletes and officials as they marched into the stadium, led by flag-bearers Harmanpreet Singh and Lovlina Borgohain. The Indian contingent

walked out for the athletes' parade in eighth position.

From the tennis team, only Ramkumar Ramanathan participated in the parade since the other players have matches on Sunday.

The male athletes were clad in bandhgala jacket and khaki kurta while their female counterparts donned high-necked blouse and khaki-textured saree made from recycled fabrics.

India is fielding 655 athletes in the Games.

To begin with, the theme 'Water in Autumn Glow' depicted

water as the heart and soul of Hangzhou, where water comes in many forms — West Lake, Qiantang Tidal Bore, the thousand-year-old Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal, and the water conservation system of the Archeological Ruin of Liangzhu City.

In a bid to use culture as a medium of blending the power of technology and the beauty of art inspired by traditional Chinese culture, the opening ceremony combined the flavour of Hangzhou, Zhejiang province imagery and elements unique to

the country.

Through innovative modern technologies, the ceremony also showcased the attractiveness, appeal and unique nature of Eastern aesthetics, as well as the profound impact culture has, the power of science, and the encompassing reach of art.

After around an hour-long protocol part of the ceremony, a cultural programme of 30 minutes and a laser show enthralled the crowd. That was followed by the lighting of the Cauldron and playing of the official song.

As September 23 falls on Autumn Equinox, or the Qiufen, one of China's 24 solar terms, it's the country's time to celebrate the harvest and welcome guests from around the world.

The Ruins of Ancient Liangzhu City, a sacred site in China's civilization and also a UNESCO Heritage site, from where the torch relay began, was also highlighted and 19 pieces of jade cong were used to represent the number of editions of the Asian Games.

The cultural programme part had sections on the natur-

al beauty and 'timeless grace' of Hangzhou and other cities of southern China, including Ningbo, Shaoxing, Suzhou and Wenzhou where a few events of the Games are also being held.

Instead of the traditional single torchbearer lighting the Cauldron, digital torchbearers were involved for the first time in a moment when the virtual and the real worlds meet.

Many individuals were selected as digital torchbearers to carry the hopes and dreams of hundreds of millions of people in Asia, join in as torchbearers in the final leg at the venue and light the Cauldron together. By hosting the continent's biggest multi-sporting event, China has heralded its opening from the pandemic with a giant competition, the largest ever in its history.

No doubt, the Olympics is the pinnacle multi-sporting event in the world but more athletes compete in the Asian Games, with over 12,000 taking part in Hangzhou.

About 11,000 participated in the Tokyo Olympics two years ago and about 10,500 will do so in the next year's Paris Games.

The 2018 Asian Games had seen a little over 11,000 athletes taking part, which will be surpassed in Hangzhou.

Besides Hangzhou, the 19th edition of the continental showpiece will be held in five other cities — Huzhou, Ningbo, Shaoxing, Jinhua and Wenzhou.

Forty-five nations and territories in Asia will compete for 481 gold medals from 40 sports and 61 disciplines, including Esports which is making its debut in the Games.

Competitions in football, volleyball, cricket, rowing, sailing and modern pentathlon began even before Saturday's opening ceremony.



## Monaco slip to defeat after Balogun misses two penalties

AFF ■ PARIS

Folarin Balogun missed two penalties on his first Monaco start before local rivals Nice grabbed a stoppage time winner to go top of Ligue 1 on Friday.

One week after stunning champions PSG at the Parc des Princes 3-2, Nice claimed the three points again when Jeremie Boga slalomd through the Monaco defence to score as Francesco Farioli's team continued an undefeated start to the season. Nice leapfrogged previously unbeaten Monaco to take top spot by one point after a third win in six games.

It was a miserable first start for US international striker Balogun who left Arsenal for Monaco in the summer on a 30-million-euro transfer.

He had penalties saved by Nice goalkeeper Marcin Bulka in the 12th and 54th minutes.

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## Pochettino defends Chelsea medical team amid rash of injuries

AFF ■ LONDON

Mauricio Pochettino insists Chelsea's medical department are not to blame for the rash of injuries that have derailed the start of his reign.

Chelsea's injury crisis left Pochettino with only 15 fit senior players for last weekend's disappointing draw at Bournemouth in the Premier League.

Although Chelsea have spent over £1 billion (\$1.2 billion) on signings since Todd Boehly's consortium took over in 2021, the squad is stretched to breaking point.

The Blues had 12 stars absent against Bournemouth, forcing Pochettino to include three players aged 19 or under who had no first-team experience on his bench, as well as two goalkeepers.

Christopher Nkunku, Reece James, Romeo Lavia, Wesley Fofana, Carney Chukwuemeka, Trevoh Chalobah and Moises Caicedo are among the players filling the treatment room.

Chelsea are languishing in 14th with one win from five games ahead of Sunday's clash with Aston Villa, but Pochettino doesn't believe the medical staff are at fault.

"Before we arrived here we did everything to try and have a clear idea of why there were



too many injuries last season also, to analyse the risk," Pochettino told reporters on Friday.

"It's about the profile of the player, the risk of the player. It's not the people working in the medical staff of performance area.

"I think we need to respect these areas at the club are very

good professionals, qualified people. That's why they are working in football. But there's an individual risk to certain players, you need to assess.

"Then there's bad luck. We have injuries that maybe happen in one season or maybe in two, but have happened to Chelsea because of different situations you cannot control."



## Ten Hag baffled by Man Utd's defensive frailties

AFF ■ LONDON

Erik ten Hag admits he does not know why Manchester United have defended so poorly throughout their dismal start to the season.

Ten Hag's side have conceded 14 goals in their last five games in all competitions after slipping to a 4-3 defeat at Bayern Munich in their Champions League opener on Wednesday.

The Bayern collapse came after Brighton won 3-1 at Old Trafford in the Premier League to pile pressure on United boss Ten Hag. With a clash against struggling Burnley looming on Saturday, Ten Hag desperately needs to shore up United's leaky defence. Alarming for United fans, the Dutch coach conceded he is still trying to get to the

root of the problem.

"We have shown that we can do it because last year we had the most clean sheets in the Premier League because of the team, because we defended very good as a team, so we have to get back to that standard," Ten Hag told reporters on Friday. "Of course I am pushing the team and demanding from the team, and from the start of the season, but they are human beings, not robots, so, why they are not doing it, I try to find out and I try to give the solutions and try to motivate the players to do the job.

"When you are in a period like we are in always as a manager you are asking yourself these questions. My job is to get them to do the job."

Question marks have been raised about the attitude of

United's squad, with clips from the Bayern game apparently showing players not chasing back as hard as they might.

Ten Hag does not believe a lack of willingness was to blame, though, saying: "It's always a concern when we didn't run but I think against Bayern it was not the case. "In certain situations: yes. So it's also to recognise which situation. Is it about they didn't recognise it and didn't make the right decisions or is it about willingness?"

"Against Spurs, we didn't run too much. But I think against Bayern we did our best from physical outputs but we didn't always run in the right moment.

"If we bounced back like we did in Munich, you can't say the spirit isn't right. I think we have other problems than that."

AFF ■ MIAMI

Seven Caribbean countries will host matches at next year's T20 World Cup, including Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago, the International Cricket Council (ICC) announced on Friday.

The ICC awarded the hosting of the event, to be held in June 2024, to the West Indies and the United States in November 2021.

Dominica, Guyana, St Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines have also been named as hosts.

"The matches will again give cricket fans the unique experience of enjoying cricket in the Caribbean," said ICC chief executive Geoff Allardice.

Matches will also be held in New York, Florida and Texas in the United States, the first time a major ICC event has been held in the country.

One notable absence from the list of Caribbean host nations is Jamaica, whose Sabina Park ground in the capital Kingston is one of the iconic homes of West Indies cricket.

Jamaica has the largest population of the main cricket-playing nations in the Caribbean

## Caribbean nations named as T20 World Cup venues but no Jamaica



but did not submit a bid to host the tournament.

Courtney Francis, chief executive officer of the Jamaican Cricket Association, said Cricket West Indies engaged with

national governments over potential bids and that Jamaica's administration had opted against participation.

"The government is the one who determines whether we

could be able to host matches because all the expenses would have come back to the government," he told CVM television.

"The government is the one who would have put up the bid

money. They would have been the one to carry out repairs to the infrastructure and so on.

"The government did not see it as a viable option in their view and that is the reason why

I believe that we have not been able to bid." West Indies hosted the tournament in 2010, three years after holding the 50 overs World Cup, and Cricket West Indies chief executive Johnny Grave said they were ready to put on a show again.

"The West Indies has got a huge experience in hosting ICC events and we're currently hosting the Caribbean Premier League, which has been another successful tournament.

"We have very experienced operators throughout the region that we work with and partner with and all the stakeholders will be ready to welcome the world and stage this iconic ICC event," he said. "We're all tremendously excited by the opportunity and the platform that it gives our region to promote itself to the world for tourism, for economic development, as well as hopefully to give our men's team a huge home advantage and going for a record third title."

Next year's tournament will be the first edition of the event to include a record 20 teams.

England are the current T20 world champions, winning their second title when they beat Pakistan in the final in Melbourne last year.

## Record-equalling Guirassy fires Stuttgart to top of Bundesliga

AFF ■ STUTTGART (GERMANY)

Serhou Guirassy scored twice to tie a Bundesliga record and propel Stuttgart to the top of the table with a 3-1 home victory over struggling Darmstadt on Friday.

Stuttgart fell behind after 18 minutes when defender Dan-Axel Zagadou turned a low cross inside his own near post.

Enzo Millot replied five minutes later, side footing home from a Guirassy lay off.

The Guinea striker then put Stuttgart ahead in the 32nd minute, smashing the ball in from the edge of the area. It was his ninth league goal from nine strikes at goal this season.

In added time, Guirassy dinked over goalkeeper Marcel Schuhen to become the second player to reach 10 Bundesliga goals in five games. The first was Robert Lewandowski.

"I am very happy," a beaming Guirassy said. "We won, that's the most important thing. But of course I'm also happy



about my goals and that I was able to help my team with them. I have to continue that now."

Stuttgart have a league-leading 17 goals and Guirassy has 10 of them.

"He's in top form, outstanding. We are happy to have him," said midfielder Chris Fuehrich.

The victory lifted Stuttgart to 12 points, two ahead of Bayer Leverkusen who host Heidenheim on Sunday and third-place Bayern Munich, who entertain Bochum on Saturday.

Darmstadt dropped to last place on goal difference.



# Pressure mounts on Iyer, Ashwin for performances that count



PTI ■ INDORE

Shreyas Iyer will be desperate for some runs after missing out on a flat track while the skillful R Ashwin will be searching for wickets in the middle overs when India take on Australia in the second ODI here on Sunday.

Despite missing four first-XI players, including skipper Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, India were able to win the first ODI rather comfortably and look on course to secure the series at the Holkar Stadium which usually produces high-scoring games.

Rain in the city has brought the temperature down which will be welcomed by the players from either side after experiencing unusual heat and humidity in Mohali. The game on Friday had enough positives for India, mainly the performance of Mohammad Shami and Surya-

kumar Yadav, but few questions still need to be answered ahead of the World Cup, beginning October 5.

India's designated number 4 Iyer, whose fitness came under the scanner in the Asia Cup even though he was coming back from a long injury-lay off, has not been able to get time in the middle due to different reasons.

While a back spasm ruled him out of the business end of Asia Cup, an avoidable run out on Friday ended his nervy 8-ball stay in the centre.

The right-hander will be hoping for a bagful of runs in the coming two games which would make him and his team feel much better going into the global event.

Ashwin, on the other hand, came up with a tidy bowling effort in his comeback game but was not able to put the Australian batters in much dis-

comfort on a flat track. He was not able to generate much turn and his flatter deliveries were easily negotiated by the opposition.

The champion spinner could still make a last minute entry into India's World Cup if Axar Patel doesn't get fit in time but the team management expects more from the 37-year-old than what he managed on Friday.

It also remains to be seen if another off-spinner Washington Sundar gets a game. If that happens on Sunday, Ashwin might have to warm the bench.

Shardul Thakur too would be looking for an improvement from the first game, having conceded 78 runs in 10 overs while all the other bowlers returned frugal figures.

He does have a knack of picking wickets and coming up with a useful cameo with the bat

but he has not been able to do that consistently in the ODI format. Thakur will only be used sporadically in the World Cup and therefore, he would be keen to make the most of the chances he gets in the ongoing series.

In the batting department, world's best T20 batter Suryakumar Yadav seems to have cracked the ODI code after a prolonged lean patch.

The management has told him to consume 45-50 balls every game, which is enough for someone like him to make a telling impact on the match. He just did that on Friday with a well paced half-century.

Like India, Australia too were missing some of their key players in the opener including Mitchell Starc, Glenn Maxwell and Josh Hazlewood. Skipper Pat Cummins hinted after the game in Mohali that they might only be ready by the third game

in Rajkot on September 27.

Australia won the series in India earlier this year and find themselves in a must-win situation on Sunday. Josh Inglis showed promise with a run a ball 45 but the middle-order needs to be more consistent.

Veteran opener David Warner has carried his good form from South Africa to India and would be looking to maintain it over the next couple of months.

Steve Smith and Marnus Labuschagne were guilty of throwing their starts in Mohali and a big hundred will be needed from either of them if Australia are to comeback in the series. The last ODI was played here in January when India amassed 385 against New Zealand with Rohit and Shubman Gill smashing hundreds.

Rohit will not be around but trust Gill to do an encore in front of a vibrant Indore crowd.

## You shouldn't feel low if you are not playing XI: Shami



PTI ■ MOHALI

"When I was playing regularly, there must have been someone, who had to sit out and I wasn't guilty. So you can't feel low if you are sitting out because the team is winning," a pragmatic Mohammed Shami said when asked about the sporadic chances he has been getting in 50-over cricket of late.

The Indian team management has indicated that when it plays full strength during the upcoming World Cup, Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj will be the two front-line pacers.

But after his match-winning figures of 5 for 51, Shami said that rotation isn't a bad thing when you play so many matches on the bounce.

"This is the team's plan and it is important to stick with it. You can't be always in the playing XI because a lot

depends on the team combination," Shami said.

"If you are playing, well and good and if you are not in the playing XI, then you should be supportive of those, who are playing. I think there is no point feeling low and I am ready to play the role the team gives me," Shami said as he steered clear of anything that could be remotely controversial.

He was also asked if he approves of this rotation policy where he has to sit out.

"What you are trying to know is beyond my comprehension but obviously when you build a team, (the) coach has a role to rotate players and, based on the situation, it is decided," Shami said with a wry smile.

He made it clear that rotation before a big event like the World Cup is a good thing.

"You have seen we have (had) got results due to rotation and I believe before the World

Cup, you shouldn't put too much workload in back-to-back games, and its going well and we are getting good results."

Shami had taken a break after the World Test Championship final and he didn't travel to the West Indies for the two Tests and three ODIs.

"It was important to take that break because I had played back-to-back games continuously for 7-8 months. At the back of my head, I felt I needed a break for a series.

"I discussed with coach (Rahul Dravid) and captain (Rohit Sharma) and took a break (from the West Indies series). But my break never seemed like a break for me because I have an elaborate training set-up at home (Sahaspur in UP's Amroha) and I end up training more at home than when I am with the Indian team," he stated.

He was asked if he did anything special to dismiss Steve Smith, but his answer was in the negative.

"Just tried to do my basics right and hit the top of off-stump and wait for the batters to make a mistake."

The conditions were humid and Shami was used in small spells. Could it be a template going into the World Cup?

"It depends on the situation. How a partnership (is) going and how well you are bowling at that time. Sometimes, you end up bowling a six-over spell as well while sometimes you bowl only three overs."

He admitted that heat does a play role.

"The heat does play a part and we are also human beings. It takes a toll on our bodies and on stamina. But when you have played international cricket for so long, it will not affect your fitness but it depends how much effort we are putting in," he concluded.



## Pakistan awaits India visa for World Cup travel

PTI ■ INDORE

Players and team officials of Pakistan's World Cup-bound contingent are yet to get visas for their scheduled travel to India on September 27, two days before their opening warm-up fixture.

The Pakistan squad was supposed to reach Hyderabad via Dubai where a two-day team bonding exercise was planned before travelling to India on September 27.

The Babar Azam-led side is scheduled to play its first warm-up game against New Zealand on September 29.

PCB sources told PTI that the team bonding trip to Dubai has been cancelled as players await their visas from the Indian High Commission in Islamabad.

Sources also confirmed that the PCB has raised the matter

with the International Cricket Council (ICC).

Pakistan last visited India for the T20 World Cup in 2016. The arch-rivals only play each other in Asia Cup and ICC tournaments due to the tense relations between the two countries.

"PCB had sent its officials to Islamabad for passport collection yesterday but the visas are still in process. That has forced the board to cancel the team bonding trip in Dubai. If the visas come through, the team will reach Hyderabad on September 27 via Dubai," said a source.

Another source privy to the matter added: "the visas will come through after due vetting process. When it comes to issuing an Indian visa to a Pakistan passport holder, clearances need to come from three

ministries — home, external affairs and sports. That process takes time but it will happen."

A total of 33 members of the Pakistan contingent, including players, three travelling reserves and team officials, are awaiting their visas. Tournament host BCCI could not be reached for a comment.

Pakistan's second warm-up will be against Australia on October 3, also in Hyderabad.

They will remain in the city for their opening two World Cup games against Netherlands and Sri Lanka on October 6 and 10 respectively before flying to Ahmedabad for the big game against hosts India on October 14. Only two members from the current Pakistan squad have toured India for cricket - Mohammad Nawaz and Salman Agha.

## India becomes top ranked team in all formats

PTI ■ DUBAI

India became the top-ranked side in all three formats of the game following their win against Australia in the series opener that elevated them to the number one spot in the ODI rankings. Following their five-wicket win over Australia on Friday, India (116 rating points) displaced arch-rivals Pakistan (115) at the top of the rankings.

Already leading the Test and T20 chart, India now reign supreme across all formats.

This is only the second time in men's cricketing history that a side has achieved the No.1 ranking across the formats. Prior to this, only South Africa had achieved the feat back in August 2012.

Australia (111) remain third in the ODI list despite dropping two points. India and Australia play the second of the three ODIs on Sunday.

## PM lays foundation stone of international cricket stadium in Varanasi

PTI ■ VARANASI (UP)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday laid the foundation stone of an international cricket stadium in Varanasi and said that through the game, the world is "getting linked" with India.

Highlighting that the design of the stadium dedicated to Lord Mahadev has instilled a feeling of pride among the citizens of Kashi, he said the facility would witness great cricket matches while young athletes would get an opportunity to train at the international level.

Modi said recent sporting successes of India were due to a changed approach as now sports have been linked with fitness, employment and career of youths.

Compared to nine years ago, this year's sports budget has been increased threefold, he said.



"Through cricket, the world is getting linked with India" and many new countries are playing cricket leading to a greater number of matches, he said, adding this stadium will cater to the rising demand for such facilities in the coming years.

To be built near the Ring Road in Rajatalab area here at a cost of about Rs 450 crores and spread across an area of more than 30 acres, the stadium is likely to be ready by December

2025. The Uttar Pradesh government said it has spent Rs 121 crore to acquire the land for the stadium while the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) will spend Rs 330 crore on its construction.

The spectators' gallery of the stadium would resemble the steps of the ghats of Varanasi. This will be Uttar Pradesh's third international cricket stadium after Kanpur and Lucknow.

## Gambhir Picks Babar As Best Player For World Cup

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former India cricketer Gautam Gambhir picks Pakistan captain Babar Azam over Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma and David Warner for the upcoming ODI World Cup which will start from October 5 in India. LSG mentor also reckoned that Babar Azam has a different level of quality.

In the recent outing against

India in the Asia Cup 2023 Super Four clash Babar Azam was unable to fire runs from his bat he just scored 10 runs and Pakistan lost that match by a huge margin of 228 runs.

Gambhir reckons that Babar Azam will be the player to watch out in the upcoming tournament.

"Babar Azam. I mean Babar Azam has the quality that he can set this World Cup on fire. And I



have seen very few players who have so much time to bat. And I believe that Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, David Warner, Kane Williamson, Joe Root, but Babar Azam has a different level of quality" said Gambhir on Star Sports.

The first match of ODI World Cup 2023 will be played between defending champion England and New Zealand at Ahmedabad's Narendra Modi Stadium.

## I Love To Put Myself In Challenging Situations: KL Rahul

PNS ■ MOHALI

India's stand-in captain KL Rahul believes it is always good to put himself in "challenging situations", especially after returning from a long injury lay-off.

Leading the side in the first two ODIs against Australia in absence of Rohit Sharma, Rahul struck an unbeaten 58 as India won by five wickets to take a 1-0 lead in the three-match series before the World Cup.

"Not the first time, always happens with me. I'm used to it, I love it," Rahul said about leading the side in place of regular skipper

Rohit Sharma.

"I think the intensity in the afternoon was great, after Colombo this felt like heaven at the start but it was really hot and humid. It gets tough and physically challenging, but we've all worked on our fitness and that's showing on the field."

Rahul said it was imperative to build a partnership with Suryakumar Yadav (50) once set Shubman Gill (74) and Rituraj Gaikwad (71) departed.

"After Shubman got out, it was a bit tricky with the set batter out. But managed to build a good partnership with Surya, need to put

myself in such challenging situations.

"We kept talking about hitting good cricket shots, rotating the strike and this is something all our batters are working on. We didn't want to get bogged down, we were always on par so we wanted to take it deep," he said.

Man-of-the-match Mohammed Shami, who returned with brilliant 5 for 51, felt good after bowling his full quota of 10 overs on Friday in hot and humid conditions.

"It depends on the captain and the game situation, but despite the heat you feel like bowling 4-5 overs



with the new ball," Shami said of bowling longer spells in the sultry conditions.

"I enjoyed the wicket of Marsh, that's a different feeling when you get the outside edge, when you control your swing nicely. It was important to hit the right lengths on this wicket, either at full pace or go slow, but bowling the right lengths were key," he said.

Australia captain Pat Cummins said it was not an overall performance from his injury-ridden side but hoped the series would help them to build a good rhythm in the run-up to the ODI World Cup starting in India next

month.

"Personally, happy to be back. Good to get my first game in India. A few guys batted well, few guys bowled well but overall not good enough.

"(On injuries) They'd probably not be ready for the second game, maybe the third game. Maxi (Glenn Maxwell) has just arrived in India. (Steve) Smith's first hit as well, and Davey (David Warner) was brilliant," he said.

"Good to see them out there together. We've got one eye on the big tournament, but you want to set the standards early and build a good rhythm," he added.



Vikram Singh Meena, founder & CEO of TechEagle said, "Time is the most crucial dimension when we talk about emergency healthcare as every second is important in such a scenario and by deploying innovative solutions such as drones a lot of time could be saved and in turn lives."







# Khalistan terror: Globalised 21st century challenge

The rise of Sikh ethno-nationalism in the 1980s posed a threat to India's territorial integrity. Since then, it has transcended the borders of India. The way the 21st-century Khalistan movement is shaped and propagated to its followers is markedly different from the violent upsurge of the 1980s. It is much more globalised now. While hardcore advocates like Amritpal Singh have followed in the footsteps of the Bhindranwale cult, the worldwide network of Khalistani sympathisers has provided the movement with an easier source of sustenance than in the past.

The history of Khalistan lies in the roots of Sikhism. The revered Sikh religion was founded by Guru Nanak in Punjab in the 15th century. It boasts more than 25 million followers worldwide, with Sikhs constituting a minority group in India, making up less than 2 per cent of the country's total population of 1.4 billion today. However, they are a majority in their home State of Punjab.

The word "Khalistan" signifies the establishment of an ethno-religious sovereign state for the Sikhs, referred to as the land of the Khalsa. This is defined as the "land of the pure." Additionally, Khalsa encompasses both a community of believers who consider Sikhism their faith and a group of initiated Sikhs. Devout orthodox Sikhs are ritually admitted to this community upon reaching puberty. The very concept of Khalsa was established by the tenth Sikh Guru, Gobind Singh, in the year 1699.

However, the demand for the establishment of Khalistan is a relatively recent development, originating during the period of British colonialism in India. It primarily emerged in the Punjab region. Some proponents of Khalistan assert that their envisioned state encompasses the current Punjab State, while others advocate for the inclusion of the Punjab region in Pakistan, along with a demand to incorporate other significant neighbouring states such as Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, and the Chandigarh region.

Furthermore, Shimla and Lahore are considered the two potential capitals of Khalistan. The original call for the formation of Khalistan was, in fact, a response to the Pakistan Resolution of 1940. This resolution, also known as the Lahore Resolution, was authored and prepared by Muhammad Zafarullah Khan and ratified by the All India



Muslim League on March 23, 1940. The term "Khalistan" was first coined by Dr VS Bhatti to signify an independent Sikh State in March 1940.

The primary objective behind the Khalistan demand was to secure better representation for Sikhs in political institutions and to establish a homeland for the community. After the partition of India in 1947, the Sikhs were deeply affected as Punjab was divided into two parts — one remained with India and the other with Pakistan. This further fueled the demand for a Sikh homeland.

The Canadian connection to the Khalistan movement is longstanding. The current controversy surrounding Khalistan has strained the relationship between India and Canada, particularly after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau stated in Canada's Parliament that there were credible allegations linking Indian Government agents to the June murder of the Sikh separatist leader, Hardeep Singh Nijjar. The Indian Government promptly denied any involvement in Nijjar's killing. It is evident that Trudeau is attempting to avoid openly addressing the issue of

the growing Khalistan movement in Canada.

India has repeatedly accused Canada of continuously supporting the Khalistan movement, which is banned in India. However, this movement enjoys widespread popularity among a substantial section of Sikhs worldwide.

What Trudeau is doing today amounts to nothing more than resorting to vote bank politics in Canada. According to Indian estimates, nearly 8,000-9,000 Khalistani radicals exert influence over approximately 15 gurdwaras, using them as centres for fundraising and garnering support for political parties in Canada. Their primary sphere of influence lies in political mobilisation in Brampton, Ontario, as well as Vancouver and Surrey in British Columbia. Instead, Trudeau should have recognised the gravity of the situation and cooperated with the Indian Government in expelling all Khalistani activists from his country.

The day will come when they may pose a potential security threat to Trudeau's fellow citizens. There is an abundance of evidence pointing to

the growth of Sikh militancy in Canada. In June 2020, Indian intelligence agencies issued a warning that criminal gangs based in Canada, comprising Indian expatriates from Punjab, including Sikhs for Justice (SFJ), are directly providing funding to the Khalistanis. The infamous Dhalial and Grewal gangs, operating in the British Columbia Province and involved in a drug-trafficking network, have connections to Gurpatwant Singh Pannu of the SFJ. Additionally, another notorious syndicate called the Brother's Keepers of Vancouver has been linked to these gangs.

Furthermore, the SFJ is establishing close links with the Pakistani establishment and agencies in order to reignite the Khalistan movement. It is reported that the SFJ is diligently working to organise a referendum for self-determination on the issue of Khalistan. Canadian authorities must take note that SFJ activists in Punjab and the Tarai region of Uttar Pradesh are consistently receiving substantial funds from gangs based in that country.

Pannu has issued a threat to Indo-Canadian Hindus, urging them to leave Canada and

return to India. In a public video message, he stated, "Indo-Canadian Hindus, you have renounced your allegiance to Canada and the Canadian Constitution. Your destination is India. Leave Canada and go to India."

This has sparked another diplomatic dispute between India and Canada. This will result in significant economic losses for both nations. Moreover, the expulsion of diplomatic staff from both sides, along with visa restrictions, will only lead to a severe strain in their bilateral relations.

"While there is currently no active insurgency in Punjab, there has been ongoing support for the Khalistan movement in the State. Consequently, successive Central governments issued repeated warnings about Khalistanis attempting a resurgence and seeking to influence the youth of Punjab."

Moreover, Punjab's political instability, fueled by infighting within the Congress and the rise of the Aam Aadmi Party to power, has created an environment where neighbouring Pakistan, its state agencies, and Sikh extremist factions based in Canada have been relentless in their efforts

to destabilise Punjab in recent times.

The warning issued by Ganga Singh Dhillon was stark: "We are not seeking just a piece of land. We are looking for a territory where Sikhs can safeguard their women and children. Where a Sikh can determine his own destiny — where our religious shrines are not subject to being overrun by army tanks. You can call it an independent Punjab, a sovereign state, or Khalistan. What we are requesting is a homeland for the Sikh nation" ("Give us Khalistan and leave us in peace," *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, July 21, 1985).

However, Harjot strongly contends that the emotional attachment with Punjab among Sikhs is relatively recent and does not trace back to the early days of the Sikh community as some Khalistan ideologues might assert today. It is the convergence of history and geography, discourse and space, territoriality and metacommentaries that has transformed Punjab into Khalistan. Both Punjab and Khalistan are human-made constructs, and there is nothing inherently natural about them (Harjot S Oberoi, *'From Punjab to*

*Khalistan: Territoriality and Metacommentary*, Pacific Affairs, Spring 1987)

Answers to these underlying currents are not very difficult to find in a globalised world. We are all part of a flat world where identities and cultural insignia are often overshadowed by economic desires, in contrast to what we experienced in a pre-globalised era. Migration has become a way of life. As more and more Sikhs migrated abroad, particularly to the US, the UK, and Canada for a better life, these extremist elements started relying on this extensive diaspora for their sustenance.

Back in India, all these groups are banned, and authorities are closely monitoring their activities and local connections. Consequently, they have found Canada to be a favourable ground for promoting and motivating many youths to support their agenda. For a long time, Khalistanis have been organising against India in Canada, and successive administrations in Ottawa are well aware of this.

Trudeau should not have aligned himself with one of the banned terror groups in India. He is well aware that he is on the wrong side. These Khalistanis have no allegiances; they simply want to keep their agenda alive so that their supporters and sympathisers remain intact for the long run.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi extended a helping hand to Trudeau, and he should have responded by taking decisive action to eradicate these criminal gangs from Canadian soil altogether.

We all must understand that terrorists recognise no religion or boundaries. They are enemies of civil society and universally recognised liberties of modern society. They stand against peace and humanity. As two democracies, India and Canada must join forces in the fight against Khalistanis. It is now time to prevent them from spreading their agenda and destabilising peace in both countries. The resurgence of the Khalistani movement is a warning signal for both Punjab and all of India. This must be addressed with a superior security and intelligence strategy and network. Undoubtedly, Delhi today possesses much stronger anti-terror infrastructure and more robust leadership than it did in the 1980s to deal with Bhindranwale-like symptoms.

(The writer is currently president of the Global Research Foundation)

**The rise of Sikh ethno-nationalism in the 1980s threatened India's integrity. Today's Khalistan movement is more globalised, with a worldwide network of sympathisers. Khalistan movement has ties to Canada, straining India-Canada relations. Khalistanis aim to influence Sikh youth in Punjab. Addressing this threat requires a robust security and intelligence approach. It is imperative for India and Canada to collaborate against terrorism, transcending boundaries and religions.**



MAKHAN SAIKIA

## PERSPECTIVE

# India's healthcare in uncertain times

**Health insurance is vital, especially during unpredictable times like the Covid-19 pandemic. It helps cover medical expenses and provides financial security. India has made progress in healthcare accessibility through schemes like RSBY and AB-PMJAY, aiming to leave no one behind**



DIPANSHU NIJJANANDI

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, individuals experienced the unfortunate loss of their loved ones, and a significant portion of them also had the dual burden of losing both loved ones and financial resources while their hospitalisation for treatment. There exists a well-known adage that posits food, clothing, and shelter as the fundamental necessities of human existence.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge an additional element that is often overlooked by the majority of individuals: the acquisition of health insurance. The natural world displays a significant degree of unpredictability and predictability, which is mirrored in the fragility of human existence. Any form of misfortune has the potential to lead to varying degrees of harm, ranging from minor injuries to severe consequences, including loss of life. Sickness or disease does not give advance notice before affecting the human body.

While it is indeed accurate that money cannot purchase life itself, it can provide assistance in navigating challenging circumstances for both individuals

and their families. In contemporary society, possessing a robust health insurance coverage is imperative due to the prevailing uncertainties. It is a cornerstone of personal financial planning, encompassing an individual's comprehensive financial inflows and outflows.

A significant portion of the population lacks awareness regarding medical inflation, of medical inflation, which is the highest form of inflation. Specifically, it compounds at an annual rate of 15 per cent. This implies that a medical treatment currently priced at ₹10,00,000 will escalate to ₹40,00,000 over a period of ten years. Therefore, one may comprehend the significance of possessing a comprehensive health insurance policy.

Undoubtedly, India's healthcare infrastructure has shown significant progress in recent years. In order to provide universal access to healthcare services for all citizens inside the nation, the government has implemented various measures. The Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) and Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-



PMJAY) are India's two main public health insurance schemes. RSBY was established in 2008 to offer those living in poverty access to health insurance. The scheme has now been combined with the 2018-born AB-PMJAY. This programme was created to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and its overarching promise to "leave no one behind".

Aiming to cover 100 million households, or around 500 million individuals, nationwide with health insurance, is AB-PMJAY. As of April 2023, data from the National Health Authority shows that over 50 million hospitalisations under AB-PMJAY had been authorised, with a total cost exceeding ₹80,000 crore. Additionally, the programme has enrolled over 23,000 hos-

pitals nationwide, which offer beneficiaries a wide range of medical services.

As of March 2022, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) reported 62 non-life insurance companies in operation, with 29 offering health insurance products. In addition, the country possessed a total of six autonomous health insurance carriers.

According to data from the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), the health insurance market in India has experienced significant growth over a period of time. As of March 2022, health insurance companies had accumulated a total of INR 64,230 crores in premiums, reflecting a year-on-year growth of 15.2 per cent. During the corresponding time period, a total of 7.69 crore policies were successfully sold, indicating a growth rate of 12.6 per cent compared to the previous year.

In today's era, it is crucial for individuals to protect their families by obtaining comprehensive health insurance coverage to guard against unforeseen medical emergencies.

There are some crucial factors to take into consideration before purchasing a health insurance policy:

- 1) The sum insured ideally should be 15 to 20 times of your annual income.
- 2) Purchase super top up policy along with base insurance policy to increase sum insured cover, once your base policy cover will exhaust then super top up will come into existence.
- 3) If you are a family person then go for family floater plans.
- 4) Claim settlement ratio should be above 95 per cent.
- 5) High number of network hospitals with cashless treatment facilities.
- 6) Pre and post hospitalisation expenses should be covered.
- 7) Less waiting period for named ailment and pre-existing diseases.
- 8) No claim bonus or cumulative bonus in case of claims also should be there.
- 9) No room rent capping should be there in the policy.
- 10) Policy should have day care; in-patient care treatment, ICU cover and ambulance cover up to sum insured with-

out any capping.

11) Automatic unlimited recharge or restoration benefits should be there for unrelated or the same illness without any waiting period.

12) Covid-19, Ayush treatments, domiciliary hospitalisation and organ donor cover should be there up to sum insured.

13) Ideally claim settlement should be done within 30 days of last document submission to the hospital or insured by the insurance company.

14) No Co-payment clause should be there.

Given the substantial cost of healthcare in India, the inclusion of health insurance is an essential element in individual financial strategising. Health insurance provides individuals and families with a sense of security by safeguarding them from the economic strain caused by medical emergencies. This is made possible by the availability of many insurance plans and the benefits offered by insurance providers.

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