

12 panchayats declared TB-free in East Singhbhum 2030 target for complete eradication

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

In a significant step towards eradicating tuberculosis (TB), 12 Panchayats in East Singhbhum district have been declared TB-free. The announcement was made on the occasion of World TB Day, during a felicitation ceremony held at the district headquarters. District Magistrate cum Deputy Commissioner Ananya Mittal honored the heads of these Panchayats by presenting them with mementoes, shawls, and certificates, recognizing their efforts in achieving this milestone. During the event, the Deputy Commissioner

extended his congratulations to Civil Surgeon Dr. Sahir Paul, District Tuberculosis Officer Dr. O.P. Keshari, and the entire Health Department team, commending their dedicated efforts in combating TB. He reaffirmed the administration's commitment to making the entire East Singhbhum district TB-free by the year 2030. He urged health officials to continue their work with the same level of dedication, ensuring that the fight against TB reaches every corner of the district.

The following 12 Panchayats have successfully eliminated tuberculosis from

their communities: Dharambhaal Panchayat (Ghatsila), Kharida, Barakanja, and Bankishol (Dumariya), North Badiya, West Badiya, and North Ichhra (Musabani), Pokhoriya (Bodam), Kamalpur (Patamda), Virдох (Chakulia), Dharambhaal (Golmuri cum Jugsalai) and Mauda (Baharagora). The Deputy Commissioner, while felicitating the Mukhiyas (village heads) of these Panchayats, praised their collective efforts and collaboration with the district administration. He emphasized that their contribution was crucial in achieving TB-free status and urged

them to continue supporting government initiatives.

Ananya Mittal highlighted the importance of Panchayat representatives in ensuring the success of health and welfare schemes. He stated that local governance plays a pivotal role in reaching out to beneficiaries and effectively implementing government services, particularly in rural areas. He expressed confidence that with continued cooperation from local representatives, East Singhbhum can make remarkable progress not only in healthcare but also in education, employment, self-employment, animal husbandry,

agriculture, and other service sectors. The event was attended by Civil Surgeon Dr. Sahir Pal, ACMO Dr. Jogeshwar Prasad, District Tuberculosis Officer Dr. O.P. Keshari, DRCHO Dr. Ranjit Pand, and several other health department officials. Their relentless efforts in community outreach, awareness campaigns, early detection, and treatment have contributed significantly to the success of the TB eradication drive. "With this achievement, East Singhbhum sets an inspiring example for other districts, demonstrating that community participation, government interven-



tives and healthcare initiatives can effectively combat tuberculosis. As the district

aims for complete TB eradication by 2030, the success of these 12 Panchayats serves

as a stepping stone toward a healthier, disease-free future," said an official.

CSIR-NML partners with Eyantram for eco-friendly PCB recycling

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

CSIR-NML Signs MoU with Eyantram Waste Management for PCB Recycling Technology Transfer



Jamshedpur, March 24, 2025: In a significant step towards sustainable e-waste management, CSIR-National Metallurgical Laboratory (NML), Jamshedpur, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Eyantram Waste Management Private Limited, Visakhapatnam, for the transfer of Printed Circuit Board (PCB) recycling technology. This partnership aims to establish an environmentally friendly e-waste recycling plant, focusing on the extraction of valuable metals like gold (Au), copper (Cu), and aluminum (Al) from discarded PCBs.

The agreement, signed on Monday, will enable Eyantram Waste Management Pvt. Ltd. to implement the "Zero Waste" approach, reducing environmental pressure and streamlining the e-waste collection and disposal system. By organizing the unorganized sector, the company aims to create structured waste management solutions, ensuring effective recycling. Municipal bodies will also be able to collaborate with Eyantram for waste disposal, contributing to a cleaner environment.

Speaking on the occasion, Aashish Lohia, Director of Eyantram Waste Management, expressed his enthusiasm for this initiative, stating, "I am very excited to be part of this transformative initiative, bringing CSIR-NML's PCB recycling technology to the forefront of e-

waste management in India. Our goal is to create a pollution-free society while preserving precious natural resources for future generations."

The technology developed by NML is designed to efficiently recover high-purity metals while preventing contamination from toxic substances. The process includes mechanical pre-treatment of waste PCBs, followed by leaching, solvent extraction, and electro-winning techniques to extract metals with over 99.99% purity. This cost-effective, indigenous, and environmentally friendly technology presents a groundbreaking solution for India's growing e-waste

problem. Dr. Sandip Ghosh Chowdhury, Director of CSIR-NML, emphasized the importance of this initiative, stating, "NML has transferred several indigenous technologies to Indian companies, and we look forward to more partnerships in the future to make India an e-waste-free society."

Dr. Manis Kumar Jha, Chief Scientist and Project Head, highlighted the significance of the project in alignment with the Government of India's Cleanliness Mission, stating, "With the proper implementation of this technology, we can expect a cleaner environment and increased employment opportunities for youth."

The partnership will not only help reduce industrial waste pollution but also generate employment opportunities for educated youth. The PCB recycling sector holds immense potential for boosting India's economy and fostering new startups in e-

waste management. In the future, this technology can be scaled up for small-scale industries, allowing more entrepreneurs to enter the field.

The event was attended by senior officials and scientists from CSIR-NML, including Dr. Manis Kumar Jha, Dr. Sanjay Kumar, Dr. Jhumki Hait, Dr. Ankur Sharma, Dr. Rekha Panda, and Ms. Karina Rani, along with Dr. S.K. Pal and Dr. Beena Kumari, who contributed to the successful technology transfer. Dr. Anjali Kumar Sahu addressed the media on the future possibilities of e-waste recycling in India.

With this successful MoU, India moves a step closer to sustainable e-waste management, reducing its ecological footprint while recovering high-value metals for industrial use.

This initiative is expected to drive innovation, create jobs, and pave the way for a cleaner, more sustainable future.

BSL spreads cleanliness message through cultural programme

PNS : BOKARO

Bokaro Steel Plant (BSL) organized a cultural program at the Human Resource (Learning & Development) Centre auditorium as part of its ongoing 'Swachhata Pakhwada' (Cleanliness Fortnight). The event saw enthusiastic participation from employees, senior officials, and members of the Bokaro Mahila Samiti.

Director In-Charge B.K. Tiwari played a central role in the event, emphasizing that true success in the cleanliness campaign would come only when it becomes an integral part of daily life. He urged employees and attendees to adopt cleanliness as a habit and mindset. Leading from the front, he administered a cleanliness pledge to reinforce the commitment toward a cleaner and healthier environment.

Under Tiwari's leadership, BSL has been actively promoting initiatives aligned with the Swachh Bharat Mission. He stressed that a clean workplace and surroundings are essential for productivity and well-being and highlighted the mission's role in achieving a developed



India. The cultural program included various performances focused on cleanliness. A joint team of current and former BSL employees presented the skit Swachhata Par Nidan. The RCL department staged Chhoti Si Soch, Bada Badlay, while the BGH team performed Atrangi Padosi. Additionally, Richa Priyadarshini from the Mahila Samiti recited a cleanliness-themed poem,

and artists from Sangeet Kala Academy showcased a mix of Odissi dance, classical instrumental and vocal performances, and a group dance based on Swachh Gange.

The event was jointly anchored by Shweta Kumar, Cultural Secretary of Sangeet Kala Academy, and Ravi Sinha, Junior Manager at BSL. It concluded with a vote of thanks from Chief of Communications Manikant Dhan.

Sportspersons, morning walkers upset over minister's statement in Assembly

PANKAJ : DHANBAD

Host of sports persons as well as morning walkers are sore over statement given by sports minister Sudiyya Kumar Sonu in Vidhan Sabha relating to Randhir Verma Stadium in reply to question raised by MLA Raj Sinha. Raj had raised issue of maintenance of this stadium that is located in heart of town besides other issues.

The minister in his reply stated that the stadium is being utilized for hosting sporting events in the coal

capital. While this statement of the minister reached common persons and sports via media they were shocked over the minister's statement.

An elderly person residing next to the stadium Srikant ji said, "in over the last one decade I have not seen any district level sports events being organised here bearing political rallies, some paid events and programmes on January 26 and August 15."

A senior member of

Dhanbad Cricket Association (DCA) who requested not to be quoted said, DCA has an office in this stadium but when it comes to organise district level tournaments one has to depend on BCCL for hosting such events. The condition of this stadium is not conducive for hosting cricket or as matter of fact any sports events due to poor ground conditions. Though boys can be seen holding practice in some corners, there is a difference between holding practice and hosting a tournament."

SAIL partners with McKinsey for digital transformation

PNS : BOKARO



Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) has signed a strategic agreement with McKinsey & Company India LLP to accelerate digital transformation across its operations. This initiative aims to enhance operational efficiency, optimize business processes, and improve customer experience through advanced technological solutions. The collaboration will focus on integrating AI, cloud computing, and data analytics to modernize key areas from mining to marketing while ensuring high safety and compliance standards. By adopting cutting-edge digital capabilities, SAIL aims to strengthen its competitive edge and deliver superior quality products. The three-year initiative sets an ambitious target of ₹1,000 crore in annual value realization, reinforcing SAIL's commitment to innovation and long-term growth.

FAITH, FRAGILITY, AND THE FIGHT FOR BALANCE



BY RAJEEV KUMAR

On Saturday, March 16, 2025, my Bhabhi Sarla, my wife Indira, and I embarked on a sacred pilgrimage to Baidyanath Temple, one of the twelve Jyotirlingas, followed by Darshan at Basukinath Temple, a revered Shiva shrine around 43 kms from Deoghar, considered to be the court of Baba Baidyanath, where Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati are worshipped together, symbolizing divine union and devotion. Our journey led us to Deoghar, 250 kms away from Ranchi, where we arrived around 6:30 PM. Initially, we faced some uncertainty regarding our accommodation due to the absence of SP Deoghar, A. P. Ddungdung, from the district headquarters. However, this momentary challenge was soon resolved, and we found ourselves comfortably settled in

the VIP suites of the sprawling Deoghar Circuit House. The dinner arranged by the SSP for us at the circuit house featured an exquisite selection of both Chinese and continental dishes, which we enjoyed to our heart's content. The delightful flavours of these culinary creations will linger in our memories for a long time. This thoughtful gesture not only showcased the SSP's refined taste and elegance but also reflected his deep respect and regard for me. After a restful night, we were blessed with a divine Darshan of Baba Baidyanath early the next morning. The temple, teeming with devout worshippers on an auspicious Monday, resonated with chants and an air of spiritual fervor. Our Panda, Pyare Lal, a towering figure known for his deep knowledge and meticulous approach to rituals, guided us through the sacred proceedings with remarkable attention to detail. Amidst the surging crowd of Shiva devotees, the experience was nothing short of transcendental.

Following this, we proceeded to Baba Basukinath, where the Darshan, though equally spiritual, was far less crowded. The police arrangements ensured a smooth and hassle-free experience, allowing us to pay our respects with ease. With our hearts filled with

divine blessings and gratitude, we parted ways—Sarla Bhabhi and Indira returned to Ranchi, while I embarked on the next leg of my journey, a spiritual retreat at Rikhiapeeth, Deoghar. My purpose for visiting Rikhiapeeth was twofold—seeking spiritual upliftment and enhancing my mental and physical well-being. Upon arrival, I was warmly welcomed by a Sadhvi on duty, who facilitated the registration process and issued my identity card. I was then escorted to a serene and well-appointed suite, which included an attached bathroom, a drawing room, and a dining area—my peaceful abode for the next eight days or so I thought.

Eager to immerse myself in the ashram's discipline, I quickly settled in and managed to partake in Prasad just before lunchtime concluded. Later that afternoon, Swami Surya Prakash Ji, accompanied by Swami Ananta, personally took me to the lounge at Patanjali Bhavan. There, Swami Surya Prakash provided a comprehensive briefing on the activities and schedule I would be engaged in during my stay. Swami Ananta was assigned to oversee my daily routine and ensure my needs were met. The warmth and positivity of Swami Surya Prakash were truly uplifting, and he hinted at the possibility of an auspicious encounter—the

Darshan of Swami Satsangananda Saraswati (Swami Satsangi)—during her scheduled inspection of construction and other activities the following morning.

After my meeting with Swami Surya Prakash lasting 15 to 20-minute, I got the chance to meet a couple of sevaks, offering me insights into the ashram's daily operations and their roles. After an early dinner at 6:00 pm—a departure from my usual schedule—I took a serene 5-kilometer walk within the campus, enveloped in peace and tranquility. With a mind brimming with thoughts, I looked forward to the days ahead, ready to embrace the spiritual discipline and profound calm that Rikhiapeeth had to offer. The next morning, March 18, 2025, I awoke at 4:00 am, feeling refreshed and eager to embrace the day's unfolding experiences in this new sanctuary. Following my morning mantras and a brisk cold bath—owing to either an unresponsive geyser or my unfamiliarity with its operation—I prepared for the day. Punctually at 5:40 am, I arrived at the Patanjali Bhavan gate, as scheduled. A vehicle transported us to the main building for the havan ceremony, which commenced precisely at 6:00 am. Participating in the rituals was exhilarating; the mantras were chanted rapidly yet rhythmically, syn-

chronized with offerings into the Agni kund. The vibrations from the chants permeated the environment, imparting immense spiritual joy—a profound experience that resonated deeply, marking my first encounter with such profound spiritual elation. Following the havan, I engaged in the day's scheduled activities, including yoga asanas, pranayama, and Yoga Nidra. Around 11:30 am, I was granted the rare privilege of meeting Swami Satsangananda Saraswati during her visit to Patanjali Bhavan to oversee various construction endeavors. Meeting such a distinguished spiritual leader face-to-face was profoundly inspiring. In our brief interaction, she warmly welcomed me, expressing joy at my presence in the ashram and encouraging me to feel at home. She instructed the arrangement of a competent yoga instructor to guide me in daily yoga sessions of at least one hour. Her aura exuded positivity and warmth, an experience I will cherish throughout my life. I feel deeply blessed to have received her blessings. After an extraordinary and blessed meeting with Peethadhivari of Rikhiapeeth, I had no inkling of the storm that was about to engulf me. On the afternoon of March 19, 2025, as I awoke around 3:00 PM, I was suddenly seized by an

BSNL TWWO honours women achievers

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR



The BSNL Telecom Women's Welfare Association (TWWO), Jamshedpur, held a special meeting to recognize the contributions of outstanding female officers and employees. In an event marked by appreciation and celebration, Rakhi Biruli was honored as the Best Female Officer, while Usha Devi received the award for Best Female Employee—both nominated by the Jharkhand Circle. Additionally, Kirti Madam

was felicitated for securing a prestigious national ranking for Jamshedpur in Kala Manjusha, an initiative promoting art and culture. Jyoti Srivastava was also recognized for her remarkable achievement in booking the highest number of connections under the FTTH (Fiber to the Home) provisioning. The event coincided with

International Women's Day, where all attendees celebrated by cutting a cake and congratulating each other. On this occasion, President Kiran Rai spoke about the importance of women empowerment and outlined future welfare programs aimed at supporting and uplifting women within the organization. The event was graced by the presence of Secretary Sunita Singh, Treasurer Smita Kujur, Jyotsna Dwivedi, Shilpi Shikha, and several other distinguished members of the association.

THE WRITER IS A RETIRED IPS OFFICER, WHO WAS DGP OF JHARKHAND. VIEWS ARE PERSONAL.

Govt plans to conduct Caste based census in State next year

Congress MLA Pradeep Yadav during question hour raised the issue of pending caste census in State

PNS : RANCHI
Congress MLA Pradeep Yadav during question hour on Monday raised the issue of pending caste census in the State. He drew the attention of the State Government in completing the caste census in the year 2025 in the interest of Dalits, tribals, backward and majority.

Reforms and Official Language has been made the nodal agency. But despite more than one year, the caste census has not been done. Whereas in Telangana, which took the decision much later than Jharkhand, the caste census has been completed. The report has also been released there.

In response to the query raised by Yadav, Minister-in-charge Deepak Birua said that it is the responsibility of the Centre to conduct the census, as it is a subject of the central list.

Therefore, it would be appropriate to call it a caste survey here. He said that the

state government wants to conduct the caste survey. Therefore, the proposal was passed in the cabinet. After this, the Jharkhand Executive Rules were amended on 19 July 2024. The Personnel Department has issued an order in this regard on 4 March 2025.

It has to be seen how much it will cost to conduct the caste survey. How many people will be needed? At what level this work has to be done. Therefore, the whole matter is under process.

The Minister in charge said that the state government wants to conduct the caste survey.



Minister Sudivya Kumar speaks in the House during the Budget Session of State Assembly in Ranchi on Monday. (Courtesy: Jharkhand Vidhan Sabha TV)

In this answer, Pradeep Yadav said that the Telangana government had engaged 80 thousand teachers of the state for the caste survey.

10 thousand supervisors were engaged in this work. This work was the responsibility of the Planning Department. At the same time, the survey work was completed within 25 days. There were 75 questions in the form.

There was also a column of religion. There is talk of Sarna code in Jharkhand. A column related to this can be inserted here too.

The government should

tell what has happened in this direction so far. Which agency will the government conduct the survey?

The Minister in charge said that the government is serious about this. The whole matter is under process. Talks have also been held with one or two agencies. The government will see how the survey was done in Telangana and Bihar.

More focus will be given in this direction in the coming financial year. On this, Congress MLA Rajesh Kachhap said that this government is not only in the interest of the state but also in the interest of the country.

States that took a decision after Jharkhand have completed this work. While conducting a survey in Jharkhand, it should be kept in mind that this work should not be done during the time of Dhankatni or farming.

Meanwhile, in another development minister Sudivya Kumar Sonu said that after completing the process of triple test in Jharkhand, elections will be held in 48 municipal bodies along with OBC reservation. Minister Sudivya Kumar Sonu has said this in response to Saryu Rai's short notice question in the assembly on March 24.

Cong wants to snatch OBC rights with Muslim quota: Marandi

PNS : RANCHI
BJP State President and Leader of Opposition Babul Marandi today took a big dig at the Congress Party. Marandi said that the history of the Congress Party is anti-backward. Even today the Congress Party is carrying forward this tradition. The same Congress Party never gave constitutional recognition to the Backward Classes Commission. He said that the Congress government of Karnataka has become so blind in the politics of appeasement that it has provided 4% reservation to the Muslim community in government contracts by breaking into the reservation of the OBC community. He said that this decision under the leadership of Rahul Gandhi, who roams the whole country with the 'Red Book' of the Constitution and sheds crocodile tears for the OBC community, is not only the culmination of minority appeasement, but is also an open attack on the constitutional rights of the OBC, SC and ST communities.

He said that the Congress government has cut 4% reservation from the OBC quota



and given it to Muslim contractors under 'Category-II B'. This decision is against the spirit of social justice. He asked the Congress leadership if this is the so-called 'social justice' of the Congress - in which the politics of appeasement is done by snatching the rights of the majority of the deprived classes?

The Rajya Sabha witnessed a heated exchange on Monday as the BJP accused the Congress government in Karnataka of providing Muslim reservation, and also claimed that the Congress leaders were keen to amend the Constitution for this.

Parliamentary Affairs

Minister Kiren Rijju raised the allegations, which Mallikarjun Kharge, the Congress President and Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, strongly denied.

The Karnataka Assembly over Opposition protests demanding a judicial probe into allegations of honey-trap, a Bill was passed Friday to provide 4% reservation for Muslims in public contracts.

Leader of Opposition R Ashoka termed the Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurements (Amendment) Bill, which was piloted by Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H K Patil, "unconstitutional".

CMPDI observes World Tuberculosis Day

PNS : RANCHI
CMPDI observed World Tuberculosis Day 2025 with the theme, "Yes! We Can End TB: Commit, Invest, Deliver" at its HQs, Ranchi on Monday. On this occasion, CMPDI organised Tuberculosis Awareness Campaign, wherein voluntary counselling on Tuberculosis was provided to 200 nos. of persons and screening for TB was done on 40 nos. of TB suspected people.

Dr. Om Prakash, Chief Medical Officer and Nodal

Officer (Tuberculosis), CMPDI (HQ), and his team sensitized people about the TB, its effects, treatment methods, and the importance of early diagnosis, etc. Contract Workers, Sanitation employees and people from surrounding areas attended the awareness camp, helping to spread awareness about the disease and its prevention.

This campaign highlights CMPDI's commitment to community health and efforts to combat tuberculosis through education, prevention, and screening.



BJP should clear stand on Manipur and delimitation: JMM

PNS : RANCHI
Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), on Monday, attacked Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led Central Government for the situation in Manipur and on-going delimitation of parliamentary seats and the State Assembly seats.

The party said that BJP is increasing the numbers of parliamentary seats in Hindi belt compared to other states for its own political safe zone through the delimitation. This will create a ditch between relations among North Indian States and South Indian States.

Addressing a press meet at the part headquarter in the State Capital JMM General Secretary cum Spokesperson Supriyo Bhattacharya said that during recently held BJP's mother organisation Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) Pratinidhi Sabha meet these two issues of Manipur and delimitation raised prominently. RSS asked several questions to the Government on these two issues but the Government was not replied, he added.

Bhattacharya also said that the BJP led Central Government is by its malign intention trying to create a safe zone for future through the ongoing delimitation. It has not published the Census report of 2011 which has



JMM General Secretary Supriyo Bhattacharya during a press conference in Ranchi on Monday. PNS

completed and the Central Government is holding the delimitation on Census of 2001.

"Almost all seats changed their demographic equation in these years. The last delimitation was held in 2008 on the basis of 2001 Census and then Delimitation Commission of India decided that the next delimitation would be held in 2026. We can easily understand by the example of Jharkhand that what it was in 2001 and now it is completely changed," said Bhattacharya.

The party General Secretary alleged that through the delimitation BJP is trying to weaken South India and North-East India and East India's representation in the parliament. "As per information we are get-

ting the seats parliamentary seats will increase in Uttar Pradesh from 80 to 143, in Bihar from 40 to 79, in Madhya Pradesh from 29 to 52, in Maharashtra from 48 to 76, in Gujarat from 26 to 43, in Rajasthan from 25 to 50, in Andhra and Telangana from 42 to 52 and in West Bengal from 42 to 60," he added.

Replying to question Bhattacharya said that JMM is opposing the amendment in Waqf Board Act and the party will participate in protest on March 26 against the upcoming Waqf Board Amendment Bill. In Jharkhand the Waqf Board Act is working as per the law and Rajya Sabha MP, Sarfaraj Ahmad is Chairman in the State of the Waqf Board Committee.

State bags award for TB eradication campaign

PNS : RANCHI
World Tuberculosis Day was organized on 24 March 2025 by the Ministry of Health, Government of India at Vigyan Bhawan, Delhi, in which representatives from all the states participated. In this program, the states performing better in the field of TB were honoured by the Union Health Minister JP Nadda, in the same sequence, Jharkhand state was awarded the award for increasing the notification of TB patients, which was received by State Tuberculosis Officer Dr. Kamlesh Kumar, it is known that in the state last year in 2023, 60547 TB patients were notified and in the year 2024, an increase was registered and it increased to around 63755.

This is the result of successful supervision and implementation of the active TB search campaign and 100-day intensive TB search campaign (from 7 December 2024 to 17 March 2025) in four districts of the state, Ramgarh, Hazaribagh, Simdega and Gumla district, which was reviewed by the Health Minister Dr. Irfan Ansari, Additional Secretary of the Department Chief Secretary Ajay Kumar Singh and National Health Mission's Campaign Director Abu Imran have been reviewing the TB eradication program from time to time. The Campaign Director congratulated the officials and employees on this achievement and said that they will continue to work in the same way so that the goal of TB eradication can be achieved on time. In this program, District TB Officers of Koderma, Ramgarh, Chatra, Chaibasa and Latehar along with State Program Manager NHM, Anima Kisko were also present.



Chief Minister Hemant Soren, MLA Kalpana Soren, Ministers in the State government alongwith a large number of fasting people attending Daawat-e-Iftar, on the auspicious occasion of the month of Ramzan at the Chief Minister's residence in Ranchi on Monday. PNS

DGP HOLDS MEETING WITH PROBATIONARY IAS OFFICERS

PNS : RANCHI
Director General and Inspector General of Police, Anurag Gupta, welcomed probationary IAS officers Lokesh Warange, Aditya Pandey, Kumar Rajat, Arnab Mishra and Abhinav Prabhush in the Police Headquarters auditorium today on 24.03.2025 and briefly discussed the work of the Police Department.

The Director General of Police, Jharkhand, in his address to the probationary officers, briefly informed about administrative coordination, police functioning, Naxalism, cyber-crime, police intelligence system, women harassment, disaster management, law/law and order management and internal security. He guid-



ed the probationary officers on the challenges faced during the service and their effective solutions. Also, all the senior police officers present in the auditorium also shared brief information about the work of their respective departments with the probationers.

On this occasion, in

addition to Director General of Police, Jharkhand, Dr. Sanjay Anandroo Lathkar, Additional Director General of Police (Operations), Suman Gupta, Additional Director General of Police (Training & Modern), Jharkhand, Manoj Kaushik, Inspector General of Police (Headquarters), Amol Vinukant Homkar, Inspector General of Police (Operations), Jharkhand, Prabhat Kumar, Inspector General of Police (Spl Branch), Asim Vikrant Minj, Inspector General of Police (CID), Jharkhand, A. Vijayalakshmi, Inspector General of Police (Training), Indrajit Mahtha, Deputy Inspector General of Police, Jharkhand Jaguar, S. Karthik, Deputy Inspector General of Police (Jharkhand Police), Naushad Alam, Deputy Inspector General of Police (Personnel), Chandan Kumar Jha were present. Deputy Inspector General of Police (SIB), Amit Renu, Superintendent of Police (Operations) and Nathu Singh Meena, Superintendent of Police (SIB) were present.

CLEAR AND DRY WEATHER TO REMAIN IN J'KHAND TILL MARCH 29

PNS : RANCHI
The weather pattern prevailing in Jharkhand for the last four days is going to change. The weather will remain clear and dry till March 29, and there is no possibility of rain during this period. Minimum and maximum temperatures may increase.

The maximum temperature may increase by 9 to 10 degrees Celsius in the next five days, while the minimum temperature is likely to increase by 4 to 5 degrees.

The Meteorological Center has forecast that the maximum temperature of Ranchi may reach 35 degrees Celsius in the next four to five days. On Sunday, the maximum temperature of Ranchi was around 26 degrees Celsius, while the temperature of most districts of the state remained below 35 degrees Celsius.

The Meteorological Center has forecast that the maximum temperature of Ranchi may reach 35 degrees Celsius in the next four to five days. On Sunday, the maximum temperature of Ranchi was around 26 degrees Celsius, while the temperature of most districts of the state remained below 35 degrees Celsius.

The Meteorological Department said that the maximum temperature may increase by 4 to 6 degrees in the next five days.

CCL organizes free health checkup camp

CCL's Jan Arogya Kendra, Gandhinagar organized a free anaemia health checkup camp on Monday in Sodag village of Ranchi. 102 people were examined free of cost by specialist doctors and given medical advice. In the camp, especially haemoglobin, blood sugar, hypertension etc. were examined free of cost and all were given free medicines. CMS, CCL, Dr Ratnesh Jain, CMO, CSR, Incharge, Dr Preeti Tigga, Dr Deepali, Dr Ashima, Dr Shilpi Jha, Dr Veena Singh, Dr Benjamin, Dr Shimpi, Munna Kumar Singh, Kamlesh Pandit, Harman and all the para medical staff made a commendable contribution in the successful organisation of the camp.

ICICI Pru GIFT Select launched

ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has launched a unique long-term savings product - ICICI Pru GIFT Select, a product designed to provide guaranteed income while preserving wealth. Amit Palta, Chief Product and Distribution Officer, ICICI Prudential Life Insurance, says that, our goal is to help customers achieve their long-term financial aspirations with certainty. The product offers flexibility, allowing customers to choose the duration of their guaranteed income while also receiving a lump sum on maturity in a tax-efficient manner. The increasing income feature, compounding at 5% annually, helps them manage inflation effectively. ICICI Prudential Life Insurance is also transforming life insurance distribution with digital innovations, empowering agents through the IPRU Edge mobile app. Between April and December 2024, the productivity of agents using IPRU Edge surged by 25%. Notably, 98% of eligible agents using the app were paid commissions on the same day.

Graduation Day-Chrysalis at SBPS

Sarala Birla Public School, Ranchi celebrated Pre-Primary School Graduation Day- Chrysalis with gusto and enthusiasm. The event commenced with lighting of the ceremonial lamp followed by felicitation of honourable Chief Guest, Dr. Anant Sinha, a renowned plastic surgeon. The school choir group presented a melodious welcome song which created a joyful aura. A special dance performance - 'Kalptaru' was presented by the students of Std. I. Students were also given special category awards including 'Star Child' of the session, Best in academics', 'Best in co-curricular', 'Outstanding Achiever', 'Perfect century awards for different subjects. Students with 100% attendance award received medals and certificates under Prawaah 2024-25. Chief Guest, Dr Sinha, inspired the students with his words of encouragement and wished them the best for their future. Principal, Paramjit Kaur, lauded the creativity and hard work of the students and teachers.



CM Yogi Adityanath completes eight years in office

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ Lucknow

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has completed eight years in office, redefining governance through a blend of Hindutva ideology and people-centric policies. From being a firebrand monk-politician to becoming a two-time chief minister, his leadership has shaped the state's political and economic landscape, earning both admiration and criticism.

Born in Pauri Garhwal, Uttarakhand, Yogi Adityanath rose from a humble background to lead India's most populous state. As the head of Gorakshapeth, he combined religious authority with political influence, pushing Hindutva from the fringes to the mainstream of governance.

Political analyst RN Bajpayee noted, "Yogi Adityanath has successfully positioned Hindutva as a governance model, not just an ideological stance. His leadership has ensured that religious identity is now an integral part of political discourse."

Since becoming Chief Minister in 2017, Adityanath has consolidated the Bharatiya

Janata Party's (BJP) influence in Uttar Pradesh. His unexpected selection for the top post was initially met with skepticism, but he has since emerged as a dominant political figure. His re-election in 2022 reinforced his hold over the state, making him the first Chief Minister in nearly four decades to return to power for a second consecutive term.

In a political landscape where caste equations and identity politics often dictate electoral outcomes, Yogi has shifted the focus towards governance marked by religious nationalism, law and order, and economic progress. His slogan, "I never lose," has proven true both electorally and administratively, making him a formidable political force.

Adityanath's first term focused on transforming Uttar Pradesh's image, particularly in law and order. His administration launched an aggressive crackdown on crime, reinforcing a zero-tolerance policy against corruption and mafia elements. This shift, according to political observer Rajendra Kumar, was pivotal in reshaping the state's perception.



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath during a press conference on the completion of eight years of the state government in Lucknow

His second term has emphasized reshaping Uttar Pradesh's identity on the national and global stage. Today, the state is no longer seen as crime-ridden or riot-prone but is recognized for its improved governance and economic growth. Several other states now look to implement the "UP model" of governance.

"Yogi Adityanath's governance has altered Uttar Pradesh's narrative," Kumar said. "From a state known for lawlessness and caste-based politics, it is now being projected as an emerging economic powerhouse."

Under his leadership, the state economy has surged from being the seventh-largest in India to the second-largest. Infrastructure projects like Noida's Film City, data parks, international airports in Ayodhya and Jewar, expressways, and the promotion of MSMEs through the One District One Product (ODOP) initiative have fueled this growth.

Beyond policy, Adityanath's governance has challenged political superstitions. Unlike previous chief ministers who avoided visiting Noida due to fears of los-

ing power, he has frequently traveled there, dismissing such beliefs. His austere lifestyle, in line with his identity as a monk, has also reinforced his public image as a disciplined and mission-driven leader.

The Road Ahead: National Role or State Politics?

As Uttar Pradesh prepares for the 2027 Assembly elections, speculation remains over Adityanath's future.

With growing national prominence, some political observers see him as a potential prime ministerial candidate in the coming years.

"His brand of politics has given Hindutva a governance model," Bajpayee said. "Whether he continues in state politics or moves to a larger national role, his influence on Indian politics is undeniable."

With a focus on governance and Hindutva, Yogi Adityanath has carved a unique political identity.

As Uttar Pradesh moves towards further economic growth, his leadership will remain a key talking point in the nation's evolving political landscape.

TMC sword hangs over undisciplined MLAs

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ Kolkata

The top Trinamool Congress leadership is angered and worried about its "disorderly" MLAs who had nearly brought the Government down "by a whisker" this Budget season that ended a couple of days ago.

According to the party sources despite a "whip" issued at the instance of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee about 50 to 100 MLAs absented from the State Assembly. This, on a day when a finance bill and an education bill were to be passed. "Thankfully the BJP leadership had walked out on a different issue ... or else had they demanded a vote on the Bill it would have been the worse day for the party in past 14-15 years of its rule," said a senior minister. "They had the audacity of even ignoring a whip issued at the instance of the Chief Minister," the leader said adding the party disciplinary committee was inquiring into the matter and "if need be strong action will be taken against them."

According to Chief Whip Nirmal Ghosh he had had issued a whip for all MLAs to attend the last two days of the Budget Session on March 19 and 20 because the Chief Minister personally wanted everyone to remain present in the House.

However "the leadership was dismayed by the fact that more than 50 MLAs ... and it could be even near hundred ... remained absent ... either they did not know the what Whip means or else they had some 'intentions' to embarrass the Chief Minister ... the disciplinary committee will find it out and deal with them accordingly," the leader said.

State Parliamentary Affairs Minister Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay has asked Ghosh to submit a report on the number of leaders who generally remain absent from the House and who skipped the Session on the specific days when they were asked to do so, the leader said. The TMC would not however provide the names of the MLAs who skipped the House on the given dates.

The inquiry will be complete by Wednesday and action will be taken by the end of this week senior leaders said adding, "our supreme leader Mamata Banerjee never encourages indiscipline ... particularly when some instructions come from the top ... the Government would have been hugely embarrassed had the BJP remained present on that day and had the bills been put to vote ... we would have to withdraw the bills," the minister said without hazarding a guess whether according to rules the Government would itself have collapsed or the Opposition had

asked for the Chief Minister's resignation in the least in case of "non passage" of the bills.

Though the BJP leadership would not comment on "TMC's internal matters" some of its leaders said how a number of Trinamool legislators were in touch with the saffron outfit and did not rule out a link between their defiance of the whip and the factionalism that was plaguing the party.

Incidentally the development takes place at a time when there are rumors that there is a deep schism between TMC general secretary Abhishek Banerjee and the Chief Minister who is also his aunt.

Though the junior Banerjee earlier said that he would never ditch the Chief Minister even if he is beheaded, inside sources said there was a serious churning within the party between the old timers loyal to an aging Mamata Banerjee and the Gen N faithful to Abhishek.

When asked to comment on the issue the TMC minister said that the absence of the MLAs from the House should not be seen in the backdrop of factionalism as "there is no one in TMC who can win without the blessings of Mamata Banerjee ... and so there is no one in the party who will dare to defy her ... still we are not taking chances and the truth will soon be found out."

Home Minister Amit Shah visit to Bengal postponed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kolkata

The three-day Bengal visit of Union Home Minister Amit Shah later this month has been postponed, State BJP president Sukanto Majumdar has said. Shah was scheduled to visit Bengal between March 27 and 29 to take part in some organisational meetings.

Majumdar said that the visit was postponed as it coincided with Eid ul Fitr.

Shah was to visit Bengal at a time when there was a churning within the State unit regarding the election/selection of a new State president as Majumdar was likely to vacate his present post on account of his becoming a Union Minister.

There were plans to get a new State president before Shah's visit but no name has yet been finalized, inside sources said. "It is important that a new State president placed so as to discuss the strategic and organizational issues with a leader as high as Amit Shah ji ... we hope we get a new State president by when he comes on a new date," a BJP State committee leader said.

According to the party rules more than half of the district presidents have to be

elected before a State president's name is announced.

The Bengal BJP which has 42 organisational districts had recently elected 25 district presidents and as such there was no problem in getting a new State president. However inside sources said that the appointment of a new State president was being delayed as a number of names were doing the rounds for the post. While one faction wants Majumdar to continue in his post, a second group wants reappointment of former MP and senior leader Dilip Ghosh to be appointed in his place. Ghosh had been the party's State president from 2015 to 2021 between which the Bengal BJP witnessed maximum jump winning 18 parliamentary seats and 77 Assembly seats.

There are other names which are doing the rounds too. These include those of State Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari, former MP Locket Chatterjee, and former State president Rahul Sinha, sources said. Though Adhikari has gone on record saying that he was not in the race considering the one-man-one-post formula sources close to him said that he too was interested in becoming the State president.

Aircraft carrying Himachal deputy CM misses landing at Shimla's airport

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Shimla

An aircraft carrying over 30 passengers, including Himachal Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Mukesh Agnihotri and Director General of Police Atul Verma, from Delhi missed the landing spot at Jubbarhatti Airport Monday morning. According to eyewitnesses, the aircraft crossed the runway and hit the studs at the edge of the airstrip. No casualties were reported.

The flight had taken off from Delhi after routine checks and engineers are inspecting the aircraft to determine if there was a technical glitch, airport authorities said.

"The runway is small and we cannot deny this fact. As a layman, I can say that while landing, the plane did not touch the ground where it was supposed to and came to the end of the airstrip," Agnihotri told reporters. "Only the airport authority or the Directorate General of Civil Aviation can tell what happened, but I can say that there was a problem in landing," he said, adding, "We could see that the runway was ending."

Person with close links to Kerala CM sentenced to life imprisonment

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan suffered a major setback on Monday as a person close to him was sentenced to undergo life imprisonment along with seven others by a court in Thalassery in connection with the gruesome murder of a former CPI(M) worker in 2005.

Manoraj Narayanan, brother of P M Manoj, the powerful media advisor to Pinarayi Vijayan and seven others were directly and physically involved in the murder. Manoj and family are close to the chief minister and his family.

The victim Sooraj had left the CPI(M) on his own and was planning to join the BJP when the murderers struck. In the CPI(M) in Kerala, members are not permitted to quit the party. The party leadership usually expels or order the execution of the troublemaker. What stands out in this particular case is the link between Manoraj Narayanan, a district level leader of the CPI(M) and the CMO.

Allahabad HC declines quash case against man for intimate videos

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ Prayagraj

The Allahabad High Court has declined to quash criminal proceedings against a man accused of uploading an intimate video of himself and his wife on Facebook, emphasising that marriage does not grant a husband ownership over his wife or diminish her right to privacy and autonomy.

Justice Vinod Diwakar, while dismissing the petition to quash the charge sheet, remarked, "By uploading an intimate video on Facebook, the applicant (husband) has gravely breached the sanctity of the marital relationship. A husband is expected to honour the trust, faith, and confidence reposed in him by his wife, especially in the context of their intimate relationship."

The court further observed that sharing such content constitutes a violation of the confidentiality inherent in a marital bond.

"This breach of trust undermines the very foundation of marriage and is not protected by the marital bond," the order stated.

Stressing the wife's individuality and rights, the court added, "A wife is not an

extension of her husband but an individual with her own rights, desires, and agency. Respecting her bodily autonomy and privacy is not just a legal obligation but a moral imperative in fostering a truly equal relationship."

The case was registered in Mirzapur district against Pradumn Yadav under Section 67 of the Information Technology (IT) Act. His wife alleged that Yadav secretly recorded an intimate act without her consent, uploaded it on Facebook, and later shared it with her cousin and other villagers.

The husband's counsel argued that since the complainant is his legally wedded wife, the charges under Section 67 of the Information Technology Act were not applicable, adding that there was a possibility of reconciliation between the couple.

However, the Additional Government Advocate opposed the plea, asserting that legal marriage does not grant the husband the right to make or distribute an obscene video of his wife.

The court, siding with the prosecution, refused to quash the case, reinforcing the principle that privacy and consent remain paramount in a marital relationship.

Assam Assembly Deputy Speaker attacked

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Guwahati

The Assam Assembly on Monday witnessed an uproarious situation with the ruling party alleging that Deputy Speaker Numal Momin was attacked by Congress MLA Nurul Huda just outside the House, leading to adjournment.

The Congress legislators attended the Assam Assembly wearing black dresses to protest against ruling BJP MLA Rupiyoti Kurmi, who verbally abused opposition MLAs and tried to physically attack them inside the House last week.

Before the session started, the Congress legislators held a sit-in protest outside the Speaker's chamber in the Assembly building demanding action against Kurmi.

"I got a WhatsApp from Momin that he was attacked by Nurul Huda and he is now hospitalised. I request the Speaker to file a police case as it happened outside the House and then police will investigate it," Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said in between the Question Hour.

Moments before that, Momin was seen sitting inside the House and attended the session. He left the House after some time.

Speaker Biswajit Daimary said he has asked the officials to check the matter.



Deputy Speaker Dr Numal Momin seen in Assembly with a bandage in hand. He said after he was injured due to assault by opposition members, he had to consult a doctor and get treatment

Reacting to CM's allegations, Leader of the Opposition Debabrata Saikia demanded a House Committee to investigate the matter instead of giving a police case as it was reported to take place inside the Assembly building.

The opposition comprising Congress, AIUDF and CPI(M) went to the Well of the House and protested against Kurmi and ruling party's statement regarding the alleged attack on Momin.

Led by Sarma, the treasury benches too countered with shouting and said Momin, a tribal, was attacked by the opposition. "This will set a bad precedence that an indigenous tribal has been attacked inside the Assembly complex. This is going to be a big issue," the CM said.

Work to link Chhattisgarh's Naxal-hit people to mainstream in final stage: President

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Raipur

President Droupadi Murmu on Monday said the work to integrate people affected by Left Wing Extremism to the society's mainstream has reached the final stage in Chhattisgarh and expressed confidence that the state will soon get rid of the Naxal menace.

Addressing the Chhattisgarh legislative assembly as a part of its silver jubilee year celebration, Murmu said the House has set the highest standards of democratic traditions.

It has presented a unique example of excellent parliamentary conduct not only to the rest of India but also to all the democratic systems of the world, she said.

The president also appreciated that the 90-member state assembly has 19 women legislators and the number of female voters in the 2023 state elections was more than males.

All the MLAs should make efforts that the number of women members increases in the next assembly, Murmu said.

An increase in the number of women legislators will be in line with the spirit of "Nari Shakti Vandan Adhinyam," she said.

"The task of integrating people affected by Left Wing Extremism into the main-

stream of the society has reached its final and decisive stage. I have been told that people of the Naxal-affected areas of Chhattisgarh want to move ahead on the path of development," she said.

"I am confident that you (the state) all will soon succeed in your efforts to completely free Chhattisgarh from extremism and add a golden chapter to the history of the state," she added.

There are 19 women MLAs in this House. In the 2023 assembly elections, the number of women voters was more than that of men. Thus, this House has received special support from the mothers, sisters and daughters of Chhattisgarh, Droupadi Murmu said.

"I request the women MLAs to always be ready to promote all the sisters working in every field of life. When all women promote other women working in various fields of the state, then men will also pay attention and the path will be paved for the development of women, whether she is a teacher, officer, social worker or entrepreneur, scientist or artist, labourer or farmer," President said.

"Our sisters make their place in the outside world by struggling hard while fulfilling their day-to-day domestic responsibilities. When all the sisters empower each



President Droupadi Murmu with Chhattisgarh Governor Ramen Deka and Assembly Speaker Raman Singh during the silver jubilee function of the state Assembly in Raipur

other, our society will become even stronger and sensitive. In this House, all the MLAs, especially the women members, should try to increase the number of women members in the next assembly," she added.

Late politician Mini Mata, who reflected the essence of Chhattisgarh, has a very respectable place in the parliamentary tradition of India, Murmu noted.

During the tenure of the first Lok Sabha, she was the first woman public represen-

tative from Chhattisgarh region to go to Parliament and was a Lok Sabha MP for five consecutive terms.

Mini Mata, who herself came from a deprived class, worked continuously for the welfare and uplift of the people, she said.

Hailing the Chhattisgarh legislative assembly, Murmu said it has made an extraordinary rule of the automatic suspension of members who enter the well during the House proceedings and has followed it. Murmu also expressed happiness that in the 25 years of the Chhattisgarh assembly (since the formation of the state in 2000), marshals have never been used in the House.

So far, the Chhattisgarh Vidhan Sabha has passed 565 bills, many of which are inspired by the goals of 'Antyodaya' and inclusive development, she said.

The president also appealed to policymakers of the state to ensure environmental conservation while moving ahead on the path of development.

There are ample opportunities for development in sectors like cement, mineral industry, steel, aluminium and power generation in Chhattisgarh, she said.

"This beautiful state is rich in lush green forests, waterfalls, and other natural boons. Your state has to move ahead on the path

of modern development and at the same time ensure the protection of the environment," she said.

All policy makers of the state have the responsibility to establish a balance between development and nature, Murmu said. "It is also your responsibility to connect all sections of the society with the journey of modern development," she added. Murmu said Baba Guru Ghasidas' (medieval-era social reformer) message of "Manke-Manke Ek Saman," which means all humans are equal, is there to guide all MLAs in the state, Murmu said.

The assembly members have to fulfil the resolution of social reforms that he had taken about 250 years ago for equality of the deprived sections, backward classes and women and build a better Chhattisgarh based on equality and social harmony, she said. "I am confident that the legislative assembly of Chhattisgarh will continue to provide proper direction to the overall progress of the state," Murmu said.

Governor Ramen Deka and assembly speaker Raman Singh also addressed the MLAs.

Earlier, Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai and Leader of Opposition Charan Das Mahant welcomed President Murmu to the House and expressed gratitude to her.

Editor's TAKE

Need for judicial accountability

The erosion of judicial integrity weakens the very foundation of democracy

The judiciary is often regarded as the last bastion of justice, fairness, and accountability. However, recent reports of large sums of unaccounted cash allegedly found in the residence of a judge in the Delhi High Court have once again raised serious concerns about corruption within the judicial system. Despite numerous allegations of corruption, impeachment proceedings against a Supreme Court or High Court judge have been initiated only four times in India's history. This raises pressing questions about the effectiveness of the current mechanisms in place to tackle judicial corruption and the urgent need for reform.

Our judicial system provides two primary mechanisms to deal with allegations of corruption against Supreme Court and High Court judges. The first is an in-house procedure established by the Supreme Court in 1999. Under this mechanism, complaints against judges are examined internally by the Chief Justice of India or the concerned High Court Chief Justice. If the allegations are deemed serious, a three-member committee comprising senior judges conducts an inquiry. However, this process is informal, lacks transparency, and rarely results in significant disciplinary action beyond an advisory to resign or a withdrawal of judicial work.

The second mechanism is impeachment by Parliament, a process enshrined in the Indian Constitution. However, the high threshold required—support from a two-thirds majority in both houses—makes impeachment an impractical tool. It is indeed a tedious process which hardly ever result in impeachment.

It is intriguing why corrupt judges remain unpunished. Several factors contribute to the de facto impunity enjoyed by judges. The in-house procedure lacks transparency, as inquiry reports remain confidential. The public and legal community remain unaware of actions taken against corrupt judges. But the biggest reason why judges go unpunished for their misdeeds is contempt laws. India's strict contempt of court laws make it difficult to openly discuss or investigate corruption allegations against judges. This suppresses public scrutiny and independent journalistic investigations. Besides, unlike other government institutions, the judiciary largely regulates itself, leading to a conflict of interest. An independent body to oversee judicial conduct is absent. Impeachment, the only constitutional method for removal, is highly politicised and seldom pursued, making it an ineffective deterrent.

To restore public trust and ensure accountability within the judiciary, the transparency in the system is the first condition. The in-house procedure must be made more transparent. Inquiry reports should be made public, and disciplinary actions against judges must be disclosed to prevent a culture of secrecy.

Contempt laws must be relaxed to allow greater public discourse and media scrutiny of judicial corruption. Establishing an autonomous commission to investigate judicial corruption, comprising retired judges, legal experts, and public representatives, would ensure impartiality and reduce conflicts of interest. The current impeachment mechanism is ineffective due to its high procedural threshold. Judges should be required to publicly disclose their assets and financial dealings periodically, similar to elected officials. This can serve as a deterrent.

The judiciary serves as the bedrock of democracy, and any erosion of its integrity weakens the very foundation of justice.

A system or institution is only as strong as the individuals who uphold it. If those in positions of power falter, there must be a robust and fool-proof mechanism to safeguard the sanctity of the judiciary and restore public trust.

Leaderspeak

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I have been a legislator for 36 years and I am well aware of my responsibilities. I possess basic common sense and would never propose altering the Constitution. My remarks have been taken out of context. They are misquoting me. I merely pointed out that several changes occur over time due to judicial rulings. Nowhere, did I suggest that we intend to modify the Constitution. We are a national party, we know what the Constitution is.

DK SHIVAKUMAR, DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER OF KARNATAKA



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Reviving the Yamuna

The newly elected Delhi government has placed the sustainable revitalisation of the Yamuna River at the forefront of its environmental agenda

The recently elected Delhi government has prioritised the sustainable cleaning and revitalisation of the Yamuna River in its environmentally friendly development plan. In line with this vision, the central government aims to convert the Yamuna into an exemplary river, establishing a standard for analogous restoration initiatives in other urban areas. Although efforts to reduce pollution from industrial effluents, drainage systems, and waste management are essential, the lasting effectiveness of this mission will significantly depend on scientific afforestation along the riverbanks.

The effort to beautify the banks of the Yamuna is an essential move towards revitalising the river's previous splendour. By combining sustainable tree planting with pollution management strategies, Delhi's authorities seek to establish a healthier, more robust river system that can act as an example for urban river restoration throughout the nation.

A crucial part of this strategy involves the organised planting of indigenous tree varieties and herbal plants. Creating herbal gardens in key locations throughout the river basin could greatly improve the ecological well-being of the Yamuna. This type of vegetation acts as a natural filter, capturing pollutants such as chemicals, fertilisers, and sediments before they enter the river, thus enhancing water quality. Furthermore, these plants offer essential habitats for birds, insects, and animals, promoting biodiversity and reinforcing the local ecosystem. Apart from ecological advantages, planting trees along the riverbanks is essential for stabilising soil and averting erosion, thereby lowering the chances of land degradation and flooding. The deeply established vegetation helps in groundwater replenishment by enabling rainwater to seep into the soil instead of being wasted as surface runoff.

Creating herbal gardens cum corridors that include medicinal plants, as well as indigenous trees and flora, close to the Yamuna River presents a unique opportunity with extensive advantages. In addition to improving the river's ecological well-being, this project presents considerable economic opportunities by providing medicinal herbs to the Ayurvedic and pharmaceutical sectors. The growing of these plants supports the Delhi government's larger initiatives to restore the Yamuna, tackle water pollution, and encourage sustainable water resource management.

As the demand for medicinal plants increases, species including Indian Barberrry (Daruhaldi), Licorice (Mulethi), Bael, Isabgol, Atis, Guggul, Amla, Senna, Brahmi, Jatamansi, Madhunashini, Kalmegh, Shatavari, Ashwagandha, Chirayata, Katuki,



Shankhpushpi, Ashoka, Giloy, Kokum, and Safed Musli are especially valued in Ayurvedic medicine. Throughout India, farmers growing these crops-like Shankhpushpi, Atis, Kuth, Kutki, Kapikachhu, and Karanjahave experienced notable rises in their earnings, aiding the growth of the Ayurvedic agricultural industry.

Several riverside plant species can further support this effort, including Latjeera, Moringa (Sahjan), Holy Basil (Tulsi), Khokli (Hulhul), Billy Goat Weed (Gandhi Buti), Garundi, Slender Amaranth (Chaulai), Apple of Sodom (Aak), Coco Grass (Nagarmotha), Egyptian Crowfoot (Murag), and Marvel Grass (Chimni). These plants not only contribute to ecological balance but also offer medicinal properties. For example, Latjeera is traditionally used to treat malaria, dysentery, asthma, hypertension, and diabetes, while Moringa is renowned for its high nutritional value and water purification abilities. Similarly, Tulsi plays a vital role in traditional Indian medicine, recognised for its immunity-boosting properties. Other suitable species for afforestation along the Yamuna include Mangium Babool, which thrives in alluvial soils, Peppermint, known for aiding digestion, Tamarind, which adapts well to various soil types and Senna, valued for its medicinal applications. Additionally, Chamomile is widely used for its calming effects, while Lemongrass, Shatavari, and Chebulic Myrobalan (Harad) offer both ecological and health benefits.

Beyond their medicinal value, these plants serve as natural water purifiers by filtering pollutants and improving water quality. They absorb harmful gases, mitigate noise pollution, reduce heat, and capture dust, making them effective air and water purifiers.

The cultivation of medicinal plants also supports biodiversity by creating habitats for diverse species, strengthening ecological balance.

Importantly, this initiative offers significant economic prospects for local communities. The growing, handling, and selling of medicinal plants can create a reliable source of revenue, encouraging business initiatives and enhancing the local economy.

Additionally, conserving these plants aids in protecting traditional knowledge systems, guaranteeing that indigenous wisdom is transmitted across generations. Promoting herbal medicine can lessen dependence on synthetic drugs, fostering a transition to natural and sustainable healthcare methods. Thus by employing a comprehensive strategy that combines ecological restoration, economic development, and the safeguarding of traditional knowledge, the rejuvenation of the Yamuna River can act as a blueprint for sus-

tainable management of urban rivers throughout India. A thoughtfully designed program aimed at nurturing and maintaining medicinal plants by the Yamuna River can act as an effective means for ecological restoration and economic growth. By encouraging areas rich in biodiversity, this initiative could draw visitors interested in traditional healing methods, thus boosting eco-tourism and strengthening economic sustainability.

For the project to achieve meaningful success, an inclusive strategy that actively involves the local farming community is crucial. Farmers cultivating in the Yamuna floodplain must be recognised as key stakeholders, serving as ecological guardians in the river restoration initiative. Instead of seeing their involvement as a hurdle, these farmers ought to be viewed as essential collaborators in this distinctive urban medicinal planting initiative. Globally, countries like Singapore and South Korea have effectively rejuvenated urban riverbanks while integrating sustainable agricultural practices involving local farmers, already engaged in cultivating vegetables and other crops in the region. India can draw from these examples by adopting a balanced approach that maintains agriculture while enhancing the health of the Yamuna.

(The writer is a former Executive Director, National Institute of Disaster Management and DG-AYUSH, Health Department, Bihar Government. Views expressed are personal)



SATENDRA SINGH

Keeping up with the Joneses

Opinion



SHARMILA VAIDYA

Keeping up with the Joneses is an old phrase that refers to the constant pressure of "keeping up" with the social status and wealth of one's friends and neighbours.

Research shows that this phrase originated with the Jones family, a wealthy and prominent New Yorker who began building elegant and grand mansions. In response, other New Yorkers tried to outdo them by constructing even more elaborate homes in the Hudson Valley.

In 1853, Elizabeth S. Jones built Wyndcliffe, a 24-room ornate mansion designed in the style of a Scottish castle. Soon, other wealthy families started building extravagant estates to showcase their wealth. This competition gave rise to the phrase "keeping up with the Joneses."

Interestingly, the sentiment behind this phrase has persisted even to this day. I have observed similar scenarios within my circle of friends. I remember, Anita and Sheila had been best friends for years. When Anita bought a beautiful three-bedroom house in an upscale neighbourhood, she couldn't wait to show her house to Sheila. "This place is amazing!" remarked Sheila as she admired the high ceilings and designer kitchen. It must have cost a fortune!

Anita beamed. "It was a bit pricey, but totally worth it.

The neighborhood is great, and the schools are top notch."

That evening Sheila went home feeling restless and envious of her friend. She and her husband had been considering upgrading their townhouse. Within three weeks, they found a house that was much bigger and grander than their friend's, located in a very upscale neighbourhood. However, they ended up spending more than they had budgeted. While they achieved their goal of finding a more impressive home, the financial strain left them constantly stressed.

It took me by surprise, when I read in the Forbes magazine that the average size of a home has tripled in the past 50 years, even with the family size consistently getting smaller. In addition, one in 10 Americans have to rent a storage unit, because they can't fit all of their stuff inside their giant homes.

Here is another scenario I observed. David, one of our friends, was ecstatic when he bought a luxury car. However, his excitement was short lived, when a friend arrived in a Mercedes - a more expensive car and a true status symbol. Suddenly, the pride David once felt began to fade. The same car he had proudly shown off to his neighbours and friends no longer seemed impressive. Before long, he stopped parking it outside his garage, as what once brought him joy now felt overshadowed.

There are many similar instances that we observe daily.

We take immense pleasure in portraying our best moments in life to the world, be it an expensive vacation, designer clothes, the latest gadgets or our busy social calendar. We are constantly trying to flaunt our perfect lifestyle to the world, especially on social media. Social media is one of the most powerful sources of displaying our choicest moments, which puts us in constant pressure and competition with each other. But why do we behave this way?

One can argue that it's just human behaviour, influenced by peer pressure, consumerism, commercialisation, social media-or all of the above. However, there should be an understanding that this facade can make us feel inadequate, burdened with financial stress with mounting debt and emotional stress in the form of anxiety and depression. It is like two parallel lines endlessly chasing each other, never quite meeting. Does it ever end? Maybe—when we stop measuring our worth against others and start defining fulfillment on our terms.

Instead of chasing status symbols, we should focus on what genuinely brings happiness—strong relationships, meaningful experiences, and financial stability. Breaking free from this cycle requires shifting our perspective, redefining success, and embracing gratitude. After all, wealth is not about what we own but about how fulfilled we feel.

The moment we stop comparing and start living for ourselves, we finally win the race that never truly existed.

(The writer is Houston based educator and author. Views expressed are personal)

Letters to the Editor

Regulating the coaching centres

Madam—It is a appreciable step of Rajasthan government to enact "The Rajasthan Coaching Centres (Control and Regulation) Bill" which aims at regulating Coaching Centres to curb the menace of student suicides which we find in the media frequently. Due to the toxic environment of coaching centres and particularly at Rajasthan's Kota which has become the country's education hub and it has been playing havoc with the young minds.

The Speaker Om Parksh Birla is member of Parliament from Kota is also trying to find the ways how the best can be done in this direction. Kota, home to the coaching market worth ₹5000 Crore, has become a killing field where dreams die at the altar of unreasonable expectations fuelled by parental and peer pressure. Here it is worth mentioning that parents expectations play a major part in this unholy happenings and it is expected from the parents that they should be aware about the actual capabilities of their sons or daughters. A sense of numbness has set in with several cases of student suicides being reported every year for over a decade now. At least six students are reported to have died by suicide in the town since the start of this year. The Bill mandates that coaching centres with over 50 students must register and meet specific standards to qualify for registration, in a bid to ensure greater accountability.

YASH PAL RALHAN | JALANDHAR

Carnage in Gaza continues

Madam—Refer to, "Israel strikes again, kill 26 Palestinians in Gaza" (March 24). The Gaza crisis is a stark illustration of the global order's failures, revealing Western double standards and the impotence of international institutions. The conflict transcends the Israeli-Palestinian dynamic, exposing a systemic breakdown in upholding international law and human rights. The disproportionate response and the international community's inability to hold Israel accountable highlight a disturbing trend.

Powerful nations, particularly in the West, often prioritise geopolitical interests over universal principles, leading to accusations of hypocrisy and eroding the credibility of international norms. The silence or muted criticism from these actors emboldens perpetrators and deepens the sense of injustice among those affected. International institutions like the UN, designed to prevent such conflicts, appear powerless. Security Council resolutions are vetoed, and humanitarian aid is often insufficient or obstructed. This impotence fosters a sense of disillusionment, particularly in the global South, where Western-led governance models are increasingly viewed with skepticism. The selective application of international law further fuels this perception, creating a breeding ground for resentment and instability.

AMARJEET KUMAR | HAZARIBAGH

Government sets the goal to eradicate TB

Madam—Tuberculosis (TB) is not merely a physical ailment, it is a mirror reflecting societal inequalities, economic hardships, and human insensitivity. This disease primarily spreads among those trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty, malnutrition, and unsanitary living conditions. Indian society has long perceived it as a curse, yet the reality remains that it can afflict anyone, regardless of their social or economic background.

The Government of India has set an ambitious goal of eradicating TB by 2025, five years ahead of the global target of 2030. Recent data indicates a 17.7 per cent decline in TB cases between 2015 and 2023, with a 21.4 per cent reduction in mortality rates. While this progress is encouraging, the stark reality remains that over 2.7 Million new cases emerged in 2023 alone, underscoring the deep-rooted nature of the disease. Under the "Nikshay Poshan Yojana," TB patients receive a monthly allowance of ₹500 as nutritional support, but this amount falls short of meeting their dietary needs. Furthermore, the rise in drug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) cases is making treatment increasingly complex and prolonged.

The fight against TB extends beyond the medical domain; it must also be waged in the realm of social awareness. This disease does not merely inflict physical suffering, it also subjects patients to societal exclusion and mental distress.

SACHIN TRIPATHI | SATNA

KUDOS TO THE PIONEER FOR ITS BRAND NEW LOOK

I am a long-time reader of the Pioneer and I just wanted to take a moment to appreciate the incredible transformation the newspaper has undergone. A year ago, there wasn't even a dedicated Vivacity page and now, the entire features section has evolved into something truly special. It's amazing to see a newspaper giving such dedicated space to books, art, culture and fashion, very few do that. The way the Pioneer is showcasing fashion even in today's edition is absolutely refreshing.

I'm writing this email specifically because of Agenda (Sunday, March 23). The interview with Saurabh Shukla, conducted by Sakshi Priya, was one of the best I've ever read. It didn't sound like another promotional piece, it felt raw, personal. The way it was structured, the choice of photographs and the overall presentation, everything was just perfect. As a reader, it feels immersive, like I am



actually part of the interview while reading it. Thank you for delivering such exceptional content. Also, I have to mention how much I appreciate the food section; it's such a great addition! Thank you for making the Pioneer such an engaging and meaningful read. It's a pleasure to pick up the paper every day. AMIT DAS | KOLKATA

Reviving India's Sacred Groves

The historical, ecological, and socio-cultural importance of Sacred Groves cannot be overstated. There is an urgent need for a holistic conservation strategy to protect them, writes BKP SINHA and ARVIND JHA

FIRST Column



In a landmark judgment, the Supreme Court of India has directed that all Sacred Groves across the nation should be officially classified as "forests" and "community reserves" under the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972. This decision is a major step in legally safeguarding these natural sanctuaries, known for their ecological and cultural significance.

In Indian culture, forests have always been revered not only for their ecological importance but also for their deep societal and spiritual significance. Ancient texts reflect this reverence by classifying forests based on their purposes, revealing the varied roles these ecosystems played. Mahavan, the vast, untouched wilderness, served as a crucial wildlife sanctuary, preserving biodiversity and maintaining ecological balance. Shreevan, on the other hand, provided communities with vital resources like timber, fruits, and medicinal plants, highlighting their economic significance. Upvan, green spaces designed for leisure and recreation, connected people with nature, often associated with royal families. Tapovan, sacred forests, were believed to be places of spiritual enlightenment for ascetics.

Among these classifications, Sacred Groves stand out as unique forest patches preserved through community-driven efforts rooted in spiritual beliefs and cultural traditions. Spread across India's diverse landscapes, they are known by different names, such as Devrais in Maharashtra, Devara Kadu in Karnataka, Orans in Rajasthan, Kaavus in Kerala, Devban in Himachal Pradesh, Sarana in Madhya Pradesh, Umanglai in Manipur, Law Lingdoh in Meghalaya, Devbhumi in Uttarakhand, Pavitra Van in Andhra Pradesh, and Gramthan in West Bengal.

These groves act as vital carbon sinks, regulate local microclimates, and serve as havens for medicinal plants and endangered species. What truly distinguishes these ecosystems is their decentralised conservation model, where local communities act as the primary custodians of these ecosystems. This approach, rooted in traditional knowledge, cultural values, and strong community ties, has often proven more effective than state-controlled initiatives, particularly in regions where community engagement and cultural practices remain deeply ingrained.

The significance of Sacred Groves was officially recognised in 1897 by Sir Dietrich Brandis, the first Inspector General of Forests in India. This early acknowledgment laid the groundwork for further research, including the pioneering work of Indian polymath DD Kaushambi (1907-1966). Decades later, in 1975, conservation studies conducted by the Agarkar Research Institute in Pune brought these ancient ecosystems into the national spotlight.

These age-old sanctuaries are shielded by deeply ingrained societal and cultural taboos, a form of traditional environmental stewardship that has effectively protected them from destructive human activities like deforestation, poaching, and resource over-

exploitation. This protection has allowed them to flourish as pristine ecosystems, providing sanctuaries for a rich diversity of plant and animal life. They serve as vital water recharge zones, maintaining groundwater levels and supporting agricultural activities in surrounding areas. Unlike artificial gene banks, which require significant energy, incur high costs and remain vulnerable to both natural and human-made disasters, these ecological havens offer a more sustainable and self-sustaining alternative for conserving genetic diversity.

Beyond their environmental significance, these sacred spaces hold immense cultural and spiritual value for local communities. They often serve as sacred sites for worship, places for social gatherings, and centres for traditional healing practices. They are also closely tied to local stories, myths, and rituals, which help bring people together and strengthen their bond with nature.

In today's hurried lives, we often find ourselves disconnected from the natural world. These sanctuaries provide a much-needed retreat, offering a peaceful setting to pause, reflect, and release the stresses of daily life. Surrounded by greenery and the calming sounds of nature, they help us find inner balance and tranquillity, reminding us of our deep connection to the natural world and the life around us.

Despite their immense value, only around 14,000 Sacred Groves have been officially documented. Experts, however, estimate that the actual number could be as high as 100,000 to 150,000, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive identification and conservation efforts to protect these invaluable ecological and cultural treasures.

The gradual loss of traditional beliefs and cultural practices that once safeguarded these spaces has left them increasingly vulnerable. Modern development projects, changes in land use, and agricultural expansion are encroaching on their boundaries, leading to deforestation and soil degradation. The spread of invasive species and the decline of village grazing lands (Gairans) further exacerbate the strain on these fragile ecosystems. Unfortunately, current conservation strategies often fail to address the underlying causes of degradation, as they remain disconnected from the lived realities of local communities. The politicisation of conservation, where short-term gains outweigh long-term sustainability, weakens the effectiveness of protection measures. Most importantly, the marginalisation of traditional custodians, the very people who have safeguarded these groves for centuries, deprives these ecosystems of their most effective protectors. Weak enforcement of legal frameworks also exposes these ancient landscapes to unchecked exploitation and degradation.

These treasured landscapes now stand at a critical crossroads, demanding immediate action for their survival. The Supreme Court's decision to classify Sacred Groves as "forests" and "community reserves" is a significant step, but effective

conservation requires a multi-pronged approach.

This should begin with thorough demarcation and surveys, both on the ground and through satellite imagery, to clearly define the boundaries of Sacred Groves and prevent further encroachment. Equally important are socio-economic surveys to understand the needs and dependencies of local communities for developing sustainable management plans that balance ecological protection with human welfare.

Biodiversity assessments are essential for identifying endemic or endangered species and prioritising conservation efforts in those areas. Similarly, studying ecosystem services—such as nutrient cycling, pollination, seed dispersal, and natural pest management—is essential for maintaining ecological balance, supporting agriculture, and combating climate change. These services, though often overlooked, are fundamental to both environmental health and human livelihoods.

A comprehensive economic valuation of Sacred Groves, encompassing both direct and indirect benefits, is crucial for illustrating their true worth. This valuation should include the cost of lost ecosystem services, the potential for sustainable economic activities, and the long-term economic implications of environmental degradation. By quantifying these economic factors, policymakers and communities can better understand the tangible benefits of investing in the conservation of these vital ecosystems. This economic lens provides a powerful argument for inte-

grating Sacred Grove protection into broader economic development strategies, demonstrating that environmental conservation and economic prosperity are not mutually exclusive, but rather, interdependent.

To preserve these ancient ecosystems for future generations, fostering a sense of ownership among local communities is essential. This sense of responsibility can be nurtured through active community engagement, particularly by involving women, who play a crucial role in sustainable conservation. Restoring degraded groves by removing invasive species, addressing encroachments, and establishing local monitoring systems can effectively secure their long-term protection.

However, to implement these strategies effectively, it is essential to streamline the roles of village-level committees to eliminate redundancy and enhance coordination. Selecting appropriate legal and institutional frameworks tailored to each grove's specific needs—such as utilising the Wildlife Protection Act for groves near wildlife areas or the Forest Rights Act for forest-dwelling communities—ensures more effective management. In non-forested regions, empowering Gram Sabhas or integrating Joint Forest Management programs can provide sustainable conservation solutions. These tailored approaches align conservation efforts with the unique circumstances of each Sacred Grove.

The Supreme Court has directed the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change to formulate a comprehensive policy for the nationwide governance and management of Sacred Groves. This policy must account for the intricate relationship between various legal frameworks, such as the Village Panchayat Acts, the Wildlife Protection Act, the Forest Rights Act, the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, and the Biological Diversity Act, to establish a robust protective framework. Ensuring that all Sacred Groves are officially classified as forests under the Supreme Court's time-bound process (Writ Petition (Civil) No 1164/2023) is also vital for their protection.

Safeguarding these ecological and cultural treasures requires the unwavering commitment of all stakeholders—communities, policymakers, and conservationists alike. The urgency to act cannot be overstated, as their decline threatens not only ecological balance but also the cultural ethos that binds communities together. Empowering local communities and integrating their traditional ecological knowledge into conservation strategies are essential for ensuring the long-term preservation of these invaluable sites. Ultimately, the enduring legacy of Sacred Groves underscores how conservation and culture can coexist harmoniously, fostering a sustainable relationship between humanity and nature.

(The writers are former principal chief conservators of forests, UP and Maharashtra. Views expressed are personal)

Rising crimes against the elderly: A growing concern for senior citizens

Our innate desire to be controller

The recent murder of an elderly couple in Northwest Delhi on Tuesday morning has, besides shaking the conscience of society, raised serious concerns about ensuring the security of elderly people in this country.

Tuesday's is not a single incident, rather incidents of crime against elderly persons frequently occur throughout the country, especially in bigger towns and metros.

The crimes against senior citizens in India have been continuously rising over the years. The NCRB Data from states is quite disappointing and shows that crimes against elderly people are increasing day by day. This makes it necessary to understand and address the causes that lead to crimes against the elderly and also to find ways to deal with this problem.

Past data reveals that a variety of crimes such as theft, robbery, cheating, forgery, and even murders frequently occur with elderly persons in India. At present, the biggest threat to elderly people is the commission of cybercrimes such as fraud and cheating with them by cyber fraudsters.

In India, particularly, those seniors are more susceptible to crimes who live in isolation from family and society, lack friends, and lack access to communication and transportation facilities etc. A lot of elderly people are gullible, forget things easily, and might feel ashamed to acknowledge they were harmed.

The criminals use data such as a victim's social security number, bank account details, PAN number, and driver's license number to finish a transaction or obtain additional personal information about them.

Security of elderly persons, though, should remain a primary concern, but, is often ignored. Compared to younger people, the vulnerability and susceptibility of elderly people to the commission of crime is obvious due to various reasons.

An increasing lack of physical and mental strength and easily believing people are among a few of the factors that make the elderly vulnerable to crime. Moreover, given the increasing number of nuclear families, with children living away from their parents, elderly people, especially, in urban households, are compelled to live alone which puts them at risk further.

The circumstances making older people live alone make them more vulnerable. The World Population Ageing Report from the United Nations estimates that 90 Million older people live alone globally.

Seniors who live alone in large homes are particularly vulnerable to physical crimes and become a target for financial scammers.

According to data from Helpeage India, there are approximately at least 112 Million people over the age of 60 in India, and forty per cent

of them live alone. As a result, they are easy targets for criminal activity and are more likely to experience severe effects from abuse.

One of the main causes of elderly people's vulnerability is their lack of involvement in the community. Participating in social activities makes people feel safer than isolating themselves from others. Elders, who are unable to communicate with others and live alone, also remain apprehensive about their security and live under constant fear and anxiety.

In India, the joint and undivided family system played a significant role in the maintenance of traditional culture and also provided various types of security to family members. Older people were given better roles, prestige and privileges in such a family structure that ensured their overall security naturally.

However, the emergence of new forces in the administrative, ideological, and economic domains meant that India's cultural life inevitably underwent a transition. In the last century, the fundamental idea of a joint family has undergone considerable change because of the development of cities and industries leading to nuclear families causing severe effects on senior citizen's security among other things.

The adverse effect of this phenomenon though visible generally all over, seems more pervasive in bigger cities like Delhi and Mumbai, in particular.

As per the available data, Delhi is the most dangerous city in India's metro areas.

However, to address this issue, the city has developed a fairly comprehensive and formal action plan for protecting and offering security to its senior citizens.

The Senior Citizen Security Cell was founded in June 2004, at the Police headquarters. Its principal objective is to supervise, advise, and coordinate with the local police in matters about senior citizen security and safety.

The cell has established Senior Citizens Toll-Free Helplines and registered senior citizens who live alone with the police to exercise extra caution.

Verification of domestic help, drivers, servants, and tenants is done through special drives and mobilization of NGO members to offer lonely citizens emotional help. Even the Delhi High Court issued an order requiring schoolchildren to assist in providing support to the elderly in their community.

The task of arranging and supervising the

interactions between the kids and senior citizens fell to the Delhi Police. They made requests to arrange for volunteer groups of students to visit the elderly person who the police had identified as vulnerable.

This initiative provides emotional aid to the elderly and serves as a link between the senior community and law enforcement.

Despite the above measures, Delhi still witnesses the occurrence of crimes against elderly people, but the Delhi model has certainly shown the path in this regard and it is advisable that other states also adopt the Delhi-like model for ensuring senior citizens' security on a priority. Besides, given the consistent rise in crimes against senior citizens, there is a need for people in general to be educated about ageism and ageist attitudes. Moreover, given the challenges elderly people encounter as a result of their infirmities special crime control measures are required for their safety and security. Therefore, the states must establish policies, health, and social services, as well as a distinct criminal justice system to address as well as counteract this threat urgently.

In the increasing crimes against senior citizens in India call for immediate and sustained intervention. While efforts like Delhi's Senior Citizen Security Cell have shown promise, much more needs to be done nationwide.

Other states should adopt similar models, ensuring a proactive approach to senior safety, including police registration, background checks for household staff, and community support initiatives.

Beyond law enforcement, society must play a greater role in safeguarding the elderly. Families should maintain stronger connections with their senior members, and communities should foster inclusivity to prevent isolation.

Raising awareness about cyber fraud, financial scams, and physical crimes targeting seniors is crucial, along with encouraging them to report incidents without fear or hesitation.

The government must also enhance social and healthcare policies tailored to senior citizens, ensuring better access to support systems.

A distinct criminal justice framework focused on elderly protection, coupled with stringent legal measures, can help curb such crimes. Ultimately, the safety of senior citizens is not just a law enforcement issue but a societal responsibility.

By strengthening familial bonds, community participation, and governmental initiatives, we can create a safer environment for our elderly, ensuring they live with dignity, security, and peace.

(The writer is associate professor Faculty of Law University of Delhi. Views expressed are personal)

We all wish to be. And we fail miserably because control cannot be in our hands.

Lord Krishna explains, "The place of action and the doer and many different kinds of instruments and many different efforts and the fifth in this connection is the providence only." (The Bhagavad-Geeta 18.14)

The Lord further states, "Whatever action is begun by a man by body, speech and mind, these five are the causes of them." (18.15) Are not we always doing something with our bodies, speech and minds? Speech and mind have been separately mentioned because what we say makes a huge difference in our lives. It is not like any other sense. For example, there is an accident, in which both parties are at fault. In case they both apologise, the matter is amicably settled. Otherwise, a fight breaks out, if they become abusive. Similarly, what we do with our minds is subtle, not gross as is the case with other senses. Therefore, our minds occupy a special position in our lives.

What are these five causes? The place of action is determined by the circumstances. For example, are we in a hot place like Delhi in summer or a cold place like Toronto in winter? One is living in a nuclear family with a newly born or in a joint family, when there is a new arrival. In short, circumstances, make a huge difference and we have no control over them. The second cause is: who is doing it. One of us will be. But are we in control of ourselves? The answer sadly is no. Our natures control us and we are helpless about it. Returning to the same example, how will drivers react depends on their natures.

Naturally prone to get angry will fight and peaceful persons will settle the matter.

The third cause is the instruments employed. If someone has a superior cellphone, he will be able to perform better than one who is without one or has an outdated one. The fourth cause is the efforts made. Are we in control of these? No, our health, etc will determine how we will be able to perform. The last one is not in our hands, because what happens depends on our past 'karmaphalas'—acts done in the past. Success or failure will be on our account of them only, not much due to our present acts.

Then, are we in control? Not by a long shot. Only God is, or can be. Let us see the role of God from the angle of five causes. The circumstances, no matter what they are, are in control of God. After all, God is the Creator, which includes all possible types of circumstances. The doer, which is a soul, is in control of God also due to the karmaphalas done earlier by a soul, though a soul has free will. In any case, a soul has no real independence as such; it must be part of the Creation. All the implements, whatever they may be, originate from God only, he is the source of all. The efforts made are also controlled by God because God controls whatever we are

allowed to do. And the providence is part of God's justice system.

Having learnt that God is the controller and we are completely under His control, we should take advantage of this knowledge. We should take God's shelter as instructed by God. "In all respects take shelter of Me only. By My mercy you will achieve supreme peace and the eternal abode." (18.62) Additionally, we will qualify for opulence of six kinds, ie beauty, fame, knowledge, power, renunciation and wealth. From the Bhagavad-Geeta we learn, "Where there is the Yogeshvara Sri Krishna and where there is the archer Arjuna, there will be opulence, victory, wealth and definite principles. (18.78) Let us not deny that we are attracted towards them. We will also achieve victory or success in our endeavours. (18.78) Our acts will be according to the highest principles, which will qualify us for higher and more gains.

Unfortunately, we do not, at least most of us. Why? This is not such a mystery. Our egos don't allow us to think beyond ourselves. I may have failed countless times, but this time I will succeed in my plans, one thinks. What about all those, who failed before me? I am different; I am more intelligent. But the wise pay attention to God's instruction, "You have a right only in action, not ever in predetermining its fruits of action; your attaching to inaction also should not be there." (2.47) "Because compared to the buddhi-yoga, which is acting without attachment to the fruits of action, material action is much inferior. Therefore, desire to take shelter in the buddhi-yoga. Those who try to predetermine the fruits are pitiable. (2.49) Because they will fail and the consequences will be lots of frustration, depression, etc. All we get is due to our past karma and nothing more. All our attempts to control are doomed to fail. God controls everything. How else can the creation last for billions of years? What is my experience in trying to control situations, results, etc? I will admit that like everyone else I try to control myself instinctively. The result is lots of anxiety and depression because they are in not my control. Yes, I have learnt that I cannot control, but the realisation is still far away. For example, someone is not well in the family. I do everything possible to see that this person recovers soon, including sincerely praying to God. Do I become peaceful then, assured that I am limited in what I can do? No, I don't. I feel bad that God, being omnipotent, does not act sooner. Or why have I been subjected to this misery having taken shelter from God? I do realise that past 'karmaphalas' will manifest. God's role comes subsequently. Then also God will decide when to act and how. I cannot control that. I am learning.

(The writer is a spiritual teacher. Views expressed are personal)



SIDDHARTHA MISHRA



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

Thailand's PM faces no-confidence vote

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Bangkok

Thailand's Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra on Monday faced a no-confidence motion in Parliament as the Opposition alleged she was being unduly influenced by her father, a former prime minister, and is mismanaging the country. Paetongtarn, who took office last year, is expected to survive her first no-confidence vote on Wednesday with the backing of her ruling coalition that makes up the majority of the House of Representatives. The head of the Opposition in Parliament, Natthaphong Ruengpanyawut, said Paetongtarn had failed to address

many of the country's chronic problems including the slumping economy, air pollution, crimes and corruption.

He said her administration was serving the interests of her family and her father, former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, a popular but highly controversial political figure.

Paetongtarn heads the Pheu Thai Party, the latest in a string of populist parties affiliated with Thaksin, who was ousted in a 2006 military coup, fled into exile and recently returned to Thailand.

Thaksin has been at the heart of nearly two decades of deep political divisions pitting a mostly poor, rural majority that supported him against royalists, the military and their urban backers, who accuse



(Left)Thailand's Deputy PM Phumtham Wechayachai and (right) PM Paetongtarn Shinawatra greet to lawmakers before a no-confidence debate in Bangkok PTI

him of threatening their status and that of the revered monarchy.

Natthaphong is the leader of the People's Party, a resurrection of the progressive, reformist Move Forward Party, which took the most seats in the general election in 2023 but failed to take power due to strong opposition from the conservative establishment, and was ordered dissolved.

Natthaphong said the formation of the ruling coalition, which saw Pheu Thai partner with its former conservative rivals, was part of the political bargain to bring Thaksin home. Paetongtarn was also accused by Prawit Wongsuwan, head of the Palang Pracharath Party, Pheu Thai's former coalition partner, of falsely declaring her assets, which she denied.

Turkiye detains journalists amid Erdogan rival protests

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Istanbul

Turkish authorities detained several journalists from their homes, a media workers' union reported on Monday, in what it said was a crackdown amid escalating protests triggered by the imprisonment of the mayor of Istanbul and top rival to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

On Sunday, a court formally arrested Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu and ordered him jailed pending a trial on corruption charges.

His detention on Wednesday sparked the largest wave of street demonstrations in Turkiye in more than a decade, deepening concerns over democracy and the rule of law.

In an apparent escalation of the government's response to the growing protests, the Disk-Basin-Is union said at least eight reporters and photojournalists were detained in what it said was an "attack on press freedoms and the people's right to learn the truth."

"You cannot hide the truth by silencing journalists!" the union wrote on the social media platform X, calling for their immediate release.

A total of 1,133 people have been detained since March 19, when the mayor was arrested at his home, Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said.

As many as 123 police officers were injured in the protests, he said adding that dangerous materials such as acid, firebombs and knives were seized.

"Some circles have been exploiting the right to assemble and demonstrate, attempting to disrupt public order, incite street unrest, and attack our police," Yerlikaya said on his social media account. The minister said some of the detained were identified as having ties to groups listed as terrorist organisations. Others had previous criminal records, Yerlikaya said, urging the public to avoid falling for "provocations."

The mayor's imprisonment is widely regarded as a political move to remove a major challenger to Erdogan from the next presidential race, currently scheduled for 2028. Government officials strongly reject the accusations and insist that Turkiye's courts operate independently. Imamoglu was jailed on suspicion of running a criminal organisation, accepting bribes, extortion, illegally recording personal data and bid-rigging, accusations he has denied.

A request for him to be imprisoned on terror-related charges was rejected although he still faces prosecution.

The Interior Ministry later announced that Imamoglu had been suspended from duty as a "temporary measure". The municipality had previously appointed an acting mayor from its governing council.

The politician was taken to Silivri prison, west of Istanbul, as more than 1.7 Million members of his Opposition Republican People's Party, or CHP, held a primary election, endorsing him as its presidential candidate. Millions of non-members also cast votes in a "solidarity ballot", the party said.

Alongside Imamoglu, 47 other people were also jailed pending trial, including a key aide and two district mayors from Istanbul, one of whom was replaced with a government appointee.

Concerns about espionage rise as Donald Trump, Elon Musk fire federal workers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Washington

As President Donald Trump and billionaire Elon Musk work to overhaul the federal government, they are forcing out thousands of workers with insider knowledge and connections who now need a job.

For Russia, China and other adversaries, the upheaval in Washington as Musk's Department of Government Efficiency guts government agencies presents an unprecedented opportunity to recruit informants, national security and intelligence experts say.

Every former federal worker with knowledge of or access to sensitive information or systems could be a target. When thousands of them leave their jobs at the same time, that creates a lot of targets, as well as a counterespionage challenge for the United States." This information is highly valuable, and it shouldn't be surprising that Russia and China and other organisations, criminal syndicates for instance would be aggressively recruiting government employees," said Theresa Payton, a former White House chief information officer under President George W Bush, who now runs her own cyber security firm.

Many agencies oversee crucial data

Each year an average of more than 100,000 federal workers leave their jobs. Some retire, others move to the private sector. This year, in three months, the number is already many times higher.

It is not just intelligence officers who present potential security risks. Many departments and agencies oversee vast amounts of data that include personal information on Americans as well as sensitive information about national security and government operations. Exiting employees could also give away helpful security secrets that would allow someone to penetrate government databases or physical offices.

The Office of the US Trade Representative, for instance, maintains information on trade negotiations that could help an adversary undercut the United States. Federal records house data on clandestine intelligence operations and agents. Pentagon databases contain reams of sensitive information on US military capabilities. The Department of Energy oversees many of the nation's most closely guarded nuclear secrets.



US President Donald Trump PTI

"This happens even in good times, someone in the intelligence community who for personal financial or other reasons walks into an embassy to sell America out, but DOGE is taking it to a whole new level," said John Schindler, a former counterintelligence official.

"Someone is going to go rogue," he said. "It's just a question of how bad it will be." Only a tiny fraction of the millions of Americans who have worked for the federal government have ever been accused of espionage. The overwhelming number is conscientious patriots who would never sell out their country, Payton said.

Background checks, employee training and exit interviews are all designed to prevent informants or moles and to remind departing federal employees of their duty to preserve national secrets even after leaving federal service.

Even one person can do serious damage

It takes only one or two misguided or disgruntled workers to cause a national security crisis. Former FBI agent Robert Hanssen and former CIA officer Aldrich Ames, who both spied for Russia, show just how damaging a single informant can be.

Hanssen divulged sweeping information about American intelligence-gathering, including details that authorities said were partly responsible for the outing of

US informants in Russia who were later executed for working on America's behalf.

The odds that one angry former employee reaches out to a foreign power go up as many federal employees find themselves without a job, experts said. What's not in doubt is that foreign adversaries are looking for any former employees they can flip. They're hunting for that one informant who could deliver a big advantage for their nation."It's a numbers game," said Schindler. Frank Montoya Junior, a retired senior FBI official and former top US government counterintelligence executive, said he was less concerned about well-trained intelligence community employees betraying their oaths and selling out to American adversaries. But he noted the many workers in other realms of government, who could be targeted by Russia or China, "When it comes to the theft of intellectual property, when it comes to the theft of sensitive technology, when it comes to access to power grids or to financial systems, an IRS guy or a Social Service guy who's really upset about what DOGE is doing, they actually are the bigger risk," Montoya said. Once military and intelligence officials were the primary targets of foreign spies looking to turn an informant. But now, thanks to the massive amount of information held at many agencies, and the competitive edge it could give China or Russia, that's no longer the case.

Israel struck Gaza's largest hospital: Ministry

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Deir Al-Balah

Israel's military struck the largest hospital in southern Gaza on Sunday night, killing two people, wounding others and causing a large fire, the territory's Health Ministry said.

The strike hit the surgical building of Nasser Hospital in the city of Khan Younis, the ministry said, days after the facility was overwhelmed with dead and wounded when Israel resumed the war in Gaza last week with a surprise wave of airstrikes.

Those killed in Sunday night's strike included a 16-year-old boy who underwent surgery two days ago, according to the Health Ministry. Also killed was Ismail Barhoum, a member of Hamas' political bureau, who was being treated at the hospital, Hamas said in a statement.

Israel's military confirmed the strike on the hospital, saying it hit a Hamas militant operating there. Israel blames civilian deaths on Hamas because it operates in densely populated areas.

Like other medical facilities around Gaza, Nasser Hospital has been damaged by Israeli raids and strikes throughout the war. More than 50,000 Palestinians have now been killed in the war, the Health Ministry said earlier Sunday.

The military claimed to have "eliminated" dozens of militants since Israel ended a ceasefire Tuesday with strikes that killed hundreds of people on one of the deadliest days in the 17-month war. Israel's unrest over Gaza and political issues grew Sunday, with anger at Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as his government voted to express no confidence in the attorney general, seen by many as a check on the power of his coalition.

"I am worried for the future of this country. And I think it has to stop. We have to change direction," said Avital Halperin, one

of hundreds of protesters outside Netanyahu's office. Police said three were arrested.

Displacement under fire

Israel's military ordered thousands of Palestinians to leave the heavily destroyed Tel al-Sultan neighborhood in the southern city of Rafah. They walked to Muwas, a sprawling area of squalid tent camps. The war has forced most of Gaza's population of over two Million to flee within the territory, often multiple times.

"It's displacement under fire," said Mustafa Gaber, a journalist who left with his family. He said tank and drone fire echoed nearby.

"The shells are falling among us and the bullets are (flying) above us," said Amal Nassar, also displaced. "The elderly have been thrown into the streets. An old woman was telling her son, Go and leave me to die. Where will we go?"

The strike hit the surgical building of Nasser Hospital in the city of Khan Younis, days after the facility was overwhelmed with dead and wounded

"Enough is enough. We are exhausted," said a fleeing Ayda Abu Shaer, as smoke rose in the distance.

The Palestinian Red Crescent emergency service said it lost contact with a 10-member team responding to the strikes in Rafah. Spokesperson Nebal Farsakh said some were wounded.

Israel's military said it had fired on advancing "suspicious vehicles" and later discovered some were ambulances and fire trucks.

HC restores Imran Khan's meetings with visitors

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Islamabad

High Court (HC) here in Pakistan on Monday restored bi-weekly meetings of incarcerated former Prime Minister Imran Khan with his visitors.

The three-member Islamabad High Court bench, which heard at least 26 petitions related to the visitation rights and jail conditions of Khan, 72, ordered authorities to arrange Khan's two meetings on two different days of the week but stopped the visitors from making political statements.

Khan's counsel, Zaheer Abbas, said it was agreed that Khan would be allowed two days of meetings a week, Tuesday with his family and lawyers, and Thursday with friends. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Secretary General Barrister Salman Akram Raja said Thursday's meeting was not being held. Advocate Naveed Malik, representing the Adiala Jail authorities, where Khan has been incarcerated since August 2023, said the meetings were held twice a week until December. However, the situation changed after the PTI founder and his wife, Bushra Bibi, were convicted in a corruption case in January. Malik also informed the court the two meetings were held on Tuesday instead of two days for security reasons.

He also pointed out that those who meet Khan make political statements outside the jail in violation of the rules.

There was a surge in humanitarian aid until Israel cut off all supplies to Gaza earlier this month to pressure Hamas to change the ceasefire agreement.

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Isar aerospace launch vehicle 'Spectrum' rolls out on Andoya island in Norway PTI

European startup to launch rocket on first test flight

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Oslo

A private European aerospace company is set to make the first test flight of its orbital launch vehicle from Norway on Monday.

The launch window for its Spectrum rocket from the island of Andoya in northern Norway is 12:30 pm to 3:30 pm local time, said Isar Aerospace, which is headquartered in Munich.

The launch is subject to weather, safety and range infrastructure. The company said it also could conduct the test flight later in the week.

The 28-metre-(91-foot) spectrum is a two-stage launch vehicle designed for small and medium-sized satellites.

The company largely rules out the possibility of the rocket reaching orbit on its first complete flight, saying it would con-

sider a 30-second flight a success.

Isar Aerospace aims to collect as much data and experience as possible on the first integrated test of all the systems on its in-house-developed launch vehicle. The startup, which says it has raised more than 400 Million Euros (\$435 Million) in capital, hopes to build up to 40 launch vehicles per year in the future in a plant outside of Munich.

The launch vehicles are all to be used for putting satellites into orbit.

Isar Aerospace is separate from the European Space Agency (ESA) which is funded by its 23 member states.

The European Space Agency has been launching rockets and satellites into orbit for years, but mainly from French Guiana, an overseas department of France in South America and from Cape Canaveral in Florida.

New Zealand qualifies for World Cup

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Auckland

New Zealand will play at the 2026 World Cup after beating New Caledonia 3-0 on Monday in the final of the Oceania confederation qualifying series.

The New Zealand "All Whites" reached the World Cup for the third time after qualifying in Spain in 1982 and South Africa in 2010. They join hosts Canada, the United States and Mexico and Japan, which last week became the first team to qualify for the 48-team tournament.

New Caledonia still has a chance to qualify through a six-team inter-continental playoff involving teams from the Asian, African, North and Central American and South American confederations.

New Zealand had a setback when its captain, Nottingham Forest striker Chris Wood, was forced from the field with a hip injury in the 53rd minute with the score still 0-0.

Wood is the focus of the New Zealand attack, scoring three headed goals in New Zealand's 7-0 semifinal win over Fiji on Friday.

Up stepped an unlikely star in Wood's absence. In the 62nd Michael Boxall, the 36-year-old center back from Minnesota United, scored his first goal in 55 international appearances to finally break the deadlock. Boxall met Francis de Vries' corner at the far post and headed it home.

Four minutes later the 17-year international veteran Kosta Barbarouses, who replaced Wood, ran onto Tim Payne's pass and chipped the ball over Nyikeine to make it 2-0.

Finally, Denmark-based Elijah Just scored from Barbarouses' assist in the 80th to clinch New Zealand's place at the World Cup.

"When the goal went in I think I was a bit more relieved than anything," Boxall said. "Fair play to New Caledonia, they made it pretty hard work for us."



Oceania is the smallest of FIFA's six confederations, made up of 11 full member nations, mostly small island states from South Pacific.

After Australia moved to the Asian Football Confederation from Oceania following the 2006 World Cup, New Zealand, ranked No. 89 and with a population of 5.2 million, became the largest and highest-ranked nation in the confederation. New Caledonia, with a population of 280,000, is ranked 152.

This edition for the first time the Oceania qualifying series winner was granted direct entry to the World Cup, without having to face an inter-continental playoff. That bonus came with the expansion of the tournament to 48.

In 1982 New Zealand played 15 matches and traveled 55,000 miles in its qualifying campaign. In 2010, it qualified after a two-game series with Bahrain.

New Caledonia's "Les Cagous", most of whom are amateurs, had to overcome political unrest in their homeland to qualify for the Oceania finals. Violent protests against voting reforms claimed the lives of 13 people in the French-speaking island nation and disrupted the New Caledonia team's qualifying campaign.

"I love the way my team played, the attitude on the field. Unfortunately the result was not on our side," New Caledonia manager Johann Sidaner said.

"Everyone's reaction when the ball finally went into the back of the net was incredible."

New Caledonia shocked pundits when it held New Zealand scoreless at halftime, mostly through the extraordinary efforts of goalkeeper Rocky Nyikeine. New Zealand threatened at set pieces from which they looked for Wood, who has scored 18 goals in the English Premier League this season.

Wood missed with a header in the 18th minute and had a low shot saved by Nyikeine in the 31st.

Billie Jean King Cup Asia-Oceania Group-1 tournament to be held in Pune

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Pune

The Billie Jean King Cup Asia-Oceania Group-1 tournament featuring six teams including India will be held here at the Balewadi Sports Complex from April 8-12. The other teams in the competition will be New Zealand, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong, Korea and Thailand. The competition will feature a round-robin format with all ties consisting of three matches, two singles followed by doubles clashes.

The teams will be vying for two qualification spots available from the region. "After the success of Mumbai Open WTA and the Maha Open ATP Challenger, the MSLTA, in association with AITA and PMDTA, is thrilled to get another event of the highest level," MSLA secretary Sundar Iyer was quoted as saying in a release. The Indian women's team will be led by Ankita Raina and will comprise of Sahaja Yamalapalli, Shrivalli Bhamidipaty, and Vaidehi Chaudhari, who are all ranked between 300 and 358.

"The addition of experienced doubles specialist Prarthana Thombare (ranked 137 in doubles), who recently finished as the runners-up at the WTA Mumbai Open, gives captain Vishal Uppal plenty of strategic options going into the tournament," the release added.

New Zealand's Lulu Sun, currently ranked 44th in the world, headlines the competition and will be supported by her teammates Monique Barry and Aishi Das. Thailand boasts of singles players in Mananchaya Sawangkaew (111) and Lanlana Tararudee (173), along with the well-rounded squad featuring Thasaporn Naklo, Patcharin Cheapchandej and experienced doubles specialist Peangtarn Plipuech. The Chinese Taipei will be led by Joanna Garland (ranked 212), and also have Ya-Hsuan Lee, Yi-Tsen Cho, Fang-An Lin, and Fang Hsien Wu in their ranks.

The Korean team will feature Sohyun Park (ranked 310) alongside teammates Dayeon Back, Eunhye Lee, Boyoung Jeong, and Kim Dabin.

Asian Championships: Time for Antim, Deepak Punia to press restart button

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ AMMAN

After a forgettable 2024 season, the senior Asian Championships, beginning here Tuesday, will provide an opportunity to Antim Panghal and Deepak Punia to make a fresh beginning while other Indian wrestlers will have a chance to carve out their own identity at the international level.

Embroided in bitter selection trials between 2022-23, young Antim lost track when it mattered the most as she made a heartbreaking exit from the Paris Olympics. Not that she was a medal favourite but a strong showing was expected, given the talent she possesses.

However, the two-time U20 world champion ended up being a pale shadow of herself in the 53kg.

Much would be expected from the U23 world champion Reetika Hooda (76kg) and U17 world champion Mansi Lather, who came through the 68kg selection tri-

als, and Manisha Bhanwala (62kg).

The 2019 World Championships silver medalist Deepak Punia, who missed a medal at Tokyo Olympics by a whisker, could not even qualify for the Games.

He has been struggling for form of late. Someone who excelled at the junior level but could not repeat the success at the senior level, Deepak would aim to shrug off the past disappointments.

He will present his challenge in the 92kg category and not in his usual 86kg weight class. A sure-shot medal would have been Paris Games bronze medalist Aman Sehrawat but since he is still in rehabilitation, the U23 world champion Chirag will present India's challenge in 57kg category that often produces fast-paced bouts Udit (61kg) and world U20 medalist Sujeet Kalkal (65kg) are the other promising prospects in the Indian squad. In the last few years India's Greco Roman wrestlers have improved a lot. In the absence of national camp and com-

petitions, not much can be predicted but it won't be a surprise if one of two end up with surprise performances.

There are several new faces in the Greco Roman women's squad and will be watched keenly.

Indian squads

Men's freestyle: Chirag (57kg), Udit (61kg), Sujit Kalkal (65kg), Vishal Kaliraman (70g), Jaideep (74kg), Chandermohan (79kg), Mukul Dahya (86kg), Deepak Punia (92kg), Jojinty Kumar (97kg) and Dinesh (125kg).

Women's: Ankush (50kg), Antim Panghal (53kg), Nishu (55kg), Neha Sharma (57kg), Muskan (59kg), Manisha Bhanwala (62kg), Monika (65kg), Mansi Lathar (68kg), Jyoti Bermal (72kg) and Reetika Hooda (76kg). Greco Roman: Nitin (55kg), Sumit (60kg), Umesh (63kg), Neeraj (67kg), Kuldeep (72kg), Sagar (77kg), Rahul (82kg), Sunil (87kg), Nitesh (97kg) and Prem (130kg).

IOC President celebrated on return home to Zimbabwe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Harare

Newly elected International Olympic Committee President Kirsty Coventry arrived in her home country of Zimbabwe to a hero's welcome as her victory is celebrated as a national milestone.

The southern African country has faced years of isolation and sanctions by the United States and other Western nations.

The 41-year-old Coventry, who is also Zimbabwe's sports minister, was the only female candidate in the IOC presidency race and became the first woman and first African to be elected head of the global Olympic movement. She beat six other candidates in the vote in Greece on Thursday, including the head of world track and field, the head of international cycling and a member of Jordan's royal family.

"It's not just my success, it is our success. We broke down barriers," Coventry said in Zimbabwe on Sunday.

Dancers in animal fur kilts and head gear made from bird feathers stomped the ground as part of a traditional African folklore dance to the sound of trumpets and drums to welcome Coventry home as she arrived at an airport in the capital, Harare.

Dozens of others, including female cricketers, young karatekas and children in school uniform cheered loudly.

"Men have dominated sport for so long. I am thrilled that one of our own is now at the very top where she can tackle the issues affecting women in sports," said Abigail Madera, a female boxing referee.

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— ABIGAIL MADERA, BOXING REFEREE

B Sumeeth Reddy announces retirement

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

India's doubles specialist B Sumeeth Reddy, a member of the 2022 Commonwealth Games mixed team silver medal-winning squad, has announced his retirement as an active badminton player to focus entirely on coaching.

The 33-year-old from Hyderabad, who formed the men's doubles pair with Manu Attri and also played mixed doubles with several shuttlers, including his wife N Sikki Reddy, made the announcement through social media on Sunday.

"RETIRED AND PROUD. Embracing the next chapter with gratitude and excitement. I thank my family, friends and well wishers for all the support," Sumeeth wrote in an Instagram post.

Sumeeth and Manu, who achieved the highest world ranking of 17, won the 2016 South Asian Games gold medal, qualified for the Rio Olympics, and were also part of the men's team at the Asia Team Championships in Hyderabad.

He represented India at the 2014 and 2018 Asian Games and won the 2015

Mexico City Grand Prix and 2016 Canada Open, along with finishing as runner-up at the US Open and Dutch Open in 2015.

Along with Ashwini Ponnappa, Sumeeth also finished second at the 2017 Syed Modi International.

"I have always pushed my limits and wanted to achieve things that I could not do in my career... But currently, even though at World Rank 25, I have started to believe that the best phase of my career is already behind me. Also, despite a few other circumstances, I have stepped down from my professional playing career," he said. "Believe me, there will be a time in your career when you will have to stop playing professional sport, and on that day you should be able to step aside with no regrets, knowing that you have given your 110 per cent to become the best version of yourself," he wrote.

"Lastly I thank each and every well-wisher who has been part of my playing career. Looking to be part of more inspiring stories by guiding and motivating young players." Sumeeth had his share of setbacks, including a spinal bone degeneration problem which forced the doctors

to advise him to quit badminton as there were fears of a lower body paralysis.

"... The common advice that everyone gave is to stop professional sports and pursue an alternative career, as there was a concern of lower body paralysis. At this point, I was 20, left with no job and an uncertain body which needed wall support to walk," he recalled.

"Due to the pain, my back would collapse while standing or walking. The solution was to bare the pain, continue with rehab and hope for the best. With Sir Gopi's advice, I shifted to doubles.

"With the help of the cosmos and, with God's grace, I won my first National Championships in 2012. Ya I then get to play the International events. The shocking pain would carry with me for the next few years. As my back would suddenly have no strength to hold my upper body, during those years."

Reddy, who opened his own badminton academy, the Sikki Sumeeth Badminton Academy in Hyderabad in 2021, is also part of India's coaching panel and has been trusted with the responsibility of the women's doubles players.

Spain, France need penalty shootouts to reach in Nations League semifinals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Paris

Defending champion Spain and France needed penalty shootouts to reach the Nations League semifinals, where they were joined by Germany and Portugal.

Spain was pegged back three times by the Netherlands in a 3-3 draw after extra time in the second leg for a 5-5 aggregate score. Barcelona midfielder Pedri scored the decisive penalty kick after Spain goalkeeper Unai Simon had saved Donyell Malen's effort as the shootout finished 5-4. France won the shootout by the same score against Croatia after leading 2-0 after 90 minutes to level the tie overall and force extra time, which saw no more goals scored. Dayot Upamecano scored the decisive spot kick after goalkeeper Mike Maignan brilliantly saved from Josip Stanisic.

Germany scored three first-half goals against Italy but then held on grimly for a 3-3 draw to win 5-4 on aggregate. Giacomo Raspadori's penalty deep into second-half stoppage time of the second leg had put Italy within one goal of forcing extra time in Dortmund.

Portugal beat Denmark 5-2 after extra time in Lisbon after losing the first leg 1-0. Francisco Trincao scored twice for Portugal late on, with Cristiano Ronaldo missing an early penalty.



The semifinals begin on June 4 with Germany playing Portugal in Munich, followed on June 5 with France vs. Spain in Stuttgart. The final is on June 8.

Mbappe missed a good chance in extra time but held his nerve to score France's first penalty in the shootout at the Stade de France.

Resilient Dutch push Spanish all the way. Mikel Oyarzabal's early penalty put Spain ahead in Valencia but Memphis Depay equalized from the spot in the 54th minute. Oyarzabal grabbed his second goal midway through the second half fol-

lowing a counterattack but defender Ian Maatsen's left-footed strike sent the game into extra time.

Barcelona star Lamine Yamal put the Spanish ahead again in the 103rd minute with a neat finish, but midfielder Xavi Simons equalized as the Dutch took Spain to penalties.

Germany stylish, then sloppy

Joshua Kimmich netted from the penalty spot after 30 minutes for Germany and Bayern Munich teammate Jamal Musiala added the second goal six minutes later in unusual circumstances.

Italy goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma had just made a fine save from a header. As he was remonstrating with his defense, Kimmich played a short corner to Musiala and he clipped the ball into the net with Donnarumma stranded. Striker Tim Kleindienst put the Germans 3-0 up and Moise Kean pulled two second-half goals back for Italy before late drama.

Ronaldo's soft penalty not costly

Ronaldo is the all-time top scorer in men's soccer, but he saw his tame sixth-minute spot-kick saved by Kasper Schmeichel, who guessed the right way and gathered easily.

Portugal took the lead close to halftime when defender Joachim Andersen cum-

sily headed into his own net from a corner. Rasmus Kristensen headed in the right way for the equalizer in the 56th, getting his first Denmark goal in the process.

Ronaldo made it international goal No. 136 when he squeezed the ball in from close range but Christian Eriksen equalized for 2-2 moments later when he turned in a cross, only for Trincao to put the game into extra time and then score again. Goncalo Ramos added the fifth goal. Denmark won the first leg 1-0.

Maldini's first start

Daniel Maldini started his first match for Italy, 23 years after his father Paolo Maldini's last game for the national team. Cesare Maldini, Daniel's grandfather, also played for Italy.

Greece and Turkey cruise, Lukaku saves Belgium

Veteran striker Romelu Lukaku scored two late goals as Belgium beat Ukraine 3-0 to stay in League A after losing the first leg 3-1.

Greece was promoted to League A after overturning a 1-0 deficit with a resounding 3-0 win in Scotland, with 17-year-old midfielder Konstantinos Kareltsas among the scorers. Hakan Calhanoglu's penalty sent Turkey on the way to a 3-0 victory in Hungary and a 6-1 aggregate victory to gain promotion to League A.

China facing reality check in World Cup qualifying

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Hangzhou

Branko Ivankovic's China lineup faces another reality check in World Cup qualifying, with the national team risking falling further behind the global ambitions it promoted a decade ago. China hosts Australia at Hangzhou in Asian qualifying on Tuesday with its hopes of a direct entry to the 2026 World Cup hanging precariously on the outcome. A loss will end those hopes, leaving China with another, more tense route through a fourth-round of Asian qualifying.

A decade ago, as the Chinese Super League was spending hundreds of millions of dollars on big-name foreign players, the national soccer federation released a plan laying out a route to a status of international powerhouse by 2050 and one of the best teams in Asia by 2030. As clubs faced financial problems, the foreign stars departed and the league started to struggle. In terms of continental strength, there's still a long way to go.

