

# THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI WEDNESDAY 25 SEPTEMBER 2024



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**Shah begins 2-day Maha visit; interacts with cadre, to review poll readiness**



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**Trump says he won't run again in four years if he loses November election**

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**Benny Golson, master saxophonist & composer of jazz, passes away at 95**



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RNI No. 57290/94, Regd No: DL-SW-05/4189/15-17

Vol. 31 No. 221 | 16 PAGES | ₹5.00

**WINDOWS**



**Chess Grandmaster D. Gukesh** being welcomed upon his arrival at the Chennai Airport on Tuesday. Gukesh won an individual gold and was also a part of the gold medal winning men's team at the recently concluded 45th Chess Olympiad. — **Report on Page 8** *PTI*

**Phase 2 elections in J&K today; 239 candidates in fray**

**Srinagar:** Thousands of well-equipped security personnel have been fanned out in half a dozen districts of Jammu and Kashmir's and all other necessary measures taken to ensure peaceful conduct of polling in the second phase of the Assembly elections on Wednesday. In this phase, over 25.78 lakh voters will decide the fate of 239 candidates. As many as 3, 502 polling stations with a 100 per cent webcasting have been set up across all 26 constituencies. The key contestants are former CM and NC vice-president Omar Abdullah, the JKPC chief Tariq Hameed Karra and his counterpart at the BJP's state unit Ravinder Raina. **Full report on Page 3**

**Actor-MLA Mukesh held & freed on bail**

**Kochi:** MLA of the ruling CPI(M) and actor M. Mukesh was arrested by the SIT in the rape case. His medical examination and potency test were carried out and then he was released as he had been granted anticipatory bail by a sessions court earlier this month. **Full report on Page 4**

**Widening of NRI quota: SC junks Punjab's plea**

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court on Tuesday dismissed the Punjab government's appeal against a high court verdict quashing its decision to expand the definition of "NRI quota" for admissions in undergraduate medical and dental courses in the state. **Full report on Page 3**

**COUNTERPOINT**



The actual fight is between rebels of our party and their party!

**WEATHER**

**Max:** 34°C  
**Min:** 27°C  
**RH:** 70%  
**Rain:** 20%

**Forecast:** Partly Cloudy

**ASTROGUIDE**

**Krodhi:** Dakshinayana  
**Tithi:** Bhadrpadaha Bahula Ashtami till 12.15 pm  
**Star:** Ardra till 10.27 pm  
**Varjyam:** 6.32 am to 8.10 am  
**Durmuhurtam:** 11.44 am to 12.32 pm  
**Rahukalam:** 12 noon to 1.30 pm  
**SUNSET TODAY 6.14 PM**  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.12 AM**  
**MOONRISE TOMORROW 12.02 AM**  
**MOONSET TODAY 1.53 PM**

**Grateful for support: Ukraine Prez ■ Too early to talk 2nd summit: FS PM holds talks with Zelenskyy at UN, vows to push Ukraine peace**

**SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI** with agency inputs NEW DELHI/NEW YORK, SEPT. 24



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy during a meeting in New York on Monday. — *PTI*

A month after his historic visit to Ukraine, Prime Minister Narendra Modi told Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at a meeting in New York on Tuesday (IST) that "India remains open to provide all support within its means to facilitate a lasting and peaceful resolution of the conflict", adding "India's clear, consistent and constructive approach was in favour of a peaceful resolution of the conflict through diplomacy and dialogue as well as engagement between all stakeholders". At the meeting on the sidelines of the Summit of the Future at the UN, New Delhi said the situation in Ukraine as well as the way forward on pursuing a path to peace figured prominently in their discussions.

At a special briefing on Tuesday hours before Mr Modi left for New Delhi, foreign secretary Vikram Misri said while the possibility of a second peace summit (after the first one in Switzerland in mid-June) figured in the talks,

**THE FOREIGN** secretary said Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meeting "demonstrates his commitment to finding a way forward and to contributing in any way possible to a resolution of Russia-Ukraine conflict".

"we are not, right now, at a stage where the second peace summit can be discussed in any detail". The foreign secretary also said Mr Modi's meeting "demonstrates his commitment to finding a way forward and to contributing in any way possible to a resolution of this con-

flict". He added that India's "voice in support of peace and a path to peace through dialogue and diplomacy was not a new one", and that "it is natural for us to assume this role".

After the meeting, the Ukraine President said discussions focused on "implementing the peace formula and preparing for the second peace summit", adding he was "grateful for the clear support (by India) of our sovereignty and territorial integrity". He also said the two leaders "had a substantive discussion on

**UN chief calls global situation 'unsustainable'**

**United Nations, Sept. 24:** UN secretary-general António Guterres warned world leaders on Tuesday that impunity, inequality and uncertainty are creating an "unsustainable world" where a growing number of countries believe they should have a "get out of jail free" card.

"We can't go on like this," he said as the General Assembly's annual debate among Presidents, Prime Ministers, monarchs and other leaders began.

Citing deepening geopolitical divisions, wars with no end in sight, climate change and nuclear and emerging weapons, he said humanity is "edging towards the unimaginable — a powder keg that risks engulfing the world."

But, he said: "The challenges we face are solvable" if the international community confronts the uncertainty of unmanaged risks, the inequality that underlies injustices and grievances. — *AP*

**Rahul targets BJP, claims it 'snatched' jobs from youth**

**Kejriwal plays victim card; vows to fight 'chor' slur**

**BHASKAR HARI SHARMA** NEW DELHI, SEPT. 24

The clash of political titans continues in poll-bound Haryana with Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi targeting the youth in a video recording and AAP supreme Arvind Kejriwal holding his second roadshow for the second consecutive day on Tuesday. Reaching out to the youth, Congress scion Rahul Gandhi accused the BJP, and specifically Prime Minister Narendra Modi, for lack of jobs, that eventually pushed them towards a "journey of torture" in seeking job opportunities abroad. Mr Kejriwal, meanwhile, playing the victim card, stepped up his attack during a roadshow in Rania Assembly constituency on the BJP-led Centre, alleging he was arrested as the ruling party wanted to project him as a "chor" (thief), but even his "fiercest enemy" believes that he is not corrupt.

Sharing a video on the social media, Mr Gandhi alleged that the BJP has done "grave injustice" to the country's youth, including those in Haryana, by snatching

**HARYANA CAMPAIGN**



Congress leader and Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi during the election campaign ahead of the Haryana Assembly polls in Karnal on Tuesday. — *PTI*

**RAHUL GANDHI** alleged that the BJP has done "grave injustice" to the youth, including those in Haryana, by snatching their employment opportunities

their employment opportunities and forced them to undertake a "journey of torture" to foreign countries.

He referred to his recent interaction in the US with some immigrants from Haryana who talked about unemployment back home, forcing them

to relocate to the US and face struggles in a foreign country. In his post in Hindi with the video, Mr Gandhi said: "Why did the youth of Haryana turn to Dunki?"

"Lakhs of families are paying the price of the 'disease' of unemployment spread by the BJP by being away from their loved ones. During my visit to America, I met youngsters from Haryana who are struggling in a foreign country, away from their families," the senior Congress leader

**Democracy is more important than staying in power, says Biden at UN**

**United Nations, Sept. 24:** Joe Biden gave a somber farewell address to the United Nations on Tuesday, using his own decision to drop out of the US presidential election to warn of the dangers of autocrats clinging to power around the globe.

The 81-year-old called on world leaders to stand up for democracy in the face of spiraling turmoil and conflict, urging support for Ukraine and pushing for peace in the Middle East.

But with six weeks until a vote that could bring the



Joe Biden

isolationist and election-denying Donald Trump back to power in the United States, Biden closed his speech by drawing lessons from his own life.

"This summer, I faced a decision whether to seek a second term as presi-

dent. It was a difficult decision. Being president has been the honor of my life, there's so much more I want to get done," Mr Biden said.

"As much as I love the job, I love my country more. I decided after 50 years of public service it's time for new generation of leadership to take my nation forward," he added.

The audience then applauded as he said: "My fellow leaders, let us never forget, some things are more important than staying in power." — *AFP*



Delhi chief minister Atishi offers prayers to Lord Shiva during her visit at the Hanuman temple at Connaught Place in New Delhi on Tuesday. — *PTI*

**Atishi prays at Hanuman Mandir after taking over**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT** NEW DELHI, SEPT. 24

A day after taking charge as Delhi chief minister, Ms Atishi on Tuesday visited the Hanuman Mandir at Connaught Place and prayed for his blessings to continue working for the people and restore Arvind Kejriwal to the CM's chair after the coming Assembly polls.

Lord Hanuman has been "protecting" the AAP and its government in the city, and Mr Kejriwal, from the attacks of its "enemies" for the past two years, Ms Atishi told the media after visiting the temple. The AAP's rivals had been trying to "break" the party and stall the Delhi government works for the people, she added.

"I sought the blessings of Lord Hanuman, who is our 'sankatmochan' (saviour), protecting us in all the crises, to continue working for Delhi's people and bring back Arvind Kejriwal as chief minister in the election," she said.

During the visit, the

**HC orders probe against K'taka CM in graft case**

**BJP demands Sidda's resignation**  
**CM plea on gov sanction rejected**

**M.B. GIRISH** BENGALURU, SEPT. 24

A single-judge bench of the Karnataka high court headed by Justice M. Nagappasanna on Tuesday ordered the holding of an inquiry/investigation against chief minister Siddaramaiah under Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, while rejecting the CM's prosecution under Section 218 of the Bharatiya Nagarika Suraksha Samhita, 2023, and also under Section 19 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988.

The high court verdict was delivered over a writ petition filed by chief minister Siddaramaiah on August 19 challenging the grant of sanction for his prosecution by governor Thaawarchand Gehlot on August 16 in connection with the alleged irregularities in the distribution of plots to B.M. Parvathi, wife of Mr Siddaramaiah, by the



Siddaramaiah

**THE HIGH** court verdict was delivered over a writ petition filed by CM Siddaramaiah on August 19 challenging the grant of sanction for his prosecution by governor in connection with the alleged irregularities

Development Authority (MUDA) in Mysore City.

After he filed a writ petition seeking quashing of the grant of sanction against his prosecution by the governor, the high court granted interim relief to Mr Siddaramaiah.

Earlier, the governor, acting on petitions by T.J. Abraham, Pradeep Kumar S.P. and

**NIA raids 11 spots in Tamil Nadu in Hizb-ut-Tahrir case**

**AMRESH SRIVASTAVA** NEW DELHI, SEPT. 24

The NIA on Tuesday conducted multiple searches across Tamil Nadu as part of its probe into an "anti-election campaign" promoted as part of a divisive conspiracy of the Hizb-ut-Tahrir a pan-Islamist organisation seeking to establish Islamic rule in the country.

The Central probe agency's sleuths conducted extensive searches at the houses of 11 suspects in

Chennai, Tambaram and Kanyakumari districts and seized various incriminating materials, including digital devices, unaccounted cash and literature belonging to Hizb-ut-Tahrir.

The case is related to causing and creating disaffection through various social media handles and campaigning against exercising electoral franchise or voting, deemed by Hizb-ut-Tahrir as un-Islamic or "haram".

**More on Page 4**

**Top Hezbollah commander killed in Israeli strike on Beirut**

**Beirut/Jerusalem, Sept. 24:** An Israeli airstrike on Beirut killed a senior Hezbollah commander on Tuesday as cross-border rocket attacks by both sides increased fears of a full-fledged war in the West Asia.

Israel's military said the airstrike on the Lebanese capital killed Ibrahim Qubaisi, who it said was the commander of Hezbollah's missiles and rocket force. Two security sources in Lebanon described him as a leading figure in the Iran-backed group's rocket division.

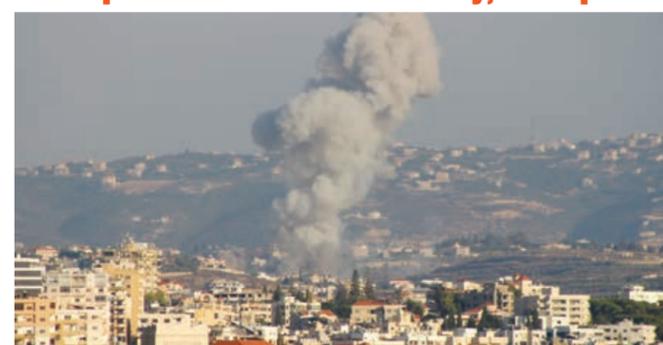
The attack dealt another blow to Hezbollah after a series of setbacks at the hands of Israel over the past week, and Israel later said it was carrying out "extensive strikes" on Hezbollah targets.

The pressure on Hezbollah has increased fears that nearly a year of conflict will explode and destabilise the oil-producing West Asia, where a war between Hamas and Israel is already raging in Gaza.

Israel is shifting its focus from Gaza to the northern frontier, where Hezbollah has been firing rockets into Israel in support of Hamas, which is also backed by Iran. — *Reuters*

**More on Page 6**

**Israel pounds Lebanon for 2nd day; toll tops 558**



Smoke billows after an Israeli airstrike targeted the southern Lebanese village of Abbasiyeh on Tuesday. Israel announced dozens of new airstrikes on Hezbollah strongholds in Lebanon, a day after 558 people, including 50 children, were killed in the deadliest day of violence since the Lebanese civil war. **Report on Page 6** — *AFP*

## IN BRIEF

**Mayor pulls up MCD over waste collection**

**New Delhi:** Citing the complaints received, Delhi mayor Dr Shelly Oberoi has directed the MCD commissioner to explain the reasons for failure in ensuring daily door-to-door waste collection across the city. In a letter to the commissioner, the mayor has asked several questions and has directed to share responses within two days by Thursday. "I have been receiving several complaints from councilors across all the MCD wards that waste collection agencies are failing to carry out daily door-to-door collection from their wards. This is leading to large piles of garbage being collected across localities of Delhi, which too are lying unattended for several days", civic body mayor wrote in her letter. "As you are already aware, carrying out door-to-door collection of waste isn't just a mandatory contractual obligation of the waste collection agencies, it is also a statutory responsibility of the MCD under Section the Solid Waste Management Rules 2016, as notified by the Government of India, which states the following duties and responsibilities of all local authorities," she added.

**City air turns poor as monsoon ends**

**New Delhi:** With the monsoon season nearing its end, the air quality in the national capital turned "poor" on Tuesday, officials said. According to the Central pollution control board (CPCB), the city's AQI at 9 pm was 204 — in the "poor" category. An AQI between 0-50 is considered "good", 51-100 "satisfactory", 101-200 "moderate", 201-300 "poor", 301-400 "very poor" and 401-500 "severe". The air quality early warning system for Delhi has predicted that the air quality is likely to be in the "moderate" category on Wednesday with a possibility of light rain. The predominant surface wind is expected to blow from the east/southeast directions with a wind speed of 8 to 12 kmph, it said. The day's maximum temperature was recorded at 37.4°C three notches above the season's average.

**Cong slams Atishi for 'gimmick'**

**New Delhi:** The Congress on Tuesday slammed Delhi chief minister Atishi for indulging in gimmicks instead of solving the problems of the city as dengue cases soar and broken roads and dust makes air pollution worse. Delhi Congress president Devender Yadav said that a two-day session of the Delhi Assembly will be held on September 26 and 27 after a gap of one year, but instead of setting the agenda for the session to address the myriad woes confronting the national capital, the CM is indulging in a gimmick. He said that keeping Mr Kejriwal's CM chair vacant by Atishi was a drama, and people were mocking her.

**L-G to top cop: Ensure ample police visibility**

**New Delhi:** Delhi lieutenant-governor V.K. Saxena has instructed the police commissioner Sanjay Arora to ensure ample police visibility in the city and to prepare a list of senior officers, who will be responsible for compliance and ensuring such visibility. A duty chart of the senior officers with details of their deployment and their phone numbers will be sent to the L-G Secretariat for regular monitoring. Mr Saxena, who has been consistently stressing on visible policing as the biggest deterrent against crime, has asked for police personnel on duty to be visibly present in all areas around the police beats.



Delhi chief minister Atishi during her visit at the Hanuman temple at Connaught Place in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

**Atishi meets HoDs, assures them of govt's full support**

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 24

Delhi chief minister Atishi held her first meeting with ministers and heads of various departments and agencies on Tuesday and assured them of her government's full support. Heads of around 26 departments, including the principal secretaries, secretaries, commissioners and directors, attended the meeting also attended by ministers Gopal Rai, Saurabh Bharadwaj, Kailash Gahlot, Imran Hussain and Mukesh Ahlawat, according to a statement issued by the chief minister's office (CMO).

The relations between the AAP dispensation and Delhi bureaucrats have been fraught.

In the meeting held at the Delhi Secretariat, Atishi said the government and the officers have full responsibility towards the people of Delhi and everyone should fulfil their responsibility in an efficient manner.

"Let us work together in

**Gahlot takes charge, returns as Delhi transport minister**

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 24

AAP MLA from Najafgarh, Kailash Gahlot, on Tuesday took charge as the minister for transport, home, administrative reforms and women and child development in the Delhi government led by chief minister Atishi. Mr Gahlot has retained the same portfolios he held in the previous government.

Mr Gahlot said he is for-

the interest of the people of Delhi. The work of officials has a significant impact on the lives of the people and as a government, we will provide full support to the officials in this," she said.

The Delhi government and the officers will together ensure that the welfare measures reach every needy person. It is the priority of the government to provide a better life to every citizen of



Kailash Gahlot

mer chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's 'Hanuman' and will clear all his pending works. "It is Tuesday today, the day of Hanumanji, and I will work like Hanuman of Arvind Kejriwal and clear all his pending works. The AAP worked well under his leadership and tried to establish Ram Rajya," Mr Gahlot said

Delhi and to live up to their expectations, the chief minister said.

"The Delhi government and the officials are fully accountable to the people. We all rely on the taxes paid by the people of Delhi, so it is our responsibility to work towards providing them with the best possible services and to fulfil our responsibilities with complete integrity," she said.

**No water supply in parts of west, southwest Delhi today**

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 24

There will be no water supply in parts of west and southwest Delhi on Wednesday due to repairing of a leakage in a pipeline near Niothi Mor, the Delhi Jal Board said.

According to a statement issued, the affected areas include Mohan Garden, Baprola Village, Bakkarwala Village, Dichaon, Maksoodabad, Laxmi Garden, Vindra Market, Bajrang Enclave, Ujwa, and Daultapur. "Due to the repairing of

leakage in the 1000mm diameter pipeline emanating from water treatment plant (WTP) Nangloi near Niothi Mor, the water supply in the affected areas will not be available from 8 am to 4 pm on September 25," the statement said.

The Jal board advised the residents of the affected areas to store a sufficient quantity of water and make judicious use of it. Water tankers will be available on demand from the DJB help line or the central control room, it said.

**Woman finds hidden cameras in her rented home, landlord's son arrested**

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 24

A 30-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly installing spy cameras in the bedroom and wash-room of his female tenant's home in East Delhi's Shakarpur area, the police said on Tuesday.

The victim, a civil service aspirant, was staying alone in the house for the past few months and would hand over the keys to her landlord's son, Karan, before going out of town.

The matter came to the fore after the woman noticed some unusual activity on her WhatsApp, DCP (East) Apoorva Gupta said.

"After being advised to check her linked devices, she discovered that her WhatsApp account was logged into an unknown laptop and she promptly logged out of it," she said.

The woman became more suspicious and began searching her apartment for hidden cameras or surveillance devices and she found one in the bulb holder of her bathroom, the officer said.

Following this, she made a PCR on Monday. A police team conducted a thorough search and found another camera installed in the bulb holder of her bedroom, DCP Gupta said.

The woman told the police that whenever she

**5 held, victim had broken glass of tempo of his neighbour****Mentally challenged man, 32, beaten to death in Rohini area**

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 24

A 32-year-old mentally challenged man was beaten to death allegedly for breaking the glass of a tempo parked near his house in Rohini's Prem Nagar area, the police said on Tuesday. The police said five suspects have been apprehended in connection with the incident while the probe was on to identify others.

According to a police officer, the incident took place in Agar Nagar locality of Prem Nagar on Monday night. Deepak was standing outside his house when a group of men attacked him with rods and sticks.

During the course of interrogation, it was found that Deepak was mentally challenged and had broken the glass of tempo belonging to his neighbour. Some people got agitated and beat him up at about 9.20 pm, the

**16-yr-old stabbed to death by friends for denying treat for his new phone**

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 24

A 16-year-old boy was stabbed to death allegedly by three of his juvenile friends in east Delhi's Shakarpur when he refused to give them a treat after buying a new phone, the police said on Tuesday. They said the juveniles, all aged 16 years and students of Class 9, have been apprehended.

Deputy commissioner of police Apoorva Gupta said a patrol team spotted blood stains on a street near Ramji Samosa shop in Shakarpur around 7.15 pm on Monday and con-

ducted an enquiry. She said the local people informed the team that a group of boys had stabbed one boy, who was taken to the LNJP Hospital.

The victim was identified as Sachin (16), who lived nearby, the official said, adding that the incident occurred in full public view.

Ms Gupta said Sachin succumbed to injuries in the hospital about an hour later and two stab wounds were found on his back.

The DCP said further investigation has revealed Sachin and one of his friends were returning home after buying a

officer said. Deepak was taken to a hospital by his family members where he was

declared dead. On the statement of the victim's father, a case of murder was registered and five

mobile phone when they ran into the three boys.

"The group demanded a party or a treat to celebrate the purchase but Sachin refused. An argument ensued, leading to the stabbing," Ms Gupta added.

She said a case under sections 103(1) and 3(5) of the BNS has been registered at the Shakarpur police station and the trio was apprehended from the locality on Tuesday.

The police used a CCTV footage to identify the accused.

A dagger used in the murder has also been recovered from the accused, the police said.

suspects were apprehended and interrogated further, the officer said.

**Delhi BJP chooses Raj for 2-day brainstorming meet**

SHASHI BHUSHAN and BHASKAR HARI SHARMA  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 24

Unconnected with the grassroots and away from power since 1998 in the city government, the Delhi BJP has chosen Rajasthan's Sawai Madhopur, 375 km away from the national capital, as the venue for a two-day brainstorming session to bring the party back into the reckoning for leading the Delhi government.

The two-day Delhi BJP extended core committee brainstorming session, to be held from September 28 in the desert state, will be attended by around the top 40 leaders of the party's state unit in the national capital.

A top party leader or Union minister is likely to attend the meet and provide guidance to the Delhi BJP to chalk out its strategy for next year's Assembly polls.

Apart from core committee members, all seven MPs and MLAs, three general secretaries and the general secretary (organisation), and presidents of different wings of Delhi BJP will attend the meeting.

A party insider said that a wider outline for the upcoming Assembly polls will be drawn with an eye on the changed political situation in the city.

APART FROM core committee members, all seven MPs and MLAs, three general secretaries and the general secretary (organisation), and presidents of different wings of Delhi BJP will attend the meeting

When questioned about the venue of the meeting, a Delhi BJP functionary said, "While brainstorming sessions may be effective in strategising the way forward for the party's comeback in the city government, it is always better to work on the feedback from the general public to assess what is plaguing the party's poll prospects at the ground."

"Instead of going out to unwind amid a fast-changing political situation, our leadership has hit the ground in the city," he said.

The two-day meet came amidst the fast-paced political developments in Delhi following the resignation of chief minister Arvind Kejriwal after his bail and Atishi taking over the top post.

The BJP had been demanding Mr Kejriwal's resignation for quite a long time but the way he resigned was in vain for the saffron camp and instead turned out to be in favour of the AAP.

Soon after he stepped down as the chief minister, the AAP supremo is going all in against the BJP accusing them of torturing him and gaining sympathy from the public.

Earlier this month, BJP state unit chief Virendra Sachdeva met party national president J.P. Nadda and briefed him about the changing political scenarios in the capital.

During that meeting, the Delhi BJP chief apprised Mr Nadda and sought the central leadership's guidance following which the BJP president is learnt to have advised Mr Sachdeva to focus on the BJP's poll preparedness in view of the forthcoming Delhi polls slated early next year and increase the party's public outreach and expose AAP and its leaders.

Party insiders claimed that the two-day session is scheduled to chalk out various strategies that might include dumping nearly two dozen "serial losers" including turncoats, making way for fresh faces and necessary organisational rejigs and public outreach. Planning out a strategy to expose AAP and its corruption will be among the top priorities.

The meet is in the offing in the backdrop of the BJP losing six consecutive Assembly elections since 1998.

**Excise 'scam': SC dismisses urgent hearing on bizman plea**

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 24

The Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to grant an urgent hearing on a plea filed by businessman Amane Singh Dhall, who has challenged the Delhi high court verdict denying him bail in a corruption case linked to the excise policy "scam".

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan declined the request of senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for Mr Dhall, who mentioned the matter for an early hearing of the plea.

"We have to think about poor litigants also. We cannot just bypass procedure of the Supreme Court," the bench said.

Stressing that Mr Dhall has been in custody for a long period, Mr Singhvi said: "He (Mr Dhall) got regular bail in the money laundering case filed by the Enforcement Directorate case. The findings in a more stringent Prevention of Money Laundering Act case in my favour. I am also seeking interim bail."

**15-yr-old girl raped by plumber in Sangam Vihar, accused on run**

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 24

A 15-year-old girl was allegedly raped by a plumber in south Delhi's Sangam Vihar area, the police said on Tuesday. The accused was identified as Mukesh who works as a plumber in the area, they said.

According to the police, the incident occurred on Sunday when the girl was alone at home. He entered her house and allegedly raped her. The girl informed her family about the incident who then approached the police.

A case was registered under section 65 (1) (rape of woman under 16 years of

age) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act against Mukesh, the police said.

A team has been formed to arrest the accused, the police added.

On the other hand, a 19-year-old youth has been arrested for allegedly trying to molest a minor girl in southwest Delhi's Vasant Vihar, the police said. According to the police, the girl's family alleged that she was going to attend the nature's call at a public toilet near their home on Sunday morning when Harender lured her to a vacant plot and tried to sexually assault her.

**Catch the wave: Govt launches contest to foster talent in animanga**

SHASHI BHUSHAN  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 24

In line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's pitch for "Design in India, Design for the World", the information and broadcasting ministry has launched the WAVES Anime and Manga Contest (WAM!) to nurture Indian creators to create localised versions of popular Japanese art forms for both domestic and international audiences.

Anime and manga refer to the distinctive styles of

Japanese animation and comics.

The contest, launched in collaboration with the Media and Entertainment Association of India (MEAI), is part of the "Create in India Challenge". It seeks to nurture local talent and tap into the growing interest in Japanese anime and manga among Indian audiences.

This initiative also serves as a precursor to the upcoming WAVES Summit, scheduled for early next year. WAM! provides a

THE GOAL is to establish a vibrant ecosystem for creative expression in manga and anime, enhancing India's presence in this popular global art form

unique platform for Indian creators to showcase their work, with substantial marketing support and opportunities for global recognition. The goal is to establish a vibrant ecosystem for creative expression in manga and anime, enhancing

India's presence in this popular global art form.

Talking about the immense potential of Webtoons, Anime and Manga in India and the world, information and broadcasting secretary Sanjay Jaju said, "With its rich storytelling, creative styles and vibrant artistry, WAM! has the capability of elevating Indian talent on a global stage, inspiring a new generation to dream boldly and connect deeply with the global tapestry of creativity. The potential also

lies in catering to the high demand among Indian consumers for such creatively weaved stories, enriching our creative landscape."

Mr Jaju also highlighted that the WAM! contest will be held across 10 states, promoting healthy competition among students and professionals.

"This will cultivate healthy competition among students and professionals, encouraging innovation and skill development. By providing platforms for showcasing their talent, we

can inspire excellence and effectively identify emerging talent within the industry," Mr Jaju said.

MEAI Secretary Ankur Bhasin added, "The launch of WAM! marks a significant step in bringing the vibrant culture of anime and manga to the forefront in India. By providing a platform for talented creators to showcase their work and reach global audiences, we are not only fostering creativity but also strengthening the 'Create in India' vision."



The two cameras installed by the accused.

went out of town, she gave her house keys to Karan, who lives on a different floor of the same building.

During interrogation, Karan admitted that three months ago, when she left for her hometown in Uttar Pradesh, she had handed over her keys to him, the DCP said.

Taking advantage of this, Karan bought three spy cameras commonly available in electronics markets and installed one in her bedroom and the other in her bathroom.

During further investigation, another spy camera was recovered from Karan's possession, along with two laptops used to store the recorded videos, a police officer said.

A case under Section 77 (voyeurism) of the BNS was registered at Shakarpur police station and Karan was arrested, the police said.

Karan is a graduate and has also been preparing for competitive exams for the last seven years. He is differently abled, it said.

**MUNICIPAL CORPORATION OF DELHI**  
Office of the Assistant Commissioner  
Shahdara North Zone

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**AUCTION NOTICE**

The unclaimed miscellaneous goods/articles such as Rehr, wooden tables, chairs, stalls & counters, utensils, Peti and Plastic Crates, Iron Chairs, Weighing Machine, Manually Dharam Kanta, Sewing Machine, Cycle, Chulah Bhatti, Waste Plastic/Polythene etc. seized from public land/Govt. land/footpath, shops etc. under section 147 & 322 of the DMC Act, 1957, will be auctioned (excluding unclaimed seized vehicles) on 27<sup>th</sup> Sep., 2024 at 11:00 A.M. in the Municipal Store, under Shahdara Flyover of Shahdara North Zone, Delhi.

Every intending bidder shall have to deposit a sum of Rs. 50,000/- (Rs. Fifty Thousand only) as Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) in the shape of Demand Draft/Pay Order in favour of COMMISSIONER, "MUNICIPAL CORPORATION OF DELHI" on or before 25.09.2024 which will be refunded/adjusted after the auction is over. The highest bidder shall have to deposit the entire remaining bid amount (after adjusting EMD) through Demand Draft, latest by 28.09.2024. The goods will be auctioned "As is and where is basis".

The intending bidders can inspect the proposed auctioned items/goods/articles on 25.09.2024 between 01:00 PM to 03:00 PM in the Municipal Store, under Shahdara Flyover of Shahdara North Zone, Delhi.

**Admin Officer**  
R.O. No. 31/DP/MCD/2024-25  
Shahdara North Zone

SHORT TAKES

'World record' by rlys in derailments: Didi

**Kolkata:** West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday mocked the Indian Railways, asserting that it has created a 'world record' in derailments. Ms Banerjee's comments came hours after a few wagons of an empty goods train jumped tracks in the state's Jalpaiguri district. "What is happening with the Railways? Even today, there is the news of derailment. The Railways has created a world record in derailments. But, nobody says anything?" she told reporters after an administrative review meeting in Birbhum. "People's safety and security is in danger, and they are scared of travelling in trains. Where is the railway minister? Only asking for votes during elections will not help, you have to be by the side of people when they are in danger," ms Banerjee said. Five wagons of an empty goods train derailed at New Maynaguri railway station in Jalpaiguri district on Tuesday morning. — PTI

RSS' office in Delhi gets completion nod

**New Delhi:** The Delhi urban arts commission has (Duac) gave its approval for the completion of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's new office in central Delhi's Jhandewalan area, paving way for its inauguration. In its August 1 meeting, the Commission had rejected the application for its no objection certificate (NOC), citing lack of documentation. According to official document, the Duac took the decision to give the certificate to the new office of RSS at a meeting on August 29. The no objection certificate has been given to two 12-storey towers of the RSS office in Keshav Kunj. The buildings have facilities like meeting rooms, conference halls and libraries. The RSS will complete 100 years of its foundation next year. — PTI

500 Tripura militants surrender before CM

**Agartala:** Around 500 militants belonging to outlawed groups National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) and All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF) on Tuesday laid down arms before chief minister Manik Saha. While welcoming the militants to the mainstream at a function in Jampuijala in Sepahijala district, the chief minister asserted that militancy is not the solution to any problem. He also declared the northeastern state "completely militancy free" after the mass surrender. "The Centre and the state have been working for the overall development of indigenous people by launching different schemes. I welcome those who have shunned the path of violence and joined the mainstream," Saha said. — PTI

'PARL USING AI FOR PROCEEDINGS IN MANY LANGUAGES'

**AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT 24**

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Tuesday said that artificial intelligence and machine learning technologies were put to use to make available House proceedings in different regional languages to members of Parliament. Addressing a press conference in Parliament House complex, Mr Birla said that the Lok Sabha Secretariat was also sharing its expertise in technology with legislatures of states and Union territories to speed up the process of digitisation. The Lok Sabha Speaker said that during the two-day conference, presiding officers of state legislatures from across the country also deliberated on the agenda of the upcoming 67th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) in Sydney from November 3-8. According to Mr Birla, the CPC has short-listed eight topics including support of legislatures to promote LGBTQ+ participation, use of artificial learning (AI) in parliamentary proceedings, violence and abuse of parliamentarians, human trafficking, refugees and immigration across commonwealth nations for deliberation by participants.



Om Birla

Shah begins Maha visit to review poll preparedness

Urges party workers to reach out to voters with govt schemes

**BHAGWAN PARAB MUMBAI, SEPT. 24**

With an aim of improving BJP's performance in the upcoming Vidhan Sabha polls in Maharashtra, Union home minister Amit Shah has urged the party workers to make extra efforts and reach out to the voters with various government schemes.

Mr Shah kickstarted his two-day Maharashtra visit with a party meeting in Nagpur, where he interacted with key office-bearers of all the 62 state Assembly constituencies of Vidarbha region.

"The party workers should keep it in mind that without winning Vidarbha, we will not be able to form the next Mahayuti government in Maharashtra. Hence, they should work wholeheartedly to ensure the victory of all Mahayuti candidates," he said.

He also warned the party workers saying rebellion and disillusionment will not be allowed in the party. "Our main aim is to stop the



Union home minister Amit Shah with Maharashtra deputy chief minister Devendra Fadnis and state BJP president Chandrashekhar Bawankule during a meeting in Nagpur on Tuesday. — PTI

Opposition MVA alliance from coming to power in Maharashtra," Mr Shah said.

Vidarbha holds a key to BJP's performance as it suffered a severe setback in the recently held Lok Sabha elections. The saffron party won only two of the 10 Lok Sabha seats in the Vidarbha region. In the 2019 Vidhan Sabha polls, the BJP had won 29 of the 44 seats it contested. In the meeting, Mr Shah listed many achieve-

ments of the Narendra Modi-led government, like scrapping Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir, constructing the grand Ram Mandir in Ayodhya and revoking triple talaq.

After Nagpur, Mr Shah will also hold meetings with BJP workers at Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar, Nashik and Kolhapur. He will review the party's election preparations in these regions for the Assembly polls.

2019 Pulwama accused dies of heart attack in Jammu hospital

**AGE CORRESPONDENT SRINAGAR, SEPT. 24**

Bilal Ahmed Kuchay, a resident of Hajbal village of Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama district, arrested by the police in connection with the deadly 'Pulwama attack' in which, at least, 40 CRPF personnel were killed and eight others injured in February 2019, died in a Jammu hospital following a massive cardiac arrest overnight, the officials said on Tuesday.

They said that Kuchay had been shifted to Jammu's Government Medical College Hospital from a jail in Kishtwar district on September 17 for receiving specialised treatment. He was lodged in the Kishtwar district jail since July 5, 2020, they said.

On February 14, 2019, a suicide bomber Adil Ahmed Dar alias 'Waqas Commando', an alleged Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM) cadre, rammed a Maruti (Suzuki) Eeco laden with deadly RDX into a CRPF bus after driving it parallel to a fully occupied vehicle which was part of a large CRPF convoy at Lethapora in Pulwama district, killing and maiming security personnel on board.

Kuchay and 18 other accused in the case were chargesheeted by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on August 25, 2020. He was among the seven accused arrested in the case.

He and the other accused Shakir Bashir, Insha Jan and Peer Tariq Ahmad Shah had provided logistics and harboured the JeM terrorists in their homes.



Railway minister Ashwini Vaishnaw during an inspection visit of the under-construction Gandhinagar Railway Station in Jaipur on Tuesday. — PTI

TMC don Mondal returns to WB, gets a hero's welcome

'I was with Mamata ji and will always remain with her'

**RAJIB CHOWDHURI KOLKATA, SEPT. 24**

Trinamul Congress' Birbhum strongman Anubrata Mondal, who returned home on Tuesday nearly two years after his arrest by the CBI in the cattle smuggling scam, received a hero's welcome from his party workers.

Mr Mondal was released from Tihar Jail on Monday after he was granted bail by a Delhi court. He flew to Kolkata on Tuesday morning along with his daughter Sukanya Mondal and travelled to his residence at Nichupatty in Bolpur.

Speaking to reporters outside his house, Mr Mondal said, "Mamata Banerjee is coming. I was with Didi and will always remain with her. I convey my Durga Puja greetings to all. My legs are not in good condition. Still, I may try to meet her."

Hundreds of TMC workers, waiting since dawn for their favourite leader's arrival, greeted him when



TMC leader Anubrata Mondal with his daughter Sukanya Mondal arrives at his home in West Bengal's Birbhum on Tuesday. — PTI

he reached his residence in a convoy. They erupted in joy and shouted "Kestoda, Kestoda", Mr Mondal's nickname, and showered flowers on him.

A huge contingent of

Plan to add momentum in connectivity and trade sector Modi, Vietnam Prez To Lam discuss ways to deepen ties

**AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 24**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday (IST) met Vietnamese President To Lam, also the general secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam, on the sidelines of the UN's Summit of the Future in New York. The two leaders discussed ways to enhance the ties between the two countries and add momentum in sectors such as connectivity, trade and culture.

India has very strong strategic ties with Vietnam spanning decades and both nations have in the previous decades fought separate border wars against China.

In a statement, New Delhi said, "The Prime Minister congratulated President To Lam on assuming enhanced leadership responsibilities and expressed hope for continued collaboration and strengthening bilateral ties between India and Vietnam. The PM reiterated his sym-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi meets members of the Sikh community in New York on Monday. — PTI

pathy and solidarity with Vietnam in the face of loss and damage caused by Typhoon Yagi earlier this month. President and general secretary To Lam thanked the PM for the timely supply of emergency humanitarian assistance and disaster relief by India under Operation Sadbhav."

Both leaders reaffirmed the importance of deep civilisational and cultural links and growing strategic ties, marked by unwavering mutual trust, understanding and shared interests between

the two countries, New Delhi said, adding, "Recalling the visit of Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh to India last month, they discussed prospects of advancing bilateral cooperation and further strengthening the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the two countries. The leaders also exchanged views on important regional and global issues, including the Indo-Pacific and underscored a collective role for Global South at international platforms."

Union home minister Amit Shah on Tuesday congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his successful US visit and said it further fortified the "Modi doctrine of diplomacy" which has propelled Bharat as a global change-maker over the last 10 years.

US tour fortifies 'Modi doctrine of diplomacy': Shah

**AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 24**

He also said that the successful Quad summit, the "Modi & US" mega community event and the UN's Summit of the Future reflect the Prime Minister's unmatched popularity across the globe. "Congratulations to PM on the successful three-day tour to the US. The tour further fortifies the Modi doctrine of diplomacy, which over the last 10 years has propelled Bharat to the role of a global change-maker," Mr Shah said.

Omar, BJP's Raina & JKPCC chief in fray J&K Ph-2 polls today; over 25L voters set to decide fate of 239

**YUSUF JAMEEL SRINAGAR, SEPT. 24**

Thousands of well-equipped security personnel have been fanned out in half a dozen districts of Jammu and Kashmir and all other necessary measures have been taken to ensure peaceful polling in the second phase of the Assembly elections on Wednesday, officials said.

In this phase, over 25.78 lakh voters will decide the fate of 239 candidates. The key contestants are former chief minister and National Conference (NC) vice-president Omar Abdullah, JKPCC chief Tariq Hameed Karra and BJP state unit chief Ravinder Raina.

While Mr Abdullah is seeking election simultaneously from family turf Ganderbal and Budgam — both in the Kashmir Valley, Mr Raina is hoping to retain the Nowshera seat in the frontier Rajouri district which he won in 2014. Mr Karra is fighting for Srinagar's Shalteng seat as a candidate of the NC-Congress combine.

Other prominent faces



Security personnel stand guard outside a polling booth near the Line of Control ahead of the Phase-2 of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly polls in Nowshera of Rajouri district on Tuesday. — PTI

in the fray include former ministers Syed Altaf Bukhari, Ali Muhammad Sagar, Abdul Rahim Rather, Aseem Naqash, Choudhary Zulfikar Ali and Syed Mushtaq Bukhari, former Speaker of the J&K state Assembly Mubarak Gul and former mayors of Srinagar Junaid Azim Mattu and Salman Sagar.

Even though it faced a tough challenge from its competitors in almost every segment throughout the campaigning, the

NC-Congress combine has an edge over them in this phase, both in the Valley and Pir Panjal region, given the mood of the electors.

In the first phase of the J&K Assembly elections being held after a gap of over 10 years, the polling took place on September 18 in 24 segments with a voter turnout of 61.13 per cent. The third phase of voting will be held on October 1 whereas the counting of votes will take place on October 8.

'Fraud must end': SC junks Punjab's plea on NRI quota

**AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 24**

Dismissing the Punjab government's appeal against a high court verdict quashing its decision to expand the definition of "NRI quota" for admissions in undergraduate medical and dental courses in the state, the Supreme Court on Tuesday said, "This fraud must come to an end now."

On September 10, the Punjab and Haryana high court trashed the AAP-led state government's August 20 move extending the ambit of the NRI quota to include distant relatives "such as uncles, aunts, grandparents and cousins" of NRIs for admissions under 15 per cent quota for this group in admissions in medical colleges.

"This is nothing but a money-spinning machine," observed a bench of Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud and Justices J.B. Pardiwala and Manoj Misra.

"We will dismiss all the petitions. This NRI business is nothing but a fraud. We will put an end to all this... Now the so-called precedents must give way to the primacy of

SC to consider review of sub quota verdict

**AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 24**

The Supreme Court is scheduled to consider in-chambers on Tuesday a batch of pleas seeking review of its judgment which held that states are constitutionally empowered to make sub-classifications within the Scheduled Castes, which form a socially heterogeneous class, for granting reservation.

The decision of the seven-judge Constitution bench comprising Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud could become public when the order is uploaded on the apex court website subsequently.

law," the top court said.

Dubbing the high court verdict "absolutely right", the bench said, "Look at the deleterious consequences... The candidates who have three times higher marks will lose admission (in Neet-UG courses)."

OBC row: WB seeks early hearing of its plea in SC

**AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 24**

The West Bengal government on Tuesday sought an urgent hearing on its plea in the Supreme Court against a Calcutta high court verdict striking down the OBC status of several castes, mostly Muslim groups, for granting reservation to them in public sector jobs and state-run educational institutions.

State government's counsel Kapil Sibal told a bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud that the plea along with other petitions needed to be heard as the issues like issuance of OBC certificate is stalled.

He said the authorities are unable to issue caste certificates to those seeking quota benefits in admissions, including entry to medical colleges. Though the cases are listed for hearing in the day's list, they are unlikely to be heard, he said.

The case was mentioned earlier also for an urgent matter on September 13. The SC had said it would consider advancing the date of the hearing on a plea of the Bengal government against the HC verdict.

MP dumps 52-yr-old rule, ends tax privilege for Speaker & LoP

**RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY BHOPAL, SEPT. 24**

Madhya Pradesh government on Tuesday dumped decades-old rule by deciding to discontinue the practice of paying income-tax of the Speaker of the state Assembly and the Leader of Opposition (LoP) in the House.

The decision was taken at the meeting of the state council of ministers held under the chairmanship of chief minister Mohan Yadav. The state government used to bear the income-tax of the state Assembly Speaker and the LoP earlier.

The move comes close on the heels of a similar decision taken relating to the state minister earlier.

As per a rule made in 1972, the state exchequer needed to bear the income-tax of the state ministers. The govt's move comes close on the heels of a similar decision taken relating to the state minister earlier.

The state Cabinet at its meeting on June 25 had struck down a 52-year-old rule entitling the state ministers to a special privilege under which the state government paid their income-tax.

As per a rule made in 1972, the state exchequer needed to bear the income-tax of the state ministers.

In another move, the state council of ministers cleared the proposal to

demolish the MLA rest house in the state capital and build 102 new quarters for the lawmakers at a cost of ₹159 crore.

Mr Yadav declared on the occasion that the next meeting of his Cabinet would be held at Singrampur, under Damoh district in Madhya Pradesh, in honour of Rani Durgavati, who was known for standing up to the mighty Mughal Empire.

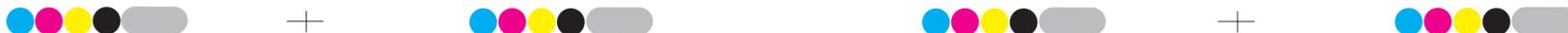
The CM further announced that this year's Dussehra festival would be celebrated with "Sasthra Pujan" (worship of arms). While he would perform the 'Sasthra Pujan' at the fort city of Maheshwar, the capital of the region Ahyalya Bai.

Goyal on US visit next wk for trade talks

**AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 24**

Even as Prime Minister Narendra Modi concluded his successful visit to the United States, American deputy chief of (DCM) in New Delhi Jorgan K. Andrews Tuesday said that the India-US commercial dialogue and the CEOs forum would be held next week in the US, with Union minister for commerce and industry Piyush Goyal and US secretary of commerce Gina Raimondo scheduled to co-chair the meetings.

He added that the strengthening and robust ties have provided "tremendous benefit" for people in both the countries.



SHORT TAKES

**Man rapes 9-yr-old girl in MP village**

**Bhopal:** A nine-year-old girl was raped when she was grazing goats on the outskirts of her village in Morena district in Madhya Pradesh, police said on Tuesday. The victim, according to police, was found lying unconscious in an agriculture field in her village of Nagra early on Tuesday morning. The incident took place late on Monday evening, as the victim used to graze goats owned by her family every evening on the outskirts of her village, and was raped after the accused found her alone on the fateful day, police said. She was admitted to the intensive care unit (ICU) of the district hospital at Morena. The accused, a 28-year-old man, was arrested on Tuesday morning, and was booked under the relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and protection of children from sexual offences (Pocso), police said.

**Truck, autorickshaw collide in MP, 7 die**

**Damoh:** Seven persons were killed and three others were seriously injured in a collision between a truck and an autorickshaw in Damoh district of Madhya Pradesh on Tuesday, police said. The incident occurred between 1.30 pm and 2 pm near Samanna village, said Damoh superintendent of police Shrutikirti Somvanshi. The injured persons were rushed to Jabalpur through a special corridor created on the road. "Police personnel and residents of the village rushed to the spot to launch the rescue operation," the police officer said. Further details are awaited. — PTT

**Kolkata's Alipore Zoo turns 150**

**Kolkata:** The oldest zoo in India "Alipore Zoological Garden in Kolkata" turned 150 on Tuesday, as two new enclosures were thrown open to the public and a book detailing the journey of the facility was launched. Inaugurated on September 24, 1875, the zoo covers an area of 19 hectares, housing around 1,265 animals. The renovated heritage building of the zoo was also opened during the day. The zoo director Subhankar Sengupta said two new gates on Alipore Road and National Library Avenue were also inaugurated on the occasion. "The renovated heritage building has enclosures having unique species like mouse deer, four-horned antelope and hog deer," he said in a statement. Two new enclosures housing species like Bengal fox and leopard cat were also unveiled, Sengupta said. Besides, a 150-year memorial book "Calcutta Zoo Metamorphosed into Kolkata Zoo" was published. — PTT

**Rape cases: Actor Mukesh arrested, Sidhique on run**

*Ruling LDF MLA interrogated by SIT, released on bail*

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, SEPT. 24

Legal action against Malayalam actors Mukesh and Siddique intensified on Tuesday as the special investigation team (SIT) arrested Mukesh in Ernakulam in connection with a sexual harassment case, while the Kerala high court rejected Siddique's anticipatory bail plea in a rape case filed against him by a female actor.

Actor and ruling LDF MLA Mukesh was interrogated for three hours by a team led by assistant inspector-general G. Poonkuzhali and then taken for a medical examination at a government hospital in Ernakulam. Later, he was released on bail.

Meanwhile, after the Kerala HC order, actor Siddique is reportedly evading arrest and the police has launched a manhunt. The court, while denying the bail, described the allegations as grave. It noted that the complainant had faced character assassination and emphasised that every woman deserves respect, regardless of the circumstances. The court also



Police personnel take MLA and actor Mukesh after he was interrogated by AIG at the coastal police office in Kochi on Tuesday. — PTT

asserted that custodial interrogation of the actor is necessary to facilitate a thorough investigation.

In the meantime, the police has issued a look-out notice for the actor, whose phones are currently turned off.

The probe team has gathered substantial evidence and testimonies in the case filed by the young actress against Siddique. Reacting to the denial of bail to Siddique, the complainant said she was

happy with the development. "Life is a boomerang, and you will receive back what you give," the survivor wrote on Facebook.

Cases related to sexual harassment were registered against several actors after survivors filed complaints with the special investigation team (SIT), which was constituted by the Kerala government after the publication of the Hema Committee report.

**NIA charges 2 B'luru café blast case accused of terror funding**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 24

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Tuesday filed a chargesheet against two men for their involvement in radicalising Muslim youth and terror funding among other anti-national activities.

The duo have been identified as ISIS radicals — Abdul Matheen Ahmed Taaha alias Taha and Mussavir Hussain Shazib alias Shazib — who were earlier chargesheeted by the NIA in the Rameshwaram Cafe blast case, according to an official statement.

"The two men, residents of Shivamogga district, were engaged in radicalising and recruiting gullible Muslim youths, including the co-accused, in the instant case," the probe agency said in the statement.

The Central probe agency filed its third supplementary chargesheet against both the radicals before a special court here.

**NCPCR plea seeking probe into J'khand shelter homes junked**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 24

Dismissing a plea by National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) seeking an SIT probe into cases of children allegedly sold by shelter homes — in Jharkhand — of the Missionaries of Charity founded by Mother Teresa, the Supreme Court on Tuesday asked the agency not to drag the court in its agenda.

A bench of Justices B.V. Nagarathna and Nongmeikapam Kotsiwar Singh slammed the NCPCR and dismissed its plea, saying, the relief sought is vague and omnibus, and it cannot be considered.

"Don't drag the Supreme Court into your agenda. What kind of relief is sought in your petition? How can we pass such directions? The petition is totally misconstrued," the bench told the lawyer representing the NCPCR.

NCPCR's counsel submitted that the plea has

sought direction for an SC-monitored time-bound investigation of all such organisations in Jharkhand to ensure protection of children.

The SC said the NCPCR was empowered to conduct enquiry and take action in accordance with law under the Child Rights (CPCR) Act, 2005.

In its 2020 plea, the NCPCR said, "During the course of inquiry by the petitioner (NCPCR), shocking revelations were made by the victims that included the factum that the children were being sold in the children's homes. These facts were emphatically brought to the notice of the state government (Jharkhand), but continuous attempts were made to sabotage and derail the inquiry."

ernor Thawarchand Gehlot had "rejected prosecution sought by the petitioners under Section 19C of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 before he accorded grant of sanction against me". "I will consult legal experts, president of Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) and deputy chief minister D.K. Shivakumar, and ministerial colleagues to decide on future course of action," he said, and added: "I will react more to the high court judgment only after going through the order in detail."

He also ruled out his resignation in the wake of investigation ordered against him by the high court and said: "The conduct of an enquiry does not mean that I have done something wrong... I have done nothing wrong," asserted the CM.

Meanwhile, state BJP president and MLA B.Y. Vijayendra sought the resignation of chief minister Siddaramaiah by respecting the verdict of the high court and observed that the CM and the state government have lost their moral right to continue in office.

The Karnataka BJP unit termed the high court judgment "a slap to the scammers" and said the court had slammed CM Siddaramaiah for abuse of power and undue influence, stating that without his position, such benefits would never have come.

**Modi holds talks with Zelensky at UN, vows to push Ukraine peace**

**Continued from Page 1**

It may be noted that as New Delhi is clearly playing peacemaker and is working along with other nations for an acceptable peace formula to end the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the foreign secretary had earlier said India is having a "set of conversations" with its important partners on the issue of the conflict that has raged on for more than two and a half years. This was the third in-person meeting between the two leaders in the last four months, which included Mr Modi's high-profile visit to Ukraine when he was hosted by President Zelensky, and also their earlier meeting in June on the sidelines of the G-7 meeting in Italy. India has strong relations with both its time-tested friend Russia and Ukraine and is therefore in a strong position to strive as peacemaker with both sides towards peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Russia had launched a military offensive in neighbouring Ukraine in February 2022. Mr Modi had also visited Russia in July and will visit that country again next month for the Brics summit in Kazan.

Mr Misri, meanwhile, also said: "The PM's meeting with Mr Zelensky also reflects his own, in a sense, commitment to this effort. Because he's deeply concerned by this conflict, not

just in terms of the human toll it is taking, something he has recognised, but also in terms of the toll that it is taking on the world at large, and especially on countries in the Global South... The discussions covered a lot of issues related to the issue of finding a way forward. A number of things came up in this, the peace summit that was held in Switzerland, the ideas that have been floated after that, the efforts that Ukraine is making on its own, and the possibility of a second peace summit that Ukraine has been talking about. But I think we are not, right now, at a stage where the second peace summit can be discussed in any detail. I think there is a lot of work that remains to be done before that. So there was not a great deal of discussion on that specific issue."

President Zelensky said after the meeting: "We are actively developing our relations and working together to strengthen cooperation across various fields. The main focus of our conversation was on enhancing our interaction on international platforms, particularly at the UN and G-20, as well as implementing the peace formula and preparing for the second peace summit. We had a substantive discussion on the available opportunities. I am grateful for the clear support of our sovereignty and territorial integrity."

**HC orders probe against K'taka CM in graft case**

**Continued from Page 1**

Snehmayi Krishna, gave his sanction for prosecution against Mr Siddaramaiah under Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and under Section 218 of the Bharatiya Nagarika Suraksha Samhita, 2023 over alleged irregularities in plot distribution to the CM's wife.

While issuing grant of sanction for prosecution against Mr Siddaramaiah, the governor stated: "I am prima facie satisfied that the allegations and the supporting materials (by petitioners) disclose commission of offences."

The governor observed: "It is very necessary that a neutral, objective and non-partisan investigation should be conducted (into the allegations)."

In his writ petition, Mr Siddaramaiah said his wife Parvathi has been compensated for having lost her lands to MUDA and MUDA agreed to the compensatory mechanism to allot 38, 284 sq ft in lieu of the 1, 48, 104 sq ft of land lost.

The writ petition by the CM said there was no legal infirmity or procedural irregularity in the compensation given to his wife by MUDA in the compensatory mechanism adopted by it.

The chief minister contended no illegalities in plot distribution nor procedural irregularities occurred. On the high court verdict, the CM pointed out that gov-

**'Religious outfit seeks to establish Islamic rule in India' NIA raids 11 locations in TN in probe against Hizb-ut-Tahrir**

**AMRESH SRIVASTAVA**  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 24

The NIA on Tuesday conducted multiple searches across Tamil Nadu as part of its probe into an "anti-election campaign" promoted as part of a divisive conspiracy of the Hizb-ut-Tahrir — a pan-Islamist organisation seeking to establish Islamic rule in the country.

The Central probe agency's sleuths conducted extensive searches at the houses of 11 suspects in Chennai, Tambaram and Kanyakumari districts and seized various

incriminating materials, including digital devices, unaccounted cash and literature belonging to Hizb-ut-Tahrir.

The case is related to causing and creating disaffection through various social media handles and campaigning against exercising electoral franchise or voting, deemed by Hizb-ut-Tahrir as un-Islamic or "haram".

The Hizb-ut-Tahrir is an organisation engaged in instigating its followers to overthrow the lawfully established democratic government through divisive actions.

**HAMEED HUSSAIN**, a key conspirator in the case, had collaborated with five other accused persons to hold secret meetings to promote the anti-India ideology of Hizb-ut-Tahrir

Hameed Hussain, a key conspirator in the case, had collaborated with five other accused persons to hold secret meetings to promote the anti-India ideology of Hizb-ut-Tahrir.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) probe in the case so

far has revealed that the accused, along with several groups of people, carried out campaigns throughout Tamil Nadu to establish "Khilafah" or Islamic rule in India and had been involved in activities aimed at dividing the people and disrupting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country. Investigations in the case, taken over by the NIA from Chennai police in July this year, are continuing and the material seized during the searches is being examined, the anti-terror agency said in a statement.

**2 slain on Monday carried ₹41L bounty 2 Naxals killed in C'garh, aides manage to escape with bodies**

**RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY**  
RAIPUR, SEPT. 24

Two Maoists were suspected to have been killed in an encounter with security personnel in the Chhattisgarh's Nayanpur district under south Bastar on Tuesday.

The encounter took place in a hilly-forested area situated on the bank of the Chintavagu river early on Tuesday morning, the police said.

However, Maoists succeeded in carrying with them the bodies of the two slain Naxals while fleeing the spot, the cops claimed. Meanwhile, two of the three Maoists slain in an encounter in Abujhmad

**ENCOUNTER HELD** in a hilly area in Abujhmad, bordering Nayanpur in Bastar and Gadchiroli district in Maharashtra

in Chhattisgarh's Nayanpur district on September 23 were senior leaders who collectively carried bounties of ₹41 lakhs, the police said on Tuesday.

The two slain Maoists have been identified as Rupesh, a member of Dandakaranya zonal committee, and Jagdish, a divisional committee member of the outlawed CPI(Maoists). Bastar range inspector general of police P. Sunderraj told this newspaper.

Rupesh, who headed the west sub-zone of Maoists, carried a reward of ₹25 lakhs on his head, while Jagdish, the commander of company number 10 of Naxals, had a bounty of ₹16 lakhs declared on him by the police.

The third slain Naxal, a woman, was yet to be identified, Mr Sunderraj said.

The encounter occurred in a hilly area in Abujhmad, bordering Nayanpur in Bastar and Gadchiroli district in Maharashtra, at around 4 pm Monday, the cops said.

A huge cache of arms and ammunition, including one AK 47, one self-loaded rifle and one Insas assault rifle, were recovered at the encounter site.

**CID will probe death of Thane accused; father seeks SIT probe**

**BHAGWAN PARAB**  
MUMBAI, SEPT. 24

The crime investigation department (CID) in Maharashtra will investigate the death of Akshay Shinde, the prime accused in the Badlapur sexual assault of two kindergarten girls, who was shot dead by the police on Monday.

As the incident concerns death in police custody, it will be investigated by the Maharashtra CID. CID officials will also record statements of Akshay Shinde's parents, a senior official said.

However, the father of Akshay has moved the Bombay high court seeking probe by a special investigation team (SIT) into the death.

A CID team will visit the spot at Mumbra bypass where the incident took place. They will also record statements of police personnel who were in the vehicle at that time, he added.

Shinde's body was taken from the Kalwa civic hospital in Thane to the state-run JJ Hospital in Mumbai for a post-mortem on Tuesday morning. The autopsy was being conducted at the JJ hospital. It was again taken back to the Kalwa hospital.

After completing relevant formalities, it would be handed over for the last rites to the family, a senior police official from Thane said.

However, Akshay's mother and uncle alleged it was a conspiracy by the police and management of the Badlapur school.

**Unnao rape: SC seeks victim's take on security**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 24

The Supreme Court on Tuesday sought responses from the 2017 Unnao rape survivor and her family members on the Centre's plea seeking withdrawal of CRPF security cover provided to them after a 2019 top court order.

Expelled BJP leader Kuldeep Singh Sengar is serving a life term for kidnapping and raping the minor girl in Unnao area in 2017.

The Centre's counsel said in the plea no security cover is needed according to the threat analysis of the victim and her family.

**After Tirupati, mice in Siddhivinayak prasad**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
MUMBAI, SEPT. 24

Amid the ongoing controversy over Tirupati laddus, a video and photo, showing rats on "prasad packet" allegedly of Mumbai's famous Siddhivinayak temple, have surfaced.

Shree Siddhivinayak Ganpati Mandir Trust has denied the Prasad being contaminated, and ordered a probe into it.

Siddhivinayak Temple witnesses more than 50,000 devotees every day on weekdays and around one lakh on weekends. Around 50,000 pockets of Laddus are sold to the devotees

everyday. The video and photo have been floating on social media. In the viral video and photo, the rats are seen crawling on Prasad packets that contain Laddu.

Speaking with this newspaper, Sunil Dasharath Giri, trustee of Shree Siddhivinayak Ganpati Mandir, said that he had received the video and photo Monday evening. But prima-facie, it appears that it does not belong to the temple, as the premises of the temple are not visible in the video.

However, the authorities constitute an internal committee to probe and verify the contents.

**Rahul targets BJP, claims it 'snatched' jobs from youth**

**Continued from Page 1**

Mr Gandhi said when he met their families on his return to India, their eyes welled up with pain. Lack of opportunities has taken away the support of fathers from children and the support of their old age from the elderly, he pointed out.

"In 10 years, the BJP has done a grave injustice to the youth of the country, including in Haryana, by snatching employment opportunities from them," Mr Gandhi said.

"It is our resolve that as soon as the Congress government is formed, we will create such a system in Haryana in which the youth will not have to stay away from their loved ones for their dreams," the Congress leader stressed.

Last week Mr Gandhi visited a village in Haryana's Karnal district to meet the family of the young man who was injured in an accident in the US.

The AAP on its part, held a roadshow in the Rania Assembly constituency in Sirsa district in favour of its nominee Harpinder Singh. "They wanted to break my resolve. But they do not know that I hail from Haryana. You can break the resolve of anyone but not of Haryanawala... Your son and brother made Haryana's name popular in the country and the world. I don't have a hunger for power."

Addressing a gathering, Mr Kejriwal said he had to spend five-and-a-half months in jail for no reason. "What was my fault? My fault is being the chief minister of Delhi for 10 years, I set up

good government schools for children of the poor. Earlier, there were power cuts for 7-8 hours in Delhi. But, now there is round-the-clock electricity. My fault is that I made electricity free in Delhi and Punjab... My fault is that I started a free 'tirath yatra' for elderly people. So many works were carried out in Delhi and Punjab. No corrupt person could do these," he said.

Last week, while campaigning in Haryana, Mr Kejriwal had claimed the next government in Haryana cannot be formed without the support of his party even as he had targeted the BJP, claiming that the entire state wants "badlav" (change) and people will oust the ruling party in the October 5 state Assembly polls.

After the "Hanuman Darshan", Ms Atishi shared snippets from the visit on X, and said: "Took blessings of Hanumanji at the Prachin Hanuman Mandir located at Connaught Place. In

the last 2 years, many conspiracies were hatched against the AAP, the Delhi government, the people of Delhi and our leader Arvind Kejriwal. But Lord Hanuman protected us from every crisis."

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**Yogi orders to fill all potholes in UP before festive season**

**Lucknow, Sept. 24:**

Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday directed officials that the ongoing special campaign to eliminate potholes on the state's roads should be completed by October 10, ahead of the upcoming festivals, including Sharadiya Navratri, Dussehra and Diwali.

During a meeting with various departments, the CM emphasised that traffic increases significantly during festivals, with many foreign tourists visiting the state.

Adityanath highlighted the "collective responsibility" to ensure that every person has a pleasant experience while walking on the roads, according to an official statement.

He also stressed the importance of carrying out pothole repairs and road maintenance with high quality.

While giving instructions to the Mandi Parishad, the CM said, "Farmers are the primary users of roads and that their convenience must be prioritised." He directed that roads be constructed using the FDR (full depth reclamation) method. — PTT



THE ASIAN AGE

25 SEPTEMBER 2024

Court move to protect kids will make us better society

Civilisational advancements of societies get reflected in the way they treat their vulnerable. Each society may have its own processes and tools to identify those who need special protection, introduce these, and then institutionalise them. The Indian Constitution is one of the best manifestations how a society can do it.

However, certain grave lapses could occur in the process whereby the weak remain meek and societies fail to identify them for several reasons. In such cases, victims would suffer for wrongs they have not committed.

Children are one such section, long denied their rightful protection from wrongdoings of the grown-up. The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Pocso) Act, 2012, and the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 partially filled these lacunae — the first is about how to treat children who land in the quagmire of crime and the second about how to protect children from sexual exploitation and punish offenders.

The Supreme Court verdict of Monday making downloading and watching child sexual exploitative and abuse material (CSEAM) an offence under the Pocso Act and the Information Technology Act, 2000, takes the whole process one more step ahead and must be seen as a bold attempt to make the lives children safer. The court overruled an observation of the Madras high court that mere downloading and watching such material without disseminating it did not constitute an offence under the Pocso Act.

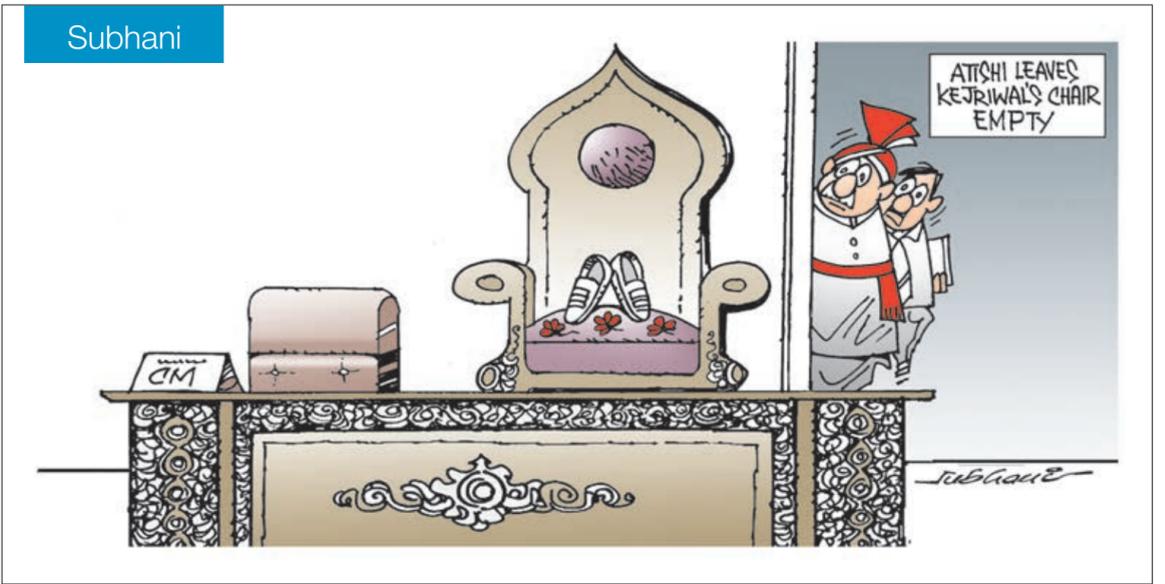
It observed that children are entitled to grow up in an environment that respects their dignity and protects them from harm and child sexual exploitative material achieves quite the opposite. "It reduces them to objects of sexual gratification, stripping them of their humanity and violating their fundamental rights," the court observed. CSEAM violates children's right in the most "egregious manner possible" and the existence and circulation of CSEAM were "affronts to the dignity of all children, not just the victims depicted in the material," the court observed. It was only reflecting truth when it said that the impact of CSEAM on its victims was devastating and far-reaching, affecting their mental, emotional and social well-being, the only remedy for which is the strict enforcement of the law.

That the court has delved deep into subject of abuse of sexual abuse of children is evident from the fact that it has come out with an important marker for society. It said it is no more normal to call such material "child pornography", and directed courts in the country to use the term, CSEAM, instead, and it has also requested Parliament to consider bringing about an amendment to the Pocso Act to give legal backing to the change.

The import of the directive lies in the fact that the term "child pornography" in no way communicates the grossness of the egregious crime or its impact on the victim; it would be seen as the children's version of an adult act, which it is not. Parliament must immediately consider this suggestion as society must be made aware of the enormity of the act so that every stakeholder joins forces to end it.

The Supreme Court's intervention for the sake of our children must be taken to its logical end so that we become a better nation.

Subhani



'One Nation, One Election': Can it work, or will it fail?



Shikha Mukerjee

While campaigning for the Lok Sabha polls, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had promised to roll out within 100 days of being re-elected an action plan that would transform India. His grand design, that is unlikely to succeed, is the "One Nation-One Election" decision by the Cabinet, specifically the minority BJP-led coalition government that can't work without a complicated constitutional amendment.

The bottom-line is that the Modi government doesn't have a mandate from the voter to get the "One Nation-One Election" plan going. Mr Modi ought to know it; if he has gone ahead without the mandate, it will require political skill to cover up a basic blunder of this magnitude.

Already there is speculation that the grandiose plan, a political masterstroke to align all elections with Mr Modi or the BJP's schedule of elections across India and in all three tiers of the democratic structure, may end up on the backburner, that is, sending it to a Joint Parliamentary Committee.

If Mr Modi's plan to hit the ground running in his third term is to bury in a committee a major reorganisation of the political timetable and the constitutional structure required to implement "One Nation-One Election", then it's time to start asking if he knows what he is doing and, more important, does he know how to get things done?

It is obvious by now that the BJP and Mr Modi as its star campaigner, political mastermind and principal strategist, do know what they cannot do; they cannot risk holding elections in Jammu and Kashmir, Delhi, Haryana, Jharkhand, Maharashtra and

INDIA parties need to raise awareness on how the Constitution and democracy could be endangered through 'One Nation-One Election' and by extension, 'One Party-One Leader' politics

Rajasthan and Karnataka; there are states that have more often than not changed the ruling party every five years, like Kerala and Rajasthan; there are states that seem fascinated by the ruling party and keep voting them back to power, like West Bengal or Gujarat.

Voters make their choices in different elections for different reasons. A "One Nation-One Election" plan has failed to factor in that voters may not appreciate the clubbing of parliamentary and Assembly elections, where different issues and different priorities are in play. It may suit Mr Modi and the BJP to fit a few select specifics of local concern into their larger narrative of protecting the purity of the nation through a process of homogenisation by talking about

Rohingyas, Bangladeshis and infiltration by antagonistic illegal Muslims in Jharkhand to scare tribal voters that they will be marginalised, swamped by outsiders. It may suit them to defend Hindutva hegemony by talking about opening up opportunities in Jammu and Kashmir by abrogating Article 370 and ending the special privileges that it guaranteed to local communities. But these may not be the priorities of voters in these states.

A political party and its leadership that disregards the diversity of India's people and their priorities is a danger to itself and the idea of unity despite the multiplicities in a democracy. The immediate local concerns of people must be foregrounded in Assembly elections and at a more granular level in civic and panchayat elections. The three tiers of elected bodies were designed to reflect the

differences between national, state and local concerns.

In the last many Assembly polls, Mr Modi has been relentlessly pitching himself as the face of the BJP, as the icon voters must remember when casting their vote. Bundling every issue and concern into one package may serve the BJP's purpose, making it easier for Mr Modi to campaign. But that is not how others campaign. Demonising Rahul Gandhi as "terrorist number one" may work for voters in J&K and Haryana, by polarising votes, but that's not what will work in Jharkhand or in Maharashtra.

One size does not fit all. To compel voters and states to fit the BJP's schedule of "One Nation-One Election" in the expectation that it will increase its political strength with more seats in Parliament and in the states cannot be India's goal, as a State or even as a nation. It is not enough for the Congress and the parties of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance to talk about defending the Constitution on behalf of the people; these parties need to raise public consciousness on how the Constitution and democracy could be endangered through the idea of "One Nation-One Election" and by extension, "One Party-One Leader" politics.

Regardless of the number of votes and other technicalities of pushing through a constitutional amendment, there are critical political and ideological issues that the rest of India's political class must raise in order to defend democracy in practice and stop authoritarianism in its tracks. The "One Nation-One Election" overturns the fundamentals of democracy, about peoples' power and their right to decide. It takes away the basics of initiating change by stripping people of the power to make decisions and periodically revise their decisions, through different schedules for different elections.

Shikha Mukerjee is a senior journalist based in Kolkata

LETTERS VOTE OUT THE OLD

Sri Lanka's presidential election has reinforced a global trend in which parties running on old ways of thinking are no longer acceptable to the public. This is due to their inability to provide solutions to people's everyday difficulties. Following the Aragayala (people's uprising) of 2022, Sri Lanka's ruling system appointed Ranil Wickremesinghe as President. He attempted to solve the extraordinary economic crisis by finding sanctuary in the IMF. His government accepted the IMF's tough loan requirements. This eliminated all subsidies, including those for food and electricity. The tax burden on the common man increased, so much so that they went out and elected the Marxist Anura Kumara Dissanayake.

Amrapali Roy Jamshedpur ANURA'S CHALLENGE

MARXIST Anura Kumara Dissanayake's win in Sri Lanka marks a pivotal moment. It does, however, bring up critical questions about the future direction of the country. Will Mr Dissanayake's promises of systemic change and anti-corruption measures translate into tangible benefits for the impoverished population? How will he balance his ambitious welfare policies with the stringent fiscal targets set by the IMF? Over and above that, what steps will he take to address the concerns of marginalised communities, particularly Tamils, who largely did not support him? The nation is watching him closely as he navigates these complex challenges.

Anshu Bharti Begusarai, Bihar 'BADLA' MOST FOUL

THE STORY of the Badlapur sex abuse suspect being shot dead by the police after he fired on them follows a familiar script. Since those shot dead were criminals in the eyes of the people there is no outcry but instead there are plaudits. People need to understand that the narrative dished out to them by the police and the media could be biased and we have seen it in the SSR case where Rhea Chakravarty was found guilty after a media trial. The quick solution sounds attractive but is actually dangerous for delivering justice.

Anthony Henriques Mumbai

World chess: A new order rises

India's double gold at the 45th Chess Olympiad has signalled the rise of a new world order in the cerebral game. As the legendary Garry Kasparov aptly put it, "Vishy's children" have come of age, not only securing Viswanathan Anand's enduring legacy but also elevating it to unprecedented heights. What Anand couldn't achieve in his illustrious career, the young brigade has delivered in stunning fashion in Budapest.

Anand's influence extends beyond being a beacon of inspiration. Like the Soviet Union's famed Botvinnik Chess School, Anand has meticulously nurtured Indian talent through his own academy, guiding young minds with invaluable camps — especially during the Covid pandemic — and arranging funds for their overseas travel. Fittingly, one of his proteges, D. Gukesh, who earlier clinched the Candidates Tournament to become the next World Championship challenger, has spearheaded India's dominance at the Olympiad. Clinching all three trophies (including overall title), India stamped their supremacy in the field of 193 teams in the Open and 181 in the Women's section.

The team of Gukesh (18), R. Praggnanandhaa (19), Arjun Erigaisi (21), Vidit Gujrathi (29), and P. Harikrishna (38) led throughout the tournament, winning 10 matches and drawing just one. For veterans like Harikrishna and D. Harika (33), the dream of winning the Olympiad took over two decades. For young Gukesh & Co., success has come rather swiftly.

The journey from last edition's bronze to this year's unprecedented sweep is a tale of extraordinary determination. Gukesh, with a mature head on his young shoulders, took the responsibility for narrowly missing out on the title in the previous edition held in Chennai. This time, he was resolute in his mission to make amends and what a way to do it!

With an astounding 9/10 score and a staggering 3056 performance rating, Gukesh has set a new benchmark. Not only did he become the only player to breach the 3000+ mark at the Olympiad, but he has also thrown down the gauntlet for the World Championship contest with Ding Liren, to be held in Singapore later this year. While R. Praggnanandhaa's performance was solid, with six draws out of 10 games, it paled in comparison to the blistering form of Gukesh and Arjun. However, it's this collective excellence that marks India's ascendancy in chess.

The icing on the cake was the women's team making it a double gold in justifying their top seeding and pulling off a win despite a couple of less powerful performances towards the end. Their win here should prove inspiring for a new generation of women players to rise in the country. With age on their side, Indian players and the national teams could be capable of dominating world chess for some years to come.

THE ASIAN AGE

KAUSHIK MITTER Editor

K. SUBHAKAR Printer & Publisher

THE ASIAN AGE office is located at: New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi-110002. Phone: (011) 23211124.

Published and Printed on behalf of and for: Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited, Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110 002 at BFL Infotech Ltd., C-9, Sector-III, Noida -201301. London: Quickmarsh Ltd, 8th Floor, Block 2, Elizabeth House, 39 York Road, London, SE1 7NQ. RNI Registration number: 57290/94

Saeed Naqvi Wide Angle



That Juan Guaido, 41, has described himself in his CV as "ex-President of Venezuela: 2019-2023" is not entirely fiction. When the world sleeps, the Free World's leader is in relentless pursuit of replacing dictatorships with democracy worldwide. Replacing Nicolas Maduro in Caracas with Guaido was one such enterprise.

"The Monroe Doctrine is alive and well", boomed Rex Tillerson, Donald Trump's secretary of state. It was therefore legitimate for the US to find a friend to install on the Caracas throne. Venezuela has the world's largest reserves of hydro-carbons.

Vice-president Mike Pence was asked to keep a close eye on Guaido as he shuttled between Colombia, the US and Venezuela to ascend the gaddi. When the Guaido initiative failed, the US was at it again: the headlines are still fresh on yet another failed effort to dethrone Maduro. Dutch foreign minister Caspar Veldkamp told Parliament that Venezuela Opposition leader Edmundo Gonzales sought refuge in the Dutch embassy. Before his papers for exile could be processed, he found cultural continuity where he's likely to stay: Spain. It will be interesting to see what new salvo is fired for democracy. It must be galling for the US that colour revolutions no longer yield the desired results.

Western covert ops must have taken heart from developments where their own Fulbright scholar, Muhammad Yunus showed the door to Sheikh Hasina, whose emotional ties to India and practical

ones with China were becoming a puzzle. It must be said scholars like Jeffrey Sachs have been quite emphatic. The state department's Donald Lou was as active in Bangladesh and Pakistan as Victoria Nuland was in Ukraine. While the "regime change" apparatus is still functional in the US, Europe in its post-colonial phase has little use for it. It has other ways to ward off the Left; even occasionally tipping the scales in favour of fascism. Look at what East Germany: Fascism has impressively opened its accounts in two states. France's political theatre has an engaging story line: how to stop the Left?

This story actually begins at the European Union elections in June where Marine Le Pen's right-extremist National Rally trounced Emmanuel Macron's right-of-centre party by miles. In a funk, Mr Macron dissolved the National Assembly and called parliamentary elections. The anxious French President hoped to recover lost ground. Exactly the opposite happened. Ms Le Pen zoomed past him, with 33 per cent votes in the first round. Not very far behind was the Left. Mr Macron came third with 21 per cent. There was no absolute majority.

The Fifth Republic had it, should Ms Le Pen win the second round. The Left and Mr Macron withdrew over 200 candidates from triangular contests to prevent any division of the anti-Le Pen vote.

The trick worked, but only to the extent that it stopped Ms Le Pen. She came third, but Mr Macron and his corporate backers were in turmoil as the

Left galloped way ahead. Mr Macron's neo-con agenda would clash head-on with the Left's socialism. Instead of appointing a Leftist Prime Minister as the numbers in the National Assembly dictated, Mr Macron appointed Michel Barnier from the Republican stable.

Will the Socialists break ranks from the Left Front? If not, the possible backroom deals may be sinister. Will Mr Barnier's minority government be supported by Ms Le Pen from outside? She will then control the Fifth Republic. The people's will, exemplified by the Left Front's progress, will then have been effectively neutralised by the Macron-Barnier neo-con agenda. Social welfare, price rise, health-care, unemployment — issues that define the lives of people, will have been replaced by migration, identity politics, Islamophobia, military budgets, the staple that fascism feeds on.

What is being played out on an epic scale in France is mainly the pattern in most Western democracies. Remember the excitement when Alexis Tsipras became the first Communist PM of Greece, the cradle of Western civilisation? No sooner had the Communists reared its head than Germany, the EU's biggest donor, sat on Mr Tsipras' back. Greece's debts would not be honoured.

In Spain, the rise of Pablo Iglesias, 39, as leader of leftist Podemos, at about the same time as Mr Tsipras in Greece, caused a frenzied response from the establishment: Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy,

whose huge corruption had precipitated the election which brought up Podemos, was manoeuvred into another term, corruption or no corruption. By attrition, Podemos was killed.

It was clear as daylight that Bernie Sanders was derailed by the Democratic Party's establishment largely over his socialist image. I wrote then: "If you make Sanders impossible, you make Trump inevitable." Likewise, if Jeremy Corbyn is impossible, Boris Johnson is inevitable. He succeeded clowning around as PM briefly. Right-wingers in the UK Labour Party like Peter Mandelson had sworn to "undermine" Mr Corbyn. As the Bible says: "there is nothing new under the sun".

This has been the pattern ever since Franklin Delano Roosevelt pulled his country out of the Great Depression of the 1930s-40s by taxing the very rich to pay for welfare schemes. The Socialists, Communists and trade unions had pressured him. The most popular American President in history who died in his fourth term ended up spawning corporate paranoia, which has not lost momentum till this day. Joseph McCarthy remains a reaction to anything resembling the New Deal. His spirit lives.

At least, in those early days of unbridled capitalism, a journalist of CBS News like Ed Murrow could single-handedly demolish McCarthy. Today, the field is left wide open for capitalist callousness.

The writer is a journalist based in New Delhi



SHORT TAKES

**TURKIYE ARRESTS OZ WOMAN FOR PKK ULTRA LINK**

Ankara, Sept. 24: Turkish authorities detained an Australian woman at Istanbul Airport last week for alleged links to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Cigdem Aslan was apprehended at the airport on Sept. 15 as she prepared to board a flight to Australia. Following her arrest, she appeared in an Istanbul court on Sept. 18 and was jailed pending trial for alleged "involvement in PKK propaganda in Australia and participation in events organised by groups aligned with the militant organisation."

**SENTENCING OF S'PORE'S PIO EX-MIN. IN OCT.**

Singapore, Sept. 24: The sentencing of Singapore's Indian-origin former transport minister S. Iswaran, who was convicted of lesser charges of obtaining valuable things as a public servant and obstruction of justice on Tuesday, has been adjourned to October 3, a media report said. The bail of the 62-year-old former transport minister has been extended following Tuesday's trial related to corruption charges. The prosecution sought a jail term of six to seven months for the minister who pleaded guilty on the first day of trial.

**POLITICIANS IN GERMANY: MORE BODYGUARDS**

Berlin, Sept. 24: A German police office that provides security for leading politicians says it plans to increase the number of bodyguards significantly over the coming years, citing growing dangers at home and abroad as the next national election nears. The head of the Federal Criminal Police Office, Holger Münch, said in comments to the RND newspaper group published Tuesday that his office currently has more than 500 bodyguards. He was quoted as saying that it plans to add 100 next year and another 100 after that.

**ENSURE SAFETY OF JAPANESE, JAPAN URGES CHINA**

Tokyo, Sept. 24: Japan's top diplomat asked China to ensure the safety of Japanese citizens there after the fatal stabbing of a Japanese schoolboy, and demanded a crackdown on what she called groundless, malicious and anti-Japanese social media posts that threaten children's safety. Foreign minister Yoko Kamikawa requested her Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, to conduct a full investigation into the stabbing and provide a clear explanation to Japan about what happened, and to punish the suspect and implement preventive measures.

**IRANIAN PREZ TO MEET PUTIN, ATTEND BRICS**

Tehran, Sept. 24: Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian will hold talks with Vladimir Putin during a visit to Russia next month to attend the Brics summit, a government spokeswoman said on Tuesday. The visit to the Brics summit in the Volga valley city of Kazan from October 22 to 24 will be Pezeshkian's first to Russia since he took office in late July. The grouping takes its name from the initial letters of the five members who joined in 2009 — Brazil, Russia, India, China and S. Africa — but has included some Middle Eastern countries, including Iran.

**NZ SCIENTISTS DISCOVER GHOST 'SPOOKFISH'**

Wellington, Sept. 24: Scientists in New Zealand said on Tuesday they have discovered a new species of "ghost shark", a type of fish that prowls the Pacific Ocean floor hunting prey more than a mile down. The Australasian Narrownosed Spookfish was found living in the deep waters of Australia and New Zealand, according to scientists from Wellington-based National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA). The specimens were discovered during research in the Chatham Rise.

**Hezbollah commander, 6 others killed**

Israel strikes Beirut; Monday's death toll at 558; Israel says seaports open for business despite conflict

Beirut, Jerusalem, Sept. 24: An Israeli airstrike on Beirut killed a senior Hezbollah commander on Tuesday as cross-border rocket attacks by both sides raised fears of a full-fledged war in the Middle East. The Lebanese health ministry said at least six people were killed and 15 wounded in Tuesday's strike on a building in Beirut's Ghobeiry neighbourhood. Israel's military said the airstrike on the Lebanese capital killed Ibrahim Qubaisi, who it said was the commander of Hezbollah's missiles and rocket force. Two security sources in Lebanon described him as a leading figure in the Iran-backed group's rocket division.



People stand outside a residential building whose top two floors were hit by an Israeli strike in the Ghobeiry area of Beirut, on Tuesday.

The attack dealt another blow to Hezbollah after a series of setbacks at the hands of Israel over the past week, and Israel later said it was carrying out "extensive strikes" on Hezbollah targets.

The pressure on Hezbollah has increased fears that nearly a year of conflict will explode and destabilise the oil-producing Middle East, where a war between Hamas and Israel is already raging in Gaza. Israel is shifting its focus from Gaza to the northern frontier, where Hezbollah has been firing rockets into Israel in support of Hamas, which is also backed by Iran.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel would continue to pound Hezbollah targets and urged Lebanese citizens to escape the grip of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah. "Anyone who has a missile in their living room and a rocket in their garage will not have a home," he said at an army base at an undisclosed location after the military said it had found ammunition in people's homes.

"Our war is not with you, our war is with Hezbollah. Nasrallah is leading you to the brink of the abyss... Rid yourself from Nasrallah's grip, for your own good." Israel has accused Hezbollah of hiding its weapons in homes and villages in Lebanon, allegations the group denies. Israel struck the Hezbollah-controlled area of Beirut for a second consecutive day after mounting a new wave of airstrikes on targets in Lebanon. Hezbollah said it had fired rockets into northern Israel earlier on Tuesday.

Israel's ports in Haifa were operating at normal capacity despite an escalation in fighting with Hezbollah in Lebanon and the city being targeted by rocket fire, authorities said on Tuesday. — Reuters

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**ISRAELI LEAFLETS PROMPT WARNING FROM HEZBOLLAH**

Beirut, Sept. 24: Hezbollah urged Lebanese to discard Israel leaflets dropped over the country's east on Tuesday, warning against scanning barcodes that it said could compromise personal data.

"The Zionist enemy is dropping leaflets with barcodes in the Bekaa region and may drop them elsewhere," the group said. "Please do not open or circulate the barcode. You must destroy it immediately," it said, warning the code could "take all your information". — AFP



We are almost in a full-fledged war.

— JOSEF BORRELL, EU foreign affairs chief

We must not allow Lebanon to become another Gaza at the hands of Israel.

— MASOUD PEZESHKIAN, Iran's President

Beijing is deeply shocked by the relevant military actions that have caused a large number of casualties.

— LIN JIAN, Foreign ministry spokesman

An event that is potentially very dangerous, risking the complete destabilisation of the region.

— DMITRY PESKOV, Kremlin spokesman

Protect innocent civilians... before the region is dragged into a comprehensive regional war.

— ABDULLAH II, Jordan's King

"Tens of thousands of people were forced from their homes yesterday and overnight, and the numbers continue to grow." — MATTHEW SALTmarsh, UN refugee agency

**Airlines suspend flights**

Dubai, Sept. 24: Gulf airlines, including Emirates and Qatar Airways, temporarily suspended flights to Beirut on Tuesday as tensions soared between Israel and Hezbollah after the deadliest bombardment of Lebanon since 2006.

Ethihad Airways and flydubai also joined a number of international carriers in suspending Beirut services, as Israeli strikes continued a day after 558 people were killed in Lebanon, according to Lebanese officials.

"The safety of our crew and customers is of utmost importance and will not be compromised," Emirates said in a statement, announcing the suspension of flights on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Qatar Airways, the national flag carrier which operates two flights a day to the Lebanese capital, also cancelled services for two days.

"Due to the ongoing situation in Lebanon, Qatar Airways has temporarily suspended flights to and from Beirut Rafic Hariri International Airport until September 25," it said.

Ethihad Arab Emirates' national airline, cancelled its return flight from Abu Dhabi on Wednesday, it said in a statement sent to AFP.

And flydubai, Emirates' low-cost sister airline, cancelled its daily flights on

**MORE AIRLINES CANCEL SERVICES**

**AIR INDIA:** The Indian flag carrier suspended scheduled flights to and from Tel Aviv until further notice.

**AIR FRANCE:** Air France expanded the suspension of its flights to Beirut until Oct. 1.

**KLM:** KLM has cancelled all flights to and from Tel Aviv until Oct. 26. The Franco-Dutch group's Transavia cancelled flights to and from Tel Aviv until March 31, 2025, and flights to Amman and Beirut until Nov. 3.

**CATHAY PACIFIC:** Hong Kong-based Cathay Pacific cancelled all flights to Tel Aviv until March 27, 2025.

**DELTA AIR LINES:** The US carrier paused flights between New York and Tel Aviv through Dec. 31.

**LUFTHANSA:** The German airline group said it was suspending all connections to and from Tel Aviv and Tehran until Oct. 14, while flights to Beirut will remain suspended until Oct. 26.

**RYANAIR:** Europe's biggest budget airline cancelled flights to and from Tel Aviv until Oct. 26.

Tuesday and Wednesday "due to the developments", a spokesperson said.

The cross-border fire between Israel and Hezbollah began last October after Hamas and other Palestinian militant groups launched an unprecedented attack on Israel.

A source at the Lebanese flag carrier Middle East Airlines informed AFP that its flights were booked out for days.

"Our flights are all overbooked because of the cancellations of other airlines," the source, who is not authorised to speak to media, said on condition of anonymity. — AFP

**Hundreds cross over into Syria**

Damascus, Sept. 24: Some 500 people have crossed from Lebanon to war-torn Syria, a Syrian security official told AFP on Tuesday, fleeing the deadliest Israeli bombardment

since Hezbollah and Israel fought a devastating war in 2006.

"Around 500 people crossed the border through the Qusayr and Dabousiya crossings between 4 pm

(1300 GMT) and midnight," on Monday, the security official told AFP, requesting anonymity to discuss sensitive matters. "Vehicles were still crossing in the morning." — AFP

**Iran's revenge call over Quran burnings: Sweden**

Copenhagen, Sept. 24: Swedish authorities accused Iran on Tuesday of being responsible for thousands of text messages that were sent to people in the Scandinavian country calling for revenge over the burnings of Islam's holy book in 2023.

According to officials in Stockholm, the cyberattack was carried out by Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, which hacked an SMS service and sent "some 15,000 text messages in Swedish" over the string of public burnings of the Quran that took place over several months in the summer of 2023. Senior prosecutor Mats Ljungqvist said a preliminary investigation by Sweden's SAPO domestic security agency showed "it was the

● THE PROTESTS were held under the freedom of speech act, which is protected under the Swedish constitution. The rallies were approved by police. However, the incidents left Sweden torn between its commitment to free speech.

Iranian state via the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, IRGC, that carried out a data breach at a Swedish company that runs a major SMS service." "The Swedish company was not named. There was no immediate comment from Iranian authorities on the accusations from Sweden. In August 2023, Swedish media reported that a large number of people in Sweden had

received text messages in Swedish calling for revenge against people who were burning the Quran," Ljungqvist said, adding that the sender of the messages was "a group calling itself the Anzu team".

Swedish broadcaster SVT published a photo of a text message, saying that "those who desecrated the Quran must have their work covered in ashes" and calling Swedes "demons".

The protests were held under the freedom of speech act, which is protected under the Swedish constitution. The rallies were approved by police. However, the incidents left Sweden torn between its commitment to free speech and its respect for religious minorities. — AP

**Trump says won't run again for Prez if he loses in Nov.**

Washington, Sept. 24: Former US president Donald Trump has ruled out running for the White House in 2028 if he loses his presidential bid in November this year.

"No, I don't. No, I don't. I think that that will be, that will be it. I don't see that at all. I think that hopefully we're gonna be successful," Trump said.

Trump is running for presidential elections for the third consecutive term this time. He won the first time in 2016 and lost in his second attempt in 2020.

The 78-year-old former president is pitched in a tight race with Democratic presidential candidate Vice-President Kamala Harris. Trump would be 82 by the time of the next



Donald Trump

elections in 2028. The presidential elections in the US will take place on November 5.

When asked what keeps him healthy, Trump said he plays golf and tries to eat properly.

During the interview, Trump also stressed that he does not get credit for the fight against Covid-19. — AP

**BID ON LIFE CASE MISHANDLED, ALLEGES TRUMP**

Washington: Former US president Donald Trump has accused the Department of Justice and the FBI of "mishandling and downplaying" the recent apparent assassination attempt on his life, demanding that the state of Florida handle the case.

A second bid in two months on Trump's life took place on September 15 at the Trump International Golf Club in West Palm Beach, Florida. Ryan Wesley Routh, owner of a small construction company was detained. — AP

**HARRIS POPULAR AMONG AAPI VOTERS: SURVEY**

Washington: Vice-President Kamala Harris is viewed more favourably by Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander registered voters than former president Donald Trump, according to a new poll. AAPI voters are also more likely to believe that she is the candidate who better represents their background and policy views.

The AAPI Data and APIAVote finds that around 6 in 10 AAPI voters have favourable opinion of Harris. — AP

**Listen to Putin on Kyiv, says Kremlin**

Moscow, Sept. 24: The Kremlin said on Tuesday that people should re-listen to a warning issued by President Vladimir Putin who said the West would be directly fighting with Russia if it allowed Ukraine to strike Russian territory with Western-made long-range missiles.

Kyiv will spend more than 60 per cent of its entire state budget on defence and security next year, according to a draft plan, as Russia's invasion grinds on.

In a draft plan presented by the finance ministry, Ukraine said it will spend 2.22 trillion hryvnia (\$54 billion) on "national security and defence". Kremlin made the comments when asked on a conference call if a decision to let Kyiv go ahead

with such strikes might prompt Moscow to change its stance on nuclear testing. "Russia will not test a nuclear weapon as long as the United States refrains from testing," Putin's point man for arms control said on Monday after speculation that the Kremlin might abandon its post-Soviet nuclear test moratorium.

"Please re-listen and read the statements that the President has made on this issue — I mean on possible permission for the use of Western weapons deep into Russian territory," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

"The statement that the President made in St. Petersburg. The position of the Russian Federation is very clearly stated there," he added. — Reuters

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"The statement that the President made in St. Petersburg. The position of the Russian Federation is very clearly stated there," he added. — Reuters

**POPE OFFERS REFUGE TO JAILED SUU KYI**

Vatican City, Sept. 24: Pope Francis has offered to give refuge to Myanmar's detained ex-leader Aung San Suu Kyi. "I asked for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi. I have proposed to the Vatican to give her shelter on our territory," the pope said. — AFP

**Harini named Lanka's new PM**

Colombo, Sept. 24: Sri Lanka's new President, Anura Kumara Dissanayake, named Harini Amarasuriya, a college professor and first-time lawmaker, as the new Prime Minister of the Indian Ocean island nation on Tuesday, making her the third woman to be appointed to the post.

Dissanayake, 55, a Marxist-leaning firebrand politician, who was elected President in the election that was conducted on Saturday, was also scheduled to pick the rest of his Cabinet.

An academic with a doctorate in social anthropology from the University of Edinburgh, Amarasuriya, 54, became a parliamentarian in 2020 under Dissanayake's NPP coalition and will also hold the portfolios of foreign affairs, education and media. Amarasuriya is the third woman Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, following the world's first woman Prime Minister, Sirimavo Bandaranaike in 1960, and her daughter Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga. — Reuters



Harini Amarasuriya

**EASTER SUNDAY ATTACKS PROBE TO BE REOPENED**

Colombo, Sept. 24: Sri Lanka's new President Anura Kumara Dissanayake on Tuesday said he would reopen an investigation into the 2019 Easter Sunday terror attacks.

Dissanayake made the remarks while paying a courtesy call on the head of the Catholic Church Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith. "The new President assured us that the truth on the Easter Sunday attacks would be brought to light," Ranjith, critical of the investigation into the attacks, said. — PTI

**Questions raised as active euthanasia is banned in Switzerland**

**Arrests after Swiss suicide pod row**

Geneva, Sept. 24: Swiss police announced on Tuesday that several people were taken into custody after the controversial Sarco suicide pod was used to end a woman's life. Police in the northern Schaffhausen canton said the capsule had been used Monday at a forest hut, after which several people were taken into custody — and are now facing criminal proceedings.

The capsule has raised a host of legal and ethical questions in Switzerland, where active euthanasia is



The capsule, first unveiled in 2019, is a portable, human-sized pod which replaces the oxygen inside it with nitrogen, causing

death by hypoxia. It is self-operated by a button on the inside, providing death without medical supervision.

The Last Resort organisation, an assisted dying group, presented the Sarco pod in Zurich in July, saying they expected it to be used for the first time within months and saw no legal obstacle to its use in Switzerland.

In a statement to AFP, The Last Resort said that the person who died was a 64-year-old woman from the midwestern US. The woman, who was not named, "died using the Sarco device" at approximately 4.01 pm on Monday.

"The public prosecutor's office of the canton of Schaffhausen has opened criminal proceedings against several people for inducement and aiding and abetting suicide... and several people have been placed in police custody," the canton's police force said.

The public prosecutor's office was informed by a law firm on Monday that an assisted suicide had taken place. — AFP

## quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	84,914.04 -0.02
Nifty 50	25,940.40 0.01
S&P 500*	5,728.94 0.18
Dollar (₹)	83.66 0.13
Pound Sterling (₹)	111.92 0.80
Euro (₹)	93.16 0.39
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	74,545,250 0.34
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	75.11 1.64
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.761 0.006
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	3.785 0.047

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

## Govt extends IT hardware import rules till Dec. 31

The government on Tuesday extended the existing approval system for import of certain IT hardware products, including laptops and tablets, for three months till Dec. 31. These imports stood at \$8.4 billion in 2023-24 against the authorisation of about \$9.5 bn. Importers would be required to apply for fresh authorisations from Jan. 1, 2025, the directorate general of foreign trade (DGFT) said in a circular.



## Sebi mandates UPI payments for securities

Market regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has mandated use of UPI for making application in public issues of securities up to ₹5 lakh and other modes of transaction for higher amounts of application. "All individual investors applying in public issues of securities through intermediaries where the application amount is upto ₹5 Lakh, would only use UPI for purpose of blocking of funds," it said.

## SWREL secures new contracts worth ₹512 crore

Sterling and Wilson Renewable Energy Ltd (SWREL) on Tuesday said it has secured two new contracts worth ₹512 crore. In a regulatory filing the company said it has received two new domestic solar engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) orders from private independent power producers (IPPs) including a 250 MWp DC project in Gujarat, and LOA for a 65 MWp DC project in Maharashtra.

## L&T gets power grid projects in Middle East

The power transmission & distribution (PT&D) vertical of Larsen & Toubro (L&T) on Tuesday said it has won new orders in the Middle East for expanding and strengthening the electricity grids at high voltage levels in Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates, L&T informed stock exchanges. Above mega order as per L&T project classification falls in ₹10,000 crore to ₹15,000 crore category, the company said.

Printed & Published by K. Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited. Printed at BFL Infotech Ltd, C-9 Sector 3, Noida-201301. Published at 219, N D Tiwari Bhawan, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi-110002. Editor: Kaushik Mitter, RNI Registration number 30074/09, Air surcharge Re 1. © All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission of The Editor, Financial Chronicle is prohibited.

# Nifty-50 hits 26,000-mark, Sensex touches 85,000

### Markets see new highs after China's central bank cut interest rates

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, SEPT. 24

Nifty-50 hit 26,000 mark and Sensex went past 85,000 mark supported by strong Asian market cues as China cut interest rate to provide stimulus to its struggling real estate. Less than a week after the US Fed cut short term interest rates by 50 basis points, the Chinese central bank cut its benchmark seven-day interest rate to 1.5 per cent from 1.7 per cent. Also, the Chinese central bank said it will cut reserve requirement ratio by 50 basis points and further reduce key interest rates to support a recovery in prices resulting in a rally in Chinese stocks and bonds.

Market saw profit taking after the new milestones were achieved and closed flat with Sensex down by 14.57 points at 84,914.04 after touching 85163.23 while Nifty-50 closed at new high of 25,940.40 up 1.35 points after rising up to 26,011.55.

"Nifty crossed 1,000 points journey in 38 trading sessions supported by positive domestic cues, healthy FPIs investment, and the start of the rate cut cycle by the US Fed," said Siddhartha Khemka, head - Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services. Similar trend was observed in the broader market with the BSE mid-cap index up by 0.21 per cent

SENSEX MILESTONES	
85,000	Sept. 24, 2024
80,000	July 3, 2024
75,000	April 9, 2024
70,000	Dec. 11, 2023
65,000	July 3, 2023
60,000	Sept. 24, 2021
55,000	Aug. 13, 2021
50,000	Jan. 21, 2021

STOCKS TREND	
Nifty-50 closed at new high of 25,940.40 up 1.35 points after rising up to	<b>26,011.55</b>
Sensex down by 14.57 points at 84,914.04 after touching	<b>85163.23</b>



and BSE small-cap index down by 0.4 per cent. Sector-wise it was a mixed bag with buying seen in metals, information technology and auto. Metal stocks were in focus after China's central bank announced a series of policy measures to support the economy and struggling property market. "The Chinese government is expected to lower the outstanding mortgage

rate and reduce the down payment required for second home purchases. Additionally, there may be opportunities to refinance existing mortgages among banks, and the government plans to enhance its re-lending program for state-owned firms to help absorb unsold property inventories," said Parthiv Jhonsa, analyst, metal and mining, Anand Rathi Institutional Equities.

"Historically, while a rebound in metal prices is anticipated in the short term, it has often fallen short of expectations. We believe that the Chinese housing market has been struggling for the past four years, and unless there is stabilisation in prices and a reduction in unsold inventory, any government initiatives will likely be inadequate," Jhonsa said.

Chinese central bank cut benchmark 7-day interest rate to 1.5% from 1.7%.

NIFTY crossed 1,000 points journey in 38 trading sessions.

MARKET saw profit taking after the new milestones were achieved

METAL STOCKS were in focus after China's central bank announced a series of policy measures

## Central banks to stay vigilant: Das

FALAKNAAZ SYED  
MUMBAI, SEPT. 24

Continuing geopolitical disturbances and geo-economic fragmentations could pose daunting challenges to central banks, warned the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor Shaktikanta Das on Tuesday.

Das said that it has become important for central banks to remain vigilant and respond in a nimble, timely and calibrated manner while navigating such turbulence. RBI governor comments come at a time when the world is experiencing many instances of geopolitical unrest, including ongoing Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Hamas wars. "Experience of past few years shows that the journey ahead may be marked

by dynamic shifts in geopolitics, with frequent incidences of supply chain disruptions and greater barriers in trade, technology and capital flows. These will be new sources of shocks, often not well captured in existing macroeconomic models," he said.

Das also listed climate change as a huge challenge that could become a systemic risk, if not addressed in time. Climate changes can also impact the balance sheet of banks and other lenders.

## S&P RETAINS INDIA'S GROWTH FORECAST AT 6.8% FOR FY25

New Delhi, Sept. 24: S&P Global Ratings on Tuesday retained India's growth forecast at 6.8 per cent for the current fiscal and said it expects the RBI to start cutting interest rates in its October monetary policy review.

In the economic outlook of Asia Pacific, S&P Global Ratings also retained its GDP growth forecast for the 2025-26 fiscal at 6.9 per cent and said solid growth in India will allow the Reserve Bank to focus on bringing inflation in line with its target. "In India, GDP growth moderated in the June quarter as high interest rates temper urban demand," S&P said. Our outlook remains unchanged, we expect the RBI to begin cutting rates in Oct., S&P said. S&P expects inflation to average 4.5 per cent in the current fiscal. — PTI

## Gold ETFs inflows triple after duty cut, sales spurt in stores

SANGEETHA G.  
CHENNAI, SEPT. 24

The duty cut announced in the Union Budget allowed investors to grab the yellow metal as is evident by the inflows into gold exchange-traded funds in August and the spurt in sales in retail stores. Gold ETFs saw inflows tripling in August compared to previous months.

The government had brought down the basic customs duty on gold bars from 15 per cent to 6 per cent in the Budget presented on July 23. Subsequently, in August gold ETFs saw total inflows of ₹2,129 crore against ₹752 crore in June and ₹704 crore in April, as per AMFI data. Even in July, total inflows almost doubled to ₹1,465 crore compared to June as investors rushed to buy the virtual asset. Gold had become cheaper by more than ₹6,000 per 10 gm due to the duty cut.

The assets under management by 17 gold ETFs went up to ₹37,390 cr at the end of August against ₹24,318 cr in August 2023.

Meanwhile, jewellery retailers too saw buyers making most of the duty cut in August. "After the gold duty cut was announced, we saw a spurt in demand in August. Apart from the duty cut, the gold prices in the international market also remained subdued in the month. In volume terms, we saw around 30 per cent higher sales in August compared to July," said Bachraj Bamaalwa, former chairman of all India gem and jewellery domestic council (GJC).

"When compared to August last year also, last month saw more than 20 per cent higher sales in volume terms. However, September sales are slower as the prices have once again gone up and are above the levels seen before the duty cut," he

### YELLOW METAL SHINES

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SEPTEMBER SALES are slower as the prices have once again gone up.

## Indian gold imports to slip by 50% in Sept.

SANGEETHA G.  
CHENNAI, SEPT. 24

The government, worried about the widening trade deficit, can breathe a sigh of relief as the gold imports in the September are estimated to have dropped by half compared to August.

After record-high imports of 150 tonnes valued \$10.06 billion in August, which was one of the main reasons behind the widening of trade deficit to \$29.65 billion, there could be some respite as gold imports in Sept. are estimated to have dropped below 80 tonnes.

According to highly-placed trade sources, the gold imported till now in the month and the contracts entered for remain-

ing days would aggregate to less than 80 tonnes, which is in usual range of monthly imports.

Aggressive stocking up of inventory for the festive season in August and a spurt in international gold prices in September have dampened demand.

According to Chirag Sheth, principal consultant of metal focus, the import volumes were 74 per cent higher than August 2023, which imported 86 tonnes, and 52 per cent higher than July, which saw imports of 99 tonnes.

In value terms, gold imports more than doubled to \$10.06 billion against \$4.93 billion in August 2023. It saw a three-fold rise compared to July.

added. The demand in the market also was evident from the fact that the discount in gold trade dropped in August. In June and July, gold in the

wholesale market was available at a discount of \$15-20 per ounce. The discount dropped to half a dollar per ounce as the demand went up.

## GST Council to discuss tax slabs for health, life insurance premia

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 24

A report focusing primarily on tax slabs and rates in health and life insurance premiums and GST rate rationalisation are expected to be finalised by the GST Council led group of ministers' (GoMs) which will be held in Goa on Sept. 25.

The GST Council, chaired by Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman, is likely to lead to

the creation of an expanded GoM to assess the impact and need and to determine appropriate GST rates for these services, a source privy to development said.

"Besides, there will be discussion on key agenda, including the GST rates on over 100 products. The GoM is expected to submit its report by the end of October 2024 and the final call will be taken by the GST Council after the proposals from the ministeri-

al panel's report which will be presented at the 55th GST Council meeting in Nov.," the source said.

Meanwhile, tax officers have discovered 10,700 fraudulent GST registrations involving tax evasion worth ₹10,179 crore in a nationwide crackdown on fake firms. Central board of indirect taxes and customs (CBIC) member Shashank Priya, said that tax authorities have identified 67,970 GSTINs as of Sept. 22.

## Provide ESIC, PF to realty workers, says Goyal

Sydney, Sept. 24: Union commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal on Tuesday asked the real estate industry to provide guaranteed ESIC and provident fund registrations for 7 crore people working in this sector, besides adopting a new form of construction process for fast project execu-

tion with less pollution. Addressing an event organised by realtors' apex body Credai here, he also asked India Inc, including realty firms, to set up manufacturing facilities for construction equipment to make India self-reliant. Goyal said there are many positive impacts if

the industry ensures the guaranteed ESIC and PF registrations.

He said there would be huge demand for construction equipment because of high growth potential in the real estate sector.

"Why should all of these (construction equipment) not be made in India? And

I am not saying assembly. Made in India. And I would urge you to come up with a list of products and potential market size. I will become your ambassador and talk to industry leaders in CII and FICCI, to all of them, to start promoting the manufacture of these products in India," Goyal said. — PTI



WE ARE WITNESSING India's digital renaissance. I like to call it the 'naya daur' of digital Bharat, and each one of you here is propelling this charter, IBM, together with you, is committed to innovating in India.

— SANDIP PATEL  
managing director, IBM India

## India leads AI adoption in world: IBM India head

Mumbai, Sept. 24: IBM India managing director Sandip Patel on Tuesday announced a digital renaissance in India, emphasising the country's leadership in AI adoption as he called for a focus on making AI practical, responsible, and embeddable.

"We are witnessing India's digital renaissance. I like to call it the 'naya daur' of digital Bharat, and each one of you here is propelling this charter, IBM, together with you, is committed to innovating in India, for the world. "And we are doing that with our focused strategy on hybrid cloud and AI, which are today two of the most transformational technologies of our time," he said. AI, according to Patel, is

not just a buzzword but a crucial growth accelerator for India.

Citing a recent survey carried out by IBM, he said 59 per cent of Indian enterprises are deploying AI, the highest rate globally. Yet, he cautioned that moving from experimentation to scaling AI presents significant hurdles. Patel urged companies to consider three questions when implementing AI: How to make it more practical for real-life use cases, how to ensure its responsible use, and how to embed it seamlessly into daily operations.

Scaling responsible AI is essential for achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat, he said, characterised by transparency, explainability, robustness, privacy, and fairness. — PTI

### TECH | WORLD

#### Firm gets results with collaborating cloud units and AI research labs

## Google sees faster progress in AI projects

California, Sept. 24: Google said it has seen faster progress in artificial intelligence (AI) as a result of closer collaboration between its cloud computing unit and its AI research lab.

Google Cloud struck deals to weave its latest AI models into popular consumer products, sharing more than 75 customer stories, including from Snapchat and the storage company Pods, the company said as part of its virtual Gemini at Work event. The company also unveiled new versions of its AI model, Gemini. Collaboration between



GOOGLE'S AI researchers invented much of technology that underpins the latest wave of AI, but after OpenAI leapfrogged Google with launch of ChatGPT, it has been under pressure to smooth path from labs to products.

Google Cloud and the company's research arm, Google DeepMind, can help accelerate products to market, executives said. Google Cloud, which has long trailed in the cloud computing market, is trying to use the excitement

around generative AI to expand its business.

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sure to smooth path from labs to products for consumers and businesses.

As progress in the field accelerates, Google's AI researchers have had to "pick up the pace," said Eli Collins, vice president of product at DeepMind. "The researchers are incredibly motivated by seeing their work in the hands of real products and users," Collins said. "That's also been a culture shift, not just within Google, but the rest of the research community, where so many of leading research labs are actually product companies at this point." — Bloomberg

### SNAP TO USE GEMINI FOR AI CHATBOT

California, Sept. 24: Snap will start using Google's generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) model to help power Snapchat's AI chatbot, part of a broader plan to boost engagement and increase user time spent on the messaging app.

Snap recently started using Gemini model which can process video, audio and text simultaneously, capabilities collectively known as multimodal AI. — Bloomberg

## SHORT TAKES

### BAI's reward for para shuttlers

**New Delhi:** The Badminton Association of India announced on Tuesday a total reward of ₹50 lakh for the para shuttlers who secured medals at the Paris Paralympics last month. Indian para shuttlers won five medals, including one gold, two silver and as many bronze, at the Paris Games. Nitesh Kumar, who clinched the coveted gold in the men's Singles SL3 category, will receive a prize of ₹15 lakh, while silver medalists Suhay Yathiraj (men's singles SL4) and Thulasimathi Murugesan (women's singles SU5) will each be awarded ₹10 lakh. Bronze-medal winners Manisha Ramadass (women's singles SU5) and Nithya Sre Sivan (women's single SH6 category) will each receive ₹7.5 lakh. Thulasimathi, Manisha and Nithya made history by becoming the first Indian women shuttlers to secure medals at the Paralympics. — PTI

### Treesa & Gayatri advance in Macau

**Macau:** Indian third seeds Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand overcame a stiff challenge from the Japanese pair of Akari Sato and Maya Taguchi in women's doubles to move to the second round of the Macau Open badminton tournament here on Tuesday. The Indian pair lost the opening game before winning 15-21, 21-16, 21-14 in a the round of 32 contest that lasted nearly an hour. In other matches, the pair of Sikki Reddy and Ruthvika Shivani got the better of Hong Kong-China's Cheung Yan Yu and Chu Wing Chi 21-15, 21-10 in the women's doubles qualification quarterfinal. Aryamann Tandon defeated country-mate Tharun Manneppalli 11-21, 21-15, 21-17 in the men's singles qualification round of 16 before going down to another Indian Alap Mishra 10-21, 22-24 in the qualification quarterfinal. — PTI

### Lee Hyun Il, Anup to coach Sindhu

**New Delhi:** Double Olympic medalist shuttler P. V. Sindhu will have South Korean great Lee Hyun Il as her consulting coach on interim basis as she bolstered her coaching team ahead of her anticipated return to action next month. The move came after the recent appointment of Anup Sridhar as Sindhu's interim coach. The duo will be in Sindhu's coaching team till December 2024. A decision on a permanent coaching team is expected by that time. Sindhu is expected to return to competitive action at the Finland Open and Denmark Open, both in October. Hyun Il, a former world No. 1 and Sindhu's teammate during the Premier Badminton League (PBL), brings vast international experience and a reputation for meticulous preparation. He is a 2006 world championships bronze medalist in singles and has two Asian Games team gold medals in 2002 and 2014. His inclusion, alongside Sridhar, was aimed at creating a dynamic coaching duo that blends experience, tactical precision, and deep knowledge of the sport. Both the coaches will help in Sindhu's preparation as she begins her post-Olympic campaign and aims to sharpen her game for the upcoming European circuit. — PTI

### Jeevan-Vijay win Hangzhou Open

**New Delhi:** India's Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan and his partner Vijay Sundar Prashanth clinched their maiden ATP title together, winning the Hangzhou Open men's doubles event, while Yuki Bhambri and his French partner Albano Olivetti finished runners-up at the Chengdu Open on Tuesday. The unseeded Indian duo of Jeevan and Vijay scripted a remarkable comeback to defeat the unseeded German team of Constantin Frantzen and Hendrik Jebens 4-6, 7-6(5), 10-7 in a one hour and 49 minutes battle. Meanwhile, Yuki and his French partner Olivetti narrowly missed out on a third title this year, losing 4-6, 6-4, 4-10 to the top-seeded French pair Sadio Doumbia and Fabien Reboul in a tense final at the Chengdu Open. India's highest-ranked singles player Sumit Nagal lost to sixth-seeded Pavel Kotov of Russia in the opening match of the Beijing Open qualifying round. Nagal, ranked 83rd in the world, lost 2-6, 6-7 to the world number 63 Russian. — PTI

# HEROES HOME

## Golden chess teams return amid fanfare

**Chennai Sept. 24:** Flashing radiant smiles after their history-making gold at the Olympiad, members of India's trailblazing chess teams returned to an enthusiastic welcome from fans, officials and their families here on Tuesday. The quartet of D. Gukesh, R. Praggnanandhaa, R. Vaishali, and men's team captain Srirath Narayanan landed here early on Tuesday morning.

Both the men's and women's teams scripted history on Sunday, winning their maiden gold medals in the Olympiad. Their extraordinary victory reinforced India's position as a new chess powerhouse. And as was expected, there were loud cheers as the four walked out of the airport.

Gukesh, who was instrumental in Indian men's team dominance in the tournament with an unbeaten run, flashed his individual and team gold medals for the cameras. The 18-year-old is now gearing up for the world championship clash against China's Ding Liren in November after becoming the youngest ever challenger to the crown by winning the Candidates Tournament in April.

The brother-sister duo of Praggnanandhaa and Vaishali Narayanan reached in the before Gukesh. All of them were welcomed with garlands, bouquets and traditional stoles as fans scammed to click selfies with them.

"I'm very happy that we have won the Olympiad for the first time, we have only won a bronze till now. And we managed to win in both sections so it's a very special feeling and a proud moment for us," Praggnanandhaa said.

"We were playing good chess and it showed that we were the best team. The Olympiad is the only tournament we play as a team for the country," he added.

Vaishali, who laid the foundation for the women's team's triumph, said missing out on the gold in the last edition in Chennai was painful.

"It's a dream moment. Last time in the Chennai Olympiad we won bronze, we were so close to winning gold we missed it in the last round and it was very painful. I'm glad that both teams have won gold. It's a historical moment."

"We won six matches in a row and then lost to Poland, painful defeat but I'm happy that we came back. We drew against US next and last two matches we had to win to secure gold. Very happy that we delivered in the crucial moment," she added. — PTI

### HC ISSUES NOTICE ON SOMDEV PLEA AGAINST AITA ELECTION

**New Delhi, Sept. 24:** The Delhi High Court on Tuesday sought the stand of the All India Tennis Association (AITA) on a petition against holding of its election later this month allegedly in violation of the Sports Code. Justice Purushendra Kumar Kaurav issued notice to the sports body as well as the Centre on the petition by former India tennis player Somdev Devvarman and doubles player Purav Raja, and said the election will be subject to the outcome to the plea. While refusing to stay the election at this stage, the judge also directed that the result of the polls, which are scheduled to be held on September 28, shall not be published. The senior counsel appearing for the petitioners argued that AITA was holding the election in a "clandestine manner" as there was "nothing on the website". Seeking a stay on the



Chess Olympiad champions D. Gukesh (clockwise from top left), D. Harika, R. Vaishali and R. Praggnanandhaa being welcomed upon their arrival at the Chennai Airport on Tuesday. — PTI, SAI MEDIA

## GUKESH FOCUS NOW ON WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

**Chennai, Sept. 24:** Indian Grandmaster D. Gukesh on Tuesday said he approached the recently concluded Chess Olympiad as an individual event while expressing satisfaction with his performance ahead of the eagerly-awaited World Championship in November.

The 18-year-old world championship challenger was the key architect of India's historic victory, as the men's team clinched its first ever gold medal in the tournament. "In the Olympiad, I took

it as an individual event. I just wanted to perform well in this specific tournament. I am very happy with my performance and the team's performance," Gukesh, who arrived here from Budapest on Tuesday morning, told reporters at the airport.

Gukesh produced a sensational display on the top board for India as he notched up nine points out of his 10 games, conceding just a couple of draws besides eight victories, which fetched him an individual gold as well. "The result is proof that

we were doing many things right and we were in the right spirit. I am really glad about whatever happened in Budapest," he added.

He will now focus on the all-important World Championship clash against defending champion Chinese Grandmaster Ding Liren in November-December.

The Indian had won the Candidates tournament in April to become the youngest challenger to the world title at the age of 17. He turned 18 in May. The two will clash in

Singapore from November 20 to December 15 for the coveted title and a prize fund of \$2.50 million.

"The form heading into the World Championship, and for now I am quite very happy. There are still a couple of months left and I will work harder and be fully ready," he said.

Should the teenager succeed, he would become the first Indian since the legendary Viswanathan Anand to claim the title. Anand won the world crown five times in his glorious career. — PTI

## Gambhir is more relaxed compared to Rahul: Ashwin

**Chennai, Sept. 24:** Gautam Gambhir is more relaxed compared to his predecessor Rahul Dravid, who had a "regimented" style of functioning, feels Indian team's oldest member Ravichandran Ashwin.

Dravid, who was in charge of Team India since November 2021, quit the role this July after T20 World Cup triumph and has since been replaced by Gautam Gambhir.

Pointing out the difference, Ashwin noted that Gambhir has a relaxed approach and helps in maintaining a lively atmosphere in the dressing room, calling him a "relaxed Rancho".

"I think he (Gambhir) is very relaxed. I want to call him 'relaxed rancho'. There's no pressure at all," Ashwin said on his YouTube channel.

"In the morning, there will be a team huddle. He is very relaxed about that as well. He will be like, 'Are you coming, please come'; it's like that."

However, when it came to Dravid, Ashwin revealed that he had a more stern and ordered approach.

"With Rahul bhai, as soon as we come, he demanded in order. Even a bottle should be kept at a particular place at a particular time. He is very regimented," he disclosed.

"With Gambhir, he doesn't expect all that. He has a relaxed order and will be a people's man. He will capture everybody's heart, and I think he will be loved by the boys."

While Dravid led India to the T20 World Cup conquest before stepping down from the role, Gambhir took charge after leading Kolkata Knight Riders to their third Indian Premier League title, having joined his former franchise as a mentor only



India captain Rohit Sharma arrives at the hotel ahead of the second Test against Bangladesh in Kanpur on Tuesday. — PTI

this season. Gambhir is guiding the Indian team in his first-ever Test assignment with the side, having won the opening Test against Bangladesh here.

### "PANT WAS BORN FOR CRICKET"

Indian wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant was also in the news during the Test, having scored a hundred in his maiden Test post his return from the horrific car accident 16 months ago.

remarking on his return, Ashwin felt that the youngster was born for cricket and often his abilities are underestimated. "He (Pant) played very well. When he played, I told Rohit 10 times, 'He plays very well. I don't know how he gets out and sometimes doesn't score runs,'" Ashwin continued.

"He was born for cricket in every angle and is a strong person. It goes very far when he hits, and he hits it with one arm." — PTI

## BCCI SECY SELECTION NOT ON APEX COUNCIL AGENDA

**New Delhi, Sept. 24:** The BCCI Apex Council will meet on Wednesday to discuss a variety of issues related to the Board's functioning but the appointment of a new secretary to replace the outgoing Jay Shah is not on the agenda.

It will be the last apex council meet before the Board's 93rd Annual General Meeting in Bengaluru in five days' time. The appointment of a new secretary has become necessary after Shah was unanimously elected as the next ICC Chairman.

However, he will not step down from his current role as BCCI Secretary during the upcoming AGM, as he is scheduled to assume his new position only from December 1.

But even a discussion on the process of nomination is not part of the eight items listed in the apex council's agenda which features, among others, the update on

Byju's matter. The BCCI has a payment settlement issue with their former title sponsor. The embattled edtech firm ended its sponsorship deal with the BCCI in March last year.

The Bengaluru-based company, co-founded by Byju Raveendran, had initially signed a jersey sponsorship deal in March 2019 for three years, which was later extended by another year for a reported sum of \$55 million.

Payments were made until September 2022, but the controversy revolves around unpaid dues from October 2022 to March 2023.

There will also be a discussion on the inauguration of the state-of-the-art National Cricket Academy on the outskirts of Bengaluru.

Currently, the NCA functions at the M Chinnaswamy stadium premises since its inception over two decades back. — PTI

## SARFARAZ, JUREL, DAYAL TO BE RELEASED FROM INDIA SQUAD

**New Delhi, Sept. 24:** Middle-order batter Sarfaraz Khan, wicket-keeper Dhruv Jurel and pacer Yash Dayal will be released from the Indian team for the Irani Cup if they are not selected in the playing XI for the second Test against Bangladesh, starting September 27 in Kanpur.

The BCCI on Tuesday announced the Rest of India squad, led by Rituraj Gaikwad, which will take on reigning Ranji Trophy champions Mumbai in Lucknow from October 1 to 5.

"Dhruv Jurel and Yash Dayal have been selected in the Rest of India squad and their participation is subject to them not being involved in the second Test match against Bangladesh in Kanpur," said the BCCI statement on Tuesday.

Sources said that in case wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant suffers any niggles during the Test, K. L. Rahul can fill up for him.

As reported on Monday, prolific run-getter Sarfaraz, who represents Mumbai domestically, too will play for his home side led by Ajinkya Rahane, if he does not figure in the playing XI for the second Test against Bangladesh. — PTI



Indian women's cricket team captain Harmanpreet Kaur (left) and head coach Amol Muzumdar address the media during the pre-departure press conference ahead of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup in Mumbai on Tuesday. — DEBASISH DEY

tions," said Harmanpreet at the pre-departure press conference for the T20 World Cup beginning October 3.

India have not had game time since end of July when they surprisingly finished runners-up to Sri Lanka in the Asia Cup. They had an extensive

preparatory camp at the NCA where the players spent a lot of time on fitness and fielding, areas where the team has been found wanting in the past.

"During the Asia Cup, we played good cricket, one odd day things did not go to plan," said Harmanpreet. — PTI