

# THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI THURSDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 2024



## NATION | 4

**Jaishankar: India-China ties 'significantly disturbed'; key issue at LAC over patrolling**



## WORLD | 6

**US intel warns of assassination bid on Trump by Iran**



## DELHI AGE | 16

**Urmila files for divorce from husband Mohsin Akhtar Mir after 8 years of marriage**

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### WINDOWS



Actress Rakul Preet Singh during an event in Mumbai on Wednesday. — PTI

### Minimum wages in Delhi hiked; nation's highest, says Atishi

**New Delhi:** Delhi chief minister Atishi on Wednesday announced ₹18,066 in minimum wage for unskilled, ₹19,929 for semi-skilled, and ₹21,917 for skilled workers in the unorganised sector. In her first press conference after taking charge as the Delhi CM, Ms Atishi said that under the leadership of Arvind Kejriwal, the AAP government implemented minimum wages for city labourers which were "highest" in the country. She accused the BJP of being "anti poor" and claimed that the minimum wages in states ruled by the saffron party were "perhaps half of what was being paid in Delhi."

Full report on Page 2

### President on Siachen base camp visit today

**New Delhi:** President Droupadi Murmu will on Thursday visit the Siachen base camp and interact with the troops posted there. Ms Murmu will be the country's third president to visit Siachen, the world's highest battlefield, which is located in Ladakh.

Full report on Page 4

### Hezbollah eyes Mossad HQ, Israel strikes kill 51

**Tel Aviv:** Hezbollah hurled dozens of projectiles into Israel early Wednesday, including a missile aimed at Tel Aviv. Hezbollah said it fired a missile targeting the headquarters of Israel's Mossad. Meanwhile, Lebanon's minister said 51 people were killed and 223 wounded Wednesday in Israeli strikes.

Full report on Page 6

### COUNTERPOINT



Let's announce 'Maximum Retail Price' for farmers for votes!

### WEATHER

Max: 33°C  
Min: 26°C  
RH: 73%  
Rain: 50%

Forecast: Showers

### ASTROGUIDE

**Krodhi:** Dakshinayana  
**Tithi:** Bhadrpadaha Bahula Navami till 12.29 pm  
**Star:** Punarvasu till 11.36 pm  
**Variyam:** 11.01 am to 12.42 pm  
**Durmuhurtam:** 10.08 am to 10.56 am; 2.55 pm to 3.43 pm  
**Rahukalam:** 1.30 pm to 3 pm  
**SUNSET TODAY 6.13 PM**  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.12 AM**  
**MOONRISE TOMORROW 2.03 AM**  
**MOONSET TODAY 2.43 PM**

## Modi: Infighting rising in Opp. party ■ 'Cong DNA is anti-quota' Congress will make Haryana unstable if it wins power: PM

**BHASKAR HARI SHARMA**  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 25

Leading the BJP's campaign in poll-bound Haryana, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, at his second rally on Wednesday in Sonapat, took a dig at the rival Congress Party, saying that the infighting within it will make the agrarian state unstable if it comes to power even by mistake. Mr Modi expressed confidence that the state will re-elect the BJP, giving it a hat-trick in the Assembly elections.

Addressing a poll rally in Gohana targeting 22 Assemblies of the Jat hinterland and the GT Road belt, the Prime Minister lashed out at the Congress on the issue of reservation, saying that opposing reservations and hatred towards it were in its DNA. Striking a personal chord, Mr Modi said, "I am saying with pride that whatever I am today, Haryana has a great contribution in it."

Mounting a scathing attack on the Congress, Mr Modi claimed: "In the past few years wherever it has formed governments,



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with chess grandmasters R. Praggnanandhaa and Arjun Erigaisi during an interaction with 45th FIDE Chess Olympiad winning Indian teams at his residence in New Delhi on Wednesday. — PTI

**THE PRIME** Minister expressed confidence that the state will re-elect the BJP, giving it a hat-trick in the Assembly elections

the chief ministers and ministers were involved in infighting. They have nothing to do with the pain and problems of the people." He cited the example of Congress-ruled states like Karnataka, Telangana and Himachal Pradesh. He also referred to the

alleged infighting in Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh when the Congress comes to power there. "Therefore, Haryana has to be cautious. Haryana has right over me. Remember, if the Congress comes to power even by mistake, it will ruin Haryana due to its infighting," he warned. "The way infighting is rising in the Congress, entire Haryana is watching," he said.

Voting for the Congress means putting Haryana's ■ **Turn to Page 4**

### Modi will launch ₹22K-cr projects in Maha today

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 25

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Maharashtra on Thursday where he will flag off a Metro train in Pune and also launch various development projects worth over ₹22,600 crores.

The inauguration of the Pune Metro section of District Court to Swargate will mark the completion of the Pune Metro Rail Project (Phase-1). The cost of the underground section between the two is around ₹1,810 crores.

He will also lay the foundation stone for the Swargate-Katraj extension of the Pune Metro (Phase-1) to be developed at a cost of around ₹2,950 crores. This southern extension of around 5.46 km is completely underground with three stations — Market Yard, Padmavati and Katraj. ■ **More on Page 3**

### Delhi L-G tells FM: Link traffic fines to cost of car insurance

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 25

Delhi Lieutenant-governor V.K. Saxena has written to Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman, proposing a policy to link vehicle insurance premiums to the number of traffic violations recorded against the vehicle. The initiative aims to promote safer driving practices across India by financially penalising reckless driving behaviour.

In his letter, Mr Saxena recommended a tiered insurance premium system that would directly reflect the driving habits of individual motorists. Under this system, vehicles with a history of traffic violations, like speeding and red-light jumping, would face higher insurance premiums.

This approach, he believes, would be a financial deterrent, encouraging safer and more responsible driving on Indian roads.

The L-G said such a system would not only ensure insurance costs aligned with the actual risk posed by individual drivers but also reduce the financial strain on insurance companies caused by frequent claims. He added that similar schemes had worked in the US and Europe. ■ **More on Page 2**

## Special court tells Lokayukta to probe K'taka CM graft charges

■ **Sleuths get 3-month deadline** ■ **Ready for probe: CM**

**M.B. GIRISH**  
BENGALURU, SEPT. 25

After the Karnataka high court's nod on Tuesday to conduct an investigation against chief minister Siddaramaiah under Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, the special court for people's representatives, Bengaluru, on Wednesday asked the Lokayukta police, Mysuru, to conduct an investigation into the alleged irregularities in the distribution of plots to B.M. Parvathi, wife of chief minister Siddaramaiah, by the Mysore Urban Development Authority



Siddaramaiah

(MUDA) in Mysuru City.

A case has been registered against the chief minister's family by petitioner Snehamayi Krishna with the Lokayukta, Mysuru district, on alleged irregularities in plot distribution to the wife of Mr Siddaramaiah. Mysuru is the native place of chief minister Siddaramaiah and he represents Varuna Assembly seat in the district.

In its order, the special court for people's representatives set a deadline of three months for the sleuths of the Lokayukta, Mysuru, to submit its report. It may be recalled here that Parvathi, the CM's wife, was allotted 14 ■ **Turn to Page 4**

## Backlash forces Kangana U-turn over farm laws

■ **Mandi MP sought 3 laws' revival** ■ **BJP distances itself** ■ **Rahul asks PM to clarify**

**SHASHI BHUSHAN**  
with agency inputs  
NEW DELHI/SHIMLA,  
SEPT. 25

After facing a backlash and censure from her own party for calling for bringing back the three controversial farm laws that were repealed in 2021, BJP Lok Sabha member Kangana Ranaut on Wednesday withdrew her remarks and expressed regret.

Knowing the adverse

effect that Ms Ranaut's comment could have in the Haryana Assembly polls, the saffron party swung in action quickly to defuse the crisis.

Speaking at an event in Himachal Pradesh's Mandi district on Tuesday, the actor-politician said the three farm laws had faced protests only in some states. "Farmers are a pillar of strength in India's progress. Only in some states they had objected to



Kangana Ranaut

the farm laws. I appeal with folded hands that the farm laws should be brought back in the interest of farmers," Ms Ranaut said.

She said the country was on the path of progress

**KANGANA SAID** the country was on the path of progress and that restoring the farm laws would ensure better financial stability and growth for farmers

and that restoring the farm laws would ensure better financial stability and growth for farmers, ultimately benefiting the agricultural sector.

Swinging into action to defuse the crisis after Ms

Ranaut's remarks, BJP national spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia distanced the party from her comments, while rejecting her support for the laws. "The party has not authorised her to make any such statement, and nor does her stand reflect the BJP's views," Mr Bhatia said.

The Himachal Pradesh BJP has also distanced itself from the Mandi MP's statement.

In a post on X, Ms ■ **Turn to Page 4**

## Amid 'chaos' in Pak, I don't know how long I'll stay CM: Maryam

**Lahore, Sept. 25:** Punjab chief minister Maryam Nawaz, whose party heads the ruling coalition in Pakistan, on Wednesday said that if the "political chaos" continues in the country, even she wasn't sure how long she will remain in office.

Addressing a ceremony in Faisalabad city, the daughter of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) president Nawaz Sharif said that ambassadors of different countries are also raising serious concerns over "politi-



Maryam Nawaz

cal chaos" in Pakistan. "The political chaos continues in the country and even I don't know how long I will remain in office (of CM)," she said.

"Today, an ambassador of a country met (ex-Premier) Nawaz Sharif

and me, and inquired about 'political chaos' in Pakistan. Nawaz Sharif told him that political upheaval is not a new thing in Pakistan as he has grown older seeing this," Ms Maryam said.

On Wednesday, Chinese ambassador Jiang Zaidong called on both Mr Nawaz and Ms Maryam in Lahore. A day earlier, US ambassador to Pakistan Donald Blome met the father and daughter and discussed the ongoing political situation in the country. — PTI



Women stand in a queue at a polling station to cast their vote during Phase-2 of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly elections in Budgam district of Kashmir on Wednesday. — PTI

### 56% voting in Phase-2 polls; Srinagar sees poor turnout

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
SRINAGAR, SEPT. 25

Nearly three-fourths of the voters in eight Jammu and Kashmir Assembly segments falling in Srinagar district gave the elections a miss on the polling day on Tuesday. However, the other two districts in the Kashmir Valley — Ganderbal and Budgam — and almost all the 11 segments of the Jammu region witnessed moderate to brisk polling in the second phase of the elections being held after a gap of 10 years.

While 18 constituencies in Kangan, Ganderbal, Budgam Poonch, Rajouri and Reasi districts recorded an average 58.81 to 71.81 per cent voter turnout, eight segments of Srinagar district clogged at mere 27.37 per cent. J&K chief electoral officer Pandurang K. Pole, however, claimed that an overall voter turnout of 56.05 per cent across the 26 Assembly constituencies spread over six districts — three each of the Valley and Jammu region — surpassed the turnout recorded in the Lok Sabha elections held earlier this year. He added that the polling was held peacefully without any incidents of violence reported from anywhere. ■ **More on Page 3**

## Diplomats from 15 countries observe polling in Srinagar

■ **NC's Omar calls them 'guided tourists'** ■ **Very healthy, very inspiring: US DCM**

**YUSUF JAMEEL**  
SRINAGAR, SEPT. 25

A group of New Delhi-based diplomats of 15 countries, including the United States, South Korea, South Africa, Spain and Singapore, observed the voting in Srinagar as 26 constituencies went to the polls in the second phase of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly elections on Wednesday.

While official circles here termed the unprecedented invite extended by the external affairs ministry to foreign envoys to watch how free and fair elections are being held in J&K as a significant diplomatic move to silence India's detractors

of the United States, Mexico, Guyana, South Korea, Somalia, Panama, Singapore, Nigeria, Spain, South Africa, Norway, Tanzania, Rwanda, Algeria and the Philippines earlier during the day drove to various parts of the J&K capital under police escort to see the voting underway at polling stations.

On emerging from a polling booth here, US deputy chief of mission Jorgan K. Andrews said: "It is fascinating to see how India organises its elections and how thorough the preparations are and how celebratory this period is."

Terming it as "very inspiring, very healthy and very democratic", he said that it was heartening to see J&K was casting a vote after ten years. Alice Chen of Singapore said: "The purpose of ■ **Turn to Page 4**

### Kejriwal to RSS chief: Do you back misuse of CBI, ED by govt?

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 25

AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday shot off a letter to RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat seeking answers to a set of five questions, including "misuse" of probe agencies by the Centre.

In the letter, the former CM said the BJP-led Centre's style of politics was harmful for both the people and country. "If this continues, our country and democracy will be finished," Mr Kejriwal wrote.

Among the five key questions posed, Mr Kejriwal alleged the misuse of Central agencies like the Enforcement Directorate and the CBI to destabilise Opposition-led governments and form BJP governments and asked if this practice aligned with the values of the RSS.

The AAP chief also raised the inclusion of leaders into the BJP fold whom Mr Modi and Amit Shah had earlier called "corrupt". "Does this not pain you?" Mr Kejriwal asked the RSS chief. ■ **More on Page 2**



US President Joe Biden with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni during a meeting in New York on Tuesday. — AP

IN BRIEF

**Man thrown into Munak Canal, dies**

**New Delhi:** A 21-year-old died after he was allegedly pushed in the Munak Canal by some men in Delhi's Rohini, officials said on Wednesday. The deceased has been identified as Vishal, a student of Class 12, they said. The police received a PCR call from a woman on Tuesday alleging that her brother had been pushed into the Munak Canal by some men, additional deputy commissioner of police (Rohini) Pankaj Kumar said. Upon receiving information, the police rushed to the woman's residence where she told them that her brother had not returned from the school. She alleged that he was thrown into the canal, Mr Kumar said. "A search was carried out and the team found the man's body. They rushed him to a nearby hospital, where he was declared dead and the body was preserved in a mortuary for autopsy," Mr Kumar added. He said that a case has been registered and further investigation is underway.

**2 men snatch SUV from contractor**

**New Delhi:** In an alleged car-jacking incident, two men allegedly snatched an SUV from a contractor when he was having lunch on Wednesday in Dwarka sector-11 here, officials said. The police said they are scanning the CCTV footage to identify the accused. "On Wednesday at 12.17 pm, a call was received regarding snatching of Eco Sports car by two men near the Rameleela ground in sector 11. A team was sent to the spot immediately," a senior police officer said. "According to the complainant, suddenly two men aged around 25 to 30 years came and one of them sat beside him on the rear seat and another on the driver seat," said the officer, adding the accused allegedly threatened him. "He told the police that after some distance when the car slowed down, he jumped out of the moving car. The duo fled with his vehicle. We are scanning the CCTV footage and have formed teams to nab the culprits," said the officer.

**Jain's bail petition adjourned till Oct. 5**

**New Delhi:** A Delhi court on Wednesday adjourned the hearing on AAP leader and former Delhi minister Satyendar Jain's bail plea in a money laundering case till October 5. He was arrested by the ED on May 30, 2022, on the charge of laundering money through four companies allegedly linked to him. He is currently in the judicial custody. Special judge Rakesh Syal, who was scheduled to hear the arguments on Mr Jain's bail plea on Wednesday, adjourned the matter for 10 days. The ED case stems from an FIR lodged against Mr Jain by the CBI in 2017.



Satyendar Jain

**COPS BUST DIGITAL GANG, 3 HELD FOR DUPING WOMAN**

**New Delhi:** The Delhi police has dismantled an international digital arrest scam, apprehending three individuals accused of swindling ₹55 lakh from a woman while posing as customs officers at Mumbai airport. The suspects, identified as Prabhakar Kumar Shah (24), Rajesh Kumar (27), and Arjun Singh (29), residents of Burari, have been taken into custody, according to an official statement on Wednesday. DCP Hemant Tiwari revealed that the syndicate was exposed following a complaint filed by a woman on September 12. She recounted her ordeal of being 'digitally arrested' via video calls and coerced into transferring funds under the pretext of verifying her accounts to dodge money laundering charges. Upon investigation, the police discovered that the fraudsters utilised a fake company to channel the defrauded money. The accused have been charged under various sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Information Technology Act. Law enforcement officials have recovered ₹20 lakh so far and seized multiple items including mobile phones, documents, and fake organisational stamps.

■ Anti-dust campaign, formation of task forces to curb pollution

**Delhi's Winter Action Plan is launched; drones to be used**

**BHASKAR HARI SHARMA**  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 25

In a bid to combat Delhi's hazardous winter pollution, city environment minister Gopal Rai on Wednesday unveiled the Winter Action Plan, featuring a range of measures including drone monitoring, an intensified anti-dust campaign, formation of task forces, road-sweeping machines, and deployment of 200 mobile anti-smog guns to combat air pollution under the theme 'Mil Kar Chale, Pradushan Se Lade.'



Gopal Rai

The minister emphasised the collaborative effort between the government and the people to tackle the problem, especially during winter when pollution levels typically spike.

Launching the Winter Action Plan, which is based on 21 key focus areas, Mr Rai said, "This year, our theme is 'Mil Kar Chale, Pradushan Se Lade' (let's fight against pollution together)," and added that the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government in the national capital will start working on it from Wednesday itself.

war room and more, the minister said. He added that a special six-member task force has been formed to oversee pollution levels and ensure immediate action at critical points across the city. The government will launch an anti-dust campaign from October 7, during which strict penalties will be imposed on violators.

All construction sites larger than 500 square metres must be registered on a designated website before this date, he said. Talking about the programme, he said special initiatives will include the 'Harit Padyatra,' where participants will walk with plants on their heads to raise awareness about greenery.

Additionally, an electric-vehicle parade and an anti-pollution march will be organised, along with the 'Red Light On, Gadi Off' campaign, to curb vehicular emissions.

Mr Rai said the city will deploy 85 road-sweeping machines and 500 water-sprinkling vehicles to control dust on the roads. He added that mobile anti-

smog guns will be used three times more frequently than last year.

"A ban on firecrackers will be implemented this year as well and once the notification is issued, the ban will be fully enforced. The GRAP (Graded Response Action Plan) stages will come into effect and 588 teams have been formed to control the open burning of garbage," he said.

The minister also mentioned that to encourage proactive pollution control, the government will introduce the 'Harit Ratan Award.'

The award will be given to those, whether from the government, the private sector or organisations, who perform exceptionally well in reducing pollution.

Additionally, with stubble burning being a major pollution contributor, bio-decomposers will be sprayed across 5,000 acres of farmland to minimise its harmful effects, Mr Rai added.

He also noted that a 360-member team has been formed to monitor vehicle emissions and ensure that older vehicles set to phase out are compliant with regulations.

**Man arrested for raping, killing his 4-yr-old niece**

*Dumps body in jungle near her house in Narela*

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 25

A 4-year-old girl was allegedly raped and killed by her uncle, the police said on Wednesday, adding that her body was found in a jungle in a village near Narela here. The 35-year-old accused is a daily wage labourer and was living in a rented accommodation with his wife and two children, the police said.

The accused is an alcoholic and would often fight with his wife, telling her to return to her native place. She refused as she was working in a factory and earning money, deputy com-

missioner of police (outer-north) Ravi Kumar said. Following the dispute, the woman moved to the accused's paternal home where his brother lived with his family. On September 22, the accused went to his brother's residence to convince his wife to return home. During the arguments, he threat-

ened to kidnap his brother's 4-year-old daughter, Mr Kumar said.

However, the family thought that the accused was inebriated. But when the girl went missing, they grew suspicious and informed the police, Mr Kumar added.

A police team was immediately rushed to the spot and the accused was arrested on Monday. He told the police that he had killed his niece after raping her. He then dumped her body in a jungle near their house in Narela, the DCP said. The body was recovered and sent for post-mortem. Further investigation is underway, the DCP added.

**1-yr service bond must for medical graduates**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 25

The Delhi government has introduced a one-year mandatory service bond for the medical students passing out from all the India quota and state quota in both undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG) programs from the medical institutions in Delhi. Under this new regulation, students graduating from undergraduate and postgraduate courses, including super-speciality programs, will be required to serve for one year in the medical institutions under the Government of the National Capital Territory (GNCT) of Delhi, according to the order issued by the health and family welfare department of the Delhi government (GNCTD).

At admission, UG students will have to furnish a bond of ₹15 lakh, while PG and super-speciality students will submit a bond of ₹20 lakh. These bonds will be forfeited if a student opts out of the mandatory service period, as stated in the GNCTD order. The scheme will ensure that the UG pass-outs are placed in junior resident (JR) positions, while PG pass-outs will be assigned senior resident (SR) roles. They will be compensated at the same level as the stipends paid to JRs and SRs, with super-speciality graduates receiving appropriate increments.

**3 AAP councillors quit party, join BJP**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 25

In a jolt to the AAP on Wednesday, three councillors of the party joined the BJP, a day before the election of one member to the MCD's standing committee.

AAP's Dilshad Colony Garden councillor Preeti, Green Park councillor Sarita Phogat and Madanpur Khadar East councillor Praveen Kumar joined the BJP in the presence of the party's state president Virendra Sachdeva and Leader of Opposition in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) Raja Iqbal Singh.

The election for filling up the lone vacancy of the 18-member standing committee, the highest decision-

making body of the MCD, will be held on Thursday. The vacancy was created by the resignation of BJP councillor Kamaljeet Sehrawat after her election from the west Delhi Lok Sabha seat earlier this year.

The three councillors also took membership of the saffron party during an event at the Delhi BJP office. Preeti said that she was a four-time councillor and has always remained among people trying to help in solve their problems related to civic issues.

"I joined Kejriwal and his party believing they wanted to do something different but now I was forced to quit the AAP as a different atmosphere exists there and it became unbearable for me," she said.

**DU campuses abuzz with election campaigns**

**New Delhi, Sept. 24:** The Delhi University campuses are abuzz with electioneering as luxury cars, including Range Rover, Thar, SUVs, and other high-end vehicles, formed part of convoys of candidates contesting the Delhi University Students' Union (Dusu) elections. Hundreds of people from other states have been brought in as a show of strength ahead of the elections.

A walk across the DU's north campus showcased blue, yellow, orange, and white posters, banners, and hoardings placed at every nook and corner of the campus.

Meanwhile, the campaign atmosphere was lively, with traditional

drums, pamphlet distributions, and slogans like "Vande Mataram" and "Jitenge Jitenge 4321" ringing across the campuses.

Although the Lyngdoh Committee rules limit campaign expenditure per candidate to ₹5,000, boxes full of printed posters were seen in their cars.

A traffic police officer said that students park their cars here in a long queue on the road, which causes congestion leading to traffic jams.

The officer said, "They take out cars convoy in the rally which creates a traffic jam in the area and it becomes difficult to manage," and added that he challans over 50 such vehicles per day.

**Unorganised sector gets hike in min wages**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 25

In her first major decision after taking the charge of the Delhi chief minister, Atishi on Wednesday announced a hike in the minimum wages for workers in the city.

The chief minister announced ₹18,066 in minimum wage for unskilled, ₹19,929 for semi-skilled, and ₹21,917 for skilled workers in the unorganised sector. The new rates will be applicable from October 1.

Announcing the development, Atishi said that for the last 10 years, the AAP's Delhi government

has run the government to give a better life to the common people of Delhi. Whether it is 24-hour electricity, the cheapest electricity in the country, excellent government schools, free tests and medicines in mohalla clinics, providing free treatment by building world-class hospitals, free pilgrimages for the elderly or free bus travel for women.

The Delhi chief minister continued, "But apart from these facilities, the Delhi government has done a historic work which could not be done in the whole country."

This is the highest minimum wage in the whole



Atishi

country. As far as the minimum wage is concerned, Arvind Kejriwal's government has ensured the highest minimum wage in the whole country."

She accused the BJP of being "anti poor" and

**Bring back BJP on right track, Kejriwal to RSS chief Bhagwat**

**AVINASH PRABHAKAR**  
JHA  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 25

AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday shot off a letter to RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat seeking answers to a set of five questions, including the "misuse" of probe agencies by the Centre.

In the letter, which has come in the run-up to the upcoming Delhi Assembly polls, the former chief minister claimed that the BJP-led Centre style of politics is harmful to both the people and the country.

"If this continues, our country and democracy will be finished," Mr Kejriwal said in the letter to Mr Bhagwat.

Among the five key questions posed, Mr Kejriwal alleged the misuse of Central agencies such as the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to destabilise Opposition-led governments and form BJP governments and asked whether this practice aligns with the values of the RSS.



AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal during a public meeting ahead of Haryana Assembly elections at Meham, in Rohtak district on Wednesday.

The AAP supremo also raised questions over the inclusion of leaders into the party fold whom PM Narendra Modi and Amit Shah had previously labelled as "corrupt."

"Does this not pain you?" Mr Kejriwal asked the RSS chief. He said that the RSS is the mother organisation of the BJP and that it is the RSS's responsibility to bring the BJP on the right path.

The AAP chief also raised a question on BJP president J.P. Nadda's statement about the RSS,

saying, "J.P. Nadda said during the Lok Sabha elections that he does not need RSS. Has the son grown so much that he has started showing his might to his mother? Didn't you feel sad when he said this?"

Mr Kejriwal further asked whether the RSS's age limit for retirement, which has been applied to veteran leaders like L.K. Advani and Murlidhar Manohar Joshi, also applies to PM Modi. He questioned whether PM Modi would step down when he reached the age of 75.

claimed that the minimum wages in states ruled by the saffron party were "perhaps half of what was being paid in Delhi."

"Arvind Kejriwal's government brought an order from the court and started increasing the minimum wage and put a provision in it that, just like the salary of government officers increases twice a year due to DA, it is necessary to increase the minimum wage twice a year," she added.

Meanwhile, the Delhi police has accorded 'Z' security cover to Atishi. The Delhi police deploys 22 personnel in shifts for a 'Z' category protectee.

**Teen poses with gun on social media to create his 'dominance'**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 25

A 19-year-old boy was held for allegedly brandishing a gun on social media after being inspired by the local criminals, the police said on Wednesday.

The police received information on Saturday that a person had posted a live video on his social media account with an illegal weapon, they said.

The police traced Pritam Kumar's, the accused, location and held him from the Ambekar Nagar area on Tuesday.

"During interrogation, Kumar disclosed that he was inspired by local criminals and one of them provided him with a pistol to create dominance in public," deputy commissioner of police (south) Ankit Chauhan said.

The police recovered the pistol with a live cartridge from his possession.

NORTHERN RAILWAY	
E-TENDER NOTICE	
The Deputy Chief Signal & Telecom Engineer/Const./TKJ, Northern Railway, New Delhi for and on behalf of the President of India invites by established and reliable tenders open e-tender under Single Packet System on the prescribed form for the following work:	
1 Mode of Tender	E-Tender (Single Packet)
2 Tender Notice No.	287-Sig/CTKJ/024
3 Full name of work	"S&T work of Utility shifting i.c.w. Construction of ROB in lieu L-xing no. 36/B at Km 69/13-14 on CH-ALN section and L-xing no. 352 'C' class at km 1288/17-19 in Pitambarpur station yard on LKO-MB section of Moradabad division of Northern Railway"
4 Approx. cost	Rs. 44,86,337.64/- (Rupees Forty Four Lakh Eighty Eight Thousand Three Hundred Thirty Seven and Paise Sixty Four Only)
5 Tender document cost	Zero
6 Completion period	6 (Six) Months from the date of issue of LOA
7 Bid security (Cash/BG)	Rs. 89,800/- (Rupees Eighty Nine Thousand Eight Hundred Only)
8 Sale/availability of tender document on Rly. Website	Tender documents will be available on IREPS web site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in from 25.09.2024 to 23.10.2024 upto 11.30 hrs.
9 Last date/Time of upload of tenders	23.10.2024 upto 11.30 hours. Tender documents can be uploaded by the tenderer on IREPS web site w.e.f. 09.10.2024 to 23.10.2024
10 Date and time of opening of tender	23.10.2024 at 11.30 hours (immediately after close of uploading of tender (D2). In case of two packet system, Financial bids of the eligible tenders would be opened subsequently on the date & time to be notified later on.
No. 287/Sig/CTKJ/024 Date: 25.09.2024 2980/2024	
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE	

## SHORT TAKES

### Nadda will visit Chhattisgarh today

**Raipur:** BJP president J.P. Nadda is scheduled to arrive here on Thursday to review the progress in the ongoing membership drive of the party in Chhattisgarh. Mr Nadda is scheduled to meet the senior party leaders, including chief minister Vishnu Deo Sai and state BJP president Kiran Deo, to review progress of the ongoing membership drive in the state, a party spokesman said here on Wednesday. The party has set a target to make 50 lakh members in the state during the membership drive, to be carried out in three phases, party spokesman Anurag Agrawal said. The first phase of the drive ended on Wednesday. Sources said the BJP is expected to register 20 lakh members in the first phase of membership drive. Mr Nadda is also scheduled to attend several party functions during his stay here.

### 1 crore members register in MP BJP

**Bhopal:** BJP has crossed the "magic" mark of one crore in the first phase of membership drive, launched on September five, in Madhya Pradesh, which ended on Wednesday. "We have crossed one crore mark in just 20 days in the first phase of membership drive. The record digital membership achieved in a rural-dominating society like Madhya Pradesh is nothing but a miracle", a senior BJP functionary told this newspaper here. However, the membership drive undertaken on the last day of the first phase is yet to be taken into account. A special membership drive was carried out on the last day of the first phase of the drive on September 25, coinciding with the birth anniversary of the party ideologue Deen Dayal Upadhyay. Under the special drive on September 25, a target has been set to make at least 100 new members in every booth.

### Assam BJP enrolls over 42L members

**Guwahati:** Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma here on Wednesday said his party — the Bharatiya Janata Party — has already crossed the figure of 42 lakh members in Assam, which is almost 10 per cent of the total members enrolled by it in India so far. Asserting that his party was targeting to achieve the figure of 50 lakh during the ongoing membership of the party, Mr Sarma said, "We have reached the strength of 42 lakhs so far. Our target is to make it 50 lakhs. We will reach 50 lakhs by the next week." He said, "As the BJP Sadasyata Abhiyan 2024 in Assam surpasses the 40 lakh milestone, I congratulate my fellow Karyakartas for their exceptionally difficult target."

### MAJHI: ODISHA RUINED DURING PATNAIK'S RULE

**AGE CORRESPONDENT BHUBANESWAR, SEPT. 25**

Odisha chief minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Wednesday launched scathing attack on his predecessor, Naveen Patnaik of Biju Janata Dal (BJD), accusing him of "mis-ruling" the state during his 24-year tenure. Speaking at a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) membership drive in Bhubaneswar's Old Town area, Mr Majhi claimed that the state had suffered under the BJD regime, and highlighted allegations of nepotism, corruption, and governance failures. The CM criticised the Mr Patnaik administration for sidelining the elected representatives, such as Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) and Members of Parliament (MPs), asserting that bureaucrats were given undue importance during his rule in Odisha. "The people of Odisha witnessed how power was concentrated among officers, while lawmakers were ignored. Under Naveen Patnaik government, democratic values were eroded, as bureaucrats shared stage and the politicians were ignored" Mr Majhi remarked. The Odisha CM took direct aim at the BJD's flagship 5T initiative, a governance reform programme introduced by Mr Patnaik.



Mohan Charan Majhi

## Voting peaceful at 106 polling stations along LoC, says EC 56% cast vote in J&K Phase-2 polls, no incidents of violence

**YUSUF JAMEEL SRINAGAR, SEPT. 25**

Nearly three-fourths of the voters in eight Jammu and Kashmir Assembly segments falling in Srinagar district gave the elections a miss on the polling day on Tuesday. However, the other two districts in the Kashmir Valley — Ganderbal and Budgam — and almost all the 11 segments of the Jammu region witnessed moderate to brisk polling in the second phase of the elections being held after a gap of 10 years.

While 18 constituencies in Kangan, Ganderbal, Budgam Poonch, Rajouri and Reasi districts recorded an average 58.81 to 71.81 per cent voter turnout, eight segments of Srinagar district clogged at mere 27.37 per cent. J&K chief electoral officer Pandurang K. Pole, however, claimed that an overall voter turnout of 56.05 per cent across the 26 Assembly constituencies spread over six districts — three each of the Valley and Jammu region — surpassed the turnout recorded in the Lok Sabha elections held earlier this year. He added that the polling was held peacefully without any incidents of violence reported from anywhere.



Voters queue up to cast their ballots at a polling station in Srinagar on Wednesday. — H.U. NAQASH

The Election Commission (EC) said that the 56.05 per cent was a "provisional" voter turnout figure recorded at 7 pm which will continue to be updated segment wise "as and when the polling parties formally close the poll and return from polling stations based on the geographical and logistical conditions and after scrutiny of statutory papers and consideration of repolls, if any".

A statement issued from Delhi quoted Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar as saying, "13 polling stations had been set up in the twin border districts of Poonch and Rajouri close to the LoC fence. Voting took place peacefully in 106 border polling stations near the LoC in Poonch and Rajouri district."

## 'We'll hit streets after polls if J&K statehood not restored'

**We have to make Sopore apples reach US, Japan: Rahul**

**YUSUF JAMEEL SRINAGAR, SEPT. 25**

Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday said that the INDIA bloc will take to the streets across the country to demand justice for the people of Jammu and Kashmir if the Centre does not restore its statehood after the Assembly elections are over.

While speaking at a series of poll rallies in the Union territory, Mr Gandhi reiterated it was for the first time in the history of Independent India that a state was bifurcated into two Union territories and with that the democratic and other rights of its people were snatched too. He said that the INDIA bloc will put pressure on the Narendra Modi government to restore its statehood. "They have to give it (statehood) after the elections. We will



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi during a public meeting in J&K's Sopore district on Wednesday. — PTI

build pressure on them. If they don't listen, we will step in the Well of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha and also take to the streets across the country if warranted," he said. He added, "If it is still not returned, the INDIA bloc will do it when it forms a government at the Centre."

At Sopore, often referred to as the apple town of Kashmir, he said that it was also imperative to restore the statehood of J&K to see the local horticulture produce reach markets across the globe. "We have to take this apple grown in Sopore to the United States, Japan, China and other countries. It is a product of your hard work, and your future lies in reaching the global market."

## Rajnath: India's defence production all-time high at ₹1.27L crore

**AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 25**

Defence minister Rajnath Singh Wednesday said that India's defence production has clocked an all-time high of ₹1.27 lakh crore in terms of value in 2023-24, and the country is now exporting weapons and military hardware to over 90 friendly countries. "Today, Indian armed forces are using weapons and platforms, which are manufactured on our own soil, and we are also exporting defence items to more than ninety friendly foreign countries," he wrote on social media platform X, on the 10th anniversary of the NDA government's "Make in India" programme.

The defence minister said that the government under PM Modi leadership introduced the "Make in India" programme, with a vision to make India self-reliant in every domain. "Ten years since then, many reforms have been made in every sector including the defence. India is rising on the defence industrial landscape of the world," he added.

According to estimates, Indian armed forces are projected to spend around \$130 billion in capital procurement by 2029. The government wants to reduce dependence on imported military platforms and has decided to support domestic defence manufacturing. The defence ministry has set a goal of a turnover of \$25 billion (₹1.75 lakh crore) in defence manufacturing in the next five years.

## TMC MP dies at 61, Didi mourns demise

**RAJIB CHOWDHURI KOLKATA, SEPT. 25**

Basirhat Trinamul Congress MP Haji Nurul Islam, who was suffering from liver cancer for a long time, died at his home on Wednesday. He was 61. The TMC MP passed away at around 1.45 pm at his residence in Boyra village of Duttapukur in North 24 Parganas.

Islam won on a TMC ticket from the Lok Sabha seat for the first time in 2009. Five years later, he was fielded from Jangipur in Murshidabad but lost. The TMC gave Islam another chance to contest the polls and in 2016, he was fielded from the Haroa Assembly constituency in North 24 Parganas, which he won.

In recently concluded Lok Sabha polls, he contested from Basirhat, which covers Sandedkhali, and won



Haji Nurul Islam

by a large margin. Chief minister Mamata Banerjee mourned his demise and said the people of Basirhat will miss his leadership. "Sad to know of the demise of my valued colleague, our MP of Basirhat, Haji Sk. Nurul Islam," she posted on X.

"He was a dedicated social worker in a remote Sundarban area and worked hard for the upliftment of poor people in a backward region. The people of Basirhat will miss his leadership," she said.

## India ranked third on Asia power index: Oz think tank

**New Delhi, Sept. 25:** India ranks third in the annual Asia power index, released by an Australian think-tank, surpassing Japan on the back of strong post Covid-19 economic growth, while China's power appeared to plateau just below the United States.

The Sydney-based Lowy Institute has put the US at the top of its Asia power index with a score of 81.7, followed by China with a score of 72.7, India (39.1), Japan (38.9), Australia (31.9) and Russia (31.1). The Index ranks 27 countries and territories in terms of their capacity to shape their external environment, its scope reaching as far west as Pakistan, as far north as Russia and as far into the Pacific as Australia, New Zealand and the US.

The index has cited economic growth, future potential and diplomatic influence as key factors for India's rise. However, it has pointed out that New Delhi's clout remains below the potential promised by its resources. "India has shown remarkable post-pandemic economic recovery, contributing to a 4.2-point rise in its economic capability. India's massive population and strong GDP growth reinforce its standing as the world's third-largest economy in PPP terms," the think tank has said. It has noted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership has garnered greater international recognition. The think tank has said India's non-aligned strategic posture has allowed it to navigate complex international waters effectively.

## PM to open ₹22K-cr projects in Maha

**Modi to unveil Pune Metro section, 3 supercomputers in Pune Delhi & Kolkata**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 25**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Maharashtra on Thursday where he will flag off a Metro train in Pune and also launch various development projects worth over ₹22,600 crores.

In a statement, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said that the inauguration of the Pune Metro section of District Court to Swargate will mark the completion of the Pune Metro Rail Project (Phase-1). The cost of the underground section between the two is around ₹1,810 crores.

The PM will also lay the foundation stone for the Swargate-Katraj extension of the Pune Metro (Phase-1) to be developed at a cost of around ₹2,950 crores. This southern extension of around 5.46 km is completely underground with three stations — Market Yard,



People bring out umbrellas to shield themselves from rain at Dadar in Mumbai on Wednesday. — DEBASISH DEY

## Huge feedback on Waqf Bill: BJP MP sees foreign hand

**Dubey seeks investigation by MHA**

**VINEETA PANDEY NEW DELHI, SEPT. 25**

BJP MP Nishikant Dubey suspects foreign hand in the nearly 1.25-crore responses that the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) has received on the proposed Waqf Bill. Mr Dubey, a committee member, said that getting such numbers is "unprecedented and signals a disturbing trend that cannot be ignored".

He has called for a probe by the Union home ministry on the possible role of Pakistan's ISI and that of China for such overwhelming feedback.

In a letter to JPC chairman Jagdambika Pal, Mr Dubey said a probe must also be done to examine possible roles of fundamentalist organisations like Jamaat-e-Islami and Taliban, and individuals like Islamic preacher Zakir Naik. He added the geographical origins of these submissions also need immediate attention, claiming that it is statistically improbable that such an overwhelming volume of responses could emerge from within India alone. The JPC, examining the proposed Waqf Bill, had

MP SUGGESTED reverting to the old system where a suggestion, a petition or a feedback, to Parliament or its panels, by an individual has to be countersigned by an MP

sought feedback from stakeholders and the general public on it. The committee is learnt to have received nearly 1.25 crore submissions. Besides, there are almost 75,000 responses with documents. The link for feedback was found circulating on various WhatsApp groups as well as that of different political and religious groups, urging people to post their responses. Given the huge volume of feedback, the committee had to seek extra staff from the Lok Sabha secretariat to compile and sort the responses.

In a letter to Mr Pal, Mr Dubey termed this as an "unabashed and mischievous campaign" by vested interests to "derail the democratic process".

The MP suggested reverting to the old system where any suggestion, petition or feedback to Parliament or its committees by an individual has to be countersigned by an MP.

## 1.78 lakh tribal voters enrolled in Jharkhand, says poll officer

**AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI/RANCHI, SEPT. 25**

As Jharkhand gears up for Assembly polls, the chief electoral officer K. Ravi Kumar on Wednesday said 100 per cent enrolment of voters, belonging to particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs) has been completed.

Giving details, he said that 1.78 lakh voters belonging to these groups have been enrolled in the electoral roll.

Mr Kumar also said that with a focus on inclusive and participative elections, all officials have been directed to ensure participation of all tribal groups in the forthcoming elections scheduled in November-December.

"There is 100 per cent enrolment of 1.78 lakh voters belonging to eight PVTGs in the electoral roll," he said. "With a focus on inclusive and participative elections, all officials were directed to enhance participation of PVTGs and tribal groups in the elections," Mr Kumar added. Altogether 2.59 crore electors are registered in the state, where the tenure of the Assembly is due to expire on January 5, 2025.

**AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 25**



Undated photo of Prime Minister Narendra Modi with senior BJP leader Suryakanta Vyas, who passed away on Wednesday at the age of 86. — PTI

Padmavati and Katraj.

Mr Modi will also lay the foundation stone for a memorial for Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule's first girl school at Bhidewada in commemoration of the noted social reformer.

The PM will launch various initiatives in the petroleum and natural gas sector worth ₹10,400 crores. These initiatives will focus on energy, infra-

structure, safety and convenience of truck and cab drivers, cleaner mobility and a sustainable future.

In line with his commitment to make India self-reliant in the field of supercomputing technology, the statement said, "Mr Modi will dedicate to the nation three PARAM Rudra Supercomputers worth around ₹130 crores, developed indigenously

under the National Supercomputing Mission. These supercomputers have been deployed in Pune, Delhi and Kolkata to facilitate pioneering scientific research. Giant Metre Radio Telescope in Pune will leverage the supercomputer to explore fast radio bursts and other astronomical phenomena. The Inter University Accelerator Centre (IUAC) in Delhi will enhance research in fields like material science and atomic physics. The S.N. Bose Centre in Kolkata will drive advanced research in areas such as physics, cosmology and earth sciences."

## 'Need to crack down heavily on illicit trade'

**AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 25**

Union minister of State Raveen Singh Bittu Wednesday pressed for the need of harsh penalties and cracking down heavily on the nexus of people engaged in illicit trade and activities.

Addressing the 10th edition of "FICCI-CASCADE's-MAS-CRADE 2024", Mr Bittu asserted that co-ordination between enforcement agencies is key to the battle against those nefarious elements ruining our economic growth.

## Consult CJ over Maha HC shift: SC to chief secy

**AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 25**

The Supreme Court on Wednesday asked the Maharashtra chief secretary to hold a meeting with the chief justice of the Bombay high court and other judges for taking a decision on redevelopment of a PWD and annexe buildings adjacent to the present HC building in Mumbai for shifting some courtrooms and other facilities.

Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud on September 23 laid the foundation stone of the Bombay HC's new complex in Mumbai's

Bandra region. The SC, which is hearing a suo moto case titled as "Heritage building of the Bombay high court and allotment of additional lands for the high court", was of the view that till the time the new HC building comes up at Bandra, some of the facilities needed to be shifted to a PWD building adjacent to the present HC premises. A special bench comprising the CJ and Justices B.R. Gavai and J.B. Pardiwala was also of the view that the annexe building of the HC needed urgent repairs as well.

SHORT TAKES

President to visit Siachen today

**New Delhi:** President of India, Droupadi Murmu will visit Siachen Base Camp on Thursday and interact with the troops posted there. She will be the country's third president to visit Siachen. Former presidents A.P.J. Abdul Kalam and Ram Nath Kovind also visited the Siachen base camp. While Kalam visited in April 2004, Mr Kovind went to the base camp in May 2018. The Siachen Glacier, at a height of around 20,000 ft in the Karakoram range, is known as the highest militarised zone in the world. Siachen Base Camp is at around 11,000 feet above sea level. Bana post is the highest Indian army post on the glacier. Avalanches and landslides are common at the glacier during the winters and temperatures can drop to minus 60° Celsius.

Woman bank staff collapses, dies in UP

**Lucknow:** A woman employee collapsed and died at a private bank in the Vibhuti Khand area here, police said on Wednesday. The incident occurred on Tuesday. The cause of the woman's death is yet to be ascertained, they said. "Sadaf Fatima (40) worked with a private bank. On Tuesday, she collapsed in the office. Her co-workers rushed her to a nearby government hospital where doctors pronounced her dead," said station house officer (SHO), Vibhuti Khand, Sunil Kumar Singh. The body was sent for post-mortem examination. "The family has not filed any complaint. Further action will be taken based on the findings of the post-mortem," Mr Singh said. A relative of Fatima told that she was the sole breadwinner. SP chief Akhilesh Yadav said the news of her death was very worrisome as such incidents raise questions about the working conditions in various organisations.

3-year-old boy stabbed to death

**Muzaffarpur, Bihar:** A three-year-old boy was stabbed to death by a person in Bihar's Muzaffarpur district, police said on Wednesday. The incident took place on Tuesday at Dighra village and the accused was arrested, a senior officer said. A team of police personnel reached the spot after getting information about the incident and took the boy to a local hospital where he succumbed to injuries during treatment, Muzaffarpur sub-divisional police officer (SDPO-2) Vinita Sinha said. The deceased has been identified as Sahil Kumar, son of Shankar Das. As per locals, the incident took place when the boy along with his friends was playing outside the accused's house. They claimed that the family members of the accused did not want kids to play outside their house. — PTI

Will pass appropriate orders if not probed properly' Badlapur shootout can't be an 'encounter': HC poses queries

AGE CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, SEPT. 25

The Bombay high court on Wednesday pulled up the police over the custodial death of the Badlapur school sexual assault accused Akshay Shinde. Stating that the incident couldn't be termed as an "encounter", the high court told the prosecution that it needs to come clean on the issue.

The division bench of Justice Revati Mohite Dere and Prithviraj Chavan was hearing a petition moved by deceased Shinde's father, who has demanded a probe by a Special Investigation Team (SIT) into the encounter. Shinde, who was accused of sexu-



Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis' poster near Uddhav Thackeray bungalow at Kalanagar Bandra after encounter of Badlapur rape case accused. — DEBASISH DEY

ally assaulting two kindergarten girls, died in the alleged police encounter on Monday, while he was being escorted by a team of Thane crime branch from Talaja Jail.

The police claimed that Shinde snatched a gun of a constable and opened fire on the police team in which a policeman was injured. The police also shot him

in self-defence, which fatally wounded Shinde, they claimed.

However, the high court expressed doubts over the police account of the incident. Questioning why accused Shinde was not handcuffed while being transported in a police vehicle, the court said it expects the police to conduct an impartial investigation in the matter.

"We expect the investigation to be done fairly and impartially even if the police are involved and if it is not done, we will be constrained to pass orders. Don't take it that we are suspecting (the police action), but we are doing it because we want truth," the bench observed.

SC orders release of YouTuber as TN revokes his detention

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 25

The Supreme Court on Wednesday ordered "forthwith" release of famous YouTuber Savukku Shankar who was detained just after his release under the TN Goondas Act.

The apex court's order came after the Tamil Nadu government apprised it of the state having revoked his detention order following the opinion of an advisory board on the

issue. "Acting on the opinion of the advisory board, the state has revoked the order of detention today... In view of the aforesaid, the detenu Shankar alias Savukku Shankar shall be released forthwith, if not required in any other case," the Supreme Court ordered while disposing of his plea against the fresh detention.

Mr Shankar was arrested by the Coimbatore police from southern

Theni on May 4 for alleged derogatory statements about women police personnel and some Madras high court judges in an interview on the YouTube channel "RedPix 24x7" on April 30, which led to several FIRs against him. Besides these cases, the YouTuber also faces a case lodged by the Theni police for the alleged possession of "ganja".

Mr Shankar was released following orders of the apex court and the Madras high court.

SC closes trial against Karnataka's HC judge

RAKESH K. SINGH NEW DELHI, SEPT. 25

The Supreme Court on Wednesday closed the suo moto matter against Karnataka high court judge Justice V. Srishananda over his controversial remarks during court proceedings, noting his apology in the open court.

The apex court cautioned courts against making comments that may be construed as "misogynistic" or targeted a particular gender or community and said no part of India can be called Pakistan.

The top court also observed that the answer to sunlight is more sunlight. The observation came in the backdrop of the Karnataka high court's strict guidelines on live-streaming of judi-

cial proceedings to prevent unauthorised sharing of clips on social media platforms. The high court's guidelines were put forth after the alleged objectionable comments of the judge went viral on social media, leading to the apex court taking suo moto cognisance of the matter.

Taking note of Justice Srishananda's apology for his observations during open court proceedings on September 21, a five judge bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud observed that since the judge was not a party to proceedings before it, "We desist from making any further observations save and except to express our serious concern about both the reference to gender and to a segment of the community".

Actor Idavela held in assault case, released

**Kochi, Sept. 25:** Malayalam actor Idavela Babu was arrested on Wednesday in connection with a case involving the alleged sexual assault of a female actor.

However, due to the anticipatory bail granted by the court earlier, he was released on bail after the medical examination, police said.

This is the second arrest of an actor by the SIT probing cases of sexual abuse of women in the Malayalam film industry, following the release of portions of the Justice Hema committee report, which investigated such issues.

Earlier in the day, Babu appeared before the SIT in Kochi for questioning. — PTI

SC assures help to Dalit who lost IIT

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 25

The Supreme Court has assured all possible help to a poor Dalit youth, who lost his hard-earned seat at IIT Dhanbad after clearing the prestigious JEE-Advanced examination in his last attempt, as he narrowly missed the deadline to deposit ₹17,500 towards acceptance fee.

"We will help you as far as possible. But what were you doing for the last three months as the fee deposit deadline expired on June 24," a bench comprising CJI D.Y. Chandrachud and Justices J.B. Pardiwala and Manoj Misra told the counsel for candidate Atul Kumar, 18, on Tuesday.

The candidate's parents failed to deposit the requi-

site ₹17,500 as the acceptance fee by June 24, the deadline for making the payment to block the seat.

The parents of the youth also approached the National Commission for Scheduled Castes, Jharkhand Legal Services Authority and the Madras high court to save the seat for the electrical engineering course at the prestigious institution.

The student's counsel told the bench that Mr Kumar cleared the JEE-Advanced in his second and last attempt and if the apex court does not come to his rescue he would not be able to take another shot at the test.

After very brief arguments, the bench issued notices to the Joint Seat Allocation Authority, IIT Admissions, IIT Madras, which conducted the test this year.

Jaishankar says relations with China 'significantly disturbed'

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI NEW DELHI, SEPT. 25

The key issue in the ongoing talks between India and China regarding military disengagement at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) is the disruption of patrolling arrangements, which needs to be resolved, external affairs minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar said on Tuesday.

Speaking at the Asia Society Policy Institute in New York, Mr Jaishankar said that troops from both nations used to patrol right up to the LAC, but this has been disturbed.

He noted that the bilateral relationship has been "significantly disturbed" since 2020, when Chinese troops violated border agreements and amassed at the LAC.

He added that the paral-

el rise of both India and China in the world present a very unique problem. The EAM also said that the entire 3,500 km border between the two nations is disputed and that India has had a "difficult history" with China which included the conflict in 1962.

Commenting on his recent statement that 75 per cent of the (current) problem between both nations (at the LAC) has been resolved, the EAM clarified that this refers specifically to disengagement.

Mr Jaishankar further stressed that peace and tranquillity at the border are essential for normalising broader relations between the two countries.

In his inaugural remarks at the event ahead of the interaction,

Mr Jaishankar said, "I think the India-China relationship is key to the future of Asia. In a way, you can say if the world is to be multipolar, Asia has to be multipolar."

Meanwhile, the EAM began his engagements in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) also by meeting several of his counterparts from other nations. He will address the UNGA later this week.

It may be noted that India's ties with China are not normal after Chinese troops amassed at the LAC in the Ladakh sector four years ago in violation of bilateral border pacts leading to the horrific clash between Indian and Chinese troops in the Galwan valley in mid-June, 2020, in which troops on both sides were killed.

India, Aussie leaders hold talks, focus on eco pact

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI NEW DELHI, SEPT. 25

India and Australia held trade talks in the Australian city of Adelaide on Wednesday to focus on the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA), with Australian trade minister Don Farrell saying that "with goodwill, we can very quickly resolve this issue and we can have a new upgraded agreement between Australia and India".

Union commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal, who represented India at the talks, said that the "kangaroos (Australia) and the tigers (India) together have a combined strength which is unstoppable". The two nations had earlier inked an economic cooperation and trade agreement (ECTA) that came into force two years ago.

The pact eliminated tariffs for more than 85 per cent of Australian goods exported to India.

The Australian trade minister announced \$10 million in new grants for Australian businesses, organisations and universities to boost cooperation with India and said, "By extending the \$10 million Maitri Grants programme, the government will deliver, firstly, \$5 million for Australian organisations working on projects that boost trade and innovation, cultural ties and community leaders, and then a further \$5 million for scholars and fellowships to support Australian universities to host some of the brightest Indian students in their research on some of our biggest shared challenges".

3 IIMs, ISB Hyd among top 100 institutes

Indian School of Business Hyderabad also in top 100: QS rankings

**New Delhi, Sept. 25:** Three Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) and Indian School of Business, Hyderabad have figured in world's top 100 for their MBA courses, according to QS rankings announced on Wednesday. The three IIMs are IIM Bangalore, IIM Ahmedabad and IIM Calcutta.

Also, the three B-schools have been ranked among top 50 for employability. Fourteen Indian full-time MBA programmes have secured a spot in QS' global list for 2025, including three new entries.

Stanford School of Business in the US continues to be at the top spot among B-schools for the fifth consecutive year. The QS Global MBA and Business Master's Rankings 2025 spans 58 countries and territories, analysing the worlds 340 best global MBAs and a series of specialised high-demand Business Master's Rankings, including Master's in Management, Finance, Marketing, Business Analytics, and Supply Chain Management.

"These rankings offer independent insights for

career-driven students navigating the global business education landscape. By providing a detailed comparative analysis, these rankings help prospective students make informed decisions about programs that align with their career goals.

Whether aiming to lead in corporations, innovate in start-ups, or impact the public sector; students can use these insights as they shape their professional paths," said QS CEO Jessica Turner. "Indian institutions are increasingly nurturing leaders prepared to navigate today's complex and dynamic business environments. The strong showing of IIM Bangalore, IIM Ahmedabad, and IIM Calcutta, particularly in employability and alumni impact, demonstrates India's ability to shape top-tier global talent," added Ms Turner. — PTI

'Cong will make Haryana unstable if it wins power'

Continued from Page 1 stability and development at stake and opening the doors of destruction, he further said. "This instability will stop every work in Haryana. Investment and jobs will be impacted", said Mr Modi.

Further attacking the Congress on its anti-reservation stance, Mr Modi said: "Whoever became PM from the Congress 'royal family', they always opposed reservations", he said. "Opposing and hatred towards reservations is in the Congress Party's DNA. That is why today we are seeing that the fourth generation of the royal family of the Congress wants to remove reservations. You have to be cautious of the Congress Party's anti-reservation tactics."

The BJP gave participation, in the true sense, to Dalits, OBCs and tribals while it worked to take forward the deprived and backward sections, Mr Modi said. "In Haryana, you see the BJP made Navab Saini (from the OBC community) the chief minister. In a short time, Mr Saini has created a place in the hearts of the people of Haryana," he said.

Mr Modi also brought in his achievements during the recent US visit, saying: "I met big leaders and representatives of big companies and told them about the talent of Indian youths." He said under the BJP gov-

ernment, Haryana has made a place among the top states in both industry and agriculture sectors.

"Today, the world's biggest companies are interested in setting up factories in India", he said, adding: "When industrialisation increases, its biggest benefit goes to the poor, farmers and Dalits".

Mr Modi said Dr B.R. Ambedkar had believed that in the empowerment of Dalits, industry plays a big role. He used to see that the Dalits, poor and deprived don't have adequate land. He knew that many poor are landless and spend their life as farm labourers. That is why Babasaheb used to say that when factories are set up, Dalits and the deprived get a chance. That is why Babasaheb used to tell Dalits to learn technical skills. In the BJP's policies, decisions and thoughts, you will see reflection of this thinking of Babasaheb."

Notably, with the 90-member Assembly of Haryana going to the polls on October 5, the ruling BJP has been targeting the Congress over the alleged infighting in its state unit and even claimed that Lok Sabha member and prominent Dalit leader Kumari Selja was unhappy with her party. Former chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar had also invited Ms Selja to join the BJP, but she dismissed any such possible switch.

Backlash forces Kangana U-turn over 3 farm laws

Continued from Page 1 Ranaut, who has often sparked political rows with her controversial remarks, said that her remarks were her personal opinions and did not represent the BJP's view.

The BJP MP said that she must remember that she is not only an artist but also a BJP member now and her statements should be in line with her party's policies. Ms Ranaut noted that she might have disappointed many with her statements on the contentious laws and expressed regret.

The actor-politician's remarks put the BJP in a tight spot once again, more

so as it is in the middle of an intense campaign to retain power in Haryana, which had witnessed protests against the three laws which were later withdrawn by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

It was only in the last month that Ms Ranaut had made controversial remarks about farmers' agitation against the three laws, linking the protests with violence and rape. The BJP had then also pulled her up, while dissociating itself with her comments. BJP president J.P. Nadda had summoned her as well.

The Congress alleged that the remarks are an indica-

tion that the ruling party was making efforts to bring back the three laws and asserted that Haryana will give a befitting reply to it.

Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi demanded that Mr Modi must clarify whether he is opposed to the comments or is "upto mischief". The Opposition Congress demanded that the actor-politician be expelled by the ruling party if it does not agree with her remarks. In a video statement, Mr Gandhi said, "The BJP people keep testing ideas. They ask someone to voice an idea among the people and

then they see the reaction. "This is what has happened, one of their MPs has talked about reviving the three black farm laws. Modi ji you must clarify, whether you are against this or you are again up to some mischief."

"Will the three farm laws be revived or not? If you do so, I guarantee you that the INDIA bloc will together

stand against it. 700 people were martyred, they must be remembered and respected, Modi ji had not allowed two minutes of silence for them, we will ever forget this," Mr Gandhi said.

In a post in Hindi on X along with his video, Mr Gandhi said, "Who is deciding the government's policy? A BJP MP or Prime Minister Modi?"

"Even after the martyrdom of more than 700 farmers, especially the farmers of Haryana and Punjab, the BJP people are not satisfied. INDIA will not allow any conspiracy of BJP against our farmers to suc-

ceed — If any step is taken to harm the farmers, Modi ji will have to apologise again," the Congress leader said. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge also hit out at the BJP over Ms Ranaut's remarks and said the poll-bound states, including Haryana, would give a befitting reply to the ruling party.

"This time, poll-bound states, including Haryana, will give a befitting reply to insulting remarks, calling farmers 'andolanjevi' and 'parasites', hurled by the Prime Minister himself in Parliament," the Congress president said in a post in Hindi.

Diplomats observe polling in Srinagar

Continued from Page 1 visiting Srinagar today is to observe polling and to see how democracy is working on the ground." She added: "It looks a lot more festive here than we normally see on a polling day in Singapore."

Lara Swart, deputy director at the department of international relations and cooperation at the South African high commission, New Delhi, said it was for the first time that she was visiting J&K and that too on a polling day. "I'm happy to be here and see how people are voting. It is really a privilege to be invited by the MEA to come and visit

the polling stations." While some other visiting diplomats said that the process looked comparable to how the elections were conducted in their own countries, Sang Woo Lim, deputy chief of mission and minister counsellor of the South Korean embassy in New Delhi, said: "It is a great experience to see especially how democracy is working on the ground very well. The people are enthusiastic about voting and that is the essence of democracy". He appeared to be ecstatic particularly after being to a "pink" polling booth, exclusively managed by female staff. He said:

"This really is a great idea... pink polling stations... to get more people (females) to vote. It is fantastic. You should export this (idea) to other countries".

The visitors also interacted with voters at a few places. But National Conference leader Omar Abdullah called the visiting foreign diplomats "guided tourists". While speaking to reporters after casting his vote at a polling station set up at Srinagar's Burn Hall School, Mr Abdullah asked: "If diplomats can be brought here, why are foreign journalists not being permitted to come here and cover the

elections. The diplomats who are in Srinagar today have been brought here as guided tourists."

He questioned the wisdom behind inviting foreign diplomats to observe the polling in J&K. "I don't know why foreigners should be asked to check elections here. When foreign governments comment, then the Government of India says, 'this is an internal matter for India', and now suddenly they want foreign observers to come and look at our elections," he said. He added that elections "are an internal matter for us and we do not need their certificate".

Spl court tells Lokayukta to probe Sidha graft charges

Continued from Page 1 plots by MUDA in lieu of her losing 3.16 acres of land in Kesare of Mysuru City.

While ruling out irregularities in plot distribution to his wife by MUDA, the chief minister in his writ petition in the high court stated that his wife Parvathi has been compensated for having lost her lands to MUDA and MUDA had agreed to the compensatory mechanism to allot 38,284 sq ft in lieu of the 1,48,104 sq ft of land lost by his wife. After the ruling by the

special court, Mr Siddaramaiah, en route to Kerala to attend a function, told reporters in Mysuru that he was not shy of facing an investigation and stated he will consult legal experts to decide on the future course of the legal battle.

The chief minister said he is yet to get complete details of the ruling of the special court. However, he said, the ongoing investigation by retired Justice P.N. Desai into the alleged plot distribution irregularities by MUDA will continue.

## THE ASIAN AGE

26 SEPTEMBER 2024

### Gaza truce vital to ensure peace across Middle East

It is that time of the year when the world's biggest talk shop puts on a show on the grand stage of world affairs at the United Nations in New York. The edifice built for the collective of 193 sovereign states may, however, have already failed in its moral obligation to try and bring about a ceasefire in any of the three wars that are being fought in the world currently — in Gaza and Lebanon, in Ukraine and the civil war in Sudan.

As more than 12 million people have been displaced in Darfur and Gaza and close to two lakh people may have died thus far in three wars, the only ones laughing their way to the bank are those who run the military industrial complex. The UN's founding principles and ideals may be crumbling but its General Assembly session at least serves the idea that to keep talking is a way to maintain focus on the senselessness of wars.

Addressing the UN this week will also be Benjamin Netanyahu who said a year ago at the same venue that Israel was poised to become a bridge of peace and prosperity between Asia and Europe. Today, he is the world's primary warmonger even if the constant existential threats his country faces were exacerbated by the barbaric October 7 attack by Hamas from the Gaza Strip and in response to which his forces have reduced Gaza to rubble.

**Mr Netanyahu is in no position to face in peace time polls his people's anger over the fate of the hostages taken by Hamas on October 7. More military action seems to be his only solution.**

In opening a second front in bombing action against the Iran-backed Hezbollah deep into Lebanon after an innovative attack on pagers, walkie-talkies and other devices, Mr Netanyahu seems unconcerned about the risk of a far wider regional conflict. The sense of impunity driving his military actions is helping push the world to the edge of a precipice even as the globally more powerful leader Vladimir Putin of Russia is pounding the cities of Ukraine in response to a counterstrike by Ukraine in the Kursk region.

With time to be called soon on his long innings as a world leader, US President Joe Biden may be desperate to crown his four-year White House stint with a negotiated ceasefire in Gaza, resolving which holds the key to giving peace a chance in a sharply divided world. Given he is a backer of both Ukraine in its struggle against a Russian invasion and Israel in its permanent squabbles in the Middle East, it is hardly likely that history will judge Mr Biden as a peacemaker.

There is no doubt that Israel's military operations are run to war cabinet prompts. The reason why it has been asked to take on a second front even when its action against the Hamas militants is incomplete in the Gaza Strip is to enable Mr Netanyahu to stay in power. He is in no position to face in peace time polls his people's anger over the fate of the hostages taken by Hamas on October 7. The solution to his personal political position seems to be more military action.

Hezbollah has been consistently hurling rockets and missiles at northern Israel from October 8 forcing much displacement among the Israeli population there, but it has vowed to stop the attacks if there is a ceasefire in Gaza. And yet it is Mr Netanyahu's reluctance to countenance even the smallest concession to the Palestinians of Gaza, and the West Bank, that may have dissolved any chance of an extended ceasefire crucial to negotiations over the future of the two-state proposition for bringing a lasting peace to the region.

### Karnataka CM must face probe

The order of the Karnataka high court directing an investigation into allegations of corruption against chief minister Siddaramaiah and the direction of the Special Court for People's Representatives to the Lokayukta police to initiate a probe will hopefully lead to the uncovering of the truth.

The Lokayukta police will now investigate the alleged irregularities in the allocation of 38,284 square feet of land to the CM's wife in lieu of 1,48,104 sq feet the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (Muda), a government agency, acquired from her. While the chief minister maintains that his wife was only compensated for the loss of her land, the petitioners who moved the governor seeking his prosecution alleged that the state exchequer suffered a loss of crores in the exchange.

The governor had issued sanctions for investigation against Mr Siddaramaiah under Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, and for prosecution under Section 218 of the Bharatiya Nagarika Suraksha Samhita, 2023, which deals with prosecution of public servants. The high court found that the facts narrated in the petition would undoubtedly require investigation but refused to uphold the governor's sanction for the prosecution of the chief minister.

While it would cause much damage in the current Indian scenario to ask holders of public offices to vacate their positions whenever they are under investigation for alleged irregularities, the CM's response that the BJP was trying to destabilise his government and that the Opposition party had also indulged in corrupt practices is too stereotypical.

The whole episode should in fact help reopen discussions on the 2018 introduction of Section 17A in PCA, which makes sanction from a higher authority mandatory even for launching an investigation into allegations of corruption against public servants. This section puts arbitrary powers in the hands of the executive which can turn into a protective cover for wrongdoers. It's time the Parliament took a relook at this clause.

#### THE ASIAN AGE

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Subhani



## Kejriwal to Atishi: Can the AAP's new strategy work?



Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay

Even if Delhi's self-declared chief minister for four months, Atishi, had not begun her stint with a video statement drawing parallels between her "pain" and that of the mythological Bharat when Lord Ram embarked on a 14-year-long exile, I would have still begun this piece by recalling the episode of his sandals (or its mythical alternative) being placed on the throne by Bharat while "ruling" from sidelines.

The new, duly sworn in CM may not have secured a *chappal*, or any other footwear, from Arvind Kejriwal, but she has equally melodramatically chosen to keep the CM's official chair vacant and propped herself on one relatively less imperial. Even if Atishi had not spelt it out, it was clear that the entire episode of Mr Kejriwal's resignation is being showcased as an act of political moralism and she assumed charge only because a remote device could not be placed on the chair. Atishi's camera act has not just projected Mr Kejriwal as the "eventual" CM, she has also perhaps safeguarded her position from detractors within the Aam Aadmi Party would might have otherwise felt belittled for being overlooked despite their longer history with Mr Kejriwal. Any threat to her position would arise only after the election, which if won by the AAP, would reopen the entire question of the chief ministership. This issue will arise because it is unlikely that the Supreme Court's order preventing Mr Kejriwal from performing his duties as CM will be vacated before the cases against him are disposed of. And this is not going to happen anytime soon, given the Centre's desire to drag these cases for long in the hope of eventually securing evidence which can secure his conviction. In the meantime, Atishi has to display tact to be an effective CM and also get past the uncooperative lieutenant-governor, Vinai Kumar Saxena.

**Mr Kejriwal possibly is of the view that the case against him will conclude with his acquittal, but it would be a long-drawn process. He is aiming to utilise this time to ramp up his political presence nationally.**

Congress under Indira Gandhi made so frequent changes in the CMs in Andhra Pradesh that the party not just lost power in 1983 as a consequence, but also led R.K. Laxman to draw one of his celebrated cartoons where the caricatured figure of the PM asks the dhoti-kurta and Gandhi cap-clad man his name after having informed him that she had selected him for the job.

Another lot stated she is the "new Manmohan Singh", to perpetuate the myth that the former Prime Minister acted solely on instructions issued from 10 Janpath. The Congress Party also said that she is little but a "dummy" CM. Others argued that Atishi's statement deepens the cult of personality around Mr Kejriwal and that it is becoming so similar to the party which the AAP wants to defeat. But, the BJP as well as the Congress, at various times, have had chief ministers who were or are little but proxies. Prior to the BJP's emergence as the principal party of governance in 2014, it was noted for strong satraps. Prime Minister Narendra Modi rose to this position on the strength of being chief minister of Gujarat. But, once he made the transition to the Centre, he ensured that no one in the party, from any state, rose to the stature he enjoyed. As a result, from the time of the first state — Maharashtra in 2014 — where the BJP secured a majority (along with allies occasionally), to the last instance when the party appointed CMs in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan in December 2023, the leaders selected as CMs made even local journalists reach out for Wikipedia. Likewise, the

tenant-governor V.K. Saxena's consistent intransigence. The apex court order did not permit Mr Kejriwal to return to office. Not having a "working" CM would have been disastrous in the run-up to the Assembly elections. But it was typical of his working style that Mr Kejriwal did not discuss the issue with party legislators formally, such as Atishi's election. Given that he steadfastly refused to resign after arrest by the Enforcement Directorate in March 2024, it was expected that remaining CM, even if lame duck, was important for him. But others ideas brewed in his head. His announcement about resigning surprised most people, opponents as well as within his own party. By stating that he and former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia would not occupy the chairs of power till the people of Delhi gave a stamp of honesty by re-electing the AAP, Mr Kejriwal conveyed to the people that he was eager for acquittal from the "janata ki adalat", even as the judicial process remains tardy.

Mr Kejriwal possibly is of the view that the case against him will eventually conclude with his acquittal, although it would be a long-drawn process. He is aiming to utilise this time to ramp up his political presence nationally. Clearly, he is preparing for the times ahead when several unforeseen developments are likely given the Central government's fragility and changing fortunes of the BJP and Mr Modi. Due to these possibilities, it is imperative for Mr Kejriwal to win in Delhi again. For this, it would be best if he was free from all encumbrances because, in any case, he would have been powerless as CM.

*Author-journalist Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay's latest book is The Demolition. The Verdict and The Temple: The Definitive Book on the Ram Mandir Project. He is also the author of Narendra Modi: The Man, The Times. He tweets at @NilanjanUdwin.*

#### LETTERS CUSTODY DEATHS

Any custodial death always raises a question about whether it has deliberately been orchestrated to stop the suspects from exposing some powerful culprits. Therefore, the custodial death of one of the convicts in a gang-rape case in Assam's Dhing area is not above suspicion. Now, another custodial death happened under another "double engine" government on September 23. The man accused of sexually assaulting two girls at a school in Badlapur, Maharashtra, died in custody. I wonder how the people would have reacted had an undertrial in such a case died in custody in West Bengal. They would certainly have smelt a rat. Why is there such a deafening silence on those two custodial deaths now?

Sujit De Kolkata

#### IITs AND AI

NVIDIA CEO Jensen Huang emphasised that India is poised for significant growth due to artificial intelligence (AI), declaring it "India's moment". Following his meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Huang highlighted key points: AI's transformative potential to democratise computing, India's talent pool of top computer scientists driving innovation, crucial government-private sector collaboration, and the need for AI infrastructure to support India's thriving startup ecosystem, the third-largest globally. To harness AI's potential, Nvidia is partnering with Indian companies, startups, and educational institutions, establishing AI Centres of Excellence at Indian IITs to train students.

Amarjeet Kumar Hazaribagh

#### DARK NET'S SECRET

CREATORS, distributors and consumers of child porn will from now on face criminal action according to the Supreme Court ruling. Nobody can question the wisdom of the court because it is a highly objectionable way of degrading and forever damaging the children. Twisted souls and crooked minds are the cause of child porn and along with jail those indulging in it need psychiatric help and counselling. The dark net is a place which allows access to the darkest and ugliest of desires. And there is no chance of regulating it. Unless there is a complainant, it is going to be extremely difficult to smoke out those who indulge in this kind of criminal activity.

Anthony Henriques Mumbai

Dilip Cherian  
Dilli Ka Babu



### Blame game afoot after Bengal floods: Power secy, chief engineer exit DVC

In a surprising move, West Bengal's power secretary, Santanu Basu, has stepped down from his role on the Damodar Valley Corporation (DVC) board. His resignation, which he announced via email, seems to be tied to what he referred to as the "uncontrolled release of water" from DVC's dam systems. This water release led to severe flooding in several parts of West Bengal, causing extensive damage and hardship for thousands of people. Mr Basu made it clear that this was the reason for his exit, underscoring the frustration with how the situation was handled.

Interestingly, this isn't an isolated incident. The chief engineer of West Bengal's irrigation and waterways department also resigned, apparently in protest against decisions made by the Damodar Valley Reservoir Regulation Committee. This raises questions about deeper issues at play. Was this simply a response to the flood management, or is there a larger governance or communication breakdown between the state and DVC?

The fallout of this event could be significant. Mr Basu's resignation signals that there might be serious concerns about how DVC manages

water resources, and this could lead to larger discussions about accountability and oversight. It also highlights how natural resource management can have immediate and devastating consequences for local populations. When officials step down in protest, it sends a message that something isn't right. Could this trigger a larger shakeup in DVC's management practices? Watch this space for updates.

**EX-BABU UNDER FIRE IN ED PROBE**  
The recent ED raids on former IAS officer Mohinder Singh's premises highlight the deep-rooted corruption within the bureaucracy and its far-reaching impact on society. Mr Singh, once a powerful figure in the Noida-Greater Noida Authority under the Mayawati-led BSP government, is now at the centre of a ₹426 crore scam linked to the Lotus 300 project. The recovery of ₹1 crore in cash, diamonds worth ₹12 crores, and gold jewellery valued at ₹7 crore during the raids underscores the extent of wealth amassed through questionable means. Such allegations of corruption not only erode public trust but also deprive homebuyers and ordinary citizens of their hard-earned money. In this case, investors were promised homes

but instead became victims of a massive fraud. The ED's investigation, triggered by Allahabad high court's directives, has unveiled a network of builders, officials, and entities involved in siphoning off funds, all while bureaucratic figures like Mr Singh allegedly turned a blind eye or actively participated.

This systemic failure is a stark reminder of the consequences when those entrusted with public welfare manipulate their power for personal gain. As Mr Singh faces increasing legal trouble, with a possible ED summons and further probes, the fallout from this scam serves as a harsh lesson on the dangers of unchecked corruption in public office.

**DEBATE OVER IAS OFFICER'S SURPRISE EXTENSION**  
In a surprising development, Anindita Mitra, who had already wrapped up her role as Chandigarh's Municipal Corporation commissioner and joined her new post in Punjab, has been granted a three-month extension. But here's where things get complicated: even though the Union government issued orders for her extension, it's not clear whether she will actually return to her old post.

Ms Mitra, a 2007-batch IAS officer from Punjab, had already started her new role as secretary of cooperation in Punjab and MD of the Punjab Cooperative Bank after her three-year deputation in Chandigarh ended.

The confusion stems from the fact that the UT Administration already relieved her from her duties, and the matter is now tangled between the Centre, the UT Administration, and the Punjab government. There's talk that the UT Administration might request clarification from the Centre because a panel of potential replacements for the MC commissioner position had already been sent to the ministry. It's also notable that this is probably the first time such a situation has arisen in Chandigarh.

With the uncertainty surrounding her return, it's anyone's guess how the next few months will play out. But one thing's certain — this extension has certainly shaken up the usual babu routine!

*Love them, hate them ignore them at national peril, is the babu guarantee and Dilip's belief. Share significant babu escapades at dilipcherian@hotmail.com.*

SHORT TAKES

GREEN ACTIVISTS SMEAR FINLAND PARL IN RED PAINT

Helsinki, Sept. 25: Environmental activists sprayed red paint on Finland's Parliament building on Wednesday to protest against the peat industry...

CHINA GUIDELINES TO PROMOTE EMPLOYMENT

Beijing, Sept. 25: China's Cabinet on Wednesday issued guidelines on promoting high-quality and sufficient employment...

DEBT FIGHT: OECD CALLS FOR HIGHER PROPERTY TAXES

Paris, Sept. 25: The OECD slightly raised its world economic growth forecast for 2024 on Wednesday but called for higher property and environmental taxes to combat soaring debt...

BEIJING OPPOSES U.S. BAN OF CHINA TECH IN CARS

Beijing, Sept. 25: China's commerce ministry on Wednesday said it "firmly opposes" US plans to ban the sale of connected vehicles incorporating Chinese and Russian technology...

GERMAN GREENS' LEADERS RESIGN AFTER POLL LOSS

Berlin, Sept. 25: The co-leaders of Germany's Greens party, which is part of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's coalition government, announced their resignation Wednesday following dire results in three state elections...

Israel's Lebanon strike kills 51, Hezbollah targets Mossad HQ

280 Hezbollah targets hit; be ready for entry into Lebanon: Army chief

Beirut, Jerusalem, Cairo: Israel widened its airstrikes in Lebanon on Wednesday and shot down a missile that the armed group Hezbollah said it had fired at the Mossad spy agency near Tel Aviv...

At least 51 people were killed and 223 wounded in Israeli strikes on Lebanon on Wednesday, the Lebanese health minister Firass Abiad said during a press conference.

The Israeli military said it hit more than 280 targets of Hezbollah in Lebanon on Wednesday after the Iran-backed militants fired rockets into northern Israel.

Israel's military chief General Herzi Halevi told troops on Wednesday that air strikes in Lebanon would continue in order to destroy Hezbollah infrastructure and to prepare the way for a possible ground operation by Israeli forces.

ICBM TEST-FIRED INTO PACIFIC OCEAN BY CHINA

Beijing, Taipei, Sept. 25: China said on Wednesday it had successfully conducted a rare launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile into the Pacific Ocean, a move likely to raise global concerns about the country's nuclear build-up.

Australia voiced concern as New Zealand termed it unwelcome. "The Australian government has sought an explanation from China", a department of foreign affairs spokesman told AFP, signalling unease at the launch.

"We remain in the process of gathering further information. New Zealand views this as an unwelcome and concerning development," a spokesperson for foreign minister Winston Peters told AFP.

The ICBM, carrying a dummy warhead, was launched by the People's Liberation Army Rocket Force at 8:44 am Beijing time (0044 GMT) on Wednesday and "fell into expected sea areas," the Chinese defence ministry said in a statement, adding that it was a "routine arrangement in our annual training plan" and not directed at any country or target.

China "informed the countries concerned in advance," said a Xinhua report, which did not clarify the path of the missile. — Agencies

IRAN TALKS TOUGH

Khamenei says eliminating commanders can't stop Hezbollah

Killing Hezbollah commanders will not bring the group to its knees, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Wednesday, after Israel hit senior figures in the Iran-backed movement during days of devastating air strikes across Lebanon.



People inspect the damage at the site of an Israeli strike on the Mount Lebanon village of Maaysra, east of the coastal town of Byblos, on Wednesday. — AFP

NGO appeals to help deceased Indian-origin Israeli soldier's family to immigrate

An Israeli NGO, which has been at the forefront of immigration of Indian-origin Jews from the northeastern states of Manipur and Mizoram who are commonly referred to as Bnei Menashe, has appealed for help regarding immigration of a deceased soldier's family to Israel.

'Leave Lebanon immediately' says UK PM

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer has called on British nationals to leave Lebanon "immediately" after fighting intensified between Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah and around 700 UK troops were deployed to Cyprus in case an emergency evacuation is needed.

Kremlin urges Russian nationals to leave Lebanon as soon as possible

The Kremlin on Wednesday urged Russian nationals to leave Lebanon as soon as possible for their own safety on commercial flights.

Fate of 64 hostages unknown

Paris, Sept. 25: When Hamas militants staged the worst-ever attack on Israel, they took back into the Gaza Strip 251 hostages, some of them already dead.

A year later, 64 people, including two children, are still in captivity and Israel believes they are alive.

Of the 251 hostages seized by militants on October 7, 2023, 117 have been freed, most of them women, children and foreign workers.

Most were released during a week-long truce in late November in exchange for 240 Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails.

The army has confirmed 70 others are dead, 33 of whose bodies are still in Gaza. The military has repatriated the bodies of 37 hostages who either died in Gaza or were killed on October 7 and taken to the territory.

Of the 64 thought to be alive, 57 are Israelis, though some of them have more than one nationality. Another six are Thai nationals and one is Nepalese.

Kremlin: Forcing Russia into peace would be fatal

Moscow, Sept. 25: Russia said on Wednesday that a plan by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to force it to make peace was a "fatal mistake" that would have consequences for Kyiv.

Russia's army said on Wednesday it had captured two more villages in eastern Ukraine, the latest gains for Moscow's advancing troops.

Moscow's soldiers have claimed a series of territorial gains in the area over the course of 2024, pressing on even as Kyiv mounts its own cross-border offensive into Russian territory.

The Ukrainian air force said on Wednesday it shot down 28 out of 32 drones and four out of eight missiles during an overnight Russian attack.

Zelenskyy told the United Nations Security Council on Tuesday that the war between Russia and Ukraine could not be calmed by talks alone and that Moscow must be forced into peace.

In a call with reporters, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said: "Such a position is a fatal mistake, a systemic mistake. This is a profound misconception that will inevitably have consequences for the Kyiv regime." Peskov said



Russian soldiers fire a Pion self-propelled cannon towards Ukrainian positions at an undisclosed location, on Wednesday. — AP

Putin: Russia can use N-weapons if attacked

Moscow, Sept. 25: President Vladimir Putin said on Wednesday that Russia could use nuclear weapons if it was attacked by any state, and that any conventional attack on Russia that was supported by a nuclear power would be considered to be a joint attack.

Moscow is weighing how to respond to Ukraine's requests to Western countries to allow it to strike deep into Russia with long-range missiles received from the West.

The 2-1/2-year-old Ukraine war has caused the worst confrontation between Russia and the West since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. — Reuters

Russia into peace is an absolutely fatal mistake, because it is impossible to force Russia." Agencies

POLL | PITCH Nine candidates are in the fray to lead the world's fourth largest economy

Surfer, defence geek are Japan PM contenders

Tokyo, Sept. 25: A photogenic political scion, a military model-maker and a hardliner hoping to become Japan's first woman Prime Minister are among nine candidates vying to lead the world's fourth largest economy.

AFP gives a rundown of some of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) lawmakers competing to win the ruling party's leadership contest — and therefore become prime minister — on Friday:

The surfer: Surfing, media-savvy Shinjiro Koizumi

is the youthful, photogenic son of popular former premier Junichiro Koizumi.

As environment minister, Koizumi backed greater use of renewables.

Model-maker: Shigeru Ishiba is a former defence minister who is popular with voters. The 67-year-old likes making military models like a Soviet aircraft carrier for the visit of a Russian defence minister as well as trains and 1970s' pop idols.

Nationalist: Sanae Takaichi is a regular visitor to the Yasukuni shrine to Japan's war dead, so her nomination may rile China and South Korea.

The liberal: Taro Kono, currently minister for digital transformation, is an experienced and outspoken reformist. He has held multiple minister jobs and has 2.5 million followers on X.

The diplomat: Harvard-educated former consultant and current foreign minister Yoko Kamikawa is one of two women in the running. As Japan's top diplomat, the 71-year-old has won plaudits, including for a visit to Kyiv, but she reportedly struggled to secure the support needed to run as a candidate.

"Trump Whisperer": Abe's ex-golf partner Toshimitsu Motegi was dubbed the "Trump whisperer" for his deft handling of tricky US-Japan trade talks.

The Harvard-educated LDP secretary-general has been economy and foreign minister, and is respected for his policy knowledge. But ex-US president Donald Trump reportedly told Abe that Motegi was "too tough". — AFP



Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump speaks at a campaign rally at the Johnny Mercer Theatre in Savannah, Georgia, on Tuesday. — AFP

US intel warns of assassination bid on Trump by Iran

Washington, Sept. 25: US intelligence has warned Donald Trump of "real and specific" threats from Iran to assassinate him, his presidential campaign said on Tuesday.

"President Trump was briefed earlier today by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence regarding real and specific threats from Iran to assassinate him in an effort to destabilise and sow chaos in the United States," Trump campaign communications director Steven Cheung said.

Ryan Routh, the gunman accused of planning to kill Donald Trump at his Florida golf course was indicted on Tuesday on three additional counts, including attempted assassination of a major presidential candidate, the US department of justice announced.

"Intelligence officials have identified that these continued and coordinated attacks have heightened in the past few months, and law enforcement officials across all agencies are working to ensure President Trump is protected and the election is free from interference," he added.

The campaign did not elaborate on the claims, which come as international pressure increases on Iran to reduce soaring tensions in Lebanon, where Israel has carried out a bombing campaign against sites belonging to Lebanese group Hezbollah, backed by Tehran.

Begin new era of ties, Iran tells US

Tehran, Sept. 25: Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian urged the US to begin a new era in its relations with Iran.

While criticising the US military presence in Iran's neighbourhood, the US sanctions against Iran, and the killing of Iranian top Gen. Qassem Soleimani in 2020, Pezeshkian said during his speech at the UN General Assembly, "We can go beyond these limits and begin a new era. The new era begins by recognising Iran's security concerns as well as joint work on joint issues."

He said his message addresses all governments that follow unconstructive strategies toward Iran. Pezeshkian said despite the bitterness of years of sanctions, Iran has achieved strong will and self-confidence and is ready to work with the world, "Iran is ready to have economic, political and security equal-base cooperation for building a better world with world powers and neighbours."

He said Iran expects that the world does not answer Iran's message for cooperation by imposing more sanctions. — AP

HARRIS LEADS TRUMP AMONG ASIAN AMERICANS

Washington, Sept. 25: Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris is leading by 38 points among Asian American voters against her Republican challenger Donald Trump, according to the results of a poll.

The poll was conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago, and its results were released on Tuesday. This is the first survey since President Joe Biden dropped out of the race in July and Vice President Harris became the Democratic Party's presidential nominee.

Harris, 59, leads 78-year-old Trump by 38 percentage points among Asian American voters, expanding Biden's 15-point lead by 23 percentage points since spring. As many as 66 per cent of Asian American voters plan on voting for Harris, compared to 28 per cent who say they back Trump. — PTI

Iran rejected accusations that it is trying to kill Trump earlier this summer, shortly after a gunman opened fire at a rally in Pennsylvania. — AFP



APPOINTMENT OF SUNNI TO V-P POST BLOCKED

Tehran, Sept. 25: The Iranian Parliament on Wednesday blocked the appointment of a politician from the Sunni minority as vice-president, state media reported.

In August, President Masoud Pezeshkian had announced the appointment of Abdolkarim Hosseinzadeh as his vice-president for rural development and disadvantaged areas, citing his "valuable experience".

But on Wednesday, lawmakers voted against his resignation from Parliament to take up the V-P post, the official IRNA news agency said. — AFP

France vows immigration rules after student murder

Paris, Sept. 25: France's conservative interior minister on Wednesday vowed consequences after a Moroccan man suspected of murdering a 19-year-old university student and leaving her body in a Paris forest was arrested in Switzerland.

A source close to the case, while speaking to AFP, identified the alleged attacker as a 22-year-old man of Moroccan nationality.

Prosecutors have said the suspect had been previously convicted of rape and had been the subject of an order to leave France.

The killing of the student is expected to further inflame political tensions in France where the newly installed right-wing government plans to crack down on immigration.

"This is an abominable crime," said interior minister Bruno Retailleau. Retailleau, who on Monday took over from his predecessor Gerald Darmanin, has vowed to boost law and order, tighten immigration legislation and make it easier to deport foreigners convicted of crimes. — AFP

Some of the candidates who are vying to become Japan's prime minister. — AFP



## quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	85,169.87	0.30
Nifty 50	26,004.15	0.25
S&P 500*	5,719.87	-0.23
Dollar (₹)	83.60	0.08
Pound Sterling (₹)	111.79	0.11
Euro (₹)	93.51	0.37
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	75,310.307	0.41
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	73.47	-2.26
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.738	-0.023
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	3.773	0.37

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

## India's foodgrain production hits 332 MT in 2023-24

India's foodgrain production reached a record 332.22 million tonne (MT) in the 2023-24 crop year ended June, driven by bumper wheat and rice output, the agriculture ministry said. The final estimate for 2023-24 shows an increase of 2.61 MT from previous year's 329.6 MT. Rice production touched a record 137.8 MT, up from 135.7 MT in 2022-23. Wheat output in 2023-24 is 113.2 MT as compared to 110.5 MT in 2022-23.



## Amazon adds 9,500 products from SMBs

Amazon India on Wednesday said more than 9,500 new products from small and medium businesses (SMBs) will be showcased on the platform. "With more than 16 lakh sellers, offering crores of products, our customers can expect great value, extensive selection, and reliable delivery to 100 per cent serviceable pin codes across India," said Amit Nanda, director, Selling Partner Services, Amazon India.

## Musashi, Log9 collabs for EV battery solutions

Japanese firm Musashi Seimitsu Industry has formed a strategic partnership with Log 9 Materials to provide advanced electric vehicle powertrain technology battery solutions for OEMs in both domestic and global markets. The strategic collaboration will also address critical challenges in EV energy management, scalability, and service reliability, enhancing overall performance and durability, it stated.

## Infosys to setup technology hub for Polestar

IT major Infosys on Wednesday said it will establish a global technology hub for Swedish electric performance car brand Polestar at its development centre in Bengaluru, a regulatory filing said. Infosys has collaborated with Polestar to create a base for the latter's development of in-car infotainment, software and electrical or electronics engineering, user experience, and cloud-powered digital services.

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## Hyundai's ₹25,000 cr IPO, Swiggy's ₹10,000 cr IPO get SEBI's clearance

New Delhi, Sept. 25: Hyundai Motor India, the Indian arm of South Korean automaker Hyundai, and food and grocery delivery major Swiggy have received capital markets regulator Sebi's approval to float initial public offerings (IPOs), people familiar with the development said on Wednesday.

Sources had previously stated that the South Korean automaker is looking to raise at least \$3 billion (about ₹25,000 crore) through an initial share sale, while the IPO of Swiggy has been pegged at over ₹10,000 crore.

Hyundai Motor India's IPO, if it goes through, would be the largest in India, surpassing LIC's share sale of ₹21,000 crore.

The country's IPO market is thriving, with around 60 main board companies having launched their initial share sales this year so far.

According to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) filed in June, Hyundai Motor India's proposed IPO is entirely an offer-for-sale (OFS) of 14,21,94,700 equity shares by promoter Hyundai Motor Company, with no fresh issue component.

This development marks a significant milestone for



the Indian industry, as it is first automaker's initial share sale in over two decades, following Maruti Suzuki's listing in 2003.

In its draft papers, Hyundai Motor India stated that it expects that the listing of the equity shares "will enhance our visibility and brand image and provide liquidity and a public market for the shares".

With regards to Swiggy, the food delivery major filed its offer document on April 30 through the confidential pre-filing route, keeping details undisclosed for the time being.

Under the confidential filing process, Sebi reviews confidential DRHP and provides comments on it. Thereafter, the company going public is required to file an update to the confidential DRHP (UDRHP-I) after incorporating the regulator's comments. —PTI

## SEBI MAY DISCUSS ABOUT NEW ASSET CLASS ON SEPT. 30

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, SEPT. 25

Board of market watch dog Sebi will meet on September 30. This will be its first meeting after several allegations of conflict of interest emerged against chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch. The Board is likely to focus on key matters like a new asset class that would fill the gap between mutual fund and PMS as asset class, tightening derivative market regulations to protect novice investors and reforms related to weekly derivative contracts.

Eight member Sebi board has three part time members representing central government and the RBI.

They are Ajay Seth, secretary, department of economic affairs, ministry of finance, government of India; M. Rajeshwar Rao, deputy governor, Reserve Bank of India and Deepti Gaur Mukerjee, secretary, ministry of corporate affairs.

## Sebi taps stock exchanges, MIs for information on key personnel

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, SEPT. 25

Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has directed market infrastructure institutions (MIIs) — all recognised stock exchanges, recognised clearing corporations and depositories to submit performance eval-

uation report of MII and key managerial persons based on key performance metrics by a Sebi approved agency.

The independent external evaluation of performance of MIIs will focus on critical operations or resilience in technology and processes of MII, in delivery of its core func-

tions which has been given the highest weightage of 40 per cent.

"The criteria may be subsequently reviewed, depending upon the evolving regulatory and operating context," Sebi said.

The independent external evaluation will take place once in three years for each MII, it said.

## Bankers must be aware of their regions: RBI Dy Gov

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, SEPT. 25

Even as India is making significant strides in enhancing access to banking and financial services, there is still considerable ground to cover in deepening financial inclusion which could be achieved by greater focus on promoting usage and improving the quality of services, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) deputy govern-

mentary said on Wednesday. He said that in both these critical areas, the role of lead district managers from the banks and district development managers from Nabard were indispensable.

Speaking at a conference in Hubballi, Karnataka, Swaminathan said that if local representatives know their districts well, they could leverage upon data analytics and field surveys to gain insights into economic activities, local credit needs, and barriers to credit access.

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## SBI AIMS TO CROSS ₹1 LAKH CRORE NET PROFIT: CHAIRMAN

New Delhi, Sept. 25: State Bank of India (SBI) is aiming to become the first Indian financial firm to cross a milestone of ₹1 lakh crore net profit in the next 3-5 years, chairman of the country's largest lender C.S. Setty has said.

SBI recorded a stand-alone net profit of ₹61,077 crore in FY24, registering a growth of 21.59 per cent.

"We have potential. Definitely, we would like to be the first company in India to reach that milestone," Setty said when asked if it is possible to cross ₹1 lakh crore in the next 3-5 years.

However, he said, "while profits, market capitalisation etc are extremely important elements for our organization, we give equal thrust on customer-centricity and it acts as a fundamental aspect of our operations."

With regard to corporate loan demand, Setty said, the bank has already got a ₹4 lakh crore strong credit pipeline from India Inc and capital expenditure by the private sector is expected to pick up in the second half of the fiscal year. "The infrastructure financing, of course, is mainly coming from the roads, renewable energy, and some of the refineries," he said. —PTI

## Nirmala urges AIB to facilitate low-income member countries

FC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 25

Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday said that Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) should continue to focus on a client-centric approach and facilitate member countries, particularly low-income countries to avail financial resources through technical assistance. Her statement came during a meeting with AIIB president Jin Liqueun ahead of the 9th annual meeting of the board of governors in Samarkand



(Uzbekistan).

"India being the second largest shareholder and the largest client, the AIIB President appreciated India's contributions to the governance and overall growth of the bank and expressed the desire to explore opportunities to further strengthen the ties

## ADB sees 7% growth in FY25; 7.2% in FY26

Robust outlook for industry, services to accelerate GDP growth

SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, SEPT. 25

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has retained India's growth forecasts at 7 per cent for FY25 and 7.2 per cent for FY26, in line with April projections, supported by broad-based expansion across sectors.

While gross domestic product (GDP) growth slowed to 6.7 per cent in the first quarter of FY25, it is expected to accelerate in the coming quarters with improvement in agriculture and a largely robust outlook for industry and services. Exports in FY24 will be higher than earlier projected, led by larger services exports, particularly in IT and professional services.

However, growth in merchandise exports will be relatively muted in FY25 and FY26, though some segments, notably electronics, may experience faster growth. Private consumption is expected to improve, driven by rural consumption fueled by stronger agriculture and by already robust urban consumption.

The outlook for private investment is upbeat, but growth in public capital expenditure will moderate in FY26. Efforts toward fiscal consolidation are expected to drive down the fiscal deficit to a level last seen before Covid-19, reflecting robust revenue collection and restrained current expenditure. A recent policy announcement offering workers and firms employment-linked incentives could boost labor demand and bolster job creation starting in FY26.

In India, the FY25 inflation forecast is revised up slightly to accommodate higher food prices, while the forecast for FY26 is



### BIGGER EXPORTS TO POWER GROWTH

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ELECTRONICS exports may experience faster growth in FY25 & FY26

A RECENT policy announcement offering workers and firms employment-linked incentives boost labor demand and bolster job creation starting in FY26.

Inflation is projected to be 4.7% in FY25 against the previous forecast of 4.6%.

CURRENT account deficit will remain moderate, helped by strong service exports, remittances.

EXPORT

## India's growth makes South Asia best performer in world, says WEF

New Delhi, Sept. 25: A

majority of chief economists have shown a cautious optimism about the global economy with India's robust performance making South Asia the best performer worldwide, a survey showed on Wednesday.

"Easing inflation and strong global commerce are fuelling cautious optimism for recovery but elevated debt levels are becoming a growing concern in both advanced and developing economies," the world economic forum (WEF) said in its latest chief economists outlook.

The report highlighted that debt levels and fiscal challenges are placing significant pressure on



economies worldwide leaving them vulnerable to future crises.

Regionwise, the survey found that nearly 90 per cent of chief economists anticipate moderate or strong growth in 2024 and 2025 in the US reflecting confidence in a soft landing' after a period of tight monetary policy.

Some 80 per cent of

those surveyed agreed that the outcome of the US election will significantly influence global economic policy. Similarly, China's struggles persist, with almost 40 per cent of economists forecasting weak or very weak growth in both 2024 and 2025.

However, it is South Asia that stood out, with over 70 per cent of economists predicting strong or very strong growth in 2024 and 2025, driven by India's robust performance.

"This reflects the current buoyant economic activity in India, where the IMF recently revised its forecast for GDP growth this year from 6.8 per cent to 7 per cent," the WEF said. —PTI

maintained in the expectation that core inflation will rise as food inflation moderates. Inflation is projected to be 4.7 per cent

in FY25 against the previous forecast of 4.6. But inflation should moderate in FY26 to the earlier forecast of 4.5 per cent.

The current account deficit will remain moderate, helped by strong service exports and remittances.

## Sensex, Nifty scale new highs for 6th day

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, SEPT. 25

Frontline indices Sensex and Nifty-50 scaled new highs for sixth consecutive session in a narrow range trading, given over-bought market conditions and monthly equity derivatives expiry on Thursday which may induce some volatility, said analysts.

The Nifty-50 index closed above 26,000 level for the first time ever at 26,004.15 gaining 63.75 points or 0.25 per cent on last hour gains and made a new high of 26,032.80. The Sensex made a new high of 85,247.42 and closed above 85,000 at 85,169.87 gaining 255.83 points or 0.30 per cent.

However, the broader market saw some profit taking as the BSE mid-cap index fell by 0.53 per cent and the BSE small-cap index fell by 0.35 per cent.

"For a major part of the session, the Index remained range bound but a sudden spurt in the last hour of the trading session propelled the Index to end the session at new closing highs. On the sectoral front, Media was the top performer followed by Energy and Realty while PSU Banking and IT were the major lag-

gards," said Aditya Gaggar director-Progressive Shares. Foreign portfolio investors were net sellers of equities worth ₹973.94 crore while domestic institutions were net buyers by ₹1,778.99 crore.

"Winding up of short positions ahead of Thursday's monthly expiry triggered a small rally towards the end which saw both benchmark indices, Sensex and Nifty, closing above their psychological levels of 85,000 and 26,000 respectively.

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"Winding up of short positions ahead of Thursday's monthly expiry triggered a small rally towards the end which saw both benchmark indices, Sensex and Nifty, closing above their psychological levels of 85,000 and 26,000 respectively. However, broader market weakness due to profit-taking could be a signal that the current rally may face intermittent hurdles due to global uncertainty and rising Middle East conflict," said Prashanth Tapse, senior VP-Research, Mehta Equities.



EULER MOTORS' STORM EV TO COST ₹8.99 L-₹12.99 L

MICHAEL GONSALVES NEW DELHI, SEPT. 25

Euler Motors, the electric commercial vehicle maker, on Wednesday introduced Storm EV, India's first advanced driver-assistance systems (ADAS) equipped four-wheeler LCV with two models for intercity and intracity use.

The Delhi-based company has invested over ₹100 crore in indigenous design and develop the new vehicle at its R&D Centre at Palwal in Haryana where it also has its factory.

While the Euler Storm EV Long Range 200 (intercity) is priced at ₹12.99 lakh, Storm EV T1250 (intracity) costs ₹8.99 lakh at Delhi showroom.

"Our innovative Storm EV electric cargo vehicles will disrupt the light commercial vehicle segment in India," Saurav Kumar, founder-CEO at Euler Motors told Financial Chronicle.

"We will be number one or two shortly in this fiercely competitive market," he noted, because of Storm EV's first in segment features, without giving sales numbers.

Kumar said Storm EV LongRange is the first vehicle in this segment designed for intercity use, offering an industry leading real range of 200 km per charge to enable cargo mobility between cities.

He said another 100 km range could be added in 15 minutes flat as CCS fast charging makes it easy to access highway charging infrastructure.

The Storm EV T1250 for intracity use boasts of a real range of 140 km.

## NEW RANGE Computing power needs will expand scale of large data centres in 10 years AI products, services to hit \$990bn by 2027

New Delhi, Sept. 25: The global market for artificial intelligence (AI)-related products and services is expected to grow at an annual rate of 40-55 per cent, and can reach up to \$990 billion by 2027, a report has said.

Bain & Company's 5th annual global technology report said AI workloads could grow about 25-35 per cent per year by 2027. "Bain estimates that the total addressable market

for AI-related hardware and software will be between \$780 billion and \$990 billion by 2027. Fluctuations in supply and demand will create volatility along the way, but a long-term, durable trajectory seems like it is here to stay," it said.

As AI expands, the need for computing power will radically expand the scale of large data centres over next 5 to 10 years, it added. "AI will spur growth in



data centres, from today's 50-200 megawatts to more than a gigawatt. This means that if large data centres cost between \$1 bn and \$4 bn today, they could

cost between \$10 billion and \$25 billion five years from now," the report said.

In addition to the need for more data centres, the AI-driven surge in demand for graphics processing units (GPUs) could increase total demand for certain upstream components by 30 per cent or more by 2026, the report projected.

However, these trends could trigger a scarcity of

semiconductors, it said.

"If data centre demand for current-generation GPUs were to double by 2026, not only would suppliers of key components need to increase their output, but makers of chip packaging components would need to nearly triple their production capacity to keep up with demand," it noted, adding that larger data centres could drive costs to \$10-25 billion in 5 years. —PTI

## SHORT TAKES

### Kohli, Pant named in Ranji probables

**New Delhi:** Premier batter Virat Kohli and the flamboyant Rishabh Pant have once again been named in a jumbo 84-member Delhi Ranji Trophy probables list although the duo is unlikely to be available for any of the red ball games throughout the season. However, veteran pacer Ishant Sharma's name didn't figure in the list which has the country's fastest bowler Mayank Yadav along with another Team India contender Harshit Rana. Kohli had last played Ranji Trophy for Delhi in 2012 at Ghaziabad against Uttar Pradesh while Pant last featured in a red ball game for Delhi in the pre-COVID era. "This is a protocol. They are our registered players and it is our duty to put their names in probables list in case they want to play," a DCCA official told said on conditions of anonymity. — PTI

### Brook's ton helps England beat Oz

**Chester-le-Street, United Kingdom:** England captain Harry Brook led from the front with a maiden one-day international century as his side beat world champions Australia by 46 runs in a rain-marred clash in Durham on Tuesday. Victory at Chester-le-Street kept England alive in a five-match series at 2-1 down with two to play. England slumped to 11/2, chasing 305 to win, after left-arm fast bowler Mitchell Starc removed openers Phil Salt (nought) and Ben Duckett (eight) in the space of four balls. But Will Jacks (84) and Brook (110 not out) responded to the pressure of the situation by adding 156, with the third-wicket duo showing good judgement as well as shot-making skill. Rain stopped play with England closing in on victory at 254/4 off 37.4 overs. But they were 46 runs ahead of where they needed to be under the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern method for rain-affected matches. And with a downpour meaning no more play was possible, it meant England had ended Australia's run of 14 consecutive ODI wins.

**Brief scores:** Australia 304/7 (Alex Carey 77 not out, Steven Smith 60, Jofra Archer 2/67) lost to England 254/4 (Harry Brook 110 not out, Will Jacks 84) by 46 runs (DLS method).

### Indian MotoGP put off to 2026

**New Delhi:** The Indian round of the MotoGP championship was on Wednesday postponed to 2026 with the organisers citing "operational circumstances" as the reason behind another delay. The Indian Grand Prix was earlier scheduled to be held in September but was deferred to March 2025. Now, it can only be held in the early stages of 2026. "The FIM, IRTA and Dorna Sports confirm that the Indian Grand Prix will be included on the 2026 FIM MotoGP calendar, moving to become a reserve event for 2025," MotoGP said in a statement.

"Operational circumstances have obliged the event to be delayed from its initial slot near the start of the 2025 calendar. With no available dates towards the end of the season, MotoGP will therefore return to India in the early stages of 2026." Over 50,000 fans had turned up for the inaugural edition of the Indian Grand Prix at the Buddh International Circuit in 2023. — PTI

### Two new teams join DGC League

**New Delhi:** Two new teams will join the quest in the race for the top spot as the fourth edition of the Delhi Golf Club League tees off at the historic Delhi Golf Club on October 3. This takes the total count of teams to a maximum limit of 24. Sudhir Power and Victorious Choice are the two new teams at the League, the inaugural season of which, in 2021, witnessed 18 teams compete while 20 teams competed in the 2022 edition and 22 teams in the 2023 edition. The tournament will conclude on October 26. The 24 competing teams will comprise 19 players each taking the total field to 456 players.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during an interaction with 45th FIDE Chess Olympiad winning Indian teams at his residence in New Delhi on Wednesday. India won gold medals in both Open and Women's events of the Olympiad. — PTI

# DAY OUT WITH PM

## Modi meets chess players, hails India's historic double gold

**New Delhi, Sept. 25:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday lauded India's young chess players for their historic achievement at the 45th Chess Olympiad in Budapest, where both the men's and women's teams clinched their maiden gold medals. India made history on Sunday as the men's team defeated Slovenia and the women's team triumphed over Azerbaijan in the final round, securing their first-ever gold medals at the prestigious event. In the men's competition, D. Gukesh, Arjun Erigaisi, and R. Praggnanandhaa secured decisive wins in the 11th and final round. The women's team secured their gold by defeating Azerbaijan.

In a video shared on social media, Modi interacted with the chess champions, including R. Vaishali, D. Harika, Tania Sachdev, Vidit Gujrathi, Arjun Erigaisi, and Praggnanandhaa. During the interaction, the players presented the Prime Minister with a chessboard, after which Praggnanandhaa and Erigaisi played a quick

## ARJUN FOUND SUCCESS BY DETACHING FROM RESULTS

**New Delhi, Sept. 25:** Indian Grandmaster Arjun Erigaisi has revealed that he once felt bogged down by the weight of his own expectations, a phase that led to several lows, but by detaching himself from the outcome of his matches, he has finally discovered the path to success. Erigaisi is enjoying a stellar year: Not only did he play a vital role in the Indian men's team's historic gold at the Olympiad, he also won nine of his 11 games to secure an individual gold on the third board. His performance has elevated



Arjun Erigaisi

him to a career-best world number three in live FIDE rankings. However, things didn't seem so rosy a year ago, as Erigaisi found himself caught in a rut. "I would say back in 2021, I was clearly underrated (in ratings). I was about 2500 something (rating). But my strength was clearly

about 2600. So, it was all smooth sailing until a point," he said. "And then in 2023, I was about 2700. And that period was tough. I was having ups and downs. And some of the downs were really harsh like missing out on the Candidates. So 2023 was really tough," he said. "One conscious decision I made after that was to detach myself from the results. Because I was ending up putting too much pressure on myself by desperately wanting to achieve something. I think detaching from the results really helped me." — PTI

game of chess, which left Modi spellbound. **CHESS BODY ANNOUNCES ₹3.2 CRORE REWARD** The All India Chess Federation (AICF) announced a whopping

₹3.2 crore in rewards for the Indian teams during a felicitation ceremony on Wednesday. AICF president Nitin Narang made the announcement during the event. Each player from the

winning teams will receive ₹25 lakh, while the coaches of the men's and women's teams, Abhijeet Kunte and Srinath Narayanan, will be rewarded with ₹15 lakh each.

Grandmaster Dibyendu Barua, head of the Indian delegation, will receive ₹10 lakh, and the assistant coaches will be rewarded ₹7.5 lakh.

### GUJRATHI DECIDES AGAINST DEFENDING TITLE TO MEET PM

Meanwhile, Gujrathi has decided against defending his crown at the 10th Vugar Gashimov Memorial Chess Super Tournament in Azerbaijan for an audience with Prime Minister. Gujrathi had won the Azerbaijan event last year after outperforming compatriot Erigaisi. Gujrathi took to 'X', to inform that he reached Baku for the event but decided to return to India to meet Modi on learning about the felicitation function. "I reached Baku and I got to know our Hon'ble PM wants to felicitate the Indian team. I was overjoyed when I heard this and I wanted to be a part of it. It's amazing at how such short notice he is taking out time for us," Gujrathi wrote on 'X'. Gujrathi has been replaced by Aravindh Chithambaram for the upcoming event. — PTI



Chelsea's Christopher Nkunku (left) celebrates after scoring against Barrow during the English League Cup third round match at the Stamford Bridge Stadium in London on Tuesday. — AP

# Chelsea, Man City in Last 16

**Manchester (England), Sept. 25:** Christopher Nkunku scored a hat-trick as Chelsea thrashed fourth tier Barrow 5-0 to reach the Last 16 of the League Cup on Tuesday as a much-changed Manchester City edged out Watford 2-1. Nkunku now has six goals in seven appearances this season, but the Frenchman has still been unable to nail down a regular place in Enzo Maresca's side. Maresca made 11 changes from the team that beat West Ham 3-0 on Saturday but could still start around £400 million (\$533 million) worth of talent. Joao Felix was another

of the Blues' big money signings to shine. His scooped pass set up Nkunku for opener. Nkunku then flicked home a second before Felix's free-kick hit the post and rebounded in off Barrow goalkeeper Paul Farman. Pedro Neto tapped in Mykhailo Mudryk's cross for his first Chelsea goal. Nkunku sealed his first hat-trick for the club when he dispossessed Farman and rolled into an empty net. City began what is likely to be many months without key midfielder Rodri after he suffered suspected knee ligament damage in a fiery 2-2 draw against

Arsenal in a Premier League match played on Sunday. Little over 48 hours on from that top-of-the-table clash, City were in action again and Pep Guardiola made nine changes, including a debut for 16-year-old Kaden Braithwaite. Jeremy Doku, one of the two to retain his place, fired in the opening goal from Jack Grealish's pass after five minutes. Rodri's absence could mean a more prominent role for Matheus Nunes and the Portugal international blasted in his first goal since joining City for £53 million a year ago. — AFP

LEAGUE CUP THIRD ROUND				
Manchester City (Doku 5, Nunes 38)	2	Chelsea (Nkunku 8, 15, 75, Farman 28-o.g., Neto 48)	5	
Watford (Ince 86)	1	Barrow	0	
Walsall	0	Wycombe Wanderers (Kone 90+5)	1	
Leicester (Leicester win 3-0 on penalties)	0	Aston Villa (Buendia 55, Duran 85-pen)	2	

# NADA notice to Vinesh after she misses dope test

**New Delhi, Sept. 25:** The National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) on Wednesday served a notice to wrestler Vinesh Phogat for whereabouts failure and sought an explanation within 14 days. All the athletes registered with NADA's Registered Testing Pool (RTP), of which Vinesh is a part, are required to provide details about their availability for dope tests. If they fill the details and are found not available on that location at that given time, it is considered a whereabouts failure.



Vinesh Phogat

The NADA, in its notice, conveyed to the wrestler-turned-politician that she had apparently committed a whereabouts failure as she was not available for a dope test on September 9 at her house in Kharkhoda village in Sonapat. Vinesh had announced her retirement from the sport after her Paris Olympics campaign ended in heartbreak, where she made the final but was disqualified ahead of her gold-medal bout for being overweight. Vinesh and fellow wrestler Bajrang Punia joined the Congress party recently and she is contesting the upcoming Haryana Assembly election from Julana constituency. She has been busy campaigning in the Julana constituency these days.

"You are hereby given a formal notice to notify you about apparent failure to comply with the whereabouts requirements of the ADR, and to invite you to make any comments before we come to a final decision on the matter," the NADA notice read. "A Dope Control Officer (DCO) was sent to test you on that day at that time and place. However, he was unable to locate you for testing as you were not available at the given location." Vinesh needs to either accept the failure or provide evidence that she was present in that location for about 60 minutes. It may be mentioned that one whereabouts failure does not constitute an anti-doping rule violation. There must be three whereabouts failures (whether filing failures or missed tests) within a 12-month period for NADA to charge an athlete. — PTI

# PANT RE-ENTERS TOP 10; ROHIT & KOHLI SLIP IN TEST RANKINGS

**Dubai, Sept. 25:** Riding on a sensational century in his Test comeback, wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant on Wednesday re-entered the ICC rankings at an impressive sixth position but India skipper Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli slipped in a major shake-up in standings. Pant (731), who smashed a stunning century in the opening game of the two-Test series against Bangladesh in Chennai, was placed sixth, while opener Yashasvi Jaiswal (751), moved up to fifth thanks to a half-century in the first innings of the Test match. India skipper Rohit Sharma retained his place in the top ten, though he moved down five places with two underwhelming scores. He has 716 rating points. Kohli also dropped five spots to go out of the top-10 and he is now placed 12th in the standings. The Sri Lanka-New Zealand Test in Galle brought about top 10 bowling rankings shifts, with Prabath Jayasuriya solidifying his reputation as one of the game's best spinners, moving five spots into eighth after a nine-wicket haul. — PTI

# MBAPPE SCORES AS REAL MADRID EDGE ALAVES

**Madrid (Spain), Sept. 25:** Kylian Mbappe struck for the fourth consecutive game as Real Madrid survived a late scare to beat Alaves 3-2 in La Liga on Tuesday. Real Madrid, second, cut the gap on Barcelona to one point before the leaders' host Getafe on Wednesday. Madrid dismantled Alaves with goals from Lucas Vazquez, Mbappe and Rodrygo before a late salvo from the visitors rocked Carlo Ancelotti's side. Carlos Protesoni and Kike Garcia scored two goals in two minutes in the final stages but Madrid held on. "This is football, you can think the game has finished, (then there's) a small slip and they score the first, they get confidence and you lose it, this is what happens," Ancelotti told reporters. "Obviously we don't want this to happen, but it can. "We have to highlight that for an hour the team played well and that gives us confidence." Los Blancos overpowered Alaves from the start in what was a hugely uneven contest for most of the game, despite the Basque side's solid start to the season. Ancelotti brought Vinicius Junior back into the starting line-up and gave Vazquez a rare start and the pair combined inside the first minute. The Brazilian surged in from the left flank and cut the ball back for a simple finish from Vazquez. — AFP



Indian players during a training session ahead of the second Test against Bangladesh at the Green Park Stadium in Kanpur on Wednesday. — PTI

# Shakib is eligible for selection, says coach

**Kanpur, Sept. 25:** Bangladesh head coach Chandika Hathurusinghe on Wednesday said Shakib Al Hasan is available for the second Test against India, downplaying concerns around his fitness owing to an injury that he picked up in the opening game. Shakib had suffered a finger injury during the game in Chennai while facing India pacer Jasprit Bumrah. The second game is scheduled to start on Friday. The 37-year-old spin all-rounder was introduced into the attack quite late and he bowled only 21 overs in two Indian innings. "At the moment, I haven't heard from my physio or from anyone. He is still eligible for selection," Hathurusinghe said after the team's first training session in Kanpur. The coach praised Shakib for putting up a great fight against the quality Indian attack in the second innings, in which he scored 25 off 56 balls. In the first innings, he was the top-scorer for the visitors, adding 32 off and 64 balls. — PTI

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