

**OPINION 6**  
FABIAN SOCIALISM IS PAST  
ITS EXPIRY DATE

**WORLD 9**  
CLAIRE: NEWEST INDIAN-ORIGIN  
MINISTER IN UK PM CABINET

**MONEY 10**  
INDIA'S GDP GROWS AT  
7.8 PER CENT IN Q1

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BY 5 WICKETS  
12 SPORT

## INDIA brainstorms common agenda

PN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Ahead of the formal brainstorming scheduled for Friday at the INDIA bloc meeting, leaders of 28 Opposition parties went into an informal huddle on Thursday evening to share views and build consensus on crucial issues like the Common Minimum Programme (CMP), seat-sharing, choice of the coordination committee convenor and the possible simultaneous elections to five State Assemblies and the Lok Sabha.

At the dinner being hosted by Maharashtra's former Chief Minister and Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray at Hotel Grand Hyatt — venue of the INDIA bloc conclave — on Thursday night, the Opposition leaders — including Malharajun Kharge, Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, Nitish Kumar, Uddhav, Mamata

Banerjee, Arvind Kejriwal and Lalu Prasad — were in the process of formalising the agenda for Friday's deliberations, at which crucial decisions are expected to be taken.

"The leaders of 28 Opposition parties are informally deliberating on the agenda for tomorrow's meeting. The formal meeting will begin at 10.30 am tomorrow," Maharashtra's former Chief Minister and senior Congress Ashok Chavan said.

"Many names have cropped up for the post of INDIA bloc's coordination committee's chairperson. At tonight's meeting, our leaders will try to build a consensus on the choice of the joint front's convenor which will be finalised tomorrow," a senior Opposition leader said.

Senior Congress leader Prithviraj Chavan said, "The focus at the meeting will be



RJD leader Lalu Prasad, party leader Tejashwi Yadav, CPI(M) leader Sitaram Yechury and CPI's D Raja arrive for the INDIA alliance meeting, at a hotel in Mumbai, on Thursday

evolving a process on how to go about seat-sharing and formulate a common minimum programme. After long time all the Opposition parties have come together. The experiment was

a success in 1977. We are attempting to replicate that experiment."

Bihar's former Chief Minister and RJD leader Lalu Prasad said the need of the

hour was to strengthen unity, sovereignty of the country and protect its Constitution and democracy.

"The Modi Government has failed to address issues of poverty, unemployment and welfare of farmers. At the INDIA alliance meet, we will work on a common programme. We have to put up a candidate against the ruling BJP candidate on a one-on-one basis," said Lalu.

Dwelling upon the contributions made by Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and Lalu in the initial stages in cobbling a joint national alliance, Bihar's Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav said, "Our Mahagathbandhan came to power in Bihar last August and Lalu and Nitish decided to work on getting all like-minded parties on board for a larger Opposition alliance"

Continued on Page 2

## Special session of Parliament triggers wild speculation

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Thursday sprang a surprise by announcing to convene a Special Session of Parliament for five days between September 18 and 22. It ignited speculation, with some saying that premature general elections could be announced.

While none from the Government or the Parliament Secretariat could provide the reason behind the Special Session of Parliament soon after the Monsoon Session was over, sources in the Government said there is a possibility of transition from the old Parliament building to the new Parliament building.

Continued on Page 2

## Xi too may skip G20

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

There is a speculation that Chinese President Xi Jinping may not take part in the G-20 summit in New Delhi and India has not yet received any confirmation about his schedule for the high-profile event from September 9-10, sources said here on Thursday. Russian President Vladimir Putin has already announced that he will not attend the summit.

US President Joe Biden may reschedule his visit to G-20 due to Hurricane Idalia in Florida early Wednesday. He said he may have to adjust his personal and work travel schedule as a result of the hurricane.

Biden, speaking at the White House, said he had spoken with the governors of all potentially affected states and reassured them that the federal government would provide any assistance needed.

Asked if he was making contingency plans for his personal travel schedule for the Labour Day weekend or his scheduled participation in the Group of 20 leaders summit in India, Biden said "Well I may, I just don't know yet," Reuters said.

Reports about the likelihood of the Chinese President not travelling to New Delhi and instead Premier Li Qiang expected to represent Beijing at the summit, come even as a majority of G20 leaders, including US President Joe Biden, French President Emmanuel Macron, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, Japanese premier Fumio Kishida and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, have already confirmed their participation at the summit.

There was no official word on the issue of President Jinping from the Indian side.

Continued on Page 2

## Dr Chandan Mitra: An enduring legacy of journalism & mentorship

SWARN KUMAR ANAND ■ NEW DELHI

Dr Chandan Mitra, the illustrious editor with an Oxford education, leaves behind a legacy that reverberates through the corridors of *The Pioneer*, where he wielded his editorial influence for an impressive span of 24 years.

On this day, he would have celebrated his 69th birthday, yet his presence remains etched in the hearts of those privileged enough to have crossed paths

with him.

The news of Dr Mitra's passing on September 1, 2021, left me with an overwhelming sense of remorse. In the months leading up to that sombre moment, I had nurtured the intention of paying him a visit, a gesture that the relentless onslaught of the Covid second wave cruelly thwarted.

Within the realm of *The Pioneer*, Dr Mitra transcended being a mere boss; he metamorphosed into a mentor and a friend. He treated every staff

member as a cherished colleague, bestowing upon me the honour of occupying a seat beside him during our news meetings. These are the reminiscences that stand out vividly in my memory, moments painted in the hues of camaraderie and shared experiences.

During these interactions, Dr Mitra would regale us with personal anecdotes, granting us glimpses into the odyssey of his life. I vividly recollect the tale of his spirited confrontation with a traffic policeman who took



issue with his lack of helmet. Undeterred, Dr Mitra promptly dialed a senior police officer from the police station, extricating himself from the predicament. Such narratives illuminated not only his resourcefulness but also the indomitable spirit that defined him.

A lasting imprint was forged through the daily ritual of perusing the logbook. Within its pages, he etched his musings and reflections on the day's edition of *The Pioneer*. This practice offered a glimpse

into his mind, a testament to his unwavering dedication to the craft of quality journalism.

Dr Mitra staunchly championed the tenets of ethical reporting with an ironclad resolve. He firmly dissuaded personal attacks in news reports, insisting on presenting both sides of any accusation before publication. Fairness and integrity were the cornerstones of his approach.

Beyond his seemingly stern exterior resided a man imbued with compassion. He extended

a sphere of autonomy to departmental heads, nurturing a climate of ingenuity and productivity. While he eschewed the hire-and-fire philosophy, his acumen was unmistakable. He strategically retained talent, offering substantial raises when warranted to align with competitive offers. I was one such beneficiary.

His investment in my journalistic growth was evident in his recommendations for books, movies, and articles. One instance stands out when

he handed me a book on journalism, only to later confess that it was primarily in French. His playful retort, "You can learn French to read this book," reverberated with mirth within the precincts of our news meeting room.

His dedication to the truth extended beyond the confines of the newsroom. Dr Mitra was unyielding in the face of pressure, his editorial decisions unswayed by external influences.

Continued on Page 2

## EK ATOOT RISHTA BHAROSE KA

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Har Pal Aapke Saath

LIC/PI/2023-24/05/ENG

# WB Congress upset as Abhishek, Rahul talk

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Though a long spell of hammering rains brought some cooling effect in large parts of Bengal there was eruption in the State Congress party after the news that Abhishek Banerjee, the Trinamool Congress national general secretary, had met Rahul Gandhi at 10 Janpath became public.



Banerjee who earlier went to Delhi in a private jet with pollster Prashant Kishore met Gandhi early on Thursday morning at around 6.30 AM, sources said, adding they had a "cordial round of talks for about an hour on the present political issues, apparently the future of INDIA Opposition bloc, particularly in Bengal context."

Sources said that the two leaders "tried to understand their mutual standpoints on seat-sharing issues" as the Pradesh Congress was reportedly asking for 5-6 seats of Murshidabad, Jangipur, Bahrapur, Malda North, Malda South and Raiganj where the party has a good support base which has further solidified in the wake of an anti-Mamata struggle with the support of CPI(M).

# Crackdown launched against absconding terrorists in J&K

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

The Union Territory administration in Jammu & Kashmir has launched a massive crackdown against absconding terror operatives involved in terrorism and disruptive activities.



To begin with, the State Investigation Agency (SIA) assisted by the CID wing of the Jammu and Kashmir police has managed to apprehend eight terrorists in TADA cases for over three decades.

According to a statement issued by the spokesman of Jammu and Kashmir police, "These absconding terrorists had managed to escape from the clutches of the law for decades by going underground and remaining untraced for some time and then resurfaced to enjoy normal family life at their native or some distant places. Some of these terrorist absconders have managed to get government services and contracts, others found engaged in private businesses and even working in Court".

The special drive was launched to trace and produce before the Court all absconders of terrorism-related cases for facing trial under the law to achieve 'Zero' terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir.

According to a police spokesman, "SIA has so far verified and identified 369 (215-Jammu and 154-Kashmir) absconders out of 734 absconders (317 in Jammu and 417 in Kashmir) in 327 TADA/POTA cases. Out of 369 verified absconders, 127 remained untraced, 80 have died while 45 are residing in Pakistan/Pok and other countries abroad and 4 are lodged in jail".

During the preliminary investigations launched in separate cases, SIA is ascertaining how these absconder terrorists managed to escape from the law and live a normal life at

their native place without being traced for so long and other aspects of larger criminal conspiracy and nexus thereof and role of insiders, if any.

The absconding terrorists have been identified as Adil Farooq Faridi son of Abdul Ghani Faridi resident of H No. 230 Shahidi Chowk Jammu (Government employee presently posted in JK BOSE, Jammu), Mohd. Iqbal @ Javed son of Sikander Khan resident of Asthan Mohalla Doda, Mujahid Hussain @ Nisar Ahmed son of Abdul Rasheed Gathwan resident of Asthan Mohalla Doda, Tariq Hussain son of Ghulam Ali Misger resident of Barshala Doda, Ishtiaq Ahmed Dev @ Ajaz sim of Mohd. Ayoub Dev resident of Sah Mohalla Doda, Ajaz Ahmed @ Mohd. Iqbal son of Abdul Rehman resident of Dandi Baderwah, Jameel Ahmed @ Jugnu @ Chika Khan son of Faiz Ahmed resident of Kursari Baderwah, and Ishfaq Ahmed son of Ghulam Ahmed Sheikh resident of Bun Doda (working as a writer in Court Complex Doda).

# Man held for vulgar act in Delhi Metro

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a shocking incident from Delhi metro on Wednesday evening, a man allegedly masturbated and ejaculated on a minor while she was travelling on a crowded metro train. The incident took place on the 'Red Line', at around 8.30 pm on the occasion of Rakshabandhan. The accused, a man from West Bengal, was nabbed by two fellow passengers who witnessed his misdeed. He was handed over to the Delhi Metro authorities at the Shahdara station. The station authorities later informed the police. The Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) issued a notice to the deputy commissioner of police (Metro) over the incident, seeking an action taken report by September 5.



(DMRC) said such incidents are "extremely unsavoury and against the dignity of passengers and all societal norms".

"In this particular case, we appreciate the response of the fellow passengers who brought it to the attention of the DMRC staff. Taking prompt action, the DMRC personnel handed over the accused to the police and an FIR has been registered for further necessary action.

"We would yet again request our commuters to behave responsibly while travelling by the Metro and help in creating a congenial travelling environment where all passengers irrespective of age or gender can travel safely and comfortably," it said.

The DCW has also sought details of the apprehended man and steps taken to prevent such incidents in future.

# 2 held for murder of Amazon manager

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A day after a 36-year-old senior executive of Amazon was shot dead and his uncle was injured in a case of road rage, the Delhi Police arrested two persons in connection with the crime. According to the police, the accused, identified as Bilal Gani alias Mallu, and his associates allegedly slapped the victims after their two-wheelers brushed past while crossing a narrow lane late on Tuesday. Bilal Gani (18), a resident of Subhash Mohalla in Bhajanpura, was apprehended near Signature Bridge around 2 am on Thursday by the northeast district police, while Mohammad Sameer alias Maya was nabbed by the Special Cell Wednesday night, they said.



The accused were arrested from Signature Bridge at about 2 am on Thursday. The Police has recovered the weapon employed to commit the crime, and have booked them under Arms Act, subsequently handing it over to a local police.

According to the police, accused Gani and his associates Sameer (18), Sohail (23), Mohammad Junaid (23) and Adnan (19) were partying in North Ghonda, Bhajanpura. Around 10.30 pm, they decided to step out for a ride on two scooters. They stopped at a few places and finally started riding on a narrow lane, Turkey said. Gill and Singh, riding in the same lane, wanted the accused to stop and give them a way. Gani and his associates became aggressive and Junaid slapped Singh. When Gill and Singh tried to get down to speak with the accused, Sameer opened fire at the two, aiming at their heads, the DCP said.

He said the accused were identified after scanning the footage of CCTVs installed in the area. Efforts are on to apprehend the other accused, Turkey said, adding further investigation is underway.

According to the police, Gani, who worked at a welding shop in Bhajanpura, turned 18 on Sunday. In 2022, he was involved in a murder as well as a robbery case in Bhajanpura. Being a minor at that time, he managed to come out of the Children's Observation home, police said.

# INDIA...

From Page 1  
"A year later, we are meeting in Mumbai for the third time as an INDIA alliance... People want an ideal alternative to the NDA. INDIA alliance is offering it. People will not forgive us if we don't meet their expectations," Tejashwi said.

"Leaders from Jawaharlal Nehru to Manmohan Singh worked to give a direction to the youth and set up institutions like JNU, IIMS, ISRO," PDP leader Mehbooba Mufti said.

AAP leader Raghav Chadda said the BJP feared the INDIA alliance. "They have hatred for the word INDIA and even linking the name to a terror outfit. The BJP leaders nurse not just hatred but also suffer from fear that INDIA might succeed which we will," he said.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray said,

"INDIA alliance leaders have come together to protect democracy and the Constitution."

RJD leader Manoj Jha said the alliance was working to unite the country. "It is not just a coalition of parties but that of ideas, he said. The country needs healing, and this coalition is for rebuilding the nation and showing a mirror to the ruling party," Jha said.

CPM general secretary Sitaram Yechury said people's response to INDIA had unnerved the Prime Minister and the BJP.

NCP working president Supriya Sule said, "INDIA alliance faces the challenge of repairing the considerable damage done by the policies of the Modi Government which has resulted in inflation and unemployment. The BJP has a problem with the name of our alliance. It means we are doing well."

# President expresses concern over suicides by students

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ RAIPUR/NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu on Thursday expressed concern over the "very serious issue" of students committing suicide, and urged all stakeholders to help them beat negative thinking and cope with study pressure in a positive way.

Making a fervent appeal to teachers, family members and society to help out students by understanding their psychology, Murmu said every individual has a unique talent and one should understand one's own interests and abilities to choose the right direction accordingly.

"Victory and defeat are part of life, momentary failure often paves the way to a big success in future," the President said speaking at the State-level launch of 'Sakarattmak Parivartan Ka Varsh' (Year of Positive Change) of Brahma



Kumaris at Shanti Sarovar Retreat Centre in Chhattisgarh capital Raipur.

Referring to the recent suicide by two NEET aspirants in Rajasthan, the President said, "On the one hand, our country is reaching new heights every day... We have hoisted our flag on the Moon and brought laurels in the field of sports at international level. It is a beautiful picture of changing India." "But on the other hand, there is a very serious issue I want to put forth before you.

Just a few days ago, two students preparing for NEET ended their lives. Many children studying for competitive exams have committed suicide in the past. I am pained when students develop negative thinking and take such extreme steps," she said.

Competition is a positive thing that improves life. Victory and defeat are part of life. There are many examples of the fact that momentary failure often paves the way to a big success in future, she said.

# Frigate Mahendragiri to be launched by Dhankhar's wife



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Mahendragiri, the last Project 17A frigate, will be launched by Sudesh Dhankhar, wife of Vice President of India Jagdeep Dhankhar at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited, Mumbai on Friday, Navy officials said here on Thursday.

Mahendragiri, named after a mountain peak in Eastern Ghats located in the state of Orissa, is the seventh ship of the Project 17A Frigates. These warships are follow-ons of the Project 17 Class Frigates (Shivalik Class), with improved stealth features, advanced weapons and sensors and platform management systems.

# THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

## CHANGE OF NAME

I, Suraj Pal S/o Krishan Murari R/o 69/T-6 T Huts, Village Rajpura Gramundi, Delhi-110007, I have declare that my name wrongly mentioned as Suraj Singh in my Driving Licence. My correct name is Suraj Pal.  
PD(147C)

# छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल

पर्यावास भवन, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर, अटल नगर, जिला- रायपुर (छ.ग.)  
// सर्व संबंधित को सूचना //  
भारत सरकार, पर्यावरण, वन और जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय की ई.आई.ए. अधिसूचना दिनांक 14.09.2006 (यथा संशोधित) के अंतर्गत सर्व संबंधित को सूचित किया जाता है कि मेसर्स बालाजी एसोसिएट्स (प्रो.- श्री यशवन्त शर्मा), ग्राम-कोदवा, तहसील-बेरला, जिला-बेमतरा स्थित खसरा क्रमांक 342 (पाट), 345/1 एवं 345/2, कुल क्षेत्रफल-4.88 हेक्टेयर में प्रस्तावित डोलोमाइट (मौण खनिज) उत्खनन भूमि-96,720 टन प्रतिवर्ष के पर्यावरणीय स्वीकृति हेतु लोक सुनवाई बाबत मुख्यालय, छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर में आवेदन किया गया है। उक्त परियोजना के संबंध में आपत्ति/सुझाव/विचार/टीका टिप्पणी, इस सूचना के जारी होने के दिनांक से 30 दिवस के अंदर क्षेत्रीय अधिकारी, छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, 5/32 बंगला, भिलाई, जिला-दुर्ग के कार्यालय में मौखिक अथवा लिखित रूप से कार्यालयीन समय में प्रस्तुत की जा सकती है। इस परियोजना के लिए लोक सुनवाई दिनांक 04.10.2023 को समय प्रातः 11:00 बजे, स्थान-बेमतरा, दुर्ग राजकीय मार्ग पर स्थित खसरा नम्बर 341 रकबा 0.87 हेक्टेयर खाली भूमि, ग्राम-कोदवा तहसील-बेरला, जिला-बेमतरा (छ.ग.) में नियत की गई है। यह भी सूचित हो कि:-

- लोक सुनवाई के दौरान सम्मिलित होने वाले व्यक्तियों को फिजिकल/सोशल डिस्टेंसिंग का पालन करना अनिवार्य होगा।
  - लोक सुनवाई में सम्मिलित होने वाले व्यक्तियों द्वारा मारक का उपयोग किया जायेगा तथा समय-समय पर सेनेटाइजर का उपयोग किया जाना अनिवार्य होगा।
  - लोक सुनवाई स्थल पर सम्मिलित होने वाले व्यक्तियों की बैठक व्यवस्था कम से कम 02 मीटर की दूरी रखना अनिवार्य होगा।
  - कोरोना वायरस के नियंत्रण एवं रोकथाम हेतु शासन द्वारा जारी समस्त दिशा-निर्देशों का अक्षरशः पालन किया जाना अनिवार्य होगा।
- ई.आई.ए. नोटिफिकेशन 14 सितम्बर 2006 (यथा-संशोधित) के अनुसार संबंधित व्यक्तियों के अवलोकन/पठन हेतु डाइप्ट ई.आई.ए. रिपोर्ट, कार्यपालक सार हिन्दी एवं अंग्रेजी भाषा तथा सी.डी. (साफ्ट कॉपी) डाइरेक्टर, पर्यावरण, वन और जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार, इंदिरा पर्यावरण भवन, जोरबाग रोड, नई दिल्ली, क्षेत्रीय अधिकारी, एकीकृत क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, पर्यावरण, वन और जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार, अरुण्य भवन, नार्थ ब्लॉक, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, रायपुर, छत्तीसगढ़, कलेक्टर, कार्यालय कलेक्टर, जिला-बेमतरा, मुख्य कार्यपालन अधिकारी, जिला पंचायत, जिला-बेमतरा, महाप्रबंधक, जिला व्यापार एवं उद्योग केंद्र, जिला-बेमतरा, सपरंच/सचिव, ग्राम पंचायत कोदवा, जिला-बेमतरा, क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, 5/32 बंगला, भिलाई, जिला-दुर्ग एवं मुख्यालय, छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, पर्यावास भवन, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, जिला-रायपुर में रखी गई है।
- सदस्य सचिव  
छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल,  
नवा रायपुर, अटल नगर, जिला- रायपुर (छ.ग.)

# Xi too may skip...

From Page 1  
Putin has already conveyed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi that it will not be possible for him to travel to India to participate in the summit. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov will represent his country at the meet.

Sources said China has not yet confirmed Xi's in-person participation at the summit. Asked about a Reuters report that said Xi is likely to skip the upcoming G20 summit in India, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said at a media briefing in Beijing that he has nothing to offer on it. "Of the Chinese leaders attending the G20 summit, I have nothing to offer at the moment," Wang said.

The ties between India and China have been under severe strain since the deadly clashes in Galwan Valley in June 2020. The Indian and

Chinese troops are locked in an over three-year confrontation in certain friction points in eastern Ladakh even as the two sides completed disengagement from several areas following extensive diplomatic and military talks.

India has been consistently maintaining that peace and tranquility along the LAC were key for normalisation of overall ties. On its part, China has been arguing that the boundary question does not represent the entirety of the bilateral relations, insisting that the two sides should move forward on overall relations.

Prime Minister Modi and President Xi Jinping held an informal conversation on August 23 on the sidelines of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) summit in Johannesburg. Following the conversation, India's Foreign Secretary

Vinay Kwatra said Modi conveyed to Xi India's concerns on the "unresolved" issues along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh, underlining that maintenance of peace and tranquility in border areas was essential for normalisation of India-China ties.

Kwatra said the two leaders also agreed to direct their relevant officials to intensify efforts at "expeditious disengagement and de-escalation". However, the Chinese readout did not have any mention of this.

On Monday China released a so-called "standard map" laying claim over Arunachal Pradesh and the Aksai Chin drawing a strong protest from India. The "map" also showed the entire South China Sea and Taiwan as part of China as it featured in the previous editions of the 'map'.

# Dr Chandan Mitra: An...

From Page 1  
His courage manifested through narratives that laid bare a tapestry of scandals.

On one occasion, my esteemed M.Phil teacher, Professor Anwar Alam, approached me with a request to facilitate an appointment with Dr Mitra, a step he deemed necessary to expose an instance of perceived "injustice" perpetrated by the university. Given Prof Alam's erudition, he tacitly conveyed to me his understanding that a counter-narrative was likely to emerge. In response, Dr Mitra accorded Prof Alam a substantial audience, meticulously reviewing the plethora of documents and evidence the latter had carried in support of his narrative. The careful examination reflected Dr Mitra's commitment to upholding journalistic integrity. Subsequently, an in-depth exposé concerning the Professor's alleged wrongful removal from his role as the director of a Centre received publication the following day. Yet, in a stance indicative of his dedication to balanced reporting, my Editor ensured the university's perspective was also disseminated. This commitment to presenting multiple facets of the issue underscored Dr Mitra's unwavering pursuit of fairness and accuracy within the realm of journalism.

As an editor, Dr Mitra not only shaped the contours of journalism but also nurtured aspiring journalists. His mentorship and inspiration continue to echo in the lives he touched. Personally, I take pride in being one of the beneficiaries of his wisdom and guidance. Dr Chandan Mitra will forever be woven into my thoughts as a paragon of honest journalism, leaving an indelible mark on the tapestry of our profession.

# Special Session of...

From Page 1  
Another sources said Prime Minister Narendra Modi is known to give surprise in the political spheres and there are chances that much talked about 'One Nation, One Poll' too could be discussed and debated in the Special Session.

"September 17 is the birthday of the Prime Minister (Narendra Modi) and every year he attempts to do something new. To my understanding September 19 is Ganesh Chaturthi which considered the most auspicious in India and that entire Parliament machinery of both the Houses-Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha- could move to the new adjacent Parliament building and hence there should be no reading between the lines," informed a top Government source.

There was no official word on the agenda of the Session which will be held days after the G20 Summit in the national Capital on September 9 and 10 and the historic success of Chandrayaan-3 mission. "Special Session of Parliament (13th Session of 17th Lok Sabha and 261st Session of Rajya Sabha) is being called from 18th to 22nd September having five sittings. Amid Amrit Kaal looking forward to having fruitful discussions and debate in Parliament," Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi said.

The new Parliament building was inaugurated by Modi on May 28 and final touches are being given to host Sessions. Generally, three parliamentary sessions are held in a year-Budget, Monsoon and Winter sessions.

The calling of a Special Session gave enough ammunition to the Opposition parties who were meeting in Mumbai under the INDIA bloc banner with Congress remaining firm

to continue their demand of Joint Parliamentary Committee probe (JPC) on the Adani Group controversy. Shiv Sena (UBT) questioned the timing of the Special Session when the entire country particularly Maharashtra and parts of Karnataka will be celebrating month long Ganesh chaturthi.

Congress chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh alleged that the five-day Session just three weeks after the end of Monsoon session was aimed at managing "the news cycle" and counter the news about the ongoing meeting of INDIA parties in Mumbai and the latest revelations on Adani. "Regardless, the JPC demand (on Adani issue) will continue to resonate inside and outside Parliament," the Congress MP added.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader and Rajya Sabha member Prialanka Chaturvedi said the Special Session called during "India's most important festival of Ganesh Chaturthi is unfortunate and goes against the Hindu sentiments. Surprised at their choice of dates."

Last when Parliament had met outside usual Sessions was on the midnight of June 30, 2017 to mark rollout of GST. However, it was a joint sitting of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, and was not a proper Session as is the case this time with both the Houses assembling.

A six-day special sitting was held in August 1997 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of India's independence. Midnight sessions have also been held on August 9, 1992 for 50th anniversary of 'Quit India Movement', August 14-15, 1972 to celebrate silver jubilee of India's independence, while the first such session was on August 14-15, 1947 on the eve of India's Independence.

# IAF choppers prepare to give security cover to G20 meet

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A helicopter was seen hovering over the Le Meridien Hotel in New Delhi ahead of the G20 Summit scheduled to be held on September 9 and 10. Le Meridien is one of the four hotels that will host G20 guests during the two-day summit.

In a bid to safeguard the Delhi airspace and provide a secure environment for the high-level gathering the Indian Air Force would be keeping its airborne warning systems, fighter jets, including the Rafale on high alert apart from stationing the new air defence missile systems at vital locations to protect the Delhi airspace and provide protection to the high-level meeting.

According to a video shared by a user on X the helicopter flew over Le Meridien as part of security drills. A person was seen coming down from the helicopter. No official details were revealed.

Sources said the helicopter exercise aimed at checking the security preparedness in the event of a hostage situation. Joint drills involving the Delhi Police, Indian Air Force and the central paramilitary forces are underway at Pragati Maidan, Aerocity, Raisina Road and other key locations in view of the mega event.

Besides Le Meridien, special security arrangements have been made at Hyatt Regency, The Lodhi, Sheraton, The Lalit,



Indian Multi-Role Helicopter security rehearsal at Le Meridien Hotel in New Delhi on Thursday ahead of the G-20 summit. Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

The Imperial, The Claridges, Hotel Shangri-la, Le-Meridien, The Grand, Radisson Blu, ITC Maurya, Taj Palace, and Taj Mahal hotel.

Several heads of state, including US President Joe Biden, and top foreign delegates are set to attend the summit on September 9-10, prompting the mega security exercise. During the summit, Sources said the counter-drone systems along with air defence missiles are also being stationed in the national capital to

protect against any possible air threat in the national capital to protect against any possible air threat in coordination with all security agencies by the Indian Air Force, sources said.

The northern regions of the nation will remain under vigilant surveillance through the utilization of Airborne Warning and Control Systems (AWACS), often referred to as the "eyes in the sky." These airborne systems will ensure continuous monitoring of the area to detect any untoward movements or activities. In con-

junction with AWACS, the indigenous surveillance aircraft 'Netra' will play a pivotal role in the monitoring efforts, providing real-time intelligence to security forces.

Several air bases surrounding the national capital territory, falling under jurisdictions of the Western Air Command and South Western Air Command, are being placed on high alert. These air bases will be fully operational and prepared to respond swiftly to any potential threats posed by aerial platforms.

## War of words over installation of 'shivling' fountains at Dhaula Kuan

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As part of the ongoing beautification of Delhi, the Shivling shaped fountains that have been installed at Dhaula Kuan in the national Capital has sparked a political controversy. Calling out the Centre for merely reducing the revered shivlings into fountains, the AAP demanded dismissal of Lieutenant-Governor VK Saxena for insulting the Hindu religion and also insisted that the Central Government issue an apology to Hindus across the nation.

Dhauila Kuan Road, positioned along the route from the Indra Gandhi International (IGI) airport, now features 18 shivlings embellished with fountains installed at the Hanuman Mandir junction in the Palam airport's technical area, intended to showcase India's aesthetic allure.

Taking to X, AAP Rajya Sabha MP and national spokesperson Sanjay Singh demanded that the BJP apologise to the country and action be taken against Saxena. There was no immediate reaction from the LG's office or the BJP



to the AAP's allegations.

As Delhi gears up to host the G20 summit from September 9 to 10, arterial stretches in the capital have been given a makeover. "Shivling was insulted under the leadership of Modi ji and shameless BJP members are praising Modi. Delhi LG is being applauded for disrespecting Shivling. The BJP should apologise to the country and action should be taken against the LG," Singh said in his post on X.

AAP's chief national spokesperson Priyanka Kakkar echoed similar sentiments. "@LtGovDelhi has played with the faith of crores of Hindus by

getting Shivling-shaped fountains installed in Delhi," she said in a post on X.

Addressing a press conference, AAP MLA Durgesh Pathak and Nitin Tyagi demanded resignation from Lt Governor as NDMC comes under the Centre for hurting Hindu sentiment. BRS (Bharat Rashtira Samithi) leader Y Sathish Reddy said this is a mockery of Hinduism by the Modi government. "Using Shivling as fountains for the #G20Summit2023. Is the sacredness of the Shivling being trivialized for amusement? This is shameful & should be removed at the earliest!" Reddy tweeted.

However, BJP leaders accused Delhi Minister Atishi of disrespecting the 'shivling' and using it for decorative purpose. "A Shivling is not for decoration. And Dhauila Kuan is not Gyanvapi. AAP Govt in Delhi has installed Shivling shaped fountains at Dhauila Kuan." BJP's media panelist Charu Pragya tweeted.

Reacting to the controversy, an X user who claims to be Hindu activists said that in New India every step taken by the secular governments is to make Hindu teerthas, Hindu symbols into tourist attractions or fun symbols. Although a religious community she added they did the same thing in Varanasi's Gyanvapi by turning shivling into a fountain.

Both AAP and the Centre have staked every step taken in beautification. A war of words have been seen between the BJP and AAP over funding of beautification projects in Delhi for the G20 Summit that is scheduled to take place on 9th and 10th September in the national capital. A PWD official, as quoted by a news report, said the Shivling fountains are from Odisha.

## City traffic to be hit due to rehearsals for G20: Police

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Traffic Police on Thursday advised that traffic is likely to be hit on the weekend in the city as police will hold full dress rehearsals for the G20 Summit, escorting caravans from different parts of the national Capital towards the New Delhi district. The Delhi Police has advised commuters to use Metro service on Saturday and Sunday.

On Saturday, the timings of the rehearsal will be from 8.30 AM to 12 PM, from 4.30 PM to 6 PM and 7 PM to 11 PM, the advisory said. During

the carcade rehearsals, traffic will be restricted at Sardar Patel Marg-Panchsheel Marg, Sardar Patel Marg-Kautilya Marg, Gol Methi roundabout, Mansingh Road roundabout, C-Hexagon, Mathura Road, Zakir Hussain Marg-Subramaniam Bharti Marg, Bhairon Marg-Ring Road, Satya Marg/Shantipath round about, Janpath-Kartavyapath, Barakhamba Road red light, Tolstoy Marg, and Vivekanand Marg etc, the advisory said.

On Sunday, the timings of the rehearsal will be from 8 am to 9 am, 9.30 am to 10.30 am and 12.30 pm to 4 pm, it stated. On Sunday, there will be

regulations on the movement of traffic at Mahatma Gandhi Marg, IP Flyover, Rajghat Chowk, Shanti Van Chowk, Saleem Garh Bypass, Bhairon Road, Ring Road, Mathura Road, Shershah Road, C-Hexagon, roundabouts at Mansingh Road, Gol Methi, Teen Murti, Yashwant Place, Brig Hoshiyar Singh Marg, and Tolstoy Marg, the advisory said.

Commuters may face more normal traffic on these roads and junctions and are therefore, are urged to plan their journey in advance and avoid these roads during specified time slots, police said.

## Metro's pedestrian plaza to grace Supreme Court Station

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As part of preparations ahead of the G20 Summit in the Capital, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) has developed a pedestrian plaza with aesthetic landscaping outside the Supreme Court station. Besides, thematic murals have been painted on the walls of the station's building depicting the G20 logo, famous monuments and Maps of member nations.

The station, on the Blue Line of the Delhi Metro, is the nearest one to the Bharat Mandapam complex in Pragati Maidan, which will serve as the main venue for the G20 Summit to be held from September 8 to 10. The



Supreme Court Metro Station (earlier known as Pragati Maidan Metro Station) is located adjacent to the sprawling Pragati Maidan facing Mathura Road which is being decked up for the big-ticket event where

Heads of State of several countries will converge for the summit of the influential grouping. "We have developed a state-of-the-art pedestrian plaza outside the Supreme Court metro station as part of the preparations,

ahead of the G20 Summit. The plaza has seating facilities. Aesthetic landscaping has been done to enhance the look of the area," a senior official of the Delhi Metro said.

The lighting arrangements in the area is also being augmented to give the plaza an enhanced look during the night, he said. The plaza is located on the pathway leading to the metro station's entrance from the Mathura Road side. On a wall next to a staircase ramp leading to the concourse of the station, a mural depicts the G20 logo and the theme of India's presidency of the grouping — "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam - One Earth. One Family. One Future." Noted

landmarks from India and other G20 member countries have also been depicted and these include Taj Mahal (India), London Bridge (the UK), Leaning Tower of Pisa (Italy), Eiffel Tower (France) and Christ the Redeemer (Brazil).

The official said already a number of measures have been taken up by the DMRC as part of the preparations to improve the look and feel of its properties ahead of the summit.

"A number of stations have been given a facelift with a fresh coat of paint and artworks. Pillars of Airport Express Line have been decorated with artworks and G20 logos have been installed at many stations," he said.

## New DERC chief takes oath, AAP assures full cooperation

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Retired Delhi High Court Judge Jayant Nath on Thursday took charge as the interim chairperson of the Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission (DERC) with Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal assuring him of his government's "full cooperation". Nath was administered the oath of office by Power Minister Atishi at a simple function at the Delhi Secretariat.

Atishi said she looked forward to working with Nath to improve the power sector. After taking oath, Nath assumed charge at the DERC office (Viniyamak Bhawan) in Malviya Nagar, officials said.

Nath was nominated to the post of DERC chief by the Supreme Court on August 4 following a feud between the



Delhi government and Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena over who should head the city's power regulator.

In a post on X, formerly Twitter, Kejriwal congratulated Nath on taking charge as the DERC chairperson. "I wholeheartedly welcome Retd Justice Jayant Nath ji as the new Chairperson of DERC. Congratulations and best wish-

es. Electricity is a very vital sector and we have been trying our best to keep improving it. I assure full cooperation of my govt," the chief minister said. Nath's responsibilities include announcing the new power tariff for the current financial year.

The tariff could not be announced last year because of several reasons, including posts of the chairperson and a member of the three-member DERC being vacant. The post of the DERC chairperson fell vacant after Justice (ret'd) Shabihul Hasnain demitted office on January 9.

Taking a call on issues like regulatory assets of discoms and their demand for a power hike and direct benefit transfer of subsidy to consumers, among others, are some of the challenges before Nath.

## 400 e-buses to hit roads

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 400 electric buses will hit Delhi roads ahead of the G20 Summit, some of which will also be used for the event before being inducted into the DTC fleet. Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal will flag off a new lot of these electric buses on September 5.

In a press statement, Raj Niwas official said these buses will further add to the fleet of electric vehicles being rapidly added to the city with an aim of cutting down on fossil fuel consumption and reducing air pollution.

As on date, 400 electric buses are in operation under Government of India supported Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles (FAME) II Scheme. The Delhi government has awarded contract for induction of 1,500 Electric



Buses in Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) fleet of which 921 are covered under FAME II scheme, under the National Automotive Board (NAB) of the Ministry of Heavy Industries, Government of India.

This Phase II aims to generate demand by way of supporting 7,000 e-Buses, five lakh e-3 Wheelers, 55,000 e-4 Wheeler Passenger Cars (including Strong Hybrid) and 10 lakh e-2 Wheelers. The Government of India supports

Electric Vehicle (EV) deployment through Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and EV (FAME) II Scheme, with an aim to reduce primary fossil oil consumption and pollution in the cities as well as creating battery and EV manufacturing capacity at global scale.

Delhi has nearly 7,500 buses under DTC and the Delhi Integrated Multi-Modal Transit System Limited (DIMTS) as well as over 400 electric buses.

## It is our responsibility to bring divided world together: Jaishankar

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Thursday the world is divided into North-South and East-West and it is our responsibility to bring the divided world together. He made this assertion while addressing Amrit Kaal-Vimarsh organised at Hindu College, Delhi University.

The event was held on the theme "G20 Presidency and its Global Impact." Vice Chancellor of Delhi University Professor Yogesh Singh presided over the function. Interacting with the students, Jaishankar said the world is divided into developed countries in the North and developing countries in the South and due to the Ukraine war,



countries are being polarized into East and West. "We are in the middle of all this, so it is our responsibility to bring the divided world together," he said.

Jaishankar said India is respected in the world because of our governance, economy, technology and independent foreign policy. He said that India has recovered very quickly from the Covid pandemic in many ways, whereas many countries were not able to recover properly.

## Lovely back in Delhi Congress chief's chair

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Senior Congress leader and prominent face of the State unit, Arvinder Singh Lovely has been appointed as the Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee (DPCC) president to rejuvenate party workers ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. He had held the post of DPCC chief earlier as well between 2013 and 2015. His appointment comes at a time when in the run-up to the 2024 Lok Sabha election, the Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) have come together under the INDIA bloc. However, there has been no decision yet on what the alliance will entail when it comes to seat-sharing in Delhi and Punjab where the AAP Government is in power. Lovely, a four-term MLA from the Gandhi Nagar constituency has also been the Urban



Congress workers welcome newly-appointed DPCC chief Arvinder Singh Lovely at his residence in Kalindi Colony in New Delhi on Thursday. Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

Development and Education Minister between 2003 and 2013 during the Sheila Dikshit government. He had joined the BJP in 2017. However, he had returned to the Congress within months. In a press release the Congress appreciated the outgoing president Anil Chaudhary. Chaudhary's tenure of three years ended in March this year.

General secretary of the All India Congress Committee KC Venugopal in a release on Thursday announced Lovely's appointment. "The Congress president has appointed Arvinder Singh Lovely as president of Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee with immediate effect," the release read. It added that the party appreciated the contribution of outgoing president Anil Chaudhary. As a Delhi Congress president, Lovely will

have to work hard to revive and rejuvenate party workers as the Congress has not won a single Lok Sabha seat or an MLA seat since the 2013 Assembly election. Lovely said the party will focus on fixing the organisational structure and also reach out to the people of Delhi. Lovely, a former minister in the Sheila Dikshit government, was appointed the Delhi Congress chief earlier on Thursday, replacing Anil Chaudhary. "My role now is to strengthen the whole party organisation in Delhi. People have started looking up to Rahul Gandhi and the Congress," Lovely said.

"We will take each and every leader, including the previous presidents, along and work unitedly to revive the party. We will focus on what's missing and also reach out to the people of Delhi," he said.

## Pro-Khalistan graffiti: One held, another detained by police

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested one person and detained another in connection with writing pro-Khalistan messages on the walls of four Delhi Metro stations ahead of the G20 Summit. Interrogation of the person is underway.

Both the persons were tracked based on the CCTV footage near the station areas while further investigation is being carried out.

The pro-Khalistani slogans had appeared on the walls of five metro stations on Sunday morning. At a press conference, police said the accused carried out the act on the directions of Gurbatwant Singh Pannun, the

chief of the banned Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) outfit. Police said while Preet Pal has been arrested, Rajvinder Singh was detained. He will be arrested once he reaches Delhi, they said.

Pro-Khalistan messages — "Delhi Banega Khalistan" and "Khalistan Zindabad" — were found on the walls of Shivaji Park, Madipur, Paschim Vihar, Udyog Nagar, and Maharaja Surajmal Stadium metro stations on August 27.

A wall of a government school in Nanangli was also found defaced. A purported video was released by the Sikhs for Justice which showed defaced walls of the metro stations.

## MCD nod to 23 doorstep services

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In the House meeting of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, 9 public-friendly proposals have been passed today. Along with this, the way for door step delivery of 23 services of the MCD has also been cleared. AAP's corporation government unanimously passed this public interest issue in the House today.

Apart from this, relief has also been given to the employees of Hardayal Library, who were troubled for the salary for many years. A proposal to constitute Hardayal Management Committee has also been passed for the purpose of giving salary to the employees soon.

# Polls in J&K can be held any time, Govt tells SC

Centre sets no time-frame for Statehood restoration

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Elections in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) can be held "anytime from now" as the work on updation of voters list is almost over, the Centre told the Supreme Court on Thursday but remained non-committal about setting a time-frame for restoration of statehood to the Union Territory (UT).

Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, told a five-judge Constitution Bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud that the UT status of J&K is a "temporary thing" and it is for the Election Commission of India and the UT's election commission to decide when the



polls for panchayats, municipal bodies and the legislative Assembly will be held. "The central government is ready to hold elections anytime from now... It is for the Election Commission of India and the Election Commission of the UT to take the call on which election will take place first and how.

The updation process of the voters' list is almost complete and will be over in a month," he told the bench, also comprising Justices Sanjay

Kishan Kaul, Sanjiv Khanna, BR Gavai and Surya Kant. The solicitor general said as far as restoration of statehood to the union territory of J-K is concerned, Union Home Minister Amit Shah has already made statements in Parliament that it will be done in due course. "The UT is a temporary thing in J-K.

We are dealing with an extremely extraordinary situation. The exact time frame for restoration of complete statehood in J-K cannot be given at the moment. It might take some time.

Various steps are being taken to restore the status of the state in Jammu and Kashmir," Mehta said at the outset. The central government made the submissions in response to the apex court's August 29 observations on restoration of electoral democracy in Jammu and

Kashmir. Mehta, on the 13th day of hearing on a batch of petitions challenging the abrogation of Article 370 which accorded special status to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, said, "Peace does not merely come by policing." He told the court about the various steps the Union government has taken for restoration of normalcy in the region.

Large-scale investment proposals post abrogation of Article 370 have been received, which include ₹28,400 crore of central sector schemes for industrial development, ₹78,000 crore of private sector and the actual investment done in 2022-23 is ₹2,153 crore," he said. Mehta said out of the 53 projects worth ₹58,477 crore sanctioned under the Prime Minister's Development Package, 32 have been completed.

# Only JPC can expose Adani graft: Rahul

Opp questions SEBI's role in clean chit after new report

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/MUMBAI

Opposition parties led by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi targeted the Narendra Modi Government over fresh allegations against the Adani Group by the Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP). Congress, Left parties, Shiv Sena (Uddhav) and others claimed that "corruption" in shell companies linked to the conglomerate was getting stronger.

While Rahul Gandhi said that only a JPC can uncover the truth, the CPI(M) called for a serious probe into the fresh allegations and urged the Supreme Court to ensure that there is no cover-up. Addressing a Press conference in Mumbai, Rahul



referred to news articles by foreign newspapers on the Adani Group. "These are not random newspapers. These newspapers affect investment in India and the perception of India in the rest of the world.

They are stating that over a billion dollars of money went from India, was circulated in different places and then came back to India," he said. "The first question arises: Whose money is this? Is it Adani's or someone else's? The mastermind behind this is a gentleman called Vinod Adani who is the brother of Gautam Adani. "There are two other people who are involved in this round-tripping of money.

One is a gentleman called Nasir Ali Shaban Ahli and another is a Chinese gentleman called Chang Chung Ling," he said. "So, the second question arises — why are these two foreign nationals being allowed to play with the valuation of one of the companies that controls almost all of Indian infrastructure.

The gentleman who conducted SEBI investigation and gave a clean chit to Adani Group is now a director on a media company owned by the same group," Rahul said. Billionaire Gautam Adani's group was on Thursday hit by fresh allegations that it used family associates to secretly invest hundreds of mil-

lions of dollars through "opaque" Mauritius-based investment funds to fuel the spectacular rise in group stocks from 2013 to 2018. The conglomerate vehemently denied the charge. An article by the OCCRP alleged that millions of dollars were invested in some publicly traded stocks of Adani Group through "opaque" Mauritius funds that "obscured" involvement of alleged business partners of the Adani family.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh questioned the role of market regulator SEBI in properly investigating the role of shell companies linked to the Adani Group. Uddhav led Shiv Sena leader Rajya Sabha member Priyanka Chaturvedi said that enough indications have surfaced on Adani Group that indicts its illegal ventures hence nothing less than the JPC will be able to unearth in the matter. In a statement, the polit bureau of CPIM said, "The fresh reports show that SEBI was looking into matter of offshore funding of Adani companies in 2014 but had closed enquiries subsequently.

# Amid merger speculation, YS Sharmila meets Sonia

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/HYDERABAD

Amid speculation that Telangana-based YSR Telangana Congress Party (YSRTP) could merge itself with the Congress, YS Sharmila, the sister of Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, on Thursday met top former Congress chiefs Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi in the national Capital on Thursday.

The development comes after months of rumours that Sharmila, who heads the YSRTP, formed in July 2021, seeks to merge it with the grand old party which was the party of her father late CM Y S Rajasekhara Reddy.

YSR's death anniversary falls on September 2. However, the Congress has remained tight-lipped on the development related to Sharmila's plan of joining Congress or merging



her party with the grand old party. Sharmila's party has a presence in the state of Telangana, where the Assembly elections are scheduled later this year.

It is also said that Sharmila is not on good terms with her brother and YSR Congress Party leader Jagan Mohan Reddy. Congress is leaving no stone unturned in the southern state to ensure victory where it has been unable to form a government after the formation of Telangana in 2014. Speculation about Sharmila growing clos-

er to the Congress has been doing the rounds for quite some time after she met Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar in Bengaluru in May to congratulate him on the victory of the party in the neighbouring state. "Met Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi. Constructive discussions took place. The daughter of YS Rajasekhara Reddy would relentlessly work towards benefiting Telangana people. I can say one thing, the countdown for KCR began (hinting at Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrababhan Rao's defeat in the upcoming Assembly polls)," Sharmila said after the meeting in at the residence of Sonia in New Delhi.

When contacted, YSR Telangana Congress Party's spokesperson Konda Raghava Reddy said none of the leaders or cadre of YSRTP is aware of her Delhi trip and meeting with the Gandhi family.

# Govt to use AI, IoT to stop waste, renew waterbodies

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the world grapples with the challenges of managing dwindling water resources, the Union Science and Technology Ministry is introducing IT-based technology to revitalize water bodies and reduce water waste, all while improving urban planning strategies.

The Technology Development Board (TDB) of the Ministry is supporting Bariflo Labs Private Limited, Odisha, for their project called "Development and Commercialization of Intelligent Water Body Management System (IWMS)-TAMARA.

The board has approved Rs 89 lakhs for this project which is based on using robots, IoT, and artificial intelligence in a system that understands

weather conditions and water quality. This smart system also keeps track of oxygen and nutrient levels, making sure the water is good for aquatic life. This practical solution is a big step towards managing water bodies in a better way.

A senior official from the Ministry shared that the AI and IoT-driven system not only monitor health of water bodies but also actively contributes to their betterment.

"This comprehensive system comprises several key elements, each playing a vital role such as smart sediment aeration system that uses robotic systems to move diffuser aerators up and down in water. It helps bring more oxygen to bottom of water bodies. This system has been tested in real-world conditions and works well in both fresh and salty water."

# Conman Omveer Singh held by ED in PMLA case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday said it has arrested conman Omveer Singh in a money laundering case linked to impersonation as a senior official of the agency and Union Home Ministry, and duping various persons on false promises of getting their work done.

Singh was taken into custody on Wednesday and a PMLA court in Ahmedabad granted his custody to the ED till Saturday, the ED said.

The ED initiated investigation on the basis of FIRs registered by Ahmedabad Police and Surat Police against Singh for commission of offences of impersonation and cheating. Singh, fraudulently identifying himself as a senior official of the ED, duped one coal trader

to the tune of Rs 1.50 crore on the pretext of getting his tender work done through his highly placed contact persons, the agency said. "In another instance, he has defrauded a Surat-based energy sector company for more than Rs 2 crore by impersonating as the Financial Advisor and Auditor at the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India," the ED said.

ED investigation revealed that Singh had "meagre" sources of income till 2019 from his employment as a construction site supervisor, and thereafter, he started to impersonate senior government officers working in different departments and started to allure various gullible persons on the pretext of getting their work done. Through such acts he defrauded them with crores of rupees, it said.

# Jaya V Sinha first woman to head Railway Board



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Thursday appointed Jaya Verma Sinha as the first woman CEO and Chairperson of the Railway Board in the 105 year old Ministry of Railways.

Jaya was at the centre stage of the railways' media interactions recently when, as the Member (Operations and Business Development), she explained the complex signalling system after the tragic Balasore accident which killed nearly 300 people.

"The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the appointment of Jaya Verma Sinha, Indian Railway Management Services (IRMS), Member (Operations & Business Development), Railway Board to the post of Chairman & Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Railway Board," an order said.

She will assume charge on or after September 1 and her tenure will be till August 31, 2024. Sinha is slated to retire on October 1, but will be re-employed the same day till her tenure gets over. She succeeds Anil Kumar Lahoti.

An Alumnus of the Allahabad University, Sinha joined the Indian Railway Traffic Service in 1988 and worked in Northern Railway, S E Railway and Eastern Railway.

She also worked as Railway Advisor in the High Commission of India, Dhaka, Bangladesh for four years.

The Maitree Express from Kolkata to Dhaka was inaugurated during her tenure in Bangladesh. She also worked as the Divisional Railway Manager, Eastern Railway, Sealdah Division.

# MD of Mumbai steel, power firm held by ED

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday said it has arrested the promoter and managing director of a Mumbai-registered steel and power company in a money laundering case linked to an alleged bank fraud.

Abhay Narendra Lodha, promoter of Topworth Steels and Power Pvt Ltd was taken into custody on Wednesday and a special court sent him to ED custody till September 8.

It said Lodha is the promoter and MD of Topworth Steels and Power Private Limited (TSPPL) and the Topworth Group.

The company is registered in Mumbai and its plant is located in Chhattisgarh's Durg district and it is undergoing corporate insolvency resolution process (CIRP).

ED initiated investigation under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act on the basis of an FIR registered by the CBI against Topworth Steels and Power Pvt. Ltd., Abhay Narendra Lodha and others. "Searches were conducted at 12

premises at various locations in Mumbai, Pune, New Delhi, Nagpur and Durg.

Details of ownership of various immovable properties and companies overseas and within India (hitherto not declared) were unearthed during the searches.

Foreign currencies of different countries bearing the present value of above Rs 7 lakh along with various other incriminating documents have also been recovered. Details of shell entities controlled by Abhay Lodha were also recovered, the ED said in a statement.

ED investigation revealed that in addition to causing wrongful loss amounting to Rs 63.10 crore to IDBI bank by committing fraud in the credit facility of the Letter of Credit / Trade Credit Bank Guarantee (LC/TCBG) during the period 2014-15 to 2016-17, the Topworth group of companies controlled by Abhay Lodha had also generated proceeds of crime to the tune Rs 3,000 crore through the Topworth group and its connected entities.

# ED attaches ₹90 L of Hyderabad company for money laundering

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday said it has attached fixed deposits worth Rs 90 lakh of a Hyderabad-based company in a money laundering case against it linked to alleged dumping of hazardous waste in contravention of anti-pollution laws.

The attachment proceedings against Sree Venkateshwara Industries, Hyderabad were undertaken under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act. The ED initiated investigation on the basis of a complaint filed by Telangana State Pollution Control Board (TSPCB) in the court of Metropolitan Magistrate, Cyberabad at Medchal, Telangana. As per the

complaint, the accused firm was disposing hazardous waste material without proper treatment in violation of the prescribed rules and regulations which were stipulated by the Telangana State Pollution Control Board (TSPCB) under various sections of Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act and Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act.

The ED said its investigation revealed that Sree Venkateshwara Industries and its partners did not comply with the statutory requirement of treatment of hazardous waste generated in their premises and did not send the same to Treatment, Storage and Disposal Facility of Hyderabad Waste Management Project.

# Property of accused in 2019 drug case to be attached

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) got a big boost in its crackdown on the narco-terror network of international drugs smugglers and the Khalistan Liberation Force (KLF), with the Special Court at SAS Nagar, Mohali, ordering the attachment of the property of a key accused in a 2019 case of seizure of heroin and drug money.

The immovable property under attachment belongs to an accused identified as Jagbir Singh Samra, along with Varinder Chahal and Harpreet Singh alias Happy.

Subsequent investigations in the case revealed that Chahal was a close associate of an international Dubai-based drug smuggler and money launderer, Jasmeet Singh Hakimzada, and also of Pakistan-based self-styled Chief of KLF, Harmeet Singh alias Ph.D, it said. "Varinder Singh Chahal was engaged in the collection



of heroin consignments from Kashmiri drug dealers on the directions of Hakimzada and Ph.D, as part of a KLF narco terror module. The narco-terror network of KLF, a proscribed terrorist organisation, was being operated by these terrorists through India-based drug smugglers, the NIA investigations revealed.

The NIA probe revealed that the narco-terror network being promoted by Hakimzada and Ph.D was widespread and involved drug smugglers/terror operatives and hawala operatives based in Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir and Delhi.

The NIA has established the role of Harmeet Singh alias Ph.D in this narco-terror network and has found that Ph.D was using the money to strengthen and expand KLF's activities in India and to radicalise vulnerable youth to spread terror as part of the outfit's agenda to promote terror and violence related activities in India.

# Zinc in soil can end stunting in kids: Study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Addition of zinc in the soil can help prevent childhood stunting in developing countries like India where more than a third of children under five suffer from the chronic under-nutrition, a global study has said after analysing the health data from nearly 300,000 children and one million women across the States here.

They also analysed over 27 million soil tests drawn from a nationwide soil health program and suggested that fortifying soil with minerals could be a beneficial health intervention. Childhood stunting is associated with poor brain development and long-lasting harmful consequences, such as reduced school performance



and increased disease risks. The paper, published in Scientific Reports, is the first large-scale study to examine the association between children's nutritional status or health outcomes and soil mineral availability in India.

"Our results add to a growing body of literature suggesting that interventions like micronutrient-enriched fertilizers may have a positive effect on health," said study lead author Claire Morton from Stanford University. "This

doesn't prove that those interventions would be cost-effective for India, but it's an exciting indication that they are worth testing." The researchers found that the presence of zinc in soil helps prevent stunted childhood growth, and iron in soil helps keep hemoglobin — a protein in red blood cells that carries oxygen — at healthy levels.

The link between soil zinc and childhood stunting is particularly robust — a one standard deviation increase in soil zinc levels is associated with approximately 11 fewer children stunted per 1,000, according to the research. As a result, the researchers suggest that the potential benefits of using zinc-enriched fertilizers as health interventions deserves more

consideration in India specifically and perhaps more generally.

Study senior author David Lobell, the Gloria and Richard Kushel Director of Stanford's Center on Food Security and the Environment and professor of Earth system science in the Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability said, "Even if this is only a small role, understanding it could help to identify better approaches to solving child stunting in India, which is one of the single biggest and longstanding challenges in global food security."

According to India's Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey 2016-18, nearly one-third of adolescents (10 to 19 years age group) were zinc deficient, leaving them highly vulnerable to stunting.

# UK's NHS rolls out 7-min cancer jab

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Cancer patients across the world will watch with bated breath as the National Health Service (NHS) England, the UK's publicly funded healthcare system has become the first health system in the world to roll out the seven-minute injection to hundreds of patients each year.

The move aims to bring speedier treatment to cancer patients and gives them more comfortable care. "The jab takes as little as 7 minutes to administer," the NHS England said in a statement.

Currently, the patients receive the life-extending immunotherapy atezolizumab in hospital directly into their veins via a drug transfusion



(intravenously), which can take from 30 minutes to up to an hour to administer, the statement said. This anti-cancer jab, a subcutaneous or under-the-skin injection, is swifter and is expected to enhance the patients' experience, it said.

The quicker administration could also free up valuable time for NHS cancer teams, it said. The vaccine has been approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA),

the statement said. The healthcare system of England anticipates the majority of the approximately 3,600 patients starting their annual atezolizumab treatment in England to switch onto the time-saving injection.

Atezolizumab is an immunotherapy drug, currently offered by transfusion, that empowers a patient's own immune system to seek and destroy cancerous cells. The drug is administered to patients with a range of cancers, including lung, breast, liver and bladder.

However, patients receiving intravenous chemotherapy in combination with atezolizumab may remain on the transfusion, the statement added. "Maintaining the best possible quality of life for cancer

patients is vital, so the introduction of faster under-the-skin injections will make an important difference," said NHS National Director for Cancer, Peter Johnson. NHS England said the faster treatment came at no extra cost because of its existing commercial deal negotiated with the manufacturer Roche.

Marius Scholtz, medical director for Roche, added: "Injecting Tecentriq under the skin offers a faster treatment option as it takes approximately seven minutes, compared with 30 to 60 minutes for the current method of an intravenous infusion of Tecentriq.

"We are delighted that NHS patients across England have access to the subcutaneous PD-L1 cancer immunotherapy injection."

# Opp just banking on name of INDIA alliance, it's their only refuge: Rajnath

PTI ■ PUNE

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday took a dig at the INDIA alliance and said the opposition leaders are just banking on the name of their grouping as it was the only refuge left to them. He also cited a Hindi proverb 'naam bade aur darshan chhote' (big name with little substance) to describe the opposition bloc. The two-day meeting of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) began in Mumbai on Thursday. During the meeting, deliberations on the strategy and roadmap to take on the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections are expected to take place. Singh also said that India has become powerful now and nobody considers it a weak nation anymore globally. India's stature globally has increased substantially as compared to what it was in the past and the



world listens attentively to what it speaks which was not the case earlier, he said. Singh was speaking at an event held on the birth anniversary of Dr Vitthalrao Vikhe Patil, the pioneer of the cooperative movement, at Pravaranagar in Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra. He said the opposition has formed a new grouping called INDIA alliance. "It is a 'gazab'

(strange) name...INDIA. I think their meeting is going on today. But as everyone knows, it is nothing but 'naam bade aur darshan chhote'. For these people, name is the only refuge left. They want to wade through a river using this name," he said. "But by just using this name, the river cannot be crossed...A vortex cannot be crossed by using the name alone, for that one needs 'karma'," Singh said.

He said the India of the past is not the same anymore. "Our India is not the same that it used to be in the past when leaders from the country would go to various global platforms and speak but the world never used to listen to them seriously. Other countries used to think 'it is India, a weak nation and why should we listen,'" he said. But today, India's stature in the world has increased so much that when it speaks at the international platform, the world listens attentively, the Union minister added. When the Russia-Ukraine war began, several Indian students were stranded in Ukraine, he said. "The concerned parents of the students appealed to Modi ji for their evacuation. PM Modi dialled Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Russian President Vladimir Putin. And see the charisma, the war stopped for four-and-a-half hours, and our students were evacuated. As many as

23,000 students were brought back," he said. But the opposition does not like this, he said. "It is because of the kind of credibility and prowess that India has established in the world...When we speak, the entire world listens. Nobody considers India a weak nation anymore. I would like to say that India is no longer a weak nation, it has become a powerful nation. "There is no situation now wherein someone can intimidate us. But we are a peace-loving country, which gives a message of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (the world is one family)," Singh said. On the occasion, he lauded the contribution of Vitthalrao Vikhe Patil and said that the cooperative movement was led by him in Maharashtra, as a result of which the cooperative sector not only thrived in Maharashtra but spread across India.

# Special summary revision post delimitation to begin in Assam

ECI has directed Assam polls dept: CEO Goel

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

The Election Commission of India has directed the Assam election department to carry out a special summary revision of electoral rolls in accordance with constituencies post delimitation, chief electoral officer (CEO) Anurag Goel said on Thursday. Before revision of the electoral rolls, intensive pre-revision activities by electoral registration officer (ERO) and 100 per cent physical verification through field machinery are required to be undertaken, Goel told reporters. New polling stations have to be created while the old ones will have to be mapped in accordance with the new constituencies and voters list will have to be also prepared accordingly, the CEO said. The entire process will be done with the help of a software and so on the directives



of the ECI, both online and offline submissions of forms for correction and inclusion of names have been stopped till November 30, he said. The draft publication of voters list will begin from December 1 and it is only then that these forms will be accepted with the process continuing till the last day of filing of nomination papers for elections, Goel said. The decision on all the forms received will be taken by January 15 and the final voters list will be published on

January 31. The continuous updation of the list will continue till the last date of filing of nomination for the elections as announced by the ECI. Meanwhile, the first level checking of voting machines for next year's Lok Sabha polls will begin from Friday and continue till September 29. Goel said a meeting with all national and state political parties of the state was held on Wednesday where the schedule of the special summary revision, 2024, was explained and he sought their cooperation during the entire process. The ECI had carried out the delimitation exercise in the state and published the final report on August 11, keeping intact the number of assembly constituencies at 126 and Lok Sabha seats at 14, while revising the nomenclature of one parliamentary and 19 assembly constituencies.

# Goa AAP chief Palekar arrested for 'misrepresentation of facts' regarding car crash

PTI ■ PANAJI

The Goa Crime Branch on Thursday arrested state Aam Aadmi Party president Amit Palekar for allegedly misrepresenting facts in connection with an accident wherein a Mercedes car mowed down three people near Panaji earlier this month, an official said. Palekar has been accused of misrepresenting facts by introducing a wrong person as the car driver before the investigation officer in an attempt to save the main accused who was at the wheels at the time of the accident, a senior police official told PTI. The AAP leader, howev-

er, said he has nothing to do with the crime and claimed his arrest was part of "dirty politics", while his party colleagues sought to link the police action with formation of national opposition bloc INDIA, which they claimed, has rattled the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Palekar was arrested under Indian Penal Code section 201 (causing disappearance of evidence of offence, or giving false information to screen offender), the police official said. Earlier, businessman Paresh Sawardekar, who owns a chain of supermarkets and a real estate firm, was arrested after the Mercedes car he was allegedly driving in an

inebriated condition on August 7 hit five vehicles in Banastarim village near Panaji, killing three persons, police had said. The accident, in which three cars, a motorcycle and a scooter were hit, took place on the Ponda-Panaji national highway, some 15 kilometres from the state capital, he said. On Thursday morning, the police took the AAP Goa chief into custody from his office in Panaji, the official said. Talking to reporters while he was being taken away by police, Palekar claimed he was arrested as part of "dirty politics". The AAP leader claimed



the police action stemmed from his refusal to join the BJP. "I was told (a couple of days ago) that 'we will teach you a lesson if you don't concede our request' (to join BJP)," Palekar said without naming anyone. AAP Goa leaders gathered outside the Crime Branch office near Panaji and condemned the arrest of Palekar. AAP MLA Capt Venzy Viegas told media persons that Palekar is facing consequences of refusing to join the ruling party. "I was told by Amit last night that he has been getting feelers asking him to join the BJP. He was threatened with

arrest if he did not listen to their diktats," Viegas said without taking any names. AAP leader Valmiki Naik claimed the BJP has been feeling uneasy ever since the opposition grouping, Indian National Development Inclusive Alliance (INDIA), took shape in June. "The BJP is disturbed after opposition parties came together. The ruling party is trying every possible trick to threaten opposition leaders," he alleged. The bloc, of which the AAP is a constituent, is holding its two-day conclave in Mumbai on August 31 and September 1.

## ‘सर्वे सन्तु निरामया’

### Nurturing The Well-Being of All

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- Free of cost doctor's advice at home under e-Sanjeevani OPD
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- Approximately 1.50 crore free tests through Nirogi Haryana healthcare scheme to over 27 lakh underprivileged individuals

“ पिछले 9 से 10 वर्षों में पहली बार देश के गरीब से गरीब को भी एहसास हुआ है कि देश के अस्पताल उसके लिये भी आसानी से उपलब्ध हैं। ”

नरेन्द्र मोदी

Information, Public Relations, Languages and Culture Department, Haryana

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PAPER WITH PASSION

## The 'people's choice' PM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's popularity has gone up despite wishful thinking by the Opposition

Indian politics is a quagmire, where leaders' fortunes rise and fall with the tide of public opinion. But a modern politician has steadfastly endured this sway, and in fact emerged stronger: Prime Minister Narendra Modi's unwavering popularity has captured both national and international attention, and a recent report by the Pew Research Centre only echoes this phenomenon. The survey's findings paint a vivid picture of Modi's continuing appeal, shedding light on the factors driving his popularity and its implications on Indian politics. Titled "Pew Research Centre Survey Validates Modi's Popularity at Home", it delves into the depths of Indian people's sentiment, offering insights into the reasons behind Modi's continuous hold on the national consciousness. The report's comprehensive analysis reveals that his popularity isn't momentary or a fleeting occurrence, but a result of multifaceted factors that have resonated with all Indians. One of the driving forces behind Modi's popularity has been his charismatic leadership style, which combines assertiveness with relatability.



Through his speeches and public appearances, he has connected with citizens on an emotional level, effectively portraying himself as the embodiment of their aspirations and dreams. His personal touch has allowed the PM to foster a strong bond with the people, making him not just a leader, but a symbol of hope and change.

Furthermore, Modi's emphasis on economic growth and development has resonated with a population that yearns for progress. His policies, such as 'Make in India' and 'Digital India,' have not only attracted global attention but also brought tangible improvements to various sectors. The Pew report underscores that these efforts have not gone unnoticed, with a significant percentage of the respondents attributing India's economic growth to his leadership. Whether it's responding to security challenges or health emergencies, Modi's ability to project a sense of stability and control has resonated far and wide. However, no analysis of Modi's popularity would be complete without addressing the role of social and cultural factors. And while Modi's popularity remains undeniable, it's important to acknowledge the diversity of opinion within India's vast population. The report highlights regional variations and generational differences in perceptions of the Prime Minister. While he enjoys significant support in many parts, there are segments of society that voice concerns about issues ranging from social inequality to freedom of expression. And this is the terrain Modi must watch out for. It's crucial to approach the popularity narrative with a balanced perspective. While his appeal is undeniably strong, it's important to recognise the need for ongoing dialogue for a healthy democratic system. As the Pew report indicates, a nuanced understanding of the various factors contributing to Modi's popularity can provide insights into the direction India is headed. Popularity, as they say, like the rest of the things is ephemeral!

Further, Modi's emphasis on economic growth and development has resonated with a population that yearns for progress. His policies, such as 'Make in India' and 'Digital India,' have not only attracted global attention but also brought tangible improvements to various sectors. The Pew report underscores that these efforts have not gone unnoticed, with a significant percentage of the respondents attributing India's economic growth to his leadership. Whether it's responding to security challenges or health emergencies, Modi's ability to project a sense of stability and control has resonated far and wide. However, no analysis of Modi's popularity would be complete without addressing the role of social and cultural factors. And while Modi's popularity remains undeniable, it's important to acknowledge the diversity of opinion within India's vast population. The report highlights regional variations and generational differences in perceptions of the Prime Minister. While he enjoys significant support in many parts, there are segments of society that voice concerns about issues ranging from social inequality to freedom of expression. And this is the terrain Modi must watch out for. It's crucial to approach the popularity narrative with a balanced perspective. While his appeal is undeniably strong, it's important to recognise the need for ongoing dialogue for a healthy democratic system. As the Pew report indicates, a nuanced understanding of the various factors contributing to Modi's popularity can provide insights into the direction India is headed. Popularity, as they say, like the rest of the things is ephemeral!

### PICTALK



Women tie 'Rakhi' to BSF personnel on the occasion of 'Raksha Bandhan' at the Attari-Wagah border, in Amritsar

# Fabian socialism is past its expiry date



PRAFULL GORADIA

That state ownership of business and industry doesn't lead to prosperity was starkly demonstrated by the disintegration of the Soviet Union

Issues like bankruptcy and solvency would seldom form an integral part of any thesis on national economics and the course of economies. It appears to be presumed by most economists, at least of the conventional kind, that bankruptcy is mainly confined to individuals and companies, and not countries. This may perhaps have been because of the existence of an institution like the International Monetary Fund. The IMF has over the years been ready to come to the aid of countries in financial difficulties; albeit on its terms.

Speaking of bankruptcy and insolvency, we may turn our attention to our neighbours. Pakistan is not our only neighbour to be on the edge of insolvency. Nepal and Myanmar (Burma) are not far away; Sri Lanka has just passed through a crisis and has been brought back to its feet thanks to India; one hopes Bangladesh's exports revive soon enough.

Today's generation might find it hard to believe it, but India also had its brief brush with insolvency; this occurred way back in 1990-91. But it dealt with it with courage and boldness. Instead of vacillating, the country's then government did not hesitate to pledge a mass of 50 tonnes of gold to get over the hump, following it up with a dramatic about-turn in economic policy. The turnaround was decisively guided by the then Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao. It required outstanding courage to demolish a pillar of Nehruvianism, namely, the socialistic pattern of economy, so affectionately constructed by Jawaharlal Nehru on the outskirts of Chennai (then Madras) in the year 1955.

While it might have been conceived of as a benign piece of Fabian socialism, the resolution, popularly called the Avadi Resolution came to earn only notoriety in later years. Avadi is a suburb of Madras, where Nehru's Socialist Manifesto was passed by the Congress. In many ways, the occasion was painted with a sanctity of sorts on account of laying the foundation of one of the two shibboleths of the Nehruvian ideology; the other



being "dynamic neutralism", later to re-christened as "Non-Alignment". Rather similarly, this socialism was given the moniker "commanding heights of the economy". Karl Marx might have defined socialism as "From each according to his ability to each according to his opportunity". But in the Nehruvian system, no individual citizen was allotted any share. Thereafter, Nehru's daughter Indira nationalized one industry after another, justifying her actions as 'socialism'. Again, no shares went to the public; in actuality, this was nothing short of state capitalism. Under it, instead of any citizen of the country owning shares, it was the President of India who owned them.

Jawaharlal Nehru long ago, had rather brusquely told the industrialist JRD Tata "Never speak to me again of profit. It is a dirty word". On another occasion, he declared that profiteers would be hanged "from the nearest lamp-posts and trees". Thus, the foundation of a non-profit making public sector was laid. Indira Gandhi and her minions neither understood nor bothered about industrial functioning nor the need to generate financial surpluses.



THE SHIPMENT OF GOLD TO LONDON UNDER FINANCIAL DURESS BROUGHT OUT LOUD AND CLEAR THE EXTREMELY CRITICAL SITUATION IN WHICH INDIA WAS THEN PLACED

On the other hand, Mrs Gandhi once even justified the growing corruption under her regime by dubbing it a "global phenomenon", which meant that her minions helped themselves to money regardless of whether their mistress made any or not.

Thankfully, the end of the 1990-91 crisis saw a new beginning. The break with the past saw a new dawn. India's rating by then had slipped to the bottom of the investment grade. Former RBI governor C. Rangarajan in his recent book *Forks in the Road: My Days at RBI and Beyond* describes how in August 1990, R.N. Malhotra, Governor of the Reserve Bank of India had suggested keeping 15 per cent of gold reserves. The initiative to pledge gold was taken by the RBI. It needed the permission of the government, led by Chandra Shekhar, and the government did show great wisdom and courage. When gold reserves were moved from the vault of the Bombay office to the airport, the movement along the road was closely monitored. It so happened in the case of one large consignment, the bullion van had to stop because of a suspected tyre burst in one of the cars in the convoy, which

later resumed its journey.

The shipment of gold to London under financial duress brought out loud and clear the extremely critical situation in which India was then placed. It also brought home to everyone the enormity of the crisis. In a sense, it paved the way for the reforms that were to come.

There is more than moral beyond this unfortunate episode in our history. The first one is that state ownership of business and industry does not lead to prosperity, starkly demonstrated by the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The second, and more important lesson is that governing a country is like managing a society on a large scale. When a voter goes to the polling booth in any democracy, does he or she ever realize that the exercise is for choosing the super managers of the citizens' welfare and future? For that matter, do the candidates realize that they stand for elections to be elected as the super managers of the country? If they did, no country should come anywhere near bankruptcy.

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

## Chandan Mitra on his final adventure

By Lalita Panicker

If there was one quality that defined Chandan Mitra, it was that he was frank and forthright with his opinions, no matter whom he annoyed. He did not have a malicious bone in his body, but very often paid the price for his

candour. However, that is just one of his qualities. An outstanding political journalist fluent in both Hindi and English, he was a sparkling intellectual, a versatile politician, and a raconteur extraordinaire with astonishing knowledge of Hindi film music. Loyal to a fault, which

is not always the route to political success, he never forgot those who helped him forge a career in politics. With the changing political guard, Chandan stuck steadfastly to those he genuinely respected. To me, he was my boss, mentor, and close friend.

I remember him once telling me that he dreamt of going by jeep across the Khyber Pass and finally reaching Samarkand. I hope he is on his travels to exotic destinations in another world. He is deeply missed and mourned by me and countless others who admired, respected, and loved him.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### DECLINING FDI

Sir — The country still remembers the days of the Chandra Shekhar regime when the country had to mortgage gold to repay loans, and presently FDI is declining. The recent data shows a 34 per cent drop in FDI equity inflows to India during the June quarter compared to the previous years. This decline raises important questions about the implications of this decline for the economy, which is already under stress due to the international environment. The decrease in FDI equity inflows to India during the June quarter can be attributed to the global economic slowdown and geopolitical tensions impacting investor sentiment in Europe and the USA. This impact will extend to India.

Despite India's investment efforts, multinational companies seem to be delaying further investment due to their own circumstances. The midyear outlook by leading investment banks suggests a downturn for the USA in the fourth quarter, followed by a year of contraction and a European recession in 2024. This fear of recession appears to be based on facts, as bank loan rates are increasing and they have a direct impact on further investment, resulting in the contraction of business and a slowdown in job opportunities. Recession warnings are prominent due to misaligned fiscal and monetary policies.

Yash Pal Ralhan | Jalandhar

### Banning nuclear tests

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has made the right statement that a nuclear test ban is a fundamental step toward a world free of nuclear weapons. The Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), though not yet in force, remains a powerful testament to humanity's will to lift the shadow of nuclear annihilation from our world, once and for all, he said in a message on the International Day Against Nuclear Tests, observed on 29 August. In the name of all victims of nuclear testing, all countries that have not yet ratified the treaty should do so immediately, without conditions. Let's end nuclear testing forever. Since 1945, more than 2,000 nuclear

tests have inflicted terrifying suffering on people, poisoned the air, and ravaged landscapes around the world. On the International Day Against Nuclear Tests, the world speaks with one voice to end this destructive legacy. This year, there is an alarming rise in global mistrust and division. At a time when nearly 13,000 nuclear weapons are stockpiled around the world, and countries are working to improve their accuracy, reach, and destructive power, this is a recipe for annihilation. The CTBT was adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 1996, but it has not entered into force.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

### ETHICS IN POLITICS

Sir — Ethics in politics serves as a classic example of an oxymoron. When ethics and politics become contradictory or when politics is regarded as dirty, it simply means that a political system has completely lost its way. Politics without ethics is dangerous for any democracy, as it produces distrust at all levels. It is very sad that ethics and moral values in current-day Indian politics have plummeted.

Politics in India is famous for criminalisation and corruption, and a triad of nexus between criminals, corporations, and politicians. It is said that the 17th Lok

Sabha, which is the latest, has close to 50 per cent of its MPs facing criminal charges.

However, this country has seen great political leaders like Lal Bahadur Shastri, who set high standards of ethical values in politics even in adverse circumstances such as the Tashkent agreement, food crisis, war with Pakistan, etc. Similarly, leaders like Sardar Patel, Abdul Kalam Azad, and Atal Bihari Vajpayee were examples of political integrity and probity.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## Tapping the power of customer emotions

For a paradigm shift in business-to-business success, harnessing emotions can be a potent tool for growth



CHRISTOPHER ROBERTS

"People buy because of emotion and justify with logic." - Drew Eric Whitman

For every pragmatic and analytical entrepreneur the pursuit of success and growth is a strong personal driver. However, the challenge that each one of them faces is a very common and hazardous misconception prevailing in the business world - the belief that emotions hold little sway over loyalty and growth, especially in the B2B sector.

### Emotions in B2B: Driving Loyalty & Growth

There is a transformative power of emotions in driving business success - 'transformative' because it has been found that clients who feel positive emotions such as being valued, cared for and supported (among others) can enjoy an increase in their Net Promoter Score\* by up to 70 points, in comparison to clients that do not feel these positive emotions. For every 1-point increase in Net Promoter Score, a brand's share of wallets increased by 1.25 per cent to 3 per cent.



### The Blueprint of Harnessing Emotions

Alex is a business leader who heads a successful B2B technology firm. Alex always prided himself on making data-driven decisions and believed that logical arguments were the key to winning clients. However, despite a superior product and efficient service, the company struggled to retain clients and attract new ones. Alex couldn't fathom why their growth had plateaued.

Alex then decided to assess the emotions of one of his longstanding clients to understand what drives their customer loyalty towards his business. To his surprise, the client said that the personal touch that Alex's company provided made them feel valued and understood. They believed that Alex's company was a strategic partner and

not just a mere supplier. The emotional bond that they had built was the reason that the client continued to stay loyal to Alex's company.

Word of mouth can bring in 30-50% of sales if done correctly. This has a huge positive financial benefit to any business. The case vividly illustrates the power of emotions in driving loyalty and growth in the B2B sector.

### Unlock the paradigm shift

Emotions hold an extraordinary power that can be harnessed, quantified, and strategically managed. This is the untapped elixir to drive loyalty and growth. Staff need to be engaged and empowered to transfer these positive emotions to customers.

Every business must radiate emotions that resonate with their customers and staff alike, growing their base of happy customers who show unprecedented loyalty towards your business. Organisations must identify the right emotions tailored to their industry. This is best achieved by running a strategic workshop with a facilitator who has skills in extracting key emotions and experi-

ence in how to leverage emotions to drive customer loyalty and growth. These emotions become the essence of their customer engagement approach

Develop a method to not just plan these emotions, but also measure them. Every emotion, positive and negative, can be measured. Remember that when these emotions are gauged accurately, it makes every customer interaction count. Besides, teams across the business silos need to consistently workshop and share best practices. During ideation workshops focused on fostering positive emotions, frontline staff consistently showcase their creativity and innovation in devising initiatives that cultivate a sense of value, care, and support for clients. This subtle yet impactful approach has the potential to establish enduring and unbreakable connections with clients, propelling businesses towards elevated levels of loyalty and success.

(The writer is Managing Director, Engaged Strategy, and creator of the Total Engagement Model)



## FIRST COLUMN

## THE G20 SUMMIT WOULD BE A TURNING POINT

This summit will highlight the importance India is paying to the Arab world



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

Almost all countries aligned with India's vision for the new world order will be descending in New Delhi, by this time next week to adopt resolutions for a changed world order, post the once-in-a-century pandemic and a war in the heart of Europe. India sensed early on, that the G20 leaders' summit scheduled for the second week of September, would be a key landmark for shaping the geopolitical landscape for the 21st century. As a result, India planned nearly 200 meetings over a year under various work groups and G20 tracks, in 50 cities. Liberally splashed across all these meetings were huge helpings of India's rich and diverse cultural heritage and traditions, along with a focus on sustainable social and economic practices for a liveable future. India also took the opportunity to place itself as a voice of the Global South (an array of countries stretching across SE Asia, Africa, Pacific islands, all the way up to Latin America, which is relatively poor as compared to the Global North bunch of countries), an important positioning, given the shifting sands of geopolitics.

What is expected? First, it will crystallise nations and their alignments. Russia, which has friendly relations with India and is one of the major sources of hydrocarbons for India, at a time, when most of Europe and the US have rejected its gasoline, has already conveyed its decision to skip the summit at a leadership level. Russia will be represented by Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov. Russia has historically been one of the largest weapons suppliers to India; however, next week US President and Indian PM are likely to announce historic progress on the development and manufacturing of advanced jet engines.

China, with whom India has a difficult relationship due to the military standoff on India's Northeast boundaries, has mischievously released a standard map, claiming rights over many Indian territories. It would be difficult for the Indian PM to welcome his Chinese counterpart to the G20 summit, with the latest Chinese propaganda tool at work. China realises



that it would not want to shake hands with key global leaders including the US President and may be evangelised about its own dictated and crafted world order, on Indian territory. With few friends to share the dais, a hostile relationship with India, and its second in command Russia barely present, the Chinese premier is also likely to skip the event. To be sure, China's absence in the leaders' summit doesn't mean it won't create roadblocks towards a joint leader's statement emerging next week. If, the past hundreds of meetings, under various work group ministerial, are a testimony, then China has stalled many joint statements and/or, reduced them to the chair's summary. We expect more in the coming week, even while the Chinese propaganda team is hard at work, justifying its positions.

What is interesting is this summit will highlight the importance India is paying to the Arab world. India has invited UAE, Egypt and Oman for the G20 summit, besides Saudi Arabia, which already is a G20 member. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman would embark on a state visit to India immediately after the G20 summit, reiterating the importance of the relationship. India is engaged in West Asia and the Arabic world, through the I2U2 quadrilateral platform, consisting of Israel, UAE and the US. It is important to note that UAE with whom India has recently tied up a mini free trade agreement and which is being increasingly wooed by the US, for a fair transparent influence in the middle east, would be present next week for the leaders summit. The I2U2 also referred to as West Asia QUAD by some analysts, reiterates US-US-led Abrahams Accord and intends for the normalisation of arrangements with Israel, a major power centre in the region. All of these leaders from the Arabic world would be eager to set up bilateral meetings with India, the US and European nations next week while enjoying an extravagant spread of Indian hospitality. (The writer is a political analyst)



SUNIL GOYAL



DIMPLE KHOKHAR

(Goyal is an eminent social scientist, columnist and Professor of DoHE, GoMP, and Khokhar is a Research Scholar)

## Exploring beyond Earthly limits

Chandrayaan-3's success resonates in the realms of healthcare, climate change mitigation, security and national well being



RAJDEEP PATHAK

Cameras, shutterbugs, vloggers, bloggers and others joined thousands of people at different locations across different cities in India to witness the making of history as the time for Chandrayaan-3 landing on the Moon's South Pole drew nearer on the evening of August 23, 2023. Soon cries and shouts of ecstasy, joy and triumph could be heard as Chandrayaan-3 successfully landed on the Moon creating history.

In a landmark achievement, India's space agency, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), became the first space mission to land near the South Pole of the Moon out of 195 countries. This is India's third lunar mission – a remarkable achievement – days after Russia's unmanned Luna-25 spacecraft spanned out of control and crashed into the Moon. This remarkable feat not only underscores the prowess of Indian scientists but also highlights the extraordinary journey of scientific development that India has embarked upon since the establishment of ISRO in 1962. The triumph of Chandrayaan-3 showcases India's technological capabilities and its visionary approach towards leveraging science and technology to address various other areas of development.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi – currently in South Africa for the BRICS Summit – watched the landing virtually. "On this joyous occasion... I would like to address all the people of the world," he said. "India's successful moon mission is not just India's alone. This is a year in which the world is witnessing India's G20 presidency. Our approach of one Earth, one family, one future is resonating across the globe". He added: "This human-centric approach that we present and we represent has been welcomed universally. Our moon mission is also based on the same human-centric approach. Therefore, this success belongs to all of humanity, and it will help moon missions by other countries in the future."

Barring ancient India's rich scientific knowledge that goes back to around 400CE, the roots of modern India's scientific journey can be traced back to the establishment of the Indian National Committee for Space Research (INCOSPAR) in 1962. Renamed ISRO in 1969, the organization embarked on a mission to break through the barriers of space technology. Over the decades, ISRO steadily evolved from its modest beginnings, achieving a series of remarkable milestones that illuminated the nation's scientific landscape. The successful launch of India's first satellite, Aryabhata, in 1975 heralded the beginning of India's space odyssey. This launch marked India's transformation from a consumer of space technology to a creator of cutting-edge solutions. The organization's journey continued with milestones like the launch of the PSLV (Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle) and GSLV (Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle) series, which demonstrated India's increasing self-reliance in space technology.

In this direction of scientific research, experiment and development, Chandrayaan 1, India's first lunar probe, was launched by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on October 22, 2008. It carried eleven scientific instruments to study the Moon's surface, mineral composition, and presence of water molecules. The result was the discovery of water molecules on the lunar surface, indicating the possibility of water ice in polar regions. It further identified key elements like magnesium, alu-



IT IS UNDENIABLE THAT IN THE FACE OF THE GLOBAL COVID-19 PANDEMIC, INDIA EMERGED AS A SHINING EXAMPLE OF SCIENTIFIC PROWESS AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

(The author is programme executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti. The views expressed are personal)

minium, silicon, calcium, iron, and titanium on the Moon.

Further, Chandrayaan 2 launched on July 22, 2019, included an orbiter, a lander named 'Vikram', and a rover named 'Pragyan'. The mission aimed to explore the lunar south pole region. Although the lander lost communication during its descent, the mission demonstrated India's capability to design and launch complex missions. The orbiter continues to provide valuable data about the Moon's exosphere and map its surface.

The landing of Chandrayaan-3 on the Moon's South Pole stands as a testament to ISRO's dedication to exploring new frontiers. The mission's success reflects India's mastery of various scientific disciplines, from astrophysics to engineering. Chandrayaan-3's objective extends beyond mere technological advancement; it symbolizes India's commitment to unravelling the mysteries of the universe and fostering international collaboration in space exploration. This lunar lander 'Vikram' consists of three parts: a lander, rover and propulsion module, which provides the spacecraft with all the thrust required to traverse the 384,400-kilometer (238,855-mile) void between the Moon and Earth.

By landing on the Moon, India has become only the fourth nation ever to accomplish such a feat. CNN reports that this mission could cement India's status as a global superpower in space. Previously, only the United States, China and the former Soviet Union have completed soft landings on the lunar surface. Moreover, the South Pole, region is considered an area of key scientific and strategic interest for spacefaring nations, as scientists believe the region to be home to water-ice deposits. We need to also understand that the mission's sig-

nificance extends far beyond the scientific community, symbolizing India's determination to engage in global scientific collaboration and pave the way for future generations to venture into the cosmos.

India's vision for science and technology extends beyond the celestial realm. The nation recognizes that these tools are instrumental in driving groundbreaking research across disciplines. From the exploration of outer space to the depths of the ocean, science and technology are catalysts for innovation and discovery. ISRO's accomplishments demonstrate how investments in scientific research can yield both knowledge and technological advancements with far-reaching impacts. Beyond space exploration, this commitment to research has yielded groundbreaking discoveries in diverse fields, from biotechnology to materials science, healthcare systems, etc., bringing to light the mysteries of life and matter.

Speaking about healthcare, the fusion of science and technology has catalyzed a transformative revolution in the healthcare sector. India's strides in medical research, pharmaceuticals, and telemedicine have democratized healthcare access, bringing medical expertise to even the remotest corners of the country. It is undeniable that in the face of the global COVID-19 pandemic, India emerged as a shining example of scientific prowess and humanitarian assistance. The country demonstrated its commitment to global health by ramping up the production and export of COVID-19 vaccines, thereby aiding numerous nations in their fight against the virus.

Amidst the spectre of climate change, India's strategic alignment of science and technology assumes paramount importance. The nation's commitment to sustainable development finds expression in its

pursuit of renewable energy solutions, reforestation efforts, and advancements in climate modelling, thus developing innovative solutions.

Further, in an era characterized by interconnectedness and evolving threats, national security demands a multifaceted approach rooted in innovation. Science and technology empower nations to safeguard their citizens against emerging threats, including cyberattacks, bioterrorism, and geopolitical challenges. India's emphasis on research in defence technology, cybersecurity, and intelligence gathering underscores its commitment to maintaining sovereignty in a rapidly evolving security landscape.

Last, but not the least, a nation's ascent in the realm of science and technology is intricately linked to its educational ecosystem and its ability to nurture a culture of curiosity, learning, and innovation. India's educational institutions and research centres play a pivotal role in cultivating a skilled workforce and fostering a spirit of inquiry. Initiatives that promote STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education, research collaborations, and technology transfer have the potential to propel India further on its scientific journey.

As India and the world celebrate this historical victory, and as the nation continues to ascend the ladder of scientific progress, it is pivotal to also look at the happiness index and where the country stands today. The Prime Minister's vision of 2047, which he underlined during the 77th Independence Day, is a step in this direction. Chandrayaan-3's success, echoes beyond the celestial sphere, resonating in the realms of healthcare, climate change mitigation, national security, research excellence, and so on. The saga of dedication and ingenuity must continue.

## Towards safer deliveries and a content motherhood

Providing a positive birthing experience to pregnant women must be the top priority for our Government and the society

Mother's, the name acknowledges the love and dedication of mothers, who sacrifice greatly in raising their children and contributing to their families and communities. It is a time to acknowledge the important role that mothers play in shaping our lives and to express our appreciation for their unwavering support and encouragement. Children express love and appreciation through various gestures such as gifts, cards, and special meals, and spend quality time with mothers and mother figures.

Women have distinct nutritional requirements throughout their lives – especially before and during pregnancy and while breastfeeding when a nutritional vulnerability is greatest. Ensuring women

have nutritious diets and adequate services and care is fundamental for the survival and well-being of mothers and their children. Before pregnancy, women need nutritious and safe diets to establish sufficient reserves for pregnancy. During pregnancy and breastfeeding, energy and nutrient needs increase. Meeting them is critical for women's health and that of their child – in the womb and throughout early childhood. Pregnant Women are among the major target groups of POSHAN Abhiyaan – the government's flagship programme to improve nutritional outcomes. To further draw attention to the nutritional needs of this group, the Government of India's focus for the 5th Rashtriya Poshan Maah (September 01 to 30,

2022) has been on maternal and child health. This year, the objective was to trigger Poshan Maah through Gram Panchayats as Poshan Panchayats with a key focus on "Mahila aur Swasthya" and "Bacha aur Shiksha".

To ensure a pregnancy without any financial woes, the Government has launched the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), a direct benefit transfer (DBT) scheme under which cash benefits are provided to pregnant women in their bank account directly to meet enhanced nutritional needs and partially compensate for wage loss.

Providing a positive birthing experience to pregnant women has been made an imperative through pro-

grammes like Surakshit Matritva Anushasan (SUMAN), and Labour Room & Quality Improvement Initiative (LaQshya). SUMAN aims to provide assured, dignified and respectful delivery of quality healthcare services at no cost and zero tolerance of denial of services to any women and newborn visiting a public health facility to end all preventable maternal and newborn deaths and morbidities. This initiative has been built on the progress of schemes like Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK) and Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY).

LaQshya was launched to reduce maternal and newborn mortality and morbidity, improve the quality of care during delivery and the imme-

diated post-partum period, and enhance the positive birthing experience along with providing Respectful Maternity Care to all pregnant women attending public health facilities. The programme is working on improving the quality of care for pregnant women in the labour room, maternity Operation Theatre and Obstetrics Intensive Care Units (ICUs) & High Dependency Units (HDUs).

Institutional deliveries in India have increased substantially from 79 per cent in 2015-16 to 89 per cent in 2019-20. Around 87% of births in rural areas and 94% of births in urban areas are institutional deliveries. The government is also taking various other steps to promote institutional deliveries,

like, the operationalisation of Sub-Centres, Health Centres, Community Health Centres and District Hospitals for providing 24x7 basic and comprehensive obstetric care, and capacity building of healthcare providers in basic and comprehensive obstetric care to enable them to provide high-quality services during childbirth at the institutions. Other initiatives include setting up Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Wings at high case-load facilities to improve the quality of care provided to mothers and children, establishing Birth Waiting Homes (BWH) in remote and tribal areas to promote institutional delivery and improving access to healthcare facilities, and strengthening of over

25,000 'Delivery Points' across the country in terms of infrastructure, equipment, and trained manpower. The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare also launched the Anemia Mukh Bharat strategy in 2018 to reduce anaemia prevalence both due to nutritional and non-nutritional causes, in the lifecycle approach. The strategy is estimated to reach out to 450 million beneficiaries including 30 million pregnant women.

It is not just the responsibility of government, community health workers, NGOs, civil society but every citizen of the country must consider it as their duty to ensure Surakshit Matritva, and work towards zero preventable maternal deaths in India.

# 73 killed in fire in multi-storey building in Johannesburg

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

At least 73 people were killed and 52 others injured after a massive fire broke out on Thursday in a multi-storey building occupied by migrants in the central business district here in South Africa's biggest city, emergency services said.

Authorities said it was unclear what sparked the blaze at the five-storey building in the city centre.

City of Johannesburg emergency services spokesperson Robert Mulaudzi said firefighters were alerted to the fire in a building on the corner of Delvers and Alberts streets at about 1:30 a.m.

Dozens of emergency and rescue workers are still on the scene as bodies continue to be brought out.

"We managed to evacuate the people who were inside the building as soon as we arrived while we were conducting fire-fighting operations," Mulaudzi said, adding that most of those treated for injuries had suffered smoke inhalation or minor injuries.

Mulaudzi said arrangements were being made to accommodate those who had been left homeless by the incident.

The fire gutted the five-storey building.

A total of 73 bodies were recovered and 52 were injured



in the fire, Mulaudzi said.

A video posted by Mulaudzi on X, formerly known as Twitter, showed fire trucks and ambulances outside the building with burnt-out windows.

A toddler was among the deceased.

Of the injured, some suffered smoke inhalation with others sustaining minor injuries.

Mulaudzi said the fire had been contained and that they were busy with "damping down" as well as search and recovery operations.

He said the death toll may increase because there was an informal settlement inside the

building which may have resulted in people being trapped while trying to flee.

"Every floor has an informal settlement, and those that were trying to evacuate were trapped because of the structures between the floors," the News24 website quoted Mulaudzi as saying.

"We have informed people who are at the scene looking for their relatives that chances of finding them alive are very slim."

The building is one of many in the once bustling district of Johannesburg that has been hijacked by criminal elements

who then let them out to desperate migrants, both legal and illegal, who need accommodation.

Often, this is despite there being no electricity, water, or sanitation services as the municipality discontinues these in abandoned buildings in an attempt to make them safer.

"There are dozens of shacks inside this building and there must be a few hundred people living in small shacks into which the five floors have been divided," said a resident from Tanzania, who lives next to the building and refused to be identified as he said he was still struggling to get refugee status.

He said most of the residents in several buildings in the area were illegal migrants from African states who came to the economic heart of South Africa in search of jobs, but most had to struggle to make ends meet as these were very scarce.

He said there were also South Africans from rural areas who did that and who were also exploited by unscrupulous criminal syndicates who have hijacked the buildings.

"Most of us are forced to use candles for light and cook on small paraffin stoves and some even use boules (open fires made in old steel drums), which are very dangerous in closed buildings. I'm not sure how this fire started, but last night was cold and it could have been something like that," he said.

He added that there were some families with small children living in the building.

"I don't see much hope for anyone else coming alive out of that building now. We just see firemen bringing out bodies one by one. It's very sad," said another woman, who also lives in a shack nearby, again refusing to be identified.

Hundreds of economic migrants live in makeshift homes on empty land and even some streets or converted small sections of buildings in the suburbs surrounding the centre of Johannesburg.

Those injured in the blaze were taken to hospital.

# Ukraine has developed long-range weapon, says Zelenskyy

AP ■ KYIV

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Thursday his country has developed a weapon that hit a target 700 kilometres away, in an apparent reference to the previous day's strike on an airport in western Russia.

Zelenskyy said on his Telegram channel the weapon was produced by Ukraine's Ministry of Strategic Industries but gave no other details.

On Wednesday, a four-hour wave of drones that Moscow blamed on Ukraine hit an airport near Russia's border with Estonia and Latvia, damaging four Il-76 military transport planes, according to local reports.

The airport is in Russia's Pskov region, about 700 kilometres north of the Ukrainian border.

In all, six Russian regions were targeted in the barrage amid the 18-month war.

The Associated Press was unable to determine whether the drones were launched from Ukraine or inside Russia.

Kyiv officials normally neither claim nor deny responsibility for attacks on Russian soil, though they sometimes refer obliquely to them. Zelenskyy's remark was the clearest hint that Ukraine was behind the strike.

The attack forced the closure of Pskov airport, though it reopened Thursday, according to Russian transport officials. Another drone intercepted



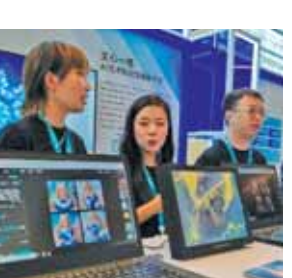
overnight near Moscow resulted in flight delays at several airports around the Russian capital, officials said Thursday. No injuries were reported.

Russian news agency Interfax reported, meanwhile, that security services killed two people and detained five members of a Ukrainian sabotage group in the Bryansk border region on Wednesday.

The apparent Ukrainian drones reaching deep into Russia and cross-border sabotage missions are part of Kyiv's efforts to heap domestic pressure on the Kremlin, militarily and politically. Meantime, a Ukrainian counteroffensive launched in June is chipping away at some parts of the front line, Kyiv officials claim.

Ukraine is aiming to "erode Russian morale and increase pressure on its commanders," the International Institute for Strategic Studies, a think tank, said in an assessment.

The strategy is "to bring Russian forces to a tipping point where combat power and morale may begin to break," the IISS said in the analysis late Wednesday.



# China's Baidu makes AI chatbot Ernie Bot publicly available

AP ■ HONG KONG

Chinese search engine and artificial intelligence firm Baidu made its ChatGPT-equivalent language model fully available to the public Thursday, raising the company's stock price by over 3 per cent following the announcement.

Beijing sees artificial intelligence as a key industry to rival the United States and aims to become a global leader by 2030.

Chinese technology firms have also raced to unveil their generative AI models - in which algorithms allow the technology to produce and create new content - after US firm OpenAI launched the widely popular ChatGPT.

Baidu said Thursday that Ernie Bot, which generates text and images in response to questions and prompts provided by users, was fully open to the general public via the official website and an app that was only available in China's app stores.

By Thursday afternoon, the Ernie Bot app had topped the charts on Apple's iOS store in China for free apps.

By releasing the model publicly, Baidu will be able to collect massive real-world human feedback, according to Baidu CEO Robin Li, who said this would in turn help improve Ernie and Baidu's foundation models. Like Europe, China has made efforts in recent months to regulate the generative AI industry.

China issued AI regulations August 15 requiring companies to carry out a security review and obtain approvals before their product can be publicly launched. Beijing also requires companies providing such generative AI services to comply with government requests for technology and data. The US does not currently have regulations in place.

Baidu CEO Li said he was optimistic and described the AI regulations as "more pro-innovation than regulation" in the company's earnings call earlier in August.



# Simulated nuclear attacks on South Korea and rehearsed its occupation: North Korea

AP ■ SEOUL

North Korea said Thursday its latest missile launches simulated "scorched earth" nuclear strikes on South Korea and that it's also been rehearsing an occupation of its rival's territory in the event of conflict.

Pyeongyang has previously tested nuclear-capable missiles and described how it would use them in potential wars with South Korea and the US. But the North's disclosure of detailed war plans reaffirmed its aggressive nuclear doctrine to intimidate its opponents, as it escalates its protest of the ongoing South Korean-US military exercises that it views as a major security threat, observers say.

North Korea's military said it fired two tactical ballistic missiles from the capital on Wednesday night to practice "scorched earth strikes" at major command centres and operational airfields in South Korea, according to the official Korean Central News Agency.

The North's military said the missiles carried out their simu-

lated strikes through air bursts, suggesting it confirmed the explosions of dummy warheads at a set altitude.

North Korea said its missile tests were response to the United States' flyover of long-range B-1B bombers for a joint aerial training with South Korea earlier Wednesday as part of the allies' field exercises.

"(The aerial drill) is a serious threat to (North Korea) as it was just pursuant to the scenario for a preemptive nuclear strike at" North Korea, the Korean People's Army general staff said. "The KPA will never overlook the rash acts of the US forces and the (South Korean) military gangsters."

The missile launches Wednesday were the latest in the North's barrage of weapons tests since last year.

According to South Korean and Japanese assessments, the two short-range missiles travelled a distance of 360-400 kilometers at the maximum altitude of 50 kilometers before landing in the waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan.

# US military plans to unleash thousands of autonomous war robots over next two years

THE CONVERSATION ■ GOLD COAST (AUSTRALIA)

The United States military plans to start using thousands of autonomous weapons systems in the next two years in a bid to counter China's growing power, US Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks announced in a speech on Monday. The so-called Replicator initiative aims to work with defence and other tech companies to produce high volumes of affordable systems for all branches of the military.

Military systems capable of various degrees of independent operation have become increasingly common over the past decade or so. But the scale and scope of the US announcement

makes clear the future of conflict has changed: the age of warfighting robots is upon us.

## AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME

Over the past decade, there has been considerable development of advanced robotic systems for military purposes. Many of these have been based on modifying commercial technology, which itself has become more capable, cheaper and more widely available.

More recently, the focus has shifted onto experimenting with how to best use these in combat. Russia's war in Ukraine has demonstrated that the technology is ready for real-world deployment.

Loitering munitions, a form of robot air vehicle, have been



widely used to find and attack armoured vehicles and artillery. Ukrainian naval attack drones have paralysed Russia's Black Sea fleet, forcing their crewed warships to stay in port.

Military robots are an idea whose time has come.

## ROBOTS EVERYWHERE

In her speech, Hicks talked of a perceived urgent need to change how wars are fought. She declared, in somewhat impenetrable Pentagon-speak, that the new Replicator programme would field attritable auto-

nomous systems at scale of multiple thousands, in multiple domains, within the next 18 to 24 months.

Decoding this, "autonomous" means a robot that can carry out complex military missions without human intervention.

"Attritable" means the robot is cheap enough that it can be placed at risk and lost if the mission is of high priority. Such a robot is not quite designed to be disposable, but it would be reasonably affordable so many can be bought and combat losses replaced.

Finally, "multiple domains" means robots on land, at sea, in the air and in space. In short, robots everywhere for all kinds of tasks.

# Divided Malaysia celebrates National Day with PM Anwar rallying for unity

AP ■ PUTRAJAYA (MALAYSIA)

Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim urged Malaysians to unite and reject racial and religious bigotry, as the country marked its 66th year of freedom from British rule on Thursday with fireworks and a street parade.

Fireworks were set off in various locations at midnight to usher in National Day. Tens of thousands of people thronged the government administrative capital of Putrajaya early Thursday for the main procession, waving national flags and cheering as bands. Dancers and convoys of vehicles went past.

Anwar, along with the nation's King Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad

Shah, were among the dignitaries at the parade.

In a televised speech on the eve of National Day, Anwar appealed to Malaysians not to let their differences ruin the nation. He warned that powerful nations have collapsed not just due to mismanagement or corruption but because they "played with fires of ethnic and religious fanaticism."

"Don't take this lightly ... Our differences can be a strength or a force that can destroy the fabrics of society and the country," said Anwar, who took power in November after a divisive general election. "We can choose to continue to sow doubt and suspicion, political and racial hatred or we can choose to say that enough is enough."



Islam is the official religion in Malaysia and by law, Malays - who make up over 2/3 of the country's 33 million people - must strictly be

Muslims and cannot convert. Malaysia also has large Chinese and Indian minorities.

Racial and religious divides further deepened in Malaysia after Nov. 19 general elections led to the rise of a strong Islamic-Malay nationalist opposition bloc. Anwar's coalition won the most seats but fell short of a majority to form a government. Anwar, 76, later established a multi-coalition unity government with the backing of former rivals.

The opposition Perikatan Nasional bloc, which included a powerful Islamic party, further reinforced its strength in local polls earlier this month. It made major inroads in three government-controlled states and nearly swept all the seats in three other states it ruled. It has

framed its gains as a protest vote against Anwar's unity government.

Sultan Abdullah, in a National Day post on Facebook, echoed Anwar's call for racial unity.

"This unity is the main key to the country's stability and prosperity, as well as the seed and source of strength for us to face any current and future challenges," he said.

Although his government has a two-thirds majority in Parliament, Anwar has not yet managed to shore up support among Malay voters, many who view him as too liberal. They fear their Islamic identity and economic privileges under a decades-old affirmative action program could be chipped away.

# Japan's defence ministry requests nearly 12 per cent budget increase to bolster military's strike capability

AP ■ TOKYO

Japan's defence ministry is requesting a nearly 12% budget increase that includes two warships with advanced radar and long-range cruise missiles as it further fortifies the nation's military in the face of North Korean threats and Chinese military advancement.

The record 7.7 trillion yen (USD 52.5 billion) request for the 2024 fiscal year marks the second year of a rapid five-year military buildup under a new security strategy Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's government adopted in December. It focuses on reinforcing strike capability in a break from Japan's post-war principle of having a military only for self-defence.

Under the five-year plan, Japan plans to spend 43 trillion yen (USD 315 billion) through 2027 to nearly double its annual spending to around 10 trillion yen (USD 68 billion), making Japan the world's third-biggest

spender after the United States and China. How to finance and justify the growing military spending is uncertain in a country with steeply declining births and increasing costs of caring for its aged population.

The budget request was approved at the defence ministry meeting Thursday and submitted to the finance ministry for negotiations.

The request includes a hefty 490 billion yen (USD 3.35 billion) to start building two Aegis-radar equipped warships that would be deployed in 2027 and 2028, as well as for training, testing and other costs related to the ships.

The warships, each carrying 240 crew members, would be designed to fire long-range cruise missiles including U.S.-made Tomahawks and a modified version of domestically made Type-12 surface-to-ship missile, planned for deployment in 2032 to serve as something of a floating missile base.



The warships would have SPY-7 radar that could locate harder-to-detect missile launches including those on a high-arch trajectory. North Korea has often test-fired missiles at a high angle to avoid neighboring countries. Japan earlier had ordered the SPY-7 for land use but was forced to scrap the plan due to safety concerns in the regions that would host them.

Japan is spending 321 trillion yen (USD 2.2 billion) billion this year to buy 400 Tomahawks for deployment in 2026-2027 and is retrofitting existing destroyers to carry them.

become the frontline in case of a Taiwan emergency. The ministry requested about 80 billion yen (USD 547 million) for the development and production of hypersonic guided missiles.

For overall missile defence, the ministry requests 1.27 trillion yen (USD 8.69 billion) for spending that includes the Aegis-equipped warships. The ministry also seeks 75 billion yen (USD 547 million) for joint development of glide-phase interceptors with the United States to be deployed around 2030 to counter hypersonic missiles being developed by China, North Korea and Russia.

Japan's government is preparing to ease its arms transfer policy, which currently bans export of lethal weapons, to allow some of them. Due to the need for developing and producing defence equipment at home, the ministry seeks to strengthen Japan's feeble defence industry and is adding 540 new staff for equipment development.

# Palestinian kills 1 after ramming truck into soldiers at West Bank checkpoint

AP ■ TEL AVIV

A Palestinian driver slammed his truck into soldiers at a busy checkpoint in the occupied West Bank on Thursday, killing one Israeli before being shot dead, Israeli authorities said, in the latest bloodshed in a relentless cycle of violence to roil the region. The violence came a day after Israeli police shot and killed a 14-year-old Palestinian boy who stabbed a man in a Jerusalem light-rail station and after Palestinian militants detonated a bomb near a convoy of Israeli troops escorting Jewish worshippers to a holy site in the West Bank, wounding four Israeli troops.

The unrest is part of more than a yearlong wave of violence that has surged to levels unseen in the West Bank in some two decades.

Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant said one person was killed in the attack. At least two others were injured, according to paramedics.

Israel's Defence Ministry said the driver sped away and was stopped by security guards at a separate checkpoint nearby. Police said the driver was killed. Avi Biton, a regional police chief, said the driver, whom he identified as a 41-year-old West Bank resident, drove a truck into a group of soldiers.

Video circulating on social media showed a white truck surrounded by security guards at the second checkpoint as gunshots rang out.



The checkpoint where the truck rammed the soldiers is on a major highway leading from central Israel through the West Bank and into Jerusalem and is next to the Israeli city of Modiin.

The checkpoint is typically packed with commuters and security guards or soldiers.

Palestinian assaults against Israelis have spiked alongside Israel's intensification of arrest raids in the West Bank since early last year. Some 30 people have been killed in Palestinian attacks against Israelis since the start of 2023.

The near-nightly raids have fuelled tensions in the region and have ushered in some of the worst fighting between Israel and the Palestinians in the West Bank since the last Palestinian uprising in the early 2000s.

Nearly 180 Palestinians have been killed in the violence, about half of them affiliated with militant groups, according to a tally by The Associated Press.



# US, Indonesia, 5 other nations hold war drills amid China concerns

AP ■ JAKARTA

Soldiers from the US, Indonesia and five other nations began annual training exercises Thursday on Indonesia's main island of Java while China's increasing aggression is raising concern.

American and Indonesian soldiers have held the live-fire Super Garuda Shield drills since 2009, and Australia, Japan and Singapore joined last year.

The United Kingdom and French forces are participating in this year's exercises, with a total of about 5,000 personnel.

China sees the expanded drills as a threat, accusing the US of building an Indo-Pacific alliance similar to NATO to limit China's growing military and diplomatic influence in the region.

Brunei, Brazil, Canada, Germany, India, Malaysia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, South Korea, and East Timor also sent observers to the two-week exercises in Baluran, a coastal town in East Java province.

The commanding general of US Army Pacific, Gen. Charles Flynn, said the 19 nations involved in the training are a powerful demonstration of multilateral solidarity to safeguard a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

"Super Garuda Shield 2023 builds on last year's tremendous success," Flynn said in a statement released by the US Embassy in Jakarta on Tuesday. "This joint, multinational training exercise displays our collective commitment and like-minded unity, allowing for a stable, secure, and more peaceful, free and open Indo-Pacific."

The statement said at least 2,100 US and



1,900 Indonesian forces will enhance interoperability capabilities through training and cultural exchanges that includes a command and control simulation, an amphibious exercise, airborne operations, an airfield seizure exercise, and a combined joint field training that culminates with a live-fire event.

The command post exercise will focus on mission planning staff tasks in a combined military setting. A field training exercise will involve battalion-strength elements from each nation exercising war-fighting skills to enhance interoperability and combined operational capacity.

Garuda Shield will hold in several places, including in waters around Natuna

at the southern portion of the South China Sea, a fault line in the rivalry between the US and China.

Indonesia and China enjoy generally positive ties, but Jakarta has expressed concern about what it sees as Chinese encroachment in its exclusive economic zone in the South China Sea.

The edge of the exclusive economic zone overlaps with Beijing's unilaterally declared "nine-dash line" demarcating its claims in the South China Sea.

Increased activities by Chinese coast guard vessels and fishing boats in the area have unnerved Jakarta, prompting Indonesia's navy to conduct a large drill in July 2020 in waters around Natuna.

# Former Thai leader Thaksin, jailed after returning from exile, requests royal pardon

AP N BANGKOK

Former Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who recently returned from exile and began serving an eight-year prison term, has requested a royal pardon, a senior member of the outgoing Cabinet said Thursday. Thaksin was moved from prison to a state hospital soon after his return last week for reported ill health.

Wissanu Krea-ngam, who is acting justice minister as well as a deputy prime minister, said he has received a letter from Thaksin requesting a pardon, but declined to say how long it would take to be approved.

"The process of approval entirely depends on his royal grace," he said. Thailand is a constitutional monarchy, giving King Maha Vajiralongkorn the final word on pardons of convicted criminals.

Thaksin, by promoting populist policies and using the fortune he made in telecommunications to build his own political party, was elected prime minister in 2001 and easily reelected in 2005.

He was ousted in a military coup in 2006 and accused of corruption, abuse of power and disrespecting the monarchy.

He returned last week after 15 years of self-imposed exile and was immediately sent to



Bangkok's main prison because of several criminal convictions he has decried as politically motivated.

Hours after Thaksin's return, Srettha Thavasin of the Pheu Thai party won enough votes in Parliament to become prime minister, ending more than three months of uncertainty after May's general election. Pheu Thai is the latest in a string of parties affiliated with Thaksin.

To achieve a parliamentary majority, Srettha formed a coalition with pro-military parties linked to a 2014 coup that ousted a Pheu Thai government formed by Thaksin's sister, Yingluck Shinawatra. Pheu Thai had vowed during the May election campaign that it would not join with any pro-military party in forming a government.

It also excluded the progressive Move Forward Party, which

won the most seats and votes in the polls.

It is widely believed that Thaksin returned out of hope that a new government friendly to him would reduce his sentence and that he may have made a deal with authorities, although he has said his decision had nothing to do with the Pheu Thai party's bid for power.

Srettha told reporters on Thursday that he expects to submit a list of his new Cabinet ministers for royal endorsement on Friday.

There is growing criticism that Thaksin has received special treatment compared to other inmates, including not having to get a prison-style haircut.

He was also transferred to a hospital just hours after being taken to prison, a move which officials attributed to several health problems.



# Claire: Newest Indian-origin Minister in UK PM Cabinet

PTI ■ LONDON

Claire Coutinho, a close aide of British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, got a big promotion as his new Energy Security and Net Zero Secretary in a mini reshuffle on Thursday.

Coutinho, 38, becomes the second Goan-origin minister after Home Secretary Suella Braverman in the Sunak Cabinet and has a tough brief ahead of her as energy costs have been soaring in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

She has committed herself to work on safeguarding energy security and reducing bills for families struggling with a cost-of-living crisis. In her first Cabinet role, Coutinho replaced Grant Shapps after he was promoted to the post of Defence Secretary following the resignation of Ben Wallace.

"I am delighted to have been appointed Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero. I will work with the Prime Minister to safeguard our energy security, reduce bills for families, and build cleaner, cheaper, homegrown energy," she tweeted.

Like Sunak, UK-born Coutinho grew up in a family connected with the National Health Service (NHS) and was in the field of investment banking before joining politics.

The pro-Brexitler with a Master's degree in Maths and Philosophy from Oxford University was elected member of Parliament for East Surrey, south-east England, in 2019 with a promise to serve people.

"I was elected the Member of Parliament for East Surrey in 2019. Growing up, I watched my parents work as GPs (general practitioners) in the NHS, listening to people's problems and solving them as best they could. It is in that spirit that I hope to serve the people of East Surrey," reads the London-born politician's mission statement as a Tory MP.



# Iran accuses Israel of supplying potentially exploding parts for ballistic missile programme

AP ■ DUBAI

Iran accused Israel of trying to sabotage its ballistic missile program through faulty foreign parts that could explode, damaging or destroying the weapons before they could be used.

The Israeli prime minister's office declined to comment on the allegation, made in a report aired on Iranian state television.

A reporter also said the parts could be used in Iran's extensive arsenal of drones as well. The report described the alleged Israeli operation as "one of the biggest attempts at sabotage" it had ever seen.

It accused Israeli Mossad agents of supplying the faulty parts, which the state TV report described as low-price "connectors."

Footage aired by state TV showed the alleged parts, some of them popping up into the air.

The pieces shown in the television report appeared to be military-style, high-density circular electrical connectors.

Such connectors can be used to connect electronic components of a missile or a drone, such as its guidance computer, and pass both electricity and signals.

"This was planted in a part called the connector, which is responsible for connecting the (computer) network of Iranian-made ballistic missiles, as well as drones," state television military correspondent Younes Shadloo

said in the report.

"Apparently the part contained a modified explosive kit planted in it and was timed to explode at a certain time."

The state TV report did not explain why Iran sought to purchase the connectors abroad, though some Iranian websites advertising such connectors suggest that Russian-made ones were the best in the market.

Russia faces international sanctions over its war on Ukraine, which has seen its own supply of electronics needed for missile systems challenged. Iranian-made drones used by Russia in the war also use circular connectors, according to reports by experts who have torn down the weapons.

The TV broadcast did not say when authorities discovered the faulty parts, nor if they had been installed in any ballistic missile prior.

In May 2022, an explosion at a major Iranian military and weapons development base east of Tehran called Parchin killed an engineer and wounded another. Other blasts have struck the program as well.

Israel has been suspected in a series of targeted slayings of nuclear scientists in Iran. Sabotage attacks also have damaged Iranian nuclear sites.

The Stuxnet computer virus in the late 2000s also attacked control units for uranium centrifuges, causing the sensitive devices to spin out of control and destroy themselves.

# Iraq court sentences 5 to life in prison in killing of US citizen

AP ■ BAGHDAD

An Iraqi criminal court convicted five men and sentenced them to life in prison on Thursday in the killing of a US citizen in Baghdad last year, officials said. Stephen Edward Troell, 45, a native of Tennessee, was fatally shot in his car in November by assailants as he pulled up to the street where he lived in Baghdad's central Karrada district with his family.

It was a rare killing of a foreigner in Iraq, where security conditions have improved in recent years.



Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani at the time called the murder "a cowardly crime against an American citizen and resident of our country who is

known amongst the community." A security guard working in the modest residential neighbourhood where Troell lived said at the time that the American would greet him in Arabic every morning on his way to work and was well liked by his Iraqi neighbours. Two Iraqi intelligence officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to comment on the case said one Iranian and four Iraqis were convicted in the killing. The Iranian was identified as Mohammed Ali Ridha. The officials did not give the names of the Iraqis.

The five convicted men are under detention, while others wanted in connection with the case have fled, they said.

One of the officials said the first suspect arrested was an Iraqi who pointed authorities to Ridha, who was arrested in the Iraqi city of Najaf after returning to Iraq from Iran.

The suspects testified during the trial that they shot Troell during a kidnapping gone wrong, one of the officials said. He said the American had been accosted by two cars, with four people in each vehicle, while others stood lookout.

# Trump pleads not guilty in Georgia election subversion case

AP ■ ATLANTA

Former President Donald Trump pleaded not guilty on Thursday and said he'll skip a hearing next week in the case accusing him and others of illegally trying to overturn the results of the 2020 election in Georgia.

Fulton County Superior Court Judge Scott McAfee had set arraignment hearings for Trump and the 18 others charged in the case for September 6. A court filing

waiving arraignment means Trump won't have to show up for that.

The decision to skip an in-person appearance averts the dramatic arraignments that have accompanied the three other criminal cases Trump faces, in which the Republican former president has been forced amid tight security into a courtroom and entered "not guilty" pleas before crowds of spectators. Georgia courts have fairly permissive rules on news cameras in the

courtroom, and this step means Trump won't have to enter a plea on television.

Trump and 18 others were charged earlier this month in a 41-count indictment that outlines an alleged scheme to subvert the will of Georgia voters who had chosen Democrat Joe Biden over the Republican incumbent in the presidential election.

Several other people

charged in the indictment had already waived arraignment in filings with the court, saving them a trip to the courthouse in downtown Atlanta. Trump previously travelled to Georgia on August 24 to turn himself in at the Fulton County Jail, where he became the first former president to have a mug shot taken.

The case, filed under

Georgia's Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organisations Act, or RICO, is sprawling, and the logistics of bringing it to trial are likely to be complicated. Legal maneuvering in the case has already begun.

At least two defendants have filed demands for a speedy trial and have asked to be tried separately from others in the case.

**SAHARA CREDIT COOPERATIVE SOCIETY LIMITED**  
Regd. Office : Sahara India Bhawan, 1, Kapoorthala Complex, Aliganj, Lucknow-226024  
Telefax : 0522-2330155, Email : socsl.cooperative@sahara.in, Regd. No. MSCS/CR/333/2010

**NOTICE**  
The 14th Annual General Meeting of the Members/Delegates of Sahara Credit Cooperative Society Limited is scheduled to be held on Wednesday, 20th September, 2023 at 11:30 a.m. at 3rd Floor, Sahara India Tower, 7, Kapoorthala Complex, Aliganj, Lucknow - 226024.

**BUSINESS ITEMS ON AGENDA :**

- To confirm the minutes of the last Annual General Meeting.
- To consider and adopt the Audited Financial Statement of accounts for the F.Y. 2022-23.
- To consider and approve the Audit Report and Annual Report for the F.Y. 2022-23.
- To consider the creation of specific reserve and other funds.
- To consider the disposal of net profit.
- To approve the Annual Budget for the Financial Year 2024-25.
- To approve the Annual Action Plan for the Financial Year 2024-25.
- To consider and approve the appointment/re-appointment of Statutory Auditor for the F.Y. 2023-24.
- To consider the list of employees who are relatives of members of the Board or of the Managing Director.
- To brief the members about the launch of "CRCS Sahara Refund" portal, in compliance with the Hon'ble Supreme Court Order dated 29.03.2023.
- Any other item, if any, with the permission of Chairperson.

Place : Lucknow By order of the Board  
Date : 24<sup>th</sup> August, 2023 For Sahara Credit Cooperative Society Limited  
Sd/-  
Deputy Managing Director

Note :  
1. Please note that if there is no quorum within half an hour of the time fixed for the scheduled meeting, the meeting shall be adjourned and the adjourned meeting shall be held at 12:30 p.m. on the same day i.e. 20th September, 2023 to transact the agenda items as aforesaid and that no quorum shall be necessary for transacting the business in the adjourned meeting so held.

**APPENDIX-IV-A**  
[See proviso to rule 8 (6)]  
**Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Property**  
E-Auction Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) and Rule 9(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described Immovable Property mortgaged to Indiabulls Housing Finance Ltd. [CIN: L65922DL2005PLC136029] ("Secured Creditor"), the constructive possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of the Secured Creditor, will be sold on "as is where is", "as is what is" and "whatever there is" basis on 20.09.2023 from 02.00 P.M. to 04.00 P.M., for recovery of Rs. 31,23,189/- (Rupees Thirty One Lakh Twenty Three Thousand One Hundred Eighty Nine only) pending towards Loan Account No. HDHLDRP00489267 (Earlier LAN Code 0000577) of DHFL, by way of outstanding principal, arrears (including accrued late charges) and interest till 21.08.2023 with applicable future interest in terms of the Loan Agreement and other related loan document(s) w.e.f. 22.08.2023 along with legal expenses and other charges due to the Secured Creditor from Dharam Singh, Varun Kausik and Babita.

The Reserve Price of the Immovable Property will be Rs. 17,55,000/- (Rupees Seventeen Lakh Fifty Five Thousand only) and the Earnest Money Deposit ("EMD") will be Rs. 1,75,500/- (Rupees One Lakh Seventy Five Thousand Five Hundred only) i.e. equivalent to 10% of the Reserve Price.

**DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY**  
ALL THAT PIECE AND PARCEL OF PLOT NO B-72 MEASURING AREA 100 SQ YARD OUT OF KHASRA NO. 367, SITUATED IN THE REVENUE ESTATE OF VILLAGE BINDAPUR, COLONY KNOWN AS SUBHASH PARK EXTN, B BLOCK, UTTAM NAGAR, NEW DELHI-110059, BOUNDED AS UNDER:  
EAST : PLOT NO. 71 NORTH : ROAD  
WEST : PORTION OF PLOT NO. 72 SOUTH : GALI

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided on the website of the Secured Creditor i.e. www.indiabullshomeloans.com. For bidding, log on to www.auctionfocus.in

Sd/-  
Date : 25.08.2023 Authorized officer  
Place : NEW DELHI Indiabulls Housing Finance Limited

**APPENDIX-IV-A**  
[See proviso to rule 8 (6)]  
**Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Property**  
E-Auction Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) and Rule 9(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

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The Reserve Price of the Immovable Property will be Rs. 10,20,000/- (Rupees Ten Lakh Twenty Thousand only) and the Earnest Money Deposit ("EMD") will be Rs. 1,02,000/- (Rupees One Lakh Two Thousand only) i.e. equivalent to 10% of the Reserve Price.

**DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY**  
BUILT-UP UPPER GROUND FLOOR, TOWARDS BACK SIDE (RHS) PORTION, PRIVATE NO. 106, AREA MEASURING 40.83 SQ. YARDS (34.14 SQ. MTRS.) CONSTRUCTED OUT OF THE BUILT-UP PROPERTY BEARING PLOT NO. 227 & 228 -UGF, OUT OF KHASRA NO. 15/12 SITUATED IN THE AREA OF VILLAGE MATIALA, DELHI STATE ABADI KNOWN AS MANSARA RAM PARK, UTTAM NAGAR, DELHI - 110059, WITH COMMON TWO WHEELER PARKING RIGHTS IN THE COMMON PARKING AREA ALONG WITH PROPORTIONATE UNDIVIDED INDIVISIBLE & IMPARTIBLE OWNERSHIP RIGHTS IN THE UNDERNEATH LAND. BOUNDED AS UNDER:  
EAST : PLOT NO. 226  
WEST : UNIT OF MIDDLE & OTHER LAND  
SOUTH : FRONT SIDE UNIT AND THEREAFTER ROAD 20 FEET  
NORTH : GALI

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided on the website of the Secured Creditor i.e. www.indiabullshomeloans.com. For bidding, log on to www.auctionfocus.in

Sd/-  
Date : 25.08.2023 Authorized officer  
Place : NEW DELHI Indiabulls Housing Finance Limited

**verka**  
THE PUNJAB STATE COOPERATIVE MILK PRODUCERS FEDERATION LTD.  
SCO 153-155, SECTOR 34-A, CHANDIGARH-160022, EPABX NO. 0172-5041812.66  
Notice Inviting Tender  
www.verka.coop

Sealed tenders are hereby invited for the purchase and supply of following items:-

Sr No	Name of Work/Item	Period/Tentative Qty
1.	For Verka Head Office Construction of Verka Milk Bars (size 10*10') at: • Various locations of Punjab • Various locations of Delhi.	Annual 150 no's 50 no's
2.	For Verka Mohali Dairy a) Labour contractor for loading & unloading / shifting of all kinds of material lying in Main Store/ Procurement Store. b) Supply, installation & commissioning of 30KLPW water softener.	Annual 01 No.
3.	For Verka Jalandhar Dairy a) Steam coal having calorific value not less than 5500 Kcal/Kg. b) Hiring of vehicles for transportation of: • Panjin to C.D.P.O.'s of Punjab. • Other milk products to Punjab & other states. c) Rate contract of advertisement material • Flex Banners • Star Flex Banner • Vinyl Board • Glow Sign Board • Gum Sheet Stickers • Pamphlets • Danglers • Sun Board • Wall Painting • Vehicle Painting • Standies • Canopies	1000 MT (200 MT per month) Annual
4.	For Verka Bathinda Dairy a) Design, supply, installation, testing & commissioning of paneer manufacturing setup including civil works complete in all respects. b) Hiring of Security services for Verka Bathinda Dairy.	01 no.
5.	For Verka Ludhiana Dairy a) Pest control services and MCCs which include control of flies, mosquitoes, Lizards rodent etc. b) Outsourcing of milk Booth at Mini Rose Garden. c) Labour Contract for loading/unloading of SMP/WMP bags, WMP Tins, Chee and butter Cartons etc.	One job Three Years
5.	For Verka Gurdaspur Dairy a) Hiring of Cold store for storing white butter at L-16	
6.	For Verka Hoshiarpur Dairy	
7.	For Verka Ludhiana Dairy	
8.	For Verka Sangrur Dairy	
9.	For Verka Mega Dairy, Bassi Pathana	

NOTE:  
1. For complete details regarding above tender (NIT), please visit our website i.e. www.verka.coop & e Tendering portal i.e. eproc.punjab.gov.in.  
2. Contingendum, if any, will be uploaded on website only.

Incharge (Purchase)

# Niger's military regime orders police to expel French envoy

AP ■ NIAMEY (NIGER)

Niger's military junta has revoked the diplomatic immunity of France's ambassador and ordered police to expel him from the country, according to a statement from the military regime.

The mutinous soldiers who ousted Niger's president more than a month ago gave French Ambassador Sylvain Itte 48 hours to leave the country last week. The deadline expired on August 28 without France recalling Itte.

The French government says it doesn't recognize the coup-plotters as the country's legitimate leaders.

**M.P. MADHYA KSHETRA VIDYUT VITARAN CO. LTD.**  
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**NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER (OPEN TENDER)**  
MPMKVVCL invites online bids under "Full Turn Key Contract" from eligible bidders for following works :-

Tender Specification No.	Name of the Works & Services Contract	Estimated Cost (In Rs.)	Tender Document Fees (With GST) (In Rs.)	EMD (In Rs.)	Scheduled Time of Completion
No. CGM/GR/11-A/2023-24/8793 Gwalior, Dtd: 29.08.2023	Replacement of 11kv line bare conductor by covered conductor and replacement of jumpers from covered conductor at various locations under city circle Gwalior	30962987/-	11800/-	500000/-	90 days
No. CGM/GR/11-A/2023-24/8797 Gwalior, Dtd: 29.08.2023	Execution of Electrification work at various locations under O&M Circle Gwalior	14586241/-	5900/-	291800/-	90 days
No. CGM/GR/11-A/2023-24/8847 Gwalior, Dtd: 29.08.2023	Construction of additional circuit on existing 200 KVA and 315 KVA for load management at various locations under city circle Gwalior	29143044/-	11800/-	500000/-	90 days

Bid documents shall be on sale from 29.08.2023, 17:30 Hrs. Online and shall be received up to 15:00 Hrs. of 18.09.2023 and shall be opened on 19.09.2023 and after Technical/Financial evaluation necessary price Bid will be opened. Relevant details of full tender would be available on our Company website : portal.mpcz.in and on e-portal : https://mptenders.gov.in from the dates as mentioned above.

M.P. Madhyam/111742/2023 CHIEF GENERAL MANAGER (GR)

# India's GDP grows at 7.8% in Q1

## Country remains fastest growing economy

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India recorded an economic growth rate of 7.8 per cent in the April-June quarter of 2023-24 and remained the fastest growing large economy mainly due to better performance by agriculture and financial sectors, government data showed on Thursday.

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) expanded by 13.1 per cent in the April-June quarter of 2022-23.

India remained the fastest-growing major economy as China posted a 6.3 per cent growth in April-June 2023.

According to the National Statistical Office (NSO) data, the agriculture sector gross value added (GVA) recorded growth of 3.5 per cent, up from 2.4 per cent in the April-June quarter of 2022-23.

The expansion in financial, real estate and professional services' GVA was 12.2 per cent, up from 8.5 per cent in the year-ago quarter.

However, the GVA in the manufacturing sector decelerated to 4.7 per cent in the first quarter of the current fiscal



compared to 6.1 per cent in the year-ago period.

The growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) during the January-March quarter of 2022-23 was 6.1 per cent and 4.5 per cent during October-December.

"Real GDP or GDP at constant (2011-12) prices in Q1 2023-24 is estimated to attain a level of Rs 40.37 lakh crore, as against Rs 37.44 lakh crore in Q1 2022-23, showing a growth of 7.8 per cent as compared to 13.1 per cent in Q1 2022-23," NSO said in a statement.

It further said the nominal GDP or GDP at current prices in the first quarter of 2023-24

has been estimated at Rs 70.67 lakh crore, as against Rs 65.42 lakh crore in the year-ago period, showing a growth of 8 per cent as compared to 27.7 per cent in Q1 2022-23.

The NSO will release quarterly GDP estimates for the July-September, 2023 (Q2 2023-24) on November 30, 2023.

As per the data, the output (GVA) in the 'mining and quarrying' decelerated to 5.8 per cent in the first quarter from 9.5 per cent a year ago, 'electricity, gas, water supply and other utility services' to 2.9 per cent from 14.9 per cent, and 'construction' to 7.9 per cent from 16 per cent.

# Sensex falls 256 points due to selling in banking, FMCG

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex closed lower by around 256 points in a volatile trade on Thursday, snapping its three-day gaining streak due to selling in banking, FMCG and oil and gas shares amid weak Asian cues.

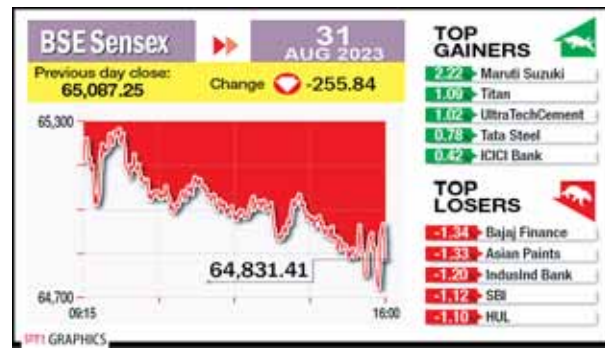
The BSE barometer fell by 255.84 points or 0.39 per cent to close at 64,831.41 points with 22 of its constituents ending in the red.

The index opened higher and later touched a high of 65,178.33 in early trade. It, however, failed to hold onto the gains and plunged 553 points from the day's high to touch a low of 64,723.63 amid selling on the expiry of derivatives contracts for August month.

The broader Nifty of NSE also lost 93.65 points or 0.48 per cent to settle at 19,253.80 with 35 of its stocks ending in the red.

"Markets traded volatile on the monthly expiry day and lost nearly half a per cent," Ajit Mishra, SVP, Technical Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

"A slew of weak economic indicators from the US, including a softened GDP figure, have heightened the likelihood of a pause in the Fed's rate tightening, resulting in a downward trajectory of bond yields," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research



at Geojit Financial Services.

However, this development had a limited impact on domestic sentiment on the day of expiry, with the market experiencing declines ahead of the release of India's GDP data, scheduled later in the day, Nair said.

Asian Paints dropped the most by 1.33 per cent. IndusInd bank fell 1.2 per cent, Axis Bank by 1.19 per cent, SBI by 1.12 per cent, Bajaj Finance by 1.07 per cent, Nestle by 1.04 per cent, and TCS by 0.97 per cent. Hindustan Unilever, Reliance Industries, Power Grid and Kotak Bank also retreated.

Maruti Suzuki was the lead gainer, rising by 2.22 per cent. Titan advanced 1.09 per cent, UltraTech Cement by 1.02 per cent, and Tata Steel by 0.78 per cent. Jio Financial Services, Tech Mahindra, Wipro ICICI Bank and Jio Fincia Services also closed higher.

In the broader market, the BSE Midcap index edged lower 0.02 per cent while the Smallcap index bucked the weak trend to close 0.79 per cent higher.

BSE Oil & Gas dropped by 1.34 per cent, BSE Utilities by 1.28 per cent, Services by 1 per cent, FMCG by 0.71 per cent, and Energy by 0.84 per cent.

On the other hand, Consumer Durables (0.89 per cent), Industrials (0.63 per cent) and Realty (0.68 per cent) advanced. Meanwhile, nine of ten Adani group stocks ended lower on Thursday after a report from investigative reporting platform OCCRP alleged hundreds of millions of dollars were invested in publicly traded group stocks through Mauritius-based 'opaque' investment funds managed by partners of promoter family of billionaire Gautam Adani.

# Fiscal deficit touches 33.9% of full-yr target at end-July: CGA data



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre's fiscal deficit in the first four months of 2023-24 touched 33.9 per cent of the full-year target, government data showed on Monday.

In absolute terms, the fiscal deficit -- the gap between expenditure and revenue -- was Rs 6.06 lakh crore as of end-July, according to the data released by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA).

The deficit stood at 20.5 per cent of the Budget Estimates (BE) in the corresponding period of the financial year 2022-23.

In the Union Budget, the government projected to bring down the fiscal deficit to 5.9 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) in the current 2023-24 financial year. The

deficit was 6.4 per cent of the GDP in 2022-23 against the earlier estimate of 6.71 per cent.

Unveiling the revenue-expenditure data of the Union government for the April-July period of 2023-24, CGA said the net tax revenue was Rs 5.83 lakh crore or 25 per cent of the BE for the current fiscal. The net tax revenue collection was 34.4 per cent at end-July 2022.

The central government's total expenditure in the first four months stood at Rs 13.81 lakh crore or 30.7 per cent of BE. The expenditure touched 28.6 per cent of the BE in the year-ago period.

Of the total expenditure, Rs 10.64 lakh crore was on the revenue account and Rs 3.17 lakh crore was towards the capital account.

# Hindenburg 2.0: Adani family secretly invested in own shares, alleges OCCRP; company denies charge

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Billionaire Gautam Adani's group was on Thursday hit by fresh allegations that it used family associates to secretly invest hundreds of millions of dollars through "opaque" Mauritius-based investment funds to fuel the spectacular rise in group stocks from 2013 to 2018. The conglomerate vehemently denied the charge.

The Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) said documents obtained by it revealed details of a complex offshore operation in two Mauritius-based funds managed by the partners of the promoter family to support prices of shares of group companies from 2013 to 2018 - a period during which the ports-to-energy conglomerate saw meteoric rise to become India's largest and most powerful businesses.

OCCRP said two close



associates of Vinod Adani -- the elder brother of group founder, and chairman Gautam Adani -- are sole beneficiaries of Mauritius-based companies through which the money appeared to flow.

Nasser Ali Shaban Ahli from the United Arab Emirates and Chang Chung-Ling from Taiwan spent years trading hundreds of millions of dollars worth of Adani group stock through two Mauritius-based funds that were overseen by a Dubai-based company run by a known employee of Vinod Adani.

Market regulator SEBI

had been handed evidence in early 2014 of alleged suspicious stock market activity by the Adani Group, OCCRP said citing a letter.

U K Sinha, who headed the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) in 2014, is now a director and chairperson of Adani-owned news broadcaster NDTV.

The fresh broadside, which comes months after US short-selling firm Hindenburg Research published an explosive report in January that accused Adani Group of running the "largest con in corporate history", sent all 10 list-

ed Adani stocks down.

Shares of flagship Adani Enterprises Ltd closed 3.72 per cent lower after dipping as much as 5.2 per cent. Other group stocks closed 2-3.5 per cent lower.

Hindenburg had alleged corporate fraud and stock price manipulation at the conglomerate and raised questions on Vinod Adani's role. The Group had denied Hindenburg allegations, which wiped close to USD 150 billion in the market value of the group at its lowest point and cost Gautam Adani his prime spot on the world rich list, and had stated that Vinod Adani has "no role in the day to day affairs" of the company. On the OCCRP allegations, the Group on Thursday termed them as "recycled allegations" and called them "yet another concerted bid by (George) Soros-funded interests supported by a section of the foreign media to revive the

meritless Hindenburg report".

On the allegation of about USD 1 billion of over-invoicing scam money being routed to the two Mauritius funds, it said, "These claims are based on closed cases from a decade ago when the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) probed allegations of over-invoicing, transfer of funds abroad, related party transactions and investments through FPIs." An independent adjudicating authority and an appellate tribunal had both confirmed that there was no over-valuation and that the transactions were in accordance with applicable law, it said, adding the matter attained finality in March 2023 when the Supreme Court of India ruled in the group's favour.

"Clearly, since there was no over-valuation, there is no relevance or foundation for these allegations on transfer of funds," it said.

# India among biggest edtech centres: Anthology CEO

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India is one of the biggest edtech centres in the world and is among the key markets of US-based Anthology, its recently-appointed CEO Bruce Dahlgren said.

Anthology, a global edtech company, is operational in 80 countries and has 150 million consumers. It is present in India since 2000 and has three offices -- two in Bengaluru and one in Chennai.

"I made it a point to ensure that I come to India in my first few weeks itself because of the importance of technology and the people here," Dahlgren, who is visiting the country for the first time after taking charge of the Florida-based company a few weeks earlier, told PTI.

Without sharing details about its India presence, the company said they are among the global leaders in the edtech sector. Dahlgren said more



than 25 per cent of its employees are Indian.

"Much of the innovation and concepts around the future come from India. So, it's not just (for) development or a support or services... it's actually about the innovation," he said, talking about the country's share in Anthology's pie.

He shared that he was roped in to scale the business by their private equity investor.

Notably, Veritas and Leeds are the majority owners of Anthology, while Providence Equity Partners LLC holds a minority stake after its merger with edtech software and solutions company Blackboard.

India's geography allows for exponential growth in stu-

dent intake for higher education, the company's Chief Digital Officer and President in India Raj Mruthyunjappa said. "You look at the geospecific needs of India... the exponential growth of the intake of students into higher education, as we're expecting, is going to happen here. In terms of the growth on the gross enrolment ratio, I think technology is going to play a very pivotal role," he said.

Dahlgren, who comes with three decades of experience in B2B software, said AI is "front and centre" in the edtech space.

"Well, having been in the high-tech industry for three decades, it's fun to see how everything has gone from infrastructure to networking to now AI." "And let's be clear, AI is front and centre in the edtech space... Everything from helping professors with their research to helping a university coordinate and communicate with students," he said.

# Fitch retains SBI, 5 other public sector banks' rating at BBB- with stable outlook

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Fitch Ratings on Thursday affirmed the ratings of the nation's six public sector lenders, including State Bank of India (SBI) and Bank of Baroda (BoB), at BBB- with stable outlook.

The other banks which the agency rated BBB- with stable outlook are Punjab National Bank, Canara Bank, Bank of India, and Union Bank of India. The rater has also affirmed these banks' viability rating at BB and its government support rating of BBB-.

On retaining the long-term issuer default rating of SBI, the agency said the rating is support-driven, with the government support rating (GSR) above the viability rating (VR). SBI's GSR is the same as the sovereign rating of BBB- with stable outlook, reflecting the agency's view that SBI has the highest probability of extraordinary state support among the banks. The stable outlook mirrors that on the sovereign's own rating, it added.

Revising the operating environment score of the bank to BB+ from BB, the agency said it reflects the view of structural improvement since the onset of Covid pandemic.

The rating revision also reflects the agency's view of the bank's ability to generate business consistently through the cycle while managing risk better than its peers.

The agency also revised the outlook on SBI's asset quality score of BB- to positive,



from stable, as it expects the four-year average impaired loans ratio to further improve over the near term.

Meanwhile, the rating agency also affirmed the long-term rating of the second largest state-owned lender Bank of Baroda and its New Zealand subsidiary BBB- with stable outlook.

In a statement issued from Singapore, the agency has affirmed the long-term issuer default ratings of BoB and its wholly-owned subsidiary Bank of Baroda New Zealand at BBB- along with retaining the stable outlook for both.

The agency has also affirmed the viability rating (VR) of the bank at BB- along with affirming the government support rating at BBB- and the shareholder support rating at BBB-.

Besides, Fitch also affirmed the ratings of Punjab National Bank, Canara Bank, Union Bank of India, Bank of India and its New Zealand subsidiary at BBB- with stable outlook along with retaining the viability rating at BB- and the government support rating at BBB-.

While retaining the BBB- rating on Punjab National Bank, the agency upgraded the viability rating to B+ even as it retained the outlook stable.

# Rupee falls 16 paise to settle at 82.79 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee depreciated by 16 paise to settle at 82.79 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, tracking a firm American currency and rising crude oil prices.

Forex traders said that negative sentiment in the equity market and outflow of foreign funds also weighed on the domestic unit. Investors were also awaiting the domestic GDP data which is scheduled to be announced later in the day.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 82.65 and moved

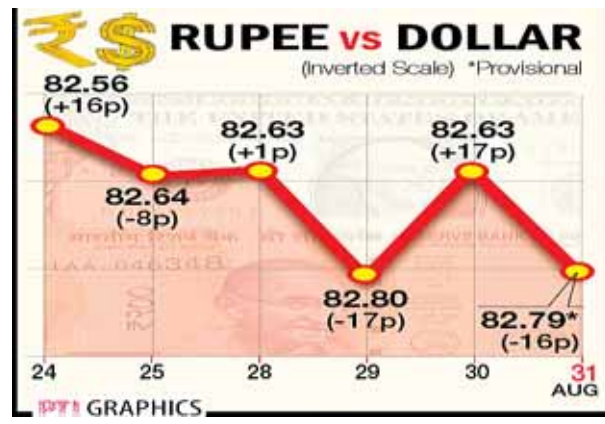
between the peak of 82.58 and the lowest level of 82.76 during intra-day trade.

The Indian currency finally settled at 82.79 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a fall of 16 paise compared to the previous close.

On Wednesday, the rupee closed at 82.63 against the dollar.

The latest US data indicated that the pace of growth was less than expected, raising hopes for the easing of interest rates by the Federal Reserve.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a slight negative bias on expectations that the US dollar may bounce back amid



disappointing European data. Rising crude oil prices and FII outflows may also weigh on the

rupee. Month-end dollar demand from importers may also put downside pressure on

the domestic unit. However, improved global risk appetite amid expectations of a Chinese stimulus may support riskier assets.

"Traders may remain cautious ahead of India's fiscal deficit and GDP data today and manufacturing PMI data tomorrow. Investors may remain cautious ahead of the US core PCE deflator, weekly unemployment claims and personal income data today and non-farm payrolls report tomorrow," Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the green-

back's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose 0.37 per cent to 103.54.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, was trading 0.52 per cent higher at USD 86.31 per barrel.

On the domestic equity market front, the BSE Sensex closed 255.84 points or 0.39 per cent lower at 64,831.41 points while the broader Nifty declined by 93.65 points or 0.48 per cent to end at 19,253.80 points. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital market on Wednesday as they offloaded shares worth Rs 494.68 crore, according to exchange data.

# Essar Oil posts 12% rise in Q1 net profit as sales zoom to record levels

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Essar Oil and Gas Exploration and Production Ltd (EOGEP), a leader in the unconventional hydrocarbon space, on Thursday reported a 12 per cent rise in the June quarter net profit after gas sales zoomed to record levels.

The firm posted a net profit of Rs 81 crore on a revenue of Rs 190 crore and EBITDA of Rs 150 crore in the first quarter of FY24 (April 2023 to March 2024 financial year), it said in a statement.



"The PAT for the quarter increased by 12 per cent year-on-year (yoy) backed by improvement in sales volume. However, quarterly revenue and EBITDA was lower by 14 per cent yoy due to softening of crude oil prices by 24 per cent which was cushioned by an

increase in sales volume by 8.5 per cent," it said.

In the first quarter, the company reported its highest quarterly sales volume of 2.18 billion cubic feet, growing 8.5 per cent compared to the same quarter last year.

Its EBITDA margins saw an improvement of 380 basis points, reaching 79.4 per cent due to constant cost optimisation and reduced internal consumption.

Post the completion of the Urja Ganga Pipeline that con-

# Sebi rejigs alternative investment policy panel

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sebi has reconstituted its Alternative investment policy advisory committee, which advises the capital markets regulator on a range of issues that impact further development of the AIF space.

The committee has now 25 members, as per latest update with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi).

The panel, which was constituted by Sebi in March 2015, had 20 members when it was last rejigged by the regulator in February 2022.

Till now, the committee has submitted three reports on the AIF (Alternative Investment Fund) industry.



The committee is chaired by Infosys co-founder N R Narayana Murthy.

Apart from Murthy, the committee includes members from Sebi, Ministry of Finance, AIF players and industry associations.

National Investment & Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) in May this year, in the committee.

At the same time, Prashant Khemka, founder and partner at White Oak Capital Management, and Subramaniam Krishnan, partner at Ernst & Young, among others have been dropped from the list.

Besides, Gopal Srinivasan, chairman and managing director of TVS Capital Funds; Gopal Jain, co-founder and managing partner at Gaja Capital; Vipul Roongta, managing director and CEO of HDFC Capital Advisors; Gautam Mehra, Partner at PwC, and Mahavir Lunawat, Director, Association of Investment Bankers of India (AIBI), continue to be the members of the committee.

INDIA'S HOCKEY SQUAD FOR ASIAN GAMES

Akashdeep, Karthi miss out; Lalit returns

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Veteran striker Akashdeep Singh and young Karthi Selvam have been dropped but experienced Lalit Upadhyay made a comeback to the 18-member Indian men's hockey team selected for the upcoming Asian Games in Hangzhou, China.

Hockey India selectors dropped three players — Akashdeep, Karthi and defender Jugraj Singh from the champion side of the Asian Champions Trophy held in Chennai earlier this month.

Drag-flicker Harmanpreet Singh and midfielder Hardik Singh will continue to don the roles of captain and vice-captain in the Asian Games.

Jugraj has been replaced by Sanjay, while Lalit and Abhishek came in place of Akashdeep and Karthi.

The team has two goalkeepers in veteran PR Sreejesh and Krishan Bahadur Pathak.

Besides two goalkeepers, the Asian Games-bound team will have six defenders, five midfielders and as many forwards.



Meanwhile, goalkeeper Savita Punia will lead the 18-member Indian women's hockey team in the Asian Games.

Experienced Sushila Chanu Pukhrabam, Baljeet Kaur and Jyoti Chhatari are the three players, who were part of tour of Germany and Spain last month, missed the bus.

The official announcement of the teams were made during a special send-off ceremony organised by Hockey India for

the Asian Games-bound sides here.

In the 12-team men's competition, India are placed in Pool A along side reigning Asian Games champions Japan, arch-rivals Pakistan, neighbours

Bangladesh, Singapore and Uzbekistan while Pool B features Korea, Malaysia, China, Oman, Thailand and Indonesia.

The Indian women, who won the silver medal at the 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta, is

placed in Pool A along with Korea, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore while reigning champions Japan, hosts China, Thailand, Kazakhstan and Indonesia are placed in Pool B.

Indian men will open their campaign against Uzbekistan on September 24, while their women counterparts will take on Singapore in their opening match on September 27.

HOCKEY SQUADS FOR ASIAN GAMES:

Men's team: PR Sreejesh, Krishan Pathak, Varun Kumar, Amit Rohidas, Jarmanpreet Singh, Harmanpreet Singh (captain), Sanjay, Sumit, Nilakanta Sharma, Hardik Singh (vice-captain), Manpreet Singh, Vivek Sagar Prasad, Shamsher Singh, Abhishek, Gurjant Singh, Mandeep Singh, Sukhjeet Singh and Lalit Kumar Upadhyay.

Women's team: Savita (captain), Bichu Devi Kharibam, Deepika, Lalremisiami, Monika, Navneet Kaur, Neha, Nisha, Sonika, Uditia, Ishika Chaudhary, Deep Grace Ekka (vice-captain), Vandana Katarinya, Sangita Kumari, Vaishnavi Vittal Phalke, Nikki Pradhan, Sushila Chanu, Salima Tete.



AIFF meets 25 Institutional League teams ahead of tentative January 2024 start

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The All-India Football Federation on Thursday conducted a pre-bid meeting with 25 Institutional League teams ahead of the competition likely to be held in January next year.

The league's objective is to merge institutional football with the Indian football structure, adding value to the competitive national setup.

The Request for Proposal document for the same is likely to be released in early September, while the eligible sides are expected to be announced by mid-October with the league tentatively scheduled to start in January next year, the AIFF stated.

The call on the event's format will be taken after consultation with the participating sides. The AIFF has set a base participation fee for the Institutional League at Rs 10,00,000 annually.

The applicants will qualify for a benefit of up to Rs 5,00,000 on the base participation fee which would depend on their legacy evaluation score.

The winners and runners-up of this Institutional League would be granted direct entry into the 2024 Federation Cup, whereas the promotion-relegation system will come into play in case of multiple divisions.

The participation is open to organisations including, but not limited to, the following - Private Corporations, Ministerial Units, Public Sector Units, Police/Defence/Paramilitary Forces (Unit-Level), State Departments and Railways (Division-level), the AIFF stated.

The bids will be subject to a two-step evaluation process - Technical Evaluation (to assess the preparedness of the applicant to participate in the competition) and Legacy Evaluation (to determine historical contribution of the applicant to Indian football).

Technical credits will be used to determine the applicant's seeding for the competition, while Legacy credits will be used to determine the concession that will be awarded to the applicant on the base participation fee.

The 25 teams that attended the conference were Aeronautical Development Establishment (Bengaluru), Air India (Mumbai), ASC Centre South (Bengaluru), Bank of Baroda (Vadodara), BSF North Bengal (Siliguri), BSF Punjab, Chennai Customs, CRPF (Punjab), CSIR - National Institute of Oceanography (Goa), Dravastream Tech Pvt Ltd (Mumbai), Employee State Insurance Corporation (Chennai), Employee State Insurance Corporation (New Delhi), Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (Bengaluru), Indian Navy (Kochi), Indian Railways (New Delhi), IndiaPost Karnataka (Bengaluru), JCT (Punjab), Karnataka Police (Bengaluru), Oil India Ltd - Assam Field HQ (Duliajan), PDC Services (Alchemy Football) (Bengaluru), PFA Organization (Haranya), Punjab Police, Reserve Bank of India (Mumbai), Reserve Bank of India (Bengaluru) and Services Sports Control Board (New Delhi).

The session was headed by AIFF's Deputy Secretary General Satyanarayan M.

Champions League finalist Inter Milan acquires defender Benjamin from Bayern Munich

AP ■ MILAN

Champions League finalist Inter Milan has acquired defender Benjamin Pavard from Bayern Munich.

Pavard, a World Cup winner with France in 2018 and a Champions League winner with Bayern in 2020, spent four years with the German champions. He's the second player that Inter has signed from Bayern in this transfer period after goalkeeper Yann Sommer.

The transfer, announced by Inter late Wednesday, is reportedly worth 30 million euros (\$33 million) - making him among the most expensive players arriving in Italy this season. Pavard signed a five-year contract with the Nerazzurri.

Pavard said he talked with both Sommer and France teammate Marcus Thuram, who also recently joined Inter. "We spoke a few times,"



Pavard said. "Marcus and I were texting. He told me that the atmosphere here is amazing, that this is a top club. I'm happy to be at a team of this level."

Bayern was due to expire at the end of the season, was often deployed as a right back at Bayern but has said he would prefer to be a central defender. The France international

has been limited to only 45 minutes in the German Super Cup so far this season and missed Bayern's first two league games. Bayern said last week he had an illness that was preventing him from training at the time.

Pavard has played 49 times for France and won the World Cup in 2018, scoring a swerving volley against Argentina in the quarterfinals that was voted the goal of the tournament. He was in the squad for last year's World Cup but only played one group game as France finished runner-up.

Inter, which was beaten by Manchester City in the Champions League final, has won its opening two Serie A matches - both by scores of 2-0.

Stefan de Vrij, Alessandro Bastoni, Francesco Acerbi and Matteo Darmian have been Inter's top choices in coach Simone Inzaghi's preferred three-man defense.

Mumbai City signs rising Indian winger Lotjem on 3-yr contract

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Indian Super League Shield winners Mumbai City FC on Thursday announced the signing of promising 19-year-old winger Seilenthang Lotjem of Manipur for a three-year contract. Lotjem's journey began when he was signed by Sudeva Delhi FC at just 16 years of age in 2020 after coming up through the JCT Academy in Punjab.

Lotjem rapidly ascended the ranks, earning a spot in Sudeva Delhi's first team during his second season in the 2021-22 I-League when he scored a goal from 10 appearances. Mumbai City FC head coach Des Buckingham was confident of Lotjem's positive impact.

"Lotjem is an impressive young talent as shown in his performances in the I-League over the past two seasons," Bucking-

ham said in a club statement.

"His abilities and versatility make him an exciting prospect and I am certain he can fit into our club and the young group that we have. "Lotjem is a confident young player who will help us achieve our goals this season while continuing to develop and build our squad over the long term," added the Englishman. Expressing his enthusiasm, Lotjem said, "It's a proud moment for me to sign for Mumbai City. "My focus is entirely on working hard and growing as a player every single day and to play at a club like Mumbai City and under a coach like Des Buckingham, it's an opportunity I want to make the most of. "I am ready to get started with my new teammates, learn from them and hopefully, I can help contribute to the club's ambitions," the midfielder added.

Pascal in line to make his Germany debut at 32, Goretzka dropped



AP ■ FRANKFURT

Brighton midfielder Pascal Gross could make his debut for the German national team at the age of 32 after being named to the squad for upcoming friendlies against Japan and France. Germany coach Hansi Flick is under pressure with his team winless in its last four

friendlies ahead of hosting next year's European Championship. Gross is a surprise selection who last represented Germany in an under-20 game 12 years ago.

Flick has recalled six players, including Bayern forward Serge Gnabry, Borussia Dortmund defender Niklas Süle and Brentford forward Kevin Schade. But Bayern Munich midfielder Leon Goretzka has been dropped.

Others missing out include West Ham defender Thilo Kehrer and Leipzig forward Timo Werner. Germany hosts Japan in Wolfsburg on September 9, less than a year after the Japanese beat the Germans at the World Cup to set the stage for another early exit. Germany will then take on World Cup runner-up France in Dortmund three days later.

7-time French champion Lyon in crisis amid fight between owner Textor and former boss Aulas

AP ■ LYON

There was a time when Lyon ruled French soccer. Back when the likes of Karim Benzema, Brazil midfielder Juninho and France winger Florent Malouda were helping the club win seven consecutive league titles at the start of the century.

Well, that was a long time ago. And, it doesn't look like such a dynasty can be revived soon, with the club now plunged in a sporting crisis amid a legal dispute between its current owner, American businessman John Textor, and his predecessor.

It was worth listening to Lyon midfielder Corentin Tolisso when he left the field last weekend after another worrying display from his team, a 0-0 draw at Nice that left Lyon second from last with only one point from three matches. "Today, we're the Olympique Lyonnais of 2023-2024. We're not the Olympique Lyonnais of 2002-2003," Tolisso summed up.

"We're not going to take ourselves for others. We're not like our predecessors ... And today, the Olympique Lyonnais of 2023-24 is happy to take a point at Nice."

Nobody will blame Tolisso, a product of the club's renowned academy who returned to Lyon last year to help it back to its glory days, for speaking the truth. But, it's unlikely his words of wisdom will have pleased Textor, who proclaimed his ambition to target the dominance of Paris Saint-Germain when he became the club's main shareholder last year. Saying that things didn't work out as the new boss had hoped would be an understatement.

After finishing last season in seventh place and 23 points behind PSG, Lyon got off to its



worst start to a season since 1966 with two consecutive losses that included a 4-1 home defeat. Still winless, coach Laurent Blanc is now under pressure ahead of Sunday's game against PSG, and Textor has made clear he wants improvement. But, Blanc has limited means to get things back on track, with several key players injured and only a few arrivals from the transfer window, including forwards Mama Balde and Ernest Nuamah, as

well as former Arsenal midfielder Ainsley Maitland-Niles.

Blanc has been complaining about the frugal offseason purchases, but there is nothing much Textor could have been doing after a decision by French soccer's financial watchdog to monitor the club's transfer activities this season. Because of the restrictions imposed by the DNCG, Lyon was allowed to bring in new players, but its moves in the market have been

limited under "a framework for wage costs and transfer indemnities" that hampered its recruiting. The DNCG ruled that Lyon did not provide sufficient financial guarantees despite Textor's financial arguments.

"We lost an opportunity to be aggressive this summer, to go after targeted players that Lyon doesn't usually go after," Textor was quoted as saying in an interview with several media outlets. "We weren't able to make that leap forward. It's a terrible feeling to be going into this mercato' with one hand tied behind our backs. We have the investment scale to position ourselves on players valued at 30 to 50 million euros, but we can't spend that money."

Textor, who also has stakes in Premier League team Crystal Palace, Belgian club RWD Molenbeek and Brazilian team Botafogo, was appointed chief

executive officer of OL Group in May with Lyon's iconic Jean-Michel Aulas stepping down as president.

The relationship between the pair has quickly deteriorated and reached its nadir this week when Lyon's commercial tribunal ordered to freeze 14.5 million euros (USD15.7 million) of the club's funds corresponding to part of the money owed to Aulas in relation to the purchase of his shares.

Lyon said in a statement it "deeply regrets that its former chairman, who is also a shareholder and director of the company, and as such fully aware of the extremely damaging nature of his actions, has initiated a violent and illegitimate attack on Olympique Lyonnais." In that turbulent context, preparations for Sunday's big game against the new dominant force of French soccer are far from ideal.

UEFA doesn't want Champions League referees to follow 'absurd' FIFA WC policy on added time

AP ■ MONACO

UEFA does not want Champions League games to match the World Cup with double-digit minutes of stoppage time that its top soccer official called "absolutely absurd."

Adding so many extra minutes over a full season is bad for players' health, UEFA Chief of Football Zvonimir Boban said.

"Player welfare is really some kind of small tragedy," Boban, a former AC Milan and Croatia star midfielder, said at a UEFA briefing on refereeing issues on the eve of the Champions League group-stage draw.

FIFA pushed referees at the men's and women's World Cups in the past nine months to let the game clock routinely run from the regulation 90 minutes to 100-plus in the second half. FIFA wanted all goal celebrations, substitutions, injuries and sus-

pected time-wasting taken into account.

The policy has been backed by FIFA president Gianni Infantino saying it gave fans better value for money amid concern the ball was in active play for as few as 50 to 55 minutes at many games.

Soccer's rules-making panel, known as IFAB, also wants domestic competitions worldwide to follow the FIFA lead on added time.

UEFA insisted on Wednesday that games in its marquee Champions League averaged 60 minutes, 7 seconds of "effective playing time" last season. That was about five minutes more than in each of Europe's biggest domestic leagues, UEFA claimed.

"They are intense minutes (in the Champions League)," said Boban who played in Milan's 1994 title-winning team, arguing that adding "12, 13, 14"

minutes to games could amount to 500 over a season - the equivalent of about five full extra games.

Boban has been the top advisor to UEFA on soccer-related matters since 2021 after having a similar role at FIFA working for Infantino. He had a short spell in Milan's front office between working for the world and European soccer bodies.

In Champions League qualifying games Tuesday, referees added eight minutes for stoppages at the end of the second half in games at Galatasaray and Panathinaikos.

RECRUITING REFEREES

UEFA used its traditional season-opening meetings in Monaco to launch a recruitment campaign for referees to fill a shortfall of 40,000 across Europe.

Soccer from grass roots to professional levels has long had



concerns about the levels of abuse - physical, verbal and on social media - that match officials have to endure.

UEFA chief refereeing officer Roberto Rosetti said he had felt scared for his 16-year-old nephew watching him referee a game. "For sure we are short of referees now and we will be short of referees in the future," said Rosetti, an Italian who refereed the 2008 European Championship final in which Spain beat Germany.

The "Be A Referee" campaign aims to add to the 236,000 active referees across UEFA's 55 national member federations. It said 276,000 referees are needed.

RUSSIAN REF

UEFA has invited Russian referee Sergey Karasev to a training camp next week at its headquarters in Nyon, Switzerland.

"I am looking forward to meeting him because in the last years I lost him," Rosetti said of Karasev, who refereed games at the 2018 World Cup held in Russia.

UEFA has not appointed Russian match officials to international games since the country's military invasion of Ukraine started in February last year.

Russian teams were then formally banned from international competitions by UEFA and FIFA, though Rosetti did not rule out Karasev being picked for a game this season.

"I will try to understand his condition - physical, mentally, technical," the Italian official said. "And then we will see."

However, Karasev would have limited options for travel and work. Players at clubs in Europe with Russian passports have been refused entry visas to enter Britain for UEFA games this month.

# LANKA BEAT BANGLADESH BY 5 WICKETS

PTI ■ PALLEKELE (SRI LANKA)

Sri Lanka defeated Bangladesh by five wickets in their opening Asia Cup match here on Thursday. Chasing 165 for victory, the hosts reached the target in 39 overs with the loss of five wickets.

Sadeera Samarawickrama (54) and Charith Asalanka (62 not out) scored half centuries for Sri Lanka. Bangladesh struggled for runs against Sri Lanka bowlers, managing a paltry 164 with Najmul Hossain Shanto scoring a 122-ball 89.

Matheesha Pathirana (4/32) was the pick of the bowlers for Sri Lanka.

Shanto's resilient fifty notwithstanding, Sri Lankan bowlers produced a fine bowling effort to restrict Bangladesh to 164.

Shanto made 89 off 122 balls but hardly received consistent support from the other end as pacer Matheesha Pathirana (4/32) and spinner Maheesh Theekshana (2/19) combined to strike at regular intervals after Bangladesh opted to bat first.

The Pallekele International Cricket Stadium pitch had a bit of carry and bounce in it, and Lanka skipper Dasun Shanaka brought Theekshana into the attack in the second over itself.

Theekshana, the highest wicket-taker for Sri Lanka in ODIs this year, fetched immediate results as he trapped Tanzid Hasan plumb in front with a lovely delivery.

The ball pitched around the leg-stump and spun across



to hit Hasan's back pad and the Bangladesh opener had to walk back with a duck on his debut.

Pathirana soon jettisoned skipper Shakib Al Hasan. The left-hander could not negotiate the extra pace of Pathirana, and the ball nestled in the hands of

stumper Kusal Mendis.

Bangladesh were 36 for 3 at this stage and they needed a couple of partnerships to steady things in the middle.

The fourth wicket alliance between Shanto and Towhid Hridoy (20) saw Bangladesh

adding 59 runs in nearly 14 overs. Shanto guided the young man well as Bangladesh showed signs of recovery. However, Lanka captain Shanaka ended the blooming alliance while winning a leg-before appeal against Hridoy.

**BRIEF SCORES:**  
**Bangladesh:** 164 all out in 42.4 overs (Najmul Hossain Shanto 89; Matheesha Pathirana 4/32).  
**Sri Lanka:** 165/5 in 39 overs (Sadeera Samarawickrama 54, Charith Asalanka 62 not out; Shakib Al Hasan 2/29)



## With Rahul unavailable, Kishan's batting position becomes bone of contention

PTI ■ PALLEKELE

Ishan Kishan is set to play the wicketkeeper-batter role in the absence of K L Rahul but question remains over the left-hander's batting slot going into the Asia Cup opener against Pakistan on September 2.

The temptation will be to hand Kishan the opening position with Rahul not available for the first two games of the continental event. He had opened the innings in India's last ODI series against the West Indies along with Shubman Gill, and made a good impression.

Kishan made 184 runs in that series from three matches, averaging 61.33 and his scores read - 52, 55 and 77. But it was a rather straightforward move as Rohit Sharma was given a rest during the ODIs against the West Indies.

Now that Rohit has returned to the side and will occupy one opening slot, the Indian think-tank will have to put in a

thought as to where to accommodate Kishan.

Opening is also Kishan's most successful slot in the batting order as he had made double hundreds there against Bangladesh last year.

Former Indian coach Ravi Shastri too had favoured Kishan opening saying his uninhibited striking will give India an early upper hand over their opponents.

If he opens, then Gill will have to come down to No. 3 and Virat Kohli will have to take the No. 4 slot. It also means that the returning Shreyas Iyer will have to move down to No. 5.

If it happens that way then Hardik Pandya will be coming in at No. 6 and there will be no place for Suryakumar Yadav in the side.

Despite his modest record, India were dabbling with the option of Suryakumar in the ODIs because of his prowess at the backend of the innings.

If India indeed want to

accommodate Suryakumar in the 11 then they might just have to put a temporary hold on Shreyas' comeback. The other option India can explore to give Kishan a place at No. 3 - Rohit and Gill as openers - with Kohli at No. 4 and Shreyas at No. 5.

The 25-year-old from Jharkhand can also be fitted in the middle-order as he has a reasonable record at No. 4, scoring two fifties in four innings.

They can mull the southpaw at number five too as it gives a certain stability at the top but the only peril is that Kishan has not batted in that position in his 17-match ODI career.

Sanju Samson is here as the travelling reserve keeping in mind the injury of Rahul, and he is not a part of the 17-member India squad. India will not be able to use his services as a wicketkeeper batsman because one of the players, Rahul in this case, has to be ruled out of the Asia Cup for Samson to come into the equation.

# Pathirana didn't copy slinging action from Malinga, it's natural: Coach Bilal

PTI ■ PALLEKELE

Matheesha Pathirana's slingshot action immediately brings Lasith Malinga to mind but the young Sri Lankan did not deliberately copy his illustrious senior, his childhood coach Bilal Fassy said on Thursday, insisting that the much talked-about bowling style came naturally to the pacer.

His Malinga-like action has also earned Pathirana sobriquets like Podi (Little) Malinga in Sri Lanka and Baby Malinga among Chennai Super Kings (CSK) fans.

Pathirana had a breakout season for IPL champions CSK. He snared 19 wickets from 12 matches and was Mahendra Singh Dhoni's go-to bowler in crunch situations.

While Dhoni is grooming the 20-year-old as CSK's designated death overs specialist, the

Sri Lankan cricket establishment should handle him with utmost care, feels Fassy.

"Seeing his action, a lot of people think that he has modelled it after seeing Malinga. Pathirana also trained under Malinga. But he came to me with this action from day one, and we just worked on it a bit, considering it can put a lot of stress on his young body," Fassy told PTI.

Despite a rising profile, Pathirana still seeks the guidance of Fassy, who runs a cricket training centre in the Trinity College here.

Fassy was impressed with Pathirana's genuine ability to generate pace when he first joined his camp five years back.

"He (Pathirana) was naturally quick. He did not have to put in a lot of effort to get pace unlike some other boys. On top of it, he was very accurate too as

you might have seen while he was bowling in the IPL. He has a fast and accurate yorker that can trouble even the best. His arm speed is just outstanding," he said.

Fassy cautioned against burdening the young man with expectations. "He has talent and he will go a long way if supported properly. But he is just beginning, so don't compare him with legends like Malinga or (Chaminda) Vaas."

"Let him be his own and allow him to work on his skills and make a mark. He is important for Lanka as we have two World Cups in two years (50-over in 2023, T20 WC in 2024)," he noted.

Eric Simons, the former India bowling coach, who now works with CSK in a similar role, too was an impressed man.

"I have worked with Pathirana over two seasons (2022,



2023) in the IPL. He has shown tremendous improvement. He is a quick learner. Yes, at times he can be a bit erratic," the South African told PTI.

But what impressed him more is his temperament, considering that he is barely out of his teens.

"But for someone who has started top level cricket a couple of years back, he has shown a good temperament to handle a tough task like bowling at death in T20s. I feel he is going to be a big part of Sri Lanka and CSK for a long time," Simons said.

With the ODI World Cup approaching fast, Sri Lanka are racing against time to make their first-choice bowling unit battle ready, as three pacers are nursing injuries.

Dushmantha Chameera, Lahiru Kumara and Dilshan Madhushanka are out of the Asia Cup 2023, and the trio is

battling to get in for the quadrennial big show.

Hence, Sri Lanka is hoping that a 20-year-old prodigy will be ready for a bigger role sooner than later.

"His strength is his unorthodox. He has shown that in the IPL, and he has good pace as well. We can gradually hand him more responsibility, and he has a good attitude as well. We are looking at him as a long-term option, and hopefully, he can be someone like (Lasith) Malinga for us," said Sri Lankan captain Dasun Shanaka.

Former India skipper Dhoni had an advise for Sri Lanka cricket establishment during the 2023 IPL. "I feel he should not play red-ball cricket, not even get close to it, he can play only ICC tournaments. He is young and he would be a great asset for Sri Lankan cricket," Dhoni had said.

## Viacom 18 bags India's home series broadcast rights for nearly ₹6,000 cr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Viacom 18 on Thursday created a near monopoly in Indian cricket broadcasting sphere by bagging both TV and digital rights of the national team's home series for the next five years with a cumulative bid of approximately Rs 6000 crore, beating Star India and Sony in a three-way battle.

The BCCI had invited separate e-bids for both linear (TV) and digital for best price discovery.

"Viacom 18 paid Rs 3101 crore (approximately) for digital and Rs 2862 crore for linear (TV). As has been the trend, digital has fetched more in Rs 5963 crore (approx) deal.

"With IPL digital rights being bought by Viacom for Rs 26,000 crore plus, they now have almost all the high profile cricket properties save IPL linear (TV) and wpl20, we extend the partnership @BCCI Media Rights as well," BCCI secretary Jay Shah said on X, formerly Twitter.

India will be playing 88 international games across three formats including 25 Tests, 27 ODIs and 36 T20Is with per match value of the deal standing around Rs 67.76 crore. This is nearly Rs 7.76 crore more than



last cycle's Rs 60 crore per match value. However, the BCCI is getting Rs 175 crore less than Rs 6138 crore it received during last cycle which had more games, specifically 102.

If one looks at the prevailing market sentiments, it is not a bad price to fetch as the per match valuation has increased. One needs to factor in that only marquee Test matches and series versus England and Australia will fetch a decent advertisement revenue. For matches against other nations, it is only the T20 which is the cash cow.

India will play Australia in 21 games and will be pitted against England in 18 matches across three formats during the next five years.

The BCCI fell way short of the billion dollar mark (at least by Rs 2300 crore) and one of the reasons for that could be the declining popularity of the ODI format and there are 27 of them in the next cycle.

"One day bilateral series save World Cup year should be done away with as it doesn't bring requisite revenues. With so

many T20 leagues also happening around the world, the viewers' fatigue should also be taken into account," a broadcasting industry veteran said.

He also provided an interesting take on how the potential bidders do their mathematics and arrive at a particular figure.

"In case of 25 Tests, you have 15 Tests against England and Australia at home. The kind of pitches that is being prepared for Test matches in India, the broadcaster has literally no chance on most of the occasions to commercially exploit the fifth day unless there is a flat deck.

"At times games finish during first session of fourth day. Just calculate how many potential seconds of ad revenue you can lose," he explained.

**TOTAL NUMBER OF GAMES IN FIVE-YEAR CYCLE: 88**  
**BREAK UP:** 25 Tests, 27 ODIs, and 36 T20Is  
**Australia:** 21  
**England:** 18  
**New Zealand:** 11  
**South Africa:** 10  
**West Indies:** 10

## Canada's McGahey to become first transgender to play international cricket

PTI ■ LONDON

Danielle McGahey of Canada will become the first transgender cricketer to play in an international match when she represents her adopted country next month in a regional qualifying tournament for the 2024 Women's T20 World Cup in Bangladesh. The 29-year-old McGahey, an opening batter, has been selected in Canada's women's squad for the qualifying tournament after she fulfilled ICC's eligibility criteria for male-to-female transgender players. The qualifying tournament will be played in Los Angeles from September 4 to 11.

Canada will take on Argentina, Brazil and the United States in the ICC Americas Qualifier for a place in the global qualifiers. "I am absolutely honoured. To be able to represent my community is something I never dreamed I would be able to do," McGahey was quoted as saying by BBC Sport.

McGahey moved to Canada from Australia in February 2020 and began her

social transition from a man to a woman in November 2020. She started medical transition in May 2021.

McGahey's participation in international cricket is a big forward-looking step by ICC as part of the game's governing body's policy of equal rights.

According to ICC's player eligibility regulations released in 2018 (and amended in 2021) trans women wishing to play women's international cricket must demonstrate "the concentration of testosterone in her serum has been less than 5 nmol/L continuously for a period of at least 12 months, and that she is ready, willing and able to continue to keep it below that level for so long as she continues to compete". It further states that a trans cricketer must "provide a written and signed declaration, in a form of satisfactory to the designated medical officer, that her gender identity is female".

On allowing McGahey to be the first transgender to play international cricket, the ICC said in a statement: "We can confirm that Danielle went through the



process as required under the ICC's player eligibility regulations and as a result has been deemed eligible to participate in international women's cricket on the basis that she satisfies the MTF transgender eligibility criteria." McGahey said she is doing everything possible in her capacity to realise her dream of playing international cricket.

"In order to determine (my testosterone levels), I've been doing blood tests

every month now for over two years. I also have to put in my player profile who I have played against and how many runs I've scored," she said.

"A lot of work with my doctor sending my medical information through to the ICC... They have a dedicated medical officer who looks over all of the information provided, and determines whether or not I have provided enough for an expert panel to make a decision.

"The need to do blood tests every month is probably the biggest challenge because when you are playing cricket you are travelling a lot," McGahey said.

McGahey drew Cricket Canada selectors' attention with her batting exploits during the country's women's inter-provincial tournament, which permits a transgender player to participate based solely on gender self-identification.

McGahey then went on to represent Canada in four T20 matches at the South American Championships in October 2022. But those games were not accorded international status.

## Indian opener Prithvi to make Northamptonshire return in 2024

PTI ■ NORTHAMPTON

Young Indian opener Prithvi Shaw will return to Northamptonshire County Cricket Club in 2024 after his stint this year was cut short due to a knee injury. He made a huge impact during its domestic One-Day Cup campaign, hammering a record-breaking 244 off 153 balls against Somerset, followed by an unbeaten 126 off 76 deliveries against Durham.

Shaw scored 429 in four contests at an incredible average of 143.00 before a knee injury halted his glorious season.

"I'm so excited to be heading back to Northamptonshire next summer. Even though it

was over quickly, I really enjoyed my time there," he told the club in a release.

"It's a great club to be a part of, and I felt so welcome by everyone immediately. I can't

wait to get back over. My goal is always to help win games for the team, and it was so disappointing to get injured and have to leave early this time."

Shaw's return to NCCC next year will be for both the County Championship and the One-Day Cup.

NCCC head coach John Sadler expressed his eagerness to welcome him back to the side.

"Prithvi is a phenomenal talent and what he delivered for us in such a short space of time was incredible. He was utterly disappointed not to stay longer due to his injury as he wanted to play some red-ball cricket, so the chance for him to do this next year is really exciting for us all."

## Legends League Cricket to be held from November 18 to December 9

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The second edition of the Legends League Cricket (LLC) will be played in India from November 18 to December 9, the organisers announced on Thursday. The first season of the LLC was won by India Capitals in October last year.

"The forthcoming franchise season of Legends League Cricket would certainly add to the flavour with top legends of the sport descending into India," the organisers said in a statement. The organisers plan to take the forthcoming season of the tournament to newer venues.

Suresh Raina, Aaron Finch, Hashim Amla, Ross Taylor, Chris Gayle among others, were the renowned cricketers who featured in the first edition of LLC. Ravi Shastri, commissioner of LLC said: "Bring it on, the world-class competitive cricket is always welcome. With more legends joining the game, much more fun is expected on the field."

"We expect to make the league one of the best experiences for the fans and cricketing fraternity in this category. The league is experiencing significant growth and positive changes, season on season."