

Safety Karaoke

Job Scam Song

Job lage yeh sachcha sachcha
Tumko bahut achcha achcha
Paise agar wo maange
Keh do usse badh jaa aage
Job hai yeh jhootha jhootha
Bach gaye aur peeche choota
Peeche choota
Haan peeche choota
Bach gaye aur peeche choota

Google ke sang tum bhi aao
Scam lage toh mauka ganwao
Scam ko mil ke, mil ke haraao
Mauka ganwao, paise bachao



Scan to sing along

Scam lage toh **#MaukaGanwao**



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As you learn to **#MaukaGanwao**
we work towards a safer online world.

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blocked every day

1B Passwords **checked** for
breaches daily by Google

15B Spam and phishing
messages **blocked** every day

200B Installed Android apps **scanned** for
malware daily by Google Play Protect.

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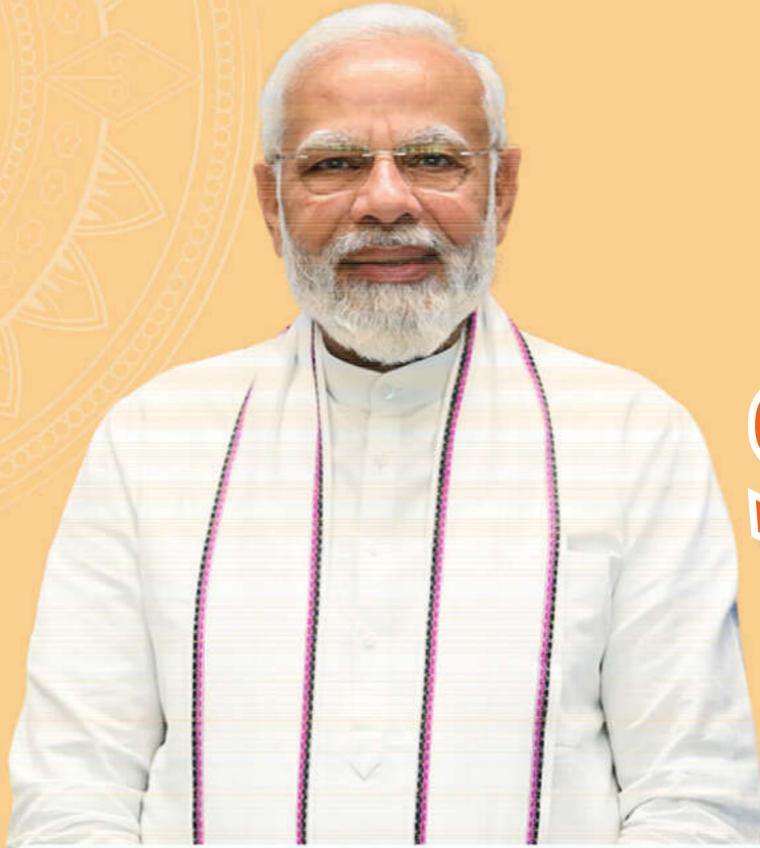


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- The scheme will benefit over 1 crore women in Odisha
- Beneficiaries will receive ₹10,000 annually in two installments, totaling ₹50,000 over 5 years
- 1st phase on International Women's Day (8th March) and 2nd Phase on Rakhi Purnima every year
- Financial assistance will be directly transferred to beneficiaries' Aadhaar enabled bank accounts through DBT (Direct Benefit Transfer)
- The application process for Subhadra is ongoing and there is no closing date

BJP CALLS IT 'DRAMA', ASKS WHY AFTER TWO DAYS

Will resign as CM after two days, going for agnipariksha: Kejriwal

Seeks early polls, says will only be CM after people's verdict: 'Every vote a certificate of my honesty'

JATIN ANAND & MALLICA JOSHI
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 15

IN A surprise move on Sunday, two days after being released on bail in the excise policy case, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal announced that he would resign "after two days", and would not return to the CM's chair until he gets the people's mandate as a "certificate of (his) honesty".

While the Delhi Assembly elections are due in February next year, Kejriwal also called for early polls, alongside Maharashtra which is expected to go to polls in November.

Questioning the timing of his announcement, the BJP dismissed it as "an attempt to stage a new drama", saying it was aimed at "avoiding tough questions" from the people.

Kejriwal announced his decision while addressing AAP workers at the party office. He also ruled out the possibility of former Deputy CM Manish Sisodia, who was released from jail last month, being named CM.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal addresses AAP workers in New Delhi on Sunday. Abhinav Saha

BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



FULL COVERAGE
PAGE 4

Amid worry over fallout of graft charges, bid to claim moral high ground

MALLICA JOSHI & JATIN ANAND
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 15

BEHIND ARVIND KEJRIWAL'S decision to resign as Delhi Chief Minister and call for early Assembly elections is an attempt to reclaim the moral high ground, especially in the wake of the corruption allegations over the now-

scrapped excise policy and the arrests of senior AAP leaders including Kejriwal himself, said party insiders.

"Once the entire narrative and propaganda around these corruption allegations and the arrests that followed hit home over the last several months if not years, even our own supporters seemingly started to believe that there

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

100 DAYS OF NDA THIRD TERM

'One nation, one poll in this term; coalition won't stall reforms'

LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 15

DESPITE THE BJP being in a minority, the NDA government will implement "one nation, one election," in its current tenure, a top government functionary said Sunday. This, even as he insisted that "there should be no confusion about the *sthai niti* (policy stability) under a government elected for a third successive term after 60 years."

The functionary said that there is no area where the NDA

government, which completed 100 days of its third term Sunday, has not taken policy decisions to continue the work it had initiated 10 years ago: "Whether it is defence, space, external and home affairs, education, Digital India and making India a manufacturing hub, spending ₹11 lakh crore annually on building infrastructure, *mahila-yuva-garib-kisan* (welfare of women, youth, poor and farmers), we are continuing with and taking forward the work that was started in 2014. Even our foreign policy

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

New Israeli envoy: India key partner, can decide role in resolving Gaza



REUVEN AZAR
ISRAEL'S AMBASSADOR TO INDIA

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 15

UNDERLINING THAT India has become one of Israel's "most important partners", especially in developing infrastructure, newly appointed Israeli ambassador Reuven Azar said it's for India to decide the extent to which it wants to be involved in resolving the Gaza war.

Speaking to *The Indian Express* in an exclusive interview, Azar said: "We want to build a 100-km metro system in the Tel Aviv area, we want to attract international companies that have the capabilities of both supplying qualitative performance and also at a cheap price. India is an excellent partner, because a thousand kilometres of metro is being built, apart from roads, airports and ports."

This is the first time that Israel has sought New Delhi's assistance in the construction sector, and the decision comes in the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Days before J&K polls, Jamaat, Engineer Rashid's party form 'strategic' pact

BASHARAT MASOOD
SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 15

THE BANNED Jamaat-e-Islami and Baramulla MP Engineer Rashid's Awami Ittehad Party (AIP) Sunday stitched a "strategic alliance" for the upcoming Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir, a move that has the potential to change the political dynamics in the Valley.

The tie-up, which comes just

DECISION 2024

SOUTH KASHMIR: PDP SEES GREEN SHOOT, JAMAAT STRUGGLES
PAGE 6

three days ahead of the first phase of polls, materialised during a meeting of Rashid and Ghulam

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Anil Vij makes it clear: Will claim Haryana CM's post if BJP wins

VARINDER BHATIA
CHANDIGARH, SEPTEMBER 15

BRINGING THE infighting in the Haryana BJP to the fore, former state home minister Anil Vij on Sunday said he would stake claim to the Chief Minister's post if the party returns to power in the Assembly elections next month. He said he was the "best CM candidate in the BJP".

Vij's statement comes even as the BJP has made it clear that Nayab Singh Saini will continue to be the CM if the party gets a third term in office.

Addressing a press conference in Ambala Cantonment, the seat which he has represented in

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

'Dabba calling': How a new extortion technique is throwing police off track

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

MAHENDER SINGH MANRAL
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 15

STEP 1: Place an extortion call to the target through the internet.
STEP 2: Dial the gang leader, usually based in a different country, using a second phone.
STEP 3: Place the two phones



Illustration: Suvajit Dey

side by side on speaker mode, let the kingpin do the talking.

For more than six months now, police in states such as Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Delhi have been poring over a new puzzle — how to track gangsters making extortion calls using this method to escape detection by intelligence agencies.

Called 'dabba calling' — because it involves threats being made through a second phone (*dabba*) — the method is

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

#News18IndiaChaupal



देश का नंबर 1 हिंदी न्यूज़ चैनल

कैसे बनेगा भारत महाशक्ति? देश के सबसे बड़े मंच पर, सबसे बड़ी चर्चा



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भगवंत मान अखिलेश यादव भूपेंद्र सिंह हुड्डा मुख्तार अब्बास नकवी सलमान खुर्रैद



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Video war: RJD, JDU flag Nitish flip-flops, 'blessings' to Tejashwi

SANTOSH SINGH PATNA, SEPTEMBER 15

A WAR of videos has been playing out between the JD(U) and the RJD in Bihar, with both circulating old clips of leaders to target each other. While the RJD's videos, aimed at building momentum for Leader of Opposition Tejashwi Prasad Yadav's ongoing statewide yatra, have sought to attack CM Nitish Kumar on his flip-flops, the ruling JD(U)'s clips have meant to flag that Tejashwi could become deputy CM only because of Nitish's "blessings".

2022 meeting of RJD and JD(U) MLAs which was held to elect Nitish as the leader of the then Mahagathbandhan alliance between JDU, RJD and Congress. Nitish was sworn in as CM on August 9 that year, with Tejashwi returning as Deputy CM. Tejashwi endorsed the RJD state chief's line. "It is a known fact that Nitish Kumar had been apologetic about deserting us in 2017," he said in Darbhanga Friday. This invited a sharp reaction from top JD(U) leaders Saturday. The party shared two videos at a press conference and state minister Ashok Kumar Choudhary released three videos. The first two videos showed Tejashwi thanking Nitish in the Assembly for "promoting him" in politics and again at a function for giving people jobs. One of the videos released by Choudhary, showed RJD chief Lalu Prasad thanking Nitish for making Tejashwi Deputy CM. The others shared by him showed Tejashwi either praising or thanking Nitish. JD(U) spokesperson Neeraj Kumar said: "Tejashwi became deputy CM twice because of Nitish Kumar's blessings."

New Israeli envoy

wake of the ban on Palestinian workers following the Hamas attack last October. Asked about Israeli trade representatives flagging a skills mismatch among Indian construction workers who arrived in Israel under a bilateral scheme, as reported by The Indian Express, Azar said "any scheme that you start has mishaps at the beginning" and that both governments are working to streamline the process.

ing our right to self defence. We understand that, like the United States, like other friendly countries of Israel, they would like this to be over. And believe me, we also would like this to be over." On Israel-India ties, Azar outlined other pillars of bilateral cooperation, apart from construction: defence and security, agriculture and water, innovation and start-ups. Looking ahead, he said cooperation on "semiconductors and cyber security" was "absolutely essential."

On a possible role for India in resolving the Gaza war, Azar said: "I think India has to decide. It's up to India to decide to what degree they want to be involved. There is an increasing role of India in West Asia in general, because India can bring a lot to the stability and prosperity in our region. "One can help with investments, like the Adani investment in Haifa... the series of agreements that India has been working on the last year with the UAE... we are establishing the corridor of stability and prosperity in West Asia. They want to have a better future for the people. They want to invest in infrastructure and entrepreneurship, in connectivity. So everybody understands that they want to create this corridor of stability."

On the bilateral scheme for Indian workers in Israel, Azar said, "Any scheme that you start has mishaps at the beginning, you will always hear about incidents happening, but it's still the exception. We are both dealing with it in the particular case, and also in the general sense between the governments, to streamline it to make it work. We have great potential, and I'm sure we are going to expand... We have thought about most of the things and we should continue perfecting it." The Indian Express had reported that the skill mismatch resulted from an assessment process that over-promised and under-delivered when it came to workers' abilities. Later, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal had described the problems as "teething issues", which have been "resolved" and that most Israeli companies were satisfied with Indian workers, and so were the workers.

FROM PAGE ONE Will resign as Chief Minister after two days, going for agnipariksha: Kejriwal

FULL REPORTS ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Both he and Sisodia would go back to the people of Delhi and prove their innocence in the "court of the people", he said.

convened soon. AAP sources said Kejriwal's decision was in line with the party's apprehensions of early polls in the Capital. "The party is in favour of early polls in Delhi, to be able to capitalise on the CM's popularity which has received another fillip after his release from jail on Friday," said sources.

Kejriwal said he would hold a meeting of party MLAs to decide the new CM. Among the names doing the rounds on Sunday were Delhi ministers Atishi and Kailash Gahlot, but party leaders said no decision has been taken yet. "I will go to every street, to every house, and until the public gives its verdict that Kejriwal is honest, I will not sit on the CM's chair... I spoke to lawyers and told them that my conscience says that I should not sit on the CM's chair until I am acquitted by the court. They said that the case will drag on for 10 years, 15 years, 20 years... I want to appeal to the public, if you think Kejriwal is honest, vote in my favour. If you think Kejriwal is guilty, do not vote for me. Every vote will be a certificate of my honesty," Kejriwal said.

Kejriwal said he would hold a meeting of party MLAs to decide the new CM. Among the names doing the rounds on Sunday were Delhi ministers Atishi and Kailash Gahlot, but party leaders said no decision has been taken yet. "I will go to every street, to every house, and until the public gives its verdict that Kejriwal is honest, I will not sit on the CM's chair... I spoke to lawyers and told them that my conscience says that I should not sit on the CM's chair until I am acquitted by the court. They said that the case will drag on for 10 years, 15 years, 20 years... I want to appeal to the public, if you think Kejriwal is honest, vote in my favour. If you think Kejriwal is guilty, do not vote for me. Every vote will be a certificate of my honesty," Kejriwal said.

Likening his decision to Sita's agnipariksha (trial by fire) in the Ramayana, Kejriwal said: "Inhone mere upar aarop lagaya hai. Jab Bhagwaan Ram vanavase aaye the, Sita maa ko agnipariksha deni padi. Aaj mai agnipariksha dene ja raha hoon (They have levelled allegations against me. When Lord Ram returned from exile, Sita had to undergo a trial by fire. Today, I am going for a trial by fire). "In today's times, not even a peon quits. I left the CM's chair on my own (in 2014). I have no lust for post or money. We only have a passion to do something for the country," he said.

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva asked why Kejriwal needed two days to resign. "What does he want to do in these two days... During the Lok Sabha elections, Kejriwal had appealed for votes in the name of being saved from returning to prison... the people

(of Delhi) gave him their answer by giving all the seven seats to the BJP... Kejriwal is resorting to his resignation now to hide how he cheated and deceived the citizens of Delhi," he said. Terming it as a decision that had arisen out of compulsion, Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Vjender Gupta accused Kejriwal of seeking to play the "victim card". "After running the government from jail for the last six months, Kejriwal is resigning now, with only a few months left for elections... Corrupt Kejriwal is handing over power to someone else after looting Delhi for 10 years, to avoid answering questions from the public and to prevent his wrongdoings from being exposed," he alleged.

Yojana under which eligible women beneficiaries were promised Rs 1,000 per month. But with several of its senior leaders who were arrested in connection with the excise policy case being released on bail over the past few weeks, the rejuvenated AAP has been in election mode for the past month. "Less than six months of the tenure of the current Delhi Assembly remains and the Election Commission of India is well within the boundary of rules to allow elections in Delhi along with Maharashtra," said a Delhi government official.

Now, because there is a Supreme Court order that he cannot go to the (Delhi) Secretariat or sign files, there is no basis for him to remain CM... the people of Delhi and the country are asking tough questions... so you have started this drama... the question is why not resign today," Delhi BJP secretary Harish Khurana said. With Kejriwal pushing for early elections, a BJP source said the party was still in the "initial stages" of preparing for the Delhi polls. However, another BJP leader said the party has "held deliberations over the campaign on at least two occasions" and the party "is more than ready to head into the Assembly polls if the need arises".

Currently, there are two-fold curbs placed on the AAP government -- by the amended GNCTD Act which gives more powers to the Lieutenant-Governor, especially over the bureaucracy; and by Kejriwal's bail conditions which specify that he cannot go to the Delhi Secretariat and his office, or sign official files unless it is required and necessary for obtaining clearance/ approval of the L-G. If Kejriwal resigns on Tuesday, it will not be the first time. In February 2014, 49 days into his first tenure as CM, Kejriwal resigned, citing disagreements with the Congress -- which was supporting his government from outside -- over the Jan Lokpal Bill. Handing his resignation to then L-G Najeeb Jung, he had recommended the dissolution of the House and fresh elections. Elections, however, were held a year later, in 2015, when AAP won 67 of the 70 seats.

The announcement, meanwhile, caught the BJP off-guard. The party has been seeking to bolster its attack on the AAP and its senior leadership, especially Kejriwal, over the issue of corruption.

This time, however, Kejriwal has announced only his resignation, and stated that a new CM will be announced.

Amid worry over fallout of graft charges, bid to claim moral high ground

must be some truth in these allegations... Zero tolerance for corruption is at the core of Kejriwal's politics and, by extension, the AAP. This step was necessary to reclaim that ground," said a party leader.

Kejriwal is also learnt to be keen to vacate his Civil Lines official residence, which has been under the scanner over its renovation, with the BJP alleging irregularities and "excessive expenditure". An enquiry into the allegations of rules being flouted is underway, and three engineers have been suspended so far.

Deputy CM, respectively) is that they want the people of Delhi to show faith in them once more and get rid of the tag of being corrupt.

ership was told about Arvind ji's decision to announce his resignation, late on Saturday night at Sanjay Singh's residence... Though there was talk about this possibility from the moment that he was released from Tihar jail on Friday, only Manish ji (Sisodia) knew that this was in the offing," a senior AAP leader said.

It was important for Kejriwal to not resign while in jail, to send out the message that he would continue to fight, said the party leader. "When he did not resign after going to jail, it was a political decision, because that (Kejriwal's resignation) was the objective behind sending him to prison. That is what the BJP-led Centre wanted. Kejriwal waited to get bail and be released to announce his resignation on his own. This is not Arvind Kejriwal the CM or politician taking the decision, but Arvind Kejriwal as a person. It is a political gamble, but, at its core, it is more a personal than political decision, taken on his own terms," the leader added.

A section of the party, however, is worried over the confusion in the AAP's ranks as many sought to understand why Kejriwal was pushing for early polls while also announcing that a new CM would be appointed soon.

When the elections will happen in Delhi is up to the Election Commission of India, it is not in our hands. In the last six months of the tenure of a Legislative Assembly, elections can be held whenever deemed necessary by the ECI. From the AAP's point of view, the ball is now in the ECI's court," another party leader said. "Most MLAs were not informed of the decision ahead of time. Till now, during the door-to-door campaign, they have been seeking votes for CM Kejriwal. The messaging will have to change now, especially if there is a new CM," said a party source.

On the possibility of early elections, a senior official said the preparation of electoral rolls was underway, with the final update set for January. AAP leaders, however, said that since the rolls were updated in April-May for the Lok Sabha polls, the exercise could be hastened. Meanwhile, asked about the "two days" time frame set by Kejriwal for his resignation, AAP Minister Atishi said that since it's Sunday today, and Eid tomorrow, "he will resign on the next working day, that is Tuesday (September 17)".

Days before J&K polls, Jamaat, Engineer Rashid's party form 'strategic' pact

Qadir Wani, chief of the eight-member Jamaat panel that has engaged in talks with the Centre and declared its intention to contest the elections.

lead to a split in the socio-religious outfit, which has been battling a credibility crisis -- both within and outside.

ing victory for AIP and JEI candidates, ensuring that the people of Jammu and Kashmir have strong representatives who can articulate their sentiments and aspirations," the AIP release said.

These gangsters. The Haryana Police also said at the meeting that it had issued 26 Look Out Circulars against different criminals -- including three blue notices and eight red notices -- against gangsters such as Brar, Godara, and Anmol Bishnoi.

Shameem Ahmad Thoker, the chief election in-charge of the Jamaat, confirmed that the two parties have allied for the Assembly polls. The banned outfit has fielded nine candidates as Independents across the Valley, and announced that it would back Ajaz Ahmad Mir, an Independent candidate from Zainapora. Mir, a former PDP legislator, decided to go it alone after being denied a ticket by his party.

A former Jamaat leader told The Indian Express that decisions taken by the panel have already created fissures within the outfit that saw a division in 2004, when Hurriyat patriarch Syed Ali Shah Geelani parted ways from the Jamaat to form the Tehreek-e-Hurriyat. "It has been almost two decades since Jamaat saw an internal division. It officially started in 1997 when Bhat sahib (Jamaat chief Ghulam Mohammad Bhat) dissociated Jamaat from militancy," he said. "The panel is the extension of the same group and decisions taken by it don't have the stamp from the ground workers. This latest decision to join hands with Rashid is unlikely to go down well with the cadre and may deepen the fissures."

"Nobody knows how this is happening. On the face of it, it seems like an abnormal activity prompted by some forces," senior PDP leader and former minister Naem Akhtar told The Indian Express. "The people can be misled for some time but they will eventually know everybody's truth. This (alliance) is neither in the interest of Jammu and Kashmir nor democracy."

While in the health sector, under the Ayushman Bharat scheme, the government has extended the ₹5 lakh per year coverage to every citizen over 70 years, and this is expected to benefit 6 crore senior citizens. The government has also increased 70,000 medical seats which "should ensure that no student would have to go abroad for medical studies," the functionary said.

Rashid's AIP, on the other hand, has fielded 34 candidates -- 33 in the Valley and one in Jammu. Since the AIP is not registered with the Election Commission, its candidates are also contesting as Independents. "This collaboration marks a significant step towards achieving a united front in the pursuit of peace, justice, and political empowerment for the people of Jammu and Kashmir," said an AIP functionary. "Both parties underscored the impor-

While the AIP will back Jamaat candidates in south Kashmir's Pulwama and Kulgam, the Jamaat will back the AIP candidates across Kashmir. "In areas where both AIP and JEI have fielded candidates, the alliance has agreed to a 'friendly contest'," particularly in constituencies like Langate, Devsar and Zainapora, an official release said. "In other constituencies, mutual support will be extended to ensure a unified approach to the elections."

The last-minute alliance between two outfits could alter the poll dynamics in the Valley, but is unlikely to have a major impact. While there has been discomfiture within the Jamaat over its leadership's decision to contest the elections, the alliance could

According to sources in the Delhi Police, several service providers also have refused to share IP addresses citing such jurisdictional issues. And in cases where such details are provided, the IP is found to be a foreign country because of VPNs. "This legal process takes several months and by the time it's done, the gangster has moved to a different place," the officer quoted earlier said. "If the IP is in India, then details are procured about the user. In most cases, it turns out that the SIM card and dongle used are found procured through fake documents".

'Dabba calling': Police are grappling with a new extortion technique

suspected to be used by gangsters based abroad -- such as Goldy Brar, the alleged mastermind behind the killing of Punjabi singer Sidhu Moose Wala; Rohit Godara; and Anmol Bishnoi.

One such example, according to this officer, is a call that 21-year-old gangster Himanshu Bhat, a fugitive whose last known location is believed to be Portugal, made to a known cable operator in India last year.

Ranhola Police Station on February 27 last year. On that day, the Delhi Police had arrested two sharpshooters from Jhajjar, Haryana, following an alleged encounter.

these gangsters. The Haryana Police also said at the meeting that it had issued 26 Look Out Circulars against different criminals -- including three blue notices and eight red notices -- against gangsters such as Brar, Godara, and Anmol Bishnoi.

According to police sources, the method was flagged by police in these states at a recent meeting at the Delhi Police headquarters. Officials representing the National Investigation Agency (NIA) also attended the meeting. In most such cases, the henchman and the kingpin are in different locations, even different countries, and make Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) calls.

"First, Bhat's aide (Gangster B) made a VOIP call from a different location to the cable operator in Outer Delhi's Ranhola and another call from a different phone set to Bhat. He then put both on speaker and Bhat threatened to kill the victim if he didn't pay. When the demands were not met, Bhat sent his shooters to fire at the victim's office, killing his son Hitesh," the officer said.

The discovery was made on the back of an FIR registered at Delhi's

According to sources, several police officers claimed at the six-hour long meeting that it was difficult to trace the money trail of

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GYM OWNER SHOOTING Got call from US to kill Shah over a month ago, accused tells interrogators

MAHENDER SINGH
MANRAL
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 15



Nadir Shah

THREE DAYS after a 35-year-old gym owner was shot dead in South Delhi's Greater Kailash, the Special Cell of Delhi Police has found that the accused were staying at a rented accommodation in Jamia Nagar for the past three-four weeks and allegedly conducted recce of the victim Nadir Shah.

Their food arrangements were managed by Mohammad Sajid, a close aide of jailed gangster Hashim Baba, who was also arrested in the case.

Sources said one of five arrested received a call more than a month ago to "eliminate" Nadir Shah. He was shot dead outside his gym on the night of September 12. Initially, the case was registered by the South district police, but it was later transferred to the New Delhi Range of the Special Cell. However, according to a source, discussions are underway at the top brass of the police to transfer the case to another unit after they received information about Shah's alleged involvement with the Delhi Police.

The police have also moved an application before a Delhi court for the custody of Hashim for questioning. Hours after the shooting incident, a team led by ACP (NDR) Hridaya Bhushan had arrested four persons — UP residents Akash Yadav, Nitalesh Tiwari (20) and Vishal Verma (19), and Naveen Baliyan (33) from Sonapat. Later, Sajid was arrested. Two accused were arrested from Vandemataram Marg in Dhaura Kuan, while another two were arrested from a Paharganj hotel.

"During questioning, Baliyan told the police that he received a call around one-and-a-half months ago from one Randeep in the US who shared a number, and directed him to contact them to eliminate Shah due to monetary

dispute with him. He claimed that he is associated with jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi and absconding gangster Rohit Godara," a source said.

"...Baliyan was told that some gang members of Hashim will also join him and asked him to stay in a flat in Jamia Nagar. He was asked to conduct recce of their target, Shah, where he met with the other arrested accused — Yadav, Tiwari and Verma. Two absconding shooters — Madhur Motta and Raju — also met him in a rented flat. They started conducting recce and Sajid, who resides in Northeast Delhi, was also staying in a rented flat in Jogabai Extension, would visit their flat regularly," the source said, adding, "Sajid would make food arrangements for them and they had informed about the daily routine of Shah to Randeep, who told them that he would discuss with Lawrence and Hashim for further action."

Baliyan, during questioning, claimed that according to their plan, Motta and Raju would open fire, while Akash and he would manage public chaos to provide them a smooth exit from the spot. "As per the discussed plan, two shooters came in an autorickshaw around 9:10 pm, but the other two accused, who were on a two-wheeler, got late and they waited for them. After they arrived, they waited for some minutes and then Madhur (Motta), along with Raju, opened fire at Shah. They fired around nine rounds and managed to escape from the spot," a source said.

The source added that the probe has revealed that after killing Shah, Raju and Motta went to Northeast Delhi where they met Sajid, who provided them logistical support, including money.

Dengue cases up, two deaths

ANKITA UPADHYAY
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 15

DELHI HAS reported at least two dengue deaths this season — a 54-year-old patient at Lok Nayak Hospital and another at Safdarjung Hospital. This comes amid a surge in cases of the vector-borne disease at several city hospitals.

As per data accessed by *The Indian Express*, from January 1 to September 10, Delhi has recorded a total of 675 cases of dengue. Sources said the highest number of cases, were reported in August.

The maximum number of cases — 103 — were reported in the Najafgarh zone, followed by Shahdara North zone with 84 cases. Along with this, 260 cases of malaria and 32 cases of chikungunya were also reported from January 1 to September 10.

Doctors said that while the severity of the infection is low because of the mild strain, cases might go up considering the excessive rainfall that has been reported this monsoon season.

At Safdarjung Hospital, 15 dengue patients and seven suspected cases were admitted in the last 24 hours on Saturday. A total of 70 patients have been admitted since July 1.

At Holy Family Hospital in Southeast Delhi, two-three



There is an increase in dengue cases and other vector-borne diseases due to the continuous rainfall in Delhi. File

dengue cases were reported every day in the first week of September. This increased slightly to four-five cases per day in the second week.

According to Medical Director Dr Sumit Ray, the hospital has about 10-15 dengue patients admitted on any given day. He said they even saw cases of H1N1 (swine flu) in August till the first week of September. "We had about 12-15 patients admitted with H1N1 every day. It has started coming down this week. Gastrointestinal infections, including typhoid, which were high since July, are decreasing now," he said.

Dr Satish Koul, Senior Director & Unit Head-Internal Medicine at Fortis Hospital, said the emer-

gency department has been stretched due to patients with dengue fever at various stages of complications. "Cases this year as compared to last year have been unprecedented," he said.

At the hospital's OPD, 40-60% of patients complaining of fever have dengue, he added.

At the Delhi government's biggest hospital, Lok Nayak, Medical Director Dr Suresh Kumar said dengue cases have increased in the last week. "Currently, we have nine patients admitted — four confirmed and five suspected cases," he said.

Dr Prashant Sinha, Head of Emergency at PSRI Hospital, said the threat of dengue will likely

continue until about November due to the prolonged monsoon. "Not only are we noticing these cases, but we are seeing patients every day. Swine flu is one particular disease or flu that has risen disproportionately during this period compared to previous years. As for dengue, it has also started to appear, but I would hesitate to say we are done with the dengue season." Dr Sushila Kataria, Senior Director of Internal Medicine, Medanta Hospital, Gurgaon, said to prevent mosquito bites, it is crucial to wear full-sleeved clothing, use mosquito repellents, and ensure there is no stagnant water around homes and communities.

"If water cannot be drained, adding a tablespoon of oil can help prevent larvae from thriving. In addition, salmonella infections and prolonged fevers from typhoid are increasing due to water and sewage contamination," he added.

Meanwhile, Delhi Health Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj said the city is experiencing an increase in dengue cases and other vector-borne diseases due to the continuous rainfall. On Thursday, he held a meeting with various departments — Municipal Corporation of Delhi, health, revenue and education — to discuss a potential disease outbreak. Over the last two days, he also visited Delhi government hospitals to check their preparedness as well.

Trainee doctor, MBA student die by suicide

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 15

TWO SEPARATE incidents of suicides were reported from two universities in Delhi Sunday.

According to police, the suicide of Dr Navdeep Singh, a second year MD student of Maulana Azad Medical College (MAMC), was reported around 7:10 am. "When he wasn't picking up the calls, his father sent a friend to check on him. The friend found that the door of his room was locked from inside," said the police.

The door was broken open and they found the victim hanging. "It was prima facie found that the deceased committed suicide by hanging. Inquest pro-

ceedings are ongoing. No suicide note has been found," police said.

Dr Singh hailed from Muktsar in Punjab.

According to one of his juniors, he was a very "hardworking doctor".

The second case of suicide Sunday was reported at Dwarka North Police Station. According to police, Gautam Kumar, a first-year MBA student of IP University main campus in Dwarka Sector 16, allegedly died after jumping from the seventh floor of a hostel building.

The 25-year-old man was a resident of Vaishali in Bihar. His body was sent to DDU Hospital. "Enquiries are ongoing to fix responsibility, if any," said DCP (Dwarka) Ankit Kumar.

Fake visa factory busted in Tilak Nagar, 3 arrested

New Delhi: The airport unit of the Delhi Police has busted a fake visa producing factory in West Delhi's Tilak Nagar and arrested a 51-year-old man running the unit where forged travel documents were being produced in mass quantities to provide to passengers for travelling to foreign countries. The police have also arrested two agents who were part of the alleged network.

The Delhi Police also conducted raids early last week at the illegal factory during which a huge cache of equipment to produce forged documents were seized. The team also recovered a large number of Nepalese passports, two Indian passports, large

quantities of gumming sheets, lamination sheets, watermark prints and printed envelopes.

The police busted the factory while they were probing the arrest of a Kurukshetra resident named Sandeep who was detained and later arrested for producing a fake Swedish visa at the Departure Immigration Counter of the IGI airport on September 2.

Further probe led to the arrest of freelance agents Balbir Singh and Jaswinder Singh. "Balbir revealed that the fake visas were produced by Manoj Monga," said DCP (IGI) Usha Rangnani. Police later arrested Monga. **ENS**

Magisterial inquiry ordered into drowning of two bank staffers in waterlogged Faridabad underpass

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
FARIDABAD, SEPTEMBER 15

TWO DAYS after two bank employees drowned in a flooded underpass in Faridabad, the Deputy Commissioner (DC) has ordered a magisterial inquiry into the incident.

On Friday night, bank manager Punyashray Sharma and cashier Viraj Dwivedi drowned in the waterlogged Old Railway underpass — parts of which were 12-foot-deep — after their car got trapped. One of the victims was taken out five hours after the incident. The entry to the underpass



The flooded underpass. File

had one barricade with a rope, though it was lying on the ground. Police, however, maintained that officers present at the spot had "gestured" to the driver to not enter the underpass but he did so anyway.

The inquiry will be conducted by the Additional Deputy Commissioner, Dr Anand Sharma, who said he will look into the incident and discuss it with all stakeholders to reach a conclusion on what happened and what needs to be done. "I received the Municipal Corporation of Faridabad (MCF) report to the DC and will start the process of reviewing it tomorrow," he said.

Meanwhile, MCF officials maintained that three motor pumps of 30HP had been installed and the genset's capacity was increased from 125KVA to 250KVA to run continuously for longer hours. Faridabad received 56.4

mm of rainfall till Saturday morning. According to the IMD, Faridabad has received 155.9 mm of rainfall this month so far, 87% excess for this time of the year.

"Apart from this, a tender for augmentation of the dewatering system, along with the construction of a drain to channel the outflow of water, is in process. Generally, underpasses are covered through sheds but here, that doesn't work as this is a railway underpass... there are also other sources of water accumulation apart from the rain," a senior official said.

Police said an FIR has yet to be registered in the case.

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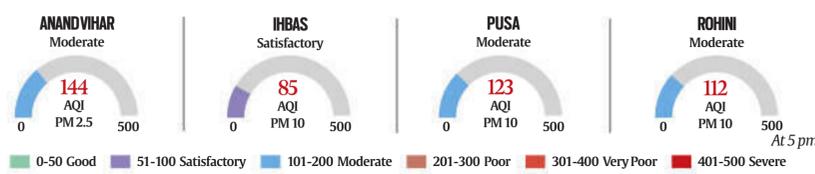
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MAX: 35
 2°C below normal
MIN: 24
 4°C below normal

KEJRIWAL TO RESIGN IN TWO DAYS

All eyes on AAP: Who will be new CM?

Someone from party to take my place until elections are held: CM Kejriwal

GAYATHRI MANI
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 15

SUNDAY'S SURPRISE announcement by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal that he would be resigning in two days generated significant buzz, with speculation rife about who would be his potential successor.

According to party sources, names of ministers Atishi, Gopal Rai and Kailash Gahlot are doing the rounds. "Someone from the party or a minister will be selected for the post but names of Atishi, Rai and Gahlot are doing the rounds," sources said.

Ruling out the possibility of former deputy chief minister and AAP second-in-command Manish Sisodia taking over, Kejriwal said someone from the AAP will take his place until polls are held. Sisodia said he will go among people along with Kejriwal and seek votes based on honesty, and that he will not hold any post till people give him a clean chit.

Atishi holds the highest number of portfolios including Education, Finance, Revenue, Law. Recently, the CM had nominated her to hoist the Tricolour on Independence Day in his stead. However, it was rejected and the L-G nominated Gahlot to do so.

A party official said Rai, who holds the Environment portfolio, can also be a potential pick as he is a senior party member.

"Atishi has a good rapport with officials and knows how to get work done. Similarly, Gahlot, who has the transport, home and WCD departments under him, is active in party work and meetings. He also gets work done in his departments despite tussles with bureaucrats," said a party source.

'Projects will get a push'

With a new Chief Minister being appointed, officials hope that several projects that need to be extended or implemented will get a much-needed boost. "Whoever becomes the CM, it

will be good as several pending cabinet proposals will be cleared," said a senior official.

Officials said a meeting of the National Capital Civil Services Authority — which presides over the transfer, posting and vigilance-related issues concerning bureaucrats — can now be held. The last meeting was in September 2023. The three-member panel, formed after the GNCTD Act came into force, is chaired by the CM and the Chief Secretary and Additional Chief Secretary are members.

"Several postings of IAS and DANICS officers will be done once the CM is appointed. Due to Kejriwal's absence, several departments are running through link officers or being held by one officer on an additional charge," said another official.

Further, the AAP government's top scheme, the Mahila Samman Rashi Yojana, whose proposal is in the final stages, may also be implemented. Eligible women between the ages of 18 and 60 in Delhi can avail of the scheme, under which they will get Rs 1,000 a month, said officials.

Some of the AAP government's flagship schemes can also get an extension:

■ The doorstep delivery scheme that provides government services to people at their homes has been halted for almost three months. As per officials, the scheme had expired and was extended in November 2023 till March 31, 2024. "The department had forwarded the proposal for further extension to the Cabinet but the Model Code of Conduct was implemented ahead of the Lok Sabha polls and then the CM was arrested," said an official.

■ The electric vehicle policy also expired last August and it was extended twice till January. Subsidies for vehicle owners have been stuck for months now. "All these schemes need Cabinet approval for an extension. But due to the CM's absence, a Cabinet meeting could not be held as he is the head," said a senior official.



Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal addresses party workers at the AAP office, Sunday. PTI

Don't resign, can run the govt from jail, Kejriwal tells Opp leaders

GAYATHRI MANI
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 15

FROM A message to opposition leaders to invoking the British Raj and hitting out at the L-G, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who said he would resign in two days in his address to party workers Sunday, made an emotional pitch for the upcoming Assembly polls. He said the BJP tried to break him, poach their MLAs and topple the AAP government in Delhi and Punjab to form their own. "They enforced the strictest law of the country, PMLA, on us in which getting bail is difficult... Despite that, we got bail from the court... But even the court can't do anything more than this... I would not sit on the CM's chair until I was acquitted by the court. So, today I've come to your court, the people's court, to ask if Kejriwal is honest or guilty."

Kejriwal, who along with former Deputy CM Manish Sisodia and other AAP leaders, was arrested in connection with the excise policy case, requested opposition leaders in power in states like Tamil Nadu, Kerala and West Bengal to not resign if the BJP filed a fake case against them. "I urge all of them to not resign," he said, adding that even the Supreme Court said he could run the government from jail and that he didn't resign then as he proved the government can run from jail.

He also invoked the British Raj several times, including to slam L-G V K Saxena for not heeding his request to let AAP leader and Delhi minister Atishi hoist the Tricolour on Independence Day in his absence. "When Shaheed Bhagat Singh was in jail, he wrote letters to many people and the British sent these letters... When I went to jail, I wrote only one letter to the L-G, requesting that on August 15, Atishi should be allowed to hoist the flag in my place. But that was not delivered to the L-G and a warning was issued — that if you write a letter to the L-G, meetings with your family will be stopped."

He also compared himself with Bhagat Singh and Sisodia with Batukeshwar Dutt. "... Kejriwal and Sisodia go to jail in the same case. We are kept in separate jails... aren't allowed to meet."

Meanwhile, Sisodia also took to X and posted, "I came into politics to work honestly for education. I worked honestly as Delhi's education minister for 10 years. I built schools. I built new universities... but attempts were made to prove me dishonest by making false allegations against me under petty politics — I was kept in jail for 17 months on false charges. After two years of legal process, now even the country's top court has told me to go and do my work. But I will not sit on the chair of Deputy Chief Minister-Education Minister right now. I did not come into politics here for the greed of chairs and posts."

LAST TIME KEJRIWAL QUIT AS CM: THE 49-DAY GOVT AND WHAT FOLLOWED

THE DELHI ASSEMBLY elections of 2013, the results of which were announced on December 8 that year, threw up a hung verdict with the BJP emerging as the single-largest party winning 31 seats in the Lok Sabha House. The AAP, which made its electoral debut, won 28 seats while the Congress was restricted to 8.

THE BJP, which was invited by then L-G Najeeb Jung to form the government, declined the offer even as the three parties ruled out alliances with each other. Jung then invited AAP to form the

government following which Kejriwal wrote to the BJP and Congress seeking "clarity" on 18 issues. While the BJP declined support, the Congress reportedly agreed on 16 of the 18 issues and extended outside support to the AAP, paving the way for Kejriwal to be sworn in as Delhi CM on December 28, 2013.

SOME OF HIS first moves as CM included initiation of a corruption redressal "durbars" and the rollback of FDI in the multi-brand retail sector, a move sanctioned by the previous Sheila Dikshit-led

Congress government, citing high unemployment.

FORTY-NINE DAYS after assuming power, Kejriwal resigned as the CM on February 14, 2014, citing the non-introduction of the Jan Lokpal Bill in the Assembly. Following this, President's Rule was imposed in Delhi and the House was kept in suspended animation.

KEJRIWAL UNSUCCESSFULLY contested the 2014 Lok Sabha polls from Varanasi against then BJP prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi and lost by a margin

of 3.71 lakh votes.

IN THE run-up to the 2015 Assembly polls, Kejriwal repeatedly apologised to the people for stepping down, terming his 49-day tie-up with the Congress as an "honest mistake".

AAP STORMED to power in February 2015, winning 67 of the 70 seats, reducing the BJP to 3 seats. The Congress, which lost power nationally months earlier in the national elections, failed to open its account.

ENS

With its 7 MPs as campaign face, BJP to 'expose Delhi's disgrace' under AAP

JATIN ANAND
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 15

AFTER INITIALLY being caught off guard following his announcement to resign in two days, the BJP chalked out an elaborate plan to take on AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal on the Capital's streets starting Monday, party sources said.

With its seven Lok Sabha MPs as the face of its campaign seeking to expose the alleged corruption of the AAP Delhi government — especially the excise policy case — and attacking its flagship schemes at its core, a senior BJP leader said the party would hit the streets across Delhi's 250 civic wards and 70 Assembly constituencies to drive home "failure" on these counts and in governance.

"Whether it is Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia, or the entire Aam Aadmi Party, they are masters of hiding corruption... The offer of resignation by Kejriwal is a conspiracy to hide the blunders of corruption... the people of Delhi will not forgive Kejriwal and will respond by defeating him in the Delhi Assembly polls," said Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva at a workers' meeting.

He also asked workers to go door to door to "expose the corruption of the Kejriwal government." "BJP will expose the failure of everyone — from the AAP's councillors to each of its MLAs. Not just their corruption, but the failure of their schemes like free power and water — the people of Delhi are fed up with inflated bills — their scams from excise to the Delhi Jal Board, we will not spare them on any count. We have been

preparing for the Delhi polls since the Lok Sabha elections; let them come, we are ready," Sachdeva told *The Indian Express*.

According to a senior BJP leader, the political battle for Delhi would literally be fought on, and over the issue of, city streets. "The 7 BJP MPs will not just go Assembly to Assembly, but ward to ward where streets — from small internal ones to arterial roads — are damaged and crumbling, citing them as one of the biggest examples of the AAP government's failure," the leader said.

"Let them (AAP leaders Kejriwal and Sisodia) step onto these streets; the BJP will confront them with the same area's residents, who've been driven up the wall due to lack of basic infrastructure and are paying through their noses for inflated power, water and health bills," the leader added.

'Why wait for two days?': BJP demands Kejriwal dissolve Cabinet immediately

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 15

THE BJP Sunday demanded that Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal "immediately dissolve the Cabinet" after he announced that he would resign in two days and sought early Assembly polls, stating that he would wait for the "people's verdict".

"The public already gave its verdict three months ago and sent him (Kejriwal) to jail, giving them zero votes in the Lok Sabha polls. So if Kejriwal has even an iota of morality, the entire Cabinet should resign, send a resolution to the L-G, and hold the polls in November," BJP Delhi chief Virendra Sachdeva said at a press conference.



Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva. Express

Accusing Kejriwal and his AAP government of corruption in everything from schools to hospitals, Sachdeva added, "Like his character, his statement is also an illusion. Why wait for two days? Why can't he resign immedi-

ately? What is going to happen in the next 48 hours? Is he going to make a request?"

Sachdeva asked the chief minister why he did not resign when people in Delhi were struggling for water, students were electrocuted in floodwater, sewers were overflowing and electricity bills were going up. "Several works are pending. People were facing problems due to pending files in the absence of a government. While the CM, who talks about honesty, is saying he will go to the people, how honest are he and his party? Will he tell the people that his bedsheets cost Rs 8 lakh and he sits on a toilet that costs Rs 4 lakh?" the BJP leader alleged.

Senior BJP leader Sudhanshu Trivedi said leaders such as Madhu Koda from Jharkhand,

Lalu Prasad Yadav from Bihar, and M Karunanidhi and J Jayalithaa from Tamil Nadu had resigned as chief minister before going to jail so the government would function and people would not face problems. "But Kejriwal didn't resign in the last six months. Now, all of a sudden, he is saying he will resign, that too after two days. Why doesn't he call a Cabinet meeting and dissolve it immediately by writing to the L-G and holding polls in Delhi?" he said.

Meanwhile, AAP leaders demanded the Assembly polls be held in November. "The Assembly does not need to be dissolved for elections to take place. Elections can be held anytime now because only six months are left before (it)," AAP leader and minister Atishi said.

CONG-AAP FISSURES COME TO LIGHT

AAP decision, say INDIA bloc allies; Cong calls it 'nautanki'

ASAD REHMAN
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 15

WHILE MOST INDIA bloc allies maintained Arvind Kejriwal's resignation announcement was an AAP decision, the Delhi Chief Minister's move brought to the fore fissures between the Congress and Aam Aadmi Party.

Kejriwal's announcement came just days after talks over seat sharing between the two parties didn't work out in Haryana, with the Congress sources saying that the AAP was "demanding too many seats".

On Sunday, a section of Delhi Congress leaders termed the announcement "nautanki". "He is doing drama. He has no moral ground anymore. If he had any morality, he would have resigned earlier," said Delhi Congress leader

and former MP Sandeep Dikshit. Asked about the two being allies at the Centre, Dikshit said: "That is at the national level. In Delhi, our fight is against Kejriwal."

Echoing similar views, a senior Congress leader said the party does not want AAP to expand too much: "They knew an alliance in Haryana would have benefitted them. Hence, they wanted an alliance with us. But it didn't work out. Now, for Delhi elections... it will be difficult for the two parties to come together."

As per another party leader, Congress leader Bhupinder Singh Hooda opposed the alliance in Haryana. "While the central leadership may have some sympathy or may feel positively about the AAP, state units are not inclined to ally with the party. The same thing happened in Haryana." "There is still a feeling in the



In July, INDIA bloc leaders had joined a protest against Kejriwal's arrest. Archive

Congress that Kejriwal is not to be trusted... the party is cautious about him and AAP. He announced he will resign, but what is the motive? What impact will it have?..." said a senior Congress leader. Notably, while several INDIA

bloc parties celebrated Kejriwal's bail Friday, the Congress top leadership, including Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and party chief Mallikarjun Kharge, had maintained strategic silence over the

Supreme Court verdict. Asked about the order, Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinete had refused to "comment on it per se". Instead she highlighted how "(central investigative) agencies have been misused against rivals in the past 10 years".

Differences between the Congress and AAP notwithstanding, several INDIA bloc parties reiterated that "central agencies were being misused by the government to target the Opposition".

TMC's Sagarika Ghose said the BJP, unable to handle electoral defeats, has tried every trick in the book to try and dislodge the AAP CM. "Kejriwal has consistently challenged and defeated the BJP for the last decade in Delhi. The BJP and the unelected Delhi L-G have been interfering daily in the AAP government's functioning and preventing an elected govern-

ment from working," she said.

Terming the resignation a "courageous step", she said, "... Kejriwal has called the BJP's bluff and shown that he remains one step ahead of it."

CPI's D Raja shared similar views on misuse of central agencies. However, he said the resignation is Kejriwal's prerogative. "He will have to explain to the people why he is doing so because he is an elected person. That is between him, his party and the people. We have not consulted INDIA bloc parties. It is their (AAP's) independent decision," he said.

RJD MP Manoj Jha said there is a need to pay attention to what the court said while granting bail. "It is important to see... the political game being played by the BJP. I feel... there'll be an end to political vendetta started by two people in the last 10 years," he said.

Ready to face challenge of early polls: DPCC chief

SAMAN HUSAIN
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 15

FOLLOWING Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's announcement of his resignation Sunday, Delhi Congress President Devender Yadav described the move as welcome but long overdue. "Had Kejriwal stepped down six months ago, the people of Delhi could have been spared much of the hardship they endured during his tenure," he remarked.

Yadav highlighted that Kejriwal had dismissed Manish Sisodia and Satyendar Jain from their posts following their arrests, questioning why the CM had not followed the same course of action after his own detention. "I personally feel this is an internal fight between vultures. While giving his resignation, Kejriwal has ensured even Sisodia cannot take charge, as he is also dealing with similar allegations," he said.

Accusing Kejriwal of engaging in political theatrics, he said, "The court has clearly stated that he cannot sign files or go to office. In a situation like this, it seems like a political drama. All this while Kejriwal has been clinging to power for personal gain and luxuries of the CM's official residence."

Responding to AAP's demand for early elections in November, Yadav asserted that Congress is ready to face the challenge: "For the last four months, we've been actively strengthening the party organisation in Delhi and setting our house in order. We have candidates for each of the 70 assembly constituencies in the capital."

He also dismissed the possibility of the two parties contesting the polls together. "If Kejriwal is really interested in Delhi elections, what is the need for a new CM? This confirms that AAP is apprehensive about their chances... Both we and AAP will go it alone in the Delhi assembly polls," he said.



MEXICO

Día de la Independencia



INTERVIEW

Federico Salas Lotfe
Ambassador of Mexico to India

Mexico-India: Enhancing global impact together

What are the key opportunities that you see for Mexico-India trade relations in the dynamic economic landscape?

The trade relationship between Mexico and India is flourishing, marked by significant growth and diversification. As our economies continue to evolve, we are strengthening traditional sectors like automobiles and green energy, and witnessing an impressive expansion in the pharma industry with 26 Indian pharma firms in Mexico. This number is increasing.

New sectors such as Fintech, e-commerce, and agrotech are emerging, reflecting our modernization efforts and the innovative agenda of trade. Furthermore, the startup sector is shaping future trade dynamics.

It is a matter of pride and joy for us that alongside a surge in tequila consumption, wherein it doubled in India last year, Mexican cuisine – recognized by UNESCO as an intangible cultural heritage – has gained immense popularity in India. This helps boost not only trade and cultural exchange but also deepens the bond between our societies, wherein we share in common the love for food and life as an integral part of our respective cultural fabric.

In the context of the Global South, how do you envision Mexico and India collaborating to address various challenges, such as climate change, poverty, and sustainable development?

Mexico and India have a strong history of collaboration to tackle challenges within the Global South, including but not limited to climate change, poverty, and sustainable development. Owing to our common priorities, both Mexico

and India share a responsibility to address the wide range of issues that affect our countries and the community of countries in the Global South.

Alongside supporting Indian priorities during India's G20 Presidency, Mexico has emphasized climate change's devastating impact on development, agriculture, and the survival of small island states.

Our focus also spans issues pertaining to development, poverty eradication, and enhancing financial structures to aid vulnerable countries. Akin to how India has programs for its neighbourhood, Mexico supports development initiatives in Central America and the Caribbean.

Through joint initiatives and summits, including recent virtual meetings, Mexico and India are advancing the energy and education sectors while addressing health and a wider range of issues, demonstrating that collective action is essential for dealing with global challenges that affect the countries of the developing world.

How do you envision India-Mexico diplomatic ties evolving amid the current global geopolitical climate?

The diplomatic relationship between Mexico and India has gone from strength to strength. Recent high-level political dialogue and visits, including that of the Indian Minister of External Affairs, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar to Mexico and the then Mexican Foreign Minister visits to India, have strengthened our communication and collaboration while helping us identify our priorities and shared values that we want to promote.

Serving together in the UN Security Council as non-permanent members has further deepened

our dialogue on global issues as we have supported each other's priorities. Furthermore, both countries have expressed concerns and are seeking solutions to reform the international system to better address diverse global challenges.

India's growing global influence as the world's fifth largest economy and increased focus on Latin America, especially Mexico – the largest trading partner of India in Latin America and the largest investor of Latin America in India – is significant and notable. The positive trajectory of the evolving relationship between Mexico and India looks promising for enhancing our joint impact on global affairs.

On Mexico's National Day celebrations, which key cultural and historical aspects would you like to highlight for both Mexicans and Indians?

Both Mexico and India share not only a promising future but also a deep pride in their rich cultural heritage. Notably, UNESCO's World Heritage Committee recently highlighted our close cultural ties, with India and Mexico closely ranked in heritage sites.

Historical exchanges include the Galeón de Manila's trade route connecting us, and various cultural influences such as Mexico's marigold flowers, used in Indian religious ceremonies, and chiles, integral to Indian cuisine, originating in Mexico.

Another fascinating link is the "China Poblana," the traditional style of dress of women in Mexico, inspired by the dress of a Gujarati princess from the 17th century who settled in Mexico. Furthermore, the Indian revolutionaries of the early 20th century to the versatile, multifaceted Indian artist Satish Gujral were deeply influenced by their visits to Mexico.

The Nobel laureate, poet, diplomat, and former Ambassador of Mexico to India, Octavio Paz, brought Indian culture to the Spanish-speaking world and global attention through his acclaimed works who were inspired by his experiences in India.

As we celebrate Mexico's 214th Independence Day, against the backdrop of the remarkable impact Mexico and India have had on each other over centuries, we celebrate these enduring cultural connections with our Indian friends.

Mexico-India, a long-lasting cultural bond



Vanessa Espinosa
Head of Cultural Affairs,
Embassy of Mexico to India

DURING the last five centuries, Mexico and India have developed ties that have had an impact on each others' cultures. As a result of colonialism in the Americas and Asia, the new maritime trade routes enabled the exchanges of products and people between both regions. Two of those products are chilli peppers and marigold flowers brought from Mexico to India. In both cases, the adoption and adaptation of them into the Indian culture is remarkable, such that its actual origin is now forgotten.

Mexico's most prominent female national dress, the China Poblana outfit, was influenced by the clothes of Meera, an Indian princess kidnapped from the coast of Gujarat and taken to Mexico in the 17th century. The China Poblana dress resembles a lehenga: rounded long skirt embroidered with colourful beads and sequins.

Notable characters of the social movements that led to the most important political changes of the 20th century in Mexico and India—Revolution and Independence, respectively—were at some point in contact either with Mexico or India. Mexican ideologue and revolutionary leader, Francisco I. Madero, is said to have had certain influence from the Bhagavad Gita to start the revolutionary movement. Likewise, José Vasconcelos —Mexico's first education minister—was fascinated by Indian history and philosophy, which then influ-

enced the cultural and education policies he tried to apply in the early 20th century.

In the final phase of the Revolution, the Mexican political landscape was filled with various ideological tendencies. Exiled in Mexico in 1917, the Indian nationalist MN. Roy, along with Mexican militants, founded the Mexican Communist Party, the first one after the Russian party. The Indian freedom fighter, Pandurang Khankhoje, conducted in Mexican institutions important agricultural researches that he later applied to build the independent India's agrarian economy.

In mid-twentieth century, then Mexican Ambassador to India, Octavio Paz—later a Nobel literature prize awardee—developed a profound relation with India that remarkably influenced his literary work. As a diplomat, Paz assisted artist Satish Gujral in obtaining a scholarship to study in Mexico under the mentorship of the great muralists Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros. The cultural work of the Embassy of Mexico in India has consistently been creating and promoting meaningful exchanges. Highlights of the past include a photography exhibit, and book, with the work of the great photographers Graciela Iturbide and Raghu Rai; a dialogue of poets of both countries during the Covid pandemic; and participation in the Kolkata book fair.

During 2024, as part of the cultural programme of the Embassy, Mexican writer Ivan Uriel developed the series 'iradas India-México' a comparative literary perspective between the works of prominent writers of both countries. As we move towards the future we will continue to promote cultural exchanges to keep nurturing the rich, multifaceted, and flourishing relationship between Mexico and India.

FLEX Films has had a strong presence in Mexico for the last 15 years and I wish the leaders, citizens, and residents of the United Mexican States a Happy National Day.

Located in Altamira, Tamaulipas, Mexico, Flex Films has a sprawling manufacturing facility spanning almost 40 acres. This manufacturing plant underscores Mexico's attraction as a key investment hub and highlights our commitment to expanding our global footprint and enhancing our presence in the vibrant Latin American market. Over the years, Flex America has solidified its position as a pivotal player in Mexico's packaging film manufacturing sector, significantly contributing to the nation's economic growth. We employ close to 900 individuals in Mexico, and more than 95% of the workforce are residents. Our people are our greatest asset, and we would like to thank our employees and business partners for their contribution toward our success - resulting in an ever-increasing customer base and a wide portfolio of innovative and sustainable products.

Flex America is amongst the leading responsible corporations in Mexico to operate a clean energy plant with an installed capacity to generate 15 MW of power. In the last year, taking our ESG journey forward, we set up a first-of-its-kind PET (bottles) and MLP (Multi-layered Plastic) mixed plastic waste recycling plant to address the problem of plastic waste management in Mexico. On Mexico's National Day, we renew our commitment to the country and look forward to the next phase of expansion and growth for Flex Films America in Mexico".

ANANTHSHREE CHATURVEDI, Vice Chairman and CEO, Flex Films International



**China Poblana-
Traditional
Dress for
Women**



**Palacio de
Bellas Artes**



**Pyramid Chichen
Itza in Mexico**

Electromobility: The future of mobility in Mexico and India



Ricardo Daniel Delgado Muñoz,
Head of Economic Affairs and
Trade Promotion,
Embassy of Mexico to India

ELECTROMOBILITY (EV) is a priority in Mexico and India and we are working together to change the future of mobility. By encouraging the use of electrical transportation and developing electrical infrastructure around major populated areas, the EV sector is one of the key industries in the economic relationship between our nations. Globally, the EV market is rising and our countries are no exception. In Mexico, the market is growing at a 40% pace with more than 70,000 units (electric and hybrids) sold in 2023. This figure is expected to keep growing due to a major intention of Mexicans to purchase electric or hybrid cars, private sector mobilisation to produce more EV units and government policies to improve the electromobility ecosystem.

The National Electric Mobility Strategy (ENME) and the Electro Mobility Association, A.C. (EMA) expect that by 2030, 50% of new cars in Mexico will be electric. The electrification of the transportation system in Mexico will contribute to a reduction of 30 million tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MtCO2). India also projects 35% of the total vehicles sales to be electric by 2030 and to reduce between 110 to 380 MtCO2 by 2050.

With these common goals, the cooperation and commercial opportunities between Mexico and India in the EV sector are countless. In 2023, the Mexican min-

istry of Foreign Affairs and the Indian Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR) signed an agreement to encourage the common research in biotechnology, water resources, airspace and lithium, a key resource for electrical batteries.

On the commercial side, there has been a longstanding connection of the auto industries in our economies that can be expanded into the electrical transportation sector. Both Mexico and India are in the top 10 biggest car manufacturers in the world. While Mexico is the 7th largest producer of cars, India holds the 4th position in the rank (OICA, 2023).

Currently, a lot of Indian two-wheeler vehicles are being sold in the Mexican market like Hero, TVS and Royal Enfield. Also, several Indian auto parts companies have settled plants in Mexico like Brakes India, Rane Madras and TitanX, part of Tata AutoComp. It is noteworthy to mention that even Mexico has invested in the Indian auto sector, in 2015 Tata AutoComp signed a joint-venture agreement with the Mexican company KATCON Global to manufacture 'Indian-Mexican' auto parts in Pune.

In the first quarter of 2024, for the first time, India ranked 7th as the country that invested the most in the Mexican auto industry, with a 5.9% share of the total. Following the example of the new investment projects in the Mexican EV industry like Tesla, BMW and Volkswagen, Indian OEMs could expand their electromobility operations, using Mexico as a manufacturing hub. With the USMCA and the trade agreements Mexico has with the rest of the American continent, Indian EV units could get preferential access from North America all the way to South America.

Fostering EV adoption and infrastructure development has become a key element in our economic partnership



Flex Films extends its warmest congratulations and best wishes to the Mexican leadership and citizens on this Mexico National Day.

We are proud to be associated with the country since 2009 and look forward to our continued partnership to serve you locally.

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6 GOVT & POLITICS



DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



MOO-ING IN

FOLLOWING IN Prime Minister Narendra Modi's footsteps, MoS in the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying and Panchayati Raj, S P Singh Baghel, has also bought a Punganur cow. The cow, which is short in height and is famous for its special qualities, arrived at his place in New Delhi last week on the occasion of Radha Ashtami, which is considered auspicious in Hinduism. It is learnt that Baghel has named the cow 'Vrinda' and he himself takes care of the cow.

FRIENDLY FEELERS

ON A day when the Narendra Modi-led dispensation completed 100 days of its third term, a top government functionary disclosed that the Prime Minister had taken lessons from Bangladesh's Grameen Bank model in implementing schemes for women self-help groups. The fact that the Grameen Bank founder is Mohammad Yunus, caretaker head of Bangladesh's current not-so-friendly regime, did not go unnoticed. The functionary's repeated reference to the microfinance lender of the neighbouring country and that the Modi government followed its model to improve the lives of rural women in India is being viewed as an attempt to reach out to the new government.

SAYS DEMOGRAPHY OF SANTHAL PARGANA, KOLHAN REGIONS 'RAPIDLY CHANGING'

Bangla, Rohingya infiltration major threat to Jharkhand: PM

ABHISHEK ANGAD
RANCHI, SEPTEMBER 15

STATING THAT Bangladeshi and Rohingya infiltration poses a major threat to Jharkhand as it is "rapidly changing" the identity and demography of the Santhal Pargana and Kolhan regions, Prime Minister Sunday accused the JMM-led coalition government in the poll-bound state of encouraging such infiltration for its political interests.

He said the state government is doing "appeasement politics" and "standing together" with the infiltrators.

Addressing a BJP rally in Jamshedpur, Modi said, "The JMM exploited tribal votes for political gains and now they are working with people who have captured the forests and land. At present, infiltration is a big issue for Jharkhand. Two-three days ago, the Jharkhand High Court ordered an investigation by an independent panel. But the JMM government is not ready to accept that there is infiltration."

"Bangladeshi and Rohingya infiltration is a major threat in Santhal Pargana and Kolhan regions. The identity and demography of these regions are changing rapidly," he said at the rally at Gopal Maidan, sharing the stage with Union minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and former Chief Minister Champai Soren, who quit the JMM to join the BJP recently, among others.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, the BJP's election in-charge for Jharkhand, was also present. Assembly elections in the state are expected to be held in November-December this year.

The Prime Minister said the tribal population is "rapidly



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with former Jharkhand Chief Minister Champai Soren and Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan in Jamshedpur on Sunday. PTI

changing" and land is being grabbed in the Santhal Pargana region — comprising Pakur, Sahibganj, Godda, Dumka, Deoghar and Jamtara districts — and the infiltrators are controlling the panchayats there.

"In Santhal Pargana, the population of tribals is rapidly changing, land is being grabbed, infiltrators have taken control of panchayats and amenities, and exploitation of women is increasing. Because of this infiltration, people in Jharkhand, in cities as well as villages, are feeling unsafe," Modi said.

"The truth is that the JMM people are standing together with the Bangladeshi and Rohingya. These infiltrators and radicals are also taking control of the JMM, their people have infiltrated the party," he said.

"Do you know why this is happening? Because the ghost

of Congress has entered JMM and when the ghost of Congress enters any party, appeasement becomes the only agenda of that party. As a result, they then sacrifice the interests of Dalits, Adivasis and the backward classes," Modi said.

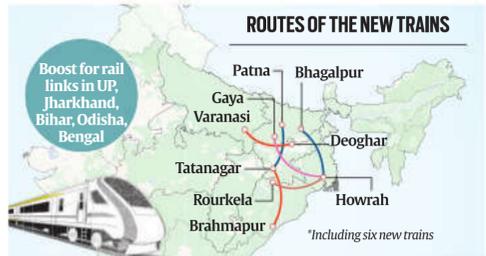
On September 12, the Jharkhand High Court, while hearing a PIL on infiltration, had ordered setting up of a committee to look into the issue of declining population of tribal communities in the Santhal Pargana region.

In his address, the Prime Minister not only spoke of infiltration in Santhal Pargana, but also raised similar concerns for the Kolhan region, which is not part of the PIL.

The Kolhan region comprises three districts — East Singhbhum, West Singhbhum and Saraikela Kharsawan.

Modi said Jharkhand has three enemies — the JMM, RJD and Congress — and the sooner the people of the state recognise this, their fate will be known. "Even today, the RJD takes revenge for Jharkhand's formation. The Congress hates Jharkhand. They ruled the country by sitting in Delhi for so many years, but they did not let Dalit, backward and tribal society to progress. These people can go to any extent for selfishness and power."

He said the Hemant Soren government has been trained by the "Congress school of corruption" and it is time to bid farewell to it. Referring to the recent deaths during the excise constable recruitment examination, Modi said, "If the BJP comes to power in the state, it will launch a probe into the deaths of 15 aspirants."



Six Vande Bharat trains flagged off, rly projects worth ₹660 cr launched

DHEERAJ MISHRA
JAMSHEDPUR, SEPTEMBER 15

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi Sunday flagged off six Vande Bharat trains and laid foundation stones for railway projects worth ₹660 crore in Jharkhand, where Assembly elections are expected later this year.

Addressing the flagging-off event at Tatanagar railway station via video conferencing from Ranchi, the Prime Minister said the trains will not only improve connectivity but boost cultural activities and tourism in the region. All the six premium trains will either have the destination station in Jharkhand or pass through the state, improving rail connectivity with neighbouring Bihar, Odisha, West Bengal and UP.

The new Vande Bharat trains will run on the Tatanagar-Patna; Bhagalpur-Dumka-Howrah; Brahmapur-Tatanagar; Gaya-Howrah; Deoghar-Varanasi; and Rourkela-Howrah routes.

Recalling the time when modern development was limited to only a few states and states such as Jharkhand were left behind, the Prime Minister said the mantra of 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas' has transformed the thinking and priorities of the nation. "Nation's priorities are its poor, tribals, dalits, deprived, women, youth and farmers," he said.

The Prime Minister said that today every city and every state wants a Vande Bharat train to boost connectivity. He underscored that the expansion of rail connectivity in eastern India will strengthen the economy of the region and benefit businesses, professionals and students.

Speaking about the boost in cultural activities as a result of the six new Vande Bharat trains, Modi said that a large number of pilgrims who visit Kashi, from India as well as abroad, would now get a chance to visit Baba Baidyanath in Deoghar with the introduction of Varanasi-Deoghar Vande Bharat. He said that it would boost tourism in the region and create new job opportunities for the youth.

"Modern railway infrastructure is imperative to fast paced development," he said.

Modi was scheduled to arrive at Tatanagar station to flag off the trains but his helicopter could not take off from Ranchi airport due to poor visibility and rainfall. However, later he addressed a public meeting in Jamshedpur.

The Prime Minister also laid foundation stones for Madhupur bypass line in Deoghar district and a railway coach depot in Hazaribag district of Jharkhand. After completion, the Madhupur bypass line is expected to help in reducing travel time between Giridih and Jasidih.

After waterlogging, old Parliament stormwater drains to be upgraded

DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 15

THE CENTRAL Public Works Department (CPWD) is planning on augmenting the stormwater drainage system in and around the old Parliament House, a month after it witnessed waterlogging this monsoon, *The Indian Express* has learnt.

On July 31, while Parliament was in session, water had collected on the driveway between the new and old Parliament buildings during heavy rainfall, leading some MPs to raise the issue on social media and inside the House. The Lok Sabha Secretariat said in a statement the next day that the water accumulated opposite Makar Dwar, one of the entrances to the new building, and "got drained out quickly".

Now, according to sources, the CPWD is set to add to the existing stormwater drains in and around the old Parliament. In preparation, the department last Wednesday invited bids for conducting a topographical survey, a ground-penetrating radar (GPR) survey, a vertical electrical resistivity test, and a robotic survey in and around the old building. An official aware of the development, however, said the project was routine.

The topographical survey will cover the boundaries, features, footprints of buildings, and internal roads, while the vertical electrical resistivity test will help in designing the rainwater harvesting system at the site, as per the tender document. The GPR survey is meant to detect and map all underground utilities

EXPLAINED What the plan entails

THE CPWD is planning on augmenting the stormwater drainage system in and around the old Parliament building. But before that, it will carefully carry out scientific surveys to map out the site, the underground utilities and the quantity and quality of groundwater.

that exist on the site.

The heritage building, completed in 1927, served as the Parliament of India from Independence till September 19 last year, when proceedings shifted to the new building constructed adjacent to it. While proceedings of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha moved to the new building, offices have continued to function from the old building, which was renamed Samvidhan Sadan or Constitution House last year.

The new Parliament building was constructed on a triangular plot next to the old one as a part of the Central Vista redevelopment plan. Before the new building came up, the plot housed the reception, utilities and parking. It had been earmarked as "recreational" land use in the Master Plan of Delhi-2021 before the government amended it for the project.

As per the environmental clearance granted for the project, the built-up area on the plot was earlier 5,200 sqm; the new building's built-up area is 64,500 sqm.

In 'last stage' of LWE fight, Govt doubles road funds

HARIKISHAN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 15

THE CENTRE has doubled the allocation of funds under the Road Connectivity Project for Left Wing Extremism Affected Areas (RCPLWEA) for financial year 2024-25, days after Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced that Left Wing Extremism will be "completely eradicated" in the country before March 2026.

The RCPLWEA, a separate vertical under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), is aimed at providing all-weather road connectivity with culverts and cross-drainage structures in 44 worst-affected Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) districts and adjoining districts in nine states, which are "critical from security and communication point of view".

Under the scheme, the Centre and states share the expenditure in 60:40 ratio — same as under PMGSY.

In a communication to the states on September 2, the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), the nodal ministry for the scheme, said the revised "indicative allocation" of funds —

the central share — has been kept at Rs 1,000 crore for financial year 2024-25. This is double the amount allocated earlier. On May 6, the ministry had informed the states that Rs 500 crore had been allocated as central share for 2024-25.

Of the Rs 1,000 crore allocated, three states — Chhattisgarh (Rs 200 crore), Jharkhand (Rs 200 crore), Andhra Pradesh (Rs 150 crore) and — will receive the most, followed by Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh (Rs 140 crore each).

According to sources, the allocation is indicative and it is likely to increase further if required.

The ministry's move came a little over a week after the Union Home Minister said on August 24 that the fight against Maoists was in its "last stage" and the country will be free of LWE by March 2026.

"I believe that time has come to deal with LWE with one strong strategy... ruthless strategy to deliver the last blow... We all believe LWE is the biggest challenge to our country's democratic process. I believe this fight is in the last stage. By March

LOOSENING THE FUNDING TAP (FY25)

States	Indicative allocation on May 6	Revised indicative allocation on Sept 2
Andhra	₹70 cr	₹150 cr
Bihar	₹20 cr	₹20 cr
Chhattisgarh	₹100 cr	₹200 cr
Jharkhand	₹90 cr	₹200 cr
Madhya Pradesh	₹60 cr	₹140 cr
Maharashtra	₹60 cr	₹140 cr
Odisha	₹20 cr	₹20 cr
Telangana	₹60 cr	₹110 cr
Uttar Pradesh	₹20 cr	₹20 cr
Total	₹500 cr	₹1,000 cr

2026, we will end the Naxal issue in our country. In 2010, Naxal incidents were being reported from 107 districts... now this figure has come down to 42," Shah said at a press conference in Raipur.

In its first term, the NDA government had approved the RCPLWEA on December 28, 2016. The scheme aims at improving the rural road connectivity in "the worst LWE affected districts" across 9 states — Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh.

The revised allocation of Rs 1,000 crore means the nine states will have to allocate at least Rs 500 crore together for their share, taking the total availability of funds to about Rs 1,500 crore in the current financial year.

According to the Centre, RCPLWEA is envisaged as a "major trigger for socio-economic development and strengthening of rural livelihoods in the LWE-affected areas by providing both mobility and access to the population".

"These roads would also serve the strategic security needs

of these areas, which have suffered from historical deficit in terms of infrastructure development, giving rise to Left Wing Extremism," state the RCPLWEA guidelines.

Initially, the government had set a target of construction of 5,411.81 km under the scheme. However, in December 2018, the Ministry of Home Affairs further recommended 6,043 km roads under the scheme. In June 2020, the Union Home Ministry recommended additional proposals of 348 roads (2,024 km).

Since the scheme's inception, 1,347 road projects covering a length of 12,227.69 km have been sanctioned, of which 907 road projects and road length of 9,258.88 km have been completed until now, according to data available on the PMGSY dashboard.

The Centre has also revised allocation of rural connectivity funds under the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN) from Rs 1,260 crore to Rs 2,000 crore for 2024-25. The allocation of the PMGSY has been revised downward to Rs 15,908.86 crore from Rs 17,163.98 crore for the current financial year.

Manipur groups protest in Delhi, ask Centre to act

New Delhi: The Delhi Meitei Coordinating Committee and the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity organised a protest at Jantar Mantar on Sunday against the "aerial bombing of civilians" in the strife-torn state.

In a memorandum to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the DMCC urged the Centre to take immediate action to address the violence in Manipur.

Dr S Y Devi, an activist from Manipur, told *The Indian Express*, "The situation in Manipur has escalated to a critical point. It has been 16 to 17 months, and now with drone bombings and projectile attacks on civilians... the government must take a stand. We urge the government to protect the lives and liberties of Manipur's citizens. This is not a conflict between two groups, but a matter of the government's responsibility to safeguard its citizens."

Congress MP Dr Angomcha Bimol Akojiam, who also teaches at JNU, addressed the gathering and criticised the central government for its handling of situation in the state. **ENS**

As Kejriwal punts on his political future, watch the AAP play 'ball by ball'

By resigning as CM, the AAP chief has sounded poll bugle in Delhi and tried to usher in a new narrative, making 'Kejriwal' and all that he stands for the pivotal issues



THE NEERJA CHOWDHURY COLUMN

Weekly insight into what's changing in national politics — and why

SOME CALL him the master of the political spectacle, others envy his political reflexes that were again on display Sunday. In an unexpected move, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal announced that he would resign in "48 hours", catching friends and foes off guard.

His gamble came within hours of being released on bail Friday from Tihar jail, but with court conditions continuing to circumscribe his functioning as CM. On Saturday, he went to the old Hanuman temple in Delhi's

Connaught Place and the cameras caught him with his wife Sunita and colleagues invoking the blessings of Lord Hanuman. The deity was invoked as an icon of the Aam Admi Party (AAP) in the past elections, too, with Kejriwal even reciting the Hanuman Chalisa.

On Sunday, in an impassioned speech at an AAP rally, he announced his resignation. "Let the people decide if I am imandhaar (honest) or gunahgaar (guilty)," he thundered. It was an attempt to recapture the high moral ground when he said he would not continue as the CM till Delhi's Janata had decided on his "innocence" or "guilt" and each of those votes would be treated like a "certificate". Kejriwal will know that as the poorer sections of Delhi and its jhuggi jhopri (slum) dwellers remain loyal to the AAP, the party has lost

some of its earlier sheen among the middle classes.

With his decision to resign, the AAP national convener has taken a gamble and sounded the bugle for the Delhi Assembly elections. He has tried to usher in a new narrative, making "Kejriwal", his leadership, and all that he stands for the pivotal issues. (There was a time during the 1971 elections when Indira Gandhi was questioned by a foreign correspondent about the issue in the election. "I am the issue," she unabashedly replied.)

Kejriwal appears to be banking on three factors to help him reshape the party agenda. One is the continuance of his delivery politics of bijlee (electricity), paani (water), schools, and hospitals for which his government is known and which the party has encashed in past elections. Recently visited the Mangolpuri area of

North West Delhi to get a sense of the impact the just-released Manish Sisodia's daily padyatras through the city were having.

"Why will we not vote for AAP when our children now learn at school, we can get medical aid, our bijlee-paani is taken care of? And also we can now travel free in the buses," said a group of women who sold wares on the pavement. "It is wrong they are keeping Kejriwal in jail," they added.

To retain this sympathy will be Kejriwal's second objective and he will hope an electoral endorsement will "finish off" the case against him and Sisodia even as it goes on to its legal conclusion. The arrest of the AAP leaders had generated sympathy for the party in certain sections. But with the release of the AAP leaders, the sympathy for them will peter out as time goes by and

elections are due five months away. Will Kejriwal's resignation as CM now regenerate sympathy for him on a different count?

Thirdly, the AAP chief is pitching to regain his moral stature while underscoring his political savvy for which he has been known. Kejriwal knows only too well that every election needs a fresh narrative and he cannot rely on old themes alone. Who will be his successor, even if it is for a few weeks? Will it be a woman, a Dalit, or his wife? It will only be for a short spell, till November if his request to hold the Delhi elections along with the Maharashtra polls is heeded, or for three months more if the polls are held on schedule in February?

A woman to head the Delhi government could make a difference to the women's constituency that Kejriwal has been

assiduously reaching out to. In his speech on Sunday, he chose to make public the information that he had sent a letter to the Lieutenant Governor from jail, requesting him to let Atishi unfurl the national flag on August 15 in his place but that the letter came back undelivered. Educated, experienced and with a clean image, Atishi, a minister in the Delhi government, could have an appeal for the old "Shiela Dixit constituency" the AAP may want to draw to its side. Though the name of Kejriwal's wife Sunita is also doing the rounds, it will take away from the moral high ground he is seeking to occupy at this juncture.

There are also other names being talked about: Gopal Rai and Saurabh Bhardwaj. The trouble is that, unlike most other parties, the AAP does not have caste or identity-based support to bank on.

Resignation as weapon

Kejriwal is in line with all those politicians who have wielded "resignation" with great effect as a weapon to get out of difficult situations. Indian political history is replete with these stories: India's seventh prime minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh resigned from the government of Rajiv Gandhi in 1987 and went on to replace him as PM in 1989. Dr Manmohan Singh threatened to resign as PM in mid-2008 to get his way in the party to push through with the Indo-US nuclear deal.

In the last 10 years, while the people of Delhi have opted for Narendra Modi's BJP in successive Lok Sabha elections, they have favoured the AAP in the Assembly elections. Even as Kejriwal and the AAP get ready for battle against their main opponent BJP, this time there may be an ele-

phant in the room. That is the Congress. In some ways, despite itself, the Congress is showing signs of being on the revival path because people want it to grow as a national counter to the BJP.

Even though both parties are members of the INDIA alliance, the breakup of the Congress's alliance with AAP in Haryana could have implications for Delhi and the AAP leadership knows this only too well and is getting ready to do battle alone.

Two days before Kejriwal's release, when asked about the party's course of action, Sisodia told this writer, "It will be ball by ball, and we have to decide how to play each ball." The AAP story will now unfold ball by ball.

Neerja Chowdhury, Contributing Editor, has covered the last 11 Lok Sabha polls. She is the author of "How Prime Ministers decide"

'School or hospital used for military purposes loses immunity'

New Israeli ambassador says his country wants to end war, working with 'hundreds of lawyers' to follow international humanitarian law

Underlining that Israel wants to end the ongoing war in Gaza, the newly appointed Israeli ambassador to India, **REUVEN AZAR**, tells **SHUBHJIT ROY** that his nation's military is working with "hundreds of lawyers" to "meticulously" follow international humanitarian law despite "Hamas using civilians as human shields". A career diplomat who has served in the US, Jordan and Romania in the past, and a former paratrooper in the Israel Defence Forces, Azar was Deputy National Security Advisor for Foreign Policy at the National Security Council and Foreign Policy Advisor to three Israeli Prime Ministers, Benjamin Netanyahu, Naftali Bennett and Yair Lapid. Azar (57) presented his credentials in New Delhi on September 6. Edited excerpts from an exclusive interview:

Priorities as Israel's ambassador to India

India has become one of the most important partners of Israel. Because of common heritage and values, it is a great basis for creating a robust and solid relationship. India is rising to become a world power. This allows us to both deepen and expand the areas where we are cooperating. So this relationship started off with very important cooperation in security

and defence that was essential and served national security goals, it expanded to agriculture and water. Then there is innovation. Israel is a start-up nation, we have more than 90 unicorns today providing technological solutions for the world, we can actually achieve a lot because India also has incredible hubs of innovation.

And, then there is cooperation in infrastructure. Israel is an old nation, a very young country, just like India. We have been lagging behind when it comes to developing our infrastructure, but thanks to the economic development now, we can allow ourselves to put the resources to build infrastructure. But unlike India, we don't have all the capabilities that we need, in order to build. We want to build a 100-km metro system in the Tel Aviv area, we want to attract international companies that have the capabilities of both supplying qualitative performance and at a cheap price. India is an excellent partner, because a thousand kilometres of Metro is being built...

There are many more things that connect our people together. Many Israelis come to tour India, especially after they finish their army service. We can see that our peoples share many of the same values like vegetar-

ianism, the appreciation of yoga, spirituality, mindfulness...

End game to Israel-Hamas war

What happened on October 7 was an explosion of a build-up taking place - mostly in the last 15 years, an effort that has been led by Iran to arm a series of proxies in the region with sophisticated weapons. Hezbollah, which is the most prominent proxy of Iran, the Houthis, militias in Iraq, militias in Syria, and, of course, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. After the Arab Spring, these forces started taking over. So today there is a situation where Beirut, Damascus, Sanaa and Gaza are basically controlled to different degrees by Iran.

Israel didn't want to invade Gaza. We knew that the strip was becoming an increasing threat. But, we didn't want to do a preventive war, because we thought that we could maintain stability by other means. We were surprised on October 7 on two aspects, one was an intelligence failure, and the second, it was an operational failure. But since then, what we're trying to do is remove Hamas' military threat in Gaza and get back the hostages...

It is also challenging because they have decided that they don't care about the population, they want to use the most savage



methods to massacre, rape, mutilate Israelis, they don't want Israel to exist. And they are ready to sacrifice the highest number of civilians in order to put pressure on Israel from the world to stop the war and let them survive. So Israel has been working meticulously according to international law. We have hundreds of lawyers that are working with our forces, identifying each target and making sure that Israel uses proportionate force.

It is done according to international law... It means, accord-

ing to international military law, once a school or hospital is used for military purposes, it loses its immunity under international law. In the last weeks, these terrorists are regrouping in a humanitarian area that was designated by Israel as a safe place...

India's nuancing of its statements on Gaza

This is something that is not actually unique to India, many of our friends, including the GCC have done that. The GCC countries are also very concerned about Iran, and the GCC countries have been cooperating with us to foil the attacks by Iran in April this year, when missiles and drones were fired. They understand the nature of the threat... India is our friend. India is defending our right to self defence. We understand that, like the United States, like other friendly countries of Israel, they would like this to be over. And believe me, we also would like this to be over.

A possible role for India in resolving the Gaza war

I think India has to decide. It's up to India to decide to what degree they want to be involved. There is an increasing role of India in West Asia in general, because India can bring a lot to the stability

and prosperity in our region.

One can help with investments, like the Adani investment in Haifa... the series of agreements that India has been working on the last year with the UAE... we are establishing the corridor of stability and prosperity in West Asia. They want to have a better future for the people. They want to invest in infrastructure, entrepreneurship and connectivity. So everybody understands that they want to create this corridor of stability. This was expressed by President Biden and PM (Narendra) Modi in the G20. So, we see the Indian interest being merged into the interest of the pragmatic nations in the region. This is very important. It means India will have a rising role in creating this reality.

The channels of communication (between India and Israel, Iran, Saudi Arabia) is a useful thing. At the end of the day, we are not here to tell others what to do... but to make friends, cooperate and advance our interests. So we are taking into account the Indian interest, but... Indians will only define the Indian interest.

Challenges facing bilateral jobs scheme for Indian workers in Israel. The Indian Express reported last week the scheme was hampered by

a skill mismatch which resulted from an assessment process that over-promised and under-delivered when it came to workers' abilities.

Any scheme that you start has mishaps at the beginning, you will always hear about incidents happening, but it's still the exception. Generally speaking, we are grateful... we have the workforce for not just construction. We have plans to make it more robust and efficient. One way of doing it is through governmental agreements. Another way is doing it through the private sector.

When we talk about infrastructure, if we manage to bring Indian infrastructure companies to Israel, they can come with a workforce that is skilled. With China, we have done similar infrastructure projects in Israel, where they brought their skilled labour.

We are both dealing with it in the particular case, and also in the general sense between the governments, to streamline it to make it work. We have great potential, and I'm sure we are going to expand. We sat down very calmly to discuss the agreements, and they were meticulously made. We thought about most of the things and should continue perfecting it.

FULL INTERVIEW ON
www.indianexpress.com

Fresh FIR over domestic help's death; SP MLA, wife absconding

MANISH SAHU
LUCKNOW, SEPTEMBER 15

POLICE IN UP's Bhadohi district have registered a fresh FIR against Samajwadi Party MLA Zahid Beg and his wife in the death of a 17-year-old girl who was found hanging in a storeroom of the legislator's house on September 9.

The girl allegedly worked as domestic help in the house of Beg, who represents the Bhadohi Sadar constituency in the state Assembly, officials said. The fresh case against the couple was filed under BNS Section 108 (abetment of suicide), Bhadohi SP Meenakshi Katayan said; a case was lodged against the two under sections 143(4) (trafficking of a child) and 143(5) (trafficking of more than one child) on Saturday. Police had invoked the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act and the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act against the couple.

It was found that the victim was harassed, leading her to take the extreme step, a cop said. On Sunday, police raided the MLA's house but failed to locate him. Efforts are being made to arrest the MLA and his wife who are absconding, SP Katayan added.

'Anti-Constitutional mindset': Dhankhar on Rahul's quota remark

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 15

VICE-PRESIDENT Jagdeep Dhankhar on Sunday said that Congress MP Rahul Gandhi's remark regarding reservations shows an "anti-Constitutional mindset". "A person holding an important Constitutional post speaking on a foreign land says reservation should be scrapped. It shows an anti-Constitution mindset. It displays prejudice against reservation," the V-P said without mentioning Gandhi's name.

During a recent visit to the US, Gandhi, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, said the Congress would think of scrapping reservations when "India is a fair place", which he said is not the case right now.

Dhankhar was addressing a public event in Mumbai where he inaugurated "Constitutional temples" at vocational training centres in 434 ITIs. Dhankhar, speaking at the event, an initiative of the Ministry of Skill Development and Empowerment, stressed on the need to create awareness regarding the Constitution, and added quota is not against meritocracy. "The quota is not against meritoc-



V-P Jagdeep Dhankhar in Mumbai. X/ @jagdeep Dhankhar

racity. It is the soul of the country and the Constitution. It is an affirmative action. It is not a negative act. It is not depriving someone of opportunity but handholding those who are pillars of strength of the society," he said.

Slamming the previous Congress governments at the Centre, he added that the Mandal Commission Report was kept under wraps for ten years and at least two Prime Ministers, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, did nothing for its implementation.

Dhankhar also stated that Dr B R Ambedkar also got Bharat Ratna posthumously after much delay in 1990. "Everybody knew the immense contributions of Ambedkar, who was the architect of the Indian Constitution. Yet, the highest civilian award was bestowed much later," he said.

Adani group wins bid to supply 6,600 MW power to Maharashtra for 25 yrs

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 15

THE ADANI Power has won a bid to supply 6,600 MW of renewable and thermal energy to Maharashtra for 25 years.

The Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company Limited (MSEDCL), which initiated the bid, will procure 5,000 MW solar power from Adani Power. The supply will be made from the world's largest renewable energy park developed at Khavda in the Kutch district of Gujarat.

As per the statement issued by the Adani Power Ltd (APL) on Sunday, the 6,600 MW capacity has been secured through a competitive bidding process initiated by MSEDCL for procurement of combined 1,600 MW thermal and 5,000 MW solar power.

Adani Power's bid for the bundled renewable and thermal energy supply for 25 years was almost a rupee lower than the cost at which Maharashtra currently procures electricity.

The terms of the tender permit APL to bid for thermal power capacity along with solar power capacity, which can be supplied by a group company.

APL, accordingly, also bid for 5,000 MW solar capacity on behalf of Adani Green Energy Ltd (AGEL), thereby leveraging the two entities' respective competitive advantages and strengths in the thermal and solar power sectors.

The solar capacity has been allocated at a flat tariff of Rs 2.70 per kWh for supply of power for a period of 25 years.

The solar projects are expected to be connected to the Inter State Transmission System and shall be developed in a staggered manner over a period of three years from execution of the PPAs with MSEDCL.

The thermal capacity has been awarded to APL on Design, Build, Finance, Own and Operate (DBFO) basis with sourcing of fuel from coal linkages allocated under the SHAKTI Policy.

APL will enter into a 25-year Power Supply Agreement (PSA) with MSEDCL for supply of 1,496 MW of electricity (net of auxiliary consumption) on long term basis from a new thermal power plant having installed capacity of 1,600 MW (2x800 MW) to be set up utilising Ultra-Supercritical technology.

Power supply under the proposed PSA will commence three-and-a-half years after the appointed date as defined in case of Unit 1 (800 MW) and four years in case of Unit 2 (800 MW).

Sagar Adani, Executive Director, Adani Green Energy, said: "This is a crucial step towards the country's energy independence and building a sustainable future. It is well positioned to achieve the 50 GW target with secured resource rich sites in strategic locations, portfolio mix of renewables and storage solutions, robust supply chain and clear evacuation plans."



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C R Paatil <small>Union Ministry of Jal Shakti</small>	Devendra Fadnis <small>Deputy Chief Minister Maharashtra</small>	V. Somanna <small>Union Minister of State for Railways and Jal Shakti</small>	Prof. S. P. Singh Baghel <small>Union Minister of State for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying; & Panchayati Raj</small>	Ravneet Singh <small>Union Minister of State for Railways and Food Processing Industries</small>	Murlidhar Mohol <small>Union Minister of State for Civil Aviation and Cooperation</small>

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RESTORING BALANCE

Removal of export curbs on onion and basmati is welcome. Centre must lift restrictions on trade in other farm products

ON FRIDAY, THE Narendra Modi government lifted curbs on onion and basmati rice exports in the form of minimum floor price, of \$550 and \$950 per tonne respectively, below which they cannot be shipped out of the country. The export duty on onions remains, but has been halved to 20 per cent now. Friday also saw the Centre hike the effective import duty, inclusive of special agriculture and social welfare cesses, on crude palm, soyabean and sunflower oil from 5.5 to 27.5 per cent. The duty on refined palm, soyabean and sunflower oils was raised from 13.75 to 35.75 per cent. The political timing of these moves cannot be missed. Haryana, a key basmati paddy growing state, votes on October 5 when the new crop's market arrivals would have also taken off. Onion and soyabean are, likewise, major crops in Maharashtra's Nashik-Ahmednagar-Pune and Marathwada-Vidarbha regions respectively. That state, too, is scheduled to go to the polls later this year.

Electoral compulsions apart — the predominantly Maratha and Jat peasantry of Maharashtra and Haryana wields numerical as well as socio-political influence in their respective states — the Modi government's latest actions seem to have been equally guided by economic factors. Soyabean is trading below its official minimum support price in the wholesale mandis of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh even as harvesting and marketing of the crop will start only from next month. Global vegetable oil prices are also roughly 50 per cent down from their March 2022 peaks scaled immediately after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. While onion prices in Maharashtra's Lasalgaon are ruling more than twice their year-ago levels, farmers have planted almost 50 per cent more area under the tuber in the current kharif season. That crop will be ready for harvesting in a month's time. A good monsoon — cumulative rainfall during the season (June-September) has been 7.7 per cent above the normal average so far, while both spatially and temporally well distributed — should translate into bountiful harvests of most kharif crops this time.

The Modi government's farm trade policy in the last two years and more has been excessively pro-consumer, with export and private stockholding restrictions being imposed alongside liberal imports. Ideally, policy should be neutral between consumers and producers, with any deviations being temporary and rules-based as opposed to arbitrary and knee-jerk. The easing of food inflation pressures provides room to dispense with the remaining export curbs on non-basmati rice, sugar, onion and even wheat. There is no justification for stocking limits on pulses and wheat either. Inflation in these can be better addressed by allowing duty-free imports. The government must also build a buffer stock of all essential food items by procuring when prices are low and offloading when they go through the roof.

EVADING QUESTIONS

Disbanding of committee on statistics will further undermine the credibility of country's data collection system

LAST WEEK, THE Centre abruptly disbanded the 14-member Standing Committee on Statistics (SCoS). The committee, which was first formed in December 2019 and later expanded in July 2023, was tasked with overseeing all statistical surveys by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI). A letter by the ministry to the panel members reasoned that the work done by the committee is similar to that of the recently-formed Steering Committee for National Sample Surveys. Yet, the committee members, led by former Chief Statistician Pronab Sen, seem clueless about the government's exact motive. Moreover, as this newspaper reported, the dissolution has happened amid apparent concerns raised by some members over the delay in conducting Census 2021. Two aspects to this development are noteworthy. One is to understand why the delay in the decennial Census is serious. Two, how this dissolution undermines the already worsening credibility of India's statistical framework.

The decennial census provides the foundation for the entire statistical system of the country. For instance, in the absence of the Census, there is no clarity of the extent of urbanisation in the country — unofficial estimates vary. Similarly, sample surveys, whether done by the MoSPI or individual departments or private agencies, are judged for how close to mirror they are to the actual reality provided by the Census. In the absence of a new Census, the original picture gets distorted and that distortion then gets amplified through sample surveys. For instance, until the end of 2023, the last sample survey to map the consumption patterns of Indians dated back to 2011-12. The survey results, in turn, provided the base for other critical policy metrics such as inflation rates and poverty levels. Not surprisingly, Sen told this newspaper that while there was no recent discussion, it is true that "all the members had earlier expressed concerns that in the absence of censuses, both economic census and census, household surveys are unreliable".

Over the past decade, almost every statistic that matters has been questioned, sometimes even by the government itself. For instance, in 2019, the government ran down the results of the first Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) as it showed unemployment had hit a 45-year high in 2017-18. Several commentators, led by one of the government's former Chief Economic Advisors, have argued that India's GDP data is misleading. Last year, a member of the PM's Economic Advisory Council argued that major surveys used by policymakers are based on unsound data collection frameworks. The larger concern that this episode raises is about the credibility of India's statistical framework especially at a time when the eyes of the world are trained towards the Indian economy.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



Mamata, the establishment



PAROMITA CHAKRABARTI

West Bengal's CM, who thrived on her underdog image, is now at sea against protestors who speak a different language

AT FIRST GLANCE, July 21, 1993, is unlikely to attract scrutiny in a documentation of the Left Front's waning fortunes in West Bengal. In a state of protests and *hartals*, it could well appear to be just another piece of statistics. Yet, it is a date that marked a change in Kolkata's dynamics with the Communist government. Led by Mamata Banerjee, then the state Youth Congress head, party workers and protestors had marched to Writers' Building, the seat of the CPM government, demanding that voter identity cards be made the sole requisite for voting. Police intervention to manage the agitating crowd had gone awry that day — Banerjee had been intercepted at a distance from Writers' but 13 party workers died in police firing. Later, the Congress and Trinamool Congress (TMC), the party formed by Banerjee in 1998, would commemorate July 21 as Shaheed Diwas (Martyrs' Day); a committee would find that the police used disproportionate force to disperse the crowd. But much before that, and certainly much before Singur and Nandigram, July 21, 1993 burnished Banerjee's credentials as the state's dissenter-in-chief, the Pied Piper to Bengal's masses.

A few months earlier, in January, she had had another run-in with the establishment during a protest outside then chief minister Jyoti Basu's office, against a cadre's sexual assault on a differently abled woman in Nadia. Banerjee had been arrested and put in detention. In 1990, during an ugly confrontation between Left cadres and Congress workers in south Kolkata's Hazra, she had been hit on the head with an iron rod — an image of Banerjee, her head and arm bandaged, lying on a stretcher had roused public indignation against the strong-arm tactics of Left cadres. She had always been vocal, but by the time 1993 rolled in, with the experience of being one of the youngest MPs in Lok Sabha and frequent run-ins with the government, Banerjee had managed to breach the distance between trouble maker — the ruling party's description of her — and mass leader. She had, so to speak, emerged as Didi who refused to be daunted or diminished by the Left's *dadagiri*. Breaking away from the Left in 1997, where her voice was getting undermined, and shaping

Why did Banerjee fail to read the signs this time? In the immediate aftermath of the gruesome incident, her government's missteps speak of a tentativeness — a nervous tic even, to maintain status quo unless pushed otherwise — that is an administrator's inheritance. It also signals the complacency of a government and party that has been in power for over a decade, arrogant in its assumption of its own irreplaceability. But most of all, it speaks of an inability to read the disruptive heft of a disappointed people whose ease with the media outdoes the CM's own, who can measure out their lives in reels and live streams, whose legitimate demand for punishment and justice must not only be met but be seen to be met.

TMC into a party of consequence in the state and the Centre bolstered that reputation.

Three decades later, and a few months into her emphatic Lok Sabha election victory, Banerjee finds herself on the other side of the protests, fumbling to keep pace with the changing idiom of negotiations. Spontaneous people's rallies against the rape and murder of a junior doctor at the state-run R G Kar Medical College and Hospital and demands for accountability have brought Kolkata to a standstill. Women — highlighted often as central to Banerjee's administration and vote bank — have reacted to the incident with shock and anger. The striking doctors have refused the government's offers for discussion unless they are live-streamed. Banerjee is the establishment now and the image of her waiting in an empty room for the junior doctors to come to the discussion table marks a turning point in her familiarity with the language of protest.

The CM's apprehensions are understandable. Whether in power or in Opposition, it is in her role as the underdog that Banerjee has been most at ease. Over the past four decades, she has positioned herself again and again as the counterforce to the establishment even when she is the establishment. In a party which runs on the cult of Didi, notwithstanding her autocratic tendencies, it has stood her in good stead, especially outside of the state capital. This even when her administration's grasp on law and order has appeared to be slipping, even when a string of corruption cases — from the Saradha scam to the recruitment scam — have mired her party functionaries, even when complaints of sexual harassment and police inaction have come up in Sandeshkhali. In June, for instance, Banerjee berated her ministers, bureaucrats, police and other functionaries for systemic corruption, giving out the signal that she stood apart from her partymen.

A large part of Banerjee's charisma owes itself to this ability to distinguish herself from others and leverage her working-class background. In the Left Front government's over three-decade rule in Bengal, politics had been the bastion of the *bhadralok*, its leaders belonging to the middle class, a euphemism for socio-economic and cultural capital. Jyoti

Basu, chief minister between 1977 and 2000, was a barrister, an alumni of premier institutions. Buddhadeb Bhattacharya was known for his interest in and knowledge of movies, theatre and literature. In contrast, Banerjee came up from the *trinamool* — the grassroots — and propped herself up as an everywoman fighting her way through life. The second of seven siblings, her education and upbringing were modest. In speech and attire, she has rejected the template of the genteel; her poetry and painting can be called pedestrian at best. But what Banerjee recognised much before her political opponents was the power of a spectacle and the role of the media in amplifying it: She offered her story both as rebellion and alternative. Her emotional outbursts, pushbacks against attempts to hem her in, targeted welfare schemes lent her a folk appeal as a champion of the masses, articulating their aspirations and grievances. By the time the Singur and Nandigram movement took shape in 2007, Banerjee had cemented her base among the state's agrarian population. When she came to power in 2011, she had managed to convert a large section of the urban intelligentsia — the *buddhijibis* — in her favour.

Why did Banerjee fail to read the signs this time? In the immediate aftermath of the gruesome incident, her government's missteps speak of a tentativeness — a nervous tic even, to maintain status quo unless pushed otherwise — that is an administrator's inheritance. It also signals the complacency of a government and party that has been in power for over a decade, arrogant in its assumption of its own irreplaceability. But most of all, it speaks of an inability to read the disruptive heft of a disappointed people whose ease with the media outdoes the CM's own, who can measure out their lives in reels and live streams, whose legitimate demand for punishment and justice must not only be met but be seen to be met.

Banerjee failed in the opening gambit. Her subsequent attempts at breaking the impasse have not succeeded at the time of writing. Can she turn the corner still?

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ANN JOSEY, SHANTANU DIXIT, ASHWIN GAMBHIR AND ASHOK SREENIVAS

POWERING AHEAD WITH COMPETITION

Governments should encourage more players in the power sector, not less

TWO DECADES AGO, India introduced competitive bidding for electricity power procurement, which has yielded significant results in the form of greater competition and increased investments.

Competitive bidding based price discovery leveraged rapid technological advancements to achieve efficient pricing for solar power. Tariffs fell from Rs 15/kWh in the initial bidding rounds of 2010 to Rs 2.80/kWh by 2018. About 27 GW of capacity was added, driven by the private sector. In the wind space, competitive bidding led to tariffs falling from Rs 5.30/kWh to Rs 2.50/kWh in just two years. The benefits of competitive procurement extended to smaller projects as well.

Recently, the renewable energy (RE) sector introduced several innovations to meet the growing demand for reliable power supply. Since 2018, over 9 GW of RE and 15 GWh of storage have been contracted through storage-linked tenders to overcome the challenges of intermittent renewables. The benefits of competition are also evident in battery energy storage procurement where the discovered price has fallen sharply.

The RE sector has lower entry barriers compared to traditional power sources encouraging participation from big as well as smaller players. This is due to several factors — shorter gestation periods, lower investment requirements, absence of fuel-related risks and the modular nature of technologies, especially solar and battery energy storage. The sector demonstrates a continuous learning curve, adapting with each new tender. This

evolution is evident in three key areas: Increased capacity, price reduction, and improvements in tender conditions to meet the complex requirements of procurers. A recent development threatens this positive trend. Some states are inviting bids for capacity from both coal and solar sources using a composite bid structure. These tenders require bidders to supply both energy sources, with selection based on an average tariff. For example, one tender is for 1600 MW of coal-based power and 5000 MW of solar, and another in a different state requires 3200 MW of coal power and 8000 MW of solar. In the former, the entire capacity can be shared by at most two bidders and in the latter the total quantum is to be offered by each bidder. This would mean an investment of about Rs 28,000 crore from one or two parties in the first case and an investment of about Rs 52,000 crore from a single party in the other case. These tenders represent the majority of both coal and solar capacity needs for these states over the next six to 10 years. However, despite the composite bidding, actual power delivery timelines will differ significantly. Coal plants require about six to seven years to become operational, compared to one-and-a-half to two years for solar projects.

Allocating a majority of the future capacity to a single tender is akin to putting all eggs in one basket. This approach not only excludes smaller players due to the massive investments required but also eliminates potential tariff reductions and innovations that could result from spreading procurement across years — a benefit particularly relevant for solar projects with shorter gestation periods.

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years — a benefit particularly relevant for solar projects with shorter gestation periods. The requirement for bidders to commit to substantial solar and coal capacity simultaneously has adverse implications. This approach effectively excludes many developers from the bidding process. Some players may struggle to secure the necessary capital for investments at this scale. Developers without expertise in building and operating thermal power plants also find themselves at a disadvantage, though they may be competitive in the solar sector. Thermal as well as solar plants will continue to operate independently, offering no particular advantage due to composite tendering. By concentrating procurement in large, composite tenders, states will be foregoing benefits of a more diverse, competitive, phase-wise and innovative power procurement.

Whether these proposals will translate to procurement and if so, at what price point is yet to be seen. The advancement towards a robust wholesale power price discovery through competitive bidding should not be undermined by such arrangements. Measures are needed to foster competition and innovation. Distribution utilities should consider implementing an annual procurement calendar to acquire capacity, providing investors with greater clarity and certainty. Given the ever-growing demand for reliable and affordable power, it is crucial that we continue to move forward towards fostering competition and market development, and not take a step back.

The writers are with Prayas (Energy Group)

SEPTEMBER 16, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO

PM ON GOVERNANCE

PRIME MINISTER INDIRA Gandhi made it clear that she was not changing the present system of government to bring in the presidential system. She pointed out that the debate was not started by the Congress (I). But when asked whether the issue could be discussed, she had thought it would be wrong to say there should be no discussion because not merely intellectuals, but the general public should study these matters.

DOORDARSHAN JUBILEE

THE PRESS CONFERENCE addressed by the

Information and Broadcasting Minister, H K L Bhagat, on the occasion of the silver jubilee of Doordarshan, was marked by some unpleasantness. Bhagat said the charge that the Opposition was not given adequate coverage was false and baseless. The matter would have ended there but for Bhagat's insinuation that the journalist's question was toeing the line of opposition parties.

ANDHRA BANDH

THE ANDHRA PRADESH bandh called by the all-party action committee demanding the dismissal of the "minority" Bhaskara Rao ministry and reinstatement of N T Rama Rao as

chief minister was near-total and peaceful. The Director General of Police, M Mahender Reddy, told ENS that the bandh passed off peacefully and that there were no incidents.

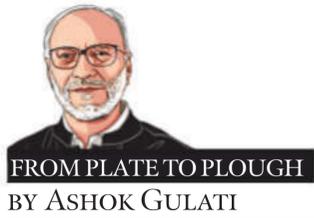
ASSAM FLOODS

THE ARMY WAS called out to assist the civil administration in rescue and relief operations in Nalban town and several other areas in Assam, now in the grip of floods. Pratul Sharma, Deputy Commissioner of Kamrup district, told PTI that the Army was expected to move into Nalban town and other affected areas any moment as the situation in the town was reported to be alarming.



Giving farms their due

A new minister, seven new schemes, and focus on rural housing and roads indicate the emphasis Modi 3.0 has placed on agriculture in its first 100 days



FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH
BY ASHOK GULATI

EVEN BEFORE THE parliamentary elections were held in 2024, the Narendra Modi government had asked all secretaries to prepare a policy agenda to be announced in the first 100 days of Modi 3.0. They were pretty sure that the BJP was coming back with a thumping majority. The actual results of the parliamentary elections were humbling for the party, as it fell way short of its target of 370. Yet, the enthusiasm of the first 100 days has not waned.

The BJP now is running a coalition government, and therefore it will have to accommodate the demands of its major allies, especially N Chandrababu Naidu and Nitish Kumar so that the government can continue to do its job without much difficulty. What has it done differently? While there is an overall thrust to manufacturing, especially high-tech chip making, etc, there are also many changes in other sectors. I cannot cover all that here in this column, nor do I have the expertise to analyse and assess the efficiency of the steps being undertaken in those areas. I would limit myself to agriculture and rural development space which affects the welfare of the masses most.

On the agriculture front, the Modi government (Modi 3.0) started off with a new Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Shivraj Singh Chouhan, and he was also given the additional charge of rural development. Bringing a minister with ample experience as the longest serving Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, and who transformed agriculture in Madhya Pradesh, signalled a high priority that Agriculture and Rural Development may get under Modi 3.0.

The first major decision that was taken was to distribute Rs 20,000 crore under PM-KISAN, a commitment that it made in 2019 to give Rs 6,000/year to most of the deserving agriculture households. It signalled clearly that direct cash transfers under the PM-KISAN scheme will continue under Modi 3.0. Although I had expected that its nominal value would be adjusted for inflation over the last five years, and the Rs 6,000 amount would be increased to at least Rs 8,000 per household, that hope was belied. In the Union Budget 2024-25 also, we had expected a major increase in agri-R&D allocations to deal with climate change issues. But there too not much real increase in the Budget allocation. It seemed business as usual.

But the major announcements came later, somewhat as a surprise, when the Union government approved seven schemes for agriculture ranging from digitalisation of agriculture (land records, farmers' identity cards, etc) to crop science for food and nutrition security in the backdrop of climate change, to horticulture for nutrition and profitability, livestock health and production for sustainability and profitability, natural resource management for climate resilience and clean environment, agriculture education for skilled human resources and Krishi Vigyan Kendras for better outreach for farmers.



CR Sasikumar

A sum of roughly Rs 14,000 crore has been allocated for these schemes to be implemented in the next two-to-three years or so. All these are steps in the right direction, and if implemented properly and quickly, they can bring rich returns, economically and politically.

Let me explain with the example of the digitalisation of agriculture. Identification of farmers is the first step. Distinguishing between an owner-operator and a tenant is the next step. Right now, India's official figure of around 17 per cent tenancy is way below what micro-surveys reveal. It could be anywhere between 25 to 30 per cent, if not more. The problem with oral tenancy is that those farmers have very limited access to institutional credit at seven per cent or four per cent, which owner-operators get. Borrowing at interest rates of 24 to 36 per cent, tenant farmers can never make agriculture a profitable business. Tenant farmers don't get even the benefits under PM-KISAN. This problem of proper identification of who is the actual tiller needs to be resolved as soon as possible and giving them access to institutional credit is a must at lower rates of interest.

But digitalisation of agriculture has to go way beyond just identifying farmers. There is a need to know what crops they are growing, whether they are insured or not, how much fertiliser they are using, what is the status of their soils, whether they are receiving food subsidies (free rice and wheat), etc. What is needed is a triangulation of various data sets related to agriculture, which are fragmented today into a common agri-stack. For example, soil health cards are not linked to fertiliser pur-

Digitalisation of agriculture has to go way beyond just identifying farmers. There is a need to know what crops they are growing, whether they are insured or not, how much fertiliser they are using, what is the status of their soils, whether they are receiving food subsidies (free rice and wheat), etc. What is needed is a triangulation of various data sets related to agriculture, which are fragmented today into a common agri-stack. If we can triangulate various data sets and use them to tweak our fertiliser and food subsidies, it can lead to massive savings and higher efficiency in the use of public resources.

chases. And why does a rice grower, for example, need to be given free rice from the Public Distribution System (PDS)? If we can triangulate various data sets and use them to tweak our fertiliser and food subsidies, it can lead to massive savings and higher efficiency in the use of public resources. The marginal rates of returns from digitalisation of agriculture then can be more than 10 times the investment being made to do it. That would be a tremendous boost to this sector, as well as the efficiency of public expenditure. Similar returns can come from investments in other schemes of agriculture, especially those focused on creating climate-resilient agriculture.

On the rural development front, Modi 3.0 announced an additional 20 million houses to be built in rural areas with government support. That would give another boost to the rural economy, creating jobs in rural areas for masons, carpenters, electricians, etc., besides giving much-needed dignity and hygiene to poor people in rural areas. That will be a commendable welfare step for the masses, and may also give political mileage to the government.

Lastly, under the PM-Gram Sadak Yojana, Modi 3.0 has announced its intention to invest Rs 75,000 crore. Our research reveals that investments in rural roads give high returns in terms of agri-GDP and poverty alleviation, as it opens up markets for rural people. All this brings some hope for agriculture and the rural economy.

The writer is Distinguished Professor at ICRIER. Views are personal

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The domestic protests that followed the killing of six hostages showed no sign of shifting Mr Netanyahu. Kamala Harris has offered a more sympathetic tone than Mr Biden to Palestinians, but no new prescription to alleviate their suffering should she win in November."
— THE GUARDIAN

Failing Sikhs again

Rahul Gandhi's recent remarks about the community deserve condemnation. He should know Congress's role in persecuting Sikhs



HARDEEP S PURI

RAHUL GANDHI'S RECENT remarks during his foreign sojourn about Sikhs in India have left not just the Sikh community but all Indians disappointed and dismayed. As a proud Sikh who has worn a turban for 62 years, I can say with certainty that not a single Sikh wonders "whether a Sikh is going to be allowed to wear his turban or a *kada* in India. Or he, as a Sikh, is going to be able to go to Gurdwara", to quote Rahul Gandhi from his "talk" in Washington DC. His contention is so stunningly bizarre and alien to the lived experience of all Sikhs that it defies comprehension.

I have served India for more than five decades as a diplomat first and now as a member of the Cabinet. Sikhs consider India their homeland, their motherland, and their *karma bhoomi*. Gandhi's malicious and divisive propaganda cannot be allowed to take wing. This mischief must be nipped in the bud. This is not the first time he has spewed such rubbish either. Last year, at Cambridge, he had called Sikhs second-class citizens in India.

The only time Sikhs have felt insecure and faced an existential threat in India was in the early 1980s and Gandhi needs to educate himself on this. His statement leads to the inevitable question on everyone's lips: Will Rahul Gandhi apologise for the atrocities his family and party visited upon the Sikhs when Indira Gandhi executed Operation Blue Star that desecrated the holiest of Sikh shrines with the brazen invasion of the Harmandir Sahib complex and the destruction of the Akal Takht? Will he apologise for the violence that followed the assassination of Indira Gandhi when Congress goons killed 3,000 Sikhs in cold blood, mostly in Delhi? Will he condemn his father Rajiv Gandhi who had said after the atrocities that "when a big tree falls, the ground is bound to shake", thus implying that such base violence was somehow justified for a democratic nation undergirded by the rule of law?

I suspect we will be waiting a long time for an apology. The fact that his statements have been endorsed by fringe separatist voices raises uncomfortable questions that Gandhi must answer. He cannot dismiss them away as his closest advisor, Sam Pitroda, had tried to when he said of the violence committed against Sikhs, "hua toh hua" ("what's done is done"). The Narendra Modi-led BJP govern-

ment has sought to heal these wounds. The Prime Minister's reverence for Sikh teachings, especially the philosophy of integral humanism, is evident in most of the government's actions. We respect the integrity, honesty, and hard work that the Sikh community stands for and lives by. Unprecedented measures have been taken in the last 10 years to improve the welfare of the Sikh community and redress long-standing grievances — which, unsurprisingly, were against Congress governments.

It was the Modi government which removed 312 Sikhs from the blacklist or the "Central Adverse List" that Congress had imposed. Sikhs who were living as refugees abroad due to government persecution during the period of turmoil in Punjab were able to come home because of our intervention. It was the Modi government which took steps to bring the perpetrators of 1984 to justice and provided long overdue financial relief of Rs 5 lakh to each victim's family.

It was the Modi government which facilitated the FCRA registration for Sri Darbar Sahib, Amritsar, and made *langar* and *langar* items tax-free. When the Taliban took over in Afghanistan, 230 Sikh families were repatriated expeditiously by the Modi government and five copies of the holy Guru Granth Sahib were brought back safely. The Modi government inaugurated the Kartarpur Sahib Corridor in November 2019. It was the Modi government which celebrated Guru Nanak Dev ji's 550th Prakash Parv as well as the 350th Parkash Utsav of Guru Gobind Singh ji and the 400th Parkash Purab of Sri Guru Teg Bahadur ji with immense fervour across India and the world. It was the Modi government which announced that the nation would observe December 26 as Veer Bal Diwas to honour the "Chhote Sahibzaade". It thus accorded the pride of place to Sikh tradition by righting a historic wrong.

In contrast, what has the Congress done for Sikhs except subject them to humiliation and disrespect? Rahul Gandhi needs to be taught a little about the dark passages of Congress's history. If ever Sikhs have been subjected to identity-based discrimination, it was under Congress's rule and under their explicit instruction. In 1982, police dragged down Sikhs from buses and cars, identifying them by their turban and *kada*, to prevent them from entering Delhi before the 1982 Asian Games because the community was viewed as a "threat" by Congress leaders. That is the legacy Gandhi must contend with.

Rahul Gandhi's disgraceful remarks in the US deserve to be condemned in the strongest terms possible.

The writer is Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas in the Government of India

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

INTERNAL MATTER

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Rahul needs an education' (IE, September 15). The Leader of the Opposition visiting the US is appreciable. But criticising the government in a foreign land does undermine the government. To use Sikhs as a tool to further his propaganda against the BJP is tragic. The only time they faced an existential threat was in 1984, during the anti-Sikh pogrom when Congress was in power. His remarks have also been hijacked by a Khalistani terrorist to justify his anti-India cause. He must carefully calibrate his speeches while outside.

SS Paul, Nadia

RELIEF FOR AAP

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Calling out the parrot' (IE, September 14). Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's stay in jail has come to an end weeks before the Haryana elections. He is free to campaign for AAP candidates but cannot make any public comment on the merits of the case. Nor can he discharge his duties as the CM as normal. Despite the restrictions, Kejriwal and his party have every reason to feel relieved. If they have a watertight case against the CM, they should not be bothered about whether he is out on bail or in jail. If not, their credibility will take another hit, buttressing the Opposition's charge of political vendetta.

Kholkan Das, Kolkata

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Calling out the parrot' (IE, September 14). The highlight of the recent bail verdict given by the SC in the Arvind Kejriwal case was Justice Bhuyan's criticism of how CBI operates, calling out the agency for selectively targeting political opponents,

which threatens justice. While many years have passed since the SC judgment, when the caged parrot metaphor was used the first time, the situation remains the same, if not worse. Despite the bail, the bigger issue remains: The working of the CBI and its credibility. Its role in the justice system requires urgent reform.

Amanpreet Singh, New Delhi

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Calling out the Parrot' (IE, September 14). It should be noted that there was a split verdict in the two-member bench of the Supreme Court. While they agreed unanimously that the Chief Minister of Delhi should be released on bail, the two judges disagreed and delivered a split verdict on the question of the validity of the CBI's arrest. The ground for granting bail but with strict conditions likely prolonged delay in concluding the case.

YG Chouksey, Pune

REFORM NEEDED

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The UN the world needs' (IE, September 14). The upcoming UN Summit of the Future is an important moment to tackle global challenges, yet the real issue remains — the relevance of the UN. The organisation struggles to address the complex issues of today, from geopolitical tensions to global security. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's participation offers an opportunity for India to push for a more inclusive and responsive UN. The organisation's inability to prevent ongoing conflicts and address global inequalities shows its limitations. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres's call for "reform or rupture" underscores this urgency.

Raj Shukla, Mumbai



MRINAL PANDE

The first face of a new chapter

Vinesh Phogat as an emblem of unbending pride marks a historic moment

HOW LONG HAS it been since you spent a few days in the close company of young female athletes and experienced their easy camaraderie? In my generation, at least, that kind of intimacy was strictly limited to male locker rooms.

I come from a generation of women who were brought up "traditionally" and did not "do sports". For me, the high school annual athletics-cum-cultural meets in UP for girls (Uttarakhand was then a part of the state) was the only time I spent time with athletes from our school and other girls' schools. Most of the athletes in our team were tall, muscular Jat girls from the Terai region sent to school in Nainital. A few came from local Thakur families and had shoulders powerful enough to throw javelins and discuses and I applauded when they won trophies and certificates. I was a nerd, a perennial part of the "cultural" team, who competed in music and dance.

In the shared bathing and changing rooms, we nerds were horribly conscious of our adolescent bodies — unlike the athletes, whose acceptance of their physical prowess and fitness I envied. I ensured that all the doors and windows were shut and curtained so no snooping male eyes would not see us. We were raised to believe that the most important thing was not knowledge of how a female body functions but rather, how it looks. And no one should look at it in the nude. In our families, sports that made women sweat out fear and weakness and build bodies like their brothers were considered "unfeminine". Women

wrestlers were unheard of.

I watched *Dangal* (2018) with great delight. And when the Phogat sisters, on whose lives the story was based, began winning gold, silver and bronze medals in the Commonwealth Games, the Asian and even the Olympics, many greying women like me, I am sure, wondered why the experience of sport was denied to us. This realisation and later, the sight of young female wrestlers draped in the tricolour, holding their medals aloft, brought both anger (why were we convinced that our bodies were items to be presented, not our personal terrain?) and a vicarious thrill (India proudly accepting muscular sweaty bodies of female wrestlers as normal).

As I have aged, the mysterious changes I saw transforming women who dared to break the glass ceiling in Indian politics — Indira Gandhi, Mayawati, Jayalalithaa, Mamata Banerjee, Vasundhara Raje and Jaya Bachchan — have also altered my thinking about the transformative power of women from various backgrounds storming the bastions of electoral politics. First came the panchayats and now women must dream big — of entering Parliament in larger numbers and changing power structures from within.

The story of 30-year-old Vinesh Phogat entering the political arena in Haryana is an indication of the gradual acceptance of women's power in two of the most conservative arenas — athletics and politics. "It feels good," Phogat said, riding in an open jeep after getting the

ticket, "I am a winner in their eyes and nothing can be bigger than this." Meanwhile, former BJP MP and ousted Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) chief, accused of multiple sexual assaults by half a dozen female wrestlers is foaming at the mouth. The female wrestlers who first blew the whistle on his long record of molestation were called liars and laughed at by the powers that be. Then came anger as their *dharma* in Delhi drew the media. When they were seen on TV being dragged mercilessly off the streets where they spent weeks asking for justice, cracks began to appear even in his party that had made many electoral promises to empower women. After being denied a Lok Sabha ticket, the accused is now accusing Congress and the Hoodas in particular, of "conspiracy".

Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh recently said that the Hoodas had used the six female wrestlers like the Pandavas had once used Draupadi and, in doing so, Congress had put the honour of "daughters and sisters" at stake. That, he said, was not a wrestlers' protest in Delhi. It was merely a family protest. Phogat had cheated her way into the Paris Olympics he said, and lost because she put on too much weight, he sneered. He has reportedly been asked by the party since to keep his mouth shut. There is vast support among the Jats and the athletic fraternity for Phogat, who after so much suffering still brought the country honour by defeating a wrestling champ like Yui Susaki of Japan in the Paris Olympics.

Singh is not the country, Phogat says non-

chalantly. "My country and my loved ones stand by me." The former WFI chief now faces the High Court later this month after charges have already been framed against him.

Phogat was asked about Singh whining that if the wrestler's charges of repeated molestation were true, why didn't she slap him when he made advances? She was no weakling. Vinesh's cryptic reply — the slap too shall follow in time — reminded me of an apocryphal story about Judy Holliday. When she went for an interview, the head of the studio started chasing her around the desk. After a while, Judy reached inside her dress, pulled out her falsies and handed them to him. "Here," she said, "I think this is what you want."

Haryana society has clearly accepted this wrestler, who has worked hard to be where she is. This support for Vinesh Phogat as an emblem of physical fortitude, fearlessness and unbending pride as a woman and an athlete, marks a historic moment. It is a palpable example of India changing before our eyes.

As for the acceptance of the strength of ordinary women of various ages and income groups, the jury is still out. But no matter how friendly or frightening the new political territory will feel to our young wrestler, she and her party can take pride in the fact that she will be the first face of a new chapter in our democratic politics.

The writer is former chairperson, Prasar Bharati

10 ECONOMY

THE INDIAN EXPRESS, MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2024

MARKET WATCH
MCAP OF 9 OF TOP-10 VALUED COS JUMPS
 Nine of the top-10 most valued firms together added Rs 2,01,552.69 crore in market valuation last week, with Bharti Airtel stealing the show, amid bullish investors' sentiment in equities. Last week, the BSE benchmark jumped 1,707.01 points or 2.10 per cent. **PTI**

COUNTRY WITH 1.4-BN POPULATION CAN'T RELY ONLY ON SERVICES SECTOR, SAY ECONOMISTS

Low- & high-skilled jobs: Gap rising as manufacturing stagnation continues

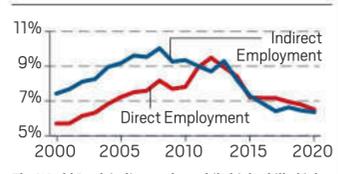
RAVIDUTTA MISHRA & SOUMYARENDRA BARIK
 NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 15

OVER THE past two decades, India's economic growth has increasingly been driven by the services sector, particularly in Information Technology (IT), banking, and finance. But the expansion of the services sector since the turn of the century has coincided with a noticeable decline in traditional industries such as apparel and footwear, which provide livelihoods for millions of low-skilled workers. The stagnation in manufacturing, which continues to remain at around 14 per cent and well short of the targeted 25 per cent, has exacerbated the divide between high-skilled and low-skilled jobs.

Although job creation and income levels for a large pool of qualified IT professionals have increased, particularly with multinational companies establishing data analytics and software development hubs known as Global Capability Centres (GCCs) in India, the country's manufacturing weaknesses have caused it to fall behind Bangladesh in textiles, Thailand in machinery, and Vietnam in electronics. This has led to a consistent decline in the creation of low-skilled jobs across the country.

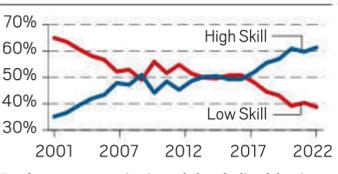
Economists have highlighted that a country with a population of 1.4 billion cannot rely solely on the services sector and will need all sectors of the economy to contribute to job creation. According to the Economic Survey 2023-24, India needs to create nearly 7.85 million jobs annually in the non-farm sector to accommodate the growing workforce. However, the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy reported that the national unemployment rate surged from 7 per cent to 9 per cent in June 2024.

JOB'S CREATED BY EXPORTS-RELATED ACTIVITIES IN INDIA, 2000-2020
 (% of domestic employment)



The World Bank indicates that while high-skilled jobs generated through manufacturing exports are rising, trade-related low-skilled job opportunities are rapidly moving to Vietnam and Bangladesh. Source: OECD Trade in employment 2023

INDIA'S HIGH & LOW SKILL-INTENSIVE MANUFACTURING
 (% of total manufacturing exports)



Employment generation in trade has declined despite a decrease in China's participation in low-skill manufacturing due to rising wages, according to the World Bank. Source: UN Comtrade, World Bank staff calculations

Decline in Labour-Intensive jobs

A new World Bank report released earlier this month identified a worrying trend: export-related jobs in India have been declining over the past decade. Direct employment linked to exports peaked at 9.5 per cent of total domestic employment in 2012 but fell to 6.5 per cent in 2020. The World Bank attributed this decline to the dominance of the services sector and high-skill manufacturing in India's export basket. Since these sectors are less suited to absorbing large portions of the Indian workforce, job creation due to trade has diminished.

The World Bank's observation aligns with the stark contrast between the growth of services and manufacturing exports from India. While India's services exports constitute 4.3 per cent of the world's commercial services exports, goods exports barely account for 1.8 per cent of the global goods market, resulting in low job generation in the manufacturing sector.

This is particularly concerning, as India has been unable to capitalise on the opportunity presented by China's exit from low-skill manufacturing between 2015 and 2022. Despite a decrease in

China's participation in low-skill manufacturing of apparel, leather, textiles, and footwear, countries such as Bangladesh and Vietnam, and even advanced economies like Germany and the Netherlands, have become the primary beneficiaries of China's shrinking market share.

With an aim to boost scale in the Indian textile sector, the Centre in 2023 had approved the setting up of seven PM Mega Integrated Textile Region and Apparel (PM MITRA) Parks to develop world-class infrastructure with an outlay of Rs 4,445 crore for a period up to 2027-28. Last month, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi had also approved setting up of 12 industrial smart cities under the National Industrial Development Programme (NICDP) with an estimated investment of Rs 28,602 crore. Query emailed to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Ministry of Textile over the widening skills gap remained unanswered till the time of going to press.

Rise in Global Capability Centres

Even as manufacturing in traditionally high-labour-intensive sectors has slowed, India has

emerged as a key market for multinational companies to establish data analytics and software development centres, leveraging the large pool of qualified IT engineers in the country.

These centres, known as Global Capability Centres (GCCs), have proliferated in India. With close to 1,600 GCCs from multinational companies across various sectors such as modern trade, apparel, finance, consumer electronics, automobiles, and shipping have established major headquarters in India to manage core functions including design, inventory, supply chain management, and transportation.

While the transition from early business process outsourcing (BPO) days to the IT services sector boom and the establishment of more advanced GCCs has largely been evolutionary with minimal government support, the Centre is currently discussing a new IT policy with the industry, aiming to double the number of GCCs in the country over the next five years, as reported by *The Indian Express*.

However, despite the rise in GCCs, the IT services sector, a bellwether of Indian skilled employ-

ment, has recently seen a slump in hiring. Leading companies like TCS, Infosys, Wipro, HCLTech, and Tech Mahindra, major recruiters of young Indians, have witnessed a significant drop in their workforce in 2024 compared to 2023, with their collective headcount reducing by more than 61,000 individuals. It is worth noting that these companies still have a substantial existing bench strength and continue to be major employers of entry-level engineers in the country.

Declining Participation in Global Value Chains

Low participation in Global Value Chains (GVCs) is one reason India has struggled to generate sufficient trade-related jobs, according to the World Bank. Around 70 per cent of international trade involves GVCs, but despite rapid economic growth, India's trade in goods and services has decreased as a percentage of GDP, and its participation in GVCs has declined over the past five years.

The World Bank's firm-level data showed that Indian exporters with GVC linkages demonstrate stronger export performance and greater diversification in products and markets compared to those without such connections. However, India's participation in GVCs has been declining due to issues such as difficulties in procuring raw materials and high transport costs.

In May 2023, NITI Aayog CEO BVR Subrahmanyam also highlighted that India's limited integration into GVCs is a significant issue. For India to improve its participation, fundamental changes, including reducing tariffs and simplifying procedures, are required. Notably, India's average tariffs rose to 18.1 per cent in 2022, up from 13 per cent in 2014, making India less competitive compared to countries like Vietnam, Thailand, and Mexico. **FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com**

'India has immense potential for regional planes, looking at it as our main market'

EUROPEAN REGIONAL aircraft manufacturer ATR, which has a dominant market share in India's small regional aircraft market, believes that the time has come for the segment to take off in earnest. Growth in India's broader civil aviation sector is booming, but the regional air connectivity segment remains largely unpenetrated as regional and intercity travel is still dominated by road and railways. This largely untapped market in combination with expansion in small regional airports and the policy push for regional air connectivity offers a promising growth opportunity, according to ATR's Chief Commercial Officer ALEXIS VIDAL. In an interaction with SUKALP SHARMA, Vidal delves into the segment's growth potential and why India has emerged as a critical market for ATR. Edited excerpts:



THE EXPRESS INTERVIEW
 WITH ALEXIS VIDAL
 CHIEF COMMERCIAL OFFICER, ATR

What is your view on the Indian market for regional aircraft? Indian Airlines have placed huge orders for narrow-body jets, but we have not seen similar enthusiasm for regional turboprops despite the government's push to enhance regional air connectivity.

We are looking at India as one of our main markets, or the main market. Yes, Indian airlines have been ordering quite a lot of large narrow-body aircraft. But I think, not just in India but globally too, the regional aircraft market does not really respond to the same purchasing strategy and forecast as the market for larger planes. Still, regional connectivity in India in particular is very promising. We have 67 ATR aircraft in India and the number will soon go over 70. We believe there is a potential in India for another 200 (regional) aircraft in the coming decade. That is a strong potential, and all this is very well supported by policies like (regional connectivity scheme) UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik).

We usually consider up to 400 nautical miles, or around 750 kilometres, as regional air routes. Going by the pattern of mobility in India, which we have studied for the past two years, 90 per cent of intercity trips are under 400 nautical miles. And 97 per cent of those are on cars, buses, and trains, which leaves air transportation with a share of just 3 per cent. And that is where you realise the potential of India, because if you benchmark that against other markets in Europe or Asia,

Are you in active discussions with your current customers and other airlines in India for potential aircraft orders?

We are always in discussion with customers and prospects. I will not comment specifically on one or the other. But yes, given the potential of the market in India and the relevance of the ATR as a product, it is quite natural that we are entertaining discussions with different parties.

Alliance Air used to be the regional arm of Air India till the latter was a government airline. But now Alliance Air is a government-owned carrier while the privatised Air India does not have any regional air operation. Any discussion with Air India to explore building its own regional network?

Like I said, I would not be able to comment on any individual airline, but in general, given the potential of India, I would expect major players to seriously consider building their own regional network.

In your view, what are the challenges to growth of regional air connectivity in India and what more should the government do to give it a boost?

There are several things, one of which is having the necessary infrastructure and regional airports. Your government is already working on rapidly increasing the number of airports... but beyond that, airlines with regional operations need to be supported through access to airport slots, particularly at large tier-I city airports to enhance connectivity between tier-I, tier-II, and tier-III cities. That kind of support is important to keep the regional network valid and viable. Other ideas could be around flight operations — in terms of flight time and schedule optimisation — and even focusing on developing the regional air freight market and ecosystem with policy support.

Are you seeing interest from new customers in India or is it mostly from your existing customers? Which segment is likely to drive the growth?

I think it is and will be a com-

bination of both. There is IndiGo, which is our largest airline operator in the country. Of course, there is Alliance Air, which is our long-standing partner and we expect that relationship to continue. New airlines are also coming into play, like Fly91. So, we believe growth will come through the combination of the existing and new customers, including startup regional airlines.

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FULL INTERVIEW ON www.indianexpress.com

BRIEFLY
RBI plans to revamp currency management infra

New Delhi: The Reserve Bank plans to comprehensively revamp its currency management infrastructure over the next 4-5 years, mainly to ensure adequate storage and handling capacity to cater to the future cash needs of the growing economy, according to an RBI document. **PTI**

Kenya: Given Adani contract to build power lines

Nairobi: Kenya has awarded a public-private partnership concession to build power transmission lines to India's Adani Group and a unit of the African Development Bank, according to an economic advisor to the country's president. The concession is worth \$1.3 billion, David Ndihi, chief economic adviser to President William Ruto, said in a post on X. **REUTERS**

Rising freight costs threaten exports: GTRI

New Delhi: Increasing freight costs, shortage of containers and dependence on major shipping hubs and foreign carriers pose serious challenges to the country's exports, think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said. **PTI**

US lenders counter Byju's claim on debt

New Delhi: US lenders represented by Glas Trust have countered Byju's founder Byju Ravendran's claim on verified debt on the company being merely around Rs 20 crore, and have said that the firm will have to pay \$1.2 billion Term Loan B along with interest. **PTI**

FPIs reverse strategy, buy more equities via exchanges on US rate cut anticipation

₹22,707 crore worth domestic shares purchased by FPIs between Sept 9-13

HITESH VYAS
 MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 15

AFTER FOLLOWING a strategy of buying domestic shares from the primary market and selling through stock exchanges for the past few weeks, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have reversed their approach, on the expectation of an interest rate cut by the US Federal Reserve.

Foreign portfolio investors were buyers of equity in the cash market on all days of the week ended September 13. In the current month (September 1-September 13), foreign investors purchased Rs 27,862 crore worth of domestic equities.

"It is significant to note that unlike in previous weeks when FPIs were buyers through the primary market, this week (September 9-September 13), they were buyers through the exchanges having bought equity for Rs 22,707 crore," said V K Vijayakumar, chief investment strategist, Geojit Financial Services.

Prior to this, FPIs were majorly buying through the "primary market and others category", and were sellers in the stock ex-



File

changes on concerns over higher valuation of the domestic market.

According to Vijayakumar, one of the reasons for the change in FPI strategy from selling to buying through stock exchanges is because of expectations that the US Federal Reserve will start cutting rates from this month onwards pushing the US yields down. It will facilitate fund flows from the US to emerging markets.

Market participants expect the US Federal Reserve to deliver a 25 bps rate cut in its monetary policy scheduled for September 17-18, following lower-than-expected US inflation data for August. The Consumer Price Index rose 2.5 per cent for the 12

months ending August, the smallest 12-month increase since February 2021.

Vijayakumar also attributes resilience of the domestic market as another reason for FPIs buying through exchanges.

"The Indian market is extremely resilient with strong momentum and missing out on the Indian market would be a bad strategy for FPIs," he said, adding that high valuations in India, however, continue to be a concern.

FPIs are encashing at the right time to tab the Indian market amidst positive market sentiments, political stability, contributing to the rally, said Manoj Purohit, Partner and leader, FS

EXPLAINED
Why the change in stance?

THE FOCUS of the global markets have now shifted to the US Federal Reserve's decision on interest rates in its upcoming FOMC meeting. Expectations of a rate cut is high and that is likely to facilitate fund flows from the US to emerging markets. FPIs are now understood to be taking a stance on this. Also, experts say that extreme resilience of the Indian markets pushes FPIs to not miss out on the momentum.

Tax, Tax and Regulatory Services, BDO India, a tax, accounting and advisory firm.

This incursion not only mirrors the growing attractiveness of Indian equities but also emphasises the confidence foreign participants have shown in India's financial markets historically as well during geopolitical crises and other macro factors, Purohit said.

Banks need to adapt to changing customer preferences to remain competitive: CEA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
 CHENNAI, SEPTEMBER 15

CHIEF ECONOMIC Advisor to the Centre, V Anantha Nageswaran has said banks should adapt to changing customer preferences and market dynamics in order to remain competitive.

He highlighted the crucial role of agriculture in driving economic growth at an event organised by public sector Indian Bank. In his remarks on



V Anantha Nageswaran,
 Chief Economic Advisor. **File**

the topic 'Indian Economy and Banking: Growth and Trends', Nageswaran stressed on the importance of technological advancements in driving growth and innovation in the industry.

The CEA, in a press release issued by the Bank, emphasised the need for banks to adapt to changing customer preferences and market dynamics to remain competitive.

He hailed the Indian Bank for its efforts to invest in knowledge sharing and excellence

and lauded its initiative under the MSME Prerana programme which is aimed at training the entrepreneurs.

In his address, Indian Bank Managing Director and CEO S L Jain said, "We are delighted to have Dr Nageswaran sharing his insights on the Indian economy and its implications on the banking sector." The interaction would undoubtedly benefit all the participants and help them better understand the challenges and opportunities facing the industry, he added.

GST Council forms GoM to review tax rate on health, life insurance; report by Oct 30

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
 NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 15

THE GST Council on Sunday constituted a 13-member Group of Ministers (GoM) to suggest GST rate on premiums of various health and life insurance products and submit its report by October 30. Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary is the convener of the GoM. The members of the panel include members from Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Gujarat, Meghalaya, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Telangana.

The 54th GST Council meeting on September 9 decided to set up a GoM to examine and review the present tax structure of GST on life and medical insurance. A final call by the Council on the taxation of insurance premiums is likely to be taken in the next meeting in November based on the GoM report. Currently, 18 per cent of Goods and Services Tax (GST) is levied on insurance premiums.

The Terms of Reference (ToR) of the panel also include suggesting tax rate of health/medical insurance including individual, group, family floater and other medical insurance for various categories like senior citizens, middle class, persons with mental ill-

Compliance by online gaming platforms Inter-departmental panel may be set up

New Delhi: An inter-departmental committee with representatives from ED, RBI, tax and consumer affairs departments may be set up to combat the proliferation of online gaming platforms and ensure regulatory compliance, a Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI) report said.

The GST intelligence wing

of the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has initiated action against 118 domestic online gaming entities, and Show Cause Notices have been issued to 34 taxpayers involving tax amount of Rs 1,10,531.91 crore.

The notices were issued to these gaming companies as they were not paying GST at 28 per cent rate. **PTI**

ness. Also, suggest tax rates on life insurance, including term insurance, life insurance with investment plans whether individual or group and re-insurance.

"The GoM is to submit its report by October 30," 2024," said the Office Memorandum issued by the GST Council Secretariat on the Constitution of GoM on Life and Health insurance.

Some opposition-ruled states, including West Bengal, had demanded complete exemption of GST on health and life insurance premiums, while some other states were in favour of lowering the tax to 5 per cent. Even Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari had in July written to Finance

Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on the issue saying "levying GST on life insurance premium amounts to levying tax on the uncertainties of life." In 2023-24, the centre and states collected Rs 8,262.94 crore through GST on health insurance premiums, while Rs 1,484.36 crore was collected on account of GST on health reinsurance premiums.

Sitharaman in her reply to a discussion on the Finance Bill in the Lok Sabha in August had said that 75 per cent of the GST collected goes to states and the Opposition members should ask their state finance ministers to bring the proposal to the GST Council.

MALDIVES FOREIGN MINISTER IN SRI LANKA

'Cleared misunderstandings with India after rough patches'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MALE, SEPTEMBER 15



Maldives Foreign Minister Moosa Zameer. File

FOREIGN MINISTER Moosa Zameer has acknowledged that the Maldives-India ties witnessed rough patches in the initial days of President Mohammad Muizzu-led government, but insisted that the two countries have resolved the "misunderstandings".

Zameer made the remarks on Friday during a visit to Sri Lanka, where he stressed the importance of the Indian Ocean archipelago's relationships with key allies, particularly China and India. He said that relations with India had faced challenges, particularly following President Muizzu's campaign to remove a small contingent of Indian troops from the Maldives.

Zameer said that the "misunderstandings" between the two countries have been resolved following the repatriation of Indian troops from the Maldives. "At the start of our government, we did have some rough patches (with India), you know," Zameer has been quoted as saying by *The Edition* newspaper. "(We) have good relations with both China and India, and both countries continue to support Maldives."

India's relationship with the Maldives came under strain since Muizzu, known for his pro-China leanings, took charge as the President. Within hours of his oath, he had demanded the withdrawal of Indian military personnel manning three aviation platforms gifted by India to the Maldives. After talks between the two sides, the Indian military personnel were replaced by civilians.

Things escalated after three Maldivian deputy ministers made controversial remarks regarding India and PM Narendra Modi on social media. Maldives Foreign Ministry distanced itself from their remarks, and the three junior ministers were suspended.

Unlike his predecessors, who made the first port of call to Delhi after assuming office, Muizzu travelled to Türkiye first and China for his first state visit in January. He visited Delhi on June 9, to attend Modi's swearing-in cere-

mony. Muizzu will travel to India "soon", his spokesperson said.

Zameer said the Maldives has no plans to seek an IMF bailout, dismissing the current economic challenges faced by his country as "temporary". "We have bilateral partners who are sensitive to our needs and our situation," Zameer said, signalling the government's confidence in addressing its fiscal issues without resorting to external assistance from the IMF.

Zameer outlined the government's strategy to address the economic situation, which includes implementing reforms in the tax regime and cost-cutting measures for government-owned enterprises. He highlighted the strengthening of bilateral ties with India and China.

His remarks came in the wake of warnings from credit rating agencies about the Maldives' financial situation. The Maldives owes much of its external debt to India and China. The debt servicing commitments amount to USD 409 million this year, placing additional stress on its limited foreign currency reserves. Maldives reserves stand at USD 444 million, with usable reserves at USD 61 million, the daily stated.

3 senior IPS officers suspended in Andhra for 'harassing' model

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
AMARAVATI, SEPTEMBER 15

THE ANDHRA Pradesh government on Sunday issued separate orders suspending three senior IPS officers, including a DG rank, for their alleged involvement in "hastily arresting" and "harassing" a Mumbai-based actor-cum-model without proper investigation in a case filed against her.

Former intelligence chief P Sitharama Anjaneyulu (DG rank), former Vijayawada Police Commissioner Kranti Rana Tata (IG rank) and Vishal Gunni (SP rank), then DCP (Vijayawada) were suspended after an inquiry revealing their role in the alleged harassment of the model.

She accused the police officials of threatening her with dire consequences during the previous government if she did not withdraw a case she had filed against a top executive of a corporation in Mumbai. "The government, after careful consideration of the report and having due regard to the circumstances of the case, came to a conclusion that there is prima facie evidence and that the disciplinary proceedings are warranted

for his grave misconduct, dereliction of duty and, so, consider it necessary to initiate disciplinary proceedings and to place Sri P Sitharama Anjaneyulu, IPS (1992), under suspension," said a GO.

The model was arrested this year during the previous regime based on a complaint by a YSR Congress leader who accused her of cheating. The then IC, instructed the two other officials to arrest her, although no crime registered against her as of that date. As per the GO, the records said the FIR was registered against the model at 6.30 am on February 2, whereas Anjaneyulu passed on instructions to Kanthi Rana Tata and Vishal Gunni on January 31 well before registering the FIR.

She recently lodged a complaint against some police officials alleging that a false case was foisted against her and that she was subjected to harassment. Based on this, the state government suspended two officials. The three officials were among those 16 IPS officers who were issued a memo directing them to mark their "attendance" in DGP's office twice a day, without any post.

Encounters in Poonch, Kathua; 1 militant injured

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, SEPTEMBER 15

ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN security forces and militants broke out in Poonch and Kathua districts of J&K on Sunday. One militant was injured in the early hours of the day during the exchange of fire in Poonch, sources said.

The Poonch encounter started early Sunday in the Mendhar area when security forces were carrying out searches after getting information about the presence of militants in the area, sources said.

The militants opened fire, and security forces retaliated, leading to an exchange of fire that lasted until the militants managed to escape using the dense forests for cover, the sources said. However, sources said one of the three absconding militants appeared to be injured as trails of blood were found at the encounter site.

Later in the evening, security forces and police had an encounter with militants in the Bai area of Kathua district. This came after militants opened fire on a joint party of the security forces and police, who were conducting searches in the forests, sources said. The area has been cordoned by the search parties.

Kerala's 2nd Nipah death this year — a 24-year-old from Malappuram dist

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
SEPTEMBER 15

THE NATIONAL Institute Of Virology in Pune confirmed on Sunday that Nipah was the cause of death of a 24-year-old from Kerala's Malappuram district, the state Health Department said.

He died on September 9 after showing encephalitis symptoms. He was prima facie diagnosed with having the Nipah virus by a PCR test at the virology lab in Government Medical College Hospital, Kozhikode. It was confirmed on Sunday by NIV-Pune, Kerala Health Minister Veena George said. In July, a 14-year-old boy from Malappuram had died after he tested positive for the deadly virus. Strict containment measures were then imposed in the district, and no other infections were reported until now.

The Health Minister said all necessary steps have been initiated as per protocol. "Soon after the PCR test held in Kozhikode turned positive, an emergency meeting of the officials of the Health Department was held on Sunday night itself. We had also formed 16 committees as per pro-

col. The youth was a student in Bengaluru and his primary contact list runs to 151," she said.

The minister said the victim had sought treatment in four private hospitals before he died on September 9, and had also travelled to various places along with friends. "Persons in the high-risk category have been told to remain in isolation and samples of five persons, who developed primary symptoms, have been sent for tests. Contact tracing is in the final stage. Steps have been taken to ascertain whether anyone else got infected with the virus and arrest an outbreak," she said.

The victim was from Malappuram's Thiruvalli panchayat, which is around 20 km by road from Pandikkad, where the 14-year-old died in July this year.

Kerala has had five Nipah outbreaks since 2018. Till now, only six positive patients have survived — one in Kozhikode in 2018, another in Kochi in 2019, and four cases in Kozhikode in 2023. In 2018, 17 out of 18 infected persons died. In 2021, there was one Nipah death, and in 2023, there were two. With two deaths so far in 2024, the total number of Nipah death in Kerala since 2018 has gone to 22.

Meerut: Six minors among dead as house collapse toll reaches 10



At the site of the building collapse in Meerut on Sunday. PTI

AMIT SHARMA
MEERUT, SEPTEMBER 15

THE DEATH toll in the collapse of a three-storey building that took place in Zakir Colony locality of UP's Meerut town on Saturday evening reached 10, officials on Sunday said. All the deceased, including six minors, belonged to the same family. Five other members of the family were critically injured and are undergoing treatment, police said.

The dilapidated building, nearly 50-year-old, housed a dairy on the ground floor, it is learnt.

Those who died in the incident were identified as Nafias (65), her son Sajid (40), his wife Saima (35), the couple's daughter Sania (15), their son Saqib (11), Farhana (20), Alisa (18), Riza (10), Himsa (6 months) and Saifiyan (7). Those injured are Samrin (4), Naeem (22), Nadeem (26), Saqib (20) and Aliya (8), the officials said.

Several cattle heads were also feared killed in the collapse, they added. Teams of the NDRF and the SDRF, along with the local police and the fire brigade, were engaged in clearing the debris amid rain. Local volunteers joined the rescue

operation, which continued until 2 am and resumed early Sunday.

Police said the rescue operation was delayed since the house was situated in a narrow lane where bulldozers could not enter.

Senior officials, including Meerut Zone ADGP D K Thakur, Divisional Commissioner Selva Kumari J, Inspector General of Police Nachiketa Jha and Senior SP Vipin Tada reached the spot to monitor the rescue operation.

"Ten people have died. The five injured have been admitted to the government hospital. They are in a critical condition. The family was involved in the dairy business, so it is likely that some cattle heads also died under the debris," said ADGP Thakur.

Meerut District Magistrate Deepak Meena said: "Three persons managed to escape when the building was collapsing. The process to provide financial aid of Rs 4 lakh for each deceased from the natural calamity fund and Rs 1.20 lakh for the house being completely damaged is underway."

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed the administration to ensure proper treatment to the survivors, he said.

-WITHPTIINPUTS

7 students expelled from Odisha college hostel over 'cooking beef' complaint

SUJIT BISOI
BHUBANESWAR, SEPT 15

SEVEN STUDENTS of the state-run Parala Maharaja Engineering College in Odisha's Berhampur were expelled from their hostel for allegedly cooking beef, sources said. With tensions prevailing over the incident, a platoon of police personnel were deployed near the college.

The Dean of Students' Welfare issued a notification on Thursday, saying the boarders were expelled for their involvement in "restricted activities" that violated the "rules and code of conduct of Hall of Residence". There was, however, no official comment on what these "restricted activities" were. Sources said a fine of Rs 2,000 was imposed on an expelled student.

Sources said the expelled students were allegedly involved in the cooking of beef in the premises of the hostel on Wednesday

night. After this, another group of boarders complained to the Dean regarding the incident.

"As a diverse community, we understand the importance of respecting the values and beliefs of all students. This incident (the alleged cooking of beef) has caused unrest and discomfort, leading to a tense atmosphere. I kindly request strict action to be taken against the boarders involved in the incident," read the complaint.

A group of Bajrang Dal and Vishva Hindu Parishad workers also visited the college and met the principal, demanding strict action against the students.

"Based on the complaint from a group of boarders, the college authorities conducted an inquiry into the allegations. Certain activities are restricted within the college premises, which the boarders had done. They were expelled based on the findings of the inquiry," said a college source. The boarders have since left the campus, sources said.



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- Production Linked Incentives worth INR 24,000 Cr for advanced solar PV modules
- National Green Hydrogen Mission to drive production, use and export of GH
- PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana for installing 1 crore rooftop solar
- PM KUSUM for agriculture sector

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More women in medicine field than ever, but basic facilities and safe spaces a distant dream for them

ANONNA DUTT, SWEETY KUMARI & ATRI MITRA
NEW DELHI, KOLKATA, SEPTEMBER 15

DURING HER residency in 1992, it was not unusual for Dr Arpita Ray Chaudhury, 56, who currently heads the nephrology department at Siliguri-based North Bengal Medical College and Hospital, to nap in the deserted seminar hall at 2 am while on night shift "since it had tables and chairs". The only woman in a team of five men at Kolkata's Nil Ratan Sircar Medical College and Hospital then, she says her colleagues would use the seminar hall to "sleep, study or even take breaks before the start of their long hours of ward duties".

On August 9, the body of a junior doctor was found in the fourth-floor seminar hall of Kolkata's RG Kar Hospital. The doctor was allegedly raped and murdered. On August 18, a woman doctor was allegedly assaulted by a drunk patient and his family at Mumbai's Sion Hospital around 3.30 am.

The ongoing protests following the rape-murder and the echoes it is still finding across the

INCREASING NUMBER IN SOME SPECIALTIES

Speciality	2012-13		2020-21	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Ophthalmology	352	279	1,253	2,729
Anaesthesiology	891	484	3,246	4,197
Gynaecology	375	1,001	706	5,027
Paediatrics	825	451	2,474	3,045
Pathology	535	709	1,082	3,054
Microbiology	224	412	2,487	5,781
ENT	574	317	968	1,370
Dermatology	207	263	708	1,496
Psychiatry	214	119	990	1,382
Biochemistry	154	193	1,361	2,082
Physiology	196	238	301	402
Anatomy	434	397	443	525
Haematology	13	5	77	79

NO. OF WOMEN DOCTORS PER 100 MALE DOCTORS



(Source: All India Survey on Higher Education)

country are framed by a reality: the steadily increasing presence of women in medicine. Data from the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) shows that for every 100 men, there were 100 women enrolled in medical colleges in India in 2020-21. These numbers increased from 88 in 2011-12 per 100 men to 110 in 2019-20, before dipping a little

during the pandemic. Despite the influx of women in medicine now, Dr Subhash Giri, former director of Lady Hardinge Medical College, and the heads of three leading government medical colleges across India say that facilities as basic as doctor duty rooms with latches or hostels for women remain "highly inadequate".

Emphasising the need for

"safe work spaces", Dr Debarupa Sarkar, an MD in general medicine at Barasat Medical College and Hospital in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas, says women continue to face challenges. "During my MBBS (2012-2018), gender-based discrimination was minimal, but that situation altered significantly once I started working. Patients still ask about the arrival

of Boro Sir (senior sir) and insist on addressing women doctors as 'Sister' or 'Masi (maternal aunt)' instead of 'Doctor,'" she says.

Dr Chaudhury says most women would gravitate towards gynaecology, paediatrics or dermatology or preclinical subjects like anatomy, pathology, microbiology due to the pressure to get married and have children. "Women doctors have started opting for all branches now." She is not wrong. AISHE data shows that more women are entering branches that were male-dominated at the post-graduate level until just five years like orthopaedics, cardiology, oncology, and neurology, among others. From just 48 women in orthopaedics against 970 men in 2012-13, their numbers rose to 283 against 4,023 men in 2020-21. In 2012-13 in cardiology, there were just seven women against 312 men, but the number rose to 78 against 220 men in 2020-21. There were just 29 women against 95 men in oncology in 2012-13, but the figures for 2020-21 stand at 116 women against 123 men. Even in neurology in 2012-13, there were only nine women against 118 men, but

there were 78 women against 173 men in 2020-21.

A medical student in the late 1970s, Dr Sutapa Ghosh, who studied and worked at CNMC, never felt unsafe during her time there. However, she says, the experiences of her daughter, a doctor at RG Kar Hospital, were "disturbing". Dr Ghosh says, "During my time, CNMC had proper washrooms and restrooms for doctors. My daughter said there were no dedicated washrooms for doctors." Dr Nandini Sharma, who took over as dean of Maulana Azad Medical College in New Delhi in May 2020, says the demand for safe spaces for women remains a "distant dream". The third woman to head the institute in nearly 40 years after cardiologist Dr Padmavati Sivaramakrishna Iyer, Dr Sharma says, "My female students still don't have safe spaces. We have not learnt any lessons despite the Aruna Shanbaug incident (a nurse who spent over 40 years in a vegetative state after she was assaulted in a Mumbai hospital by a cleaner in 1973), which happened because she was changing in an unsafe space." **FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com**

FOR REMISSION

Lawyers making false statements in court, our faith shaken, says SC

PRES TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 15

EXPRESSING DISPLEASURE over the lawyers repeatedly making false statements before the court as well as in the petitions to secure premature release of the convicts, the Supreme Court has said when it comes across cases like this, "our faith is shaken".

A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Augustine George Masih in its recent order recorded its anguish and said that it has come across several cases in the last three weeks where false statements have been made in the pleading.

"A large number of petitions are being filed in this court wherein a grievance is made about non grant of permanent remission. During the last three weeks, this is the 6th or 7th case which we have come across where blatantly false statements have been made in the pleadings," the bench said in its September 10 order uploaded recently.

It pointed out that on a miscellaneous cases hearing day in the apex court, there are 60 to 80 matters listed before every bench and it is not possible for the judges to go through each page of every case listed, though an endeavour to go through every case very meticulously.

"Our system works on faith. We trust the members of the Bar when we hear cases. But when we come across cases like this, our faith is shaken," the bench said. While dealing with one of such cases, it added there are not only false statements made in the writ petition filed for seeking remission, but a false statement was made before this court which is recorded in the order dated July 19, 2024. It said false statements were repeated in the

email dated July 15, 2024 addressed by the then advocate-on-record for the petitioners to the jail authorities. "Though he was aware of this factual position, a false statement was made on July 19, 2024 that the period of furlough of all the petitioners (convicts) has not expired," it said.

"This is a fit case where exemplary costs should be awarded. However, we cannot penalise the petitioners for the mistakes committed by their lawyers," the bench said.

It recorded that in one of the cases before it, the writ petition proceeded on the footing that all the four petitioners have undergone 14 years of actual imprisonment without remission. It noted the Delhi government in its affidavit has pointed out that two out of four prisoners have not completed the requisite 14 years of imprisonment for availing remission.

"Thus, a false statement was made in the writ petition that all the four petitioners have undergone actual 14 years of imprisonment. The petitioners have been convicted for different offences in different cases as can be seen from the nominal roll," the bench said.

The bench directed the Delhi government to consider the case of one of the four petitioners for remission, who has served 14 years in jail as per the applicable policy and refused to grant relief to two others, as they have not completed the requisite 14 years in jail. With regard to the fourth convict, whose case was considered for remission by the state government but denied, the bench said he will have to challenge the decision before the high court.

The bench dismissed the petition by the four convicts for remission with these directions.

CBI gets 3-day custody of RG Kar ex-principal, inspector, tells court 'larger conspiracy likely'

SWEETY KUMARI
KOLKATA, SEPTEMBER 15

DAY AFTER former principal of RG Kar Medical College Sandip Ghosh and Tala police station officer-in-charge Abhijit Mondal were arrested in connection with the rape and murder of a junior doctor, they were remanded in CBI custody until September 17 by a court in Sealdah on Sunday.

The CBI told the court that "there could be a bigger conspiracy" and that both Ghosh and Mondal had played some "vital roles" in this crime. The two were in touch with each other, and the former issued instructions to the policeman on how to proceed with the rape-mur-



Junior doctors' march in Kolkata Sunday. Partha Paul

der case, the agency claimed. Seeking a three-day custody of Ghosh and Mondal, the CBI said they need to be interrogated

"face-to-face", and both have tried to "downplay the incident" as well as "shield" the heinous crime. On September 2, Ghosh was

arrested by the CBI in connection with the alleged financial irregularities at the institute during his tenure. He is currently in judicial custody. The CBI on Saturday alleged that Mondal and Ghosh were involved in disturbing the crime scene, tampering with evidence, violating official rules, criminal conspiracy and misleading investigators.

On Sunday before the court, the CBI claimed that Mondal took an "unusually long time to arrive at the scene of crime", although it was "only a five-minute drive". The CBI also raised questions regarding filing of a "general diary by the police, stating that the victim was lying unconscious", and pointed out a "14-hour delay in registering an FIR".

According to the CBI, Mondal

was "informed about the incident at 10.03 am but he reached the spot at 11 am."

Mondal appeared before the CBI Saturday, and was arrested after being questioned for over seven hours. According to CBI sources, Mondal could not provide proper answers.

A day after the body of the junior doctor was found in a seminar hall of the RG Kar Medical College on August 9, Sanjoy Roy, a civic volunteer attached with the Kolkata Police, was arrested.

Around 11 am Sunday, CBI officers, along with Mondal, left the CGO complex in a car amid sloganeering and protesters demanding the resignation of Kolkata Police Commissioner Vineet Goyal.

ABVP holds self-defence training for girls

New Delhi: The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) organised a two-day self-defence training programme for women 'Mission Sahasi' in Kolkata, which ended Sunday with a demonstration of their skills at the Sports Authority of India (SAI) complex. The training programme was attended by actress and former BJP Rajya Sabha MP Roopa Ganguly.

"Grandmaster Shifuji Shaurya Bharadwaj trained quick and easy skills of self-defence to hundreds of girl students. He encouraged them to become mentally strong and fearless. In the mega demonstration session, participants showed a brief demo of what they were taught in the two-days training camp," an ABVP statement said. **ENS**

2 women killed as BMW hits scooter in Indore

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BHOPAL, SEPTEMBER 15

TWO WOMEN were killed after a BMW car hit their two-wheeler in Indore, police said Sunday. The car driver fled the scene after the accident occurred on late Saturday night.

The incident occurred in the Khajrana area when Lakshmi Tomar (24) and Diksha Jadon (25) were returning on a scooter after attending a temple fair.

"According to eyewitnesses, a BMW car rammed into the scooter. Though the women were rushed to a nearby hospital, they succumbed to their injuries," said Khajrana police station in-charge Manoj Singh Sendhav. ACP Kundan Mandloi said, "The police arrested the driver of the BMW, Gajendra Pratap Singh (28), who is a resident of Gwalior."

Chhattisgarh: 3 women among 5 killed over witchcraft suspicion

JAYPRAKASH S NAIDU
RAIPUR, SEPTEMBER 15

THREE WOMEN and two men were beaten to death by a group of people from a remote village in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district Sunday after a priest "hinted" that "witchcraft" performed by them may have caused the sudden deaths of a boy and a senior citizen at the village, police said.

The people who allegedly beat the five to death with sticks later walked to the local police station and surrendered.

The incident took place at Ektal village, around 90 km from Sukma district headquarters. The victims were identified as Mausam Kanna (34), his wife Mausam Biri, Mausam Buchcha (34), his wife Mausam Arjo (32), and Karka Lachhi (43).

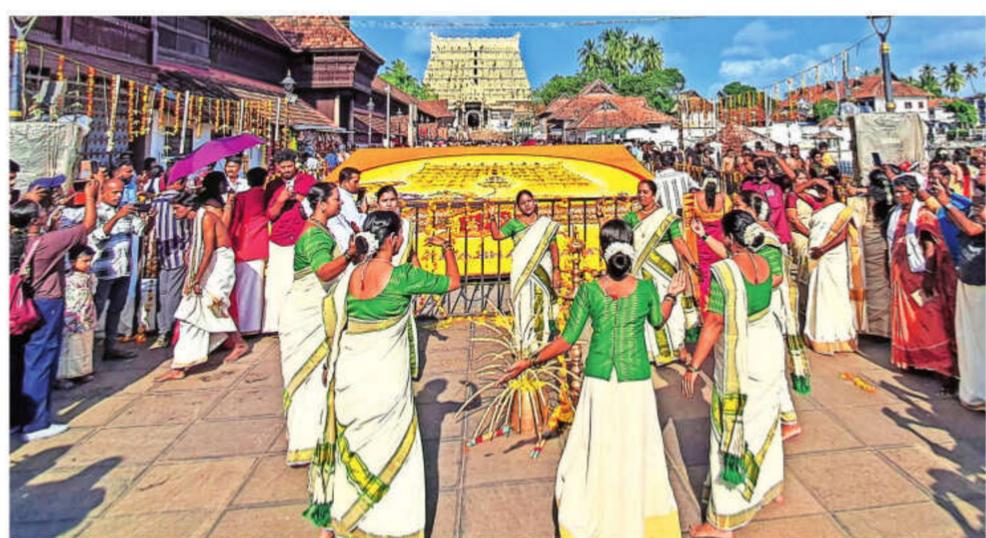
"There were a couple of deaths that took place in the village - one of a boy and another of a senior citizen. Even though they died of natural causes, their family members asked a tribal pujari why the sudden deaths took place. The pujari hinted that the victims are responsible for it," a police officer said. The accused were Savlam Rajesh, Savlam Hidma, Karam Satyam, Kunjam Mukesh and Podiam Enka. "They do not even feel remorseful. They believe the accused were doing black magic. We are searching for the pujari and others involved in the incident," the officer said.

On Thursday, four members of a family, including an infant, were killed after a woman from their family was suspected of performing "black magic".

and Karka Lachhi (43).

"There were a couple of deaths that took place in the village - one of a boy and another of a senior citizen. Even though they died of natural causes, their family members asked a tribal pujari why the sudden deaths took place. The pujari hinted that the victims are responsible for it," a police officer said. The accused were Savlam Rajesh, Savlam Hidma, Karam Satyam, Kunjam Mukesh and Podiam Enka. "They do not even feel remorseful. They believe the accused were doing black magic. We are searching for the pujari and others involved in the incident," the officer said.

On Thursday, four members of a family, including an infant, were killed after a woman from their family was suspected of performing "black magic".



CELEBRATING ONAM

Women perform Thiruvathira in front of an Athapookkalam (floral carpet) at Sreepadmanabha Swamy temple on the occasion of the Thiruvonam, in Thiruvananthapuram on Sunday. PTI

455 km from riot-hit village, Muslims, Hindus unite to mark festivities

For the last 24 years in Karnataka's Karwar, Muslims have been organising Ganesh festivities while Hindus make arrangements for Eid

KIRAN PARASHAR
BENGALURU, SEPTEMBER 15

TENSION PREVAILED in Nagamangala in Mandya district of Karnataka after communal violence over alleged attack on a Ganesh idol procession. In Karwar, a town 455 km away from Nagamangala, Gajanana committee president Nazir Ranebennur was busy on Sunday conducting the Ganesh idol immersion procession in a grand manner.

In a unique example of religious harmony, Muslims organise Ganesh festivities while Hindus make arrangements for Eid-e-Milad celebrations every year in Karwar town of Uttara Kannada district.

This is the 24th year that Muslim and Hindu communities in Karwar celebrate the festivals together.

Notably, Uttara Kannada is considered as a communally sensitive district. Bhatkal town of the district was in news in the past after the arrest of several Muslim youths in connection with terror activities. Former BJP MP Ananth Kumar Hegde, who is known for his hate speeches, was elected from Uttara Kannada Lok Sabha constituency four times.

On Sunday, with much pomp and honour, Hindus and Muslims held a grand procession in Karwar before immersing a Ganesh idol, capping nine days of celebrations. And the Madina Jamiya Masjid's Eid-e-Milad celebration committee is helmed by president Nagaraj



Hindus and Muslims held a procession in Karwar on Sunday before immersing a Ganesh idol

Babuni and vice-president Vinayak Vadder. The festival falls on September 17 this year. It all started 24 years ago, when Babu Sheikh, a local merchant, donated a Ganesh idol for Sri Gajanana Samithi of Konewada area. "All the communities in Karwar are dependent on each

other and we are living in harmony. After I donated the idol, people from the Hindu community took the responsibility to hold Eid celebrations. We have been doing it for the last 24 years," Sheikh said. In the Sri Gajanana Samithi, Nazeer Ranebennur is the president and Nisar Sheikh the vice-president. "Every three years, the members of both committees (for the Ganesh festival and Eid celebrations) change. We issue notices to temples and mosques and people fund the celebrations. Both Hindus and Muslims work to decorate roads and venues. This time, we celebrated the Ganesh festival for nine days," Nazeer, whose tenure as the committee president will end this year, told The Indian Express.

On Sunday, when the Ganesh idol procession approached Madina Jamiya Masjid, the music systems were turned off for a while. The Muslim youth distributed Annasanthrapana (food) for the Hindu devotees. Nagaraj, who heads the Eid-e-Milad committee, said he along with other Hindus was busy with preparations to celebrate the Prophet's birth anniversary. "After their prayers, we will hold a food distribution ceremony for Muslims. We don't go and collect funds from others but people from both communities donate money for the celebrations. We are planning a grand celebration next year to mark the 25th anniversary of the Ganesh and Eid celebrations," he said. Speaking about the Nagamangala communal vio-

lence, Nagaraj said that such incidents would not happen without instigation, but that at the end of the day the common man would suffer. "We have seen instances where Ganesh processions deliberately stop in front of mosques and play loud music. We respect all the communities' sentiments and ensure that such loud music is not played in front of the mosque," he said. Clashes broke out between two groups during a Ganesh idol procession in Nagamangala town in Mandya district, following which mobs went on a rampage, targeting several shops and vehicles leading to tension on Wednesday night. A few people, including two policemen, had sustained minor injuries in stone-pelting on Wednesday night.

Pune: Retired Defence officer loses ₹2.9 crore in online share trading fraud

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
PUNE, SEPTEMBER 15

A RETIRED officer of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) lost Rs 2.9 crores of his life savings in online share trading fraud after he was added to a WhatsApp group where cyber frauds posed as a 'professor' and a 'trading expert' and sent a tutorial on stock market trading everyday.

An FIR was registered by the victim, who is in his early 60s and retired from the Military Engineering Services (MES) of the MoD. In April this year, he received a link to join a WhatsApp group of share trading tutorials, said police. In the group, a man, who identified himself as a 'professor', and another, who claimed she was a trading expert, regularly posted links of online tutorials on stock market operations and trading. They claimed that they were from a US-based brokerage firm.

Sometime after joining the group, the complainant was sent a link to the phone-based application, which he downloaded on his phone. Probe now suggests that the phone-based application was fraudulent.

The complainant started sending specific amounts to the bank accounts as directed. All these funds transfers to fraudulent accounts were reflected as his investments on the application. Over several weeks, the complainant was manipulated into making close to a dozen transfers totalling Rs 2.35 crore against which the corresponding gains on the app was around Rs 8 crore. When the complainant tried to withdraw the sum, he was asked to pay Rs 55 lakh as commission. He paid the amount. However, soon the administrators of the group, the professor and trading expert went incommunicado.

13 DECISION 2024



HARYANA • JAMMU & KASHMIR

PHASE 1 CAMPAIGN CONCLUDES TODAY

In South Kashmir, PDP spots green shoots, Jamaat struggles to get off the ground

Since its alliance with BJP, Mehbooba Mufti's party has been shrinking in its bastion, while rival NC has been growing

BASHAARAT MASOOD
PULWAMA, SEPTEMBER 15

IN A speech in Pulwama on Tuesday, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti credited the people of South Kashmir with "changing the destiny" of Jammu and Kashmir. "By giving us 16 members, you showed the PDP the path to government," Mufti said. "Your vote ended the suppression in J&K, your vote ended POTA in Kashmir, your vote disbanded the (Special) Task Force (of J-K Police)..."

Twenty two years ago, you changed the destiny of Kashmir." Mufti was referring to the 2002 Assembly polls, when the party came to power for the first time, in coalition with the Congress. The credit for its rise to power, just three years after being founded by Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, went clearly to South Kashmir, which gave the party 10 of its 16 seats, falling across the districts of Anantnag, Kulgam, Shopian, and Pulwama (see map).

However, 10 years – and an alliance with the BJP to form the government in 2014 – later, the PDP is struggling to retain its hold. South Kashmir's 16 seats vote in the first phase on September 18, with the campaign wrapping up on Monday. Even in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, held months after the Pulwama attack in which 40 CRPF personnel were killed, the disillusionment with the PDP was obvious. While Mufti took the lead in eight of the 16 Assembly segments, the low voter turnout in traditional PDP areas resulted in her loss to NC first-timer Hसनain Masoodi, a retired High Court judge.

In the recent Lok Sabha polls, the PDP shrank further, with Mufti

losing again – from the newly crafted Anantnag-Rajouri seat. Of the 18 Assembly segments that are part of the new seat, Mufti could secure a lead in only three this time, while the NC-Congress's Mian Altaf (the winner) finished ahead in 15 segments.

Rival NC, which was almost wiped out in South Kashmir once, has now re-established itself, while the Jamaat-e-Islami's presence in the electoral fray, even if limited, could hurt the PDP as it is targeting the same vote that the party used to command.

PDP's hopes

The party is counting on the fact that the Assembly elections, happening after 10 years, are different, with both its voters and cadre energised at the renewal of political activity, especially after the Lok Sabha polls. This will "show results in the Assembly elections", says a PDP leader.

Popular youth leader Waheed ur Rehman Para, the party's driving force in South Kashmir, adds: "On the ground, there is no wave for any party. The NC may have some votes but that is for individual candidates and not the cadre. And many of their leaders are upset over not getting tickets."

Para, who also lost in the Lok Sabha polls, from Srinagar, and is contesting the Assembly elections from Pulwama, adds: "Our strength is our cadre. Our leaders left us, but the cadre is intact." According to him, the PDP struggled in the Lok Sabha polls as it was not able to reach people and its cadre because of "a government crackdown". "Even on (Lok Sabha) election day, our workers were picked up to send a message to the people," he alleged. "Despite that, people voted for us."

Since 2019, seven PDP MLAs from South Kashmir have left. Other senior leaders such as Abdul Rehman Bhat and Mufti's uncles Sartaj Madni and Farooq



South Kashmir gave the PDP, now led by Mehbooba Mufti, 10 of its 16 seats in 2002, propelling it to power. The party formed the government with the Congress. Shuaib Masoodi

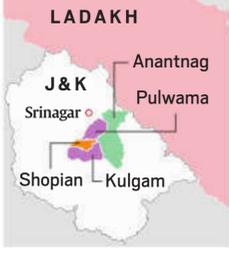
Andrabi have either taken a backseat or announced a break from active politics.

Now the PDP is banking on, what it calls "pro-people" measures of its previous governments. Addressing a rally in Pulwama, Para raises a slogan, "Yeli Yeli Mufti (When Mufti will come to power)...", and the crowd finishes it, "teli chali sakhti (then suppression will be erased)".

In her speeches, the former CM continuously talks about her government's decision to withdraw 12,000 FIRs registered against protesters and the disbanding of the police Task Force.

NC's growth

With the PDP's "soft separatism" appealing to South Kashmir where militancy has been the most active, the NC was slowly pushed to the margins here, with the Congress emerging as the PDP's main, if marginal, rival in the region. But the



party had been "wiped out" of the area, saying they are still the PDP's main rival. "In electoral politics, if you leave space open, someone will fill it. The PDP allied with the BJP despite the fact that it sought votes against the BJP, and this left a window of opportunity open for us... It would be a tough fight between the two of us this time."

Senior PDP leader Naem Akhtar, however, argues that the space which became available in the absence of democratic competition in South Kashmir was taken over by militants and separatists, resulting in near total election boycott. In the 2019 parliamentary polls, there was only 8% polling. "To that extent, it (the NC reviving in south Kashmir) is a welcome sign," Akhtar says, who also says that "the PDP's absence was forced but despite that we are reviving".

This time, as the election campaign gathered pace, the PDP's old cadre that had gone

silent could be seen on the ground, with the youth in a majority and its election rallies gaining in size. Some leaders who had switched sides after 2019 have returned to the party, with many more seeking to do so.

Jamaat factor

The PDP's rise in South Kashmir has long been credited to the Jamaat keeping out of elections after denouncing the 1987 Assembly polls, when it contested under the banner of the Muslim United Front. Those elections are widely believed to have been rigged in favour of the NC-Congress alliance, and were the immediate spark for militancy.

This time, after expressing its desire to contest the elections and seeking unsuccessfully that the ban against it under the UAPA be lifted by the Centre, the Jamaat is backing 10 Independents. Four of them are standing in the South Kashmir seats of Pulwama, Zainapora, Kulgam and Devsar.

While the Jamaat has stirred the political scene in Kashmir, both PDP and NC leaders believe it won't be a factor. "This leadership of the Jamaat isn't acceptable even to Jamaat cadres," says a senior NC South Kashmir leader. "The fact is that the original Jamaat cadre didn't vote in the past and they will not vote even today."

A former Jamaat leader rejects that its supporters rallied behind the PDP in its absence. "As an organisation, we never endorsed any party nor asked our cadres to vote against one... On the ground, some of our cadres or sympathisers might have voted for a party, but that was their own choice," says the leader.

Meanwhile, apart from a big rally in Kulgam, the Jamaat campaign has failed to get going, with several of its own cadres clearly sceptical about the party's move.

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ANALYSIS
HOW BJP'S MUSLIM NOMINEES IN HARYANA FARED IN PREVIOUS POLLS

Why it is crucial for BJP to retain power in Haryana



The BJP could fend off some of the heat from farmer protests because it runs the Haryana government. @BJP4Haryana/X

LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 15

AS NARENDRA Modi addressed his first poll rallies for the Haryana elections on Saturday, the BJP will be hoping the PM will help shrug off the impression that the party's campaign is struggling, with rebellions and resignations marking the release of its candidate lists in the state.

Senior party leaders fear that a loss in Haryana will have far-reaching implications. Apart from adding to the Opposition momentum coming so soon after the Lok Sabha results, it will mean the loss of a crucial state in terms of both resources and the larger message to the farming community.

Admitting that the "stakes are really high", a senior party leader pointed out that with Haryana under its control, the BJP could fend off some of the heat from the farmer protests. A loss in Haryana will mean another state going to the Opposition after Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, and Delhi where the protests have got the most traction, with the BJP suffering a setback in another such state – Uttar Pradesh – recently in the Lok Sabha polls.

"The protesters from Punjab and Haryana could be stopped at the borders before entering the national capital. At the peak of the farmer agitation, Haryana, having a BJP government, could stop it from becoming a national protest. The consequence of losing Haryana means these types of protests and agitations can arrive at Delhi without any checks," the leader said.

Another aspect of losing Haryana is Gurgaon, which along with Noida in UP is the fastest-developing region for investments and real estate in North India. The other two such hubs, Hyderabad and Bengaluru, are already in Congress-ruled states.

"If Gurugram also goes to the Opposition, it essentially means that almost all the fast-growing metros will be with the Opposition," said the leader.

More than hurting the BJP's kitty, it may mean a substantial addition to the Congress's, with the Opposition party hamstrung by a severe lack of resources since it lost power one by one across states and the Centre.

What also makes Haryana crucial is that next up is Maharashtra, hosting the commercial capital Mumbai, where the BJP is also facing a tough fight from the Opposition.

Some leaders in the party are raising questions over how the candidate lists were handled, particularly given that this was identified as a prime factor in the setback to the BJP in crucial UP in the Lok Sabha polls.

While the BJP's core team for Haryana played a crucial role in candidate selection, apart from deciding poll strategy, a source in Haryana noted that the final call was taken by Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP national president J P Nadda.

However, sources added, the rebellions did not mean that the candidate selection was flawed. No popular or mass leader had been "ignored", sources pointed out, giving the example of, among others, senior leader and Lok Sabha MP Krishan Pal Gujjar. If he could not get a ticket for his son, at least five of his supporters figure in the list, a source said. Similarly, Union Minister of State Rao Inderjit Singh, who has been making noises about wanting to be CM, has got a ticket for his daughter Aarti Singh Rao apart from nine supporters in other seats.

A leader said almost a dozen candidates carry former CM and current Union Minister Manohar Lal Khattar's stamp, five are in on CM Nayab Singh Saini's recommendations,

I HEREBY DECLARE

DIGVIJAY SINGH CHAOTALA, 33
JJP candidate in Dabwali

TOTAL ASSETS
₹102.17 CR

Movable assets	₹47.46 cr
Immovable assets	₹54.71 cr
Liabilities	₹26.82 cr
Education	12th pass
Pending criminal cases	None

ARJUN SINGH CHAOTALA, 32
INLD candidate in Rania

TOTAL ASSETS
₹45.98 CR

Movable assets	₹18.51 cr
Immovable assets	₹27.47 cr
Liabilities	₹1.34 cr
Education	12th pass
Pending criminal cases	None

IMAGE OF THE DAY



ASEA OF RED: National Conference supporters hold a rally in Pattan in Kashmir's Baramulla district on Sunday. ANI

CANDIDATE CHECK

Swanky cars to jewellery worth crores, the wealth of Haryana's dynasts

VARINDER BHATIA
CHANDIGARH, SEPTEMBER 15

SEVERAL OF the political dynasts contesting the October 5 Haryana Assembly elections own swanky cars and gold and silver worth crores, their election affidavits show.

The richest among these dynasts is former Deputy Chief Minister and Jannayak Janta Party (JJP) chief Dushyant Chautala, who is contesting from Uchana Kalan. He has declared assets worth Rs 122.48 crore – Rs 44.03 crore movable and Rs 78.54 crore immovable – with sources of income listed in his poll affidavit as "agriculture, salary and business". While Dushyant owns a Toyota Fortuner, he and his wife collectively own 5.6 kg of gold worth

Rs 4.14 crore and diamonds worth Rs 2.63 crore.

The JJP chief's brother Digvijay and the party's candidate from Dabwali, along with his spouse, has declared assets worth Rs 102.17 crore. While he owns a Range Rover, the couple owns 4.6 kg of gold worth Rs 3.4 crore and diamonds worth Rs 1.96 crore. Digvijay, like his brother, has also listed "agriculture, salary and business" as his sources of income.

Arjun – Dushyant and Digvijay's cousin and the son of Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) leader Abhay Chautala – is the party nominee from the Rania seat. He has declared assets worth Rs 45.98 crore while listing "agriculture and business" as his sources of income. He owns a Hummer and with his wife, collectively own 2.8 kg of gold

worth Rs 2 crore and diamonds worth Rs 3.9 crore.

BJP's Tosham candidate and former CM Bansi Lal's granddaughter Shruti Choudhary, who recently crossed over from the Congress along with her mother Kiran, owns a BMW X1 and Mini Cooper along with her spouse. Together, the couple also owns 10.95 kg of gold, diamonds, and precious stones, besides 75 kg of silver, all worth Rs 10.09 crore. She has declared assets worth Rs 104.32 crore, of which Rs 44.11 crore are movable.

Union Minister Rao Inderjit Singh's daughter Aarti has declared assets worth Rs 68.26 crore. The BJP's Ateli candidate, Aarti has 1.9 kg of gold worth Rs 1.29 crore besides diamond jewellery worth Rs 10.69 lakh.



Dushyant Chautala is the richest political scion in fray. Facebook

Randeep Singh Surjewala and party candidate from the family stronghold of Kaithal, has declared assets worth Rs 20.09 crore and owns gold and jew-

ellery worth Rs 91.25 lakh along with his wife.

With "business" as his source of income and total assets worth Rs 6.96 crore, grandson of former

CM Bhajan Lal, Bhavya Bishnoi does not own any vehicle but collectively with his wife, the BJP's Adampur candidate owns 1.4 kg of gold worth Rs 1.05 crore.

Chander Mohan, the Congress' Panchkula candidate and Bhajan Lal's son, has declared assets worth Rs 80.47 crore and is the owner of a Mercedes Benz car. With sources of income as "social work, bank interest and pension", the four-time MLA collectively owns 1.1 kg gold worth Rs 85 lakh with his wife.

Former Union Minister Birender Singh jumped ship from the BJP to the Congress along with his son Brijendra ahead of the Lok Sabha polls. Brijendra, a former MP from Hissar, is taking on Dushyant in Uchana Kalan. He and his wife have declared assets worth Rs 26.73 crore including a Toyota

Fortuner Legender and an Innova Hycross, among other vehicles. The couple also owns gold and diamonds worth Rs 18.75 lakh and Congress' Uchana Kalan candidate has listed his sources of income as "salary, rent, interest and capital gain".

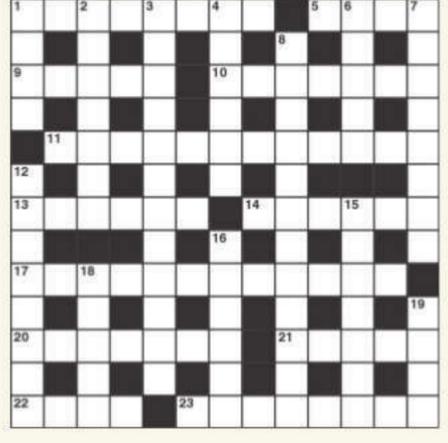
INLD nominee from Dabwali and former Deputy PM Devi Lal's grandson Aditya Sihag has declared assets worth Rs 26.4 crore including gold and diamonds worth Rs 1.18 crore. Anirudh Chaudhary, a former treasurer of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and Bansi Lal's grandson has assets worth Rs 21.33 crore including a Toyota Fortuner and Toyota Innova Hycross besides gold and diamond jewellery worth Rs 55.57 lakh. The Congress's Tosham nominee has listed business, consultancy and directorship in

companies as his source of income.

Abhay Singh Chautala, Devi Lal's grandson and INLD's Ellenabad candidate, who has declared assets worth Rs 61.01 crore, owns seven vehicles including two Toyota Land Cruisers, 2.9 kg gold worth Rs 2.07 crore and diamonds worth Rs 45 lakh. He has listed "agriculture and business" as his sources of income.

Former BJP minister-turned-rebel Ranjit Singh Chautala, who is contesting as an independent from Rania, has declared total assets worth Rs 23.98 crore. Apart from the Ford Endeavor and Toyota Fortuner, Devi Lal's son owns gold and diamonds worth Rs 61 lakh, four buffaloes and three cows. He has listed his source of income as "agriculture, salary and pension".

CROSSWORD 5470



- ACROSS**
- Separated being indifferent (8)
 - Adjusted the sails and dock (4)
 - Sick dog goes to doctor for a little bread (5)
 - RAF's set to scramble in attacks (7)
 - What he mends were made to last (4,8)
 - It may be used to sort out a difficult problem (6)
 - Fine fabric used in making suits (6)
 - Inexperienced hands reveal growing talent (5,7)
 - People who live near it have little latitude (7)
 - Love to scold and harangue (5)
 - Seasoned sailor (4)
 - Girl getting in a mess shows ill temper (8)
- DOWN**
- Pack part of a record player (4)
 - Felt inspired (7)
 - Measure how many words in a telegram? (6,6)
 - A tree's transformed in March or April (6)
 - Appeal put up or put down (5)
 - I'm upset over a succession of wretched experiences (8)
 - Evaluating what a faulty machine is doing (8,4)
 - What you can make as you go along (8)
 - Come out on top (7)
 - Peer found among the quality (5)
 - Allowable lapses in service? (4)

Solutions Crossword 5469 Across: 1 Fraillies, 8 Amuse, 9 Rollers, 10 Global, 11 Fedora, 12 Drowning, 15 Converge, 18 Rumbas, 20 Adults, 21 Stilton, 22 Corer, 23 Sports car. Down: 2 Rhone, 3 Igloos, 4 Toreador, 5 Sallow, 6 Gumball, 7 Red lights, 11 Fat chance, 13 Operator, 14 Enquiry, 16 Enters, 17 Smisses, 19 Aroma

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



JUMBLLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given quip. In many cases, the more you try to compete, the less you actually are - Kathy Sierra (11)

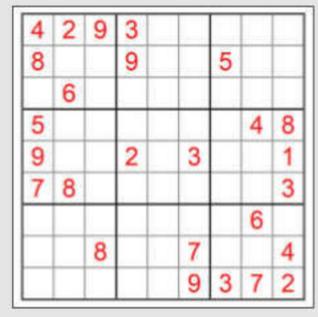
DREEO **ISYCMT**

SVIIT **AEERPV**

SOLUTION: ERODE, VISIT, MYSTIC, REWAVE
Answer: In many cases, the more you try to compete, the less competitive you actually are - Kathy Sierra

SUDOKU 5715

Difficulty Level 1s
Instructions
To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.



SOLUTION SUDOKU 5714



Difficulty Level
1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy; 3s = Medium; 4s = Hard; 5s = Very Hard; 6s = Genius

DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

- ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)**
The Moon's current position reveals that just as one chapter comes to a close another is about to begin. Anticipate some surprises over the coming few days, and don't expect everything to work out as planned. Even apparently unimportant events can have big results.
- LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)**
For a peace-loving Libran you appear to be close to losing your temper and letting fly at people who are still withholding vital information. Partners may be more to blame than you, but what you need to do is establish the real issues and then make your move.
- TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)**
For the time being it may be better not to make too much of a song and dance about questions and issues which have been nagging you for some time. Be a wise Taurean and recognise that other people need your trust.
- SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)**
If you feel out-of-sorts the cause is probably to be found in the Moon's relationship with the Sun. The time has come for some smooth talking and tough action. There is no point in agreeing with people just to keep the peace, but you need them to see your point of view.
- GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)**
Today's lunar patterns reflect on the region of your chart responsible for your social life. From now on new and stimulating people will be walking into your life. If you have been considering issuing an inspiring invitation, then your time has come.
- SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)**
You should by now have learnt to trust in yourself, so don't listen to those who believe that you could improve on a personal transaction. You may have got the best deal you can right now. That doesn't mean that it's perfect, but at least it's a start.
- CANCER (June 22 - July 23)**
Professional affairs and public ambitions are in a complicated state and that's an understatement. Insist that everybody sticks to the truth, but not at any price. First of all you need to negotiate a little and find some common ground.
- CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)**
Life is still beset by more complications than you would like. There are way too many undercurrents for you to settle down and be confident that present conditions will last. But, then, change can be to your advantage if it brings the improvements you've been waiting for.
- LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)**
Astrologically this week could bring a few shocks, but almost certainly pleasant ones. Working conditions and legal questions seem to be the more important issues, and radical solutions may be the best. You could be fighting for a cause, and pursuing a matter of principle.
- AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)**
In spite of the many potential misunderstandings which may mar the next few days, this is a marvellous period for friendship. All personal contacts will go with a swing if you take the initiative, so write a letter, pick up the phone and do whatever you have to.
- VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)**
You should now be in a position to pick and choose. In fact you ought to be covering a lot of new ground before long, and will be off in search of adventure and excitement. Give yourself a few more days before putting such plans into action and make sure you're properly prepared.
- PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)**
At last the Piscean heart is ruling the heart in matters financial. However, remember that you have your unique way of conducting your affairs, one which doesn't necessarily correspond to what other people hope or expect. So don't be surprised if they don't approve.

indianexpress.com

I arrive at a conclusion not an assumption.

Inform your opinion with detailed analysis.

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For the Indian Intelligent.

The Indian EXPRESS
JOURNALISM OF COURAGE

Classifieds

- PERSONAL**
- I, AAUSH CHATURVEDI S/O DARSHAN CHATURVEDI, R/O H NO. 53 A, GARHWALI MOHALLA BLOCK-H, LAXMI NAGAR, EAST DELHI, DELHI-110092, have changed my name to AYUSH CHATURVEDI for all future purposes. 0070924226-1
- I, Prem Kishore S/O Krishan Prashad, R/o H. No. 93, Suraj Apartment DDA Flats, Suraj Kund Road, Pulpehaldpur, South Delhi. Delhi-110044, have changed my name and shall hereafter be Known as Prem Kishore Sharma. 0070924167-1
- I, DARSHAN KUMAR CHATURVEDI S/O KAILASH CHAND CHATURVEDI, R/O H NO. 53 A, GARHWALI MOHALLA BLOCK-H, LAXMI NAGAR, SHAKAR PUR BARAMAD, EAST DELHI, DELHI-110092, have changed my name to DARSHAN CHATURVEDI for all future purposes. 0070924227-1
- I, Bhargavi Verma D/O Sanjay Verma, R/o H.No C-3/4, C-Block, Yamuna Vihar, North East Delhi-110053, have changed my name and shall hereafter be Known as Nandani Verma 0070924166-1
- I, Ashvinkumar Baldevbhai Patel S/o Patel Baldevnbhai Kanjibhai, holder of Indian Passport No. V6412220, r/o Po. Falu TV Vijapur, Mehstana, Gujarat, India have changed my Son's name Arya Jyotsanben Patel to name Arya Ashvinkumar and surname Patel, Passport No. X4868605. 0040749635-1
- I, Sabha Jeet Misra S/O Meghnath Mishra, R/o Rzd-90, Nihal Vihar, Nangloi, West Delhi, Delhi-110041, have changed my name and shall hereafter be Known as Ajay Kumar Mishra 0070924163-1
- I, MOUBINA W/O SABUDIN residing at H NO 553, CHHATTA LAL MIYA BEHIND DELITE CINEMA GALI PAPAD WALI DELHI-110002 have changed my name to MAUBINA. 0050250924-1
- I, RENU BALA D/O JAI KISHAN KWATRA, W/O SANJAY DUA, R/O-2083, SECTOR-D, POCKET-2, NEAR DEEP PUBLIC SCHOOL, VASANT KUNJ, SOUTH WEST DELHI-110070, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO EKTA DUA. 0040749671-6
- I, V P Mittal S/O J. P Mittal, R/o Flat No-127, Gh-13, Pashchim Vihar, West Delhi, Delhi-110087, have changed my name and shall hereafter be Known as Vinod Prakash Mittal. 0070924165-1

WESTERN RAILWAY-BHAVNAGAR DIVISION
PROVISION OF 2 LIFTS
No. DRM/EL/BVP/2024-25/08 Date 09/09/2024; Divisional Railway, Manager (EL), Western Railway, Bhavnagar para invites e-tenders for the following works: Tender Details are as under:- Sr. No. (1); E-Tender No: BVP-EL-P-06-2024-25-R; Name of Work: Bhavnagar Division: Provision of 02 lifts each at BHAVANAGAR PARA, SIHOR JN and KESHOD station under Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan (Phase-2); Tender Value: ₹ 14763375.00; EMD: ₹ 223600.00; Date of Bidding Start Date: 17/09/2024; Date of Bidding Closing: 01/10/2024; The NIT will be uploaded on Railway web site www.ireps.gov.in on 09/09/2024. 99
Like us on: facebook.com/WesternRly

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY
Open E-Tender Notice For Mechanical Work year 2024-25
NIT 06-2024-25-DSL BGKT 1. Name of work, location & Completion Period: Repair and maintenance of roof mounted Cub AC units during minor and major inspection schedule of 3 Phase locomotives and One time repair and AMC of HHP loco Cab AC at Diesel Shed, BGKT for a period of 02 years 2. Approx. cost of the work : Rs. 19474290.82 3. Earnest money to be deposited: Rs. 247400.00 4. Date and time for submission of tender and opening of tender : Up to 15.00 Hrs. on 09.10.2024. Tenders will be opened soon after. 5. Website particular and Address of the office : http://www.ireps.in Notice board of Sr. Section Engineer (General) North Western Railway, Diesel Shed, Bhagat ki kothi (Jodhpur)'s notice board. 1072-DR/24
Please join us on: facebook.com/NWRailways @NWRailways

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY
Notice of Inviting E-Tender
Dy. CSTE/Project/JP acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders against Tender No. SNT-Proj-JP-2024-25-01R closing date 05.10.2024 15:00. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids upto closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Contractors are allowed to make payments against this tender towards tender document cost and earnest money only through only payment modes available ON IREPS portal LIKE net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft, Banker cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed. 1. Name of work with it location : Provision of Remote Diagnostic & Predictive Maintenance System in RE-MD of JP, MD-PNU of All RE-BTI of BKN and MTD-LUNI of JU Division over North Western Railway 2. Approx. Cost of work (Rs.) : 482945751.13/- 3. Earnest Money (Rs.) : 2564700/- (Online Payment only) 4. Date & Time for submission up to on www.ireps.gov.in : 04.10.2024 up to 15.00 hrs. 5. Website particulars & Notice board location : www.ireps.gov.in and Dy. CSTE/Proj/JP Office. 1073-DR/24
Please join us on: facebook.com/NWRailways @NWRailways

SALUTE THE SOLDIER
INDO-TIBETAN BORDER POLICE (ITBP)
16 September, 2024
ITBP salutes its braveheart Constable Deep Kumar of 8th Battalion, who made the supremesacrifice in the line of duty fighting bravely on this day in Jammu & Kashmir in 2000.
Resident of : Vill- Hiranagar, Distt. - Kathua (J & K)

NATIONAL FERTILIZERS LIMITED
(A Govt. of India Undertaking)
Phone - 0120 2412294, 2412445, Fax: 0120 2412218
e-PROCUREMENT NOTICE
Ref No : NFL/Mktg-D/PDM/2024-25/02 Date : 16.09.2024
Bids are invited from the prospective bidders for procurement of Potash Derived from Molasses-PDM (Granulated) for further marketing in various states. For details visit website: https://etenders.gov.in/e-procure/app (e-tendering) & www.nationalfertilizers.com (Homepage). E-Tender No 2024_NFL_208115_1. Last date of Bid submission date / Opening of Technical Bid document is - 15.30 Hrs on 26.09.2024 / 15.30 Hrs on 27.09.2024. Any Corrigendum (s) to this tender shall be published only on our websites. DGM (Mktg-D)

विद्युत सेवा आयोग
उत्तर प्रदेश पावर कारपोरेशन लि.
(उ.प्र. सरकार का उपक्रम)
गोमती नगर लखनऊ-220010
सहायक अभियन्ता (प्रशिक्षु) भर्ती सूचना
सूचित किया जाता है कि उ.प्र. पावर कारपोरेशन लि० एवं उसके सहयोगी वितरण निगमों, उ०प्र० पावर ट्रान्समिशन कारपोरेशन लि., उ०प्र०एस०एल०डी०सी० एवं उ०प्र० राज्य विद्युत उत्पादन निगम लि० हेतु सहायक अभियन्ता (प्रशिक्षु) के पदों पर आगामी भर्तियों हेतु अन्तिम आयोजित Graduate Aptitude Test in Engineering (GATE) परीक्षा के Score के आधार पर शार्टलिस्टिंग (shortlisting) की कार्यवाही की जायेगी। सहायक अभियन्ताओं (प्रशिक्षु) की भर्ती हेतु आयोग द्वारा शीघ्र अग्रेतर कार्यवाही की जायेगी। वर्तमान में GATE-2025 परीक्षा हेतु आवेदन प्रक्रिया चल रही है जिसकी अन्तिम तिथि दिनांक 26 सितम्बर, 2024 (दिनांक 07 अक्टूबर 2024 विलम्ब शुल्क के साथ) है। GATE परीक्षा के लिए आवेदन वेबसाइट https://gate2025.iitr.ac.in /पर किया जा सकता है। निर्धारित योग्यता रखने वाले ऐसे अभ्यर्थी जो उपरोक्त पदों की भर्ती में आवेदन करने के इच्छुक हैं, वह आवश्यक रूप से GATE-2025 परीक्षा में सम्मिलित होकर GATE Score प्राप्त कर लें। अन्यथा की स्थिति में GATE Score-2025 के आधार पर चयन प्रक्रिया सम्पादित किए जाने पर वे सहायक अभियन्ता (प्रशिक्षु) के पद पर आवेदन करने हेतु अर्ह नहीं होंगे।
पत्रांक: 659/विसेआ/2024/AE सचिव
दिनांक: सितम्बर 15, 2024 विद्युत सेवा आयोग

15 IDEA EXCHANGE

NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

ON BJP'S POST-POLL IMAGE

The BJP has been dealing with this question of image versus reality and ground reality versus perception for a really long time. But the reality is people still believe in us regardless of the party or the politician



WHY NITIN GADKARI

As the longest serving Minister of Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari has consistently redefined the infrastructure push for the Modi government, accelerating road corridors across the country. As a seasoned BJP leader, he has his ear to the ground, winning the Nagpur Lok Sabha seat

again at a time when the BJP was routed in Vidarbha during the recent Lok Sabha election. He has built his political indispensability on the basis of his performance, effortlessly cutting across party lines. He is now giving a big push to EVs to lower fuel cost per kilometre and reduce emissions.



ON GREEN TRANSPORT

We need to encourage fuels and technology that are in the wider interest of the country. Ultimately, the cost of EVs will come down because of increased production of lithium ion batteries and other components

Liz Mathew: What is your take on the recent Lok Sabha elections and the 240-seat tally of the BJP?

The 10 years of our government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, have been golden years in the history of the country as far as development, economy and investment are concerned. Our government has prioritised infrastructure — water, power, transportation and communication. Without that, we cannot have industry, trade, business and employment or eradicate poverty.

The most important thing is to increase our exports and reduce our imports. In two years, we will be the number one manufacturer of semiconductors in the world. Today we export mobile phones. The size of the automobile industry is Rs 22 lakh crore from Rs 7 lakh crore when I took over. Four months ago, we overtook Japan in becoming the third-largest automobile manufacturer in the world. I am confident that in 2030, we will be the second. Right now, the first is the USA, the second is China, and third is India. By 2030, I expect our electric vehicle (EV) industry to be worth Rs 20 lakh crore. If we look at the alternative fuel and biofuel sector, we import fossil fuels at Rs 22 lakh crore. I am confident that by adopting the policy of alternative fuel and biofuel — ethanol, methanol, biodiesel, bio LNG, bio CNG, electric and hydrogen — we will be in a position to reduce our imports.

If we look at our GDP (gross domestic product), the major contribution comes from the service sector, between 52 and 54 per cent, about 24 per cent comes from the manufacturing sector and only 12 per cent from agriculture. Yet about 72 per cent of the population practises agriculture. Ethanol is helping them supplement their incomes. In Panipat, Indian Oil is making bioethanol and sustainable aviation fuel.

So the government has taken different policies to strengthen the lower and middle-income group, pulled out 25 crore people from the below poverty line (BPL) category. That's progress.

Liz Mathew: Then why did the BJP face a setback in terms of the number of seats in the Lok Sabha election?

This election was about either convincing or confusing the people. First, the Opposition did a whisper campaign to confuse the voters, saying that the BJP was against Dr BR Ambedkar and that it would change the Constitution. Its leaders created fear, particularly among the backward classes, that their benefits would no longer continue. Second, our measures meant to benefit farmers were misinterpreted as being against them.

Ultimately, I feel that the Lok Sabha election was a victory for India. The BJP is back in government and I am 100 per cent confident that we will get a good majority in the forthcoming elections in the four states. People have reposed confidence in the BJP that it is capable, has a proven track record and can change the future of this country. You can compare 60 years of the Congress with 15 years of the BJP in terms of performance. You will get the answer.

Liz Mathew: Since the election result was unexpected for the BJP, why haven't we seen any change or course-correction in the party yet?

Ours is a democratic party and the party president has discussed the issue with the people concerned. There is a distribution of work and division of powers in the party and dialogue is a continuous process during meetings. I am 100 per cent confident that the future of the party is very good.

Liz Mathew: When we talk to party MPs across states, we sense disappointment or disillusionment because they do not see any major changes in the leadership or in the organisation. Do you think the party will have a working president?

Everybody is working for the party and there is a good atmosphere. Some election results have been good, some have not been in line with our expectations. Democracy is a continuous process and we should be part and parcel of this system.

Liz Mathew: Why was your letter to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, requesting withdrawal of GST on life and medical insurance premiums following pleas by the Nagpur Divisional Life Insurance Corporation Employees' Union, made public? Shouldn't correspondence between Cabinet Ministers be kept private? Of course, now there is a Group of Ministers (GoM) to look into GST rate cuts on health insurance.

Neither am I given to indiscipline, nor do I indulge in politics. The letter was indeed confidential and written with good intention. When the delegation came to

'A strong Opposition is good for a democracy, we need to work together'

Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari on the Lok Sabha election results, the BJP's introspection, biofuels, electric vehicles and the need for a robust agricultural economy. The session was moderated by Deputy Editor Liz Mathew



Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari (right) in conversation with Liz Mathew at the Noida office of *The Indian Express*. Renuka Puri

meet me, I immediately told my private secretary to prepare a letter requesting the FM to consider their plea as an important issue. After sending the letter to the FM, my office gave a copy to the delegation without my knowledge. They did it innocently as I write many such letters to officials. The delegation gave it to the Press. That was the problem.

Anil Sasi: Why are road accidents rising? Is there a problem with road design, engineering or funding? You even appealed to the auto industry to use CSR funds towards educating people about driving norms.

There are many reasons for rising road accidents — road engineering, defective DPR [daily project report] and giving tenders to the operator who quotes the lowest price. Now we have changed the policy and the lowest bidder cannot get the work order. We are spending Rs 40,000 crore to identify black spots (zones of frequent traffic accidents) and have improved 8,000 such accident-prone areas. We have to address 12,000 more black spots. I have spoken to IIT engineers and asked them to build road divisions that can protect even those attempting dangerous stunts. The problem is human behaviour. I have been trying my level best for the last 10 years; we are reducing accidents but the percentage is very low.

Anil Sasi: EVs are currently at the lowest bracket in terms of the GST rate. There's a big gap between that and other technologies like flex and low hybrid. Why so?

We need to encourage fuels and technology that are in the wider interest of the country. Ultimately, the cost of EVs will come down because of increased production of lithium ion batteries and other components. For one bus, the cost of the lithium ion battery is Rs 40 lakh. So when it is reduced to Rs 22 or 24 lakh, the bus will become cheaper to buy. The cost of a lithium ion battery was \$150 per kilowatt per hour. It's down to \$105 per kilowatt per hour. Now Tata, Adani, Suzuki, Panasonic and Ola are manufacturing lithium-ion batteries in India. I am expecting that in two years, the cost of an electric car, bus, scooter or autorickshaw will be the same as the petrol and diesel variants. For that initial push, it is good to give incentives. Now with LNG (liquefied natural gas) trucks, you can save Rs 12 lakh compared with the diesel. As we develop alternative fuels and biofuel, costs will come down. The government is encouraging different types of technology, and the automobile industry is doing an excellent job.

Shyamal Yadav: The BJP has become so big in the last few years that it doesn't need any outside support. Party president JP Nadda had openly said that the BJP no longer needs the support of the RSS. For watchers like us, it feels that the RSS is sometimes a liability for the BJP, sometimes an asset. Naddaji had said the BJP and the RSS need to do their respective work. What do you think?

I think you've already said it very well and there is no need for me to talk.

Shyamal Yadav: A lot of third and fourth-generation leaders of political families look at the BJP as a springboard to get a ticket. This has miffed several BJP workers. Is that a problem?

I have never done dynastic politics. None of my family members is in politics. I told them that whatever my parents and I have earned is theirs. But it is only my workers who are entitled to my political inheritance. Having said that, being someone's son or daughter is neither a crime nor an asset till they have proven their worth to party workers, who may request a ticket for them if they are good enough and have their collective faith. Even in politics, only the one with merit will go forward. It won't be right if we deprive someone of their legitimate and genuine right to be leader because they are someone's children.

Liz Mathew: But isn't nepotism the BJP's main plank?

When parents demand that their children be given tickets, that's a problem.

Coomi Kapoor: After the parliamentary elections, some people in Delhi felt that you should be in charge of the Maharashtra Assembly elections but

you were not inclined. Why?

Nothing like that. I'll do whatever the party asks of me. During the Lok Sabha elections, I toured 55 Lok Sabha areas (kshetra), cancelling my nationwide rallies.

Coomi Kapoor: Although you say the Modi government is well-settled, somehow there is a perception that it won't last the full five years. How will you get rid of this perception?

The BJP has been dealing with this question of image versus reality and ground reality versus perception for a really long time. But the reality is people still believe in us regardless of the party or the politician. Nobody hits a century in every match. But we will get people's support decisively and advance the nation.

Harikishan Sharma: Recently, Prime Minister Modi told all his ministers to expand the "reform, perform and transform" mantra to include "inform" or reach out to the public about the government's good work. How are you and your colleagues trying to implement that?

It is true that our ministry has no PR. We get no news coverage for our good work and call nobody. We do 10 rupees worth of work and don't even get a rupee's worth of interest. The PM has said that the good work that has been done for the people should be communicated to them.

Harish Damodaran: You are passionate about biofuels but can we sustain them in India where there is a conflict between food and fuel? You recently stopped the use of sugarcane juice and rice for biofuels. Ultimately, we have to feed 140 crore people.

The biggest problem is that Delhi, from the government to the media, is urban-

centric. You don't understand the concerns of villages, the poor and labourers. The two policies that you mentioned were temporary. In our country sugar is always surplus. The price of sugar in the world is Rs 49/kg. Here, it's Rs 36/kg. Similarly, there is a surplus of wheat and rice. In UP, potatoes are thrown away at Re 1. In Nasik, onions are thrown away for peanuts. In Punjab and Haryana, three years ago, there was no place to keep rice, they were being kept on railway station platforms. When there is a temporary aberration and onion is priced at Rs 50, it makes front page news. But when onion prices crash and fall to Re 1 and are thrown away, there's no news. Farmers don't get their minimum price and commit suicide when they are debt-trapped. They need to supplement their income. Biofuels do that for them. So much ethanol is being produced in the country, has there been a food shortage? Crop productivity is increasing and there is a lot of land.

Mukesh Jagota: What is the status of the Bharatmala project as no new projects are currently being undertaken. So, has it been abandoned because of escalated costs?

All the projects have begun to be cleared. They have been included in the PM's Vision Viksit Bharat@2047. Projects worth Rs 51,000 crore were cleared at a recent meeting and projects worth Rs 50,000 crore are in process. By December, I will complete projects worth Rs 2 lakh crore.

Mukesh Jagota: There was talk of NHAI setting up a new Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT).

The IPO (initial public offering) of InvIT was a success, oversubscribed by about eight times. There's no dearth of money in this country. There's a dearth of people working with integrity.

Mukesh Jagota: What is the status of the GIS (Geographic Information System)-backed real time monitoring of wait times at toll plazas that would do away with boom barriers and ease traffic congestion?

The global tender has started and five pilot projects have been successful. But nothing is official yet. It used to take nine hours to travel from Mumbai to Pune. After the new highway was made, it now takes only two hours. There are savings in time and fuel and in exchange there is the toll. This is why I can do Rs 5 lakh crore worth of work a year when my budget is only Rs 2 lakh crore. When you want good services, you have to pay for them. There is no exploitation involved.

In high-density traffic areas, we don't

apply toll to scooters, tractors and autorickshaws but we do apply it to trucks, buses and cars. We get a higher toll in economically developed states of Karnataka, Andhra, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. In Bihar and UP, we don't get as much. So we get compensated that way. We take toll from those who can give and have created toll-free roads for the poor.

We are even giving monthly passes for short stretches. The current problem stems from the fact that the toll is for 70 km but a person has to pay the full amount even if they are travelling only 20 km. Now a camera will take a picture of your number plate on entry and exit and you will only have to pay as much as you have travelled.

Nikhil Ghanekar: After the Char Dham Project was implemented in Uttarakhand, construction activity has led to landslides. Do you need to do some rethink on this project as it is happening in a very fragile area?

Close to 700 km have been completed in the Char Dham project. The remaining 180-km stretch is in the Bhagirathi Eco-Sensitive Zone. The Himalayas are very fragile here. We've consulted some experts from Austria and Switzerland, where there are similar issues. There is also a Supreme Court-appointed committee where I have given my opinion. We will ensure that the mountain doesn't fall on people. There is a suggestion on making tunnels. We are rethinking the way to go about it.

Vandita Mishra: You are among those BJP leaders who do not consider the Opposition the enemy or anti-national. In that context, is a strong Opposition better for polity? Or was it better earlier when the BJP was dominant in the House?

We are the world's biggest democracy. The Prime Minister says we are the "mother of democracy." And in the four pillars of democracy there is the judiciary, the media, legislature and the executive. And in a democracy, there is the ruling party and the Opposition party. Just like wheels of a car or train, both are important and need to be balanced. We are privileged that we've been in the Opposition and are now in the government, too. *Sabka saath, sabka vishwas, sabka prayas* (With everybody, with collective faith and effort) — this is the sentiment that we must have. It's the job of the Opposition to shout out loud.

Vandita Mishra: But is a strong Opposition good for the country?

It's good for democracy. And politics is an instrument of socio-economic power. We need to work together.



ON BJP VERSUS CONGRESS

People are confident that the BJP is capable, has a proven track record and can change the future of this country. You can compare 60 years of the Congress with 15 years of the BJP

Why Commons matter, how community is key to their well-being

AMITABH SINHA
 NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 15

LAST month, Delhi hosted a first-of-its-kind dialogue on the conservation, restoration and governance of common resources such as forests, community lands, and water bodies like lakes or rivers, all usually referred to as "Commons".

More than 500 people, mostly representing grassroots organisations in different parts of India, attended the three-day event, which was organised to raise awareness about the need to evolve more inclusive and community-led frameworks for the governance of the Commons.

Commons, their governance

Commons refers to resources that are not owned by an individual, group or government, but belong to, and are shared by, the community as a whole. Forests, local ponds, grazing lands, rivers, and sacred sites are all Commons. In urban settings, parks and lakes

are Commons. Commons could be intangible too. Language, folk art or dance, local customs, and traditional knowledge are shared resources, thus Commons. At the international level, the polar regions, the Arctic and Antarctica, are considered global Commons. No country is allowed to take ownership of these areas, even though everyone can use them for certain kinds of activities. Outer space, the Moon, and planetary bodies are also global Commons.

In the digital age, most Internet and open-source software are Commons. Digital resources with creative commons licences are meant to be used freely by everyone.

Commons provide a variety of ecological and other services that are beneficial for the entire community. But they need to be maintained, preserved, and used sustainably. As these resources are accessible to all, they face a greater threat of over-exploitation and damage. Since no one owns Commons, the responsibility of maintenance and upkeep often becomes a problem. Commons have also come under increased stress due to climate change.

Several kinds of governance mechanisms have evolved to manage Commons. There are international agreements for the use and management of polar regions, outer space, and the high seas. The Paris Agreement on climate change, which seeks to maintain a liveable planet for everyone, is an example. In urban areas, municipalities or other bodies of local governance take care of the Commons.

In rural areas, however, the governance of Commons is often not very well-defined — or is non-existent. Local communities do get involved, but in most cases, they lack the resources or the legal sanction to manage their common spaces. The NGOs gathered in Delhi last month raised their voice mainly over issues related to the governance of these kinds of Commons.

Need for community leadership

In the past, it was believed that Commons such as grazing lands or water bodies at the local level could not escape over-exploitation or destruction, as everyone using them would tend to extract the most for themselves. This was referred to as the Tragedy of the Commons, a term popularised by ecological economist Garrett Hardin in the 1960s. The only viable solution was to either get the government or the market involved in managing and regulating the use of these common resources.

This view was turned on its head by the landmark research of Elinor Ostrom. Her field studies with several local communities across the globe provided plenty of evidence to show that community-led governance structures resulted in more sustainable management of common spaces. She also found that interventions of the government or the markets were not the only way to deal with the Commons. Ostrom's work, which fetched her the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2009, the first for a woman, culminated in a book titled *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*.

Ostrom's ideas now form the backbone of the governance structures of Commons in many parts of the world. These involve the participation of local communities in different ways, depending on local contexts and requirements.

Forest Rights Act, significance

In India, the 2006 Forest Rights Act (FRA) is considered to be a good template for managing common forest resources. The Act gives individual and community ownership rights to forest-dwellers to live in and carry out their livelihood in the forest areas.

Before the Act, the forest department used to be the sole custodian of forest areas, although practices such as setting up joint forest management committees, with representation from the local villages, had begun acknowledging the role of indigenous peoples in the conservation and restoration of natural resources. The FRA is considered to be a turning point, as it recognised the legal rights of forest dwellers over the land.

Jagdeesh Rao, director of Common

Ground, one of the organisers of the Delhi event, said the FRA is a good model for forest land, but similar frameworks need to be developed for other common resources — in particular, areas that are officially classified as wasteland.

Almost one-fourth of India's landmass, about 205 million acres, is estimated to be Commons, comprising community forests, pastures, or water bodies. Almost 350 million rural people depend on these Commons for their livelihoods. These Commons are estimated to generate economic value worth about Rs 6.6 lakh crore annually through the provision of goods and ecological services.

Rao said that schemes such as MGNREGA, compensatory afforestation, and green credits would become much more effective at governing Commons once the rights of the locals are acknowledged. He said the NGOs working in this area wanted the Centre to legislate a model Commons Bill, which could be replicated or adopted by state governments for more effective governance of the Commons.

EXPLAINED SCIENCE

STUDY SHOWS HOW AI CAN TRIGGER RETHINK ON CONSPIRACY THEORIES

A CHATBOT with the ability to call out fake news and misinformation was able to persuade participants in a study to have second thoughts about their beliefs — which suggests that artificial intelligence (AI) can be used as a tool to combat conspiracy theories and disinformation.

The chatbot presented participants with comprehensive answers and detailed arguments, following which they found themselves thinking differently — a change that lasted for several weeks. ("Durably reducing conspiracy beliefs through dialogues with AI", *Science*, September 13, Thomas H Costello and others)

Conspiracy theories are thought to feed off the yearning of individuals for safety and stability in a world full of uncertainties. "What we found in this paper goes against that traditional explanation," co-author Thomas H Costello, a psychology researcher at American University in Washington DC, told *Nature* news, which published a report on the research.

"One of the potentially cool applications of this research is you could use AI to debunk conspiracy theories in real life," Costello said.



Supporters of Donald Trump who stormed the Capitol on Jan 6, 2021 were fired by a conspiracy theory about a 'stolen' election. *The NYT*

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How study was done

The researchers said they sought to "leverage advancements in large language models (LLMs)...to try to directly refute" particular evidence each study participant cited as supporting their conspiratorial beliefs.

"Across two experiments, 2,190 Americans articulated — in their own words — a conspiracy theory in which they believe, along with the evidence they think supports this theory. They then engaged in a three-round conversation with the LLM GPT-4 Turbo [chatbot], which we prompted to respond to this specific evidence while trying to reduce participants' belief in the conspiracy theory," the study says.

The results were encouraging: across a wide range of conspiracy theories, "the treatment reduced participants' belief in their chosen conspiracy theory by 20% on average", and the "effect persisted undiminished for at least 2 months". Also, the study noted, "AI did not reduce belief in true conspiracies".

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

Relevant and important

The study shows that many people who strongly believe in "seemingly fact-resistant conspiratorial beliefs" can change their minds when presented with compelling evidence, the researchers wrote.

"From a theoretical perspective, this points a surprisingly optimistic picture of human reasoning: Conspiratorial rabbit holes may indeed have an exit. Psychological needs and motivations do not inherently blind conspiracists to evidence — it simply takes the right evidence to reach them," they said.

Studies have shown that almost half of all Americans believe conspiracy theories — the claim that NASA "faked" the 1969 Moon landing has endured for decades. During the Covid-19 pandemic, some conspiracy theorists said vaccines were used to inject chips into the body to enable mass surveillance; in Germany, such beliefs triggered violent protests.

With social media dramatically ampli-



HARISH DAMODARAN

"FOOD VERSUS fuel" is a familiar debate in the context of sugarcane, rice, maize, palm or soyabean oil being diverted for the production of ethanol and biodiesel.

There's also a looming "food versus cars" dilemma, which is linked to phosphoric acid — the key ingredient in di-ammonium phosphate (DAP), India's second most consumed fertiliser after urea — increasingly finding its way into the production of batteries for electric vehicles (EVs).

DAP contains 46% phosphorous (P), a nutrient crops need at the early growth stages of root and shoot development. The P comes from phosphoric acid, which is manufactured from rock phosphate ore after grinding and reacting with sulphuric acid.

But phosphoric acid is also the source of P in lithium-iron-phosphate (LFP) batteries. These supplied more than 40% of the global EV capacity demand in 2023 — up from a modest 6% in 2020 — gaining market share from normal nickel-based NMC and NCA batteries.

While all three are lithium ion batteries, the first type uses iron phosphate as the raw material for the cathode or positive electrode; the others use more expensive nickel, manganese, cobalt and aluminium oxides.

Implications for India

India consumes 10.5-11 million tonnes (mt) of DAP annually — next only to the 35.5-36 mt of urea — more than half of which is supplied through imports from China, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Russia, and other countries.

In addition, India imports phosphoric acid (mainly from Jordan, Morocco, Senegal, and Tunisia) and rock phosphate (from Morocco, Togo, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, and the UAE) for the domestic production of DAP, as well as other P-containing fertilisers.

In 2022-23, India imported 6.7 mt of DAP (valued at \$5,569.51 million), 2.7 mt of phosphoric acid (\$3,622.98 million) and 3.9 mt of rock phosphate (\$891.32 million). These amounted to \$10 billion-plus of imports — excluding imports of other inputs, namely ammonia and sulphur/ sulphuric acid.

But just as bio-fuels have created an alternative market for foodgrains, sugarcane, and vegetable oils, merchant-grade phosphoric acid with 52-54% P used in fertilisers is find-

TABLE 1
IMPORTS OF DI-AMMONIUM PHOSPHATE
 (lakh tonnes)

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
China	15.91	20.43	11.97	22.87
Saudi Arabia	18.89	19.33	21.28	15.86
Morocco	14.98	12.13	16.79	10.49
Russia	3.03	1.97	9.69	3.41
Jordan	3.04	2.46	1.81	1.74
US	0.45	0	2.86	0.31
Australia	0	0.52	1.51	0
Tunisia	0	0.44	0.85	0
Egypt	0.84	0.68	0	0.30
TOTAL*	58.00	58.60	66.77	55.96
VALUE**	1,948.90	4,007.50	5,569.51	3,109.86

*Includes other countries; **Million US dollars; Source: Department of Commerce

TABLE 2
TOP ROCK PHOSPHATE MINE PRODUCERS
 (million tonnes)

	2022	2023	Reserves
China	93.00	90.00	3,800.0
Morocco	39.00	35.00	50,000.0
US	19.80	20.00	1,000.0
Russia	14.00	14.00	2,400.0
Jordan	11.30	12.00	1,000.0
Saudi Arabia	9.00	8.50	1,400.0
Brazil	6.20	5.30	1,600.0
Egypt	5.00	4.80	2,800.0
Peru	4.20	4.20	210.0
Tunisia	3.56	3.60	2,500.0
TOTAL*	228.00	220.00	74,000.0

*Includes other countries; Source: US Geological Survey.

ing new application as cathode raw material in EV batteries after further purification.

This is already being seen in China, where two-thirds of EVs sold in 2023 had LFP batteries. China is a leading DAP supplier to India (*Table 1*). It was also the world's third largest shipper of DAP (5 mt) in 2023, after Morocco and Russia. As more of China's phosphoric acid goes towards LFP batteries, there will be that much less available for manufacturing fertilisers — hence the 'cars vs food' dilemma.

The share of LFP batteries in EV sales is still below 10% in the US and Europe. However, even these markets are likely to switch to batteries that are less dependent on critical minerals such as cobalt — whose world reserves are only 11 mt, of which 6 mt are in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Rock phosphate and iron ore reserves are more abundant, at 74,000 mt and 190,000 mt respectively.

LFP batteries also score in longevity (chargeable more number of times) and safety (less overheating/ fire risk), offsetting their disadvantage of lower energy density (larger size required to store the same amount of energy).

The looming challenge

As the world moves more to LFP batteries, it can potentially reduce the supply of phosphate fertilisers. India's DAP imports of 1.59 mt during April-August 2024 were 51% below the 3.25 mt for the same period of last year. This was largely due to export restrictions imposed by China.

While China is the only country that is mass-producing LFP batteries now, Morocco too has attracted significant investor interest

for establishing LFP cathode materials and EV battery manufacturing facilities. Morocco is the second biggest rock phosphate miner after China, but holds an estimated 50,000 mt or nearly 68% of global reserves (*Table 2*).

With phosphate reserves of hardly 31 mt and an annual production of 1.5 mt, India has to meet the bulk of its nutrient requirement (including as intermediate acid and finished fertiliser) from suppliers such as Morocco's OCP Group, Russia's PhosAgro, and Saudi Arabia's SABIC and Ma'aden.

This also makes India vulnerable to changing global market dynamics — whether on account of war-induced supply shocks, or the diversification of phosphoric acid use beyond fertilisers.

Way forward for India

The effects of low DAP imports may be felt in the ensuing *rabi* (winter-spring) crop season, starting with mustard, potato and *chana* (chickpea) plantings in October and wheat in November-December. Farmers apply this fertiliser, necessary for root establishment and growth, right at the time of sowing.

Sales of DAP fell 20.5% even during the *kharif* (monsoon) season, from 4.83 mt in April-August 2023 to 3.84 mt in April-August 2024. It was partly compensated by a 29.5% jump in complex fertilisers — containing nitrogen (N), P, potassium (K), and sulphur (S) in different combinations — from 4.55 mt to 5.88 mt.

Farmers replaced DAP (which has 46% P plus 18% N) with complexes with less P (like 20:20:0:13, 10:26:26:0 and 12:32:16:0). They may have to do the same in the coming *rabi*.

The decline in DAP imports and sales has

been exacerbated by government policy fixing its MRP at Rs 27,000 per tonne. This is only marginally more than the Rs 24,000-26,000 for 20:20:0:13 (having less than half DAP's P content) and less than the Rs 29,400 for 10:26:26:0 and 12:32:16:0.

Fertiliser companies are being paid a subsidy of Rs 21,676, average rail freight reimbursement of Rs 1,700, and a one-time special incentive of Rs 3,500 on DAP sales. Adding these to the MRP of Rs 27,000 takes their overall realisation to Rs 53,876 per tonne.

As against this, the landed price of imported DAP is around \$620 per tonne. Together with other expenses (5% customs duty, port handling, bagging, freight, interest, insurance, dealer margins, etc), the total cost comes to roughly Rs 61,000 per tonne.

Thus, companies are incurring a loss of more than Rs 7,100 per tonne, making it unviable to import and market DAP. They are, instead, choosing to sell complexes or single super phosphate containing just 16% P and 11% S.

This may not be a bad thing. A country having very little rock phosphate, potash, sulphur, and natural gas reserves cannot afford to consume too much DAP, urea (46% N), and muriate of potash (60% K). The future lies more in fertiliser products incorporating less N, P, K, and S, but having higher nutrient use efficiency.

In the long run, India needs to also secure supplies of raw materials, especially phosphates, through overseas joint ventures and buy-back arrangements. Indian companies already have four plants manufacturing phosphoric acid in Senegal, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia. More are probably required.

Behind Typhoon Yagi becoming the most powerful storm in Asia this year

ALIND CHAUHAN
 NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 15

MILLIONS of people in Southeast Asia continue to struggle with torrential rain, floods, and landslides triggered by Typhoon Yagi — the strongest tropical cyclone Asia has seen this year and the second most powerful storm in the world so far this year after Hurricane Beryl.

While Typhoon Yagi has severely impacted multiple countries, including the Philippines, China, Laos, Myanmar, and Thailand, it has hit Vietnam the hardest, where the death toll stands at around 233. The overall toll across these countries has crossed 300 as of last week.

How are tropical cyclones formed?

Tropical cyclones form over warm ocean

waters near the equator. When the warm, moist air from the ocean surface rises upward, a lower air pressure area is formed below. Air from surrounding areas with higher air pressure rushes into this low pressure area, eventually rising, after it also becomes warm and moist.

As warm, moist air rises, it cools down, and the water in the air forms clouds and thunderstorms. This whole system of clouds and winds gains strength and momentum using the ocean's heat, and the water that evaporates from its surface.

"The weakest tropical cyclones are called tropical depressions. If a depression intensifies such that its maximum sustained winds reach 39 miles per hour [63 kmph], the tropical cyclone becomes a tropical storm," according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration



People help a woman in a flooded area in Thailand on Friday. *Reuters*

(NOAA). Storm systems with wind speeds of 119 kmph and above are classified as hurricanes, typhoons, or tropical cyclones.

The category of a tropical cyclone is de-

termined by its sustained wind speed, as measured by the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale. It is classified into five categories — Category 1 to Category 5. While Category 1 tropical cyclones bring winds of 119 to 153 kmph, Category 5 tropical cyclones, which are the strongest, have winds of 252 kmph or higher. Storms that reach Category 3 and higher are considered major tropical cyclones due to their potential to inflict significant damage.

How did Typhoon Yagi become the strongest storm in Asia?

Typhoon Yagi started as a tropical storm in the western Philippine Sea on September 1. It made landfall in the Philippines the next day and began to weaken. However, due to unusually warm waters in the South China Sea, the storm intensified again. By September 4, it strengthened into a typhoon with Category 3 winds.

The next day, it became a Category 5 typhoon with peak maximum sustained winds of 260 kmph. Typhoon Yagi is one of four Category 5 storms recorded in the South China Sea, after Pamela in 1954, Rammasun in 2014, and Rai in 2021.

On September 6, it made landfall in China's Hainan province with winds of 223 kmph. The following day, Typhoon Yagi hit near Haiphong, Quang Ninh province, in northern Vietnam, as one of the strongest storms the country has seen in more than a decade. The storm was later downgraded to a tropical depression but still brought heavy rain in countries such as Thailand last week.

What is the role of climate change?

Scientists are yet to reach an agreement over how exactly climate change is impacting tropical cyclones. That is because there are a lot of factors that determine whether a storm forms, how it develops, its strength,

duration, and overall characteristics.

However, there is consensus that with rising global temperatures, tropical cyclones are becoming more intense. A study published in the journal *Climate and Atmospheric Science* in July showed that tropical cyclones in Southeast Asia are now forming closer to coastlines, intensifying more rapidly, and lingering longer over land.

This is happening primarily because of warmer surface temperatures of the ocean. Higher sea surface temperatures cause marine heat waves, an extreme weather event, which can also make storms like hurricanes and tropical cyclones more intense. Warmer temperatures escalate the rate of evaporation along with the transfer of heat from the oceans to the air. When storms travel across hot oceans, they gather more water vapour and heat. This results in stronger winds, heavier rainfall and more flooding when storms reach the land.

BRITISH PRIME Minister Keir Starmer has breached parliamentary rules by not declaring a businessman and Labour Party donor bought high-end clothes for his wife Victoria, the *Sunday Times* reported Saturday. The PM's registered financial interests, listed on the parliament website, show that he had received several donations from Alli. The report said those were declared but the clothes given to his wife were not. **REUTERS**

TOP OF THE WORLD



The flooded Wienfluss river channel in Vienna

Torrential rain batters central Europe, kills 2

Warsaw: One person drowned in southwest Poland, a rescue worker was killed in Austria and thousands were evacuated in the Czech Republic after heavy rain continued to batter central Europe on Sunday, causing flooding in several parts of the region. A firefighter tackling flooding in Lower Austria was also killed, Austrian Vice Chancellor Werner Kogler said on Sunday on social media platform X, as authorities declared the province which surrounds Vienna a disaster area. Rivers overflowed from Poland to Romania, where four people were found dead on Saturday, after days of torrential rain in a low-pressure system named Boris. Some parts of the Czech Republic and Poland faced the worst flooding in almost three decades, as towns evacuated thousands. A quarter of a million Czech homes were without power. **REUTERS**

MYANMAR Flood toll jumps to 74, reports state media

MYANMAR'S FLOODING death toll rose to 74 as of Friday evening, according to a state media report on Sunday, after heavy rains triggered widespread floods across the war-torn country. Search and rescue operations are ongoing, with at least 89 people missing as of Friday evening, the report said. Adverse weather brought on by Typhoon Yagi, the strongest storm to hit Asia this year, has killed hundreds of people in Vietnam and Thailand, and flood waters from swollen rivers have inundated cities in both countries. **REUTERS**

PAKISTAN ADB asks Pak to adopt India's education plan

Islamabad: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has advised Pakistan to adopt India's scheme ULAS to fix its dysfunctional education system and impart quality training to its citizens, according to a media report. The Manila-based lender's recommendation came in response to Pakistan's request for financial support to improve its education system and impart education to all out-of-school children, *The Express Tribune* said. **PTI**

JORDAN King Abdullah names head of his office as PM

Amman: Jordan's King Abdullah has designated Harvard-educated Jafar Hassan as prime minister after the government resigned on Sunday, the royal court said, days after a parliamentary election in which the Islamist opposition made some gains in the US-allied kingdom. Hassan, now head of King Abdullah's office and a former planning minister, replaces Bisher Khasawneh, a veteran diplomat who was appointed nearly four years ago. **REUTERS**

ISRAEL SHOULD EXPECT MORE AS OCT 7 ANNIVERSARY NEARS: ARMED GROUP

Houthi missile lands in central Israel for the first time, no injury reported

Israel will exact a heavy price... visit Hodeida port for a reminder: PM

REUTERS
JERUSALEM, SEPTEMBER 15

PRIME MINISTER Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel would inflict a "heavy price" on the Iran-aligned Houthis who control northern Yemen, after they reached central Israel with a missile on Sunday for the first time.

Houthi military spokesman Yahya Sarea said the group struck with a new hypersonic ballistic missile that travelled 2,040 km in just 11 1/2 minutes.

After initially saying the missile had fallen in an open area, Israel's military later said it had probably fragmented in the air, and that pieces of interceptors had landed in fields and near a railway station. Nobody was reported hurt. Air raid sirens had sounded in Tel Aviv and across central Israel moments before the impact at around 6:35 a.m. local time, sending residents running for shelter.

At a weekly cabinet meeting, Netanyahu said the Houthis should have known that Israel



An Israeli policeman walks near a crater at the impact spot in central Israel on Sunday. *Reuters*

would exact a "heavy price" for attacks on Israel. "Whoever needs a reminder of that is invited to visit the Hodeida port," Netanyahu said, referring to an Israeli air strike against Yemen in July after a Houthi drone hit Tel Aviv.

The Houthis have fired missiles and drones at Israel repeatedly in what they say is solidarity with the Palestinians, since

the Gaza war began with a Hamas attack on Israel in October.

The drone that hit Tel Aviv for the first time in July killed a man and wounded four people. Israeli air strikes in response on Houthi military targets near the port of Hodeidah killed six and wounded 80.

Previously, Houthi missiles have not penetrated deep into

Israeli air space, with the only one reported to have hit Israeli territory falling in an open area near the Red Sea port of Eilat in March.

Israel should expect more strikes in the future "as we approach the first anniversary of the Oct. 7 operation, including responding to its aggression on the city of Hodeidah," Sarea said.

The deputy head of the Houthi's media office, Nasruddin

EXPLAINED Iron dome under review

THE ISRAELI military confirmed that interceptors from the Iron Dome and Arrow air defence systems were deployed but said it had not yet determined whether the interceptors were successful. The military is investigating whether the fire was the result of falling fragments caused by the interceptor missiles launched at the projectile, or if it successfully penetrated Israeli air defences. "The entire incident is under review," the military said in a statement.



Brent Neiman, US Asst Secretary of Treasury, with Bangladesh Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus in Dhaka on Sunday. *AP*

US officials meet Yunus, promise \$202 mn more in aid to Bangladesh

REUTERS
DHAKA, SEPTEMBER 15

THE UNITED States is committed to supporting Bangladesh's inclusive economic growth, institution building and development and will provide an additional \$202 million of aid, a US delegation said during a visit to Dhaka on Sunday.

The six-member delegation, led by Deputy Under Secretary of the Treasury Department Brent Neiman, is the first from the U.S. since the interim government headed by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus took office last month following the ousting of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

In a televised address last week, Chief Advisor Yunus said the government was appealing for \$5 billion in aid to help stabilise an economy that has been struggling since the Ukraine war sharply increased the cost of fuel and food imports. Bangladesh last year sought a \$4.7 billion bailout from the International Monetary Fund.

The United States Agency for International Development said it would provide a \$202 million grant to promote good gover-

nance, social, human and economic opportunity and resilience, in a deal signed Sunday in Dhaka.

It follows a 2021 agreement where USAID pledged a total of \$954 million between 2021 and 2026, of which \$425 million had already been provided. In a statement released on its Facebook page following the meeting with Yunus, the US embassy emphasised its readiness to support Bangladesh in its pursuit of a more "equitable and inclusive future".

Yunus sought U.S. support to help rebuild Bangladesh, carry out essential reforms to the judiciary, police and financial institutions and to recover assets stolen by the previous regime, according to a statement from his office.

The talks also covered economic reforms, investment, labour issues, the Rohingya crisis and Yunus's upcoming visit to New York for the UN General Assembly. The team also held discussions with key interim government officials, including Foreign Affairs Adviser Mohammad Touhid Hossain, Finance and Commerce Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed and Bangladesh Bank Governor Ahsan Mansur.

Iran President to attend BRICS summit in Russia

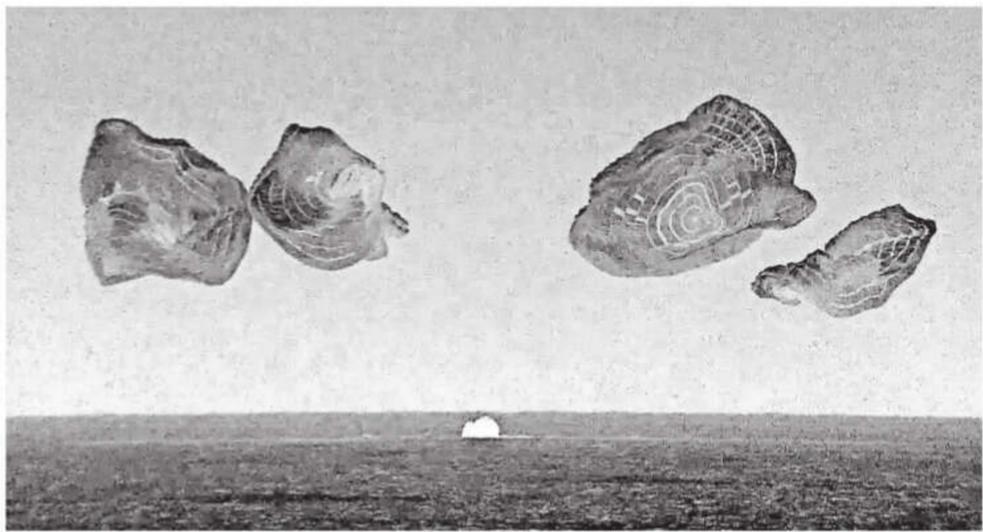


Iran President Masoud Pezeshkian

Dubai: Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian will attend the upcoming BRICS summit in Russia, state media cited Tehran's ambassador in Moscow as saying on Sunday, amid tensions with the West over military cooperation between the two countries.

Iran's ambassador in Russia Kazem Jalali confirmed on Sunday that Pezeshkian will attend the BRICS summit, scheduled to be held in Kazan, Russia from October 22 to 24. Pezeshkian will meet his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin there, Jalali said.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Tuesday that Russia had received ballistic missiles from Iran and had imposed new sanctions on Iran the same day. **REUTERS**



BILLIONAIRE RETURNS AFTER 1ST PRIVATE SPACEWALK

The SpaceX carrier with billionaire spacewalker Jared Isaacman and his crew touches down in the Gulf of Mexico on Sunday. The five-day trip lifted the team higher than anyone has traveled since NASA's moonwalkers. They pulled off the first private spacewalk while orbiting 740 km above Earth, higher than the International Space Station and Hubble Space Telescope. *AP*

8 dead in Channel crossing bid, say French authorities

Paris: Eight people have died trying to cross the Channel from France to England, French authorities said on Sunday, confirming earlier media reports.

This latest incident follows the deaths of 12 people earlier this month when their boat capsized in the Channel on its way to Britain and highlights the pressure on Britain and France to find ways to tackle the boat crossings.

Jacques Billant, the Prefect of the Pas-de-Calais region, said that rescue crews were alerted that a boat with 59 people onboard was in difficulty in waters off the coast



Patrol officers in Ambleteuse, France, on Sunday. *Reuters*

of Ambleteuse in the Pas-de-Calais area. The dead were men from Eritrea, Sudan, Syria, Egypt, Iran and Afghanistan, he added.

'CIA-led plot to kill Maduro': US soldier among 6 held in Venezuela

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BOGOTA, SEPTEMBER 15

THREE AMERICANS, two Spaniards and a Czech citizen were arrested Saturday after Venezuelan officials accused them of coming to the South American country to assassinate President Nicolas Maduro.

The arrests were announced on state television by Diosdado Cabello, the nation's powerful interior minister. Cabello said the foreign citizens were part of a CIA-



Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro

led plot to overthrow the Venezuelan government and kill several members of its leadership. Cabello showed images of rifles that he said were confiscated from the plotters of the alleged plan.

The arrest of the American citizens included a member of the Navy, who Cabello identified as

Wilbert Joseph Castañeda Gomez. Cabello said that Gomez was a navy seal who had served in Afghanistan, Iraq and Colombia.

The US State Department late Saturday confirmed the detention of a US military member and said it was aware of "unconfirmed reports of two additional US citizens detained in Venezuela." "Any claims of US involvement in a plot to overthrow Maduro are categorically false. The United States continues to support a democratic solution to the political crisis in Venezuela," the statement said.

Russian bomb injures at least 30 civilians in Ukraine's Kharkiv

REUTERS
KYIV, SEPTEMBER 15

AT LEAST 30 people, including three children, were injured when a Russian guided bomb hit a high-rise residential building in Kharkiv in northeastern Ukraine on Sunday.

"The rescue operation in Kharkiv continues. A Russian air strike. An ordinary residential building, a multi-storey building, was damaged. There is a fire and rubble between the 9th and 12th floors," President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Telegram app.

He posted photos of smoke and fire billowing out of the windows of a multi-storey building. All windows had been blown out. Kharkiv governor Oleh Syniehubov said civilian infrastructure was also damaged.

Kharkiv, Ukraine's second biggest city, is located near the Russian border and is constantly under attack from Russian bombs, missiles and drones.



The building in Kharkiv bombed by Russia. *Reuters*

Meanwhile, two people died in a missile attack on the Ukrainian Black Sea port city of Odesa, local officials said, as Moscow and Kyiv exchanged drone and missile attacks. The Ukrainian air force said Sunday it shot down 10 of the 14 drones and one of the three missiles Russia launched overnight.

Oleh Kiper, Odesa's regional governor, said the two who died in the suburbs of Odesa on Saturday night were a married couple, and that another person was wounded in the attack.

A VOTE IN MONTREAL IS SEEN AS A REFERENDUM ON CANADA'S PM, WHO HAS BRUSHED ASIDE SEVERAL CALLS TO RESIGN

Justin Trudeau's party has a popularity problem — Justin Trudeau

NORIMITSU ONISHI
MONTREAL, SEPTEMBER 15

PRIME MINISTER Justin Trudeau's Liberal Party should be a shoo-in for a Parliamentary seat at the southern point of the island of Montreal.

The district has been a stronghold for his party for more than half a century. It was home to another Liberal prime minister a generation ago. The base for a former Liberal justice minister. An easy drive to Trudeau's own redoubt in the city.

And yet, days before a special election on Monday to choose the

district's member of Canada's Parliament, polls show a tight three-way contest. For many life-long Liberals, the problem is clear: It is Trudeau himself.

"I am a Liberal supporter, but it's almost like enough is enough," Michael Altimas, 79, a retired city bus driver, said during a walk on a sunny day along the district's long pedestrian commercial street. "For the most part, he's been a good prime minister." "But he's had nine years," Altimas added, "and people are hearing often enough that he messed up and they don't want... him anymore."

The election to fill a vacancy in the district has become a referen-



Canada PM Justin Trudeau in Montreal in 2022. *NYT file*

dum on Trudeau, the once golden boy of Western leaders who is now fighting for his political survival. His own Liberal Party members are increasingly calling for him to step aside, worried that the party risks a drubbing in the next general election.

Public grumblings about his leadership grew louder over the summer after his party lost a special election in Toronto in June and after President Biden's decision to step down as the Democratic candidate in the US election suggested a path forward for Liberals.

The stunning loss in Toronto has raised the stakes for the election in Montreal. Underscoring

Trudeau's cratering popularity is his near total absence from the local campaign. His face does not appear on posters in the Liberal campaign office's storefront windows or on the lampposts.

"Right now, Justin Trudeau has no political coattails," said Nik Nanas, a leading pollster in Canada. "He's become the lightning rod for the general disaffection directed at the Liberal Party."

Trudeau's approval ratings are now stuck just above 20 percent and trail by double digits those of opposition Conservative Party leader, Pierre Poilievre.

A loss in Montreal's special election could embolden inter-

national opposition and further undermine Trudeau's public image. Many voters interviewed on Wellington Street in Verdun — a long pedestrian street filled with restaurants, cafes and neighborhood stores — singled out the Prime Minister for influencing their decision.

"It's hard to imagine a world in which Trudeau gets re-elected," said Christopher Gaudreault, 28, a classical pianist, who has voted for Liberals, Greens and New Democrats. "What I've been hearing in my circles is that pretty much everyone across the board is fed up with Trudeau for various reasons." **NYT**

17 SPORT

BRIEFLY

ACT: India favourites against South Korea

Hulunbuir: Maintaining a clean slate, favourites India will fancy their chances when they take on a below-par but unpredictable Korea in the semifinals of the Asian Champions Trophy hockey tournament here on Monday. Paris Olympics bronze medallist India have been in rollicking form in the tournament so far, registering five wins out of five league matches. The Harmanpreet Singh-led side started their campaign with a 3-0 win over hosts China and then trounced Japan and Malaysia 5-1 and 8-1 respectively. India then beat Korea 3-1 before eking out a narrow 2-1 win over arch-rivals Pakistan. **PTI**

ISL: Punjab register 2-1 win over Kerala

Kochi: Punjab FC secured a stoppage time 2-1 victory over Kerala Blasters FC to kick off their Indian Super League (ISL) campaign here on Sunday. The game looked set to end in a goalless draw, despite exciting efforts from both sides until the final 10 minutes of the contest and deep into the stoppage time. It was a close affair until then, with offensive lines of both teams giving each other a tough run, stretching the backlines. However, the livewire Punjab attacker Leon Augustine earned a spot-kick in the 86th minute that skipper Luka Majcen converted into a goal with absolute ease. **PTI**

Saleema breaks new ground for Pakistan

Islamabad: Saleema Imtiaz became the first Pakistani woman to be nominated to the ICC international panel of development umpires, the Pakistan Cricket Board said on Sunday. Imtiaz's nomination on the panel means she is now eligible to officiate in women's bilateral international matches and ICC women's events. "This isn't just a win for me, it's a win for every aspiring female cricketer and umpire in Pakistan," Imtiaz said in a statement. "I hope my success motivates countless women who dream of making their mark in the sport." Imtiaz said she had always wanted to make her own name in the field of umpiring ever since her daughter made her international debut against South Africa in 2010. **PTI**

Yamal scores brace in Barcelona's 4-1 win

Girona: Barcelona's Lamine Yamal struck twice in the first half to help deliver a commanding 4-1 win at Girona on Sunday that extended their perfect start to the LaLiga season with a fifth consecutive win. Yamal gave Barca a two-goal lead with strikes in the 30th and 37th minutes while Dani Olmo extended their advantage right after the break with a first-time effort from close range. Pedri scored the fourth with a tap-in in the 64th minute while Girona substitute Cristhian Stuani netted a consolation goal in the 80th, six minutes before Barca were reduced to 10 men when forward Ferran Torres was given a straight red card for a studs-up challenge on Yaser Asprilla. Barcelona top the LaLiga standings with 15 points, four ahead Real Madrid and Villarreal. Girona are seventh on seven points **REUTERS**

Gukesh on redemption spree stringing wins

AMIT KAMATH
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 15

EYEBROWS SHOT up, heads were cocked and frowns made appearances as some of the world's top players, including former and current world champions like Magnus Carlsen, Vladimir Kramnik and Ding Liren caught a glimpse of Gukesh's battle against Azerbaijan's Aydin Suleymanli, which the teenager from India ended up winning in 38 moves.

There's something about Gukesh and Olympiads. Two years back, at the Chess Olympiad hosted in his hometown of Chennai, a 16-year-old Gukesh had given one of the first indicators that he was going to be a problem for the rest of the world.

Playing on the top board of the India B team at the Chess Olympiad in 2022, Gukesh (back then ranked World No 20) had gone on a rampage, smiting away at anyone who sat in front of him, even the world's best players like Fabiano Caruana. But all of his work had been undone in a sense as he had lost against Uzbekistan's Nodirbek Abdusattorov in the 10th round, which meant that the team lost the tie. What had stung in that game more than the defeat itself was the realisation that even if he had taken a draw in that game, India would have more or less been assured

With their exploits vs Pak, Bangla pacers are remoulding the nation's cricketing identity

SANDIPIG
SEPTEMBER 15

HERE IS an old joke about Bangladesh cricket: if someone flipped a coin in the anarchic streets of Dhaka, a left-arm spinner would catch it. But the dazzling new crop of fast bowlers is shifting those stubborn perceptions.

A speed merchant nudging 150kph, a sui generis in his country; a seam and swing merchant with dexterous wrists and a natural gift of bending the ball either ways; a beanpole left-arm quick coaxing unnerving lift and slippery pace; an exciting but erratic talisman discovering precision to ally his pace; a stream of young quicks bristling about in the domestic circuit. In unison, they are re-imagining the cricket identity of their country, from a land of left-arm spinners to fast bowlers.

For the first time in their history, seamers took all ten wickets in an innings, en route to winning the first Test against Pakistan. The first time they won a Test, in Harare, left-armers hoarded 11 of the 20 wickets. But Test wins arrived only sporadically until the stroke of 2023 (16 in 134). In the next 20 months though, they won five of eight. It is little coincidence that those—one fourth of their Test wins ever—have arrived after they built a serious pace pack. Left-arm spinners still influence games, but so do the seamers. Ebadot Hossain and Taskin Ahmed starred in the victory over Afghanistan, Hasan Mahmud and Nahid Rana headlined the historic feat over Pakistan.

The surge of Gukesh could be a prospectively pathbreaking moment for Bangladesh fast bowling. He is his country's first 150-kph-er. Until four years ago, the quick from the regally sounding Chapainawabganj in north western part of Bangladesh had no serious aspirations about the game. His father wanted him to focus on academics, but he snuck out with friends to play tape-ball cricket.

During one of the tournaments, he caught the eye of former Test fast bowler Alamgir Kabir, a coach at the Clemon Academy, a chain of cricket schools launched by former captain Khaled Mashud. "We were playing tape ball cricket and we needed a fast bowler. A local coach sent us Nahid. The keeper said he could barely see the first four balls. I kept for a ball and I couldn't see it either," Kabir tells *The Indian Express*.

The latter took him under his tutelage at the Rajshahi branch of the academy. He was uncut, had a weird action wherein he held



Nahid Rana, a prospectively pathbreaking moment for Bangladesh fast bowling, is his country's first 150-kph-er. **AP**

the ball with both palms. Alamgir refined and regimented it, initially dropping pace before gaining it. Talha Subair, another fast bowler turned coach, solved his no-ball woes. Four years after the fateful tape-ball game, he co-instigated Bangladesh's maiden series win over Pakistan. In the mecca of the mystique paceman, on the red earth that chiselled Shoaib Akhtar, he troubled the finest of Pakistan batsmen in Rawalpindi.

Lethal bowling

Twice he devoured Babar Azam, harassing him for pace and bounce generated from his shoulders and upper body. Babar wasn't coaxed into indiscretion but couldn't configure the deliveries's sting, inside-edging onto stumps and caught at slips. Nahid left Mohammed Rizwan with physical scars too. His career is nascent still, there is guarded optimism that he could be his country's finest.

If Nahid discomfits with raw pace, Hasan Mahmud tricks batsmen with movement either direction at lively pace. Monikered the Laxmipur Express, he runs through his action with a negligible jump during the load-up like some of the Caribbean quicks of the 90s. He has a sumptuous wrist position, which he worked extensively with former national coach Sarwar Imran.

"He has a unique action that confuses bats-

NEED FOR SPEED

Spin land enters the fast lane

ENG-AUS SERIES ENDS IN A DRAW

England's T20I series decider vs Australia was washed out Sunday without a ball being bowled at Old Trafford. The series finished tied 1-1. The forecast never looked likely to allow for any meaningful play to take place in the third T20I and the umpires finally called the abandonment at 4:20 p.m. local time, almost two hours after the scheduled start. **AP**

Litton Das and Najmul Hossain Shanto.

Complementing them is the six foot three Shoriful Islam, another bowler sculpted by the hands of Alamgir, hailing from the northernmost outpost of Bangladesh, a Nogordanga in the Panchagarh village. The son of a rickshaw puller, after unseasonal rain ravaged his farms, professional cricket was beyond his dreams.

"There were days when I survived on one meal a day, or a fruit. There was no electricity in our home. So, to watch cricket I used to walk or cycle to a village some two kilometres away from home," he told Daily Star. Playing cricket and volleyball was an escape from the everyday realities. A scout from Dinajpur centre of the Clemons Academy happened to spot him, from where Alamgir fast-tracked him to Rajshahi.

Age factor

Auguring their depth are Ebadot Hossain and Khaled Ahmed. The latter is 30, perennially injury-prone but is lethal when fit and fresh. Ahmed is 31, but options don't hurt in a county where fast bowlers have poppamod physiques. Marshalling them is Taskin Ahmed, who had once captured a generation of youngsters.

The biggest factor in spurt of pacers according to BCB director and a mentor to most cricketers, Nazmul Abedeen Fahim, is the robust coaching at grassroots. "We were blessed to have so many fast bowlers taking up coaching after retirement," he says. Alamgir is a classic example—he buried his three wicketless Tests, but nursed his disappointment by committing his life to grooming young pacers. So are Talha Jubair and Rubel Hossain, a host of men lost in Bangladesh's spin-fixated era. The fundamentals imparted, they passed through the battle-hardened hands of international coaches. At some juncture, they had all been coached by one of Allan Donald or Gibson, or both.

After the conquest of Pakistan, Donald instantly posted a picture of the Bangladesh quicks on his Facebook wall. He later told Daily Star about how he helped them eliminate the fear factor: "One of my biggest challenges was to get the fear factor out of the dressing room. What I mean by fear factor is that guys are a little bit fearful of making mistakes." An inferiority complex of sorts. But Donald, with whom the group still interacts, gradually convinced them to shed that fear.

The pace bloom comes with riders. Most of them are young and still raw. The bowlers from the region are notoriously injury-prone. The next stage of development is equally important, says Fahim. "Keeping them fit is important. If we nurture them, keep them injury free and continue the development trajectory, we could certainly be competitive," he says. En route, they would burn perceptions and the coin joke.

THE FAST AND FURIOUS TIGER PACK

NAHID RANA

Only 21, he hits consistent pace to rattle the best of batsmen. Babar Azam would testify. He is not just raw pace alone, but has the smarts to set up competent batsmen and sizes up their deficiency quite fast.

HASAN MAHMUD

Not as quick as Rana but the 24-year-old seams and swings more proficiently, is disciplined, and could hit decent pace. He can don the role of a new-ball seam merchant as well as put on the enforcer garb.

SHORIFUL ISLAM

The strapping left-arm seamer could make the ball move both, allied with fizzing bounce. He is adept at hitting the deck hard, especially when he chooses to operate from around the stumps, as well as probe a fuller length.

TASKIN AHMED

His biggest enemy was his crumbling body, but a fully fit Taskin could be a handful on any condition and has ripened into a canny leader of the group, an elder-brotherly figure to all.

men. Besides, he has variations that he smartly employs, apart from swing and pace" Sarwar says. The former fast bowling coach Otis Gibson says he "could be an enormously im-

portant cricketer for his country." His entry was dramatic. Called to bowl in the nets, he troubled the whole lot, from Shakib Al Hasan and Mushfiqur Rahim to

Duleep Trophy: Mulani, Kotian script big win for India A

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHENNAI, SEPTEMBER 15

SHAMS MULANI and Tanush Kotian completed the job they began on Day 1, this time with the ball on the final day, bagging seven wickets between them as India A posted a comprehensive win over India D to keep their title hopes alive in the Duleep Trophy. Courtesy the 186-run victory, India A are now placed third in the table with six points, and next face table-toppers India C in their final fixture on Thursday.

Having begun the final day needing 9 wickets to get off the mark, India A needed a bit of luck to break the overnight stand between Yash Dubey and Ricky Bhui. The latter, who ended third day's play on an aggressive note, continued with his intent even in the morning session as boundaries came with minimum risk against the pacers.

But Dubey's unfortunate run-out at the non-striker's end with the ball ricocheting off his bat back to Mulani, who knocked off the bails, gave India A the opening they sought. From there on, apart from Bhui who scored a well-constructed 113, the likes of Shreyas Iyer and Sanju Samson only sparked with cameos as India D remain the only team without a point in the tournament.

In his next over, Mulani made one sneak between Devdutt Padikkal's bat and pad from round the wicket. With the pitch offering good bounce—a Kotian delivery bounced head high to the wicketkeeper from a good length—they created regular chances. There was also a mini-battle between the two Mumbai spinners and Iyer. Having failed to get off the mark in the first innings, the latter batting at No 5 in the second essay, dealt in boundaries. Using his feet and the crease, he picked gaps effort-

lessly. But like in the first innings, it was yet another tame shot that cut his stay short.

Having committed to an aggressive stroke even before Mulani had released the ball, Iyer stayed back to a delivery he should have played off the front foot. He went for a hoick over mid-wicket, but the ball was too full for the shot and sneaked between his legs to give Mulani his second wicket of the morning. Having lost his spot in the Test squad, Iyer seems to be slipping further down the pecking order.

Once Iyer departed, it was Samson's turn to take over. A very good player of spin, the Kerala batsman used his feet to come down the track and loft Kotian over mid-on for a boundary. Picking length early, he would jump down the pitch and hit Mulani and Kotian for sixes over long-off. Post lunch, with Kotian continuing to offer flight, Samson would take the invitation and pick a boundary and six. But

Mulani would eventually send him back, courtesy a faint edge that was pouched safely by Kumar Kushagra.

Though the rest of India D batsmen were in a mood to rush, Bhui took the foot off the pedal. Like any good No 3, he went about constructing an innings, dropping anchor and picking up boundaries whenever an opportunity presented itself. A lofted cover-drive off Kotian's off-spin brought his century off 170 deliveries.

Kotian's perseverance would eventually pay off as he removed Saransh Jain, Bhui and Saurabh Kumar during a lengthy spell in the second session. And once the centurion departed, it was only a matter of time before India A walked away with 6 points.

India C go top Having taken a sizeable lead and a bowler short – Sandeep Warrier has been ruled out of the tournament with a leg injury – India C didn't press for a win and chose to play it safe

against India B. Resuming their first innings at 309/7, India B were bowled out for 322 with captain Abhimanyu Easwaran carrying his bat for 157. Haryana seamer Anshul Kamboj finished with figures of 8/69 and boosted his chance of making it to the India A tour of Australia next month.

Having taken a 193-run lead, India C lost Sai Sudharsan early, but thereafter Raturaj Gaikwad (62) and Rajat Patidar (42) stonewalled to avoid a batting collapse. India C then declared at 128/4 as both teams settled for a draw.

Brief scores: India A 290 & 380/3 declared beat **India D** 183 & 301 (Ricky Bhui 113, Shreyas Iyer 41, Sanju Samson 40; Tanush Kotian 4/73, Shams Mulani 3/117) by 186 runs

India C 525 & 128/4 declared (Raturaj Gaikwad 62, Rajat Patidar 42) drew with **India B** 332 (Abhimanyu Easwaran 157 not out, Narayan Jagadeesan 70; Anshul Kamboj 8/69)

Gabriel header seals win for Arsenal in feisty contest

GABRIEL MAGALHAES'S second-half header earned Arsenal a crucial 1-0 win at Tottenham Hotspur in a feisty north London derby on Sunday to keep pace with early Premier League leaders Manchester City.

Spurs started sharper and David Raya was forced into early saves, turning Dejan Kulusevski's first-time effort behind before he clawed away a dangerous cross from the Sweden winger.

Record signing Dominic Solanke, making his home debut, squandered a good opening in the 14th minute after Arsenal lost possession deep in their own half, taking too long on the ball and allowing William Saliba to recover. Arsenal were missing captain Martin Odegaard through injury and Declan Rice through suspension, but dug deep impressively despite an under-strength midfield.

"It was difficult because we have lost a lot of important players for us," Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta told Sky Sports. "Those who waited for the chance trained and behaved in the right manner. This is the result." The Gunners fought their way into the contest, with Guglielmo Vicario tested by a Kai

Havertz header before Gabriel Martinelli was then played in brilliantly by Leandro Trossard but scuffed his shot with Bukayo Saka waiting centrally.

Jurrien Timber was perhaps fortunate to avoid a straight red card in the first half for a reckless challenge on Pedro Porro as he tried to retain possession.

His studs landed on Porro's ankle but referee Jarred Gillett deemed the incident was not serious foul play and VAR declined to intervene, much to the Spurs fans' anger. The second half started in similar fashion to the first, with the hosts on top as Micky van de Ven tested Raya with a glancing header, before Arsenal again got a foothold in the game.

The game had been breathless but low on quality in front of goal until Arsenal punished Spurs from a corner, having done so twice in last season's 3-2 away win in April.

Gabriel escaped far too easily from Cristian Romero, who pleaded for a foul in vain, and powered a header past Vicario from close range in the 64th minute.

REUTERS



Gukesh claimed his fastest win at the 2024 Olympiad with in moves.

gold as Pragganandhaa had put India ahead. Eventually, the Indian team had claimed bronze while Uzbekistan took gold.

Two years after that heartbreak, Gukesh has arrived at the Olympiad in Hungary's capital like a man who has unfinished business. In the four games he has played so far at the Olympiad in Budapest after sitting out the first

Thanks to the win, Gukesh now has 2775.9 points in the live ratings and is ranked No 5 in the world, just behind compatriot Arjun Erigaisi in the live rankings

round, he's accounted for four strong grandmasters – Vignir Vatnar Stefansson (Iceland), Adam Kozak (Hungary), Alexandr Predke (Serbia) and finally Aydin Suleymanli (Azerbaijan) – with an average rating of over 2600.

On Sunday, he claimed his fastest win at the 2024 Olympiad rather than the slow death that he has delivered to other opponents. Playing with white pieces in a game that saw the Giuoco Pianissimo Variation of the Italian game being used, Gukesh had engine-like accuracy. By the 10th move, he held a 30-minute advantage on the clock. By the 13th move, he was the evaluation bar's preferred pick to win the contest. By the 15th move, he had a material advantage on the board, with Suleymanli being a rook, and two pawns down. It was really a matter of playing the perfect moves and letting the oppo-

nent make mistakes. And Gukesh, who is one of the best calculating players in the sport, did just that, squeezing the life blood out of his opponent's pieces on the board slowly one move at a time until he was ready to throw in the towel. By the time both queens were beheaded in the 38th move, Gukesh was one move away from reincarnating a pawn into a queen. It was a completely lost position, and his opponent resigned.

Thanks to the win, Gukesh now has 2775.9 points in the live ratings and is ranked No 5 in the world, just behind compatriot Arjun Erigaisi in the live rankings (which are updated real time as opposed to the FIDE published rankings, which are announced at the end of each month).

Gukesh had, in fact, moved to fifth spot on Saturday itself after winning his almost six-hour battle against Alexandr Predke of Serbia. India thus have three players in the live rankings, with Arjun fourth, Gukesh fifth and Pragganandhaa in 10th spot.

Spurred by Gukesh, the Indian team defeated the strong Azerbaijan team in the fifth round with a 3-1 scoreline to take two more game points. While Arjun also defeated Rauf Mamedov to claim one full point for India, Pragganandhaa (facing Nijat Abasov) and Vidit Santosh Gujrathi (taking on Shakhriyar Mamedyarov) settled for draws.

India's F2 driver Maini survives scary crash

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SEPTEMBER 15



INDIAN DRIVER **Kush Maini** on Sunday survived a horrifying crash after he stalled at the start of the feature race in Formula 2, a support race to Formula 1.

The scary incident occurred on the opening lap of the Formula 2 race which preceded the Formula 1 Azerbaijan Grand Prix. The 23-year-old Indian had nowhere to go at the race start as his car's engine stopped working suddenly. That left fellow drivers Josep Maria Martí and Oliver Goethe unsighted, leading to a massive collision.

The rear of Maini's car was totally destroyed by the impact of the crash and fortunately, he came out of it unscathed.

Maini's father Gautam confirmed to PTI that his son is doing fine.

"He is doing okay. As part of the standard protocol all medical checkups were conducted on Kush and all reports are normal," he said.

Maini, representing Invicta Racing in his second Formula 2 season, is 11th in the standings. The race was won by Richard Verschoor of Trident.

Following the investigation of the incident, the stewards handed the Indian a 10-second time penalty for causing the collision.

"After the race, the Stewards heard from the Team Representative and examined available video evidence before determining that the driver of Car 9 had failed to engage the Start Set Up Procedure for the start of the race, an error that led to the car stalling on the grid causing the subsequent collision.

"The Stewards determined that because of this, Maini was wholly responsible for the collision and, as a result, elected to hand him a 10-second time penalty.

"With Maini not finishing the Feature Race, his time penalty has been converted into a five-place grid penalty," read a Formula 2 statement.

Maini will serve the penalty in the next race.

Safety has improved drastically in motorsport over the past two decades but the sport remains dangerous. Formula 2 driver Antoine Hubert had succumbed to his injuries following an accident at the iconic Spa Francorchamps circuit in Belgium in 2019. The Frenchman was only 22.

Jules Bianchi, who was only 25, had died following a collision with a recovery vehicle during the Formula 1 Japanese Grand Prix in 2014. The FIA had introduced Halo, a head-protecting device, on all Formula 1 cars post the fatal accident.

1st one is precious: 17-year-old Anmol wins maiden int'l tourney

SHIVANI NAIK
SEPTEMBER 15

ANMOL KHARB, India's breakout badminton prodigy integral to the Asian Team gold medal at the start of 2024, has had an eventful past eight months. Widely lauded for winning decisive tie-clinchers in February, the 17-year-old collapsed in a tearful heap on the court with a viciously swollen ankle at the Uber Cup in May. However, her senior career is properly back on track come September, as she won her first-ever individual title, the Belgian International Challenge at Leuven on Saturday.

"It's special, this title will remain very close to my heart. But there's no time or need to celebrate, I play in Poland next week, and have to win so much more," the Faridabad teenager said after sealing the final, 24-22, 12-21, 21-10, against World No 80 Dane Amalie Schulz.

Anmol displayed her trademark bouncing back and finishing qualities, as she took control of closing-out situations at 19-18, at least three times in the tournament. The youngster also played seven matches in three days, starting out as a qualifier, ranked World No 220.

It was a whirlwind five days of travel and

competition, as Anmol got her visa on September 10 and took a flight out to Belgium at 1.20 a.m on September 11, heading straight to the venue to play the first of those seven matches on arrival.

"It was crazy because the visa came only on 10th, then the flight from the stopover was delayed by three hours. So I reached the venue straight at 11.30 am Belgian time, and played the first match at 12.35 pm. All this has to be done to get ranking up and makes you stronger mentally," the Indian shuttler said, not wanting to complain. The title had eased away all the accumulated exhaustion of the packed schedule.

The semifinal against the Bulgarian World No 68 Kaloyana Nalbantova tested Anmol's fortitude before she won 21-13, 24-26, 21-19. She had been dragged into a decider after frittering two match points, and the Olympian closed in from 16-19 with sustained pressure. "Last game got tough. I used to think Asian players are tougher because of speed and Europeans will be easy. But European women are playing with a lot of wrist power and are stronger in long rallies," she felt.

In the final against Schulz, Anmol was 11-14 down in the opener. "It was a good final,



Anmol Kharb played seven matches in three days, starting out as a qualifier, ranked World No 220.

where I fought back in the first game, had a lot of negatives, errors at the start of the second, but reversed momentum playing well in the third. I just told myself at the start of the third that it's a new game, and I have to regain focus," Anmol added.

Injury setback

The return from the Uber Cup had been tearful after she crashed on the court, and the ankle ballooned and grew bluish-red. "It was difficult because doctors said I couldn't play for 1-2 months. Even after I returned, the fear of injury persisted about movement on court and even taking a lunge step," she said.

The youngster would slowly recover, and was kept motivated by coaches. At her lowest, Uber Cup coach Parupalli Kashyap would tell her that she remained a class-player, and invite her to train at the Gopichand Academy in Hyderabad.

"We knew we had to train harder to make the next level, so when he said I could try and see if I liked it, my mother and I shifted to Hyderabad. It was tough to adjust because I'd never lived at a hostel. But now I'm settled at the academy and my mother makes food, so there's no problem. My father, who coached me first at 10-11, is accompanying me as coach," Anmol said.

She was told by coach Gopichand that training would be hard, and take a bit of time to start showing results. "There's been a huge change in my game. Many mistakes needed correcting and technique had to be strength-

ened. But I had to be patient and understand that results won't come immediately. It's still tough, the senior circuit - speed, power and different games - but slowly I'll start winning more," she insisted.

The biggest input coaches would drill into her was to start thinking like a champion. "They said the mindset has to be to win every match, no matter what, finding solutions and not cribbing. Also, to not be happy with smaller titles, though I can't help feeling happy today because it's my first individual title," Anmol said, feeling giddy gleeful.

Her on-court fitness work has considerably increased. "Earlier, I used to run a lot. Now of the three physicals, two are outside, off court but the toughest is on-court, mostly shadows and agility," she said.

The Poland International Challenge will be another wringer of five matches in three days at Lublin, though she's already in the main draw, starting Friday. She runs into Schulz again in Round 1, and will learn plenty about fighting off the wrath of the vanquished in head-to-heads, and playing back-to-back tournaments.

"Jeetna hi hai (Must win) is the mentality I have to adopt, though opponents don't make it easy," she chuckles.

Broken bone, barest of margins

Chopra competes despite fracture in left hand and throws 87.86m, finishing second in Diamond League

VINAYAKK MOHANARANGAN
SEPTEMBER 15

ONE CENTIMETRE. In the end, that was all that separated Neeraj Chopra and Grenada's Anderson Peters. On a cold night in Brussels, it was an equally cold way to miss out on a second Diamond League Final title.

The Grenadian started the night with an 87.87m throw, which was eventually enough to seal the win. Neeraj, however, came within the smallest measurable distance. With his third throw of the spear, the Indian managed 87.86m to get within 0.01m of Peters and finished the season in second place.

It also summed up the kind of year the Tokyo Olympics gold medalist has had. After all, 2024 started with Neeraj finishing second at the Doha Diamond League meet by 2 centimetres. The season tested Neeraj's abilities to the fullest.

And yet, sample this for a return: One Olympic Games silver medal, a runner-up finish in athletics' most important international event apart from Paris, three throws beyond 89m for his career's second, third, and fifth-best marks. All while nursing an injury.

On Sunday, Neeraj revealed that he competed in Brussels with a fractured fourth metacarpal in his left hand, an injury he suffered in training early in the week. "This was the last competition of the year, and I wanted to end my season on the track. While I couldn't meet my own expectations, I feel this was a season in which I learned a lot. I am now determined to return, fully fit and ready to go," he said in a social media post, about another 'painful challenge'.

By the yardstick of any elite athlete, it has been a successful season. But, just like that night at the Stade de France in Paris, Neeraj's reactions at the King Baudouin Stadium on Saturday night gave out vibes of a man searching for something elusive.

The Diamond League finale was an event of two halves for Neeraj. Two of his best throws of the night came in the first half. And the common factor between those was that Neeraj was standing upright at the end of his follow-through. The left leg's blocking action seemed consciously pronounced as he tried to avoid falling over to his left. The third throw, especially, is likely to be the template for the future. Nice easy pace on the runway, straighter, unbent left leg at the point of release, and finishing just inside the white line. The result was 87.86m.

But with each of his last three throws, Neeraj once again reverted to the style that one has seen in the past. As he tried to find that little bit extra - a couple of centimetres, literally - he leaned to the left side and



With his third throw of the spear, Neeraj Chopra managed 87.86m to get within 0.01m of Anderson Peters.

overbalanced, falling over after releasing the spear.

"Right now, his throws aren't right technically," Neeraj's physio Ishaan Marwaha had told The Indian Express after the Lausanne Diamond League event. "When he throws, he falls towards the left and so, the javelin also travels towards the left. He falls because the block leg isn't straight when he is releasing, it bends. So, he is not able to put all his force into the javelin."

Tough challenge

Conditions on the night didn't lend themselves to big throws either. All the throwers made their way to the playing area in full winter gear. "It was rather cold tonight and in the warming-up area, there was no track, only grass. When we come to the stadium, the track is rather hard and the difference is big, so that made it a little difficult for us javelin throwers," third-placed Julian Weber said after the event.

After his sixth throw, Neeraj fell again but got up with a roar. Now, that is a familiar sight. He seemed to like what he managed with the last competitive release of javelin in 2024. But it wasn't quite enough.

This was the last competition of the year, and I wanted to end my season on the track. While I couldn't meet my own expectations, I feel this was a season in which I learned a lot. I am now determined to return, fully fit and ready to go.

NEERAJ CHOPRA
ON HIS INJURY

After exchanging some notes with his coach Klaus Bartonietz, the customary embraces followed with his opponents as the season wound down. And finally, there was a hint of a smile as the Indian star posed for a few customary selfies with fans.

Back in September 2022, Neeraj won the Diamond Trophy (the prize that winners of the Diamond League Final get) and said afterward in Zurich that he finally truly felt like a big part of global athletics. Tokyo happened in front of empty stands, and while Neeraj was already no stranger to winning, to see himself as one of the cen-

tres of attraction at a proper global athletics-only event, felt special. And he seemed to be revelling in it, enjoying the occasion.

Starting from Paris though, Neeraj has been throwing like he is carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders. As he steps away from the bright lights of the world's biggest stages for a quieter off-season, he will begin the process to return to peak physical fitness.

That is vital for the Indian to achieve his ultimate goal in his chosen field. "I feel there is a better throw left in me. Until I get that, shanti nahi mil paegi (I won't be at peace)," he had said after the silver at the Olympics. Perhaps that bigger throw might come with that peace.

PTI adds: On Friday night, national record holder 3000m steeplechaser Avinash Sable finished ninth in Brussels. Sable, who turned 30 on Friday, clocked 8 minute and 17.09 seconds to finish second-last in the 10-man field in his debut DL final. Amos Serem of Kenya emerged as the Diamond League champion in a time of 8:06.90, while reigning Olympic and world champion Soufiane El Bakkali (8:08.60) of Morocco was second.

Davis Cup: India suffer sixth loss against Sweden

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
STOCKHOLM, SEPTEMBER 15

RAMKUMAR RAMANATHAN and N Sriram Balaji could play well only in patches in the do-or-die doubles encounter and later Siddharth Vishwakarma lost on debut as India went down 0-4 to Sweden in the Davis Cup World Group I tie, here Sunday.

After losing both the singles on Saturday, India needed to win the third rubber to stay alive in the tie but Ramkumar and Balaji went down 3-6 4-6 against Andre Goransson and Filip Bergevi in one hour and 19 minutes to concede an unassailable 0-3 lead.

India's dismal record against Sweden in the Davis Cup continued as it was the team's sixth defeat in as many ties.

The reverse singles were rendered inconsequential and it gave captain Rohit Rajpal chance to test former national champion Siddharth, who lost 2-6 2-6 to Elias Ymer.

It was India's best chance to beat Sweden despite having a depleted squad but the players could not grab their opportunities.

India will now compete next year in the Play-offs to keep place in World Group I.

The Indian pair had its first chance in game three in the opening set on Goransson's serve. Balaji and Ramkumar pocketed four straight points to earn a break-point but the home team averted the danger. Ramkumar was, however, broken in the next game and Bergevi held his own to zoom to a commanding 5-2 lead.

Balaji served to stay in the set and managed to hold. The home team comfortably sealed the opening set with Bergevi holding at love. In the second set, Ramkumar had a fiery start, holding at love.

Bergevi though surprisingly struggled with his first serve as he committed two double faults to be at 30-all.

Sensing a chance, Ramkumar attacked Bergevi's second serve but could respond only with a feeble shot on the Swede's widish cross court return. Standing at the net, it was an easy put away for Goransson.

Balaji was under pressure in the next game. Serving at deuce, he fired an ace but Goransson hit a backhand volley winner on the next point to again make it deuce. The Indians soaked the pressure and eventually saved the game.

Balaji faced the heat again in the seventh game with both Swedish players finding service return winners with attacking shots. Goransson earned a break chance with a volley winner from the net.

Ramkumar hit a powerful forehand return following an exciting rally on that break point and later the Indians saved one more but on the third breakpoint Balaji netted a return. The lead stayed with the home team that served out the match in the 10th game. Ramkumar's causal forehand return landed outside the lines on the match point.

SMT KRISHNA KHAITAN MEMORIAL

15-year-old Khelo India trainee Jagsher qualifies for U19 main draw

NITIN SHARMA
PANCHKULA, SEPTEMBER 15

FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD PUNJAB youngster Jagsher Singh Khangura completed a 15-11, 12-15, 15-11 win over Chandigarh's Krishna Sharma in the fourth qualification round to become one of the youngest to make it to the U19 main draw of the Yonex Sunrise 31st Smt Krishna Khaitan Memorial All India Junior Ranking Prize Money Tournament being played at Tau Devi Lal Sports Complex.

Khangura was cheered by his teacher parents Manpreet Singh and Rashpal Kaur, who have tried a bunch of academies across India to help the youngster improve his game.

The 15-year-old Asian U15 bronze medalist is one of the youngest in the tournaments and with Sunday's win, his parents travelled

from the princely city of Nabha to watch him play over the next week.

"Both my parents are teachers and have always given me the belief that if I can play good, then I should not fear playing against higher age group players. This is the first time that I have made it to the U19 main draw in a national ranking tournament and that was my first target. Hopefully, I can extend my good run here and watch my parents celebrate my U19 wins," shared the youngster while speaking with *The Indian Express*.

It was at a school ground near his home that the then seven-year-old Khangura first practised on a badminton court under coach Harinder Singh. With his elder sister pursuing MBBS currently, the Nabha youngster's interest was always in pursuing sport. A two-year training at Polo ground in nearby Patiala under coach Suresh in his U-10 days would see him winning medals at state level before



Jagsher Singh Khangura is one of the youngest players to make it to the main draw of the tournament. Nitin Sharma

Playing in China made me see the Chinese badminton culture and also understand the kind of fitness we need as we grow up. I have been a fan of Lee Chong Wei and the way he used his smash and deceptions. It all came due to his fitness and that's what juniors like us dream to practice.

-JAGSHER SINGH KHANGURAI

he shifted to Bahadurgarh to train at Shining Star Academy at the age of 11 in 2022.

The 22-months stint at the academy saw him reaching quarterfinals in the All India Ranking tourney in Goa in 2022 before he

shifted to Hyderabad to train at Gopichand Academy in Hyderabad. While the Patiala youngster would train in Hyderabad for six months only, he returned home for his ninth standard exams, making it to the quarter-finals in National Junior Ranking tournaments at Jaipur and Panchkula last year.

"When I told my parents about training at Ballabgarh, they were a bit skeptical of sending me alone but I knew I could manage. Coaches Chandan Kumar and Veronika Pratama would focus on spending time on stroke training like smash or drop or toss for 100-150 shots per 20 minute sessions and would make me compete in U-15 matches too. While I shifted to Hyderabad, I had to shift back for my studies," says the Indo-British School Nabha student.

Khangura also shifted base to Mumbai to train at Thane Badminton Academy to train under coach Shrikant Vad and alternated

with coach Nitesh Kumar at Virar last year.

The stint saw him winning bronze in the 35th U-15 Nationals at Hyderabad, where he also paired up with Dev Ruparelia to win the U15 doubles' silver. It also secured him a spot in the Indian team for Asian U15 Championship in China, where he reached the U15 semi-finals before losing to compatriot Akash Chhangmai.

He currently trains as Khelo India trainee at AM (Akshit Mahajan) badminton Academy in Zirakpur, Chandigarh. "Playing in China made me see the Chinese badminton culture and also understand the kind of fitness we need as we grow up. I have been a fan of Lee Chong Wei and the way he used his smash and deceptions. It all came due to his fitness and that's what juniors like us dream to practice. Even if we can achieve ten percent of it as a junior, it will help us" signs off the youngster.