

THE ASIAN AGE

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Kareena says she still have that fire and passion for taking up different roles



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WINDOWS

WB doctors will end stir, resume work tomorrow

Kolkata: Agitating junior doctors announced that they will "partially" lift their 'ceasework' and partially rejoin their duties at emergency and essential services in state-run hospitals from Saturday as the West Bengal government has accepted most of their demands. The medics, who have been on 'cease work' for the last 41 days following the rape and murder of a woman doctor at R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital, announced that they would lift their sit-in outside Swasthya Bhavan on Friday. Before lifting the sit-in, they would hold a march from Swasthya Bhavan, the state health department headquarters, to CBI office at CGO Complex in Salt Lake area. "It has been decided that given the flood situation in West Bengal and the state government agreeing to certain demands of ours, we will be rejoining emergency and essential services partially from Saturday. We are withdrawing our ceasework partially," an agitating doctor said after their general body meeting. The protesting doctors said they will not work in the OPD but will work partially in emergency and essential services. — PTI

Political fight erupts over Tirupati laddoos

Amaravati: Andhra CM N. Chandrababu Naidu's claim that animal fat was used in Tirupati laddoos triggered a political row with the YSRCP accusing Mr Naidu of indulging in "heinous allegations" and TDP circulating a lab report to back the claim. **Full report on Page 3**

SC junks pleas by telcos on AGR dues

New Delhi: The Supreme Court has dismissed a batch of pleas filed by companies, including Vodafone Idea and Bharti Airtel, seeking correction of alleged errors in the AGR. The court also rejected the plea of telcos seeking to list the curative petitions for open court hearing. **Full report on Page 3**

COUNTERPOINT



Are our mobiles safe?

WEATHER

Max: 32°C
Min: 26°C
RH: 94%
Rain: Nil
Forecast: Cloudy

ASTROGUIDE

Krodhi: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Bhadrpada Bahula Tadiya till 9.18 pm
Star: Ashwini till 2.43 am
Variyam: 11.08 pm to 12.34 am
Durmuhurtam: 8.33 am to 9.21 am; 12.34 pm to 1.22 pm
Rahukalam: 10.30 am to 12 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.21 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.09 AM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 11.38 PM
MOONSET TODAY 8.22 AM

Tells Srinagar rally BJP is committed to restoring J&K statehood ■ Vows faster development ■ 'Removing Dil ki doori & Dilli se doori' PM hits out at '3 families', vows to make J&K 'paradise on earth'

YUSUF JAMEEL SRINAGAR, SEPT. 19

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while striking a chord with the people of Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday, said that he and his party, the BJP, were working hard towards bridging the distances between them and Delhi and bring their hearts closer. "Hum Dil ki doori and Dilli se doori mita rahe hain" (we are removing the space between our hearts and from Delhi), he said, while addressing a rally here. He said that his government had already committed itself in Parliament to restoring J&K's statehood. "The BJP will fulfil this promise. The BJP implements fully what it says or promises. I, therefore, appeal to you to come out on September 25 to vote in its favour and break all previous records (of voter turnout)". After opening his speech with extending greetings to the people in Kashmiri, the PM said he had come to Srinagar with the message that his vision for J&K is to "speed up development works to take it to new heights of success". He said: "It is Modi's goal and promise as well to make J&K completely terror free, to defeat every conspiracy that is hatched against it and every power which lays a plan to damage it and make it a peaceful and prosperous region," he said. Accusing the "three



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a roadshow for the Jammu and Kashmir elections at Katra in Reasi district on Thursday. — PTI

THE PRIME Minister also promised a dignified life for J&K's youth by providing them proper employment befitting their aptitude

political dynamic" — the Gandhis, the Abdullahs and the Muftis — of obliterating several generations of the Kashmiri youth to remain in power and pluck the day, he said: "I'm buckled down with utmost honesty to restore peace here. I won't allow these three families to ruin J&K further." He also promised a dignified life for its youth by providing them proper employment befitting their aptitude. He said that he felt a deep sense of contentment over the first phase of the

Modi: Cong-NC executing Pak terror agenda

AGE CORRESPONDENT SRINAGAR, SEPT. 19

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday accused the Congress-National Conference combine of executing the agenda of "lord of terrorism" Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir by asking for reinstating Articles 370 and 35A in the Constitution. "But I want to tell them loud and clear that we will not allow Pakistan's agenda to be implemented in J&K. No power on earth can bring Article 370 back," Mr Modi said addressing a BJP rally in Katra. The Prime Minister was referring to Pakistan defence minister Khawaja Asif's remarks that his country's government and the Congress-NC shared a common stand on Article 370. **More on Page 3**

2 pacts on anvil during PM's US visit ■ Modi to meet Quad leaders ■ Trump meeting not final yet

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI NEW DELHI, SEPT. 19

During Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the United States from September 21-23, India will sign up to join two more pillars — one pertaining to clean energy and the other dealing with anti-corruption efforts — of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for

Prosperity (IPEF). Besides, India will also ratify an "overarching agreement" on the IPEF and sign a separate Drugs Policy Framework pact with the United States. Briefing the media on the Prime Minister's forthcoming US visit, the foreign secretary said that the Quad summit at Wilmington, Delaware, which the Prime Minister will attend this Saturday,

will be followed by a Cancer Moonshot event, marking the Quad initiative to "detect, treat and alleviate" cancer in countries of the Indo-Pacific region. Talking about the forthcoming visit during which Mr Modi will, apart from attending the Quad summit, also address the Indian diaspora at an event in New York on Sunday and also address

the UN Summit of the Future on Monday, the foreign secretary said the visit will include an important bilateral meeting with US President Joe Biden, who will be hosting the Quad Summit in his hometown. He added that India was to host the Quad Summit this year but had "agreed" to exchange turns of hosting the Summit with the US **Turn to Page 4**

Kejriwal to join AAP's Haryana poll campaign

New Delhi, Sept. 19: AAP supreme Arvind Kejriwal will join the party's campaign in poll-bound Haryana with a roadshow in the Jagadhri constituency on September 20, AAP national general secretary (organisation) Sandeep Pathak said on Thursday. He will also participate in 13 events across 11 districts, covering the Dabwali, Rania, Bhiwani, Meham, Kalayat, Assandh and Ballabgarh constituencies, among others. **More on Page 2**

BJP promises govt jobs, MSP, ₹2,100 for women in Haryana

Nadda unveils manifesto in Rohtak, calls Cong corrupt

AGE CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs NEW DELHI/ CHANDIGARH, SEPT. 19

Facing anti-incumbency and a resurgent Congress, the BJP manifesto for the Haryana Assembly polls promises a monthly assistance of ₹2,100 for women, two lakhs government jobs for the youth and guaranteed government jobs for Agniveers hailing from the state, among others. In a bid to woo the farmers in the state, the BJP's poll document released on Thursday also promised to purchase 24



J.P. Nadda

crops at minimum support price (MSP). In power since 2014 in Haryana, the BJP is not just facing strong Opposition but also factionalism and anger among party leaders over ticket distribution. The polling scheduled for

October 5 is expected to be a multi-corner contest, with most of the BJP's opponents vying for the dominant Jat vote bank. Haryana is a Jat-dominated state where the BJP gave the first non-Jat chief minister in 2014 **Turn to Page 4**

Shivraj to meet farmers regularly every Tuesday

SHASHI BHUSHAN NEW DELHI, SEPT. 19

In a bid to reach out directly to the farmers and discuss their issue, Union agriculture minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Thursday announced that he will hold regular meetings with them in his office in the first half of every Tuesday. "I will personally, on a regular basis, establish a seedha samvad (direct dialogue) with our farmers and their organisations to address their pressing concerns," Mr Chouhan said, adding that the weekly meet-

THE UNION minister said that the govt has a six-point strategy for the welfare of farmers and development of agriculture

ings with the farmers will be held with prior intimation. Giving out the details of important decisions and achievements of the ministry of agriculture and farmers' welfare in the first 100 days during the third term of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Mr Chouhan at a press conference in the national capital said **Turn to Page 4**

Congress, Pak on same page on anti-India agenda: Shah

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 19

Union home minister Amit Shah on Thursday said the Pakistan defence minister's statement on the Congress and the National Conference lending support to Article 370 and 35A has once "again exposed" the Opposition parties. Mr Shah also claimed that Lok Sabha Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi's party and Pakistan have always been on the same page. He asserted that the Congress has always been "hand in glove with the anti-national forces". "The Pakistan defence minister's statement about the Congress and the JKNC's support on Article 370 and 35A has once again exposed the Congress. This statement has once again made it clear that the Congress and Pakistan have the same intentions and agenda. For the last few years, Mr Gandhi has been standing with every anti-India force, hurting the sentiments of the countrymen," Mr Shah wrote on X in Hindi.

Referring to the statement of Pakistan defence minister Khawaja Asif, he said it proved that the neighbouring country and the Congress have the "same intentions and agenda". **More on Page 3**



Ravichandran Ashwin celebrates his century with Ravindra Jadeja during Day 1 of the first Test against Bangladesh at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on Thursday. Ashwin pulled India to a "good position" at 339-6 after Bangladesh fast bowler Hasan Mahmud rattled the hosts with four wickets. **Report on Page 8** — PTI

Dalit minister in Atishi's team, 4 old faces to stay

New CM will be sworn in tomorrow at Raj Niwas

AVINASH PRABHAKAR JHA NEW DELHI, SEPT. 19

Delhi chief minister-designate Atishi, who is due to be sworn in on September 21, is all set to retain four old faces and bring in a fresh Dalit face in her Cabinet. AAP MLA Mukesh Ahlawat will be the new face in the Delhi Cabinet, the others to be retained are Gopal Rai, Saurabh Bharadwaj, Kailash Gahlot and Imran Hussain. Mr Ahlawat, MLA from Delhi's Sultanpur Majra, is being inducted to fill the vacancy created following the resignation of social welfare minister Raaj Kumar Anand. Mr Anand resigned from the Kejriwal government and quit the AAP in April. Mr Ahlawat, who is currently co-in-charge of the party's Rajasthan unit, led the AAP to victory in Sultanpur Majra constituency by defeating the BJP's Ram Chander Chawriya by a margin of 48,042 votes in the 2020 Delhi elections.



Atishi



Arvind Kejriwal

ACCORDING TO the AAP, Gopal Rai, Kailash Gahlot, Saurabh Bharadwaj and Imran Hussain, who are part of outgoing CM Arvind Kejriwal's council of ministers, will be in the new Cabinet

as the Delhi Assembly polls are due in February next year. The name of the seventh member is yet to be announced. The oath ceremony of the new chief minister is likely to be held at the Raj Niwas. It is expected to be a "low-key affair" given the circumstances of Mr Kejriwal's resignation. Ms Atishi herself has said Mr Kejriwal's resignation was an "extremely sad moment". Ms Atishi and Mr Bharadwaj were inducted into the Kejriwal Cabinet after the AAP national convenor's trusted lieutenants Manish Sisodia and Satyendra Jain resigned in February last **Turn to Page 4**



Officials stand near derailed wagons of a goods train in Mathura on Thursday. Twenty-five wagons of the train taking coal to the Suratgarh power plant derailed near Vrindavan on Wednesday, a senior official said. — PTI

Hezbollah fires a new barrage at Israel, fears mount of wider war

Beirut, Sept. 19: Hezbollah fired a new barrage into northern Israel on Thursday, continuing its drumbeat of exchanges with the Israeli military as fears of a greater war rise after hundreds of electronic devices exploded in Lebanon, killing at least 32 people and wounding more than 3,000 others. The device explosions appeared to be the culmination of a monthslong operation by Israel to target as many Hezbollah members as possible used by Hezbollah detonated, wounding and even crippling some fighters, but also maiming civilians connected to the group's social branches and killing at least two children. It was unclear how the attack fit into warnings by Israeli leaders in recent weeks that they could

THE RECENT device explosions appeared to be the culmination of a monthslong operation by Israel to target as many Hezbollah members as possible

launch a stepped-up military operation against Hezbollah, Lebanon's strongest armed force. The Israeli government has called it a war aim to end the Iranian-backed group's crossborder fire in order to allow tens of thousands of Israelis to return to homes near the border. Speaking to Israeli troops on Wednesday, Israeli defence minister Yoav Gallant praised the work of Army and security agencies, saying "the results are very impressive." — AP **More on Page 6**

IN BRIEF

2 men of Hashim Baba gang arrested

New Delhi: Two sharpshooters of the Hashim Baba gang, including an 18-year-old man who was allegedly involved in the firing incident at Delhi's GTB Hospital that left a patient dead, were held from Uttar Pradesh's Muzaffarnagar following an encounter early Thursday, officials said. The Delhi and Uttar Pradesh police forces launched a joint operation to catch the duo — Anas Khan, and Asad Aameem, 21, who suffered bullet injuries on their legs in the exchange of fire, they said. Anas was allegedly involved in two murder cases including the killing of the patient at GTB hospital in a case of mistaken identity in July, the police said. According to the Delhi police officials, information was received that Khan and Aameem were seen in the national capital and neighbouring Ghaziabad. A team of Delhi and Uttar Pradesh police was formed to catch the duo. At around 4 am on Thursday, the team intercepted a car near Bhainsi village in Muzaffarnagar's Khatuali on the Delhi-Haridwar Highway, with three occupants, including Khan and Aameem, the police said.

Cong visits collapsed Karol Bagh building

New Delhi: The Congress on Thursday lashed out at the AAP ruled Delhi government and the MCD alleging that the government has shown irresponsibility in clearing the debris, as people are still trapped under the collapsed Karol Bagh building. Delhi Congress chief Devender Yadav, after visiting the collapsed site, demanded a probe to fix responsibility and to prevent recurrence of such mishaps. He said that the Delhi government should pay suitable compensation to the families of the dead and the injured. Mr Yadav expressed his sympathy with the grieving family members of the dead and injured. He said that it was very disturbing to note that despite several incidents of building collapses, fire and water-logging deaths in many buildings in the recent past, the AAP Government and the MCD had failed to act.

CVC ordered probe into DJB graft: BJP

New Delhi: The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) has taken cognisance of a complaint of alleged corruption in the Delhi Jal Board, Leader of the Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Vijender Gupta said on Thursday. He also claimed that the CVC had instructed the chief vigilance officer of Delhi to conduct an "in-depth investigation" into the matter. Mr Gupta earlier this month wrote to the CVC, seeking a probe into alleged financial irregularities in the DJB under the AAP government. Mr Gupta had claimed in his letter that no account of ₹28,400 crore allocated to the board since 2015, when AAP came to power, was available as the agency did not maintain balance sheets.

NAXALISM VICTIMS FROM BASTAR HOLD PROTEST

New Delhi: A group of Naxal violence victims from Chhattisgarh's Bastar district staged a protest at Jantar Mantar here on Thursday to demand justice and peace for their region. Under the banner of 'Bastar Shanti Samiti', the group began their demonstration at Kartavya Path, making their way to Jantar Mantar by noon. Manguram Kawade, the coordinator of the Bastar Shanti Samiti, said, "We have been suffering from Naxalite violence for decades. Our villages have been ravaged, and our region has been stifled from development. "We demand that the voice of Bastar be heard and that our people be freed from this relentless violence." Mr Kawade said. The protesters, including many of whom have suffered devastating losses, walked on the streets to make their voices heard. Guddaram Lekam (18), who lost his leg to a Naxal-planted landmine in March said that he was returning home after picking chillies from the fields when he stepped on a landmine in the forest. The bomb exploded and he lost his leg in the incident. The protesters carried banners and placards bearing slogans like 'I am Silent Bastar, but Today I Speak'.

Kejriwal will join AAP's Haryana poll drive, address rally in Jagadhri today

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 19

Taking over the reins of the otherwise rudderless AAP party supremo Arvind Kejriwal will be sounding the poll bugle with his maiden rally in his home state Haryana, where the party is contesting all the 90 Assembly seats.

The Haryana elections is witnessing an interesting poll battle with the BJP campaigning to retain power for the third time, Congress banking on the BJP's anti incumbency and the AAP trying to garner votes on sacrifice, sympathy and development in the name of Mr Kejriwal after his release on bail from the Tihar jail. The AAP national convenor will kickstart his campaign from September 20 with a roadshow in the Jagadhri constituency in Yamunanagar district.

Water supply to be hit in Delhi today for 12 hours

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 19

There will be no water supply in parts of the national capital for 12 hours on Friday due to maintenance work, the Delhi Jal Board said.

The affected areas include Civil Lines, Hindu Rao Hospital, Kamla Nagar, Shakti Nagar, Karol Bagh, Pahar Ganj, Old and New Rajinder Nagar, Patel Nagar (east and west), Baljeet Nagar, Prem Nagar, Inderpuri, parts of cantonment areas, and adjoining areas under NDMC and south Delhi.

"Due to the repair of leakage in 500 mm dia Rising Main emanating from Chandrawal Water Works inside premises of Dr Ambedkar National Memorial, Civil Lines, potable water supply from Chandrawal Water Works will remain affected for 12 hours on September 20 from 11 am onwards due to shutdown of Chandrawal Water Work," the statement issued by DJB said.

The residents of the affected areas are advised to make judicious use of water, it said.

At 21.1°C, Delhi sees lowest min temp in Sept. in 14 yrs

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 19

Intermittent rainfall over the last few days led to a dip in the mercury levels in the national capital, with the city recording a minimum temperature of 21.1°C on Thursday — its lowest for September in 14 years. According to the India meteorological department (IMD) data of the last 14 years, Thursday's minimum temperature surpasses the previous record of 21.4°C set on September 13.

In comparison, the lowest minimum tempera-

Man promises to marry 50 women, including judge; arrested for fraud

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 19

A 38-year-old man, who allegedly duped over 50 women on the pretext of marriage by posing as a senior government official, has been arrested, officials on Thursday said. The accused, identified as Mukeem Ayyub (38), was arrested from the Nizamuddin railway station, they said, adding the accused is a permanent resident of Gujarat's Vadodra. "The accused had duped over 50 women on the pretext of marriage through matrimonial websites posing as a senior government official. He has been involved in such cases across the states and was



AAP MP Sandeep Pathak addresses a press conference in New Delhi on Thursday.

He will also participate in 13 events across 11 districts, covering the Dabwali, Rania, Bhiwani, Mehamb, Kalayat, Assandh and Ballabgarh constituencies, among others, in the coming days, AAP organisational general secretary Sandeep Pathak said while adding that Mr Kejriwal's further campaign schedule will be announced later. The AAP asserted that the party is prepped up to contest the elections with full strength, aiming for a regime change in Haryana and 'bringing Kejriwal's model of governance to the state. Mr Pathak even targeted the rule of BJP as well as their INDIA bloc ally Congress rule in the state.

Gramin Sewa service to go green, switch to e-vehicles

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 19

Aiming to promote a cleaner transportation, the Delhi government has announced that all the CNG-powered Gramin Sewa vehicles registered under the 2010-11 scheme must be replaced with electric vehicles. Launched in 2011, Gramin Sewa is a para-transit scheme under which high-capacity three-wheelers with a seating capacity of six passengers were given permits to ply in rural areas, unauthorised resettlement

colonies, and JJ (jhuggi-jhopri) clusters of Delhi.

"It is ordered that the replacement of the existing Gramin Sewa vehicles shall be by electric vehicles, with a maximum seating capacity of six passengers plus a driver, duly approved by MORTH's (Union ministry of road transport and highways) authorised testing agency," a transport department order issued on Wednesday said. Kailash Gahlot, the transport minister in the outgoing council of ministers, said, "The Delhi gov-

ernment is committed to making the city's public transportation system more sustainable and environmentally friendly."

By replacing old the Gramin Sewa vehicles with the electric ones, "we are taking a significant step towards reducing pollution and enhancing the travel experience for commuters simultaneously", Mr Gahlot added.

Registered owners of Gramin Sewa vehicles are required to apply for replacements through an online, Aadhaar-based process.

Delay in HC CJ appointments: Centre says will share 'some details' with SC next week

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 19

The Centre on Thursday told the Supreme Court that it will be providing some details next week regarding the collegium's recommendations on appointment of chief justices in several high courts in the country. While seeking an adjournment of the hearing on a public interest litigation listed for hearing on Friday, attorney general R. Venkataramani made the submission before a

bench comprising Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud and Justices J.B. Pardiwala and Manoj Misra.

"I will be providing some details about the collegium's recommendations. Please list the plea (which is listed on Friday) after a week," the top law officer told the bench.

The bench said the submissions for the adjournment can be made on Friday itself as the matter is already on board.

Meanwhile, the CJ1 told the top law officer that the

"Haryana first gave chance to all the other parties and people are fed up with all, they want change."

The AAP is contesting in all 90 seats in Haryana after talks with the Congress over a seat-share agreement broke down.

The AAP's foray into the state was delayed in view of Mr Kejriwal undergoing judicial custody in jail. After coming out of the jail, Mr Kejriwal stepped down as Delhi chief minister and shifted his focus on the party, which was facing a leadership crisis due to his incarceration.

The elections hold significance for the AAP and its biggest face, Arvind Kejriwal, embroiled in the corruption case, is seeking to regain the lost moral high ground. The AAP rode to power in Delhi on the anti-corruption plank.

MEANWHILE, THE CJ1 told the top law officer that the Jharkhand government has filed a contempt petition against the Centre for not appointing a chief justice there

Jharkhand government has filed a contempt petition against the Centre for not appointing a chief justice there.

The state government has moved the top court against the Centre for not clearing the recommenda-

4 friends injured in accident near Raj Ghat DU student dead after car rams into guardrail

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 19

A 19-year-old Delhi University student died and his four friends were injured after their speeding SUV crashed into a guardrail, which pierced through the vehicle, near Rajghat in north Delhi early on Thursday, the police said. They were returning from Gurgaon after celebrating the teenager's birthday.

Aishwarya Pandey was admitted to the LNJP Hospital where he was put on ventilation support. He died late on Thursday.

The police suspect that the students were under the influence of alcohol. However, one student said the one who was driving the car got distracted while changing song on his mobile phone.

Deputy commissioner of police (north) M.K. Meena said a case under sections 281 (rash driving) and 125(a) (causing hurt by act endangering life of personal safety of others) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita had been registered at the Kotwadi police station.

A probe is underway from all angles to ascertain the actual cause of the accident, he said.

The police conducted medical examinations of the three students, including the two who were discharged from the hospital after first aid, and found them to be under the influence of alcohol, sources said.

Another officer said they were also investigating if there was any engineering fault on the road.



A damaged SUV after it crashed into a guard rail in New Delhi on Thursday.

1 dead as speeding car runs over 2 men sleeping on Shahdara footpath

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 19

A 40-year-old man died after a speeding car allegedly ran over two labourers sleeping on a footpath in the Geeta Colony area of Delhi's Shahdara, the police said on Thursday.

The alleged incident occurred at Pusta Road in Gandhi Nagar in the early hours.

When a police team reached the spot, they found a car mounted on

the footpath. They learnt that Sonu (40) and Mohammad Islam (38) were injured and taken to SDN Hospital.

Sonu and Islam, both labourers, were sleeping on the footpath. A police officer said Sonu, a native of Uttar Pradesh's Lucknow, died during treatment while Islam was recuperating. Shastri Nagar resident Rahul Kumar (38), who was driving the car, was detained from the spot and later arrested.

It appears that Hyundai Venue was being driven at a high speed and the driver lost control, leading to the crash, the officer said and added that the accident occurred on the stretch between the Shanti Van red light and Geeta Colony.

Pandey, a first-year BA student of Deshbandhu College, had thrown a birthday party for his friends — Keshav Kumar

(19), Aishwarya Mishra (19) and Ujjawal (19), all students of Dayal Singh College, and Krishna (18) of Motilal Nehru College.

The second officer said Pandey had rented the SUV for ₹1,500 from Shadipur for a night and asked Mr Mishra to drive.

Pandey suffered multiple head injuries and was put on ventilator support at LNJP Hospital.

'Unheard of': Top court irked over bail in NDPS case

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 19

The Supreme Court on Thursday said granting anticipatory bail in a case registered under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act is a "very serious" issue and "unheard of."

A three-judge bench comprising Justices B.R. Gava, Aravind Kumar and K.V. Viswanathan was hearing a plea filed by an accused seeking regular bail in a case for alleged offences under provisions of the NDPS Act in West Bengal.

"In NDPS matter, anticipatory bail?" the bench said, adding, "In NDPS matter, anticipatory bail is unheard of."

The apex court said: "We can issue notice (on the plea) and direct the state to file an application for cancellation of the anticipatory bail granted to the co-accused...Grant of anticipatory bail in a NDPS matter is a very serious issue. We, therefore, direct the state to consider whether it proposes to file an application for cancellation of the anticipatory bail granted to the co-accused."

The petitioners counsel told the bench that four of the six accused in the case were granted pre-arrest bail while one of them was on regular bail. In the plea, the accused challenged the Calcutta high court's order of July this year dismissing his application seeking regular bail in the October 2023 case.

While rejecting the bail plea of the accused, the

SC launches online mediation training portal

New Delhi, Sept. 19: The Supreme Court has launched an online mediation training web-portal developed by National Legal Services Authority in collaboration with the apex court's mediation and conciliation project committee (MCPC). Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud and Justice Sanjiv Khanna, executive chairman NALSA, launched the portal on Wednesday.

Speaking at the function, Chandrachud said this training programme will help make mediation the first and a default mode of dispute resolution by training lawyers, judges, law students etc. in the art of mediation.

"The Online Mediation Training Web-Portal combines theoretical knowledge with practical skills, covered by 50+ lectures on 20 topics pertaining to mediation and 10+ hours of online/ interactive practical sessions," a release said.

high court had said: "The samples that were sent to FSL have tested positive indicating that the materials seized from the petitioner are contraband....In view of commercial quantity of 'ganja' being involved and keeping in mind the restrictions in section 37 of the NDPS Act, we are not inclined to grant bail to the petitioner at this stage."

2 women in 5 held for extortion

Faridabad, Sept. 19: The police has arrested five people including two women for allegedly honey-trapping men and extorting money from them, officials said on Thursday.

The accused were identified as Saniya (23), Irfan (27), Rahish (48), Fa-reed (27), and Reshma (45). The police said, Sania, the kingpin of the gang, would lure the victims into meeting them in person and then extort money.

The matter came to light on September 11.

NORTHERN RAILWAY
E-NOTICE INVITING TENDER
For and on behalf of President of India, Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (RSO), Northern Railway, Delhi Division, New Delhi invites E-Tender in prescribed tender form for the following work.

1	Name of the work with its location: Supply, Installation, Testing, Commissioning, and integration of complete Equipment's of Terminal Support System (Hardware) & allied accessories for computerized crew management system application at various lobbies Shakurbasti, Delhi Sarai Rohilla, Delhi Meerut City, Rohtak, Jind & Jakhal over DL1 division as per CRIS Specification no. 2007/CRIS/INDLS-HQ/CM/Project/Rohtak/II0030/PII date 26.07.2024.
2	Approx. Tender value (Rs.) Rs. 48,51,137.89 (including GST)
3	E.M.D (Rs.) Rs. 97,100/- Note:-Online payment mode available on IREPS website.
4	Date & Time of tender opening (immediately when tender submission ends) 07.10.2024 at 15:00 hrs.
5	Website particulars where complete details of tender documents can be seen www.ireps.gov.in

TENDER NOTICE No.: NIT-03-2024-26-Elect-RSO, Dt. 18.09.2024 2926/2024
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SHORT TAKES

SP MLA surrenders in suicide abetment case

Bhadoli, UP: Samajwadi Party MLA from Bhadohi Zahid Beg, accused of abetting suicide and violating child labour laws, surrendered in a local court on Thursday and was sent to judicial custody for 14 days. "I have been assaulted by policemen. I am not a goonda or a hooligan. I do not know on whose directions and why all this is being done," Mr Beg claimed as he was being taken to a police van from the court. Meanwhile, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav reacted to the incident during a press conference in Lucknow without mentioning Mr Beg's name. "The incident is sad. Nobody would want such an incident to occur at their home. He is being harassed because he is from the Samajwadi Party and secondly, the BJP will benefit from it by creating a Hindu-Muslim divide. It is a strategy of the BJP to defame the SP," the former chief minister alleged. — PTI

Rebalancing 2.0 is required: Army Chief

New Delhi: After Indian army re-balanced its forces as tensions broke with China in May 2020, Indian Army chief General Upendra Dwivedi said on Thursday that now there is a need to carry-out rebalancing 2.0. He said that the location for the forthcoming Army Commanders' Conference will indicate "what is our intent." "We had already gone through the stage of re-balancing 1.0. Is there a requirement for re-balancing 2.0? The answer is, yes. Time, space and resources is something which we need to look into. But before that we have to carry out psychological orientation," said the Army Chief. Mr Dwivedi said that the Indian Army is reorienting its high command courses for the officers and it is also changing the training curriculum.

Murder accused dies in jail, cop suspended

Raipur: One of the accused in the murder of a local deputy sarpanch died in a jail in Chhattisgarh's Kabirdham district, leading to the constitution of a judicial probe into it. The deceased, identified as Prashant Sahu, was rushed from the district jail, where he was lodged, in Kawardha in the state to a local hospital on Wednesday. He was however declared dead by the doctors in the hospital, the police said on Thursday. Deputy chief minister Vijay Sharma said that Kabirdham district additional superintendent of police Vikash Kumar, a trainee IPS officer, was suspended in connection with the incident. Sahu was among 69 people who were arrested for setting ablaze the house of the deputy sarpanch Raghunath Sahu in the village of Loharidih under Rengakhar police station on Sunday, leading to his death.

PRESIDENT: MAKE NATION 'SWACHH, SWASTH & VIKSIT'

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY BHOPAL, SEPT. 19

President Draupadi Murmu on Thursday exhorted countrymen to work for building a "Swachh (clean) Bharat, Swasth (healthy) Bharat and Viksit (developed) Bharat". Addressing a function organised to felicitate the "safai mitras" (cleanliness volunteers) in Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh, Ms Murmu said that "Only cleanliness can make the country healthy and developed". All the countrymen should strive in a coordinated manner to build India as a developed nation, she said. She praised Madhya Pradesh for achieving many milestones in the field of sanitation. Ms Murmu said that Madhya Pradesh has achieved a leading position in the field of urban and rural sanitation. Many cities of Madhya Pradesh have been declared the best cities for cleanliness. Indore city has been declared the cleanest city in the country for the seventh consecutive time. Bhopal has earned the tag of cleanest capital city. She said that in the last ten years, cleanliness in India has become a national movement.

PM: Cong-NC executing agenda of 'lord of terror'

Pak minister has exposed both parties: Modi in Katra

YUSUF JAMEEL SRINAGAR, SEPT. 19

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday accused the Congress-National Conference (NC) combine of executing the agenda of "lord of terrorism" Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir by asking for reinstating Articles 370 and 35A in the Constitution.

"But I want to tell them loud and clear that we will not allow Pakistan's agenda to be implemented in J&K. No power on earth can bring Article 370 back," he said while addressing a BJP rally in Katra, a town situated at the foot of the Trikuta hills where the revered shrine of Mata Vaishno Devi is tucked away.

The Prime Minister was referring to Pakistan defence minister Khawaja Asif's remarks that his country's government and the Congress-NC shared a common stand on Article 370. In an interview, Mr Asif said, "Pakistan and Congress-National Conference are on the same page in Jammu and Kashmir to restore Articles 370 and 35A."

Amnesty says India must end 'repression of dissent' in J&K

AGE CORRESPONDENT SRINAGAR, SEPT. 19

Amnesty International (AI) on Thursday urged India to end what it alleged is the repression of dissent in Jammu and Kashmir and said that it must go beyond assembly elections being held after a gap of ten years and ensure all human rights are upheld and protected for everyone in the region. "That is the 'naya' (new) Kashmir that the authorities must aspire to as they lay grounds for the return of the statehood of the region," it said.

The AI said that the Indian authorities "must stop using restrictive travel bans and arbitrary detentions under stringent anti-terror laws to intimidate critical dissenting voices from speaking out on J&K".

It asserted that the authorities' escalating repression of human rights after revocation of special autonomous status of the region has resulted in arbitrary detentions, passports being revoked, the creation of opaque "no flying lists".



A BJP supporter during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's rally for Jammu & Kashmir Assembly elections in Srinagar on Thursday. — PTI

"There may be no enthusiasm about the Congress-NC in Jammu and Kashmir, but the neighbouring country is very excited about them. No one is going to give them a damn here, but they are being chewed over there," Mr Modi said.

He added, "Pakistan mein Congress aur National Conference ki balle balle ho rahi hai (In Pakistan there is an expression of joy and excitement about the Congress and the NC). Pakistan appears to be very happy with their manifestos."

The Prime Minister said Pakistan's defence minister has openly supported the two parties. "They say that the agenda of the Congress-NC regarding Articles 370 and 35A is the same as that of Pakistan. It is being said by their minister. Hence, their secret has been revealed by Pakistan itself."

Meanwhile, the NC leadership has distanced itself from the Pakistan defence minister's statement and urged the neighbouring country to "allow us to fight our own battles".

Shah tears into Opp. J&K pact, says Pak, Cong on same page

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 19

Union home minister Amit Shah on Thursday said the Pakistan defence minister's statement on the Congress and the National Conference leading support to Article 370 and 35A has once "again exposed" the Opposition parties.

He also claimed that the tune of Opposition leader Rahul Gandhi's party and Pakistan has always been on the same page and the Congress has always been "hand in glove with the anti-national forces".

"Pakistan defence minister's statement about the Congress and the JKNC's support on Article 370 and 35A has once again exposed the Congress. This statement has once again made it clear that the Congress and Pakistan have the same intentions and agenda. For the last few years, Rahul Gandhi has been standing with every anti-India force, hurting the sentiments of the countrymen," Mr Shah wrote on X in Hindi.

Referring to the statement of Pakistan defence minister Khawaja Asif,

the senior BJP leader said it proved that the neighbouring country and the Congress have the "same intentions and agenda". "Be it asking for proof of airstrikes and surgical strikes against Pakistan or saying objectionable things about the Army, the tune of the Congress and Pakistan has always been the same. The Congress has always been hand in glove with the anti-national forces," he said.

"But, the Congress and Pakistan forget that there is Modi government at the Centre, hence neither Article 370 nor terrorism is going to come back in Kashmir," he said.

The Pakistani minister has said that the Shehbaz Sharif government and the Congress-NC alliance in J&K were on the same page on the issue of restoration of Article 370.

Top cop should be 'in his limits', says former chief minister U'khand DGP's remark triggers row

PRITHVIRAJ SINGH DEHRADUN, SEPT. 19

Uttarakhand's acting DGP Abhinav Kumar's statement taking a dig at politicians has irked many leaders, who have asked him to "stay within his limits".

Reacting on the comments of politicians who questioned the law and order situation in the state, Mr Kumar asked them to "have some faith in the state government and the police". A few days back, Mr Kumar had questioned political leaders over statements on the alleged poor law and order situation in the state and said, "Concerns were raised on the law and order and crime situation in the state by some of our leaders. It's fine. We respect their concern and criticism but they must have some faith in the government and their police."

Rajnath asks Navy to stay prepared for challenges

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 19

Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday asked the Indian Navy to be prepared for every situation in the current volatile global scenario and said that India is now seen as a preferred security partner in the Indian Ocean Region.

Addressing the second edition of the Naval Commanders' Conference here, he commended the Navy for playing a crucial role in promoting peace and prosperity in the Indian Ocean Region, terming the region as valuable and sensitive in view of the economic, geopolitical, trade and security aspects.

Mr Singh asserted that the Indian Navy's growing strength in the Indo-Pacific region should not be taken for granted and called upon the Commanders to continue introspection from time to time and be prepared for every situation in today's volatile global scenario. He emphasised the need for a strong naval capability to protect the economic, trade, transport and overall national interests.

Pointing out that India was once a landlocked country with seashores, but now it can be seen as an island country with land borders, Mr Singh lauded the Indian Navy's readiness towards safeguarding the maritime interests of the country.

"Our Navy has made a significant contribution in protecting the economic interests of all stakeholder nations of the Indo-Pacific and in smooth movement of goods in the Indian Ocean Region," Mr Singh said.



A woman tries to save her belongings after water entered houses due to an increase in the level of Pandu river following heavy rainfall in Kanpur on Thursday. — PTI

Nadda: Kharge's letter to PM bid to market 'failed product'

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 19

Labelling Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi as his political compulsion to market a "failed product" repeatedly rejected by people, BJP president J.P. Nadda on Thursday accused Rahul Gandhi of having a history of abusing Mr Modi and OBCs and of siding with anti-India forces, days after the Opposition party charged ruling alliance members with using violent language against the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Nadda wrote the letter to Mr Kharge in response to his letter to the PM on Tuesday to complain against the "extremely objectionable" and violent statements by ruling alliance members targeting Mr Gandhi and urged him to discipline his leaders.

Citing his party's own litany of complaints against the LoP and other Congress members for their choice of words against the Prime Minister, the BJP president said Mr Gandhi has a history of calling the entire Other Backward Classes, including the PM, a "thief" and using extremely indecent words against Mr Modi.

"Under what compulsion are you trying to justify Mr Gandhi?" the BJP president asked his Congress counterpart in a three-page letter written in Hindi.

He told Mr Kharge, "Your comments are far from the truth. It appears from your letter that you have either forgotten the misdeeds of Gandhi and other leaders or have deliberately ignored them."

Mr Kharge had raised with Mr Modi the issue of "extremely objectionable" and violent statements by ruling alliance members targeting Mr Gandhi and urged him to discipline his leaders. He had also demanded strict legal action against those giving such statements so that Indian politics can be prevented from degenerating and nothing untoward happens.



Union minister and BJP president J.P. Nadda being greeted by Haryana chief minister Nayab Singh Saini during the release of party's manifesto for Haryana Assembly elections in Rohtak on Thursday. — PTI

Hitting back, Mr Nadda said Mr Gandhi had once spoken of people "beating up" Mr Modi with baton, betraying his "disrespectful" mindset. His mother, Sonia Gandhi, he added, had once called Mr Modi, then Gujarat chief minister, "maut ka saudagar".

Speaking on the condition of anonymity, a senior BJP leader said the police has indeed failed to address the rising concerns on law and order in the state and senior leaders in the party must raise their concerns with the party high command.

Earlier, Trivendra had alleged, "The police is doing everything but for its duties." Speaking on the condition of anonymity, a senior BJP leader said the police has indeed failed to address the rising concerns on law and order in the state and senior leaders in the party must raise their concerns with the party high command.

Train driver spots iron pole on tracks, averts accident

New Delhi/Rampur, Sept. 19:

The driver of the Naini Jan Shatabdi Express averted a possible accident when he slammed the emergency brakes on finding an iron pole across the tracks in Uttarakhand's Rudrapur, officials said on Thursday, alleging that it could be sabotage.

The incident occurred on Wednesday near Rudrapur City Railway Station, approximately 43 kilometres from Uttar Pradesh's Rampur, Railway officials said.

"On September 18 at 10.18 pm, the loco pilot of train number 12091 reported to Station Master/Rudrapur City that he found one 6-metre-

long iron pole on track between Bilaspur Road and Rudrapur City," a spokesperson from the railway ministry said.

"The driver stopped the train to clear the track. He started the train safely afterwards," the spokesperson said.

On the complaint of Rudrapur city section engineer Rajendra Kumar, an FIR was lodged at GRP police station Rampur under sections of the Railways Act 1989 against unnamed people.

"On seeing the electric pole, the loco pilot applied emergency brakes and stopped the train and after removing the pole train resumed its journey," the FIR read. — PTI

Big blow for telcos as SC junks pleas on AGR dues

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 19

In a setback to telecom firms, the Supreme Court has dismissed a clutch of pleas filed by companies, including Vodafone Idea and Bharti Airtel, seeking correction of alleged errors in the adjusted gross revenue (AGR).

The SC also rejected their plea for a hearing of this court in Rupa Ashok Hurra v Ashok Hurra. The curative petitions are dismissed. The top court order came on August 30, which was uploaded on its website on Thursday.

A bench comprising Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud and Justices Sanjiv Khanna and B.R. Gavai said, "Application for listing the curative petitions in open court is rejected. We have gone through the curative petitions and the connected documents. In our opinion, no case is made out within the parameters indicated in the decision of this court in Rupa Ashok Hurra v Ashok Hurra. The curative petitions are dismissed."

The top court order came on August 30, which was uploaded on its website on Thursday.

On October 9 last year, the SC had taken note of submissions of some telecommunication companies seeking the listing of their pleas on the AGR issue. The telcos had referred to alleged errors in the calculation for arriving at the AGR-related dues by the department of communications.

In July 2021, the top court dismissed a plea seeking correction of errors in the demand of AGR dues. The telecom companies had moved the SC claiming there were several errors in arriving at the AGR dues pegged at over ₹1 lakh crores.

Massive political fight erupts over Tirupati laddoos

TDP, YSRCP spar over 'animal fat' claim

Amaravati, Sept. 19:

Andhra Pradesh chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu's claim that animal fat was used in Tirupati laddoos during the previous government triggered a massive political row on Thursday with the YSRCP accusing Naidu of indulging in "heinous allegations" for political gains and TDP circulating a lab report to back the claim.

During an NDA legislative party meeting on Wednesday, Mr Naidu claimed that the previous Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy-led government did not even spare Sri Venkateswara Swamy temple in Tirupati and used substandard ingredients and animal fat for making laddoos.

TDP spokesperson Anam Venkata Ramana Reddy in a press conference claimed that the adulteration has been confirmed by a Gujarat-based livestock lab

ported lab report which apparently confirmed the presence of "beef tallow", "Lard" and "Fish Oil" in the given ghee sample.

The sample receipt date was July 9, 2024 and the lab report was dated July 16. However, there was no official confirmation on the lab report from either the Andhra Pradesh government or the TTD.

Senior YSRCP leader and Rajya Sabha member Y.V. Subba Reddy, who served as chairman of TTD for four years, noted that Mr Naidu's allegations had undermined the hallowed nature of the deity and hurt the sentiments of the devotees.

"It is unimaginable to even say that animal fat was used in the consecrated food offered to the deity and the laddus given to devotees. There is no other heinous attempt than alleging that animal fat was being used," said Mr Reddy. — PTI

BJD govt overlooked people's welfare: Odisha CM

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO PURI, SEPT. 19

Marking 100 days in office, Odisha chief minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Thursday presented a comprehensive report on his government's achievements at a special event held in pilgrim city Puri. The chief minister, accompanied by his council of ministers, highlighted the efforts and accomplishments of the new BJP government in delivering on its pre-poll promises and

addressing key issues faced by the state.

During his address, Mr Majhi emphasised the government's commitment to fulfilling its electoral pledges and outlined several major initiatives launched within this short period. These include the reopening of the four gates of Lord Jagannath's Srimandir in Puri, the re-accessing of the Ratna Bhandar (treasury) of Srimandir after 40 years re-enumeration, the introduction of the Subhadra



Mohan Charan Majhi Yojana — a women's welfare scheme, and a significant increase in the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for paddy to ₹3,100 per quintal.

The chief minister also highlighted the government's success in attracting investment worth ₹45,000 crores, which he said would boost the state's economic growth and employment opportunities.

"The first 100 days have been a period of dedicated efforts to fulfill our promises. We are committed to bringing governance to the people's doorstep and ensuring their welfare," said the CM. Taking a swipe at the

previous Biju Janata Dal (BJD) government led by Naveen Patnaik, Mr Majhi criticised it for what he described as "arrogance" and "inefficiency".

"The previous government was deeply corrupt and egoistic. It misused the name of Lord Jagannath for political gain, but such disrespectful behavior was not tolerated, and the people chose to reject them. The mandate was a clear message against their misrule," he remarked.

SHORT TAKES

Odia girl sexually assaulted by 3

Bhubaneswar: A young girl in Odisha's Sundergarh district has reportedly been "sexually assaulted" by three people, including two minors. According to reports, the three accused waylaid the victim while she was returning from the "Karam" festival, a major local cultural event, and took turns to abuse her. What is more shocking is that two of the accused are minors. One of the accused is said to be the girl's "boyfriend". However, he was joined by two of his friends who "abused" her and fled after committing the heinous crime, sources said. The heinous crime was reported from the Kutra area under Rajangpur in the tribal-dominated Sundergarh district.

2 pacts on anvil during PM's US visit

Continued From Page 1 following an American request. When asked whether Mr Modi will also be having a bilateral meeting with former US President and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump, Mr Misri indicated that such a meeting had not been finalised as yet. Another important engagement of the PM on Sunday will be a tech and business roundtable with prominent CEOs of companies dealing with cutting-edge technology in the fields of artificial intelligence, semiconductors, and quantum computing.

Mr Misri said that Mr Modi will also be having bilateral meetings with other heads of government during his visit to Wilmington and New York, including with his Australian and Japanese Prime Ministers. Asked whether defence pacts between the two nations could be signed during the visit, Mr Misri said that there are other issues under discussion and that "maybe a few more steps are required" before an agreement is inked on these.

There are indications that New Delhi is also working along with other nations for an acceptable peace formula to end the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The foreign secretary said India is having a "set of conversations" with its important partners on the issue of the conflict that has raged on for more than two-and-a-half years. He, however, indicated that one will "need to wait" to see whether a consensus is possible on ways to end the conflict.

Asked about pro-Khalistan extremist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun's civil lawsuit in a US Federal court against the Indian government in the wake of an alleged plot to kill him last year on American soil, the foreign secretary said that it is a "completely unwarranted and unsubstantiated imputation".

India faces threats from ISIL, Qaeda ■ 'Must expedite prosecutions in financial fraud cases'
FATF lauds India's anti-laundering efforts

VINEETA PANDEY
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 19

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has lauded measures taken by India to prevent money laundering and curb terror funding. However, the global body said "major improvements" were required to strengthen prosecution in such cases. It also underlined that India must tighten checks on transactions involving precious metals and stones as several such deals are conducted in cash and fall outside the purview of the typical monitoring procedure. The FATF report, released on Thursday, said India's main sources of money laundering originate from illegal activities committed within the country. The largest money laundering risks are related to fraud, including cyber, corrup-

tion and drug trafficking. Following the assessment, India is placed in the "regular follow-up" category and in line with procedures, will report back to the FATF plenary in three years. "India has achieved strong results in its technical compliance with the FATF standards. The remaining areas requiring significant improvement are risk-based measures to protect non-profit organisations (NPOs/NGOs), establishing due diligence requirements on domestic politically exposed persons (PEPs) — someone more susceptible to being involved in corruption) and supervision of designated non-financial businesses and professions (DNFBPs — like casinos, real estate agents and dealers in precious metals, lawyers, notaries, other independent legal professionals and accountants;

- ▶ India must tighten checks on transactions involving precious metals and stones
- ▶ India's main sources of money laundering originate from illegal activities committed within the country
- ▶ India is placed in the "regular follow-up" category and in line with procedures, will report back to the FATF plenary in three years
- ▶ India has a strong emphasis on disruption and prevention and has demonstrated its ability to conduct complex financial investigations

and trust and company service providers)," the FATF said in the "mutual evaluation report" on "anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing measures". The FATF is an independent inter-governmental body that develops and promotes policies to protect the global financial system against money laundering, terrorist financing and the financing of proliferation of

weapons of mass destruction. The FATF recommendations are recognised as the global anti-money laundering (AML) and counter-terrorist financing (CTF) standard. In its report, the FATF said India has implemented an AML/CFT system that is effective in many respects. Good results are being achieved in the areas of money laundering and terror financing risk

understanding, national coordination and cooperation, use of financial intelligence for money laundering, predicate offences and terror financing investigations, depriving criminals of their assets, preventing misuse of legal structures, the implementation of targeted financial sanctions related to proliferation and international cooperation. However, "major improvements" are needed to strengthen prosecution in such cases, protecting the non-profit sector from terrorist abuse, supervision and implementation of preventive measures. India faces serious terrorism and terrorist financing threats, including those related to ISIL or Al Qaeda. India has a strong emphasis on disruption and prevention and has demonstrated its ability to conduct complex financial investigations. The country needs to

ensure that measures aimed at preventing the non-profit sector from being abused for terrorist financing are implemented in line with the risk-based approach, including by conducting outreach to non-profit organisations on their terrorist financing risks, the report added. One of the major achievements the FATF has lauded is that of India taking significant steps for financial inclusion by doubling the proportion of the population with bank accounts, encouraging greater reliance on digital payment systems and making use of simplified due diligence for small accounts. "These efforts have supported financial transparency, which in turn contribute to anti-money laundering (AML)/counter-terrorist financing (CTF) efforts," the report said.

'This is a victory for our deceased sister'
WB Medical Council cancels ex-principal Ghosh's licence

Kolkata, Sept. 19: The West Bengal Medical Council (WBMC) on Thursday cancelled the registration of R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital's former principal Sandip Ghosh, an official said. Ghosh, who is in CBI custody, has been removed from the list of registered medical practitioners maintained by the WBMC, he said. His licence was cancelled under various provisions of the Bengal Medical Act of 1914, the official said. He is an orthopaedic surgeon and without the licence, he cannot practice. Ghosh was arrested by the CBI on September 2 for his alleged involvement in the financial irregularities at the hospital amid the protests over the rape and murder of the on-duty trainee doctor. He was later accused of evidence tampering in the rape-murder case.

Aniket Mahato, one of the leading faces of the junior doctors who have been agitating over the death of their colleague, described it as a "victory". "This is a victory for our deceased sister. The cancellation of Ghosh's medical registration should have been done the very next day of his arrest. We are happy that the West Bengal Medical Council has finally taken this step," he said. Ghosh was appointed the principal of the R.G. Kar Medical College in February 2021. —PTI

Women drink liquor during 'Reclaim the night': Minister

Kolkata, Sept. 19: West Bengal minister and senior TMC leader Swapan Debnath has stirred a controversy by saying that parents should monitor what their daughters do during the "Reclaim the night" movement held after midnight, while citing an alleged incident of a protester consuming liquor with men during one such agitation. The animal resources development minister said that any untoward incident makes the state government responsible but the safety of women is the responsibility of everyone. The ruling TMC, however, sought to distance itself from the remarks made by the minister. —PTI

Victim's father urges CBI to save call records of deceased daughter

Kolkata, Sept. 19: The father of the doctor, who was allegedly raped and murdered in the R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital last month, informed the Central Bureau of Investigation that he had talked with his daughter over the phone a few hours before her death and urged the agency to "save" call records of her phone, a source said on Thursday. In a letter to the CBI, the father also requested the officers to secure the CCTV footage at the hos-

pital, primarily those on the floor of the seminar hall, where the body of his daughter was found on August 9. "The father of the deceased wrote a letter to us with a request that we save the call records," the CBI source said. The central agency officer said that the letter, along with the status report of their probe of the rape-murder case at the hospital, was shared with the Supreme Court on September 17 during its hearing. —PTI

34 houses of SC/STs burnt in Bihar's Nawada

Nawada (Bihar), Sept. 19: Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar on Thursday condemned the torching of 34 houses, mostly belonging to SC and ST communities, in Nawada district and asked ADG (law and order) to visit the spot and oversee the probe. The police has arrested 15 people, including prime accused Nandu Paswan, after arsonists torched 34 houses in Manjhi Tola in Mofussil police station area on Wednesday evening. The police also seized three country-made pistols, several live and spent cartridges and six motorcycles. The police said probe suggests a 29-year-old land dispute as the motive behind the incident. An FIR has been registered against 28 people. —PTI

'Bishnoi ko bheju kya? Couple to Salim Khan

Mumbai, Sept. 19: A man and a burqa-clad woman allegedly threatened screenwriter Salim Khan, father of Bollywood actor Salman Khan, citing jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi's name in Mumbai's Bandra area, police said on Thursday. The incident took place when Khan was sitting at the Bandra Bandstand promenade after his morning walk on Wednesday, following which the police detained the accused duo, an official said. During their investigation, they told the police that they were playing mischief with Khan, he said. "A man and a burqa-clad woman going on a two-wheeler spotted Salim Khan sitting at the Bandstand promenade and came near him after

taking a U-turn. They stopped close to him and asked him to send Lawrence Bishnoi to you?" the official said. After threatening him, the couple fled from the spot, he said. Salim Khan's bodyguard later lodged a complaint at the Bandra police station on Wednesday, based on which an case was registered. "We launched a probe and detained both the accused persons. During their investigation, they told us that they were playing mischief," he said. —PTI



Salim Khan

'Unwarranted': India on Pannun's suit
Pro-Khalistan leader files suit, seeks damages for foiled attempt to kill him

New Delhi, Sept. 19: India on Thursday described as completely "unwarranted and unsubstantiated" imputations a lawsuit filed against the Indian government in a court in the US by Sikh separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun. Pannun, who heads the radical group Sikhs for Justice, filed the civil lawsuit in a US federal district court demanding damages for the alleged foiled attempt to kill him on American soil last year. In November last year, US federal prosecutors charged Indian national

Nikhil Gupta of working with an Indian government employee in the foiled plot to kill Pannun in New York. Pannun, wanted in India on terror charges, holds dual citizenship of the US and Canada. "As we've said earlier, these are completely unwarranted and unsubstantiated imputations. Now that this particular case has been lodged, it doesn't change our views about the underlying situation," foreign secretary Vikram Misri said. "I would only invite your attention to the person



Gurpatwant Singh Pannun

behind this particular case whose antecedents are well known," he said. The foreign secretary's remarks came at a press conference in response to a question on the lawsuit filed by Pannun. "I would also underline the fact that the organisation — so-called that this

person represents — is an unlawful organisation, has been declared as such under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act of 1967 and it has been done so on account of its involvement in anti-national and subversive activities aimed at disrupting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India," Mr Misri said. "I do not want to say anything more than that at this point in time. I think that speaks for itself," he said. The lawsuit was filed on Tuesday in a district court in New York. —PTI

BJP promises govt jobs, MSP

Continued From Page 1 when it formed its first ever government a decade ago. On Thursday, BJP president J.P. Nadda released the party's "sankalp patra" in the presence of chief minister Nayab Singh Saini, Union ministers M.L. Khattar, Rao Inderjit Singh and Krishan Pal Gurjar at Rohtak. Facing flak from the Opposition parties over Agnipath, which is for short-term military recruitment scheme, the BJP president said that there will be a guarantee of government jobs for every Agniveer hailing from Haryana. Among 20 main points in the manifesto, the BJP promised ₹2,100 per month for all women under the Lado Lakshmi Yojna. The ruling party said two lakhs government jobs will be given to the youth without "kharchi-parchi", a reference to the alleged corruption prevailing earlier under the Congress regime. The BJP also announced to give cooking gas cylinders at ₹500 under the Har Ghar Grihini Yojna. Notably, the state government is already giving cooking gas cylinders at ₹500 under the BPL and antyodaya families in the state. After releasing the manifesto in Rohtak, Mr Nadda said Haryana has marched on the path of progress during the BJP-led government. "You will clearly see

Haryana has changed and the difference is visible," he said, referring to corruption and scams that allegedly took place during previous regimes. The BJP also promised 5-lakh houses in urban and rural areas if it is voted to power after the Assembly elections, besides a scooter for every college-going female student in a rural area under the Awal Balika Yojna. Scholarships for Haryana students belonging to the OBC and SC communities in any government medical and engineering colleges in the country will be given, the BJP manifesto stated. Hitting out at the Congress, Mr Nadda accused the rival party of reducing poll manifestos to a diluted document. For them, the manifestos are mere formality, with which they deceive the public, he charged and added that Haryana under the Congress regime was known as the "land of scams". "Their real manifesto was land scams, taking land at the rate of peanuts, snatching land of farmers and changing its land use," Mr Nadda said and asked the gathering whether the government had a corrupt image or not 10 years ago. "We have talked of 'non-stop Haryana', a state that is now marching on a path of progress under the BJP rule and the kharchi-parchi system prevalent under the

Congress rule has ended. Among the other promises made by the saffron party are starting new Vande Bharat trains and setting up the KMP Orbital Rail corridor with the assistance of the Centre. The party further promised the start of intercity express Metro service between Faridabad and Gurugram. The BJP also promised to set up 10 industrial cities on the line of Industrial Model Township Kharkhoda and said industrialists will be given special incentives for giving 50,000 jobs to local youths in every city. Under the Chirayu-Ayushman scheme, each family will be given free medical treatment of up to ₹10 lakhs and an elderly person above 70 years of age in each family will be provided free medical treatment of up to ₹5 lakhs. The poll document also promised employment opportunities for 5-lakh youths and a monthly stipend through the National Apprenticeship Promotion scheme. According to the manifesto, the party will set up welfare boards for backward classes and a sufficient budget for their welfare. Sports nurseries will come up in every district for the Olympic Games, the manifesto stated. To promote tourism, the BJP has promised an Aravalli Jungle Safari of international level in south Haryana.

Shivraj to meet farmers

Continued From Page 1 that the government has a six-point strategy for the welfare of farmers and development of agriculture. "Farmers are the soul and life of agriculture. The Prime Minister said from the rampart of the Red Fort that he will work three times more than before. All the officers of the agriculture department, including me, have taken a pledge that why should the Prime Minister work alone, we will all work together. We have made this effort in the first hundred days." "We have a six-point strategy for the welfare of farmers and development of agriculture." The Union agriculture minister announced that a new television and radio programme named "Krishi Chaupal" will launch next month with an aim to bridge the gap between farmers and the latest agricultural research and technology, ensuring that vital information reaches those who need it most. He noted the government's strategy to boost both farm production and farmers' income by ensuring assured procurement at minimum support prices (MSP). Mr Chouhan said: "Agriculture is the backbone of the Indian economy and is also the base of our life and it is the biggest responsibility of the government to provide food security to 140 crore countrymen."

The Union minister mentioned that among the decisions taken recently, the major decision was that to increase the production of crops, the Prime Minister had dedicated new seeds of 109 varieties of 65 crops to the farmers, which are climate friendly, pest resistant and high yielding. "One way of reducing the cost of production, we are committed to ensuring that farmers get cheap fertilisers on time." "A bag of urea costs ₹2,366. We make it available to farmers for ₹266. A bag of DAP costs ₹2,433 which we make available to farmers for ₹1,350," he said. Mr Chouhan noted that another special work has been done in 100 days and that the launch of the Digital Agriculture Mission has been approved. He said that the National Pest Surveillance System is important for farmers and they have started using it. The Union minister said that modern kisan chaupal is going to be started in October, in which scientists will provide direct information to the farmers. The minister further mentioned that India's rice production this year will be higher than last year despite heavy rains and flooding in some states. "Our overall rice production will be more than last year despite flooding because rice planting is higher this year," Mr Chouhan said.

PM hits out at '3 families'

Continued From Page 1 J&K Assembly registering a record turnout on Wednesday. He said: "It is a source of satisfaction and contentment for me that the people of four districts of the Kashmir Valley and three of the Jammu region yesterday celebrated the festival of democracy by coming out of their homes in huge numbers to vote. The youth, women and elders-all voted wholeheartedly and broke all the previous records (of voter turnout) and wrote new history. I feel proud." He added: "The world is watching how the people of J&K are expressing their aspiration to touch new heights by strengthening Indian democracy. I congratulate you for this." The first phase of the J&K Assembly elections held on September 18 had recorded a 61.13 per cent voter turnout in 24 constituencies across seven districts. The second and third phase of the voting are due to be held on September 25 and October 1 respectively. In an obvious reference to the alleged rigging done during the 1987 J&K Assembly elections, the PM said it shattered the faith of

the youth of the erstwhile state in democracy. "Three families trampled underfoot the democracy and Kashmiriyat (the ethno-national and social consciousness and cultural values of the Kashmiri people) here. What did they do in the 1980s here? They had considered politics as their fiefdom. They wouldn't allow anyone else to come forward. They withheld the elections to panchayats, BDCs and DDCs. They did not want new faces to emerge on the political arena to ensure their own hereditary continuity," he said. The Prime Minister said: "The result of all this was that the people lost their faith in the vote. They thought that even if they vote in favour of someone else, the results will come in favour of these three families and their staying away from voting would make these families happy." "But now the tide has turned. Democracy is being celebrated here as well. The people's faith in the vote has been restored. People now strongly believe that it is the vote through which they can change a situation. They have realised that voting is

the first ladder to achieve success. Their hope and expectations have lived up," he said. The Prime Minister said that during his recent visit to J&K, he had said that the "parivarvad" of the Congress, National Conference (NC) and People's Democratic Party (PDP) had hollowed out and destroyed the beautiful state of J&K "which has exasperated these people from Delhi to Srinagar". He added: "Apparently these three families think no one can question them. They want to occupy the chair anyhow. They think it is their birthright to loot you. It is their political agenda to deprive the people of their genuine rights, to inflict J&K with violence, dread and chaos only." Mr Modi, however, quickly added: "But now J&K is not going to remain fettered by these three families. Now the youth of this place, the youth who were not allowed by them to move ahead, the very youth against whom they jumped-up is challenging them. The youth of this place suffered enormously and remained in pain when these three families were in power."

THE ASIAN AGE

20 SEPTEMBER 2024

'One election' plan will be hard to implement

The Union Cabinet's approval of the report submitted by the panel headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind recommending simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and all state Assemblies is at best an attempt by the BJP to build a narrative for the introduction of a presidential system. The Opposition has called it an impractical idea which goes against federal principles, the Constitution and democracy.

The proposal by the panel envisages two-level elections — first, simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and the state Assemblies, to be followed by elections to the local self-government bodies, which are also constitutional institutions. This would essentially mean that all the directly elected representative bodies will have a fixed tenure of five years. All the elections will be conducted based on a single electoral roll and a single voter identity card. Should a government fall short of majority, and another government is not formed, then there will be election for the remainder of the term of that body; elections will again be conducted along with the general elections.

The advocates of the "one nation, one election" proposal point out that a single national poll will considerably reduce the expenditure related to elections; it can also obviate policy and governmental paralysis which often hits the decision-making process thanks to one election or the other taking place in one part of the country or the other at any given point of time.

The opponents of the idea, especially those in the Opposition, point out that the idea militates against the Constitution and the federal principles promoted by it

The opponents of the idea, especially those in the Opposition, point out that it militates against the Constitution and the federal principles it promotes as it effectively binds the will of the people of a state to be coterminous with that of the national idea of a Union government. They would argue that cost should not be a concern when it comes to elections as they are the only way to ascertain the will of the people as to who should be at the wheel whether it is a state or the Union government.

The Constituent Assembly had decided on the parliamentary system of governance after thorough deliberations which led the members to conclude that only a parliamentary system would effectively represent the diversity of this nation and will serve national goals better.

However, every live democracy should periodically introspect on the feasibility and utility of the systems it has put in place and look for opportunities to improve or overhaul them. And hence there is no harm in the nation seriously taking up a fixed tenure for legislative bodies in the country.

However, given the well-known positions various parties have taken on the topic, it is highly unlikely that a proposal which requires a series of amendments to the Constitution will pass muster unless the government works with those on the other side of the spectrum. It may be noted that the government does not enjoy the special majority required to pass constitutional amendments in either house of Parliament. If the government is serious about the proposals, it must initiate a national dialogue with an open mind, and with a commitment to go by its results. Attempts to push the proposal through are bound to fail, which was in fact the message the people sent across to the ruling front in the last general elections. The government will also do well to remember that democracy is a costly affair; we have nurtured it through the years, with warts and all. Attempts to tinker with it without a deep understanding of it could prove counter-productive.

All is not well in Bangladesh

Things are far from normal yet in Bangladesh. The clearest sign of this came as Bangladesh's interim government granted sweeping powers to the army for two months to improve the law and order in the country which has still not settled after tumultuous events led to the departure of Sheikh Hasina to India on August 5.

When the former microfinance banker and Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus was placed, ostensibly at the behest of foreign powers, as the chief adviser and caretaker of the government, it was assumed that his non-political stature would help bring about normalcy quickly with the restive students and others going back to their normal lives.

Given the history of Bangladesh in its years since independence, the army has never needed an invitation to take over duties of governance of the country. The caretaker head of government, who took over with the blessings of the army brass after he had declined to give Sheikh Hasina any protection from the riotous mobs, and his administration, were first tasked with restoring law and order.

They seemed to have failed in their primary job as "subversive acts" disrupting stability are said to be taking place and the police force, not fully equipped to do their job in the face of deserters failing to come back after fear of being killed on duty saw them abandon their posts. Their seniors are still said to be wary of leaving the sanctum of their police stations and venturing into the streets.

The garment industry, the backbone of the country's economy, is feeling the pinch of disruption the most as Western importers are scrambling to find suppliers. The minorities are feeling the heat in an unsettled environment and the chief adviser may not have been speaking in sympathetic and placatory tones when describing the attacks as political and not communal in nature as the Hindus may have been targeted as sympathisers of the Awami League regime.

The good intentions of banking for the poor may not apply for a tough task like restoring law and order and it is the credibility of Muhammad Yunus that is at stake as Bangladesh is drifting so much as to invite the army to keep the law. Maybe Yunus and the regime he advises must be pulling up its socks now lest anarchy finds more sustenance.

THE ASIAN AGE

KAUSHIK MITTER
Editor

K. SUBHAKAR
Printer & Publisher

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Subhani



The India-China standoff: One border, two systems



Claude Arpi

On September 12, 2024, India's national security adviser Ajit Doval met Wang Yi, a member of the politburo of the CPC central committee and de facto Chinese foreign minister. The encounter took place in St. Petersburg, on the sidelines of a Brics meeting, and a Chinese communiqué says: "The two sides discussed the progress made in the recent consultations on border affairs and believed that the stability of China-India relations is in the fundamental and long-term interests of the two peoples."

Wang Yi noted that in the face of a world in turmoil, as two ancient Eastern civilisations and emerging developing countries, "China and India should adhere to independence, choose unity and cooperation, and insist on mutual achievement and avoid mutual consumption." On the disputed Line of Actual Control (LAC), it said: "Both sides agreed to work with urgency and redouble their efforts to realise complete disengagement in the remaining areas."

This is much easier said than done, for the simple reason that in the first place, China has never admitted to having changed the status quo by advancing into India's territory in six places in eastern Ladakh in 2020.

Another issue is that the LAC has been moving over the years. The line, which was agreed by Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai in 1956 (and reconfirmed in December 1959) is far from the present Chinese claims.

Recently, India's external affairs minister S. Jaishankar said that 75 per cent of the disengagement has already been achieved in eastern Ladakh, but the remaining 25 per cent is certainly the most complex, to put it mildly.

As in previous encounters with Indian leaders, Wang

Yi tried to argue that India and China are in the same boat and if they work together, the two nations can change the whole world.

However, one should not forget that the systems of governance of India and China are vastly different; in fact, they stand at opposite ends. While India is a democracy with all its good and less good aspects, China is a totalitarian regime with a leader appointed for life.

Some examples show the difference between the two Asian nations. Today's "disputed" border is with an occupied country, namely Tibet, before 1950, India had no border dispute with its northern neighbour. Beijing tries to change this fact with intense propaganda.

On September 11, the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT), a think tank based in Washington DC, released a report: "China launches new propaganda centre in Lhasa". It explains that "in the latest escalation of China's efforts to control the narrative on Tibet, a new propaganda centre called the Tibet International Communication Centre was launched in Lhasa on September 2, 2024."

The Chinese propaganda would like us to believe that all is well in Tibet, which is not the case. If it was true, why should China stop visitors from coming to Tibet or Tibetans to visit their leader, the Dalai Lama, in India?

In fact, the border discussed by Wang Yi and Ajit Doval is hermetically closed, even centuries-old trade exchanges between the Indian Himalayas and Tibet have stopped; ditto for the Kailash-Manasarovar Yatra which is not accessible for Indian devotees.

The first stage of the new propaganda campaign is to replace the name "Tibet" with a Siniticised version "Xizang", and begin to manifest Chinese President Xi Jinping's old slogan "tell a good Chinese story on the

global stage". Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) party secretary Wang Junzheng argued that "external propaganda is an important part of the cause of the Party and the country. We must thoroughly implement General Secretary Xi Jinping's important expositions on external propaganda [and] fully and accurately implement Xi Jinping's important instructions on Tibet work". The instructions are that all is fine in Tibet.

One of the tools used by the Chinese propaganda is the Beijing-selected Panchen Lama, the second highest figure in Tibetan Buddhism. The *Tibet Daily* recently remarked that the lama, whom the Tibetans name as the "fake" Panchen Lama, "carried out a series of Buddhist and social activities in Lhasa, the capital city of southwest China's Xizang Autonomous Region".

The "Panchen" gave a talk during which he stressed "the need to firmly uphold the Communist Party of China central committee's final say on the reincarnation of Living Buddhas of Tibetan Buddhism and voiced strong opposition to secession, while calling for national unity, ethnic unity, and religious and social harmony". China is already preparing for the Dalai Lama's succession.

You could ask how this is connected with the border issue between India and China? But forceful propaganda is always linked to a weakness. Remember the Great Leap Forward, during which 30 or 40 million people died of starvation following Mao's flawed agricultural policies? The years 1958-1961 witnessed more propaganda posters on the bumper harvests in the Middle Kingdom and the happiness of the masses

than at any other time. Propaganda always tries to cover a flaw or a shortcoming. As Tibetans are today prisoners in their own country, they are shown enjoying Xi's policies; this is the crucial difference between populations on the Indian and Tibetan sides of the Himalayas. This should be noted by New Delhi.

On September 10, the TAR announced the beginning of the celebrations for the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China; since the ministry of public security had already designated Year 2024 as "the year of special action to combat and rectify online rumours", it was decided "to deploy public security organs across the country to carry out a one-year special action".

The public security organs "have responded quickly and taken the initiative to crack down on Internet-related crimes... making every effort to maintain the order of cyberspace and social security and stability," observed the Chinese media; quite ominous for an already over-monitored region.

An article mentioned the launch of a "special action": "...the public security organs of the whole region have cleared over 13,000 online rumour information, investigated 69 online rumour cases, and shut down 65 illegal and irregular accounts according to law... More than 650 offline publicity activities have been carried out, and 200,000 people have benefited and participated."

It concluded that "the public security organs treated both the symptoms and the root causes, supported by special operations, and helped maintain security of cyberspace effectively".

Let us remember that there is one border, but two opposite systems. It is certainly something that India should use to its full advantage to counter China's propaganda.

Claude Arpi is Distinguished Fellow at the Centre of Excellence for Himalayan Studies, Shiv Nadar Institution of Eminence (Delhi), and writes on India, China and Indo-French relations

LETTERS HARE-BRAINED IDEA

With 28 states and eight UTs speaking 780 languages and professing eight faiths with two monsoons and extreme climate variations, six national parties and 57 state parties besides 2,764 unrecognised ones, India is a diverse country. Now that the Ram Nath Kovind committee has submitted its recommendation for "one nation, one election", several doubts arise. Does the EC have enough EVMs? Do we have the security required in terms of paramilitary forces? How to synchronise Assembly elections of states whose governments aren't ruling concurrently with the Centre? The questions are too many to ponder.

Gopalswamy J. Chennai

HI-TECH WARS

AFTER THE EXPLODING pagers, walkie-talkies have begun exploding across Lebanon. What next? Laptops and cellphones? The world was already a dangerous place and these attacks have made it more dangerous. Planes could become a veritable deathtrap if such explosions happen in air. The need of suspicion points towards Israel because they have the necessary skill and technology to carry them out. The UN and the United States need to step in immediately to destroy the technology that is needed for it. Just imagine it in the hands of the terrorists of the world.

Anthony Henriques Mumbai

TAKE NOTE, INDIA

TILL THE TIME that pagers and hand-held radios of Iranian terror proxy Hezbollah started exploding, the surprise element was always in favour of the terrorists. The Israeli counter-terror action has a message for Indian armed forces as well. It is to secure their communications rather than use phone and hand-held devices made in Western countries. Unless the supply chain is secure and monitored 24x7, the Indian armed forces could also be crippled by its adversaries through such attacks.

Sankar Paul Chakdaha, West Bengal

Indranil Banerjee



Blasts in pagers, other devices in Mideast: Battle is turning dirtier

Israel's dirty tricks department has once again proved how effective and innovative it can be when it wants to. On Tuesday afternoon (Sep. 17), residents in a suburb of the Lebanese capital Beirut suddenly found the pagers they were carrying starting to beep, some lifted them up to read the screens while others pressed them to stop. That's when they began to explode. Hundreds of pagers all over the area went off, blowing up faces, obliterating fingers and leaving gaping wounds in the waist of people wearing them. The explosions continued for about an hour in a Beirut suburb, Dahiyeh, and in parts of the Bekaa Valley near the Israeli border. Within an hour, about 12 Lebanese, including two children, lay dead and almost 3,000 men and women injured. Among them was Iran's envoy in Lebanon. A day later, more pagers, walkie-talkies and other electronic devices blew up, killing at least another 20 people and injuring hundreds more.

It soon became clear that these explosions were an elaborate Israeli covert operation targeted at members and supporters of the Hezbollah militant group. The areas targeted are known to be strongholds of the militant group. An estimated 5,000 of these pagers had been imported by Hezbollah some months ago from Hungary, and distributed to its members in lieu of mobile phones that were being tracked by Israeli intelligence. A Lebanese militant leader had warned that mobile phones were more deadly and the Israelis themselves had proscribed them! Pagers were chosen as a safer means of communications. No one had the slightest clue that these imported pagers had been tampered with by Israelis at the time of manufacture to contain a small amount of explosive that could be set off at a particular time.

The way the entire operation was executed reads like a thriller. Apparently, Hezbollah had contracted with a firm called BAC Consulting Kft based in Hungary to produce 5,000 pieces of AR-924 model pagers from Taiwanese components made by a company called Gold Apollo. Hsu Ching-Kuang, the founder of Taipei-based Gold Apollo, revealed that the pagers sold to the Hezbollah was not manufactured by them but by a European company that had the rights to use its brand name. Israeli operatives seem to have infiltrated the Hungarian manufacturer and then somehow rig the pagers. Or could it be that the Hungarian firm established only in 2022 was an Israeli set-up? Whatever the case, the saboteurs managed to insert a miniature circuit loaded with three grams of explosives into the pagers which could be detonated by the transmission of a secret code.

The motivation behind the pager blast operation is not difficult to understand. Since the beginning of the Gaza War, Israel has been battling Hezbollah, which has routinely been firing missiles into northern Israel, leading to civilian casualties and the evacuation of several thousand Israeli civilians from the area. Israel's Security Cabinet recently said that the return of its residents displaced from northern Israel

adjoining the Lebanon border was an additional war aim. The daily exchange of firing in Israel's northern borders have become commonplace.

Realising it cannot wage a conventional war with Hezbollah, the Israeli leadership has been systematically targeting Hezbollah leaders and assets in a manner that would provoke them to launch a massive attack against Israel, which would in turn compel the United States to intervene militarily in the fighting. The latest pager blasts seem to be continuation of the same strategy of provocation.

Washington, however, has resisted every attempt to get involved and has been urging the government in Jerusalem to desist from provoking Hezbollah in Lebanon. Washington also wishes to avoid a direct conflict with Iran, which today has a large body of combatants, fighter aircraft and sophisticated missiles capable of inflicting considerable damage on any adversary. Immediately after the blasts, a US state department official disassociated itself from the blasts and said it was investigating who was responsible. Pointedly, the spokesman urged Iran not to take advantage of the incident to raise instability, while admitting that civilians were not legitimate targets for any type of operation.

The blasts ultimately proved that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's strategy of drawing the United States into the war is not working. Both Hezbollah and its patron, Iran, have been extremely restrained in the face of Israeli provocation in the

past and have desisted from any action that could draw the US into the conflict. While Hezbollah has sworn to avenge the pager blasts, it is certain its response would not be excessive.

Meanwhile, it is Mr Netanyahu's government in Israel which is losing the battle of hearts and minds both within and outside the country. The pager blasts border on terrorism, given that non-combatants including two children were killed and many more wounded. Israel started the Gaza War with much international sympathy and support, which over the months have eroded as incessant bombings of civilians in Gaza have led to over 40,000 deaths and no resolution in sight.

The international community is increasingly sickened by the continuing carnage and the latest pager blasts is being viewed as yet another instance of Israeli atrocity. This is no way to win a war. Dirty tricks are at best a sideshow and cannot alter the strategic reality of Israeli military fatigue and the futility of its war efforts. Even Israel's defence minister Yoav Gallant has said that Mr Netanyahu's avowed objective of "total victory" in Gaza is nonsense. Clearly, now is the time to take a step back, seek a deal that will bring back those Israeli hostages still alive and pull the Middle East back from the precipice on which it is currently poised.

The writer is an independent commentator on political and security issues

SHORT TAKES

POLICE ARREST MEMBERS OF IMRAN PARTY: PTI

Lahore, Sept. 19: Pakistan's jailed ex-PM Imran Khan's party on Thursday claimed that Punjab Police have launched a crackdown on the outfit, arresting dozens of its workers ahead of its planned power show in Lahore on Saturday. "Police have detained Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) parliamentary leader in Punjab Assembly Ali Iftikhar Awan, senior leader Afzal Phat and dozens of other party workers ahead of its power show at the ground of Minar-i-Pakistan, Lahore on Saturday (Sept 21)," PTI leader Ali Ijaz Buttar said.

TWO HK MEN SENT TO JAIL FOR SEDITIOUS ACTS

Hong Kong, Sept. 19: A Hong Kong judge on Thursday jailed two men in the city's first sedition cases under a new national security law — one for wearing a shirt with a protest slogan and another for writing similar messages on bus seats. Chief Magistrate Victor So initially sentenced Chu Kai-ping, 27, to 14 months' jail under tougher sentencing laws created by the city's legislature in March. "If the law does not intervene early and allows individual sedition to occur, it will eventually lead to chaos in the society again," So said.

ISLAMIST ATTACK IN MALI DAMAGED UN PLANE

Bamako, Sept. 19: A plane that was used for humanitarian work by the World Food Programme was damaged during an Islamist attack in the capital of Mali, according to the South African aviation company that owns the plane. The company, National Airways Corp., said that all crew and staff were unharmed and in a remote safe house. Djao-unsed Madjiangar, spokesperson for the World Food Programme, said the aircraft was used to "transport aid workers and provide emergency humanitarian aid in remote areas of Mali."

FIJI COUP LEADER SPEIGHT SET FREE AFTER PARDON

Sydney, Sept. 19: Former coup leader George Speight, sentenced to life imprisonment in Fiji in 2002 for treason, was released from prison on Thursday after he was pardoned by Fiji's Mercy Commission. Fiji's Corrections Service said that Speight was discharged from custody on Thursday, a day after being pardoned by Fiji's President Ratu Wiliame Katonivere. Speight was among seven men pardoned and discharged, it said. In 2000, armed men led by Speight had held then PM Mahendra Chaudhry and 35 other MPs hostage.

TALIBAN IN CONTROL OF 39 AF EMBASSIES

Kabul, Sept. 19: The Taliban administration is in control of 39 Afghan embassies and consulates globally three years after it took over Afghanistan and the previous Western-backed government collapsed, the acting foreign ministry said on Thursday. No international government has formally recognised the Taliban administration, though China and the UAE have officially accepted its ambassadors in their capitals. Many governments have said the path to any formal recognition of the Taliban will be stuck until they change course.

WEINSTEIN HIT WITH NEW SEX CRIME CHARGE

New York, Sept. 19: Harvey Weinstein pleaded not guilty on Wednesday to a new sex crime charge in New York, as he awaits retrial in his landmark #MeToo case. Details of the new allegations were not immediately available. He was charged with committing a criminal sex act. The jailed ex-movie mogul has maintained that any sexual activity was consensual. Prosecutors revealed that he had been indicted on additional sex crime charges that weren't part of the case that led to his now-overturned 2020 conviction.

Israel bombs Lebanon after blasts of gadgets

Hezbollah fires new volley; Turkiye: Israel expanding war

Beirut, Jerusalem, Sept. 19: Israel bombed southern Lebanon on Thursday and said it had thwarted an Iranian-led assassination plot after explosions in booby-trapped radios and pagers in the past two days caused havoc in the ranks of Hezbollah. Hezbollah fired a new barrage into northern Israel on Thursday, continuing its drumbeat of exchanges with the Israeli military as fears of a greater war rise after hundreds of electronic devices exploded, killing 37. Turkiye on Thursday accused Israel of seeking to expand the war in Gaza to Lebanon with the "alarming" wave of deadly explosions that swept through Hezbollah strongholds. "The escalation in the region is alarming," foreign minister Hakan Fidan said on state-run TRT television. "We see Israel mounting its attacks towards Lebanon step by step." Lebanese authorities on Thursday banned walkie-talkies and pagers from being taken on flights from Beirut airport, the National News Agency reported, after thousands of such devices exploded during a deadly attack on Hezbollah this week. The attacks on Hezbollah's communications equipment killed 37 people and wounded around 3,000, raising fears that a full-blown war was imminent. It also sowed disarray across Lebanon as panicked residents abandoned their mobile phones. "This isn't a small matter, it's war. Who can even secure their phone now? When I heard about what happened yesterday, I left my phone on my motorcycle and walked away," said Mustafa Sibal in Beirut.



Lebanese army forces prepare to destroy in a controlled explosion a communication device found in southern Lebanon, on Thursday. — AFP

JAPAN CLEARS THE AIR

ISRAEL VIOLATED GLOBAL CHILD RIGHTS TREATY IN GAZA, UN COMMITTEE SAYS
A UN committee on Thursday accused Israel of "severe" breaches of a global treaty protecting children's rights, saying its military actions in Gaza had a "catastrophic" impact on them and are among the worst violations in recent history.

JAPAN FIRM SAYS NO LONGER MAKES RADIO REPORTEDLY USED IN LEBANON BLASTS

Japanese firm Icom said Thursday that it had stopped producing the model of radios reportedly used in recent blasts in Lebanon around 10 years ago.

BULGARIA TO PROBE COMPANY LINKS TO PAGERS THAT EXPLODED IN LEBANON

Bulgaria will investigate a company linked to the sale of pagers to Lebanon's militant group Hezbollah that exploded this week.

TAIWAN PROBES FIRM'S POSSIBLE LINK TO HEZBOLLAH PAGERS

Taiwan investigators searched four locations on Thursday as part of a probe into the origin of pagers that exploded in Lebanon.

Israel has neither confirmed nor denied being behind the attacks but multiple security sources have said they were carried out by its spy agency Mossad. The Lebanese army said on Thursday it was blowing up pagers and suspicious telecom devices in controlled blasts in different areas. It called on citizens to report any suspicious devices.

In Beirut on Thursday, a distant roar in the skies could be heard from what state media said was Israeli warplanes breaking the sound barrier — a noise that has become common. — Agencies

Man nabbed over Iran plot to kill PM

Jerusalem, Sept. 19: Israel's police arrested an Israeli citizen allegedly recruited by Iran to plot the assassinations of top Israeli officials, including PM Benjamin Netanyahu, and Shin Bet said on Thursday. "An Israeli citizen was recruited by Iranian intelligence to promote assassinations of Israeli figures. He was smuggled twice into Iran and received payment for carrying out missions," it said. Among the targets were Netanyahu, defence minister Yoav Gallant and the Shin Bet security chief, Ronen Bar, as well as other top officials.

TOKYO QUESTIONS JAPANESE BOY'S STABBING IN CHINA

Tokyo, Sept. 19: Japan's Prime Minister demanded an explanation from Beijing on Thursday about the fatal stabbing of a Japanese schoolboy in Shenzhen and urged China to ensure Japanese citizens' safety. Wednesday's attack, on the anniversary of a notorious 1931 incident in the run-up to Japan's occupation of Manchuria, came against a backdrop of worsening bilateral relations. Beijing responded by expressing condolences for the killing, calling it an isolated incident that "could happen in any country". While the assailant's motive remained unclear, Japanese officials have urged increased security around Japanese schools in China. "For now, we will strongly urge China to provide an explanation about the facts of what happened. Since it's been more than a day since the incident happened, we expect them to offer an explanation as soon as possible," PM Fumio Kishida said, calling the attack "extremely despicable". "A case like this must not be repeated. We will strongly call on China to ensure the safety of Japanese citizens and prevent a recurrence, while at the same time, doing everything doable in our capacity as the government," he said. — AFP

Russia attacks Ukrainian energy, civilian facilities

Kyiv, Moscow, Sept. 19: Russia targeted Ukrainian energy facilities and struck civilian infrastructure in overnight attacks, Ukrainian officials said on Thursday, and a UN monitoring body said Moscow's strikes on the power grid probably violated humanitarian law. Russia on Thursday said it had captured another village in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region, where its troops have made a series of advances in recent months. The defence ministry said its forces had "liberated the village of Georgievka," around 30 km (20 miles) west of Donetsk city, the regional capital under Russian control. Ukraine's air force said it had shot down all 42 drones and one of four missiles launched by Russia in the latest attacks in more than 2-1/2 years of war since Russia's full-scale invasion. Three people were killed and one wounded in shelling near Krasnopillia in the Sumy region on Wednesday evening, local prosecutors said. The region suffered a temporary power cut overnight after energy infrastructure was attacked, the national grid operator said. Russian forces have pummelled the energy system in the Sumy region. — Agencies



The destroyed hatch of the grain cargo ship AYA is covered by a foil in the Black Sea port of Constanta on Thursday. The Ukrainian navy said the ship was hit with a cruise missile. — AFP

EU TO SEND 160 MN EUROS FROM FROZEN RUSSIAN ASSETS TO UKRAINE

Brussels, Berlin, Sept. 19: The sum of 160 million euros from the proceeds of frozen Russian assets will be allocated to meet Ukraine's urgent humanitarian needs for this winter, European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen said. Germany is set to approve close to 400 million euros (\$450 million) in additional military aid to Ukraine, according to a finance ministry letter. The funds are in addition to around 8 billion euros budgeted for Ukraine in 2024. Germany is Ukraine's biggest supporter in Europe in terms of military aid. Ukraine has been backed by arms from its allies but is worried that support may drop as the war grinds on. "In view of the continuously deteriorating military situation in Ukraine, there is a serious risk that Ukraine, without significantly increased material support, could be defeated in its defence campaign," the letter said. On top of the cash injection, the EU will help with repairs and additional exports. — Agencies

Iranians fail to lure Biden team on Trump info: FBI

Washington, Sept. 19: Iranian hackers sought to interest President Joe Biden's campaign in information stolen from rival Donald Trump's campaign, sending unsolicited emails to people connected to the Democratic president in an effort to interfere in the 2024 poll, the FBI and other federal agencies said on Wednesday. "There's no evidence that any of the recipients responded," officials said, preventing the hacked information from surfacing in the final months of the closely contested election. The hackers sent emails in late June and early July to people who were associated with Biden's campaign before he dropped out. The emails "contained an excerpt taken from stolen, non-public material from former president Trump's campaign as text in the emails," according to a US government statement. The announcement is the latest effort to call out what officials say is Iran's brazen, ongoing work to interfere in the 2024 election. The FBI, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency have said the Trump campaign hack and an attempted breach of the Biden-Harris campaign are part of an effort to undermine voters' faith in the election and to stoke discord. — AP



Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump speaks at an evening rally in Uniondale on Long Island on Wednesday in Uniondale, New York. — AFP

Harris and Trump tied nationally: Polls

Washington, Sept. 19: Vice-President Kamala Harris and ex-president Donald Trump remain deadlocked less than seven weeks before the Nov. 5 US presidential election, according to new polls released on Thursday that also show a tight race in key state of Pennsylvania. While the surveys found likely and registered voters gave higher marks to Democrat Harris in last week's debate with her Republican opponent Trump, they showed the race — particularly in the battleground state — remains close, in line with other polling. In the national poll, Harris and Trump were tied at 47% among the 2,437 likely voters polled Sept. 11-16, according to a survey by *The New York Times*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and Siena College. The margin of error was plus or minus 3 percentage points. In Pennsylvania, one of seven critical battleground states, Harris maintained her 4-point advantage, leading 50% to 46% with a margin of error of plus or minus 3.8 percentage points. *The Washington Post* also found a tight race in the state, which along with Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina, Wisconsin that are likely to decide the outcome. — Reuters

Muslims' blow to Kamala

Washington, Sept. 19: Arab-American and Muslim voters angry at US support for Israel's offensive in Gaza are shunning Democrat Kamala Harris in the presidential race to back third-party candidate Jill Stein in numbers that could deny Harris victories in battleground states that will decide the Nov. 5 election. A Council on American-Islamic Relations poll released this month showed that in Michigan, home to a large Arab American community, 40% of Muslim voters backed the Green Party's Stein. Republican candidate Donald Trump got 18% with Harris, who is President Joe Biden's Vice-President, trailing at 12%. Stein also leads Harris among Muslims in Arizona and Wisconsin, battleground states with sizeable Muslim populations where Biden defeated Trump in 2020 by slim margins. Harris was the leading pick of Muslim voters in Georgia and Pennsylvania, while Trump prevailed in Nevada with 27%, just ahead of Harris' 26%, according to the CAIR poll of 1,155 Muslim voters nationwide. All are battleground states that have swung on narrow margins in recent elections. Biden won the 2020 Muslim vote, credited in some exit polls with more than 80% of their support, but Muslim backing of Democrats has fallen sharply since Israel's nearly year-long action in Gaza. — Reuters

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U.S. KEEPS MISSILE SYSTEM IN PHILIPPINES

Manila, Sept. 19: The United States has no immediate plans to withdraw a mid-range missile system deployed in the Philippines, despite Chinese demands, and is testing the feasibility of its use in a regional conflict, sources with knowledge of the matter said. The Typhon system, which can be equipped with cruise missiles capable of striking Chinese targets, was brought in for joint exercises earlier this year, both countries said at the time, but has remained there. The Southeast Asian archipelago, Taiwan's neighbour to the South, is an important part of US strategy in Asia and would be an indispensable staging point for the military to aid Taipei in the event of a Chinese attack. China and Russia have condemned the first deployment of the system to the Indo-Pacific, accusing Washington of fuelling an arms race. China's foreign ministry said on Thursday it was very concerned about the plan. — Reuters



A new tactical ballistic missile lands on the target during a test-firing, at an undisclosed location in North Korea. — AFP

Kim call to bolster nuclear weapons

Seoul, Sept. 19: North Korea said on Thursday that leader Kim Jong Un supervised successful tests of two types of missiles — one designed to carry a "super-large conventional warhead" and the other likely for a nuclear warhead, as he ordered officials to bolster up his country's military capabilities to repel US-led threats. The tests were apparent references to the multiple missile launches that neighbouring countries said North Korea performed off its east coast on Wednesday, extending its run of weapons display as confrontations with the US and South Korea escalate. The official *Korean Central News Agency* said that Kim oversaw the launch of the country's newly built Hwasongpho-11 Da-4.5 ballistic missile tipped with a dummy "4.5-ton super-large conventional warhead." It said the test-firing was meant to verify an ability to accurately hit a 320 km (200 mile)-range target, suggesting it's a weapon aimed at striking sites in South Korea. KCNA said Kim also guided the launch of an improved "strategic" cruise missile, a word implying the weapons were developed to carry nuclear warheads. KCNA cited Kim as stressing the need to continue to "bolster up the nuclear force" and acquire "overwhelming offensive capability in the field of conventional weapons, too." — AP

PILGRIMAGE | SITE Visitations by Virgin Mary first reported by children in '81 Pope allows devotion to Medjugorje

Vatican City, Sept. 19: Pope Francis has approved a Catholic spiritual devotion centred in Medjugorje, a town in Bosnia that has been steeped in controversy over whether the Virgin Mary appears to local people, the Vatican said on Thursday. The Vatican's doctrinal office said that Francis was not declaring that messages given by the alleged apparition of the Madonna were authentic. Rather, it said the pontiff was recognising there were "positive fruits" for Catholics in the spiritual experience tied to the town. Thursday's statement appeared to conclude decades of Vatican investigations into the alleged visitations, which were first reported by six children in 1981, in a scenario reminiscent of famous apparitions in the French town of Lourdes in the 19th century and more than 100 years ago in Fatima in Portugal. The Bosnian village has become a major pilgrimage site, attracting hundreds of thousands each year and giving many people what they say is a renewed sense of spirituality. Francis had previously expressed doubt about the alleged phenomenon. Referencing messages said to have been given by the Virgin Mary to local townspeople, he told reporters in 2017 that he did not think Mary was "the head of a telegraph office". The Vatican said its note "does not imply that the alleged supernatural events are declared authentic. Instead, it only highlights that the Holy Spirit is acting fruitfully." — Reuters

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A statue depicting Virgin Mary in front of St Jacob church in Medjugorje, Bosnia. — AFP

TAIWAN NODS SAME-SEX MARRIAGES BETWEEN CHINESE, TAIWANESE

Taipei, Sept. 19: Same-sex Taiwanese-Chinese couples are now legally able to register their marriages in Taiwan, Taipei said on Thursday, recognising cross-strait unions for the first time. Taiwan has long been at the forefront of Asia's burgeoning LGBTQ rights movement, becoming in 2019 the first place in the region to legalise marriage equality. But tensions between Taiwan and China — which claims the self-ruled island as part of its territory while declaring it will annex it at any cost and maintains daily military movements around it — have meant cross-strait couples were not afforded the same right. — AFP

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	83,184.80	0.29
Nifty 50	25,415.80	0.15
S&P 500*	5,721.90	1.84
Dollar (₹)	83.68	0.09
Pound Sterling (₹)	111.15	-0.33
Euro (₹)	93.54	-0.26
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	73,261,206	0.28
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	74.38	0.99
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.758	-0.021
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	3.723	0.036

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Railways needs to diversify revenue using data

Indian Railways needs to diversify its revenue sources by leveraging real-time data for operational efficiency, introducing premium services and focusing on commercial development around railway stations to sustain its pace of development. Railways have plans to construct 1 lakh km of new railway tracks over the next 20 years, expand the Kavach safety system to cover 44,000 km within five years.



Brookfield Asset to invest in Indian infrastructure

Brookfield Asset Management plans to add to the \$13 billion it has already invested in Indian infrastructure, describing it as the brightest spot in emerging markets. "There's no reason why we can't keep up with that trajectory," Arpit Agrawal, head of investment firm's India infrastructure business, said. Brookfield has ramped up spending in the sector across India from just \$100 million eight years ago.

Vahan.ai secures \$10 million from Khosla, others

Vahan.ai, an AI-powered recruiter of blue-collar workers, has secured \$10 million in funding led by Silicon Valley billionaire Vinod Khosla's Khosla Ventures, bringing artificial intelligence to a hiring segment in India. The Series B round also drew capital from other US investors such as Y Combinator and Gaingels LLC to tackle a segment that Vahan expects will account for 70 per cent of job growth by 2030.

Jindal India to invest ₹1,500 cr to add capacity

Jindal India, a downstream steel player, on Thursday announced its plans to invest ₹1,500 crore to increase its annual production capacity to 1.6 million tonne (MT). The expansion focuses on the production of coated flat products, pipes, and crash barriers, the company said. The expansion is expected to be completed by FY26, while the production is slated to be started within this fiscal, it said.

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Check cash trade in gold, says FATF

India has about 1.75 lakh businesses in jewellery sector but only 9,500 are registered with GJEPC

Paris, Sept. 19: India must tighten checks on transactions involving precious metals and stones as several of these deals are conducted in cash and fall outside the purview of typical monitoring procedures, according to a global anti-money-laundering watchdog.

India, one of the world's biggest importers of gold and an important processor and exporter of diamond jewellery, has about 1,75,000 businesses in this

sector, but only some 9,500 are registered with the Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council that verifies proof of identity, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) said in its report Thursday.

"As a result of tax law provisions relating to cash threshold prohibition, the dealers in precious metals and stones (DPMS) sector falls outside the scope of preventive measures," the FATF said. "There are doubts



on the dissuasiveness of the penalty provisions."

The findings follow a review of India's finan-

cial system through a site visit in November 2023. The report concluded that while several changes - for

instance mechanisms to monitor compliance with terrorist-financing rules - are starting to help, other guidelines including for the supervision of virtual asset service providers have been too recent to evaluate. FATF placed India in the 'regular follow-up' category.

The Financial Action Task Force places countries with weak terrorist financing and money laundering provisions on their 'grey' or 'black' list, which

can restrict a country's international borrowing capabilities. 'Enhanced follow-up' is a classification for countries that need major improvements, followed by 'regular follow-up' that allows countries to self-report.

India said just four nations among the Group of 20 are classified as 'regular follow-up.'

India achieves a significant milestone by securing 'regular follow-up' rating from Financial

Action Task Force.

This is a testament to our nation's commitment to combating money laundering and terrorist financing, said ministry of finance in a tweet.

The Financial Action Task Force task force that visited India also sought to understand the impact of India's laws on non-profit organisations, it was reported at the time. Some NGOs said some laws were used to target them. — Bloomberg

Dubai key diamond supplier to India

SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, SEPT. 19

Dubai has overtaken Antwerp in Belgium as the dominant rough diamond supplier to India. The emergence of Dubai has rendered India's Special Notified Zones in Mumbai and Surat largely ineffective as diamond trading hubs.

Dubai does not produce diamonds yet its share in India's import of rough diamonds is increasing steadily.

Dubai imports rough diamonds from Botswana, Angola, South Africa, and Russia and re-exports these to India. Belgium's share of India's rough diamond imports dropped from 37.9 per cent in FY20 to 17.6 per cent in FY24, according to GTRI.

Meanwhile, Dubai's share increased from 36.3 per cent in FY20 to 60.8 per cent in FY24 and further to 64.5 per cent in April-June 2024.

A major reason for the higher share of Dubai is India's high corporate tax regime applicable for foreign suppliers of rough diamonds.

This forces them to re-export diamonds to Dubai and export from there to India. This has rendered India's Special Notified Zones (SNZs) in Mumbai



● AS PER GTRI, to make the special notified zones in Mumbai and Surat successful and establish India as a diamond trading hub, it is important to exempt foreign rough diamond sellers from corporate tax.

and Surat ineffective.

As per GTRI, to make the Special Notified Zones (SNZs) in Mumbai and Surat successful and establish India as a diamond trading hub, it is important to exempt foreign rough diamond sellers from corporate tax.

These zones, set up in 2015, allow international diamond mining companies to display rough diamonds for Indian buyers, helping India become a global diamond trading hub. However, the 40 per cent corporate tax on foreign firms selling diamonds in India has made the SNZs unattractive.

India 3rd largest economy soon

SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, SEPT. 19

India is set to become the third-largest economy and transition to the upper-middle-income category by fiscal 2030-31 if forecast annual growth of 6.7 per cent is realised, finds S&P Global.

In the post-pandemic world, India has emerged as the fastest-growing large economy, with healthy medium-term prospects. In FY2024, growth was on the upside and at 8.2 per cent, exceeding the government's earlier estimate of 7.3 per cent.

Increasing productivity should boost India's growth, allowing the economy to expand 6.7 per cent on average till the end of the decade.

According to S&P Global market intelligence projections, the size of the country's nominal GDP would nearly double to

over \$7 trillion by fiscal 2030-31 from \$3.6 trillion in FY24. This would make India the third-largest economy in the world, raising its share in global GDP from 3.6 per cent to 4.5 per cent and lifting its per-capita income to the upper-middle-income group.

The private sector needs to take the lead in achieving a balanced and sustainable lift in the investment cycle. The continuation of structural reforms to facilitate business transactions and improve the logistics sector will support private-sector investment, making growth less dependent on public capital expenditure.

The India composite PMI output index, compiled by S&P Global, reached one of the highest levels in nearly 14 years, supported by favourable economic conditions and strong demand.

Fed rate cut spurs Sensex

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD WITH AGENCIES MUMBAI, SEPT. 19

Indian stock markets made a new high after overnight 50 basis point interest rate cut by the US Federal Reserve.

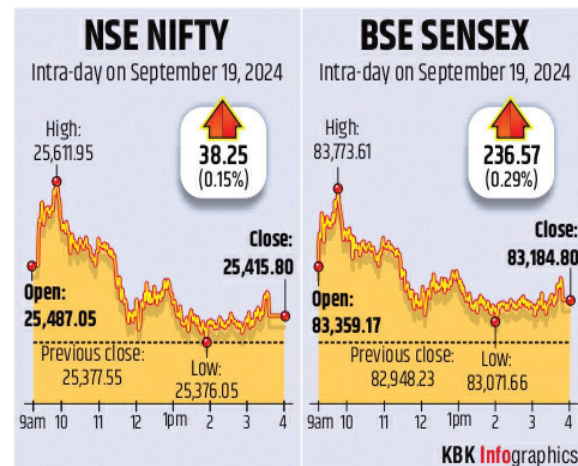
On Wednesday, the US Federal Open Market Committee voted to cut the federal funds rate target range by 50 basis points to 4.75-5.00 per cent from 5.25-5.50 per cent, against expectations of a cut half that size.

The Sensex on Thursday touched a new peak of 83,773.61 points but shed gains later to close at 83,184.80 gaining 235.57 points or 0.29 per cent on profit taking. The Nifty-50 index crossed the 25,500 mark for the first time ever touching a high of 25,611.95 and later closed at 25,415.80 gaining 38.25 points or 0.15 per cent.

Chief economic advisor V Ananth Nageswaran said the impact of the US Federal Reserve's move to cut the benchmark interest rate will be muted for India as it was mostly priced in. The rate cut is positive for emerging markets, he said.

Economic affairs Secretary Ajay Seth also said that the rate cut is unlikely to have any impact on foreign inflows into India.

To a question on whether RBI would start to cut interest rates, the official said, "This is for MPC to take a decision at apt time. Their decision is based on what is good for the Indian economy. You should not read too much into the event which happened yesterday."



US stocks close with modest fall

Washington, Sept. 19: The Federal Reserve's bold start to cutting interest rates and its determination not to fall behind the curve in easing has reshaped the policy horizon for counterparts spanning the globe.

In emerging markets, the Fed's half percentage point cut offers reduced pressure on exchange rates that have felt the impact of the highest US borrowing costs in decades. That offers space to recalibrate their own rate settings - as Indonesia did just ahead of the Fed.

Fed chair Jerome Powell and his colleagues faced some risk of spooking the public into perceiving that recession

risks were rising by cutting more than most economists anticipated. Wednesday's move was "a sign of our commitment not to get behind" the curve, he said.

Investors initially reacted with confidence, though US stocks closed with modest declines.

"The half-point cut by the Fed will ripple through other central banks' interest-rate decisions and lead market participants to conclude that the US economy is slowing, perhaps leading to a global slowdown," said Stefan Gerlach, chief economist at EFG Bank in Zurich and a former deputy governor of the central bank of Ireland. — Bloomberg

GOVT RESOLVES EXPORTER ISSUES IN SHIPPING BIZ

FC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, SEPT. 19

The Centre on Thursday announced steps, including reducing certain charges at ports and purchase of five additional second-hand container vessels by shipping corporation of India, to resolve shipping sector related problems of exporters and importers.

Commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal said that several issues were discussed to look at addressing the challenges that exporters and importers are facing in the shipping area. "There will be result in significantly bringing down the shipping cost, improve the availability of empty containers," he said.

Bigger IPOs offering global investors more opportunities

Mumbai, Sept. 19: The renewable-energy arm of India's state-run power producer NTPC is seeking to raise as much as ₹10,000 crore (\$1.2 billion) in its initial public offering (IPO), underscoring how the world's busiest market for listings is now attracting bigger deals.

NTPC Green Energy plans to use the proceeds to invest in its subsidiary, capitalising on India's burgeoning power needs, and repay loans taken by the unit, according to a draft prospectus.

The New Delhi-based firm joins companies such as SoftBank-backed Swiggy and the Indian units of LG Electronics and Hyundai Motor that



are also seeking \$1 billion-plus IPOs.

The bigger offerings, after a slew of small deals worth less than \$50 mn, will add depth and offer global investors more opportunities to participate in what is increasingly most important emerging markets globally. "The outlook remains strong with a number of

FEDERAL RATE CUT BOOSTS RALLY OF EUROPEAN STOCKS

Amsterdam, Sept. 19: European stocks rose to within striking distance of their record highs, tracking a global rally across financial markets after the Federal Reserve's interest-rate cut.

The Stoxx Europe 600 Index gained 1.4 per cent to 521.84 points, just short of the 525.05 points peak in August.

Britain's FTSE 100 pared some gains but was up about 1 per cent after the Bank of England held interest rates steady and said it would not rush to ease policy.

Miners, oil majors and autos outperformed in the rally. — Bloomberg

BOE SAYS NOT IN HURRY TO EASE MONETARY POLICY

London, Sept. 19: The Bank of England warned investors it won't rush to ease monetary policy, deciding against a second consecutive cut in borrowing costs as it awaits further signs inflationary pressures have subsided.

The BoE's Monetary Policy Committee voted 8-1 to keep rates steady at 5 per cent. "We should be able to reduce rates gradually over time," bank governor Andrew Bailey said in a statement. — Bloomberg



GOVT TO CHANGE BASE YEAR FOR COMPUTING GDP

New Delhi, Sept. 19: The government is considering changing the base year for computation of the GDP to 2022-23, from 2011-12 at present, to reflect an accurate picture of the economy, sources said on Thursday.

The last revision was done in 2011-12, they said.

The ministry of statistics and programme implementation (MoSPI) is likely to make a suggestion for accepting 2022-23 as a base year to the advisory committee on national accounts statistics (ACNAS), they said.

The 26-member ACNAS is expected to complete the exercise by early 2026 and the estimates of the new base are likely to be released in February 2026, sources said.

As per sources, in the new computation, items like lanterns, VCRs, recorders will be removed and products like smart watches, phones and processed food items will be added.

In addition, the GST data is a new data source that could be used in GDP computation. — PTI

DEATH AT EY: GOVT PROBING UNSAFE ENVIRONMENT

New Delhi, Sept. 19: The ministry of labour and employment is investigating an alleged unsafe and exploitative work environment days after the tragic demise of Anna Sebastian Perayil who worked with S R Batliboi, a member firm of EY Global.

Perayil was a 26-year-old chartered accountant (CA) who died allegedly due to extreme work pressure at the firm.

"Deeply saddened by the tragic loss of Anna Sebastian Perayil. A thorough investigation into the allegations of an unsafe and exploitative work environment is underway. We are committed to ensuring justice and labour ministry has officially taken up the complaint," union minister of state Shobha Karandlaje said on X.

Perayil, who passed her CA exams in 2023, worked at EY Pune office for four months before she succumbed. — PTI

NEW | OPTIONS Bullion's rally, easing cost pressures make assets appealing for cos

Mining companies hunting for deals

New York, Sept. 19: With gold prices at a record high, mining companies are back hunting for deals while trying to reassure investors that they've learned from past mistakes of overspending.

There has been a flurry of activity in recent months, with Gold Fields's \$1.6 billion purchase of Osisko Mining and AngloGold Ashanti's \$2.5 billion acquisition of Centamin. That has sparked speculation over what could be



next, with signs that more companies are working to ink deals. Bullion's rally have made assets more appealing, especially for those seeking to replace ageing mines. Yet companies

are signalling they're wary of repeating errors made in a previous bull market when mega expansions left them with debts and angry shareholders. At an industry gathering

in Colorado Springs, executives sought to show discipline by talking up the virtues of cutting debt, controlling costs and rewarding investors rather than the prospect of merger and acquisition.

"There were some really stupid deals made last time around," Ross J. Beaty, chairman of Equinox Gold, said at the Denver Gold Forum. "Companies bought dumb stuff and were penalised for it." Deal appetite has picked

up as gold soared to successive records on the outlook for lower US interest rates, central-bank buying and haven demand.

Prices topped \$2,600 an ounce for first time on Wednesday as US Fed kicked off an easing cycle by lowering borrowing costs by half percentage point.

Inflationary pressures eased in last year, too, helping the industry to keep costs in check, make more cash and boost share prices. — Bloomberg

Ready-made garment exports up 12% in Aug.

New Delhi, Sept. 19: The country's ready-made garment exports (RMG) in August rose by about 12 per cent to \$1.26 billion despite global headwinds and challenges such as high logistic cost, according to the commerce ministry data.

Cumulatively, RMG exports during the April-August period of 2024-25 grew by 7.12 per cent to \$6.39 billion.

Apparel export promotion council (AEPC) chairman Sudhir Sekhri said that exports are keeping the growth momentum despite global headwinds and other challenges such as high logistic costs. With focus on product quality as well as environmental compliance, the industry is poised to take a leap into high growth trajectory and be a major global player of garment exports, he added. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

Malvika enters China Open Last 8

Changzhou, China: Young Indian shuttler Malvika Bansod continued her fine form as she cruised to her maiden Super 1000 quarterfinal after eking out a hard-fought victory against higher-ranked Kristy Gilmour in the China Open here on Thursday. Malvika, ranked 43rd, toiled hard for one hour and five minutes before pulling off a 21-17, 19-21, 21-16 win over the two-time Commonwealth Games medalist and world number 25 from Scotland in a women's singles round-of-16 contest. "This is the first time I will play a quarterfinal of a Super 1000 tournament so it is a dream come true and the biggest achievement of my life so far," Malvika said after the match. "I dreamt about this before the tournament that how would it be if I reached the quarters and now I'm top 8, so it's a great feeling," she added. The win comes a day after the 22-year-old defeated Paris Olympics bronze medalist Gregoria Mariska Tunjung of Indonesia. — PTI

Indian lifter Babu strikes gold in Fiji

Suva, Fiji: Indian weightlifter Valluri Ajaya Babu produced a record-breaking performance to clinch the gold medal in the men's 81kg junior and senior categories at the Commonwealth Championships here on Thursday. The 19-year-old Babu heaved a total of 326kg (147kg + 179kg) to finish on top of the podium. With his performance, Babu set a Commonwealth record clean and jerk in the 81kg junior category. He also smashed the junior national marks in snatch, clean and jerk and total weight sections. Compatriot Sairaj Pardeshi bagged the youth gold in the same category while finishing second in the junior section behind Babu. Lalruatfela won the silver in the men's 89kg event with a best effort of 301kg (135kg+166kg) while Hrudananda Das, who lifted 299kg (129kg+170kg), clinched the silver medal in the youth category and the bronze in the junior section. — PTI

Oz bans ex-Lanka player for 20 yrs

Melbourne: Former Sri Lankan Test cricketer Dulip Samaraweera, who was working as Victoria's women's team coach, has been banned for 20 years by the country's board after being found guilty of breaching its code of conduct with "utterly reprehensible" behaviour during his stint with the side. Samaraweera, who played seven Tests and five ODIs for Sri Lanka and first joined Cricket Victoria as a batting coach in 2008, was banned following an investigation by Cricket Australia's Integrity Department. According to *cricket.com.au*, the 52-year-old will not be allowed to hold any position in the cricketing set-up Down Under for the next two decades. Samaraweera was found to be in "serious breach" of clause 2.23 of the CA's Code of Conduct, which concerns conduct "contrary to the spirit of cricket, is unbecoming of a representative or official, is or could be harmful to the interests of cricket, or does or could bring the game of cricket into disrepute". — PTI

Holders India face Bangla in opener

Thimphu: India will begin their SAFF U17 Championship title defence against Bangladesh in the first game of Group 'A' at the Changlimithang Stadium here on Friday. Maldives are the other side in the three-team Group 'A', against whom India will play on September 24. Group 'B' consists of hosts Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. The top two teams from each group will progress to the semi-finals on September 28, followed by the final on September 30. India were the champions in 2022, which was the previous occasion the tournament was held for the U17 age group. — PTI

ASHWIN DAY

Allrounder's century puts India in control against Bangla on first day

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR
CHENNAI, SEPT. 19

The sun was about to set, the shadows grew longer and son of the soil R. Ashwin stood tall. A centurion, a saviour and the architect of an incredible fightback, Ashwin, in the company of Ravindra Jadeja, carried India to 339 for six in 80 overs after being in a precarious position at 144 for six against Bangladesh on day one of their first Test here at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium on Thursday. As Ashwin worked a delivery through mid-wicket to complete his sixth Test hundred — his second consecutive ton at Chepauk — the crowd erupted in cheers and whistles. A wide and radiant smile broke out on his face and the moment lit up the whole stadium, which had been under a blanket of clouds for most of the day. It was a stellar century, coming at a time when India was staring down the barrel after a spectacular collapse of the top order. But, Ashwin's unbeaten 102 off 112 balls, combined with Jadeja's gritty 86 off 117 balls, has taken the hosts to a commanding position. Off their unbroken partnership of 195 runs, coming off just 227 balls, 163 runs were added in the final session alone. Ashwin looked fearless and exuded confidence from the moment he walked in. Against the spinners, he didn't hesitate to dance down the track. He dispatched off-spinner Mehidy Hasan Miraz over deep mid-wicket for a massive six, bringing up India's 300 in style. He had slog-swept Shakib Al Hasan, sending the ball soaring into the stands. Earlier, after a series of record-breaking hot days, the weather took a dramatic turn overnight. Light overnight showers and overcast skies provided much-needed respite in the morning, creating ideal conditions for pace bowling. Bangladesh skipper Najmul Shanto, quick to notice the moisture on the surface, decided to bowl first. Bangladesh's decision to field — unprecedented at Chepauk since 1982 — paid off handsomely as their pacers exploited the conditions. Hasan Mahmud who is playing his fourth Test match made life difficult for the Indian top-order. Hasan's first spell read a remarkable 7-2-14-3 and his scalps included Rohit Sharma, Shubman Gill and Virat Kohli. Rohit, fishing outside off, edged it to the second slip, while Shubman Gill was caught behind for an eight-ball duck, nicking a wayward delivery down the leg side. Kohli, who showed his usual intent early on, fell



India's Ravichandran Ashwin celebrates his century with teammate Ravindra Jadeja on the first day of the first Test against Bangladesh at the M. A. Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on Thursday. — SANJAY KISHORE

YASHASVI SAYS INDIA IN STRONG POSITION NOW

AGE CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT. 19

Young India opener Yashasvi Jaiswal showed a knack for adaptability as he tackled overcast weather and a challenging surface at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium during the opening day of the first Test against Bangladesh. Yashasvi scored a patient 56, displaying his skill against a seaming ball. "I felt it was amazing to go out there and play in these conditions — a bit cloudy. It will make me strong and I will learn from it — how to play in all these conditions, how to build my innings. Initially, I think the ball was moving a bit and seeming a bit, and the wicket was a bit down. So, we took our time, but if you see in the last session, we scored quite well. I think we are in a strong position at the moment," he said. The 62-run stand between Yashasvi and Rishabh for the fourth wicket helped India recover from early setbacks. Yashasvi said the dressing room under new coach Gautam Gambhir remained calm even when the team was in deep trouble. "We were calm, because we knew Jadeja and Ashwin would get us through that tough period. We always have a plan. And there is a lot of experience in our dressing room as well."

SCOREBOARD

India 1st Innings: Yashasvi Jaiswal c Shadman Islam b Nahid Rana 56, Rohit Sharma c Najmul Hossain Shanto b Hasan Mahmud 6, Shubman Gill c Litton Das b Hasan Mahmud 0, Virat Kohli c Litton Das b Hasan Mahmud 6, Rishabh Pant c Litton Das b Hasan Mahmud 39, K. L. Rahul c Zakir Hasan b Mehidy Hasan Miraz 16, Ravindra Jadeja batting 86, Ravichandran Ashwin batting 102. Extras (b-18, lb-5, nb-4, w-1) 28. Total (for 6 wickets in 80 overs) 339.

Fall of wickets: 1-14, 2-28, 3-34, 4-96, 5-144, 6-144.

Bowling: Taskin Ahmed 15-1-47-0, Hasan Mahmud 18-4-58-4, Nahid Rana 17-2-80-1, Mehidy Hasan Miraz 21-2-77-1, Shakib Al Hasan 8-0-50-0, Mominul Haque 1-0-4-0.

to a classic dismissal — caught behind off Hasan, attempting to prod at one outside off. Spin was introduced in the 18th over, with Mehidy taking over the attack. By lunch, India had reached 88 for three, with Rishabh Pant and Yashasvi Jaiswal working hard to prevent further damage. Pant's brisk scoring helped maintain a healthy run rate and stabilise the innings. However, just three overs into the post-lunch session, Pant perished for 39, caught behind while attempting a full-blooded cut shot, giving Hasan his fourth wicket. His 62-run partnership with Yashasvi had helped India recover from the early jolts, but the team was still in trouble. Yashasvi, after grinding his way to a workmanlike half-century, was undone by the sheer pace of Nahid Rana, edging to first slip. When KL Rahul was sent back to the dressing room, India was tottering at 144 for six, their backs firmly against the wall. Rahul's wicket was the first breakthrough for a spinner — Mehidy Hasan Miraz — on a day dominated by the pacers.

We can wrest back control, says Hasan

AGE CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, SEPT. 19

Bangladesh speedster Hasan Mahmud, who tormented India's famed top-order on the opening day of the first Test, believes the visitors can wrest back control despite letting the hosts off the hook in the final session. "We were dominating in the morning session, but the wicket has improved a lot now. So, the bowlers are trying to curtail the flow of runs and boundaries. We had the momentum at one point, but now it has shifted. Anything can happen from here on. Maybe we can come back tomorrow and get an early breakthrough. We have to be more economical and precise," said Hasan. Despite taking the

prized scalps of Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, Hasan celebrated with just a fist pump. "That is not a celebration, just a simple gesture of mine. I'm just happy. When you take the wickets of the best batsmen in the world right now, naturally, one would be happy," Mahmud added. Hasan became the first visiting pacer since 2000 to claim four wickets on the opening day of a Test match in India, joining the company of the legendary Dale Steyn. "My plan was very simple. I just wanted to pitch it up and let the ball move both ways. When there is help from the pitch, you just need to stick to the basics, which would trouble the batsmen. I got some movement, and it created pressure on the batsman."

Man City held by Inter as PSG win

Paris, Sept. 19: Manchester City made a sluggish start to their Champions League campaign as they drew 0-0 against Inter Milan on Wednesday, while Paris Saint-Germain needed a last-minute goal to beat tournament newcomers Girona. Pep Guardiola's side have won all four of their Premier League games this season but failed to break down Italian champions Inter in a repeat of the 2023 final won by City. City lost Kevin De Bruyne to injury at half-time and Phil Foden fired straight at Inter goalkeeper Yann Sommer with their best chance as Erling Haaland was kept quiet on a night he was chasing his 100th goal for the English club. "It was a very intense game against a strong opponent. We knew what was coming, they are a top team as well and they are used to winning, so we were not going to have an easy job," City defender Ruben Dias said. Henrikh Mkhitaryan could have won it for Inter



Inter Milan's Matteo Darmian (left) vies for the ball with Manchester City player Jack Grealish during their Champions League opening phase match in Manchester on Wednesday. — AP

when he blazed over 15 minutes from time, allowing City to extend their unbeaten run in the competition to 24 matches — one off the record set by Manchester United between 2007 and 2009. It is just the second time in 42 home Champions League games under Guardiola that City have

THE RESULTS

Manchester City	0
Inter Milan	0
Paris Saint-Germain (Gazzaniga 90+og)	1
Girona	0
Club Brugge	0
Borussia Dortmund (Giltens 76, 86, Guirassy 90+5)	3
Bologna	0
Shakhtar Donetsk	0
Sparta Prague (Kairinen 2, Olatunji 42, Laci 58)	3
Red Bull Salzburg	0
Celtic (Scales 17, Furuhashi 47, Engels 56-pen, Maeda 70, Idah 87)	5
Slovan Bratislava (Wimmer 61)	1

for several months in Spain last season before coming third. However, a goalkeeping blunder from Paulo Gazzaniga in the 90th minute resulted in Nuno Mendes' cross squirming through his grasp and handed the French champions victory. "It was a difficult game, they're a team that plays well with the ball," Mendes told Canal Plus. — AFP

LATHAM & KANE HALF-TONS PUT NZ IN COMMAND

Galle (Sri Lanka), Sept. 19: Half-centuries from Tom Latham and Kane Williamson put New Zealand at 255/4 and in hot pursuit of Sri Lanka on day two of the first Test on Thursday. The Black Caps trailed by 50 at stumps in Galle with Daryl Mitchell (41) and Tom Blundell (18) to resume in the morning. No New Zealander scored a Test century in Galle and both Williamson and Latham looked set to end that drought before falling against the run of play. Their 73-run partnership steadied the reply to Sri Lanka's first innings of 305 but ended when Latham fell before tea for 55. World number two batter Williamson departed in the final session for 70. **Brief scores:** Sri Lanka 305 (Kamindu Mendis114, Kusal Mendis 50, William O'Rourke 5/55) vs New Zealand 255/4 (Tom Latham 70, Kane Williamson 55, Dhananjaya de Silva 2/31).

Nagal demanded fee of \$50,000 to play for India

New Delhi, Sept. 19: The All India Tennis Association on Thursday claimed that Sumit Nagal demanded an annual fee of \$50,000 to play Davis Cup ties for India but the country's top singles player defended himself, saying it is "standard practice" for athletes to be paid for their services.



Sumit Nagal

Nagal had opted out of the recent Davis Cup tie against Sweden, citing a back strain that also forced him out of the US Open men's doubles competition last month. It was India's best chance to beat Sweden in their own backyard but competing without a singles specialist, the team received a 0-4 hammering. Packed with doubles players and debutants, the team could not even win a set in the World Group I tie. AITA, on Tuesday, made its displeasure clear by saying that the country's top players, including Nagal, Yuki Bhambhani and Sasikum Mukund, refused national duty. Nagal had entered the ATP 250 Hangzhou Open and was scheduled to play on Thursday but withdrew citing the same back issue. "You tell me why should a player be asking for money to play for the country. This is a big question. He had demanded an annual fee of \$50,000 (approx ₹45 lakh) and said if he is not paid, he will not play," Dhupar said. Largely restricted to World Group I, India play only two ties in a single

season — in February and September. For a World Group I tie, AITA gets around ₹30 lakh and 70 per cent of it is distributed among the participating players while the remaining 30 per cent is kept by the national federation to manage administrative expenditure. A former India Davis Cupper confirmed that there have been instances in the past when the country's leading players asked for money to play Davis Cup. Nagal did not deny the AITA claim as he put his defense through a statement on social media. "Regarding compensation, I want to clarify that it is standard practice in professional sports for athletes to be compensated for their participation in events, even when representing their country. "This is not about personal gain. My discussions with AITA and the Davis Cup Captain are confidential and I would not like to indulge in any speculation about this," he wrote in his statement. — PTI

INDIAN WOMEN CRUSH GEORGIA IN 7TH ROUND

Budapest, Sept. 19: Grandmaster R. Vaishali and Vantika Agrawal put up impressive performances as Indian women defeated Georgia while World Championship challenger D. Gukesh led the men to victory over China in the seventh round as both teams continued their unbeaten streak in 45th Chess Olympiad here. Vaishali and Vantika notched wins against Lela Javakhishvili and Bella Khotenashvili as Indian women thumped second seeds Georgia 3-1, while the men eked out a 2.5-1.5 over China.

On a day that saw D. Harika settling for a draw with Nana Dzagnidze and Divya Deshmukh being held by Nino Batsiashvili from a better position, it was Vantika who handled her time pressure extremely well to play almost 20 moves with just about a minute on her clock to win her game and seal India's seventh straight victory. "The Indian women took their tally to an impressive 14 points out of a possible 14 and stretched their lead to two points over nearest rivals Poland, Kazakhstan and France who all have 12 points apiece. — PTI



India's R. Vaishali ponders her move against Georgia's Lela Javakhishvili in the seventh round of the Chess Olympiad in Budapest on Thursday. — FIDE

Rawat's rearguard ton rescues 'A' side

Anantapur, Sept. 19: Shashwat Rawat led India A's dramatic recovery with an unbeaten 122 to steer them to 224 for seven on day one of the Duleep Trophy tie against India 'C' here on Thursday. The left-handed batter, who plays for Baroda in domestic cricket, got support only from Shams Mulani (44 off 76) after India 'A' were reduced to 36 for 5 in the 20th over. Last match's centurion Pratham Singh, captain Mayank Agarwal, Tilak Varma and Riyan Parag all fell in single digits. Pacer Anshul Kamboj, who took eight wickets in an innings last week, was again the standout bowler for India 'C'.

BRIEF SCORES

■ India A 224/7 in 77 overs (Shashwat Rawat 122 batting, Shams Mulani 44, Anshul Kamboj 3/40, Vijaykumar Vyshak 2/33) vs India C
■ India D 306/5 in 77 overs (Sanju Samson 89 not out, Devdutt Padikkal 50, Srikar Bharat 52, Ricky Bhui 56, Rahul Chahar 3/60) vs India B.

drives and even reverse sweeps off the spinners. **IYER FAILS AGAIN** The under-pressure Shreyas Iyer's dismal run continued but strong performances from the other frontline batters, including Sanju Samson, guided India 'D' to 306/5 on the opening day against India 'B'. Iyer fell for a second successive duck in the ongoing tournament. However, Devdutt Padikkal (50), Srikar Bharat (52), Ricky Bhui (56) and Samson (89 not out) smashed half-centuries as India 'D' batters produced a solid show. — PTI

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