

**OPINION 6**  
COMPROMISING THE  
'NORMALCY' OF SECRECY

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SENSEX REBOUNDS FROM  
EARLY LOWS

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WEDDING HALL FIRE IN  
IRAQ KILLS OVER 100

LUCKNOW, THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 28, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3



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11 SPORT

# NIA tightens noose on Khalistanis

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

In a multi-State clampdown against Khalistanis and the terrorists-gangsters-drug smugglers syndicate, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Wednesday conducted synchronised raids in several places and detained a number of suspects linked to Canada-based "listed terrorist" Arsh Datta and his cohorts, including dreaded gangsters. Datta is operating his cartel through a network of gangsters in India.

A total of 53 locations were raided during the day-long operation, which started early on Wednesday. State Police forces provided the necessary support and assistance in the raids.

The search operation spanned the six States of Punjab, Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and the Union Territory of Chandigarh.

During the raids, the NIA seized pistols, ammunition, large numbers of digital devices and incriminating materials.

Besides Arsh Datta, others covered in the NIA raids are notorious gangsters Lawrence Bishnoi, Sukha Duneke, Harry Maur, Narender alias Lali, Kala Jathari and Deepak Tinu among others.

The searches follow a recent intelligence input against gangster Lawrence Bishnoi, a criminal mastermind with a notorious track record, who has

been linked to several high-profile crimes, including the murder of renowned Punjabi singer Sidhu Moosewala and threats issued against Bollywood actors Salman Khan, officials said.

Recent intelligence inputs suggest an alarming development in Bishnoi's illicit activities suggesting he has established a direct line of communication with Nasir Khan, an operative of Pakistan Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).

"The connection suggests that Bishnoi and his gang might be diversifying their criminal portfolio by procuring weapons with the help of Pakistan Intelligence Operatives (PIOs) and making use of these weapons for furthering gangster activities in the region," reads the Intelligence report.

Bishnoi's gang is notorious for involvement in extortion and killings but the recent revelation of links with Pakistan-based entities suggests a "strategic shift in the gang's operational focus."

"The gang's involvement in arms smuggling represents a significant escalation in their criminal activities and poses a considerable risk to the nation's security. The potential backing by Pakistan ISI operatives also indicates a concerning overlap between organised crimes and geopolitical adversaries, enhancing the threat profile of Bishnoi's operations," the report warned.

The latest round of search-



Police personnel outside a residential premises during a raid by National Investigation Agency in Dehradun on Wednesday PTI

es were the seventh in the series of such crackdowns launched by NIA following the registration of five cases since August 2022, including the two new cases registered against Organised Criminal Gangs in July 2023. The cases relate to conspiracies of targeted killings, terror funding of pro-Khalistan outfits and extortion by the gangsters, many of whom are lodged in various jails or are operating from various foreign countries, including Canada, Pakistan, Malaysia, Portugal and Australia and the United States among others, officials said.

"The focus of today's raids, aimed at dismantling the terror-gangster-drug smuggler nexus, was on weapon suppliers, financiers and logistics providers associated with various hardcore gangs and their operatives. These gangs are working with drug smugglers and terrorists based out of other countries, including Pakistan, the UAE, Canada, Portugal, etc," the NIA said in a statement.

NIA investigations so far have revealed that the conspiracies under investigation were being hatched in jails of different States and were being exe-

cuted by an organised network of operatives based abroad. Notable among such conspiracies were the sensational killing of Maharashtra builder Sanjay Biyani, mining trader Mehal Singh and international Kabaddi player Sandeep Nangal Ambia in Punjab last year.

Many of the criminals and gangsters who were earlier leading gangs in India have fled abroad in recent years and are now pursuing their terror and violence related activities from there, the NIA probe has unraveled.

*Continued on Page 9*

## Extrajudicial killing is not India's policy: Jaishankar

PTI ■ NEW YORK

In the wake of Canada's allegations about India's "potential" involvement in the killing of a Khalistani separatist on its soil, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said that New Delhi conveyed to Ottawa that it is not the Government of India's policy and it is open to looking at "specific" and "relevant" information in the case.

Jaishankar made the comments in a conversation at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York on Tuesday after addressing the UN General Assembly session.

"Yes, I do have a comment. I will share with you very frankly what we told the Canadians," Jaishankar said when asked if he had any comment on recent allegations by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau that "agents" of the Government of India are linked to the killing of Khalistani extremist Hardeep Singh Nijjar on Canadian soil on June 18.

"One, we told the Canadians that this is not the Government of India's policy," Jaishankar said.

"Two, we told the

Canadians saying that look, if you have something specific, let us know. We are open to looking at it," Jaishankar said while responding to a question from former US Ambassador to India and CFR Distinguished Fellow Kenneth Juster, in his first public comments on the issue.

Jaishankar asserted that one must also understand the context because the "picture is not complete" without the context of it.

"You also have to appreciate that in the last few years, Canada actually has seen a lot of organised crime relating to the secessionist forces, organised crime, violence, extremism. They're all very, very deeply mixed up," he said.

"We have actually been badgering the Canadians, we have given them a lot of information about organised crime leadership, which operates out of Canada. There are a large number of extradition requests. There are terrorist leaders who have been identified," he said, adding that one has to understand that there is an "environment out there," he said.

"That is important in a way

to factor in if you have to understand what is going on out there. And our concern is that it is really been very permissive because of political reasons. So, we have a situation where actually our diplomats are threatened, our consulates have been attacked and often comments are made about 'there is interference in our politics'. And, a lot of this is often justified as saying, well, that is how democracies work," Jaishankar said.

When asked by Juster whether the Government of India will cooperate with Canada if there are specific pieces of evidence provided to it, Jaishankar said, "If somebody gives me something specific, it doesn't have to be restricted to Canada, but if there is any incident which is an issue and somebody gives me something specific, as a government I would look at it. Of course, I would look at it."

When asked about reports that intelligence about the killing was shared amongst the Five Eyes, Jaishankar said, "I'm not part of the Five Eyes. I'm certainly not part of the FBI. You are asking the wrong person."

## Cracks in INDIA Bloc

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

A "difference of opinion" has surfaced in the Opposition INDIA bloc over the venue for its fourth meeting. The Congress is insistent that the meeting should take place in a city within the poll-bound States of Madhya Pradesh or Chhattisgarh.

However, INDIA bloc parties like the Samajwadi Party, the JD(U), the NCP, and others are advocating for the meeting to be held in Delhi, sources said.

According to sources, the Samajwadi Party has cited their reasons for the choice of venue, arguing that it should not create an impression that the Congress, as the grand old party, is attempting to assume an elder brother role in the Opposition alliance.

The Congress sources have refuted this argument, emphasising that any victory by a member of the coalition will undoubtedly bolster and contribute to the success of the INDIA bloc.

The Opposition bloc has so far conducted three meetings with the first at Patna, coordinated by senior JD(U) leader and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, followed by Bengaluru where the Congress wrested power from the BJP this year,

and then at Mumbai under arrangements by the MVA alliance partners — the Congress, the NCP and the Shiv Sena.

During the alliance's meeting in Mumbai, there was a general consensus that the forthcoming gathering of the INDIA bloc should take place in Bhopal, coinciding with the inaugural joint public rally featuring leaders from various Opposition parties.

In the first coordination meeting of the INDIA bloc, the discussion revolved around organising the third meeting in the national Capital, with coordination led by AAP convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

However, soon after the coordination committee meeting at NCP leader Sharad Pawar's residence in Delhi where it was announced that a joint rally will be held at Bhopal, it stood cancelled at the backdrop of massive controversy over the Sanatan Dharma row fuelled by its alliance partner DMK leaders.

"The modalities and date of the meeting are yet to be finalised, however, it is likely that it can be held sometime in the first fortnight of October. Delhi was also considered among the venues in the last meeting but Bhopal remains the preferred one for many

leaders," said a top Congress source.

In Madhya Pradesh, the Congress emerged victorious in the previous Assembly elections and held the Government for a year and a half.

However, it faced a setback when a faction of its party MLAs defected to the BJP, resulting in the formation of a new Government. The State is set to hold elections later this year, alongside neighbouring Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan, both of which currently have Congress-led Governments.

Just as the Samajwadi Party and the JD(U) expressed their dissatisfaction with the media boycott call by the INDIA bloc, these same parties are now opposing the Congress' initiative to host the fourth meeting in the Lake City of Madhya Pradesh. The alliance members believe that the grand old party has a stronger electoral advantage in the Assembly polls there.

"The Congress attitude is still the elder brother type. They did in the media boycott call and we had to rally behind it," a JD(U) leader told *The Pioneer* over phone from Patna. Already Nitish seems to be increasingly out of sync with the RJD on its "backward versus forward" politics.

*See Page 8: INDIA Bloc in tatters in Bengal*

## Shooters do India proud

PTI ■ HANGZHOU

Young star Sift Kaur Samra stole the show with a gold medal in the women's 50m rifle 3 position event as Indian shooters set the range ablaze by securing as many as seven medals at the Asian Games here on Wednesday.

In the same event, Ashi Chouksey, who was in contention for a silver, settled for bronze with a score of 451.9, while Esha Singh claimed silver in the women's 25m pistol event with a total of 34.

On her way to silver, Esha upstaged her senior Manu Bhaker who finished a disappointing fifth after topping the qualification.

Samra produced some excellent shooting to claim the yellow metal with a world and games record score of 469.6. She also became the first Indian shooter to win gold in rifle 3 position.

Earlier, the triumvirate of Bhaker, Esha and Rhythm Sangwan fired in tandem to shoot the gold medal in the women's 25m pistol team event, as Indian shooters dominated proceedings at the Hangzhou Shooting Range Hall.

In the day's last shooting final, Anant Jeet Singh Naruka claimed the silver medal in



Shooter Sift Kaur Samra poses for photos with her gold medal during the presentation ceremony of the women's 50m rifle 3 positions event at the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou in China on Wednesday PTI

men's skeet event, adding to the team bronze he won alongside Angad Vir Singh Bajwa and Gurjoat Khangura.

Naruka finished his last round with 10/10 to end his event with an impressive 58/60 but it was still not good enough

for gold as Kuwait's Abdullah Alrashidi equalled the world record with a perfect 60/60 to finish on top of the podium.

Nasser Al-Attia of Qatar bagged the bronze with 46.

Manu, Esha and Rhythm totalled 1759 to finish on top of

the podium and help the country clinch its fourth gold medal in the ongoing sporting extravaganza. This was the second gold medal for India in shooting in these Games.

Meanwhile, the Indian team of Angad Vir Singh



Bajwa, Gurjoat Khangura and Anant Jeet Singh Naruka bagged the team bronze medal in the men's skeet event.

The trio shot a total of 355 to settle for the third position. The hosts China won the gold medal while Qatar claimed the silver.

The Indian women's team, however, crashed out of the skeet event by finishing in the fourth position behind Kazakhstan, China and Thailand.

In the women's 3P event, host nation China's Qiongyue Zhang crashed what could have been an India one-two, by winning the silver with a score of 462.3.

Before her triumph in the final, Samra broke the Asian Games record in qualification with a total score of 594 (out of 600) along with China's Xia Siyu, who finished on top by virtue of higher inner 10 scores (closer to the centre of the target.)

*Continued on Page 9*

## Canada's weird reasons on India travel advisory

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

During Justin Trudeau's tenure, Canada has taken a diplomatic disagreement with India to an unprecedented level. The Canadian Government has provided peculiar explanations to its citizens, urging them to exercise caution when visiting India.

The reasons — strange and exaggerated — include extreme weather conditions, frequent train accidents, forced marriages, incidents of rape and sexual assaults in yoga centres and ashrams, as well as the overall poor road conditions across the country.

This travel demarche has been issued at a time when India and Canada find themselves entangled in a diplomat-

ic dispute over the killing of Khalistani terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Canada.

"Forced marriage affecting foreigners occurs, sometimes without the affected person's prior knowledge or consent and some Canadians have been forced into marital arrangements and have been detained against their will," reads the advisory.

"They have been subjected to threats, intimidation and violence by family members," claimed the advisory uploaded on Canada's official website travel.gc.ca.

Highlighting women's safety issue, it warned that reports of rape and assault against foreign women have increased. "You should be particularly vigilant in Delhi, Goa, and at

yoga centres, ashrams and other places of spiritual retreats. If you are travelling to India to meet someone you have otherwise only met online, you may be the victim of a scam," it warned.

"Be alert to attempts at fraud by persons who profess friendship or romantic interest over the internet," it said.

"Crimes committed against women frequently occur in India. Foreign women are often the target of unwanted attention. Staring, verbal abuse, groping, and other forms of sexual harassment can occur anywhere, including in tourist sites and areas. Attackers sometimes act in a group," it said, adding, credit card and ATM frauds also occur.

According to the advisory,

India is prone to extreme weather events such as avalanches, cyclones, dust storms, earthquakes, floods, landslides and extreme temperatures that can occur in both spring and summer.

Advising people to limit their activities outdoors, the advisory said smoke haze and other types of air pollution can be extremely hazardous in urban areas and cities like Delhi.

"It is typically at its worst in winter. In rural areas, air quality can be affected by agricultural burning. Dust storms also occur across northern India," it said.

The advisory further said demonstrations/mass gatherings, general strikes, "bandh" or "hartal," take place frequently.

"Even peaceful demonstrations can turn violent at any time. They can also lead to disruptions to traffic and public transportation. Stampedes have occurred during mass gatherings, including religious ceremonies, and resulted in deaths and injuries. Local authorities may impose curfews and other restrictions at short notice. Avoid areas where demonstrations and large gatherings are taking place," it advised.

The advisory also cautioned that road conditions and road safety are poor throughout the country. Most roads, including major highways, are poorly maintained.

"There is severe traffic congestion. Driving conditions may be hazardous during the rainy season, and some roads

can become impassable. India has an extensive passenger train system. Rail accidents are common, mostly due to poor maintenance. Thefts are frequent on certain train lines," it said.

The advisory warns people against travelling to States like Gujarat, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home State, Punjab and Rajasthan, which share borders with Pakistan, due to presence of "landmines".

The advisory said petty crime, such as pick-pocketing and purse snatching, is common.

"Criminals may target foreigners, especially in major cities and tourist areas. Petty crime frequently occurs on public transportation and overnight trains, it said.

However, serious crime against foreigners is less frequent, but incidents do occur, it cautioned.

The Canada Government advisory also warned that tourist areas and airports are of particular concern where scammers particularly target foreigners.

"Scams involving the exportation of jewels, gemstones, carpets, and other items have occurred. Taxi drivers may approach you, offering money to export such items," it said.

Amid the diplomatic row over the killing of Nijjar, Canada has further updated its travel advisory for its citizens in India to "remain vigilant and exercise caution".

Tensions flared between

the two countries after Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's explosive allegations of a "potential" involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Khalistani extremist Nijjar, 45, on his country's soil on June 18 in British Columbia. India had designated Nijjar as a terrorist in 2020.

In a riposte, India dubbed the allegations as "absurd" and "motivated" and expelled a senior Canadian diplomat in a tit-for-tat move to Ottawa's expulsion of an Indian official over the case.

New Delhi also announced temporarily suspending issuance of visas to Canadian citizens in view of "security threats" faced by its High Commission and consulates in Canada.



# Newly-married woman found murdered

## Husband, in-laws absconding

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A newly married woman was found murdered inside her house close to Kamta police outpost in Chinhat on Tuesday. Her husband and in-laws were found missing from the house. The incident came to light when the victim's sister reached the house and sought the help of police, who broke open the door. Later, the police registered a case of dowry death.

As per reports, the victim, identified as Rinki of Sitapur district, married Manish Kumar, also of Sitapur, on June 23 this year, and she was staying at a house near the Kamta police outpost in Chinhat along with her husband and in-laws.

Deceased's sister Poonam alleged that Manish and his parents were demanding a car, a gold chain and Rs 1 lakh as dowry from them. "They had been harassing Rinki ever since she got married," she alleged.

She said she called Rinki to ask about her well-being on Tuesday but found her phone switched off. She said she tried calling Manish but it was switched off.

"I tried calling both on several occasions, but in vain. I later reached the house to inquire about Rinki and found the doors locked. I sought the help of cops, who reached the scene and broke open the doors only to find Rinki lying dead on

the floor in a room," the complainant said.

She alleged that Manish and his parents were absconding and they had locked the doors before escaping.

A spokesman said the body was sent for autopsy and the police started further investigation into the case. He said the case was registered against Manish Kumar, and his parents Gudia Devi and Vishan Kumar. Meanwhile, the mutilated body of a 28-year-old Kushinagar resident was recovered from railway tracks in Chinhat on Wednesday.

Reports said that a porter at Malhaur railway station informed police about the death of a man on Malhaur-Safedabad up line. The police found an Aadhaar card, on the basis of which the deceased was identified as Rustam Ansari of Jahta Bazaar police station area. His family was informed about the incident.

The family reached the scene and identified the body, a spokesman said.

In another incident, the body of a man, aged around 30 years, was found hanging from the ceiling at his locked house in Thakurganj on Wednesday. The deceased, identified as Naushad of Aasiau in the locality, worked as mason.

His wife, along with their children, has been staying at her parents' house for the last

two months and Naushad was all alone. His elder brother Masoom Ali said he was informed by neighbours that Naushad had not been seen for the last 4-5 days. He went to the house but found it locked. He called the police who broke open the doors. "The room was filled with a putrid smell and Naushad was hanging from the ceiling with a dupatta tied around his neck," he said. Police sent the body for autopsy and informed Naushad's wife about the incident. The police said that the body appeared to be 4-5 days old.

### WOMAN CRUSHED TO DEATH BY BUS

An unidentified woman was crushed under the rear wheels of a roadways bus near Kaiserbagh bus stand on Wednesday afternoon. She died on the spot as the wheels rolled over her head. The bus driver fled the scene, abandoning the vehicle. On being informed, police reached the scene and impounded the bus.

Despite much effort, the identity of the deceased could not be ascertained. The police said that Rajkumar was driving the vehicle slowly and the woman came under the rear wheels of the bus around 3 pm and died on the spot.

As the face of the deceased was smashed, it was difficult to ascertain her identity.

# Firm agent, colleagues accused of fraud

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

An agent of a company and his colleagues were accused of embezzling funds (over Rs 80 lakh) meant for installing LED street lights in Amethi district gram panchayat. The company was also accused of not paying for the LED street lights.

Managing director of Indian Cooperative Rural Development and Construction Limited (ICRD-CL) V Kumar lodged a complaint in this regard at Kaiserbagh police station. The police registered a case under relevant sections of the IPC.

Those named in the case were identified as Rohit Kumar Tiwari aka Bablu Tiwari (prime accused) of Amethi, Gayatri Shukla of Amethi, Sitaram Mishra of Pratapgarh, Ram Vishal Yadav, and Hariram Yadav. The fraud took place between April 2022 and May 2023.

It was alleged that Rohit and his aides were tasked with installing the LED lights in the gram panchayat and Rohit was given Rs 16.66 lakh (in cash and in bank) for the work. He was also allotted 3,800 lights. In July, Rohit was asked to provide details of the places where the LED lights were installed, but he resorted to dilly-dallying tactics.

Rohit later returned 2,175 lights to the company, which had supplied the same, but did not give details of the remaining lights. It later surfaced that

Rohit paid for only 30 lights in the Rambha gram sabha in Amethi district. He was asked to make the payment and get the lights installed, but he did not comply with the instructions. The complainant said Rohit's act caused hindrance in government work and he also embezzled Rs 64.49 lakh by not returning 1,625 lights and not paying for 1,547 lights. "The firm got the payment for 30 items (lights) out of the 3,800 and this caused the firm to suffer monetary loss," he added.

### THRASHED

A group of Ola and Uber drivers allegedly thrashed an Chaudhary Charan Singh International Airport staff assigned to collect pick-up charges from taxis ferrying passengers, in Sarojinagar on Tuesday. Reports said Punit Tripathi of Krishna Nagar was deployed at the airport parking. Around 9:30 pm, a taxi driver picked a passenger outside the parking in violation of the rules. When Punit objected, the cab driver had a scuffle with him. Punit called his supervisor but a huge number of drivers reached the scene. They thrashed Punit and allegedly threatened to kill him. He lodged a complaint against the accused, two of whom were identified as Ashish Verma and Ashish Yadav. The victim said cab drivers are supposed to pay pick-up charges even if they pick passengers outside the parking lot.

# Woman harassed by former friend

**Lucknow (PNS):** A woman accused her former friend of forcing her to talk to him and threatened to get her brother killed, in Hazratganj. Police registered a case under relevant sections of the IPC and started investigation.

As per reports, the woman came in contact with the accused, whom she identified as Sujal Sonkar, a few months back and both started talking. As their friendship grew, they exchanged their photographs.

"He clicked some photos in which we both were in the frame. A few weeks after that, I stopped talking to him due to some reservations. Irked over

this, he resorted to bullying tactics and forced me to continue talking to him," the woman alleged.

"Sujal misbehaved with me and threatened to get my brother killed if I did not talk to him. He is uploading the photos which he had clicked in the past on Instagram and is threatening to defame me. He has also threatened to not let me get married and he used to hang around near the house where I live with my parents," she alleged.

Meanwhile, in a case of cyber harassment, an official of the NCC Directorate was duped of Rs 1.52 lakh in Hazratganj. The

victim, identified as Ram Vriksh Gupta, stated in his complaint that he got a call from a man who introduced himself as a representative of a bank in which he has his savings account. The caller asked Gupta to download an app to resolve his query about updating of bonus points in his bank account.

Gupta followed the instruction and fell into the trap. "I realised my mistake instantly after I downloaded the app. However, before I could contact the bank's customer care, a sum of Rs 1.52 lakh had been deducted from my account," he said.

# 108kg modak offered to Lord Ganesha

**Lucknow (PNS):** On the last day before Visarjan, the Ganesha Prakatya Samiti on Wednesday offered a 108-kg modak to Lord Ganesha at Jhulelal Park. Bharat Bhushan Gupta from the committee said that this modak would be offered as prasad to the devotees enroute to the Visarjan. He said that its preparation was not an easy task and skilled workmen were required to make the delicacy.

Gokul Maharaj, who prepared the huge modak, said they made it with the help of milk. "Fifteen hundred litres of milk was used to make khoya in three days. To that we added 45kg sugar and 25kg dry fruits and used 20 packs of silver foil for decoration," he said.

"It is a challenging task because if we get khoya from the market and do not prepare it from milk, the structure will not

be consistent. The milk is divided into three batches of 500 litres and then used to make khoya," he said. He added that about 12 workers are used to give a shape to the huge modak. "Not everyone can carry out this task. We have been involved in the task for the past eight years and gained proficiency," he said.

Meanwhile, Bharat Bhushan Gupta said that the *shobha yatra* and immersion of the idol would take place on Friday.

"On Friday, the procession of the 'king of manautis' will start from Jhulelal Vatika and end at Jhulelal Vatika via University Road, IT crossing, Ramakrishna Math, Shankarnagar, Nazirganj, Daliganj. After the immersion procession, the Ganesha idol will be immersed near Jhulelal Vatika," he said.

# Sanjay Singh hits out at Modi govt

**Lucknow (PNS):** AAP leader Sanjay Singh said on Wednesday that the Narendra Modi-led government did not fulfil its promises despite being in power at the centre for the last nine years. Addressing AAP workers' meet in the city, Singh said youths, farmers and women were the worst hit.

"The most corrupt gets the most important portfolio in the Modi government," he alleged.

He spoke on all the issues including education, employment guarantee, free electricity, medical help. He said people in UP were unhappy with the present government. "The youths are beaten by police for demanding jobs, while farmers are ending their lives with their arrears still pending with the government. The costs of their crops is being estimated by the government," he added.

## CLASSIFIEDS

### NOTICE

I have to changed my name from Isamail Khan to Mohd Ismail S/o Abdul Majeed for future purpose. Add-Sallahpur Akbarpur Prayagraj.

### NOTICE

I Gulerana W/o Mohammad Zafar Alam Khan R/o 14/37 S.A. Tower Flat-501 Civil Lines Kanpur 208001. I have changed my name to Gulerana Shameem for all future purposes.

### NOTICE

I have to changed my name from Kishan Gupta To Kishan Kumar Gupta S/o Kailash Chandra Gupta for future purpose. Add-117/353 O Block Geeta Nagar Navten Nagar Kakadeo Kanpur Nagar.

### NOTICE

I have changed my name from Khan Afiya Bano Siraj Ahmed to Aafiya Banu Khan for all future purpose, Aafiya Banu Khan W/o Saif Fazal R/o- 24/8 New Idgah Colony, R.K.Nagar Kanpur

### NOTICE

It is inform that my son name wrongly mentioned in my army record as RISHAV DHAR DWIVEDI, But in all documents, his correct name mentioned as RISHABH DHAR DWIVEDI. So in further he will be known as this name. Durgesh Dhar Diwedi, Village-Gyanipur Ram Prasad, Post-Andhiyari, Tahsil- Mankapur, Gonda, UP-271302.

### AUCTION NOTICE

दिनांक 07.10.2023 पूर्वाह्न 11:00 बजे विज्ञान एवं प्रौद्योगिकी परिषद उ०प्र० द्वारा संचालित इन्दिरा गांधी नक्षत्रशाला, 9-नबीउल्लाह रोड, लखनऊ में आधुनिकीकरण के दृष्टिगत स्थापित पुरानी कुर्सियों, 40 के०बी०ए० के 2 यू०पी०एस० (42 ए०एच०-64 बैट्रियों) सहित की नीलामी जिसमें केवल अधिकृत ई-वेस्ट डिमेन्टर/रिसाइकलर फर्म प्रतिभाग करें, सित्योरिटी रु० 15,000/- बैंकड्राफ्ट "सचिव, विज्ञान एवं प्रौद्योगिकी परिषद, उ०प्र० लखनऊ" नामित/आई०पी० सिंह एण्ड सन्स

### NOTICE

I have changed my name from ABDUL RAHMAN to ABDUL REHMAN S/o Mohd Zaheer , 15/41 Mission Compound Civil Lines, Kanpur.

### NOTICE

I have changed my name from FARRAH ASRAR to FARRAH ALAM W/o Mohd Sharaf Alam R/o 97/9 Kayasthana Road Kanpur.

### NOTICE

I have changed my name from Mohammad Zameer to Mohd Zameer S/o Mohd Zaheer , 15/41 Mission Compound Civil Lines, Kanpur.

### NOTICE

It is herewith inform to all that I have lost the original copy of chain-registry Ledger no. 1 zild no. 7879 Serial no. 5117 dated 04.05.2011. I will not be responsible if someone is found using it. Shabnam Begum R/o 454/224 Ahmed Gaji Daulatganj, Thakurganj, Lucknow.

### NOTICE

I Vedansh Jaiswal S/o Mr.Satish Jaiswal , Residence of Mehmoorganj, Varanasi. I hereby declare that. I have lost my High School Marksheet passed in 2017 with Unique ID 6477868, if anyone have found it please contact- 9236611339

### NOTICE

I, Aditya Singh S/o Rajesh Singh R/o A-29/114, Baluabir, Piliikothi, Varanasi. Declare on Oath that my High School Marksheet & Certificate of passing issued by the Central Board of Secondary Education in the year 2019 from ST. Mary's Convent School Sona Talab, Varanasi has been actually lost.

### आवश्यकता है

**हर सहाय महाविद्यालय, पी० रोड कानपुर।**  
आवश्यकता है।  
स्वविप्लोपित द्विवार्षिक बी०एड० पाठ्यक्रम हेतु प्रवक्ता - 05 पद अहर्ता - यू०जी०सी०/एन०सी०टी०ई० मानकानुसार आवेदन पत्र रु० 250/- के मूल्य पर महाविद्यालय कार्यालय से प्राप्त करने व जमा करने की तिथि 13 अक्टूबर 2023 है।  
प्रबन्धक/प्राचार्य  
**हर सहाय महाविद्यालय कानपुर।**

# 'Tackling air pollution need of the hour'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Air pollution is an important issue and the need of the hour is to tackle it. People should make lifestyle changes to curb air pollution, Minister for Forest and Climate Change Dr Arun Kumar Saxena said at a workshop, titled SHAPE UP (Solutions for Health, Air Pollution and Environment in Uttar Pradesh), organised by the Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board (UPPCB) and Lung Care Foundation at IIA Bhawan on Wednesday.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi always talks about climate change and global warming wherever he goes. When particulate matter increases in the air, it gives rise to pollution which results in global climate change and this impacts an infant even before birth. Work is required at all levels to curb pollution, but first we need to change ourselves. Lifestyle changes for better environment should be adopted such as the use of solar power, quitting smoking, not burning garbage and walking short distances," he said.

Additional Chief Secretary, Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Manoj Singh said that the UP government has carried out a lot of pro-



grammes and activities in the direction of environment conservation.

"Nearly 135 crore saplings have already been planted and to achieve the targeted carbon sequestration levels, 145 crore more saplings need to be planted. The planning for the plantation of 35 crore saplings this year was carried out a month before the event and each group was targeted such as women, children, etc. Forests were also created for each targeted group," he added.

He acknowledged that there are 17 cities which are still in the non-attainment zone.

Giving examples of places where work was done to con-

trol air pollution, he said that in Gorakhpur, a road was constructed end to end, which decreased the pollution levels by 22 per cent.

Manoj Singh pointed out that small steps need to be taken to check air pollution and these include purchase of more electric vehicles by the common man, running the air conditioners at 24 degrees, purchasing fridges with five star ratings, encouraging carpooling and moving by cycles.

Head of the respiratory department, KGMU, Dr Surya Kant Tripathi said that the government is doing the maximum it can for tackling air pollution but it is also people's

responsibility to work on the issue.

"Ask yourself whether you are contributing to air pollution, stop smoking because if you smoke, you inhale 30 per cent of the smoke, others inhale 70 per cent of the same smoke, look within your house for things which can give rise to particulate matter and then remove them and always plant saplings on special occasions," he said. Dr Arvind Kumar from Medanta Hospital, also the founder of Lung Care Foundation, said that in the past 40 years of his career, he has seen the colour of the lungs change because of air pollution. He stressed that air pollution is not a problem of the environment but a serious health issue which needs to be addressed properly.

"Air pollution starts impacting even before the birth of a child because the mother inhales the toxins which, through the placenta, move into the body of the infants causing several diseases. All the organs of the body are impacted by air pollution but the maximum are the lungs because they form the portal for entry. The hyperactivity in children is because of the polluted air affecting the outer membrane of their brains," he said.

## CITYBRIEFS

### EDUCATION LOAN FAIR

Canara Bank's regional office in Lucknow approved Rs 5.5 crore in the mega education loan fair to promote retail loans. Indian Institute of Information and Technology deputy registrar Vivekananda Sinha was the chief guest at the fair, which was organised under the direction of zonal head and general manager Alok Kumar Aggarwal. He said that education loan is available in Canara Bank at low interest rate and it is designated as the nodal bank for subsidy by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.



### DONATION PROGRAMME

State Bank of India, Lucknow circle, organised a donation programme at Drishti Samajik Sansthan on Wednesday. Chief general manager Sharad S Chandak donated various items of daily use to special children of the institute.



### HINDI MONTH

Bank of India on Wednesday organised 'Hindi Month' and conducted eight competitions for the officers and staff working in the National Banking Group, Uttar Pradesh, zonal office and all branches under the Lucknow zone. National Banking Group,



# Minnesota woman in city to trace her roots

**Lucknow (PNS):** She has come all the way from the USA to Lucknow to search for her roots. Mahogany Emberkai (26) is a determined woman and has faced enough trauma in her life.

"I was three-and-a-half years old when found at Charbagh railway station in 2000 and sent to the Leelavati Bal Griha. When I was five in 2002, I was adopted by a US citizen, Carol, who was mentally and physically abusive and caused a lot of trauma to me. When she died in 2016, I was able to find some records and decided to search for my roots," she said.

On why she did not report her abusive foster mother to the authorities, she said she was afraid lest her mother would retaliate. "I would have been sent to someone else, which could have been worse," she said.

A café manager in Minnesota in the USA, Mahogany said that she visited the Leelawati Bal Griha and Charbagh railway station to see if something could be found about her parents, but in vain.

"The district probationary officer here has met me and said that he would



Mahogany Emberkai with her friend

post my photograph as a child to see whether somebody recognises me or not. I have also reported the matter to the women powerline from where the matter is likely to go to the DM office," she added.

She admitted that it was not an easy task finding one's roots after 20 years.

"Though I feel disappointed, I am hopeful that someone will read my story, recognise me and come forward with some

information," she said.

She also said that she is planning to meet Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. "I am trying to figure out what else can be done. I am planning to meet the chief minister because he does a lot for women empowerment," she added.

Fortunately, she said, she had friends who were there to care for and support her. "My friend Christopher is there to support me. I also paid for his visit to India and so it became an expensive affair," she added. Describing herself as a determined girl, she said she felt empowered when she came to Lucknow for the overwhelming support which she has received from the people. A district administration official, when contacted, said it is a difficult task to trace her roots because there are hardly any records.

"We have asked for a photograph but it is also blurred. If we get a photograph, we will get it published in newspapers and circulate it on social networking sites. The case is 20 years old when information technology was not as strong as today," the official said.

# 'Slashed entry fee to attract more visitors to Dudhwa'

**Lucknow (PNS):** The reduction in entry fee and other charges in Dudhwa National Park will prove to be a milestone in attracting the common man. The number of tourists coming to Dudhwa will increase, which will make the revenue of the department go up, Minister of Environment, Forest, Climate Change and Zoological Park (Independent Charge) Dr Arun

Kumar Saxena said during a review meeting of the Governing Body of Dudhwa Tiger Conservation Foundation.

Saxena said that entry of children below five years of age and schoolchildren in Dudhwa has been made free.

For the convenience of tourists, investors will be attracted to open hotels within a radius of one km of Dudhwa.

He said that the connectivity routes should be strengthened as soon as possible for better transportation facilities for the tourists coming to Dudhwa.

Saxena said that for the trip to Dudhwa, the entry fee per person per shift will be Rs 150 instead of Rs 300. For the trip to Rhino range, the entry fee will be Rs 200 instead of Rs 700 per person, and safari vehicle fee

will be Rs 200 instead of Rs 600. Outside the Rhino range, the fee per elephant ride will be Rs 500 instead of Rs 2,000 for a maximum duration of 02 hours and the fee per elephant ride will be Rs 500 instead of Rs 4,000 for a maximum of two hours inside the rhinoceros area, and fee per person for boat ride fee will be Rs 250 for a maximum of one hour.



# Listen to public issues with seriousness: CM Yogi to police, administration

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has instructed the administration and police officials to listen to public issues with utmost seriousness, sensitivity and attention as well as ensure satisfactory solutions.

He added that benefits of government welfare schemes should be provided to the needy. Yogi gave an audience to 200 people at the Gorakhnath temple complex in Gorakhpur on Wednesday morning. After listening to their issues patiently, he gave necessary directions to the officials concerned.

Yogi referred everyone's prayer letters to the authorities concerned along with instructions for speedy and satisfactory disposal. He assured everyone that no injustice would be done to anyone during his tenure.

Yogi said that the government would provide all help for the treatment of patients seeking financial help.



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath at Janata Darshan in Gorakhpur on Wednesday

Handing over their applications to the officials, he said that the estimation process of the treatment cost should be completed as soon as possible

and be made available to the government so that the required funds could be released. The chief minister also

blessed the children who came with their families at the Janata Darshan. He also enquired about their studies and offered them chocolates.

# RSS hints at shift towards greater inclusivity, diversity

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a significant development, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), is gearing up to play a pivotal role in the lead-up to the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. During his recent four-day visit to Lucknow, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat emphasised on the organisation's strategies for the upcoming elections, signaling a shift towards greater inclusivity and gender diversity within the Sangh.

A notable departure from tradition, the RSS has embarked on a mission to involve a more diverse representation, including women, in key positions within the organisation. This marks a significant step forward for the RSS as it works to engage with nearly half of the population, which has been previously underrepresented.

The RSS's proactive stance in Uttar Pradesh regarding the 2024 Lok Sabha elections is evident, with the organisation collaborating closely with the government to formulate a special



election plan. Central to this strategy is the increased participation of women, an aspect considered crucial by both the Sangh and its affiliated organisations.

Bhagwat conveyed a message of inclusivity during his visit, asserting that Muslims are not outsiders to the Sangh, but rather fellow citizens who worship differently. He emphasised the unity and shared ownership of the nation, stating that those who oppose the RSS are also a part of the broader community.

Bhagwat expressed the need to establish contact with oppo-

A NOTABLE DEPARTURE FROM TRADITION, THE RSS HAS EMBARKED ON A MISSION TO INVOLVE A MORE DIVERSE REPRESENTATION, INCLUDING WOMEN, IN KEY POSITIONS WITHIN THE ORGANISATION

nents to prevent any potential disruptions during the election process. "The RSS's evolving approach, as articulated by Mohan Bhagwat, underscores its commitment to a strategy that encompasses the support and development of all segments of society. As the organisation adapts to the changing political landscape, it appears poised to play a significant role in shaping the dynamics of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections with a focus on inclusivity and outreach to diverse groups," Shalabh 'Chitransh', a political analyst said.

# Train climbs onto platform at Mathura stn

Mathura (PTI): A woman sustained minor injuries when a local train climbed onto a platform at the Mathura Junction Railway Station, an official said on Wednesday.

The Railways has ordered a high-level inquiry into the matter, he said.

According to the official from Agra division, the electric multiple unit (EMU) train arrived on platform 2A from Shakurbasti at 10.50 pm on Tuesday.

After all the passengers, including the crew, had deboarded, the train rolled down the track and climbed onto a platform before coming to a stop, the official added.

"A woman received an electric shock, and no one else was injured in the incident," Prashashti Srivastava, divisional commercial manager and public relations officer for the Agra division of the North Central Railways said.

Usha Devi (39), hailing from Jhansi, was taken to a hospital and administered first aid. Later, she was sent to Jhansi, she said.

# UP ranks third in Smart City Conclave

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a major accomplishment for the Yogi Adityanath-led Uttar Pradesh government, the state has been ranked 3rd in the country in terms of 'Smart Cities', with Agra emerging as the third smartest city.

Overall, Uttar Pradesh has received 10 awards spanning various categories.

The announcement was made during the two-day India Smart City Conclave 2023, organised by the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs at the Brilliant Convention Centre in Indore, Madhya Pradesh. The event concluded with an award ceremony on Wednesday, which was attended by President Droupadi Murmu.

President Droupadi Murmu presented the 'Third Best State Award' to UP. On behalf of the state government, Principal Secretary Urban Development Amrit Abhijat and Smart City Mission director, Dharmendra Pratap Singh

## CITIES AWARDED IN DIFFERENT CATEGORIES

- Uttar Pradesh secured third position in the 'Best State' category.
- Agra Smart City clinched the third position nationwide in the 'National Smart City Award' category.
- Varanasi Smart City secured the first position in the 'City Awards' category among smart cities with a population of over 10 lakh in the North Zone
- Kanpur got third place in the 'Project Awards' category under 'Built Environment, for the modernization and development work of the Palika Sports Stadium.
- Lucknow secured third position for employment training center work in economy category.
- In the 'ICCC Sustainable Model' category, Agra Smart City secured the third position for revenue generation and reducing carbon emissions through the Centralized Command and Control Center.
- Agra got second place in the 'Social Aspect' category for the upgradation of Smart Health Center and Municipal School.
- Second place for Smart Water Meter by Agra Smart City in ABD area and 24x7 water supply by SCADA.
- Agra received the third place in the 'Covid Innovation Award' category for its various innovative initiatives during the Covid-19 pandemic.

received the award.

Notably, a contest was organised by the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs in various categories among 100 smart cities of the country last year, in which Agra managed to secure a place in the top three.

Under the Smart City Mission, Uttar Pradesh is developing 10 cities, including Agra, Aligarh, Bareilly, Jhansi, Kanpur, Lucknow, Moradabad,

Prayagraj, Saharanpur and Varanasi as smart cities.

A total of 670 projects are proposed in these cities including smart roads, smart parking, parks, water bodies and better civic amenities such as sanitation, water supply, street lighting and sewerage. The estimated cost of these projects are Rs 9313.45 crore. So far, 456 projects valued at Rs 5889.14 crore have been successfully completed, while 214 projects with

a total expenditure of Rs 3424.31 crore are currently in progress. Notably, Agra, Kanpur, Varanasi, and Jhansi have received their full funding allocation, while Lucknow, Bareilly, Prayagraj and Aligarh are yet to receive their final installments. In the ranking, Agra and Varanasi, consistently remain among the top 10 cities while Agra, Varanasi and Kanpur, are managing to feature in top 20 cities.

# Noida airport gets IATA code 'DXN'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has awarded Noida International Airport (NIA) with the international three-letter code 'DXN'. This is an important recognition and another milestone for the airport project.

With the recognition by the international aviation body, the NIA moves one more step closer to its customers who will be able to identify the airport across multiple platforms as they take their flights from the Noida International Airport by the end of 2024. The code, to become active once airport operations start, will help travelers and aviation professionals identify and communicate destinations swiftly, accurately avoiding any confusion and mistakes.

CEO, Noida International Airport, Christopher Schnellmann said, "As one of the world's largest urban agglomerations, India's National Capital Region deserves a second airport. Noida International Airport will make this long-standing dream a reality and we are excited to receive our three-letter IATA code, which is a significant milestone towards the airport's operationalisation. We are looking forward to welcoming passengers, cus-

tomers, and partners at the region's new economic and cultural hub."

The IATA codes are unique to each individual airport and serve as essential identifiers for airports globally to prevent any ambiguity between countries and cities. These codes are featured not only on passengers' travel documents but are a crucial element in various other communications on a daily basis.

From flight schedules, ticketing, and baggage handling from one airport to another to streamlining and regulating communication, operations, and logistics, IATA codes help bring the identity of an airport alive at each level.

On the progress front, the airport construction is progressing rapidly. It's been more than a year since the EPC construction contract was awarded to TATA Projects.

The passenger terminal is currently undergoing work on the structural steel required to support its roof. The ATC tower is now standing at a height of over 30 metres. Additionally, subgrade work is in progress along the entire length of the runway.

There are around 7000 workers who are fully mobilised at the site. In the next few months, more than 20 buildings will

come up at the site, including the passenger terminal, air traffic control tower, office blocks, sewage and water treatment plants, and electric substations.

NIA has further floated tenders for various other aeronautical and non-aeronautical concessions for the airport. Tenders for F&B concessions and lounges are in place while advertising and ground handling concessions will be shared in the coming days. Groundbreaking for work on the cargo terminal is also scheduled this week.

The airport will enhance connectivity for western UP and add capacity for air travel to/from Delhi NCR while acting as a catalyst for infrastructure development, economic growth, and job creation in the region.

NIA will connect the greater Delhi area and western Uttar Pradesh with other cities in India and the world.

This world-class airport will combine Swiss efficiency and Indian hospitality to offer rich experiences and comprehensive commercial attractions and services to its passengers.

NIA will be the first airport in its class in India to achieve net zero emissions, setting a new standard for sustainable airport operations.

# 6-year-old girl strangled to death; rape suspected

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a shocking incident, a six-year-old daughter of a lock factory worker of Turkman Gate area in Aligarh was strangled to death. Family members suspected that she was also raped before being murdered. The body of the girl, missing since Tuesday morning, was found stuffed in a sack in the bathroom of a neighbour's house late in the night.

Police have sent the body for autopsy and taken into custody the neighbour's three sons, suspecting their involvement in the killing.

Reports said that a labourer family lives in a rented house near the Pathwari temple at Turkman Gate intersection in the Kotwali area of Aligarh. The tenant works in the lock factory of Jagalgarhi.

The couple had a six-year-old daughter, the third among their four children.

According to the family, the girl left the house around 10 on Tuesday morning to play in the neighbourhood but did not return till late afternoon.

Initially, her mother thought that she must be playing somewhere nearby but as she did not come back for launch, she started looking for her. When she failed to get any clue, she informed her husband and the couple contacted the local police and lodged a missing

case.

The police scanned CCTV footage to spot the girl and found that she was last seen entering the neighbour's house.

The police searched the neighbour's house and found the body of the girl stuffed in a sack in the bathroom on the first floor. A piece of cloth was wrapped around her neck.

Circumstantial evidence showed that the girl was strangled. The family also suspected that she was raped.

The police rounded up brothers trio Sualin, Rizwan and Atiq, suspecting their role in the killing.

Sources said that the suspects confessed to have murdered the girl, but the police were still grilling them to confirm whether they raped her too.

SSP, Aligarh, Kalanidhi Naithani, who visited the spot, revealed that the body of the girl, who was missing since Tuesday morning, was found stuffed in a sack in the bathroom of a neighbour's house.

Prima facie, it seems that she was strangled to death, he added. He also did not rule out rape.

Meanwhile in Sambhal, a 15-year-old girl was allegedly raped by a man, who was known to her family, after entering the house on the pretext of charging his mobile phone, police said on Wednesday.

# Akhilesh launches poll campaign in MP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Escalating the war of nerves with the Congress, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Wednesday launched the election campaign in poll-bound Madhya Pradesh. Akhilesh Yadav, in a terse message to the Congress, has already stated that the Samajwadi Party is not seeking but giving Lok Sabha seats to the partners of INDIA bloc.

Both the Congress and Samajwadi party are members of the opposition alliance INDIA and presently engaged in negotiating seat sharing in Uttar Pradesh for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

On a two-day visit to MP, Akhilesh Yadav addressed a meeting in Sirmour assembly constituency in Rewa district, 127 kms from Prayagraj. Yadav, who is the leader of opposition in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly, will hold several meetings with the party leadership in MP.

The SP has fielded former BJP MLA Laxman Tewari as its candidate. He will also hold meetings with party workers in Khajuraho before returning to Lucknow on Thursday.

SP sources said that the party is preparing to fight all seats in the state where the contest is expected to be between the BJP and the Congress. Despite the SP and Congress



being part of the INDIA bloc, these two parties seem to be heading for a fight in MP, Chhattisgarh, and other states where polling is scheduled later this year.

In Chhattisgarh, the SP is mulling over contesting as many as 40 seats out of a total of 90 assembly segments.

A senior SP leader said that the reason behind the SP contesting assembly elections in MP and Chhattisgarh later this year is the objective to make a hard bargain in Uttar Pradesh for the Lok Sabha elections.

The Samajwadi Party has so far announced candidates for six seats in MP, including Dhauhani (ST) and Chitrangi (ST) in Siddi district in the

state's Vindhya region; and Mehgaon, Bhandar (SC), Niwari, and Rajnagar in Bundelkhand and Gwalior-Chambal belts, all located near the UP border.

Of these six seats, the Congress won three and finished second on two in the 2018 assembly elections. SP sources said that the alliance between their party and the Congress is for Lok Sabha and not for state assembly elections.

Electoral battle in Madhya Pradesh is bipolar where the BJP and Congress are the main contenders. Besides the Samajwadi party, the Bahujan Samaj Party has also contested all the assembly polls in the last over two decades. However, the BSP is yet to announce candidates for the MP assembly elections.

Among the issues the party is likely to raise in the MP polls are a monthly allowance of over Rs 3,000 each for the unemployed youth, government guarantee for business loans for the youth, and loan waiver for farmers. The SP will also raise the issue of caste-based census in the state. Though no party won a clear majority in the state in 2018 state assembly elections, the Congress emerged as the single-largest party with 114 seats in the 230-member House, followed by the BJP with 109 seats.

# Athawale to hold rallies in Meerut, Lucknow

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a strategic move to mobilise support among the Other Backward Classes (OBC) voters in Western Uttar Pradesh ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, Union Minister and National President of the Republican Party of India, Ramdas Athawale, is set to conduct 'Jan Adhikar' rally, in Meerut on October 1.

The rally, poised to have a significant impact on the political landscape in the region, will be attended by Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya and other prominent leaders, including the BJP's

national vice-president Laxmikant Vajpayee.

After Meerut, Athawale will hold another rally in Lucknow, both of which will focus on discussions about the rights, justice, and entitlements of backward communities.

The Jan Adhikar rally holds particular importance for the BJP as it aims to secure the support of the 37.53% OBC voters in Western UP, a demographic that significantly contributed to the party's success in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. With an eye on repeating that success in 2024, BJP seeks to connect with this crucial voter base through this rally.

The political significance of Western UP can not be understated, and BJP traditionally initiates its campaign strategies in this region.

The rally in Meerut, often considered the political capital of Western UP, is a strategic choice for launching this initiative.

The presence of MP Rajendra Aggarwal and other prominent BJP leaders on the platform highlights the party's commitment to mobilising support from the entire Western UP region.

Furthermore, this Jan Adhikar Rally addresses the pressing demands of the Jat

community for reservation at the national level. The rally aims to raise awareness about the rights and entitlements of backward classes, with Union Minister Ramdas Athawale playing a pivotal role in delivering this message.

"Ramdas Athawale's Jan Adhikar Rally is a well-thought-out political maneuver by the BJP to consolidate support from the OBC voters in Western UP and address the concerns of various backward communities, setting the stage for a potentially game-changing impact in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections," a senior BJP leader said.



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath flagging off tourist vans on the occasion of World Tourism Day in Gorakhpur on Wednesday



# ₹15 lakh looted from accountant

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A sum of ₹15 lakh was looted from the accountant of a wood trader and his friend in Unnao district late on Tuesday night. Shobhit Kumar of Bangermau is an accountant of a wood trader Mohd Saifi. Around 5 pm on Tuesday he had gone to Lucknow with friend on a private vehicle. Sudhir got down in Budheshwar while Shobhit after informing the wood trader went to recover ₹15 lakh from a client in Ashiyana. Around 9 pm Shobhit and Sudhir again met near Budheshwar temple. When they were waiting for a conveyance, a car rider gave them a lift. After moving about 50 metres away two more youths also boarded the car. The vic-



Police officials quiz the victim of loot case in Unnao district.

tim alleged that both the youths beat him up and his friend. After 1.5 km they escaped after looting ₹15 lakh and mobile phone near Baratikheda village in the Hasanganj police station area. The victim informed the police from friend's mobile and reached Bangermau on another vehicle to inform the wood trader about the incident. On the victim's information Kakori

(Lucknow) police station SO Pravin Singh and Hasanganj (Unnao) Kotwali incharge Rajesh Singh also reached there. Both the cops remained engaged in a debate over their police station area limit till 2 am. On Wednesday morning SP Sidharth Sanker Meena, SP Shashi Shekhar Singh, CO Bangermau (Hasanganj) and Kakori (Lucknow) again reached the spot and quizzed

the victim. They put the accountant's looted mobile phone on surveillance and came across its location in Bara Deogaon of Hasanganj Kotwali police station area. As the car-borne miscreants targeted Shobhit only, it was apprehended that they were aware about the availability of cash with him. Miscreants, however, did not loot ₹20,000 and mobile phone of Sudhir. After the incident SOs of Hasanganj and Kakori exchanged heated arguments while the driver of Hasanganj Kotwali incharge was also thrashed.

Meanwhile armed miscreants brutally beat up an elderly goat rearer and took away his seven goats with them in Garhi locality under Bangermau Kotwali police station area of

Unnao on Tuesday night. At the time of incident he was fast asleep in his hut near Mau village railway crossing. Miscreants tied his limbs and brutally beat him up before looting the goats. On hearing him crying, villagers rescued the goat rearer and informed the police. He was admitted to the CHC and from there referred to the district hospital. Misrilal (70) of Garhi, Bangermau, is engaged in goat rearing in a hut near railway crossing. When he was fast asleep in the hut miscreants tied his limbs and started untying the goats. When Misrilal tried to raise an alarm, they shut his mouth with a piece of cloth, brutally beat up with stick and escaped with the looted goats on a loader. The victim said the looted goats were worth around ₹2 lakh.

# BLW bags 'Rail Mantri Rajbhasha Shield'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Adding another feather to its Acap, the Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) has bagged the prestigious 'Rail Mantri Rajbhasha Shield' for promoting the national language Hindi. In addition, the Senior Rajbhasha Officer of BLW Dr Sanjay Kumar Singh bagged the first prize under the Premchand Puraskar Yojana for his collection of stories 'Akhiri Tukda'. At a function held in Rail Bhawan on Wednesday, the Director General, Human Resources, Railway Board Mohit Sinha have away the prestigious Rail Mantri Rajbhasha Shield to the Senior Rajbhasha Officer of



Senior Rajbhasha Officer of BLW Dr Sanjay Kumar Singh receiving the Rail Mantri Rajbhasha Shield and first prize under Premchand Puraskar Yojana.

the BLW to promote the national language Hindi. Dr Singh also received first prize under Premchand Puraskar

Yojana for his collection of stories 'Akhiri Tukda'. The officers of Railway Board and others were present to grace the occasion.

# IIT-K develops novel technology

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (IIT-K) has developed a novel technology titled, "A Continuous Lung Health Monitoring System". The technology has been innovated by a group of inventors from IIT Kanpur, IIT Kharagpur and the International Institute of Information Technology (IIIT) Naya Raipur. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India, has provided financial support for the innovation. The technology is a low-cost, ubiquitous, unobstructive and compact system

that can help healthcare teams to track patients' lung health status.

Speaking about the invention, Prof S Ganesh, officiating director, IIT-K said, "The team of researchers have unveiled an affordable and revolutionary patient monitoring system designed specifically for enhancing lung care. It is a testimony to IIT-K's longstanding commitment to advancing cutting-edge healthcare technologies that directly benefit patients." It has been noted that infectious lung diseases typically lead patients to stay at home, creating challenges for continuous medical monitoring. Remote monitoring systems

provide a solution, yet they may encounter delays and network issues. IIT-K's technology offers rapid access to lung disease data and facilitates the patient to monitor the disease at the convenience of sitting anywhere. Prof Ganesh said the system included an acoustic mask with highly sensitive sound sensors and an intelligent corded device to sense the inaudible breathing sounds from the user's mouth and nose. The corded device of the mask consists of a Wi-Fi module for sharing the lung health status with the health-care provider. The device is equipped with a highly-durable battery that provided seamless continuous mon-

itoring and a local storage unit that stored the processed audio data for long-term inferences and a processing unit that has inbuilt memory and micro-processor. He said this real-time continuous monitoring system assisted doctors in responding promptly to any possible change or deterioration in the health status. The device will have far-reaching impact on patient health monitoring market as going by a global report from the US-based Markets and Markets, it has been estimated that the monitoring devices were expected to be \$65.4 billion by 2027 growing at a CAGR of 9.1 per cent over the forecast period.

# Students made aware under Mission Shakti

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Circle Officer (CO), Pipri in Sonbhadra district Ashish Mishra and Police Station In-charge, Pipri Rajesh Kumar Singh made the girl students aware under Mission Shakti at Aditya Birla Intermediate College (ABIC), Renukoot on Wednesday. The message was given to the girl students that in difficult times, they can easily seek help from



Police officers apprising students of ABIC Renukoot (Sonbhadra) about Mission Shakti on Wednesday.

the police by dialing '112'. Ashish Mishra said that if there is any complaint related to a woman, then one should immediately call 'helpline number-1090'. When one calls, security will reach one's place immediately, he added. Along with this, detailed information was also given to the students about the Anti-Romeo Squad. School Principal Dayanand Shukla praised this campaign of the police administration and said that in case of emergency, girl students and women can avail these services. On the occasion Vice Principal and other teachers were also present.

# Last date extended

VARANASI: The VMC has extended the last date to get CNG (Compressed Natural Gas) engines installed in the boats till October 7 and also made it clear that there will be complete restriction on the operation of diesel-based boats in the river Ganga thereafter.

# Blood donation camp inaugurated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Director of National Sugar Institute (NSI) Prof Narendra Mohan while inaugurating a blood donation camp in association with the UHM Hospital on Wednesday made a fervent appeal to students to donate blood liberally to cover the huge gap in demand and supply of blood to save precious life. He said there was a need for more awareness that blood donation was the noblest donation and saved many lives. He donated blood as part of the campaign. Addressing the donation camp he said it was a matter of grave concern that even today people hesitate to donate blood to their own blood relation and this was more because of many myths. He said it was very healthy to donate blood and added every healthy person can donate blood at least four times in a year. He said unless people voluntarily donate blood the dependance on mercenary donors will remain rampant and pose to be a big threat to human life. He said one pint of blood can save up to three lives.



Director NSI Prof Narendra Mohan donating blood in the blood donation camp at the institute on Wednesday

He said healthy adults who were at least 17 years old and at least around 50 kg may donate about 350 gm of blood. He said the truth is that every two seconds of every day, someone needed blood and since blood cannot be manufactured outside the body and had a limited shelf life, the supply must constantly be replenished by generous blood donors where the young generation had a larger role to play. On the occasion 52 units of blood were donated by staff and students of the institute.

**WORLD RABIES DAY:** The annual estimated number

of dog bites in India is 17.4 million, leading to estimated between 20 to 30,000 deaths of human rabies per year. This year World Rabies Day is being observed on September 28 and the theme was "All for 1, One Health for all". The UP government has launched a month long special drive ensuring equitable access to health services and rabies post-exposure prophylaxis for underserved communities which not only saved lives but also strengthened national health systems. This was stated by Jt Director (Health) Dr Akhilesh Prasad while informing about

the month long special drive in city and rural areas to prevent and substantially reduce rabies deaths. He said today the country had vaccines, medicines, tools and technologies to break the cycle of one of the oldest diseases known as hydrophobia. He said the recent achievements in mapping the full structure of the rabies glycoprotein and advances in neutralising monoclonal antibody cocktails were bringing potential new rabies therapies and vaccines giving hope for making rabies a completely treatable infection by 2030. Dr Prasad said rabies is a highly fatal zoonotic disease caused by the rabies virus invading the central nervous system. He advised people who kept dogs and other animals as pets to stay vigilant from all animals, even if they seem tame or friendly as it was impossible to tell by appearance if an animal had rabies. He advised people to educate children on why they should not handle stray animals. He cautioned them not to wash bite wounds with soap and water, and immediately contact a health care provider.

# DC flags off Heritage Walk

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The India Tourism, UP Tourism and Tourism Welfare Association jointly organised a programme of 'Heritage Walk' on the occasion of World Tourism Day on Wednesday. Divisional Commissioner (DC) Kaushal Raj Sharma flagged off the Heritage Walk. To mark the World Tourism Day, the India Tourism, UP Tourism and Tourism Welfare Association jointly organised a Heritage Walk from Hotel Taj Ganges which was flagged off by DC Sharma. The Heritage Walk culminated at Shastri Ghat. The students of the Institute of



DC Kaushal Raj Sharma flagging off Heritage Walk on the occasion of World Tourism Day.

Tourism Studies, MGKVP led the Heritage Walk in which the people associated with the tourism industry also participated. At Shastri Ghat, Sharma administered the oath of paying more attention to cleanliness in the city to the participants. After partic-

ipating in the Heritage Walk, students of the institute launched an awareness programme at Kedar Ghat on the theme of Tourism and Green Investment in which tourists of the country and abroad too were made aware of tourism and green investment.

# BJP to continue contact drive in slum localities

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The contact campaign, being run by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in slum localities, will continue till October 2 and it was inaugurated by regional party president Dilip Singh Patel at Nevada village under Sewapuri assembly segment of Varanasi parliamentary constituency here on Tuesday. During the campaign, Patel also met the beneficiaries of the public welfare schemes of the central and state government and learned about their experiences. He also met the

intellectuals of the area.

Besides, Patel while addressing at a chaupal highlighted the work being done by the central government for the Scheduled Caste society under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the decisions taken in the honour of Bharat Ratna Baba Saheb Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar.

He said that the work that has been done for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the last nine years under the leadership of Modi has never been done before.

# 'Upskill Programme' launched

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Madras and Vidya Shakti Foundation (VSF) on Tuesday launched 'Upskill Programme' on Software Testing and Data Analysis under Vidya Shakti Scheme in collaboration with Uday Pratap Autonomous College, known as UP College and Government Girls PG College to get the modern education reach to the villages of Varanasi. Director of IIT, Madras, Prof V Kamakoti and Chief Development Officer (CDO) of Varanasi Himanshu Nagpal launched the Upskil Programme at a program organised in UP College here. The Vidya Shakti Scheme was launched in Tamil Nadu and the idea to implement it in



the scheme Dr Jitendra Kumar Pandey informed that there would be two training sessions of one hour each every day under the programme which will last for 12 weeks and added that the experienced professionals of IIT, Madras will impart training to more than 500 students of both colleges on various aspects of ultra-modern skill in software testing and data analysis. Outlining the objective of the programme, the Regional Higher Education Officer Dr BK Tripathi said that the youths of rural areas would get new opportunities of employment with this initiative of the IIT, Madras. Principal of UP College Prof DK Singh welcomed the guests and Principal of Government Girls PG College proposed the vote of thanks.

# Six swimmers win finisher medal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Six swimmers of the city won the finisher medal in the International Swimathon organised at Shyama Prasad Mukherjee (Talkatora) swimming pool, Delhi. They won the medals by completing the distance within prescribed time limit. They included Govind Pradhan (68 years) and Ranjana Saffar (65 years) - 500 metres; Pankaaj Jain (56 years), Sidharth Khaitan (44 years), Anurag Khaitan (42 years), Ashima Khaitan (40 years) - 1500 metres. This was being informed by honorary secretary of Kanpur District (rural and urban) Swimming Association Prakash Awasthi in a press

release issued on Wednesday. Meanwhile the 6th All India Finswimming Federation Cup 2023 is scheduled to be organised in Delhi from September 29 to October 2. Hony. Awasthi said as many as 74 swimmers from Uttar Pradesh will take part in the championship. These included 35 swimmers of Kanpur who were Vikas Awasthi, Raghav Awasthi, Anyana Awasthi, Rohit Nishad, Abhijit Singh, Ravindra Gaur, Sneha Nishad, Brijendra, Aditya Pathak, Aditya Garg, Mrityunjaya Pandey, Yatharth Mishra, Sanchit Pandey, Swastika Dixit, Prajjav Tripathi, Chandni Upadhyaya, Amit Pal, Dr VK Moga, Dr Sumit Upadhyaya,

Dr Tarun Goel, Geet Ayush, Manjari, Achanta Upadhyaya, Janki Mittal, Nakshatra Singh, Sayla, Arohi Rai, Trishna Baghmare, Prerna Chauhan, Nishtha Das, Muskan Bhati, Oram Bisht, Saurya Mohini, Anya Agarwal and Ayush Adhikari. Prakash Awasthi, his son Vikas Awasthi and grandsons Raghav and Anyana Awasthi were also included in Kanpur team. Kamlesh Awasthi will accompany the team as manager while Diksha Jugrat, Mohinte, Tejendra Sharma and Vikas as coach. Prakash Awasthi, Rakesh Yadav, Mukesh and Vikas Awasthi were the technical officer. Swimmers swim on surface of water with footfins and snorkel in mouth.

<b>APPENDIX IV-A</b> (See proviso to rule 8(6)) <b>Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Property</b> 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) 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 31.10.2023 from 02.00 P.M. to 04.00 P.M., for recovery of Rs. 1,20,32,707/- (Rupees One Crore Twenty Lakh Thirty Two Thousand Seven Hundred Seven only) pending towards the Loan Account No. HHLKAN00483124, by way of outstanding principal, arrears (including accrued late charges) and interest till 22.09.2023 with applicable future interest in terms of the Loan Agreement and other related loan documents) w.e.f. 23.09.2023 along with legal expenses and other charges due to the Secured Creditor from NEETU SINGH, AJAY SINGH, SEEMA DEVI, PRADHUMN SINGH and SWAMY LOGISTICS PVT. LTD. The Reserve Price of the Immovable Property will be Rs. 1,31,00,000/- (Rupees One Crore Thirty One Lakh only) and the Earnest Money Deposit ("EMD") will be Rs. 13,10,000/- (Rupees Thirteen Lakh Ten Thousand only) i.e. equivalent to 10% of the Reserve Price.	
<b>DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY</b> ALL THAT PIECE AND PARCEL OF RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY BEARING HOUSE NO. H. S. /10, ADMEASURING 308.87 SQ. MTS., SCHEME NO. 2, BLOCK NO. X-1, KRISHNAPURAM, KANPUR - 208012, UTTAR PRADESH AND BOUNDED AS UNDER: EAST : 30 FT WIDE ROAD NORTH : DEFENCE LAND WEST : HOUSE NO. H.S./13 SOUTH : HOUSE NO. H.S./9	
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 Date : 23.09.2023 Place : KANPUR	
Sd/- Authorized officer Indiabulls Housing Finance Limited	



# Varanasi gets Best Smart City Award in North Zone

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Varanasi has written a new chapter of development with heritage as it has received the 'Best Smart City Award' in the North Zone on Wednesday when at a programme organised in Indore (Madhya Pradesh) by the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Municipal Commissioner and CEO of Varanasi Smart City Shipu Giri was honoured by President Draupadi Murmu on Wednesday.

Varanasi was selected as the best smart city out of more than 30 smart cities of North Zone including Agra, Lucknow, Dehradun, Srinagar and Shimla. An exhibition has also been organised in this event, which was inaugurated on Tuesday by Kaushal Kishore, Minister of State, Ministry of Urban and Housing Affairs. Major works of Varanasi were displayed in the exhibition.

The security cover of Varanasi was shown live during the exhibition through advanced surveillance cameras installed in the city. Apart from this, Rudraksh



President Draupadi Murmu giving Best Smart City Award in North Zone to Varanasi MC Shipu Giri in Indore (MP) on Wednesday.

International Convention Centre, Machhodari Model School, modern development of streets of Varanasi, Integrated City Command Centre and Colony Parks were also showcased through 360 degree virtual reality tour. Benia Bagh, development of ancient streets etc have also been demonstrated. According to reports received here, a huge crowd of visitors gath-

ered at the stall of Varanasi Smart City to see the growth journey of 'Brand Banaras'. Dr D Vasudevan, Chief General Manager (CGM) of Varanasi Smart City, called this award an honour of the people of Varanasi. The project undertaken by Varanasi Smart City has been completed within the stipulated time frame and with quality. This is being taken full care of even in the

Gatimaan project. He said that a scheme worth Rs 1,017.69 crore was approved in Varanasi Smart City in 2018, the work of which has been completed. State-of-the-art development has been done in many areas of the city. At the same time, work on three projects worth Rs 329 crore is in progress. It is likely to be completed by March 2024, he added.

## CHC Misirpur Supdt given adverse entry

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Superintendent of Community Health Centre (CHC) Misirpur has been given adverse entry for not giving proper response regarding low institutional delivery in block Kashi Vidyapeeth. This was ordered by the Chief Development Officer (CDO) Himanshu Nagpal while presiding over a meeting of the District Health Committee at Vikas Bhawan here on Tuesday.

In the meeting, information was obtained regarding the status of payment under Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY). Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Sandeep Chaudhary said that payment of 266 beneficiaries of last year is pending in the district. The CDO expressed displeasure over the non-payment of last year's pending payments in the district under the JSY and directed all the medical officers in charge to ensure that all the beneficiaries are paid.

The divisional accounts manager was taken to task for not providing satisfactory information about the progress of the amount spent in relation to the allocated budget and not being able to provide item-wise information about the amount spent. He was directed to attend the upcoming meetings with



CDO Himanshu Nagpal holding a meeting of District Health Committee in Varanasi on Tuesday.

complete information. Similarly, block account managers Harhua and Pindra were taken to task for laxity in their work and directed to take strict action. The CDO also sought the information about Seva Pakhwada of Ayushman Bhava campaign. The CMO said that about 500 units of blood were collected in the blood donation camp organised during the Ayushman Bhava campaign.

The CDO said that all the medicines should be kept as per the standards in the health and wellness centres (HWCs) including the district hospitals so that the patients do not have to purchase medicines from outside. Apart from this,

displeasure was expressed over at least four antenatal check-ups and less identification of complicated deliveries in the RCH portal. He laid emphasis on safe delivery of women with high risk pregnancy (HRP) at all the FRUs in the district. Apart from this, the CDO conducted a thorough review of all the programmes.

The CDO also reviewed the progress of Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) 5.0, which was conducted in the month of September. While receiving information about the progress of the currently running Ayushman Bhava campaign, he directed that as per the guidelines pre-

scribed for this campaign, all the blocks should conduct the same as per the department-wise microplan. While reviewing the programme, it was directed that the report should be sent to the district headquarters on time. The CDO said that the programmes to be conducted on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti should be organised in 100 per cent gram sabhas.

The superintendents of all government hospitals, all ACMOs, Deputy CMOs, Divisional Accounts Manager, Senior Finance and Accounts Officer, DCPM, incharge medical officers and other medical officers were also present in the meeting.

# CM praises Prayagraj police for best use of latest tech

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has applauded the role of Prayagraj police for making the best use of latest technology (Artificial Intelligence (AI)/Machine Learning (ML)-based traffic enforcement solutions for vehicle tracking) and inter-district coordination in nabbing an inter-state gang of robbers.

The CM's praise came during an online review meeting held recently. The meet was also attended by Commissioner of Police Ramit Sharma who briefed the CM about the use of technology in cracking the case.

The Prayagraj police had

recently arrested four key members of a Katihar (Bihar) based gang, who had executed two loots in UP, including Prayagraj and Sitapur, on September 12 and 15 respectively.

Explaining about the technology that helped cops in tracing out the escape route, Sharma told reporters "We took the advantage of the AI/ML based traffic enforcement solutions technology that helps in vehicle tracking. The Prayargaj police with the help of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) camera and Red Light Violate Detection (RLVD) traced the escape route of robbers who had executed a ₹7 lakh loot

near MG Road under Civil Lines police station in the city on September 12."

"After tracking their bike's registration and through CCTV network, police found that the robbers had entered the city from Varanasi. Then the Prayagraj police coordinated with their Varanasi, Lucknow, Kanpur, Agra, Sitapur and Barabanki counterparts and shared information to tighten the noose around the law breakers," Sharma added.

Similarly, various police teams assigned to crack the incident also coordinated with each other and seniors with the help of Integrated Control and Command Centre (ICCC).

The police also took help from different toll plazas and hotel industry to find out their exact route and stay details.

The CP added that a group of four robbers on two separate bikes in a bid to dodge cops had escaped on two different routes i.e Prayagraj-Kanpur and Prayagraj-Lucknow. However, one was spotted moving to Kanpur and Lucknow with the help of ICCCC, he added.

Sharma said the ICCCC facilities at Varanasi, Lucknow, Prayagraj and Sitapur helped in tracking the route of criminals. Moreover, the Operation Trinetra (that involves installing CCTVs) also helped cops to ascertain the identities of the criminals.

## 7 kids hurt in terrace collapse

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

As many as seven kids sustained injuries after they were trapped under the debris of a collapsed terrace in Parsara village under Kokhraj police station of Kaushambi. The injured kids — Aditya (12), Riya (8), Sneha (10), Aryan (6), Kanak (8), Shreyansh (10) and Kashish (10) were taken to the district hospital, Manjhanpur, from where doctors referred Aditya and Shreyansh to

Prayagraj for better treatment.

The incident took place when a group of children were playing under the dilapidated terrace attached to a wall. "Some kids climbed the terrace following which it collapsed trapping the kids. They were pulled out with the help of locals and taken to Manjhanpur hospital. Two of them were later referred to the SRN hospital in Prayagraj for better treatment," Kaushambi SP Brijesh Kumar Srivastava said.

**ABETMENT TO SUICIDE CASE AGAINST TEACHER:**

A case has been registered against a teacher for abetment to suicide of a female student here. The student, Palak Jaiswal, was a class XI student in a college. She had posted a video of the programme organised in the college on Teachers' Day on WhatsApp status in which the school teacher is seen dancing. It is alleged that after seeing the status the teacher got

angry, called the student and threatened to get her name removed from the college. After this the student committed suicide at home. The family members were continuously visiting the police station to register a case against the teacher but the police allegedly scolded them and sent them away. When MLA Harshvardhan Vajpayee took cognizance of the matter, a case was registered against the teacher on the Tuesday.

## UP Board disposes of 59,860 correction-related complaints

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The authorities of Madhyamik Shiksha Parishad, popularly known as UP Board, claimed to have disposed of 59,860 complaints related to correction in certificates and mark sheets of students pending since 1984 after holding special camps in different districts.

Over 45,000 of the total complaints were related to examinations that had been held between 2010 and 2017. Board secretary Dibyakant Shukla told mediapersons that

the board authorities have taken outstanding measures to solve the long-pending backlogs and complaints of students pending since 1984.

He added the board had received as many as 59,860 backlogs/complaints, including Prayagraj region (8356), Meerut (24,512), Bareilly (5188), Varanasi (18,591) and Gorakhpur (3213) related to correction of errors in student's certificates/mark sheets. "This is despite the fact that the board had been repeatedly demanding proof and certified documents from students/principals/BSA and

DIOS concerned to get the errors rectified," he said. Shukla added the oldest complaint was from Meerut region wherein the applicant had registered his plaint regarding the correction of his father name's spelling in High School certificate in 1984. Similarly, in Prayagraj region a complaint of Rae Bareilly-based applicant was pending since 1986 wherein the father's name in High school certificate was misspelt. The board authorities after taking serious note of problems being faced by students and their guardians, had decided to hold camps in different districts

with the help of BSAs and DIOSs concerned and invited the applicants or complainants to come with proper proofs, documents to get grievances sorted out on the spot.

"All the 59,860 backlogs were sorted out within two months. The corrected documents have been uploaded on parishad's website as well," Shukla said adding that the board has decided to take online applications from students, developing its tracking system and seeking online documentation to get the errors cleared as well as online verification within stipulated time.

## Air show to impact operation of flights

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The air show to celebrate the Air Force Day will impact the operation of flights from different cities to Prayagraj between October 3 and October 8. The mega air show will be organised on October 8 and is likely to be attended by President Draupadi Murmu. Authorities have already cancelled flights from Indore, Raipur, Lucknow and

Dehradun. Besides 76 other flights will be cancelled between the given dates. Although the main event is on October 8, flight operations at Prayagraj airport will remain affected from October 2 itself. On October 6 there will be a full dress rehearsal of the event. The Indigo has released information about the cancellation of 76 flights during this period. Apart from this, timings of flights operated by Alliance Air have been changed and will

be delayed by one hour. At present flights to Bhubaneswar, Delhi and Mumbai are allowed from October 2 to October 8. Although this may also change later but Prayagraj-Dehradun, Prayagraj-Indore, Prayagraj-Raipur, Prayagraj-Lucknow will remain cancelled for seven consecutive days.

Likewise, Prayagraj-Bengaluru service will also remain cancelled on October 3, 5 and 8 and will operate only on October 2, 4, 6 and 7. The

Prayagraj-Bhopal flight will also remain cancelled on October 3, 5 and 7 and will operate on the rest of the intervening days.

On the 91st foundation day of India Air Force (IAF) an air show is being organised by the IAF at Sangam. While a number of flights operating from Prayagraj Airport are being cancelled, a radius of three kilometres around Bamrauli Air Station has been declared as 'no flying zone'.

## BLW employees pledge for clean food, water

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A campaign was run in Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) on Wednesday with awareness and pledge of clean food, water and environment and 'no use of single waste plastic'. The employees improved the workplace by offering shramdaan. As per the guidelines of the Ministry of Railways, a cleanliness campaign was conducted in the Officers' Guest House, Officers' Rest House and Office Canteens in the series of Swachhta Pakhwada-2023 being organised from September 16 to 30. Under the cleanliness campaign, along with a thorough inspection of the catering units and food facilities available in the canteens, high quality cleaning arrangements were also tested. The food and beverages available in the canteens were inspected and necessary guidelines were given for cleanliness.

Under the public awareness programme, every canteen employee of BLW was educated about clean food, water and environment and also the availability of separate dustbins for dry and wet wastes. During the drive, the ill effects of single use plastic were explained



Employees taking a pledge for clean food, water at BLW in Varanasi on Wednesday.

and people were encouraged not to use it and to use only cotton bags. Various types of posters and messages related to cleanliness were also displayed in BLW Officers' Guest House, Officers' Rest House and office canteens.

Earlier, under the ongoing Rajbhasha Fortnight, various programmes are also being organised in BLW. In this direction, a seminar on Bhartendu Smriti Hindi Original Composition was organised at the Hall of Fame. The programme was presided over by BLW's Chief Rajbhasha Officer and Chief Mechanical Engineer (SE) Neeraj Jain. The subject

was introduced by Senior Rajbhasha Officer Dr Sanjay Kumar Singh. Public Relations Officer (PRO) Rajesh Kumar and others were also present. In the seminar, many BLW employees mesmerised the officers and employees by reciting their own poetry. Alok Kumar Singh, Vikas Pandey, Naval Kishore Gupta, Dr Sunita Tiwari, Amlesh Srivastava, Karuna Singh, Om Prakash Chanchal, Nitu Prakash Jaiswar, Bijendra Kumar, Arvind Pratap Singh and many others took part in the programme.

In the same direction, a technical seminar and Hindi

workshop was organised at BLW's Technical Training Centre (TTC). Junior translator Alok Kumar gave detailed information about the technical aspects of e-Office and Unicode.

Junior translator Dr Shashi Kant Sharma talked in detail about the use of punctuation marks in Hindi, technical words, full forms, foreign expressions as well as common mistakes in Hindi.

The programme was conducted by senior translator Amlesh Srivastava, while the vote of thanks was proposed by senior translator Vinod Kumar Srivastava.

## ‘Kanya Janmotsav’ programme held

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

District Magistrate Priyanka Niranjani while addressing the 'Kanya Janmotsav' programme organised by the Probation department at the Women's Hospital on Tuesday as the chief guest said that equal right was a must for the girls to move forward. She appealed to the parents of newborn girls for registration under Kanya Sumangla Scheme for their future. She said that the government has increased the amount of help from Rs 15,000 to Rs 25,000 which will be available to the girls from time to time. On the occasion she gave gift kits to all the 30 girls and blessed them. Congratulating the mothers for giving birth to girl child the DM said no discrimination should be done between boys and girls. Probation Officer Shakti Tripathi said the 'Kanya Sumangla Yojana' was a scheme to empower girls and threw light over the other schemes related to women welfare.

After the function the DM inspected the maternity ward and interacted with patients about the facilities which were being provided to them by the hospital. She directed the officials concerned to make avail-

able medical facilities properly and ensure the availability of other benefits too. Inspecting the premises the DM took the officials concerned to task for the filth and warned to maintain cleanliness otherwise remain prepared to face the music. She made it clear that medical waste should be disposed of as per norms. She inspected the buildings which were to be demolished for new construction, including the nursing school. During the inspection the DM was accompanied by Chief Development Officer (CDO) Srilaxmi VS, Principal Medical College Dr RB Kamal, Dr Juhi Deshpande, representative of working agencies and other officials concerned.

Meanwhile the DM while presiding over the meeting of the District Health Committee, Ayush Committee and inter-departmental Coordination Committee at the Collectorate on Tuesday directed the doctors posted at the CHCs as well as the PHCs to upload their photographs on group while doing rounds in wards. Reviewing the availability of the health facilities to patients the DM expressed her discontent over the attitude of doctors under which pregnant women

were being referred to other hospitals instead of treatment. Taking a strict view the DM directed the doctors to mention proper reason in referral cases. She sought details from the chief medical officer (CMO) about the admitted pregnant women and the figure of referred cases in comparison to admitted patients. She directed the CMO to issue show-cause notice to the incharge of Women's Hospital for mismanagement. She directed the doctors deployed at the CHCs and PHCs to do the round in the wards at midnight and upload the photograph on the group. She said no doctor was allowed to leave the place of posting without the prior permission. She made it clear that it was a wrong practice that most of the doctors were not staying at the place of posting during night time. The DM directed the CMO to prepare a list of the ASHAs according to the bad performance. On the issue of bad progress in the distribution of Ayushman cards the MOIC Rajgarh was taken to task and the DM directed the CMO to review the progress regularly and take action accordingly.

**ARRESTED:** The City Kotwali police arrested three

accused of theft and recovered three gas cylinders on Tuesday. Pushpa Devi of Gafoor Khan Ki Gali Vasliganj under City Kotwali police station had on September 23 lodged a case at the police station stating that her gas cylinder and a mobile phone had been stolen at night. After registering the case SHO Bal Mukund Mishra handed over the investigation to sub-inspector (S-I) Ajay Kumar OJA. During investigation the IO interrogated a suspect who was identified as Sunil Lodhi of Oliyarg Ghat under City Kotwali police station who said he used to steal household goods with Sonu of Takiya Danu Shah under City Kotwali police station. On identification of Sunil the police nabbed Sonu but nothing could be recovered from his house. The police recovered a gas cylinder from Sunil's house. The two accused said they used to sell the cylinder to Suresh Nishad of Machhali Ka Pul under City Kotwali police station who was working at a gas agency. On information provided by the accused the police raided the house of Suresh Nishad and received two gas cylinders. After completing the legal formalities the police sent the trio to jail.



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**PAPER WITH PASSION**

# Taking a stand

## S Jaishankar gives a befitting reply to the Canadian tirade at a world forum meeting

Repeated verbal volleys by Canada Prime Minister Justin Trudeau without putting forth any tangible proof on the table have finally forced India to indulge in some hard, plainspeak. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar took diplomacy to another nuanced level when he forcefully articulated his reply to Trudeau's allegation that India was behind the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a pro-Khalistan Canadian citizen of Indian descent. Already making a name for himself in some straight talk, Jaishankar's measured statement charged Trudeau's Government with harbouring extremists in Canada and not taking any action against them. Speaking at a Council on Foreign Relations event in New York, the Minister said: "Canada has seen a lot of organised crime relating to secessionist forces, organised crime and violent extremism." However, Jaishankar declined to reveal if Canada had handed over any intelligence linking Indian officials to Nijjar's death in a firing incident. After the killing and Trudeau's statement in Canadian



Parliament about India's involvement, their bilateral relations are at an all-time low. The Canadian Government, in a kneejerk reaction, identified and expelled an Indian diplomat. Without giving any name, India also sent back a Canadian diplomat. But then Jaishankar said in unequivocal terms that Indian diplomats in Canada were being threatened. Obviously, it is a matter of grave concern for India and political expediency should be the criterion to deal with such situations. "Our concern is that the Trudeau Government has been very permissive because of political reasons. So we have a situation where our diplomats are threatened," he said in New York.

Jaishankar has employed a multipronged approach to deal with the crisis in which India has to come clean on the alleged extrajudicial killing. He made it known that India does not have such a policy and, two, if Canada has any intel, it should be shared with Indian authorities. He has also tried to rope in the United Nations, talking about India's position at length and asking the world body to be more broad-based so the countries could effectively use it to air their grievances. He also warned nations (read Canada) that "political convenience" must not determine responses to terror or violence. "Respect for territorial integrity and non-interference in internal affairs cannot be exercised in cherry-picking," Jaishankar told the UNGA. "When reality departs from the rhetoric, we must have the courage to call it out.... This is very much the sentiment of the Global South," he added. Indeed, Jaishankar is the best person to plead India's case. It is time to do some plain talking with Canada, which has harboured anti-India elements for long and ignored all Indian requests to act against them. Nijjar's case, though unfortunate, presents an opportunity to air India's concerns about the anti-India campaigns being carried out in Europe and America by rogue elements while the Governments there look the other way on the pretext of supporting human rights and freedom.

# PIC TALK



Tourists enjoy a shikara ride in Srinagar

All countries, including moral democracies, have spy agencies and their infrastructure embedded in officialdom. These are vital towards ensuring the safety, security and mitigation of increasingly asymmetric threats. India has some like the Research Analysis Wing (RAW), and Canada, its Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), and there is nothing abnormal or extraordinary about the same. Their mandate entails the collection, analysis, and timely warning with data to support the larger national security outlook, and therefore the means to achieve the same could be both, overt and covert. Part of the mandate also includes counterintelligence (defence against spy agencies from other countries, including 'friendly' countries), counterterrorism and conducting operations, across seas. It is par for the course and there are certain unsaid and inviolable 'redlines' and tolerances afforded on the same, especially amongst 'friendly' countries.

Beyond the one-upmanship and naivety postured by Ottawa, it is the unprecedented compromise of the established (though unsaid) norms of reciprocal secrecy between 'friendly' nations that is simply unwarranted. Under this accepted and respected norm between two 'friendly' nations, certain officials of various security backgrounds knowingly operate in the official Embassies/Consulates, as part of the overall diplomatic mission. While there could be topical issues of bilateral disagreement, but never is the lid on such specialist security personnel, never blown. It is the nature of the domain that mutual confidentiality is always maintained as one inadvertent leak on the identity of the personnel is professional invalidation, forever. While this reciprocal accommodation may not be tolerated between traditionally 'enemy' countries e.g., Pakistan and India, it is certainly to be expected between Canada and India, whose strategic interests ought to (and did) converge, naturally. In one stroke of misplaced bravado, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau undid the

sacred equation and named Pavan Kumar Rai, as the local station chief of the Research Analysis Wing (RAW). This practically ends the said official's possible career in missions abroad, effectively. The desperation to pander to domestic politics got the better of a struggling (in opinion polls) Trudeau as he partook in pretended outrage, without proof. A miffed Delhi was livid and a reciprocal action of expelling Olivier Sylvestre, the Canadian intelligence agency's station chief in Delhi, followed. All gloves are off, and Delhi was forced into a tit-for-tat with Delhi insisting, "The decision reflects Government of India's growing concern at the interference of Canadian diplomats in our internal matters and their involvement in anti-India activities". That Delhi did not think that the said diplomat was interfering in 'our internal matters' till the time the Canadians unthinkingly escalated the war of words, suggests the breakdown of a traditional arrangement between the two countries.

It is particularly peculiar that Trudeau felt compelled to take the recklessly revelatory step of naming the official, given the relatively seamless Indo-Canadian relationship, and more importantly, the

wounded history of the bombing of Air India Flight 182, in June 1985. A public inquiry conducted by the retired judge of the Canadian Supreme Court, John Major, had held Ottawa's security infrastructure lacking the requisite urgency about a threat perception, that it did not purportedly understand. Canada's security apparatus had bungled the case of the principal terror accused, Talwinder Singh Parmar.

Even now, the fringe elements in Canada had not only upped the ante of civil protests but had gone as far as releasing photos of Indian Embassy staffers, in a 'wanted' style optic that had compromised on safety of the Indian Embassy staffers. This should have been reason enough for Trudeau to understand the Indian concern, as opposed to indulging in grandstanding, as he chose. The pressures and backdrop of a faltering election re-bid was playing on Trudeau's mind when he took the hastily bizarre step.

Irrespective of the truth behind Trudeau's accusations of India in the killing of a Canadian citizen – the double standards of Canadian morality when it came to celebrating the neutralising of the likes of Osama Bin Laden or even Ayman al-Zawahiri, is brazen. Trudeau had tweeted follow-

ing the killing of Ayman al-Zawahiri in Kabul by a US drone, "The death of Ayman al-Zawahiri is a step toward a safer world. Canada will keep working with our global partners to counter terrorist threats, promote peace and security, and keep people here at home and around the world safe." Trudeau had not fully comprehended the concept of respecting sovereignty, as what was seemingly good for the goose was not good for the gander.

The inconsistency of stand and moralising is glaring, especially since Trudeau had the necessary heft to make direct calls with the powers-that-be in Delhi to manage the situation, instead of divulging the unnecessary, that too, without proof. While Delhi's diplomacy has been increasingly driven by its own electoral and partisan agenda for some time, it too got a taste of the same from the Canadian side. It is now beyond the vanilla issue of 'involvement', as it now entails violating and derailing the hitherto norms of 'normalcy'. This time, Trudeau started the unnecessary and avoidable theatrics.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)

IN ONE STROKE  
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LOCAL STATION  
CHIEF OF  
RESEARCH  
ANALYSIS WING  
(RAW)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## STRAIN IN NDA-ADMK RELATIONSHIP

Sir — I trust this letter finds you well. I am writing to discuss the evolving dynamics within the NDA-ADMK relationship, which appears to be undergoing a significant transformation, marking the end of what some may call a "honeymoon" period.

Historically, the ADMK has enjoyed a favourable relationship with the BJP, benefiting from the synergy between the two parties. This camaraderie was particularly pronounced during the tenure of Jayalalithaa, where the partnership flourished. However, in recent times, the relationship has faced strains, exacerbated by the change in leadership within the BJP, with Annamalai taking the helm.

Over the past year, the BJP has been engaged in a campaign that the ADMK perceives as "deliberate, planned, and motivated defamation" of key party figures like CN Annadurai and Jayalalitha, along with criticism of party policies. These actions have not been well-received and have added to the friction between the two parties.

With the 2024 general elections on the horizon, both parties are reassessing their strategies and alliances. While the current state of affairs may seem like an upset, there is a possibility of a post-poll alliance between the two parties after the election results are revealed. Various tactics, including potential name changes, are being considered to ensure that both parties secure a larger vote share and make significant strides in Tamil Nadu politics, with Annamalai potentially bolstering the BJP's standing.

A Jayanthi Subramaniam | *Chennai*

## NIPAH VIRUS ALERT

Sir — The resurgence of the Nipah virus in Kerala is a cause of concern. This development demands swift and proactive measures from both the government and the public to prevent a potential crisis. The Nipah virus has resurfaced, and if not contained promptly, it could pose significant challenges for both the government and the

**Jahangir Ali** | *Mumbai*

# Empowering women through concerted effort

Women in Bundelkhand are being liberated; they are not only becoming self-reliant but also getting freedom from the drudgery of fetching water

RAJESH KUMAR **SINGH**

The Jal Jeevan Mission Scheme of the Uttar Pradesh Government, whose objective is to provide clean drinking water by tap to every rural family is changing lives.

The Har Ghar Jal Yojana of the Government of India was implemented on priority by the Yogi government in those districts of the state where the problem of water was a cause of concern for many years. Under Har Ghar Jal Yojana, 55 litres of water is to be supplied to every villager per day. Bundelkhand women have gotten a big relief due to pure drinking water reaching their homes. Especially in Bundelkhand and Vindhya, women had to fetch water from miles away, but since the launch of the Jal Jeevan Mission scheme, they are now devoting time to their children's education along

with household chores. They are becoming self-reliant by setting up their employment. There was a time when there were thousands of such villages in Mahoba, Lalitpur, Hamirpur, Jalaun, Chitrakoot, Banda, and Jhansi of Bundelkhand where people did not marry their daughters due to the water crisis. Anurag Srivastava, Principal Secretary, Uttar Pradesh Government, believes that the Jal Jeevan Mission is not only ensuring the supply of clean drinking water from

taps in rural areas but is also providing employment to promising and needy people. In such a situation, 13 youths are being given training for this in a gram panchayat. For their skill development, 1,16,366 youth are being given training in plumbing, 1,16,366 electricians, 1,16,366 motor mechanics, 1,16,366 fitters, 1,74,549 masons, 1,16,366 pump operators across UP. In the direction of making rural women self-reliant, along with making rural women self-reliant in UP, 5 women from every village are being given training in water testing (water test kit) for clean drinking water. In

such a situation, women are testing water in the village with field test kits. And making the local administration aware.

In such a situation, till now more than 4,87,955 women have been given training in water testing. And in every village, women are doing 11 types of tests for the purity of water. Due to this, the quality of water from taps, wells, hand pumps and tube wells is also being tested.

Jal Jeevan Mission has changed the picture of Bundelkhand and Vindhya region which has been suffering from every drop of water for years. Namami Gange and Rural Water Supply Department's Har Ghar Nal Se Jal Yojana has become a new story of Bundelkhand and Vindhya region. Jal Jeevan Mission's Har Ghar Jal Yojana has saved large areas of the state from the major drinking water crisis. The supply of drinking water from the tap to every home in thousands of villages is living proof of this.

*(The writer is a senior journalist; views are personal)*

Whereas in ancient times, the Chandelas, Bundelas, Gond kings and Marathas along with the British had constructed more than 4,000 ponds in total in this water-scarce Bundelkhand region. Most of the ponds have dried up. However, the remaining water sources are proving to be a boon for this area today.



FIRST COLUMN

HOW TO GET HELP FROM GOD?

To begin with, accept the ‘Karmaphala’ principal’ — “what we sow we reap”




AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

We have to make suitable efforts to do that. God is unlike our parents, who are obliged to help, especially when we are quite young. In the case of God, we have to deserve His help. If it wasn't so, God would be obliged to help everyone. Even parents stop helping as children become self-supporting, except to guide, as required. Therefore, we have to get rid of this false impression that God will help no matter what. Yes, He will if we become deserving. In this article, I will detail some thirty ways we can successfully do that, and which are mostly simple.

The first one has to be following dharma because it is most dear to God. God even incarnates to re-establish dharma. (The Bhagavad-Geeta 4.7) Dharma is the bedrock upon which the creation is based. Don't we know what social and other norms are? Then, we must not cross their 'Maryada' (limits). The second one is to be dutiful because this is the only right given to us. (2.47) Goodness must follow in our behaviour. We must be headed towards purity, as practised by yogis. (5.11) We should try to remember God because He is everything. (7.19) This will lead to 'dhyana' – the process of meditation.

Now I take up processes involving others. The first one has to be charity. All of us have something to spare, whether material objects or personal time. Human birth demands that we become useful to others. How else can the creation go on? We must help/serve others and others will do likewise.

The next group of acts are when we directly address God. The first one has to be praying, which comes to us naturally, whenever we are in trouble; even children pray when fearful. We should express our thanks if God responds. Shouldn't we be highly obliged? If God still does not respond, it is time to seek forgiveness and begin repenting for sins done in the past. Shouldn't we wonder about God's non-response and what we must do to deserve His help? Gradually, we must begin giving our minds and intelligence to God. What does this mean? Simply stated, God must be brought into our psyche; we must begin to think about God.



By now we would have become humble enough to do 'namaskar' to God giving up our highly bloated ego; visit a nearby temple to have 'darshan' of God. These places are generally highly charged with spiritual energy, which will help us to become God-conscious. We can begin worshipping God in our homes. We can begin by choosing a photo of God in whatever form attracts us the most; God has multiple forms. Similarly, we can start chanting God's name or mantra, whatever appeals to us. All these will lead to our becoming inquisitive about God's instructions, as detailed in bona fide scriptures like the Geeta. We can try to do whatever God wishes us to do (16.24), which will ensure God's pleasure. By now, we would have become highly deserving of God's help, because we in effect would have taken God's shelter.

This takes us to another level. God takes charge of our lives; He begins to use us as His 'nimitta' (instrument). Our lives will begin to become greatly fulfilling. God will get everything done and we will get credit. We will become very useful and highly satisfied. 'Tapasya' will begin to come naturally, which will qualify us for more gains, because in the spiritual domain also, the 'karmaphala principle' works, the only difference being: in this case our acts are spiritual. The word 'yogi' will no longer be a distant concept, we will become one. Sky is the limit then, as Sanjaya of the Mahabharata fame has described, "Where there is the yogeshwar Shri Krishna and where there is the archer Arjuna (in our case us), there will be 'saubhagya' (opulence), victory, wealth and definite principles (morality)".

(The writer is an educator, views are personal)

# Punjab is reeling under socio-economic distress



AS MITTAL

Without sustainable economic growth, local employment generation, and self-reliance, Punjab's well-being will continue to be a challenge



It's worrisome that Punjab only receives 45 paise for every rupee it contributes to the Centre's tax kitty. This is especially concerning when comparing it to states like UP and Bihar, which receive Rs 1.80 and Rs 1.20, respectively. This revenue-sharing disparity is a significant contributor to the socio-economic distress experienced by Punjab. As a landlocked border state, it's even more crucial for Punjab to overcome this fiscal distress since India's and Pakistan's bilateral trade also halted through the Wagah-Attari route majorly affected Punjab's economy only. The said cost-effective cross-border route can directly short-connect to Europe, a big potential to catalyse the Punjab economy as strong as the economy of Southern-Western States, because of near to seaports.

Being far away from the seaports is one of the major disadvantages that Punjab is struggling with, and has a crippling impact on industrial growth. Secondly, adjoining the sensitive Pakistan border not only halted the trade but Pakistan led to illegal arms supply and drug terror scuffed the social fabric and law and order of Punjab. Keeping these two major geographical disadvantages centre stage till any central government has not compensated Punjab as it faces odd challenges in comparison to other states. Not even a fair share of tax kitty given, the Rural Development Fund(RDF) and Mandi Fee of Rs 5337 crore have not been released for long. Thus, how long does a fiscally distressed state government alone take forward the most development and welfare-oriented expenditure?

When a state's economy weakens, its people and progress suffer together. This is evident in the current crisis in India-Canada relations, as Punjab's economic distress has led to a migration of its human resources to Canada. Unfortunately, this migration has created a breeding ground for radicals and anti-Indian khalistan extremist activities on Canadian soil, a globalised challenge that has gone unaddressed. The Canadian connection to khalistani is longstanding. Since the mid-80s, there has been a significant exodus of Punjabi youth to Canada, where they often



WHEN A STATE'S ECONOMY WEAKENS, ITS PEOPLE SUFFER. PUNJAB'S ECONOMIC DISTRESS HAS LED TO A MIGRATION OF ITS HUMAN RESOURCES TO CANADA

(The author is vice-chairman of Sonalika group, vice-chairman of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board, and chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council. Views expressed are personal)

do odd jobs to sustain themselves. Unfortunately, some of these young people become prey to anti-India extremists.

It is not good to allow a lop-sided economic development of a sensitive state like Punjab. It has its serious repercussions. If we fail to ensure holistic development, then we will be accused of inefficiencies in handling human resources. Unemployment is a multi-faceted problem exacerbating the distressed places associated with poorer mental health, crime and drug abuse. There is enough evidence of drug abuse and distress in the law-and-order situation, that an issue of brimming, can be ascribed directly to unemployment.

Punjab, which used to be a prosperous and progressive state even during its toughest time, is currently facing a significant problem of uncontrolled unemployment due to distressed farming and an imbalanced industrial base. This has resulted in Punjab's GDP growth rate dropping to 6%, which is lower than the national growth rate of 7.24% in 2022-23. Punjab is currently ranked at the 19th position, whereas it ranked first in GDP among the states in 1981 and fourth in 2001. Interestingly, UP and Bihar, which were once part of the economically sick states known as 'BIMARU' (Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh), are now fast-growing economies. UP achieved an impressive growth rate of 16.8%, with a GDP of Rs 20.48 lakh crore in 2022-23, while Bihar's growth rate was 10.98% with a GDP of Rs 7,45,310 crore.

It is crucial to acknowledge that Punjab has immense potential that should not be overlooked when compared to the Southern and Western states. Presently, Punjab's contribution to the country's tax kitty stands at approximately 3%, and it only receives 1.8% of

the divisible pool of taxes allocated by the Fifteenth Finance Commission. In contrast, the Western and Southern states contribute 67% to the central exchequer but only receive a meagre 3-4%. While their argument may appear valid, it is essential to consider that the Southern and Western states account for 53% of India's total factories and have the advantage of being closer to seaports, which can drive economic growth and result in more contributions to the central exchequer. Punjab's sluggish growth may dampen overall economic sentiments, but it still holds enormous potential for growth and contribution to the country's economy.

Undoubtedly, Punjab has the potential to contribute 10-15% as it possesses a strong capable and committed entrepreneurial spirit to overcome this economic distress. This spirit has been evident in the past when it overcame the challenges of the partition of India in 1947 and 13 years of militancy in the mid-80s to mid-90s. Within a few years of these events, Punjab was able to rehabilitate its economy and become the richest state in India in the 80s. Today, Punjab seeks a fair interface without any political interference to compete on a level playing field and strengthen its economy, ultimately reducing unemployment.

It is important to consider Punjab's significant contribution to national food security. However, the large areas and population figures of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar provide them with additional leverage from the central tax pool. It is concerning that Punjab only received 1.8% of the Rs 8,16,649 crore distributed by the centre to the states during 2022-23. In contrast, Uttar Pradesh received the highest share at 18% (Rs 1,46,525 crore) and Bihar received the second-highest share

at 10%. This highlights why Punjab and other states argue that they are not receiving a fair share of funds, despite contributing more to the exchequer.

During the fiscal year 2022-23, Punjab contributed a sum of Rs 32,800 crore to the central taxes fund, which included CGST, income tax, corporation tax, wealth tax, union excise duty, customs, and service tax. However, in return, the state only received Rs 14,756 crore. This has led to Punjab raising the issue with the Fifteenth Finance Commission, as it believes it deserves a fair share of central tax. Despite its efforts, Punjab has been unable to secure an amendment to the Finance Act.

Constitutionally, the purpose of the finance commission is to create some kind of 'equalization' among advantaged and disadvantaged states. From the point of view of equalization, the adoption of population figures as one of the criteria of devolution needs to be justified. Therefore, the constitution provides for a fair share of union revenue to be devolved to the states to address this issue.

**The Way Forward:**


In a federal structure, the central government needs to prioritise the improvement of economic conditions and livelihood prospects for the people of Punjab, which are facing unique challenges in comparison to other states.

It is crucial to take a comprehensive approach that ensures employment opportunities and social respect regardless of demographic and political differences. Without sustainable economic growth, local employment generation, and self-reliance, Punjab's well-being will continue to be a challenge, which is indispensable for the overall well-being of our nation.

# Goat-rearing can be an excellent source of livelihood in rural Bihar

To provide livelihood, the government should provide adequate training and information to landless, marginal farmers about the goat farming schemes

Anita Devi, a 40-year-old resident of Hussainpur village, located about 65 kilometres from the Muzaffarpur district in Bihar, lost her husband two years ago. Left with no means to support her family of seven, including four daughters and two sons, she started goat farming to earn a livelihood. She faced criticism when she began rearing goats as a woman farmer. However, Anita resisted because her motivation to provide for her family kept her going. She had started with just two goats. Today, she has eight adult goats and 20 young ones. Goat rearing enabled her to protect her family and improve her financial status.



SIMRAN KUMARI

(The writers is a student from rural Bihar; views expressed are personal)

Alongside manual labour, agriculture-based employment like cattle, poultry, ducks, and goat farming is a crucial source of income, especially for economically disadvantaged individuals like landless, small-scale farmers, agricultural labourers, and socially oppressed individuals. According to the latest 2019 Livestock census, India has a population of 150 million goats, the second largest in the world. In around half a million remote villages, 70 million farmers are involved in the goat farming business. The primary income from Goat farming comes from milk, which has a production of about 42000 Kgs and meat production, which stands at 8500 Kgs.

Like Anita Devi, Goat farming is an excellent means of self-employment for many rural women. Around rural areas in Muzaffarpur, many women earn their livelihoods through goat farming, becoming breadwinners for their families. 35-year-old Champa Devi, resident of the same village as Anita, also supports her three daughters and two sons by raising goats.

In other instances, older women in the village claim that their sons and daughters-in-law have stopped providing for them in their old age. These women have, therefore, started rearing 2-4 goats to earn a living. These women leave for the fields in the morning to



graze their goats and only return in the evening. Goat farming is a hard job, especially during the monsoons. It can be a challenge to find adequate fodder for the goats. The farmers rely on bananas, bamboo, and Banyan leaves to keep the cattle alive. People invest their capital into it. Even

after that, we see an increasing number of women who raise goats in the village. It has become a source of livelihood for many families.

Various non-governmental and government organisations run programs to strengthen the village economy through agriculture-based employment like cattle, poultry, ducks, and goat farming. The Bihar government provides subsidies up to 60% for promoting goat farming. Under the Integrated Goat and Sheep Scheme, there is a provision for subsidising ten goats plus one buck, and 40 goats and two bucks. The government also provides financial aid to disadvantaged communities like Scheduled Caste/Schedule Tribe and

Other Backward Classes. These continuously disadvantaged groups get up to 60% subsidy, while the rest get 50%.

In addition, the capital investment required for raising 20 goats with one buck is about two lakhs, and farmers can take a loan from the bank for this purpose. This process of approving loans goes through the Department of Animal Husbandry in consultation with the bank. After that, subsidies get deposited into the beneficiaries' bank accounts in two instalments. However, because of a lack of awareness, many rural families do not know these schemes, leading women farmers like Anita and Champa to take loans with

high interest rates to start goat farming. On top of that, due to their lack of training, It is difficult for farmers to acquire high-quality breeds.

To promote livelihoods, the government should provide adequate training and information to landless, marginal farmers, and labourers about the goat farming schemes. Details about these schemes should be available in the Panchayat office or Gram Sabha. Ward members should be responsible for disseminating information about these programs to goat farmers. Only then women in vulnerable situations will be able to continue goat farming as a career and give themselves and their families a better future.



# BJP may field Central Ministers in four other States also

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Given the fact that close contests are expected in the upcoming Assembly polls, the BJP may strategically soon announce candidates for Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Telangana with “surprise” inclusions in line with Madhya Pradesh Assembly list.

The BJP’s move to field three Union Ministers and several senior Members of Parliament in the upcoming Madhya Pradesh Assembly elections may be repeated in the four other State Assembly polls, including Rajasthan, where the BJP hopes to cash in on “anti-incumbency” against the Ashok Gehlot-led

Congress.

Rajasthan voters traditionally not repeating a government twice has also made BJP optimistic of winning the election as it is also working hard to keep its house in order in the desert state.

The factional division in the Rajasthan unit and former two-time Chief Minister Vijaya Raje’s tug of war with Union water minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat are expected to be “neutralised” by fielding ‘heavy weight’ Central ministers and MPs who would impact on the assembly segments other than their own, sources said.

The entry of senior leaders in the assembly poll would also be done to positively tilt caste

equations - Rajputs, jats, SC, STs - in the state, according to sources.

Working on the MP model, the party may include Central Minister and Jodhpur MP Shekhawat, Minister of state for law, Arjun Ram Meghwal, Rajsamand MP Diya Kumari, and Jaipur (Rural) MP Rajyavardhan Rathore.

Despite Raje wanting to be projected as the Chief Ministerial candidate, the Central leadership has made it amply clear that as in the case of Madhya Pradesh, the elections in the state will be contested under a “collective leadership” with Prime Minister Narendra Modi being the main engine of the poll cam-



paign, they said.

With the likely induction of senior leaders in the assembly fray, there could be more claimants to the CM post in Rajasthan as may be the case in Madhya Pradesh also where three top Central ministers have been fielded as assembly

candidates.

BJP had recently appointed Arjun Meghwal, a backward class leader, the convener of BJP’s Election Manifesto committee, for Rajasthan.

In Madhya Pradesh - Union Minister for agriculture, Narendra Singh Tomar, will be

contesting from Dimani; Pralhad Patel, minister of state for food processing from Narsinghpur; and minister for state for rural development, Faggan Singh Kulaste who has been given a ticket from Niwas, a seat reserved for STs.

All three are now ‘competitors’ to the incumbent four-time CM Shivraj Singh Chauhan. Tomar and Kulaste have been fielded from the assembly seats won previously by the Congress.

In Telangana also, MPs, including Union Minister and State Chief GK Reddy, are expected to enter the electoral fray where BJP is seeking to be the main opposition party vis-à-vis the current Chief Minister

KC Rao’s ‘Bharat Rashtira Samithi, even though the Congress has now emerged as the main challenger to the ruling dispensation..

Union Minister and BJP’s Rajasthan election in-charge Pralhad Joshi said his party would soon announce the list of candidates for Rajasthan but did not confirm that it may include bigwigs from the Centre.

He said that the BJP has given tickets in Madhya Pradesh to its leaders in that state but the Congress Party ‘does not have a leader.’ “This is the problem of the Congress party,” he said.

“We are going to win with a huge majority in Madhya

Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Rahul Gandhi himself has admitted that they are losing in Rajasthan,” the BJP leader said.

On Sunday, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi had said that as of now the Congress is certainly winning Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, probably winning Telangana, and there is a ‘very close’ contest in Rajasthan that the party believes it will be able to win.

Prime Minister Modi on Monday visited Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan which would go to the polls along with Chhattisgarh, Telangana and Mizoram, before December - and blamed the Congress for making them lag-gard states.

## INDIA Bloc in tatters in Bengal

Cong playing second fiddle to BJP: TMC

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Indian National Democratic Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) looks to be in tatters from the beginning in Bengal not only with the Left Front categorically declaring its no-truck formula with the Trinamool Congress but also the latter fighting an ongoing war of words with the primary INDIA constituent Congress accusing the tri-colour party’s Bengal unit of playing second fiddle to the BJP.

A day after Chowdhury accused Mamata Banerjee of making fun trips to Spain and splurging taxpayers’ money for her personal reasons at a time when Dengue was wreaking havoc in Bengal, TMC leader

and Minister Dr Shashi Panja hit back saying, “by making such statements Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury is only weakening the INDIA alliance ... I don’t know whether he is hitting out at the Alliance itself.”

Chowdhury had earlier questioned how Banerjee paid her hotel bills in Madrid. “We have heard that the Chief Minister does not take her salary. She earns her sustenance from the sale of her books and from her paintings. If that is so then how she could afford to stay at a hotel in Madrid that costs Rs 3 lakhs per day” the Congress MP from Behrampur asked.

The counterattack from Panja came hours after TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh attacked Chowdhury saying, “he is sounding like a BJP man ... he seems to have a plan to weaken the INDIA alliance ... by his statement it is clear that he playing the B Team of



the BJP in Bengal ... his party leadership should take note of this.”

Ghosh said that the Congress high command “should reign in Chowdhury if they really want the Alliance to work well.”

Ghosh’s hard-hitting statement notwithstanding Chowdhury attacked the Chief Minister once again saying, the “dengue situation in Bengal is manmade ... rather I will call it Mamata made ... rather we can also call it government-sponsored dengue.”

While the TMC and the Pradesh Congress traded fire,

the second most visible Congress leader in the State Kaustav Bagchi on Wednesday sprung a second surprise by walking alongside senior BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari in a protest rally of recruitment scam victims.

While the Pradesh Congress leadership remained tightlipped on Bagchi who has from the very beginning protested against the Congress’ joining hands with Mamata Banerjee “who has literally decimated the Congress in Bengal by engineering defections and whose goons daily attack, loot and rape our grass-roots workers” the Congress odd ball said he was walking for a cause and not with any person.

“I have walked in a rally which has no flags ... I have no problem with Suwendu Adhikari — despite him being a BJP leader and promoting different ideology — insofar as he

is fighting for a cause that relates to the people,” Bagchi a lawyer-turned-politician said provoking the TMC once again to draw the attention of the national leadership.

“We will expect the Congress leadership to take note of these issues in Bengal if they really are serious about the INDIA alliance,” Ghosh said even as NCP leadership too asked the two parties to refrain from open war of words like this.

Meanwhile, TMC sources said that Mamata Banerjee would embark on a tour of other States beginning with Assam where she would campaign for the INDIA alliance.

According to sources TMC Assam leader Ripun Bora had a meeting with party general secretary Abhishek Banerjee where it was decided that the Bengal Chief Minister would embark on a tour of Assam in the month of November.

## SC tags plea seeking FIR against Udhayanidhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday tagged a plea, which has sought registration of an FIR against Tamil Nadu Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin over his “eradicate Sanatan Dharma” remark, with another similar pending petition. A bench of justices Aniruddha Bose and Bela M Trivedi was hearing a plea seeking direction for registration of an First Information Report (FIR) against Udhayanidhi Stalin and DMK leader A Raja for their comments on Sanatan Dharma.

On September 22, the top court had agreed to hear a separate plea filed by Chennai-based lawyer B Jagannath seeking registration of an FIR against Udhayanidhi Stalin and



others over his “eradicate Sanatan Dharma” remark, which the petitioner likened to hate speech. Udhayanidhi Stalin, who is also an actor, is the son of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and ruling DMK chief M K Stalin.

The plea filed by Delhi-based advocate Vineet Jindal came up for hearing before the bench on Wednesday. “We will not issue notice but we will tag it,” the bench told the counsel

appearing for the petitioner. The lawyer appearing for Tamil Nadu argued that the plea was “public interest litigation in the nature of publicity interest litigation”.

He said the top court had last week issued notice on the other petition having similar prayer and there was no need to have another such plea. “Instead of taking notice, we will take it up on that day,” the bench said, adding, “The question of entertaining itself, we will take it up that day”. Terming it an “unfortunate scenario”, the state’s counsel said in this matter, several writ petitions have been filed in different high courts and it becomes difficult for the State. “You have the appropriate remedy under the Constitution,” the bench observed, adding, “We are only tagging it”.

## Fresh SC bench to hear Naidu’s plea for quashing FIR in ₹371-crore scam

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A new bench of the Supreme Court will hear on October 3 former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu’s petition for quashing the FIR against him in the alleged ₹371 crore scam in the State’s Skill Development Corporation as Justice SVN Bhatti on Wednesday recused himself from hearing it.

Senior advocate Siddharth Luthra, appearing for the TDP leader, rushed to a bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud after Justice Bhatti, who was sitting with Justice Sanjiv Khanna, recused himself from hearing his petition.

“We will list it before an appropriate bench on Tuesday,” said the bench, which also comprised justices JB Pardiwala



and Manoj Misra. The apex court also made it clear that it cannot restrain the trial judge from dealing with the prosecution’s plea seeking further police custody of the TDP leader.

Naidu was arrested on September 9 for allegedly misappropriating funds from the Skill Development Corporation when he was the Chief Minister in 2015, causing a purported loss of Rs 371 crore to the State exchequer. His judicial remand has been extended by the trial court till October 5.

## India, US hold 2+2 dialogue to strengthen logistics cooperation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/WASHINGTON

Given the robust ties between the two countries with focus on defence and security, officials of India and US held discussions on opportunities to further strengthen interoperability and logistics cooperation during the India-US 2+2 Intersessional Dialogue.

Underscoring the transformative momentum in the India-US relationship, the officials late Tuesday in Washington also discussed combined maritime engagements in the Indian Ocean Region, as well as expanded cooperation in the space and cyber domains, the Pentagon said.

The Indian delegation was led by Additional Secretary



Vani Rao of the Ministry of External Affairs and Joint Secretary Vishwesh Negi of the Ministry of Defence, it said. The American side was led by Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs Ely Ratner and Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Donald Lu. “The officials also discussed regional security developments and

strategic priorities across the Indo-Pacific region,” a statement said.

The 2+2 Intersessional Dialogue advanced a wide range of ambitious initiatives across the breadth of the US-India partnership, including defence and security, emerging technologies, people-to-people ties, clean energy, and supply chain resilience, the Pentagon said.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A three-day Indo-Pacific Armies Chiefs Conference (IPACC) organised by the Indian Army with the US Army as the co-host, culminated here on Wednesday. The event witnessed participation from 30 countries and provided an opportunity for the delegates to exchange ideas and views on security and other contemporary issues of mutual interest, with core efforts directed to promote ‘Peace and Stability’ in the Indo-Pacific region.

The event commenced with a call-on by General Randy George, the Chief of Staff (COS) of the US Army to General Manoj Pande, Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) Indian Army on September 25. Both Chiefs discussed



issues of mutual interest and shared views on contemporary issues.

The next day, the Chiefs and the Heads of Delegations laid wreath at the National War Memorial paying homage to our fallen heroes. This was followed by a Joint Press Brief by the COAS Indian Army and COS of the US Army.

The COAS Indian Army

remarked that the region is not only a cauldron of cultures, histories, resources and opportunities but also a theatre of complexities and challenges. The COS of the US Army highlighted the role of land power and said it not only contributes to the shared security of the region but land power is also the decisive force in dealing with crises.

## Centre directs banks to depute doorstep executives to help immobile pensioners

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With reports of several pensioners in their late nineties, immobile or bedridden and hence facing difficulty in visiting the facilities to collect their pensions, the Centre has woken to the cause and directed the pension disbursing banks to depute doorstep executives to such pensioners submit their life certificates.

All pensioners have to give a life certificate (proof that they are alive) annually to continue receiving pension. There are about 69.76 lakh central government pensioners.

An order issued by the Department of Pension and Pensioners’ Welfare (DoPPW) also asked all banks to create awareness about the convenience of obtaining the life certificate digitally by using the face authentication technology by super senior pensioners (those aged 80 and above).

In view of the digital life certificate through face authentication technology, it is now possible for every citizen to submit a digital life certificate (DLC) either from home using an Android smartphone or at the bank branch, said the order dated September 25.

“It is suggested that all



banks may utilise the various platforms for creating awareness of the convenience of obtaining a life certificate by using the face authentication technology,” it said.

Banks can facilitate the submission of life certificates by deputing doorstep banking executives, said the order. They can widely publicise the methodology for submitting DLC by pasting information posters at branches and ATMs, it added.

Banks may send SMS/emails/WhatsApp messages to the pensioner with a link to the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for face authentication to empower the super senior pensioner to submit their life certificate through face authentication technology using their Android phone, the order said.

The DoPPW has also asked the banks to circulate the SOP on DLC through face authentication via email among their concerned officials to enable them to get familiar with the usage of this technology.

“Necessary instructions may be issued to all the bank branches to make suitable arrangements for submission of life certificates by the super senior pensioners/family pensioners aged 80 and above from 1st October of every year,” the order said.

The Centre had in 2019 asked banks to allow senior pensioners aged 80 and above to give their life certificates with effect from October 1 every year instead of November. The remaining pensioners below the age of 80 years have to give their life certificate in November.

## Navy to unveil updated ‘indigenisation roadmap’

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With special stress on self-reliance, the Indian Navy will unveil an updated new “indigenisation roadmap” next week with a focus on specific initiatives to achieve self-reliance in acquiring various critical technologies and platforms to boost its overall military might.

The roadmap will be released at the second edition of the annual ‘Swavlamban’ seminar to be held on October 4 and 5, Navy officials said on Wednesday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to attend the conclave.

At a media briefing, Vice Chief of the Naval Staff Vice Admiral Sanjay Jasjit Singh said the Navy resolved to develop 75 technologies at the Swavlamban seminar last year and the aim has been achieved.

“Last year, in the presence of the prime minister, the Indian Navy had committed to develop at least 75 technologies as part of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav,” he said.

The Vice Chief said the Navy has invested considerable time and efforts towards realising this commitment. “Today, I can say with confidence that the Swavlamban initiative has



gained critical mass, and is gathering continuous momentum. And, I am happy to inform you that the promises made last year have been fully met, and even surpassed in some cases,” he said. These technologies will be showcased during the upcoming Swavlamban seminar.

An updated “Indian Navy indigenisation roadmap”, a document titled ‘Swavlamban 2.0’ and new challenges for the industry are planned to be released at the seminar, said another senior official.

The Navy will showcase the new technologies that include swarm drones of various categories as well as applications of robotics and artificial intelligence at the seminar. Vice Admiral Singh said over the past year, each and every proposal received by the Navy has been examined, processed and pursued by dedicated teams of

officers to ensure that the force has an array of “trials cleared products”, which are consequently ready, or nearly-ready, for induction. “We have already obtained Acceptance of Necessity for 12 such cases, worth close to 1500 Crores, and procurement orders for products worth 200 crore amongst these have already been signed. In the coming weeks, we are looking to conclude many more such contracts,” he said.

The Navy is encouraging development of new products under the ‘Sprint’ initiative that was launched at the Naval Innovation and Indignation Organisation (NIIO) Seminar in July last year.

These products are being developed under the innovation scheme for defence excellence of the Ministry of Defence and Technology Development Acceleration Cell of Indian Navy.

## Chhattisgarh Government withdraws plea challenging ED’s action against officials

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Chhattisgarh Government on Wednesday withdrew from the Supreme Court its plea challenging on the ground of jurisdiction the Enforcement Directorate’s action against State Government officials in the money laundering case. The money laundering case lodged in 2022 stems from an FIR registered on a complaint by the Income Tax department over allegations of illegal collection of levy on coal as well as attempts to influence public servants through corrupt means in Chhattisgarh.

The ED charged a “massive scam” took place between 2019 and 2021 in coal transportation in Chhattisgarh as part of which a “cartel” of politicians, officers and others was allegedly running a parallel system of extorting illegal levy. In its plea, the Chhattisgarh Government argued that the ED, on the basis of the FIR lodged in Bengaluru, registered an Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR) in Raipur on September 29, 2022

and started an investigation against State Government officials.

Chhattisgarh standing counsel Sumeet Sodhi told a bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and SVN Bhatti on Wednesday he has instructions to withdraw the plea. The bench allowed the State Government to withdraw the petition and recorded Sodhi’s submission. The petition demanded the court to declare the ED’s action illegal, without jurisdiction and unconstitutional.

The State Government had earlier this year filed a suit challenging the constitutional validity of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) alleging that central investigating agencies are being misused to “intimidate, harass and disturb” the normal functioning of the non-BJP State Government.

The Bhupesh Baghel-led Congress government filed the original suit challenging the law under Article 131 of the Constitution which empowers a state to move the Supreme Court directly in matters of dispute with the Centre or any other State.



# Sensex rebounds from early lows

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex rebounded from early lows to settle higher by 173 points on Wednesday following buying in Reliance Industries, Larsen & Toubro and ITC and positive trends in Asian and European markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex rose by 173.22 points or 0.26 per cent to settle at 66,118.69 with 20 of its components ending in the green and 10 closing lower.

The index opened lower and fell further to a low of 65,549.96 in morning trade. However, buying in Reliance, L&T, Infosys and Maruti helped it recover losses. Later, it jumped 226.8 points or 0.34 per cent to a high of 66,172.27.

The Nifty gained 51.75 points or 0.26 per cent to end at 19,716.45. It moved between a low of 19,554 and a high of 19,730.70 in day trading.



Among the Sensex firms, Larsen & Toubro, ITC, Sun Pharma, Maruti, Reliance Industries, Axis Bank, IndusInd Bank and Hindustan Unilever were among the gainers. Titan, State Bank of India, ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank, Tata Steel and Nestle were the major laggards.

"The market inched higher in the second half, driven by positive openings in European markets. Concerns about glob-

al interest rates and elevated oil prices are being balanced by several domestic factors, such as promising economic growth prospects and the potential for strong earnings, which validate the premium valuation," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Persistent outflows of foreign funds and rising US bond yields are expected to keep the broader indices in bleak terrain,

in the near term, Nair added.

Ajit Mishra, SVP - Technical Research, Religare Broking Ltd said that markets remained volatile but ended higher due to recovery in select heavyweights.

"The impending rebound in select heavyweights like Reliance and ITC largely contributed to the recovery," Mishra said, adding that the scheduled monthly expiry of derivative contracts would keep the volatil-

ity high.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge climbed 0.76 per cent and smallcap index jumped 0.68 per cent.

Among the indices, capital goods jumped 1.14 per cent, healthcare climbed 1.13 per cent, industrials (0.97 per cent), FMCG (0.77 per cent), realty (0.70 per cent), IT (0.48 per cent) and teck (0.43 per cent).

Bankex, consumer durables and oil & gas were the laggards.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended in the green. European markets were trading mostly in positive territory. The US markets ended lower on Tuesday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.98 per cent to USD 94.88 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 693.47 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data.

# Implementation of NFSA, LPG subsidy to be evaluated

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Niti Aayog is looking to hire a technical consultant to evaluate the implementation of the National Food Security Act (NFSA) and LPG subsidy to ensure benefits are reaching eligible beneficiaries.

The government think tank's Development Monitoring and Evaluation Office (DMEO) has floated a tender to select a technical consultant for "Central Coordinating Agency for Evaluation of the National Food Security Act and LPG Subsidy".

"The government implements one the largest public food and nutritional safety nets in the world through the National Food Security Act (NFSA), enacted in 2013. "...However, despite the large public expenditure, gains in the food security and nutritional outcomes in India have been slow, with the country accounting for roughly 30 per cent of the global burden of hunger," DMEO said in the RFP (request for proposal) document.

The National Food Security Act provides a legal mandate for the distribution of foodgrains at subsidised prices, cooked meals, take-home rations, and food security allowance through a network of schemes — namely the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), and Mid-Day-Meal (MDM) scheme.



The cost of implementing the food subsidy under TPDS was Rs 4,22,618.11 crore in 2021 (Revised Estimate). The cost of implementing MDM and ICDS was Rs 12,900 crore and Rs 17,252.21 crore (Revised Estimate), respectively.

According to the DMEO report, "More than 1/3rd of children less than 5 years are stunted (35.5 per cent, NFHS-V, 2019-20), one-quarter of adolescents aged 10-14 years have low body-mass-index (BMI) for their age (24 per cent, CNNS, 2016-18), and more than half of all women aged 15-59 years and 15-19 years are anaemic (57 per cent and 59.1 per cent, NFHS-V, 2019-20)".

Elaborating on the rationale behind the evaluation of the LPG subsidy, DMEO further said that India is the third largest energy consumer in the world after China and the US.

"The current consumption of LPG in India has risen to 12.3 per cent of total petroleum products compared to 1.13 per cent of kerosene. The ongoing

schemes will potentially increase the usage of LPG further, thus, making their evaluation imperative," it added.

DMEO also said the demand for oil and gas has been burgeoning over the years with rising population, economic growth, and concomitant demand for cleaner energy.

To meet future energy demands, a market-determined price mechanism (MDPM) was introduced through price deregulation, which allowed the refineries to stipulate refinery gate prices of petroleum products that would compete with prices of imported products, it added.

DMEO pointed out that the LPG subsidy not only reflects the policy makers' cognizance of the need to augment the transition from traditional cooking fuel, such as firewood and dung cake to cleaner cooking fuels but also to provide them to a majority of the underserved population — mostly from rural areas and economically weaker sections — at subsidised rates.

# AMNS India's Hazira project to be started by 2026: Mittal

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

ArcelorMittal executive chairman Lakshmi N Mittal on Wednesday expressed confidence that AMNS India's Hazira project, which is under expansion, will be commissioned by 2026.

In October last year, ArcelorMittal's arm AMNS India had stated that it will invest Rs 60,000 crore to scale up capacity of its steel plant at Hazira to 15 million tonnes (MT).

"We have full confidence that with the cooperation of the Centre and Gujarat government, we will be able to commission the project by 2026, Mittal said here while speaking at the celebrations of 20 years of 'Vibrant Gujarat' summit.

Hazira expansion project is moving at a fast pace and over 20,000 people are involved in the project construction, he said.

"It is our target to double our production capacity in the first phase and then triple...We will also make advance projects for technology," he said, adding it would help India reduce imports and become self-reliant.

The company is also committed for sustainability, he said.

He also said that because of the 'Vibrant Gujarat' summit, different states are organising investor summits and this is helping India attract foreign investments.

Today India is termed as the fastest growing economy in the world and global firms are keen to invest in the country.

He added that the successful G20 Summit has further enhanced the image of India.



The summit not only reflected India's diplomatic and organisational success, but also showed India's image as a global consensus builder.

Talking about the state, Mittal said that Gujarat is a leading industry state as it has presence of industries from varied sectors such as petrochemicals, automobile, pharma, port, textiles, electric vehicles, green hydrogen and semiconductors.

The state, he said, provides reliable infrastructure, stable policy environment, and professional administration.

In January 2022, he said the company signed an agreement with the state to invest over Rs 1 lakh crore.

Further, he said that at a time when India is attracting the eyes of the world, there is a need to focus on talented manpower and industry 4.0.

Speaking at the event, Welspun Chairman B K Goenka said that the investor summit in Gujarat has helped in increasing investments and promoting socio-economic development in the state.

The Vibrant Gujarat summit has become like WEF (World Economic Forum), where top global industry leaders participate.

He added that Kutch is going to be the capital of green hydrogen.

The next Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit is scheduled from January 10-12 next year in Gandhinagar. Takashi Suzuki, Director General, JETRO- The Japan External Trade Organisation, said that Japan contributes significantly to the 'make in India' initiative.

"We plan to invite a Japanese business delegation focusing on semiconductor electronics...In November," he said, adding, "we would like to show every new opportunity and happening in Gujarat to attract them."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi initiated the Summit during his tenure as the chief minister of the state in 2003 with the aim of making Gujarat a leader on the global map of industry and trade.



# Adani Ports to buy back another \$195 mn of bonds

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone will prepay USD 195 million of debt due in 2024 as the conglomerate helmed by Gautam Adani looks to boost investors' confidence post being targeted by a US short-seller.

In a stock exchange filing, APSEZ said it will buy back USD 195 million of bonds due in 2024 using its cash reserves. Out of the USD 520 million principal outstanding, USD 325 million will be left after the buyback, it said.

The company board "has approved tranche II of the tender offer to purchase for cash up to USD 195 million in aggregate principal amount of the outstanding 3.375 per cent senior notes due 2024 which represents 30 per cent of the principal amount of the notes," it said.

In May, the company had bought back its July 2024 bonds for cash USD 130 million in aggregate of the principal amount and stated that it would buy back 20 per cent of the principal amount of the bonds in each of the next four quarters.

In the second tranche of this, the company is now proposing to purchase up to USD 195 million of bonds. This represents 30 per cent of the principal amount of the bonds (USD 650 million). After USD 130 million buyback in May, USD 520 million remained outstanding.

The buyback tender is open till October 26, the filing said.

Adani Group has been attempting to rebuild investors' confidence since Hindenburg Research in a January 24 report accused it of accounting fraud and improper use of offshore tax havens for stock manipulation.

The group has denied all allegations. The company has engaged Barclays Bank, DBS Bank, Emirates NBD Bank PJSC, First Abu Dhabi Bank PJSC, Mizuho Securities (Singapore) Pte Ltd, MUFG Securities Asia Singapore Branch, SMBC Nikko Securities (Hong Kong) and Standard Chartered Bank to serve as deal managers for the offer. The company will pay accrued interest, in respect of any notes purchased in the tender offer.

# Rupee snaps two-day fall, recovers 6 paise against \$

PTI ■ MUMBAI

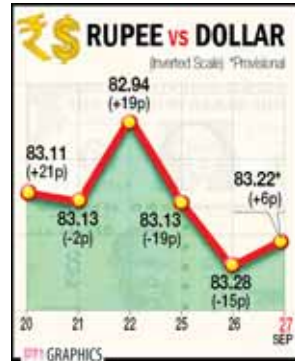
The rupee on Wednesday staged a recovery after two days of steep losses to end 6 paise higher at 83.22 (provisional) against the US dollar on positive cues from domestic equity markets.

However, selling pressure from foreign equity investors amid elevated levels of American currency and surging crude oil prices weighed on the local unit, forex traders said.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 83.23 and traded in a narrow range of 83.18 to 83.24 against the greenback. It finally settled at 83.22 (provisional), registering a gain of 6 paise from its previous close.

The rupee lost 34 paise in the past two sessions. It closed 15 paise lower at 83.28 against the dollar on Tuesday, a day after registering a decline of 19 paise.

The downward movement of the rupee was attributed to



a strengthening dollar amid a record rise in US Treasury yields. Also, the US dollar surged to a ten-month high level after a Federal Reserve policymaker hinted at a prolonged interest rate hike cycle.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose 0.05 per cent to 106.28.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, were trading 0.87 per cent higher at USD 94.78 per barrel.



# Churchill's Old War Office launched as luxury hotel by Hindujas

PTI ■ LONDON

The Old War Office (OWO) of Britain's World War II era prime minister Winston Churchill opened its doors as a brand-new luxury hotel in London with a glittering launch event, complete with surprise musical performances by musicians Lord Andrew Lloyd Webber and Andrea Bocelli.

Princess Anne - the Princess Royal, the sister of King Charles III, officially unveiled the plaque for The OWO after a tour of the hotel with Hinduja Group co-chairman GP Hinduja on Tuesday evening.

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak also made a quick stopover, along with parliamentarians, entrepreneurs, hoteliers and stars of film and television.

The Indian-origin Hinduja Group conglomerate and the UK's richest family had acquired the landmark on Whitehall, opposite Downing Street, over eight years ago and tied up with Raffles Hotels to transform the building into an extravagant hub complete with luxury residences, restaurants and spas.

"We have always been working to see what best we can do between India and the UK because we believe our responsibility is to act as a bridge between the host country and the motherland," said GP Hinduja.

"It took us eight years and in these eight years we had a lot to do, but finally this iconic building has been converted into peace and solace, not World Wars. It is the legacy not only of the Hinduja Group but London as a great destination. Everyone who lands in London will first come here to see what it is," he said. After the launch event, which also showcased the food of 3-Michelin-starred chef Mauro Colagreco as the chef partner for The OWO, the hotel will welcome its first guests starting this Friday.

Raffles London at The OWO, as it is officially known, has been developed in partnership between the Hinduja Group and French multinational hospitality group Accor.

"When we came to Whitehall, the team were blown away by the size and beauty of this majestic building. No expense has been spared in bringing it back to its former glory and paying homage to its heritage, whilst breathing new life into it.

Along with Raffles London at The OWO, we hope to create a legacy that is both timeless and unsurpassed," said Sanjay Hinduja, who has overseen the project.

## FROM PAGE 1

### NIA TIGHTENS NOOSE ON KHALISTANIS

"These criminals have been engaged in planning and commissioning serious crimes, including contract and revenge killings, in association with criminals lodged in jails across India. These groups have been carrying out targeted killings and raising funds for attacks and other nefarious activities through smuggling of drugs and weapons, hawala and extortions," the agency further said.

The spotlight on these gangs has become sharper after reports of several prisons becoming havens of the deadly nexus and hubs of gang wars, which recently resulted in violence and murder inside Goindwal jail in Punjab.

Some of the locations where raids were conducted during the day included: Amritsar, Moga, Fazilka, Ludhiana, Mohali, Faridkot, Barnala, Bhatinda, Ferozepur, SAS Nagar, Amritsar and Jalandhar districts of Punjab.

In Haryana, the searches were conducted in Rohtak, Sirsa, Fatehabad and Faridabad districts. Likewise, Sri Ganga Nagar, Jhunjhunu, Hanumanagarh and Jodhpur districts of Rajasthan were covered in the search operation. Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh, Dehradun and Udham Singh Nagar districts of Uttarakhand besides the South-east district of Delhi/ NCR (National Capital Region) and Chandigarh were also part of the coordinated action against the Khalistani terrorists and the terrorist-gangsters-drug cartel.

NIA had earlier conducted similar raids at over 370 locations, leading to seizure of 38 arms, including four lethal weapons, along with 1,129 rounds of ammunition.

Till now, the NIA has frozen 87 bank accounts and attached 13 properties, besides seizing 331 digital devices, 418 documents and two vehicles.

Two absconders have been declared as designated individual terrorists, and 15 accused declared as Proclaimed Offenders and Interpol Red Corner Notices (RCNs) issued against nine others as a result of NIA's concerted efforts to destroy and dismantle the deadly nexus between terrorists like Dalla and dreaded gangsters and drug smugglers. Further investigations are on to dismantle such terror, violence and extortion networks as well as their funding and support infrastructure, the agency added.

### SHOOTERS DO INDIA PROUD

Chouksey had a total of 590 and qualified in sixth position. Manini Kaushik finished 18th with a score of 580. The trio of Samra, Chouksey and Manini claimed the team silver in the women's 50m rifle 3 position event with a total score of 1764 in the qualification. In the pistol qualification, Manu topped the qualification after finishing the last rapid-fire series with 98.

In the women's 25m pistol, the Chinese bagged the team silver with 1756, while the shooters from South Korea settled for the third position with 1742. They claimed the top prize minutes after the trio of Chouksey, Manini and Samra combined to shoot a total of 1764 points in the qualification and finish second on the podium in women's 50m rifle 3 position event. Hosts China won the gold with an aggregate score of 1773, while South Korea bagged the bronze with a total score of 1756.

Samra and Chouksey qualified for the finals as well by finishing second and sixth respectively, while Kaushik bowed out in the individual event by finishing 18th.

While Kaushik missed out on the final, Samra shot 100 in two series to finish with a total of 397 after kneeling and prone positions.

Samra and Chouksey were excellent in their three series, more so in standing section, to finish in the top 8 and qualify for the individual final. In the women's 25m pistol, while Manu topped the qualification round, Esha (586) finished fifth. Rhythm (583) ended seventh but since only two shooters per country are allowed in the final, she missed the cut.

In the 25m range, the 18-year-old Esha shot 34 to settle for the second place, while China's Rui Liu won the gold medal with a games record score of 38. South Korea's Jiin Yang ended with bronze after shooting 29. On her way to gold, Rui Liu broke the record held by India's Rahi Sarnobat (34). In the gold medal contest, Esha missed three out of her five shots, while the Chinese missed the target only once to emerge victorious. Esha's medal was India's 10th in shooting here, bettering the 2018 edition of nine medals.

Meanwhile, there was an unusually long delay in the final because of a missing shot of the Korean shooter, leaving the judges to inspect the target and the back-up target to see if the shooter actually missed the target or failed to register.

# Moody's downgrades Vedanta Resources

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Moody's Investors Service has downgraded the rating of Vedanta Resources Ltd because of the elevated risk of debt restructuring over the next few months, as the firm has not made progress on refinancing its upcoming debt maturities.

Moody's said it has downgraded to Caa2 from Caa1, the corporate family rating (CFR) of Vedanta Resources Limited (VRL).

At the same time, Moody's has maintained a negative outlook.

"The downgrade reflects the elevated risk of debt restructuring over the next few months because VRL has not made any meaningful progress on refinancing its upcoming debt

maturities, in particular the USD 1 billion bonds maturing each in January 2024 and August 2024," said Kaustubh Chaubal, a Moody's Senior Vice President and lead analyst on VRL.

VRL's credit quality is constrained by its weak liquidity because of large refinancing needs and interest expenses amid tightening financing conditions in global capital markets, the agency noted.

"The company continues to face challenges in refinancing its debt, a reflection of reduced appetite from the lending community, and a key credit concern," the rating agency said.

"VRL's Caa category CFR reflects the company's unsustainable capital structure, aggressive risk appetite and weak financial management."

# Travel & tourism sector sees 44 per cent jump in hiring in Aug: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

With the country witnessing a boom in the travel and tourism sector, the industry saw a 44 per cent growth in hiring demand in August, compared to the same month last year, a report said on Wednesday. This optimistic growth can be attributed to increased disposable incomes and higher spending on leisure and business travel in the country, a report by foundit (formerly Monster APAC & ME) said.

Pre-pandemic trends indicate that the travel and tourism sector experienced a robust 16 per cent growth in 2019, however, with the pandemic-related disruptions,



travel restrictions and lockdowns, there was a 47 per cent fall in job postings in 2020 and 27 per cent dip in 2021.

While the industry began to bounce back with a marginal 3 per cent growth in hiring in 2022, it has dramatically recovered this year, as people regained confidence in travel, the report stated.

The foundit report is based on the data as of August 2023. The report also includes annual data comparisons for the period August 2023, against August 2022.

"The travel and tourism industry has truly bounced back from the pandemic with a boom, driven significantly by the government initiatives focused on infrastructural development and heritage promotion.

"India has also opened its doors by allowing 100 per cent foreign direct investment (FDI) for tourism construction projects, and participation in the G20 summit has further bolstered sustainable tourism in the country," foundit, a Qess company, CEO Sekhar Garisa said.



# Wedding hall fire in Iraq kills 100, hurts 150

AP ■ MOSUL (IRAQ)

A raging fire seemingly caused by fireworks set off to celebrate a Christian wedding consumed a hall packed with guests in northern Iraq, killing around 100 people and injuring 150 others as authorities warned Wednesday the death toll could still rise.

Authorities said that flammable building materials also contributed to the latest disaster to hit Iraq's dwindling Christian minority. In the fire's chaotic aftermath, officials offered conflicting death tolls and security officials said they had detained staff at the wedding hall as part of their investigation.

The fire happened in the Hamdaniya area of Iraq's Nineveh province, authorities said. That's a predominantly Christian area just outside of the city of Mosul, some 335 kilometres (205 miles) northwest of Baghdad. There was no official word on the cause of



People gather at the site of a fatal fire, in the district of Hamdaniya, Nineveh province, Iraq on Wednesday. A fire that raced through a hall hosting a Christian wedding in northern Iraq killed multiple people, authorities said Wednesday. AP/PTI

the blaze, but the Kurdish television news channel Rudaw aired footage showing pyrotechnics shooting flames up from the floor of the event and setting a chandelier

afire. Multiple witnesses, including 50-year-old wedding attendee Faten Youssef, said the fire started as the bride and groom began their slow dance.

The flames raced through plastic decorations and the ceiling started collapsing, she said. "Flames started falling on us," Youssef told The Associated Press. "Things were

falling down and blocked the way to the exit." She said her family found their way out through a kitchen, after the family struggled through smoke and flames and her son failed to kick through a jammed exit door.

It wasn't immediately clear if the bride and groom were among those hurt.

Survivors arrived at local hospitals in bandages, receiving oxygen, as their families milled through hallways and outside as workers organized more oxygen cylinders. Some of those burned included children. Ambulance sirens wailed for hours after the fire as paramedics brought out the injured.

Extravagant wedding ceremonies are common in Iraq, like many countries in the Middle East. Families often invite hundreds of relatives and members of the broader community, spending heavily on spectacular ceremonies with elaborately decorated

halls, music and entertainers, often including pyrotechnics. Casualty figures fluctuated in the hours after the incident.

An initial Health Ministry statement, carried by the state-run Iraqi News Agency, said the blaze killed over 100 people and injured 150. Health officials in Nineveh province put the death toll at 114, while Iraqi Interior Minister Abdul Amir al-Shammari later put the death toll at 93.

A Health Ministry official, speaking to the AP at midday Wednesday on condition of anonymity as he did not have authorization to talk to journalists, said that 30 bodies have been identified by their relatives, but the rest are so badly burned that will require DNA identification.

He put the death toll at 94, with around 100 people still receiving medical treatment. "The death toll is expected to rise as some are in critical condition," he said.

## Leader of Spain's conservatives loses first bid to become PM

AP ■ MADRID

The leader of Spain's conservatives failed Wednesday in his long-shot first bid to become the country's next prime minister when he fell short of the votes he needed in the Spanish parliament to form a government. As expected, Popular Party leader Alberto Núñez Feijóo came up four votes shy of the necessary absolute majority of 176 votes in his favour. Feijóo will try again on Friday when the bar is lowered and he needs only more "yes" than "no" votes from parliament's 350 lawmakers.

The Popular Party holds 137 seats in the Madrid-based Congress of the Deputies, the most of any party. But even with backing from the far-right Vox's 33 lawmakers and two from small conservative parties representing Navarra and the Canary Islands, Feijóo only reached 172 votes in his favour to 178 against him.

Spain's July 23 national election left the parliament highly fragmented with its legislators spread between 11 different parties, setting the stage for a difficult path to power for any party. If Feijóo fails to win approval on his second attempt, acting Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez would get a shot at staying in the Moncloa Palace. The centre-left Socialist leader would have to round up enough support of lawmakers from a group of competing leftist, regionalist and separatist parties from Catalonia and the Basque Country. The parliament debated Feijóo's bid to become prime minister for several hours on Tuesday and on Wednesday morning before the vote. The debate, however, was dominated by the possibility that Sánchez is considering accepting demands from Catalan separatist parties that Spain grant an amnesty for hundreds, possibly thousands, of people who participated in a failed 2017 secession bid by northeast Catalonia. Sánchez, who has pardoned several high-level Catalan separatists, has kept quiet on the possibility of an amnesty, and only said that he wants to continue "normalising" relations with the northeast region where tensions have decreased in recent years.

## 6 climate activists take on European nations

AP ■ STRASBOURG

Six young people argued that governments across Europe aren't doing enough to protect people from climate change at the European Court of Human Rights on Wednesday in the latest and largest instance of activists taking governments to court to force climate action.

Legal teams for the 32 nations — which includes the 27 EU member countries, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Norway, Russia and Turkey — questioned the admissibility of the case as well as the claim that the plaintiffs are victims of climate change harm.

But lawyers representing the young adults and children from Portugal said the nations they're suing have failed to adequately address human-caused warming and therefore violated some of the group's fundamental rights.

Barrister Sudhanshu Swaroop, a counsel for United Kingdom, said national governments understand the threat

of climate change and its challenges and are determined to tackle it through international cooperation.

He said the plaintiffs should have gone through national courts first, and stressed that since they are not nationals of the countries they are attacking, other than Portugal, the European Court of Human Rights cannot have jurisdiction.

"There was no attempt by the applicants to invoke, let alone exhaust domestic remedies," agreed Isabelle Niedlispacher, a legal expert for Belgium.

Pleading on behalf of the young people, Alison Macdonald told the judges about the urgency to tackle the "biggest crisis that Europe and the world" have perhaps faced, and that they should play a bigger role in helping control planet-warming emissions. "It cannot be within a state's discretion whether or not to act to prevent catastrophic climate destruction," she said.

## US allows Israeli citizens to travel to America visa-free

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The Biden administration is admitting Israel into a select group of countries whose citizens are allowed to travel to the United States without getting a visa in advance.

The decision announced Wednesday comes despite Washington's concerns about the Israeli government's treatment of Palestinian Americans and marks a major accomplishment for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has sparred frequently with the Biden administration.

Under the waiver programme, Israelis will be able to travel to the US for business or leisure purposes for up to 90 days without a visa simply by registering with the Electronic System for Travel Authorisation. But even if they are authorised to travel under that system, US officials at the airport can still bar them from entering the country. Israel had been facing a

Saturday deadline, the end of the US government's budget year, to gain admission to the programme without having to qualify for eligibility next year.

The Department of Homeland Security administers the programme, which currently allows citizens of 40 mostly European and Asian countries to travel to the US for three months without visas.

Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said the agreement, after more than a decade of work, "will enhance our two nations' collaboration on counterterrorism, law enforcement and our other common priorities" and make the allies more secure.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken, in a joint statement with Majorkas, cited enhanced "freedom of movement for US citizens, including those living in the Palestinian Territories or travelling to and from them". Israel's admission has been a priority for successive Israeli leaders. It comes as

Netanyahu is facing months of mass protests against his proposed remake of Israel's judicial system that critics say will make the country less democratic.

Countries that want to take part in the visa programme have to meet three critical benchmarks.

Israel met two of those benchmarks over the past two years: a low percentage of Israelis who applied for visas and were rejected and a low percentage of Israelis who have overstayed their visas. Israel had struggled to meet the third, for reciprocity that essentially means all US citizens, including Palestinian Americans, must be treated equally when travelling to or through Israel.

Claiming national security reasons, Israel has long had separate entry requirements and screening processes for Palestinian Americans.

Many complained that the procedures were onerous and discriminatory.

## Azerbaijan says 192 of its troops were killed in last week's offensive

AP ■ BAKU

A total of 192 Azerbaijani troops were killed and 511 were wounded during Azerbaijan's offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh last week, the country's Health Ministry announced on Wednesday. It also said that one Azeri civilian died in the hostilities. Nagorno-Karabakh officials said earlier that at least 200 people on their side, including 10 civilians, were killed and over 400 were wounded in the fighting.

The military operation allowed Azerbaijan to reclaim full control over the breakaway region that was run by separatists for about 30 years.

Tens of thousands of ethnic Armenians — more than a third of the region's population — have already left. More are likely to follow after separatist troops agreed to lay down arms and Azerbaijan lifted a

10-month blockade of the road linking the territory to Armenia.

Azerbaijan and separatist officials have held two rounds of talks on the "reintegration" of Nagorno-Karabakh and its ethnic Armenian population into the mainly Muslim country, but how exactly it would happen remains unclear.

Nagorno-Karabakh is a region of Azerbaijan that came under the control of ethnic Armenian forces, backed by the Armenian military, in separatist fighting that ended in 1994.

During a six-week war in 2020, Azerbaijan took back parts of Nagorno-Karabakh along with surrounding territory that Armenian forces had claimed during the earlier conflict.

In December, Azerbaijan imposed a blockade of the only road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh with

Armenia, alleging that the Armenian government was using the road for mineral extraction and illicit weapons shipments to the region's separatist forces.

Armenia charged that the closure denied basic food and fuel supplies to Nagorno-Karabakh's approximately 120,000 people. Azerbaijan rejected the accusation, arguing the region could receive supplies through the Azerbaijani city of Aghdam — a solution long resisted by Nagorno-Karabakh authorities, who called it a strategy for Azerbaijan to gain control of the region.

Some 42,500 people, or about 35 per cent of Nagorno-Karabakh's ethnic Armenian population, had left for neighbouring Armenia as of Wednesday morning, according to Armenian authorities. Hours-long traffic jams were reported on Tuesday on the

road linking Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia.

An explosion at a gas station near the region's capital Stepanakert, where people were queuing to fuel up their cars before leaving for Armenia, on Monday night killed at least 68 people, according to Nagorno-Karabakh's human rights ombudsman Gegham Stepanyan.

Another 290 were wounded, and a total of 105 were considered missing as of Tuesday evening, he said.

The Armenian Health Ministry on Wednesday said 237 people wounded in both the hostilities last week and the gas station explosion on Monday had been evacuated by ambulance and helicopter from Nagorno-Karabakh.

They're receiving necessary treatment, and the process of evacuating the injured continues, the ministry said.

## UK authorities first drug consumption room

AP ■ LONDON

Scottish authorities on Wednesday approved a 2.3 million-pound (\$2.8 million) pound drug consumption room, the first government-backed place in the UK where users can take illegal drugs such as cocaine and heroin under the supervision of medical staff.

Local officials in the Scottish city of Glasgow on Wednesday approved the facility, which had long been delayed by political disagreements.

Authorities hope the pilot project will help tackle drug misuse problems in Scotland, which has the highest drug death figures in Western Europe and saw almost three times the rate of drug poisoning deaths compared to the UK average in 2021. The facility, which will start recruiting staff next year, was first proposed in 2016 following an

## 'US soldier Travis, who crossed into N Korea, is in American custody'

AP ■ SEOUL

The American soldier who crossed into North Korea two months ago is in American custody, two US officials said Wednesday. One official said that Pvt Travis King was transferred to US custody in China. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss King's status ahead of the US announcement.

Earlier, North Korea said it would expel King. That announcement surprised some observers who had expected the North to drag out his detention in the hopes of squeezing concessions from Washington at a time of high tensions between the rivals.

The North's official Korean Central News Agency reported that authorities have finished their questioning of King but did not say when officials plan to expel him or where.

King, who had served in South Korea, sprinted into North Korea while on a civilian tour of a border village on July 18, becoming the first American confirmed to be detained in the North in nearly five years.

At the time he crossed the border, King was supposed to be heading to Fort Bliss, Texas, following his release from prison in South Korea on an assault conviction.

On Wednesday, the state news agency said that King confessed to illegally entering the North because he harbored "ill feeling against inhuman maltreatment and racial discrimination" within the US Army and was "disillusioned about the unequal US society." It has attributed similar comments to King before, and verifying their authenticity is impossible.

"The relevant organ of the DPRK decided to expel Travis King, a soldier of the US Army who illegally intruded into the territory of the DPRK," the state news agency said, using the initials of North Korea's formal name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. US officials have said that King has been declared AWOL, which can be punished by time in the brig, forfeiture of pay or dishonourable



discharge, with the severity based on the amount of time away and whether the service member was apprehended or returned on their own. Following weeks of silence, North Korea confirmed in August that it had detained King, 23, and was investigating the circumstances surrounding his border crossing.

In an interview last month with The Associated Press, King's mother, Claudine Gates, said her son had "so many reasons" to want to come home.

"I just can't see him ever wanting to just stay in Korea when he has family in America. He has so many reasons to come home," she said.

King, who is from Wisconsin, was among about 28,000 US troops stationed in South Korea as a deterrent against potential aggression from North Korea. US officials had expressed concern about King's well-being, citing the North's harsh treatment of some American detainees in the past. Unauthorised crossings across the Demilitarized Zone separating the Koreas are extremely rare. The few Americans who crossed into North Korea in the past include soldiers, missionaries, human rights advocates or those simply curious about one of the world's most cloistered societies.

North Korea's decision to release King after 71 days appears relatively quick by the country's standards, especially considering the tensions between Washington and Pyongyang over the North's growing nuclear weapons and missile program and the United States' expanding military exercises with South Korea.

## Churchill's Old War Office launched as luxury hotel

PTI ■ LONDON

The Old War Office (OWO) of Britain's World War II era prime minister Winston Churchill opened its doors as a brand-new luxury hotel in London with a glittering launch event, complete with surprise musical performances by musicians Lord Andrew Lloyd Webber and Andrea Bocelli.

Princess Anne — the Princess Royal, the sister of King, Charles III, officially unveiled the plaque for The OWO after a tour of the hotel with Hinduja Group co-chairman GP Hinduja on Tuesday evening. British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak also made a quick stopover, along with parliamentarians, entrepreneurs, hoteliers and stars of film and television. The Indian-origin Hinduja Group conglomerate and the UK's richest family had acquired the landmark on Whitehall, opposite Downing Street, over eight years ago and tied up with Raffles Hotels to transform the building into an extravagant hub complete with luxury residences, restaurants and spas. "We have always been working to see what best we can do between India and the UK because we believe our responsibility is to act as a bridge between the host country and the motherland," said GP Hinduja.

"It took us eight years and in these eight years we had a lot to do, but finally this iconic building has been converted into peace and solace, not World Wars. It is the legacy not only of the Hinduja Group but London as a great destination. Everyone who lands in London will first come here to see what it is," he said. After the launch event, which also showcased the food of 3-Michelin-starred chef Mauro Colagreco as the chef partner for The OWO, the hotel will welcome its first guests starting this Friday.

## UN asked to declare 'gender apartheid' as Af womens' mental health worsens

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

The UN's most powerful body must support governments seeking to legally declare the intensifying crackdown by Afghanistan's Taliban rulers on women and girls "gender apartheid", the head of the UN agency promoting gender equality said Tuesday.

Sima Bahous, executive director of UN Women, told the Security Council that more than 50 increasingly dire Taliban edicts are being enforced with more severity, including by male family members. That is exacerbating mental health issues and suicidal thoughts especially among young women and is shrinking women's decision-making even in their own homes.

"They tell us that they are prisoners living in darkness, confined to their homes with-



out hope or future," she said. Under international law, apartheid is defined as a system of legalized racial segregation that originated in South Africa. But a growing consensus among international experts, officials and activists says apartheid can also apply to gender in cases like that of

Afghanistan, where women and girls face systemic discrimination.

"We ask you to lend your full support to an intergovernmental process to explicitly codify gender apartheid in international law," Bahous urged the 15-member council, including its five permanent

members: the United States, Russia, China, Britain and France.

There is no existing international law to respond to "mass, state-sponsored gender oppression," Bahous said. But she said the Taliban's "systemic and planned assault on women's rights... must be named, defined and proscribed in our global norms so that we can respond appropriately".

The Taliban took power in August 2021 during the final weeks of the US and NATO forces' pullout from Afghanistan after 20 years of war. As they did during their previous rule of Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001, the Taliban gradually reimposed their harsh interpretation of Islamic law, or Sharia, barring girls from school beyond the sixth grade and women from almost all jobs, public spaces, gyms

and recently closing beauty salons.

The Security Council meeting on UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' latest report on Afghanistan took place on the final day of the annual meeting of world leaders at the 193-member UN General Assembly. On Wednesday, Zabihullah Mujahid, the main spokesman for the Taliban government, slammed the council meeting for focusing on domestic Afghan matters of "women's education and their work" instead of issues such as security, peace and stability.

"It was necessary to discuss the end of the blacklist in the United Nations, the removal of sanctions, the release of seized assets," Mujahid said on X, formerly known as Twitter. He said the UN gathering should also have discussed "the recog-

nition of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan" as the Taliban call their government.

No country has recognized the Taliban, and the assembly's credentials committee hasn't either, primarily over its effort to relegate women to their homes and failure to form an inclusive government. This has left UN recognition with the now-ousting previous government led by Ashraf Ghani. For the third year, its representative did not speak at the high-level gathering.

Bahous said that over the past year, UN Women collaborated with the UN political mission in Afghanistan known as UNAMA and the UN International Office for Migration to interview over 500 Afghan women.

Among their key findings, she said: 46% think the Taliban should not be recognised under

any circumstances; 50% think the Taliban should only be recognised after it restores women's and girls' rights to education, employment, and participation in government.

The women interviewed said the dramatic shrinking of their influence on decision-making, not just at the national or provincial level but also in their communities and homes, is driven by increased poverty, decreasing financial contribution and "the Taliban's imposition of hyper-patriarchal gender norms," Bahous said.

In a grim sign of women's growing isolation, she said, only 22% of the women interviewed reported meeting with women outside their immediate family at least once a week, and a majority reported worsened relations with other members of their family and community.



# NARUKA BAGS SILVER IN MEN’S SKEET



PTI ■ HANGZHOU

India's Anant Jeet Singh Naruka claimed the silver medal in men's skeet event at the Asian Games here on Wednesday, adding to the team bronze he won alongside Angad

Vir Singh Bajwa and Gurjoat Khangura. Naruka performed well and looked on course to win the gold, having not missed a shot until the business end of the final. Naruka finished with an impressive 58/60 but it was still

not good enough for gold as Kuwait's Abdullah Alrashidi equalled the world record with a perfect 60/60 to finish on top of the podium. Nasser Al-Attia of Qatar bagged the bronze with 46. "It was a good competition.

The gold winner is a very experienced shooter. He is a two-time Olympic bronze medal winner. But I was not thinking about him but focusing on my performance," said Naruka. "I lost my rhythm a bit in the middle. Later, I recovered.

This is also my first Asian Games medal," he added. He said the day's performance was his best. "You need to imagine what your targets would be. I tried to break the targets in my head. I have to make a vision of how I have to break them.

"But it all depends on the particular day. Everyone performing at the highest level would tell you, on the day if you are shooting well and your rhythm is going on, anyone can win. It is just about the rhythm and experience counts," he added. He said the humidity at the Fuyang Yinhu Sports Centre Range was energy-sapping. "Throughout the day, you are mentally exhausted but you need to keep going," Naruka added. Earlier in the day, the trio of Naruka, Bajwa and Khangura shot a total of 355 to win the team bronze. Hosts China won the gold medal while Qatar claimed the silver. The Indian women's team, however, crashed out of the shotgun skeet event by finishing in the fourth position behind Kazakhstan, China and Thailand.

## INDIAN TRIO SHOOTS GOLD



Gold medalist Indian shooters Esha Singh, Rhythm Sangwan and Manu Bhaker pose for photos during the presentation ceremony of women's 25m pistol rapid team event at the 19th Asian Games, in Hangzhou, China, Wednesday

PTI

## Sarvanan wins bronze; sailors end campaign with one silver, two bronze

PTI ■ NINGBO

Indian sailor Vishnu Sarvanan won a bronze, the country's first-ever medal in the men's dinghy ILCA-7 event at the Asian Games here on Wednesday. Sarvanan finished with a net score of 34 points to miss the silver medal by just one point in the gruelling 11-race competition. South Korea's Jeemin HA took the second spot with 33 points. Singapore's Jun Han Ryan Lo claimed the gold with a net score of 26.

Lack of wind, however, denied India a medal in women's single dinghy ILCA-6 event where Nethra Kumanan had to settle for a disappointing fourth place finish after race No 12, which was to be the final one in the category, was cancelled. After the penultimate race, Nethra (41 net points) was three points behind Singapore's Jing Hua Victoria Chan (38). But she eventually failed to secure a podium finish as race 12 could not be held and the event was cancelled. Nevertheless, the Indian sailors matched their 2018 Asian Games feat of one silver and two bronze medals here.



Earlier on Tuesday, 17-year-old Neha Thakur grabbed a silver, while Eabad Ali claimed a bronze, India's first-ever medal in the men's windsurfer RS:X event. In sailing, the competitor's worst score (which is equivalent to their respective positions) from all the races is subtracted from the total points to determine the net score. The one with the lowest net score is adjudged the winner. Sarvanan had a total score of 48 and his worst race was No. 8, where he finished last in the 13-competitor field after

retiring because of a technical foul. So, he ended up with 14 points with the addition of one penalty-point in race No 8. Sarvanan, thus, finished with 34 net points by subtracting 14 points from his overall score of 48, just one-point behind Jeemin, who took the silver. A reigning National champion since 2017, Sarvanan finished second as the second-best Asian at the Tokyo Olympics by virtue of his 20/25 overall finish.

## Nikhat sails into quarters; Shiva, Sanjeet bow out



PTI ■ HANGZHOU

Two-time world champion Nikhat Zareen cruised to the 50kg quarterfinals but seasoned Indian pugilist Shiva Thapa and Sanjeet bowed out of the Asian Games boxing competition here on Wednesday. Nikhat notched up an easy 5-0 win over South Korea's Chorong Bak in the second round of the women's event. However, record six-time Asian Championship medallist Shiva couldn't capitalise on a favourable draw as he was beaten comprehensively (5-0) by Kyrgyzstan's Askat Kultaev in the 63.5kg pre-quarterfinals. Sanjeet (92kg) was completely outpunched (5-0) by world championship bronze medallist Lazizbek Mullojonov. After two back-to-back losses in the day, Nikhat gave the Indian camp something to cheer about with her dominant display. After sizing up her opponent, Nikhat released a series of punches, using her longer reach effectively. The Indian controlled the proceedings but Bak made her task difficult by moving around the ring. Nikhat landed a couple of left crosses to end the second round. After taking the opening two rounds, Nikhat conserved energy like she did in her previous bout, evading attacks by Bak to move to the quarters.

Earlier, Shiva, who received a first round bye, was beaten by Kultaev's relentless attacks and pace in a draining pre-quarterfinal bout. It is a shocking defeat as Shiva was a strong medal contender. Kultaev started off aggressively, as his onslaught caught Shiva off guard. The Indian took a few seconds to regroup and connect his powerful hooks. But at a slight height disadvantage, Shiva was forced to fight from a distance with the judges ruling the first round 4-1 in favour of Aksat. The 21-year-old from Kyrgyzstan continued his attacks in the second round. He kept throwing punches which didn't necessarily connect but it forced Shiva to defend. Shiva was more patient with his punches, which cost the Assam boxer the second round. Trailing, Shiva tried his best to land a flurry of punches in the final three minutes but his younger opponent stepped back and defended easily. In the second Indian bout of the day, Sanjeet found it tough to respond to the 2022 super heavyweight Asian Champions' punches and was forced to go into a defensive mode. Trailing 0-5, Sanjeet lost his balance after being struck by Mullojonov's punch, which got him an eight count.

## Indian men in quarters in basketball 3x3

PTI ■ HANGZHOU

The Indian men's 3x3 basketball team continued its winning streak, progressing to the quarterfinal with a dominating win over Macao in a Pool C game at the Asian Games here on Wednesday. Sahaij Pratap Singh Sekhon scored a maximum of 10 points in the match and helped India beat Macao 21-12. Macao's only positive in the match was Hou In Ho, who scored five points in the match. India had previously defeated Malaysia by 20-16 on the first day of the event. India will face last-edition gold medallist China in their next match on Friday, while the women will take on China later in the day.



## Sathiyani-Batra, Harmeet-Sreeja pairs enter mixed doubles pre-quarters

PTI ■ HANGZHOU

India's G Sathiyani and Manika Batra stormed into the mixed doubles pre-quarterfinals of the table tennis competition in the Asian Games here on Wednesday. Sathiyani and Batra defeated Thailand's Napat Thanmathikom and Suthasini Sawettabut 10-12, 11-8, 11-3, 11-8. Later, Harmeet Desai teamed up with Sreeja Akula to overcome Macau's Chi Cheng Cheong and Hui Li Seak 12-10, 11-7, 11-7 to also enter the last 16 stage. Sathiyani and Batra made a rather cold start to the match losing the first game 10-12. Perhaps, stung by the loose game they dished out, the



Indian pair showed more purpose in the second game. The Thai duo tailed their Indian counterparts 6-6 but Sathiyani and Batra upped their

game when it was needed the most. Nipat could not return Sathiyani's fierce forehand when India were leading 10-8, as India levelled the scores.

Sathiyani and Batra had little trouble in quelling the challenge of Thai players in the third set, winning it quite easily 11-3.

## David Beckham advances to men’s sprint quarterfinal

PTI ■ HANGZHOU

India's David Beckham Elkatochoongo shone in the cycling track, making the quarterfinal in men's sprint event at the Asian Games here on Wednesday. On a difficult track of at the

CSC Velodrome, David edged out his Kazakhstan rivals Sergey Ponomaryov and Andrey Kazchugay in final repechage to confirm his last-eight place. Earlier in the final heat, David edged out Ponomaryov by 0.188 seconds to make the



last-eight. Ronaldo Singh Laitonjam however failed to progress losing to Andrey Chugay of Kazakhstan in the 1/16 final repechage round. David and Ronaldo had come up with timings of 10.030s and 10.086s to take ninth and 13th positions

respectively and make the 1/16 finals. In women's keirin, India's Shushikala Agashe (+1.087) finished fifth in her heat to fail to qualify for the semifinals, while Triyasha Paul (+1.109) narrowly missed qualification after finishing at third spot in her heat.



## Hriday, Anush, Divyakriti to enter individual dressage final

PTI ■ HANGZHOU

India's Hriday Vipul Chheda, Anush Agarwalla and Divyakriti Singh continued their fine show and moved into medal contention after qualifying for the individual dressage final of equestrian at the Asian Games here on Wednesday. Astride his horse Chemxpro, Hriday topped the qualification round with total score of 73.883, while Anush, riding Etro, finished fourth with score of 71.706. Riding Adrenalin Firfod, Divyakriti Singh finished 11th with score of 67.676, while Sudipti Hajela was eliminated. The top 15 riders in qualifying progress to the final. The quartet of Hriday, Anush, Divyakriti and Sudipti on Tuesday claimed a historic team dressage gold, breaking a 41-year-old jinx at the continental event.

## Sangita hits hat-trick as India blank Singapore 13-0 in women’s hockey

PTI ■ HANGZHOU

Young striker Sangita Kumari slammed a hat-trick as a dominant Indian women's hockey team scored goals at will to thrash lowly Singapore 13-0 in its opening Pool A match at the Asian Games here on Wednesday. While the Indians pumped in as many as eight goals in the first two quarters, the Singaporeans did show some resistance after the halfway break as they conceded just five goals.

Sangita (23rd, 47th, 56th) scored thrice, while Navneet Kaur found the net twice in the 14th minute. Udit (6th), Sushila Chanu (8th), Deepika (11th), Deep Grace Ekka (17th), Neha (19th), Sailima Tete (35th), Monika (52nd) and Vandana Katariya (56th) were the other goal scorers. India will take on Malaysia in their next pool match on Friday. "It was a good performance, we are happy with the result. The young girls comple-

mented the seniors well. It made our job easy," skipper Savita said after the match. "We are taking match-by-match here. Our next focus is on Malaysia, we have ode day gap in which we will prepare and study Malaysia's game. We will just focus on our plans. "There is also Korea in our pool and they are a very good team but we will try to win and top the pool. Our mindset is right, everybody knows why they are here. Our target is to qualify (for Olympics) directly," she added.



The gulf between India and Singapore was evident as the Savita Punia-led side mounted attack after attack to score eight goals in the opening two quarters. The Indians' relentless attacks resulted in a heap of penalty corners and they managed to convert five of them. India took the lead in the sixth minute when Udit scored from a penalty corner with a slap shot. Two minutes later, they were awarded a penalty stroke and Sushila made no mistake.

Penalty corners came thick and fast for the Indians and Deepika tripled the lead with a perfect flick. Navneet scored two quick goals a minute from the first quarter -- first from a penalty corner and then a field goal seconds later. Navneet snatched the ball from a defender and then dodged past the Singapore goalkeeper -- with fine stick work to push the ball in. Deep Grace then joined the party scoring with a slap shot from a penalty corner before Sangita scored a fine field goal

after one-two with Lalremsiami. Neha then converted a penalty corner to go into the half-time with a healthy 8-0 lead. The Indians continued in the same trend after the change of ends and kept up the pressure on Singapore's defence with continuous attacks. The Singaporeans showed some fight in defence in the last two quarters but still India managed to pump in five more goals to make a perfect start to their campaign.



# Australia beat India by 66 runs to score a consolation win in 3rd ODI

PTI ■ RAJKOT

Australia avoided an unprecedented series whitewash after registering a 66-run victory over India in the third ODI here on Wednesday. Chasing a massive 353 to win, India were restricted by Australia to 286 in 49.4 overs. India however won the three-match series 2-1.

The Aussies motored to 352 for 7 after Mitchell Marsh (96), Steve Smith (74), Marnus Labuschagne (72) and David Warner (56) made impact knocks.

Jasprit Bumrah took three for 81 and emerged the most successful among Indian bowlers. India made a fist of chase through captain Rohit Sharma (81) and Virat Kohli (56), but soon fizzled against the off-spin of Glenn Maxwell.

Earlier, Mitchell Marsh's stroke-filled 96 and Marnus Labuschagne's polished 72 took Australia to a commendable 352 for 7 against India in the third and final ODI here on Wednesday.

While Marsh missed reaching triple figures by a whisker, Australia's batters came good collectively in what will be their last official ODI before the start of the World Cup.

David Warner had himself to blame for his dismissal after a fiery 56 off 34 balls (6x4s, 4x6s), but he set the tone for Australia early on.

Steve Smith also put brakes on his poor run of scores to make a rapid 74 and towards the end, Labuschagne upped the ante with his 58-ball knock to help Australia post their challenging score. Labuschagne also became Australia's top run-getter in the ongoing calendar



year. On a hot and humid day, drinks were brought out more often than not between change of over while batters dropped down to their haunches, turning out to be quite a laborious effort for the Australian batters after their captain chose to bat.

Marsh took the attack to Jasprit Bumrah (3/81 in 10 overs), hitting two fours and a six and forcing India to take off the solitary slip since there was no early movement on offer.

Warner too shrugged off a slow start to hit Mohammed Siraj for two imperious sixes as Australia seized early

momentum.

The assault continued as Prasidh Krishna was hit for three fours and a six in his opening over with Warner taking the lead. The Australian opener completed his ninth fifty against India and 31st overall with a six over fine leg off Siraj. However, Warner's charge ended while trying to scoop Prasidh, walking across the wickets but only to edge it behind.

In search of a big score, Smith opted for consolidation with Marsh, who had long shifted gears to drop the anchor.

Bumrah was brought back for the 23rd over but Marsh clobbered him for

three fours and two sixes to collect 19 runs — he gave that many in two separate overs — which finally forced India to bring Kuldeep Yadav (2/48) into the attack.

While India found it difficult to penetrate owing to a placid surface, the Australian pair of Marsh and Smith amassed 137 from 119 for the second wicket.

However, the Australian pair did struggle with the heat and humidity late in the afternoon and increasingly looked for boundaries while sacrificing the doubles.

For the second time this year and against the same opponent, Marsh came close to bringing up only his second ODI century but missed it by four runs.

All the hard work of getting close to the mark while braving the conditions went in vain when Marsh hit straight to Krishna at cover off Kuldeep.

Smith perished soon after as Siraj pinned him in front of the wickets for 74 off 61 balls, including eight fours and a six.

Alex Carey (11) had a short stay as he misjudged a slower ball from Bumrah to chip it straight to Virat Kohli at cover in the 37th over.

Bumrah, mixing his deliveries well in this spell, cleaned up Glenn Maxwell (5) for his second wicket of the game but one that also dented Australia's hopes of acceleration in the remaining overs.

Australia's slide continued as Kuldeep had Cameron Green (9) caught at long on, but Labuschagne and Pat Cummins put on 46 to take them to their overall fourth highest ODI total against India.

# Tough to look beyond Shreyas in WC playing XI: Azharuddin



PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Former captain Mohammad Azharuddin can't look beyond Shreyas Iyer in India's playing eleven in the ODI World Cup and also backed a possible last-minute inclusion of R Ashwin in the 15-man squad.

India find themselves in a problem of plenty in the middle with Iyer, Ishan Kishan and Suryakumar Yadav staking a claim for one spot.

Iyer, who was India's designated number four before a back injury ruled him out of the game for six months, struck an attacking hundred in Indore to put himself ahead of Kishan and Suryakumar in the middle-order race.

"Good competition always brings the best out of the players. Shreyas is an exciting player and he really batted well the other day after losing out on games due to his back issues. He is very positive with his intent and looks to score all the time."

"He can make a big impact in the game. It is very hard to look past him unless you are looking for a left-hander in the middle, then Ishan comes into picture. However, I feel Shreyas has done enough," Azhar told PTI on Wednesday.

**Ashwin should find a spot in final-15**

Ashwin, who had played only two ODIs since 2017 before being picked for the ODI series against Australia, is expected to replace Axar Patel in the squad if the latter doesn't regain full fitness. He gave a good account of his skills in the first two ODIs before being rested for the final game in Rajkot.

The wily off-spinner also has Azhar's vote.

"Ashwin is someone who should be in the team. It is not very easy to line up against him as he has got a lot of variations. The team has already been announced. It remains to be seen whether Axar is in there or not."

"Instead of two left-arm spinners, Ashwin can also bat well, he should find a place," said Azhar, who captained India in three World Cups.

While Shardul Thakur has done alright in the chances he has got, he doesn't match the skills of Mohammad Shami who should be preferred over the former in the playing eleven, said the 60-year-old.

The recent selection showed that the management has not fully made up its mind on the fast bowling combination. Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammad Siraj walk into the playing eleven.

"Shami has been doing well for a long time. Shardul too has done alright in the limited chances he has got. But you don't require everyone to bat in the 11. Shami has also batted well at times."

"Shardul is a bowling all-rounder not a batting all-rounder. When you already have Haridk Pandya you don't need Shardul in the playing eleven," he said.

For him, the Indian player to watch out for will not be Rohit Sharma or Virat Kohli, as he has put his money on Shubman Gill.

Gill has been in sensational form over the past 12 months and has racked up five ODI hundreds this year.

"This time, Gill will be the main player for India. Obviously, the others around him are also batting well. If he can give India a good start it will set the ball rolling," said Azhar.

**'Pressure will be on India'**

Considering India have not won an ICC event since 2013, Azhar feels the team is bound to feel the pressure of not being able to win knock-out games over the past decade.

"It is going to be a very competitive world cup. India have a very good team. Grounds will be full as India are hosting after a long time." Asked if India are peaking at the right time following the Asia Cup title and series win over Australia, Azhar said: "I really don't understand this peaking business. When you are playing you are playing well, doesn't matter whether you are peaking or not peaking."

"Sometimes you lose two three matches even after peaking and that has happened with this team. Rather than thinking about all of this, one should focus on the game, rather than thinking about semis and finals straightaway."

"Yes, there will be a lot of pressure to win an ICC tournament which we have not won for a long time. I am sure the boys are fully aware of that," he said.

His home city of Hyderabad will be one of the 10 venues staging the World Cup games. But Azhar is disappointed that Hyderabad is not hosting an India match.



## Williamson likely to play World Cup warm-up matches

PTI ■ CHRISTCHURCH

New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson is set to return from a long injury layoff in his side's World Cup warm-up matches, starting in India this week.

The star batter hasn't played any cricket since March when he ruptured the ACL (anterior cruciate ligament) in his right knee while fielding for Gujarat Titans in the IPL. He underwent surgery in April.

"The plan is to be involved in the warm-up games. There is a strong desire to be involved as much as I can," Williamson said ahead of the team's departure to India.

"Basically, it's just wanting to progress what I am doing now - the running, the fielding, time in the middle with the bat."

New Zealand will take on Pakistan and South Africa in World Cup warm-up matches on September 29 in Hyderabad and October 2 in Thiruvananthapuram respectively.

"They play England in the

tournament opener in Ahmedabad on October 5.

Asked if he was still experiencing discomfort, Williamson said: "Not a huge amount."

"Although the load is going to keep increasing, so there is a little bit of an unknown. But it has felt pretty good really in the last few weeks."

"Although it's going well, you still have days that vary a little bit. So it's working through those warm-up games to get as much out of it as I can, and as a team, without bothering it too much," he added.

Williamson had played a crucial role in New Zealand's campaign in 2015 and 2019 editions when they reached successive finals.

Talking about the most difficult aspect of his recovery Williamson said: "Not so much the sprinting, more the slowing actually. From sprinting, the braking, a little bit of a change of direction. It's all been part of the plan, and introducing it towards the end of recovery."

## Nepal batters break three world records in T20Is

PTI ■ HANGZHOU

Nepal batters smashed three world records en route to becoming the first team to amass a 300-plus total in T20Is, in the Asian Games here on Wednesday. Kushal Malla, a 19-year-old left-handed batter, struck the fastest-ever T20I hundred in 34 balls, eclipsing David Miller and Rohit Sharma's joint previous record (35 balls).

Batting at No. 3, Malla smashed 12 sixes and eight



fours to remain unbeaten on 137 and power Nepal to the highest-ever T20I score of 314 for 3

against Mongolia, who opted to field. Their No. 5 batter Dipendra Singh Airee also rewrote the record books, blasting a nine-ball fifty that bettered Yuvraj Singh's 16-year-old record. Yuvraj took 12 balls for his fifty en route to scoring 58 in the World T20 match against England on September 19, 2007.

The previous record for the highest innings total in a T20I was held by Afghanistan, who had amassed 278 for 3 against Ireland on February 23, 2019.

## Our ambition is to become biggest T20 league outside IPL: SA20 Commissioner Graeme Smith

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The kind of generational Indian T20 stars that IPL has produced in the last one and half decades has set the template to follow for a new franchise competition like SA20, former South Africa captain and commissioner of league Graeme Smith said on Wednesday.

"Our ambition is to be the biggest league outside India," Smith told PTI ahead of the second season's auction.

The SA20 comprises six franchises — MI Cape Town, Joburg Super Kings, Durban Super Giants, Paarl Royals, Pretoria Capitals, Sunrisers Eastern Cape, all of which are owned by the owners of IPL teams.

"I think IPL was there in the beginning. It took a couple of years to develop a number of generational stars and work within BCCI managed to create

outstanding depth of cricketers in India. It will be our goal too going forward," said Smith, who has always shared a cordial relationship with the Indian board, both as player and administrator.

"The highlight of the first season of SA20 was to see some youngsters and more established stars perform together. I think they played in the competition and were exposed to best practices by franchises — exposed to way of global thinking, getting the best coaches, best medical advice," said Smith, who is very satisfied with how the league has shaped up in just one season.

In fact, Smith is happy that SA20 has kept a salary cap of USD 2.3 million, offering the best pay scale outside IPL.

So, do you plan to increase the salary cap this time?

"Our salary cap is USD 2.3 million and teams can work with significant



numbers for a league outside the IPL. It gives us the ability to attract quality players," he said.

Smith believes that SA20 brought a lot of positivity in South African crick-

et. "The Season 1 exceeded all the expectations. We had such a limited amount of time to get up and running and we were able to attract six partners like six global franchises," said Smith.

As the league's commissioner, Smith has worked tirelessly with his team to deliver a product that is acceptable in the market. "Apart from the commercial side, it was important to bring some positivity back to South African cricket and see the fans flock to the stadium."

"Most importantly, the cricket in season 1 was outstanding. Some local young talent really stood up, global stars shone through and it was a very successful season," he said.

In Season 2, each franchise can buy up to 15 players with six uncapped ones, which will also help South Africa promote its own local talent, beneficial to the national team in future.

## App revolutionises fantasy sports

**Mumbai:** The newly launched free-to-play app, by Sports engagement platform BeBetta,



prioritises community, unity, and sportsmanship over traditional betting. With personalised content and real-time updates, it offers

fans an engaging platform for

Cricket, Football, and Kabaddi ahead of the Cricket World Cup.

"We believe that sports are best enjoyed with friends, and at BeBetta, we're committed to delivering an extraordinary experience that fosters a sense of belonging within a winning team, said Meet Shah, CEO & Founder of BeBetta.

## Spain rout Switzerland in first home match since Women's WC title

AP ■ CORDOBA (SPAIN)

Spain's women's team received the support of a record crowd in its first home match since winning the World Cup title.

A crowd of 14,194 saw Spain rout Switzerland 5-0 in the Nations League on Tuesday, surpassing the previous record of 11,209 fans for a women's national team match in Spain, which was achieved in a friendly against the United States last year.

The local crowd, which did not fully fill the 21,000-capacity Nuevo Arcangel Stadium in Cordoba, showed their support for the players who have been fighting against sexism since their world title was tarnished by a scandal sparked by the former Spanish soccer federation president, Luis Rubiales, kissing player Jenni Hermoso on the lips



during the World Cup awards ceremony. Players boycotted the national team but eventually a deal was reached with the federation and government mediators for significant reform in the

beleaguered federation.

A banner shown by fans in Cordoba read "Your fight is our pride. You are not alone."

Before the match, players from both teams got together

and held a banner with the words "Se Acabo" — Spanish for "this is over" — followed by "Our fight is the global fight."

The "Se Acabo" slogan was started by Hermoso's teammate

Alexia Putellas, Spain's star player, and has been a rallying call amid the scandal. New coach Montse Tomé left Hermoso out of the squad "as a way to protect her."

Players also wore wristbands with the "Se Acabo" slogan, and raised their wrists while posing behind the banner.

The national team showed off the World Cup trophy to the fans, with Putellas and Irene Paredes raising it in front of the home crowd. "We were excited about being able to celebrate with the fans," said Aitana Bonmati, who scored twice on Tuesday. "It was an atypical week but we were able to overcome everything. The players showed that they are professionals." Spain's first match after the World Cup was a 3-2 come-from-behind win at Sweden in the Nations League last week.

## India continue winning streak at Badminton World Junior

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian team continued its winning streak at the badminton World Junior Championships with an impressive 5-0 win over Brazil in Spokane, USA on Wednesday.

In the opening match, the mixed doubles pair of Samarveer and Radhika Sharma triumphed over Joaquim Mendonça and Maria Clara Lopes Lima 21-14, 21-17 to give India a 1-0 lead.

In the boys' singles match, Lokesh Reddy Kalagotla faced a formidable opponent in Renan Melo, who lost the first game 17-21 but fought back resiliently in the second game.

Lokesh managed to get the upper hand and ultimately won the second game by 24-22 to wrap up the match.

In the girls' singles section,



Devika Sihag cruised to victory by defeating Maria Eduarda Oliveira 21-9, 21-6 in just 18 minutes. In the boys' doubles category, Divyam Arora and Mayank Rana emerged victorious against Joaquim Mendonça and João Mendonça Taveira 21-19, 21-10. Girls' doubles pair of Vennala Kalagotla and Shriyanshi Valishetty then displayed their coordination on

way to an impressive 21-13, 21-11 win over Maria Clara Lopes Lima and Maria Eduarda Oliveira. Later in the day, group D leaders India will next face Germany, who is second in the group. The outcome of this match will decide who tops the group. The team that finishes on top will face the winner of group C in the quarter-finals on September 28.