



INDIA ENGAGING RUSSIA AND UKRAINE TO HELP END WAR, SAYS JAISHANKAR

TALKS EXPLORATORY, NO PEACE PLAN

Jaishankar said India does not have a peace plan or any suggestions on how to end the conflict.

INDIA UNIQUELY PLACED TO FACILITATE TALKS

Highlighting India's unique position, the external affairs minister said there are not many countries that have the ability or the willingness to engage both Moscow and Kyiv at the same time



SAYS HE HAS ALREADY INVITED INDIA TO THE SECOND PEACE SUMMIT

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Rourkela shocker: Minor girl gangraped twice within hours

PRASANJEET SARKAR @Rourkela

ROURKELA was rocked by yet another case of sexual assault as an adolescent girl was allegedly gangraped by five miscreants at two separate places on the night of September 22 (Sunday) in what is a grim pointer to the deteriorating law and order.

The victim had been to a bar and restaurant at Civil Township within RN Pali police limits

its where two miscreants raped her. Another miscreant later joined the two in the heinous crime, police said.

However, the girl's ordeal did not end there as she was dumped on the road when two other miscreants picked her up in a motorcycle and raped her near the library and defunct millet cafe along ring road opposite the administrative building of RSP within Plant Site police limits.



A scientific team and dog squad at the crime scene in Rourkela on Wednesday

The second crime spot was developed under the city beautification project two years

back and is hardly 50 metre from the busy ring road.

Three persons have been detained by Rourkela and are currently being interrogated.

Victim's father in the complaint stated that the girl had left home on Sunday evening saying she was going to a shopping mall, said DIG Brijesh Kumar Rai who officiates as Rourkela SP.

The incident occurred within 24 hours of the gangrape of two minors in the steel city on Friday.

The case came to light after the victim's father lodged a complaint on Tuesday and police along with a scientific team and dog squad inspected the crime spots on Wednesday.

After receiving the complaint, four teams were formed

under an additional SP to ascertain the identity of the culprits and multiple raids were conducted on Tuesday night to nab them," Rai said. SDPO of Panposh has been entrusted monitoring of the case and the statement of the victim was recorded.

On the day, a scientific team and dog squad visited the crime spots. The investigation is in primary stages and steps are being taken to avail technical

inputs and more information. "Police are committed to ensure speedy justice to the victim," he said.

On September 21 evening two adolescent girls aged 14 and 15 were forcibly taken from Bisra Chowk and gangraped at a secluded spot just a few metres away from the ring road.

The same day, a school girl was molested by a PET teacher at Guru Nanak Khalsa School along Gurudwara road.

Lokayukta police to probe MUDA dirt against Siddu

Special court directs the SP to register a case under land grab law

YATHIRAJU @Bengaluru

A day after the Karnataka High Court allowed investigation against Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in the alleged Mysore Urban Development Authority (MUDA) scam case, a special court directed the Lokayukta police to probe the allotment of 14 compensatory sites to his wife Parvathy B M. The Lokayukta police has been asked to submit its report within three months.

The special court in Bengaluru, which exclusively deals with criminal cases against sitting and former MPs and MLAs, also directed the Superintendent of Police, Mysuru Division of Karnataka Lokayukta, to register a case under the provisions of the Prohibition of Benami Property Transactions Act and the Karnataka Land Grabbing Prohibition Act.

This is in addition to provisions under Indian Penal Code sections 120B (conspiracy), 166 (disobeying law), 403 (misap-



Siddaramaiah

'Not scared of probe'

Siddaramaiah said he is ready to face any probe and will continue the legal fight. "We are not scared of investigation and are prepared for the legal fight. I said it yesterday and am reiterating it today," he said

propriation), 406 (breach of trust), 420 (cheating), 426 (mischief), 465 (forgery), 468 (forgery of an electronic record), 340 (wrongful confinement), 351 (use of criminal force) and oth-

er relevant sections of the IPC, under Section 9 (bribing public servant) and 13 (criminal misconduct) of the Prevention of Corruption Act.

In his order, Special Court Judge Santhosh Gajanan Bhat ordered registration of a private complaint against Siddaramaiah, his wife, brother-in-law Mallikarjuna Swamy, and one Davaraju J, among others, in connection with the MUDA's illegal allotment of the compensatory sites.

The case pertains to 14 sites worth ₹56 crore being allotted illegally in an upscale Vijayanagar 3rd Stage for the land acquired at Kesare village, a down market area on the outskirts of Mysuru, due to alleged undue advantage taken by Siddaramaiah when in power.

On Tuesday, the Karnataka High Court had upheld Governor Thawarchand Gehlot's approval to conduct a probe into the MUDA case and the allegedly illegal allotment of 14 sites to the CM's wife.

Phase II done, heartening to see Kashmiris casting their votes, say foreign diplomats

FAYAZ WANI @Srinagar

THE second phase of polling for 26 assembly seats in J&K on Wednesday recorded a healthy 56.05% turnout, which could go up further.

While brisk polling took place in five districts, there were no long queues in Srinagar; where the poll percentage for eight seats stood at 29.24%. However, 4.41% more voters turned up to vote in Srinagar as compared to the Lok Sabha polls in April-May when the percentage was 24.83%.

A team of foreign diplomats visited a few polling stations and found it "heartening" to see Kashmiris casting their votes after 10 years.

US Deputy chief of Mission Jorgan K Andrews, who was among the visiting diplomats



Foreign diplomats after visiting a polling booth in Srinagar, for a first-hand assessment of the Assembly elections in J&K on Wednesday | ZAHOR PUNIABI

said, "It has been excellent and fascinating to see how India organises its elections and how thorough the preparations are. It has been very inspiring." It looks very healthy and democratic, he added.

The turnout was good in the three violence-hit districts in the Jammu region Reasi (74.14%), Poonch (73.78%) and Rajouri (69.84%) Even Ganderbal (62.63%) and Budgam (61.31%) in the Kashmir re-

gion did well. "The Shri Mata Vaishno Devi seat in Reasi district recorded the highest voter turnout of 79.95%," informed J&K Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) P K Pole.

In Srinagar, which has remained a hot bed of separatist politics, people came out to vote for first Assembly polls without any poll boycott or militant threat.

"It is first time that I am casting a vote. There are no jobs, power bills are very high and youth are falling to drugs. We hope that the elected government will provide some relief to the population," said Javed Ahmed, a resident of Nowhatta area of Srinagar.

Nowhatta was once a stronghold of militants and separatists where stone pelting used to take place every Friday.

Bharatpur IIC to undergo narco and polygraph tests at Gandhinagar SFSL

ASISH MEHTA @Bhubaneswar

AMIDST nation-wide outrage, the former inspector-in-charge (IIC) of the police station, where the army officer and his fiancée were allegedly assaulted and humiliated in Bhubaneswar, gave his consent before a court to undergo narco analysis, brain mapping and polygraph tests on Wednesday.

The tests will be conducted at the State Forensic Science Laboratory (SFSL) in Gujarat's Gandhinagar.

The Crime Branch of Odisha Police, investigating into the sensitive case, approached the SDJM court in Bhubaneswar seeking permission to carry out all three tests of Dinakrushna Mishra, the former IIC of Bharatpur police station in the state capital.

Mishra appeared before the court where he was explained the purpose of the proceedings and its legal consequences. He told the court that he was innocent and not involved in the offences as alleged against him. "I do not have any objection to undergo narco analysis, polygraph and brain fingerprinting tests. I am giving consent on my own accord and free will," he told the court.

The SDJM court said it was satisfied Mishra gave his consent for the tests on his own volition and allowed the prayer of the investigating officer (IO) to conduct the tests at the Gan-

dhinagar SFSL.

While the army officer's fiancée has levelled serious allegations against Mishra, the accused officer reportedly denied the accusations during his questioning by CB officers.

With no CCTV cameras in the police station or any eyewitness, CB decided to go in for legally admissible evidences.

"As the incident took place inside the police station and there were no eye-witnesses, scientific methodology may give a proper direction to the investigating agency to unearth the truth," sources added.

Sources said the court directed the IO to conduct the tests as per the standard operating procedure and without any delay. It also asked for submission of the medical report of the accused officer after the completion of the tests.

"The CB prayed before the court to carry out the tests in Gujarat as it has one of the best forensic science laboratories in the country. The agency also wants to maintain transparency in its investigation. It will request Gandhinagar SFSL to give a date to conduct the tests soon," said sources.

The SDJM court observed that it was relying on the Supreme Court suggestions that the investigating agency should adopt latest and advanced scientific technologies to arrive at the right conclusion.



50 DRUGS INCLUDING PARACETAMOL TABLETS AND PAN D FAIL REGULATOR'S QUALITY TEST

The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation issued a 'Not of Standard Quality' alert for over 50 medicines. Telma H, Glimepiride and Shelcal C are among them | P7

HARPREET BAJWA & PREETHA NAIR @Chandigarh/ New Delhi

A day after BJP member of Parliament Kangana Ranaut's statement that the three controversial farm sector reform laws repealed in 2021 should be reinstated, made her party squirm and the Opposition go ballistic, the actor and newbie neta was forced to eat her words.

"I withdraw my remarks. I have to keep in mind that I am not just an artist, but a party worker of the BJP. My opinion should not be personal and my actions should align with the party's stand. I regret and take my words back," she said.

Kangana emphasised the importance of respecting Prime Minister Narendra Modi's decision to repeal the laws that were intended to benefit farmers but faced intense opposition.



Kangana Ranaut Rahul Gandhi

Earlier in the day, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi sought to put the government on the mat, demanding an explanation from Modi whether he was opposed to the comments or is he "up to some mischief".

"BJP people keep testing ideas. They ask someone to voice an idea among the people and wait for the reaction... Modi ji you must clarify, whether you are against this or you are again up to some mischief," he asked. "Who is deciding the

government's policy? A BJP MP or Prime Minister Modi?" he poked.

Rahul said the Opposition India bloc will oppose any move to bring back the black farm laws. "Will the three farm laws be revived or not? If you do so, I guarantee you that the INDIA bloc will together stand against it," he warned.

The extent of damage Kangana's loose talk could cause in poll-bound Haryana is unclear, but farmers form a sizeable section of the voters in the state.

BJP spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia distanced the party from Kangana's statement, saying it was her personal comment. "She is not authorised to make such a statement on behalf of the BJP, and it does not depict the party's view on the farm bills. We disapprove of this statement," he said.

Prime accused in Mahalakshmi murder ends life

ASISH MEHTA @Bhubaneswar

IN a bizarre turn of events, Mukti Ray, the prime suspect in the sensational Mahalakshmi murder case of Bengaluru, allegedly died by suicide outside his house in Bhadrak district on Wednesday even as a police team from Karnataka was out looking for him in the state's northern parts bordering West Bengal.

Mukti's body was found hanging from a tree. He is believed to have used a rope to end his life. Later in the evening, police recovered a note from his house in which he had reportedly confessed to killing the woman, police sources said.

The maggot-infested body parts of Mahalakshmi, a sales-

woman by profession, were found stashed in the refrigerator at her one-bedroom apartment in Bengaluru's Malleshwaram area on September 21 after neighbours complained of stench emanating from the flat. She had apparently been chopped into 59 pieces.

Karnataka Home minister G Parameshwara had recently confirmed that main suspect Mukti was from Odisha but had fled Bengaluru after the gruesome murder that sent shockwaves

across the country. Sources said a five-member team of Bengaluru police arrived in Odisha on Tuesday and informed their counterparts here about the main suspect's involvement in the cold-blooded murder.

The police team had no information about Mukti's exact address but quietly fanned out to two northern districts of Balasore and Bhadrak on Wednesday in an attempt to ensure that he did not get a whiff about the manhunt launched

to nab him. On Wednesday morning, Dhusuri police found Mukti hanging from a tree near his house and a case of unnatural death (UD) was registered in this connection. Postmortem was conducted and his body was handed over to the family members later in the day.

When Bengaluru police shared the details of Mukti with Bhadrak police, it turned out that he was the same person who had ended his life outside his house.

Police sources said Mukti had likely got wind of the fact that Bengaluru police were zeroing in on him. Realising that he could not escape the repercussions, he may have ended his life, said the sources. CONTINUED ON P5



Misogynistic remarks must be avoided: SC

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY @New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Wednesday warned courts across India against making remarks that could be construed as "misogynistic" or directed towards a certain "gender or community".

"Courts, therefore, have to be careful not to make comments in the course of judicial proceedings which may be construed as being misogynistic or for that matter prejudicial to any segment of our society," a five-judge bench of the court said while closing the suo motu proceedings over Karnataka High Court judge Justice V Srishananda's alleged objectionable comments during his one of his court hearings.

The bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud advised judges to conduct proceedings conscious of the wider impact of casual observations on the community at large. CONTINUED ON P5





Nurses staging dharna in front of Old OPD building of SCB MCH | EXPRESS

NURSES' STRIKE HITS PATIENT CARE IN SCB

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Cuttack

PATIENT care services were affected at SCB Medical College and Hospital here as around 1,100 nurses went on an indefinite strike from Wednesday over 10-point charter of demands of the Odisha Nursing Employees' Association (ONEA).

cadre on the basis of seniority, change in dress code, stopping contractual appointment through outsourcing agency and bringing nurses from community health officer (CHO) posts of Ayusman Arogya centres back to government hospitals among others, Jena added. SCB registrar (administration) Abinash Rout, however, claimed patient care was not affected due to the strike by nurses. "A day back, the nursing association had submitted a memorandum to go on strike from Wednesday. To ensure delivery of care, we engaged around 500 students pursuing BSc Nursing course to look after patients in different wards," he said. But with less nursing students to provide care, patients experienced delay in receiving treatment. "We are not able to receive the level of care we need as the nursing students lack adequate skills and experience," said some patients undergoing treatment in different clinical departments.

To ensure delivery of care, we engaged around 500 students pursuing BSc Nursing course to look after patients in different wards



Talks fail, agitation to continue

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bhubaneswar

ODISHA Nursing Employees' Union (ONEA) will continue its agitation and resort to cease-work from Friday to press for their demands as its discussion with the Health and Family Welfare department on Wednesday remained inconclusive.

Services in non-emergency departments, including general wards/OPDs and routine OT in all government-run hospitals in the state have been affected as thousands of nursing officers are on a two-day strike with their 10-point charter of demands, including regularisation of left-out contractual nursing officers, pay parity, promotion and other benefits on par with other state government employees.

Secretary of ONEA Ashwini Das said they will continue their agitation until the state government forms a high-power committee and takes a favourable decision to fulfil the demands. "Secretary of the Health department held discussion with us and assured to look into our issues. But the Finance department is not accepting our demands. That's why we want a high-power committee to intervene," he said. In a statement, the Health department said, "After detailed discussion, the nursing officers were assured that there will be continuous engagement with them in future and their issues will be considered sympathetically at appropriate times. They have been requested to withdraw their strike and resume duty immediately."

Nadda arrives today, to bolster membership drive

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bhubaneswar

TO give further impetus to the ongoing mega membership drive launched in the state from September 3, BJP national president Jagat Prakash Nadda will arrive on a day's visit to the state on Thursday.

Nadda will attend a series of events organised by the party during the day. He will first pay homage to the statue of Dr BR Ambedkar at AG Square and then attend a meeting of intellectuals. Representatives of

different organisations will attend the meeting, said party's state general secretary Jatin Mohanty. After interacting with intellectuals and discussing the party's membership drive, he is slated to meet ministers, MPs, MLAs, and state office bearers at the state party office here. With the state unit of the BJP setting an ambitious target to enrol one crore members

into the party fold, Nadda is likely to discuss strategies with state leaders to increase party membership and further expansion of its base in Odisha.

Mohanty said membership drive is the backbone of party's growth and selection of active members will carry forward the party as well as government programmes. Nadda's visit will energise party cadres and

boost party morale to help achieve the goals.

This is the first visit of Nadda to the state after the BJP government came to power. The last organisational election was held in January 2019 when the state unit had crossed its target by enrolling around 46 lakh members.

The next national president of the BJP is likely to be elected in January 2025 before which election of state party presidents of more than 50 per cent of the states are to be completed.



BJD and BJP engage in war of words over tribal welfare

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bhubaneswar

THE BJD on Wednesday lashed out at the BJP government in the state for discontinuing several schemes launched by the previous Naveen Patnaik-led government for welfare of tribals.

Addressing a media conference here, BJD MPs Niranjan Bisi and Sasmith Patra and media coordinator Priyabrata Majhi described the BJP government as anti-tribal for dissolving all the 23 special development councils (SDCs) created by the previous government. The tribal people benefitted under the SDCs, but the BJP government stopped it, they said.

The BJD leaders also came down heavily on the BJP government for stopping LABHA (Laghu Bana Jata Drabya Kraya) Yojana, a fully state-funded initiative to provide minimum support price for minor forest produce, which was launched by the previous gov-

Tribal communities are living with uncertainty and in fear as development work has come to a standstill. Tribal development has become a distant dream under the BJP dispensation



BJD leaders

"Though we demanded exemption of GST on kendu leaves, the BJP government at the Centre ignored it."

The BJD leaders alleged that several communities are still awaiting tribal status.

Countering the allegations, BJP spokesperson Anil Biswal said in the past, the BJD government had tried to seize tribal land which was retracted following opposition from the saffron party. "The then Naveen Patnaik government was forced to withdraw an ordinance in this regard following opposition by the BJP," he said.

Biswal also referred to the violent incidents involving tribal communities during land acquisition in Kalinga Nagar. He said the BJD's defeat in scheduled areas during the 2024 elections indicates rejection by tribal voters. "All the BJD leaders lost elections in the scheduled areas in the elections. This indicates that the tribal people rejected the BJD," he added.



IRCON INTERNATIONAL LIMITED advertisement for expansion of interest in 3rd line between Nergundi-Barang (22Km) and Khurda Road-Vizianagaram (36Km) section.

PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited advertisement for tender enquiry No. 327/SS-II(D) for Dy.CE/Substation Design/TS Organization, C-1, Shakti Vihar, PSPCL, Patiala.

RAJASTHAN RAJYA VIDYUT PRASARAN NIGAM LIMITED advertisement for tenders invited from reputed contractors registered in AA class with RRVPNL and Central/State Govt.

MAHATRANSCO advertisement for E-TENDER NOTICE for Work of Supply, Civil and ETC for additional 501MVA 400/220/33KV ICT-III and 1X167MVA 400/220/33KV Spare ICT along with the provision of RRS at 400/220KV Koradi-II S/s under 400KV S/S (O&M) Division Koradi-II under Nagpur Zone.

PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited advertisement for tender enquiry No. 326/SS(D)-II for Dy.CE/Substation Design/TS Organization, PSPCL, C-1, Shakti Vihar, PSPCL, Patiala.

ODISHA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION advertisement for recruitment to the posts of Professors in different disciplines (Group-A) in Government College of Engineering, Kalahandi, under Skill Development and Technical Education Department.

STATE POLLUTION CONTROL BOARD, ODISHA advertisement for State of Forest, Environment & Climate Change Govt. of Odisha.

Advertisement for RADHA GOBINDO ROY GRANDSON JEWELLERS featuring 22 CT GOLD (10 gm) for ₹70,600.00.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA DEPARTMENT OF SPACE advertisement for BRIEF E-TENDER NOTICE for ISTRAC/CMG/CON/C/ETN-45/2024-25.

Advertisement for recruitment to the posts of Professors in different disciplines (Group-A) in Government College of Engineering, Kalahandi, under Skill Development and Technical Education Department.

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Though wise men at their end know dark is right,  
Because their words had forked no lightning they  
Do not go gentle into that good night

Dylan Thomas

INDIAN EXPRESS IS NOT AN INDUSTRY. IT IS A MISSION.

— Rammath Goenka

## USE JOB MAPPING INDEX TO ENSURE SAFETY OF MIGRANTS

CREATION of jobs is a priority for the government. To plan for it more scientifically, the Union Ministry of labour and employment is developing an Occupational Shortage Index (OSI) to track demand and supply of both white- and blue-collar workers in each state. The parameters will include the different categories of employment available, broken down by region. The index will also track changes in wage levels and highlight the shortage or excess of labour supply. Giving weights to various variables, a high OSI rank would indicate labour shortage. A low rank, on the other hand, would indicate a labour surplus and poorer wages.

If the experiment takes off, this mapping of labour demand for particular occupations and regions will benefit all stakeholders. Entrepreneurs can use the data to set up units where talent is available; workers looking for jobs can take an informed decision based on where wages are on the rise. Governments, too, can improve decision-making and develop information channels to guide workers, so that they get the best deal. The new initiative has to be seen in the context of rising youth unemployment. In the latest Periodic Labour Force survey, for the July 2023-June 2024 period, the unemployment rate for those aged 15 to 29 rose to 10.2 percent from 10 percent in 2022-23.

Even without a scientific guide, India has always had robust labour migration loosely regulated by demand and supply. For instance, Punjab has faced a shortage of farm hands for years and has been served by steady migration from Jharkhand and Odisha. Some older surveys indicate inter-state migration was 9-10 million a year. The 2011 Census pegs the total number of internal migrants in the country at a staggering 139 million. Though necessary to turn the wheels of the local economy, migrant workers face discrimination, wage exploitation and lack of welfare support. They often become targets of sons-of-the-soil agitations. Some 50,000-80,000 migrant workers fled Gujarat in 2018 after they were relentlessly attacked following the arrest of a migrant worker for allegedly raping a 14-year old girl. Considering the size of the shifting populations and the problems they face, the government must also track these migratory groups to ensure welfare support and keep them from becoming victims of human trafficking. The laws on the subject are well spelt out. Close monitoring is what is needed.

## CIVIC AUTHORITIES MUST BE SUED FOR NEGLIGENCE

YOUNG Niranjan paid with his life when the gate of a public playground in Bengaluru collapsed on him as he attempted to open it and wheel in his bicycle. The 11-year-old lay bleeding under the high wrought-iron gate and later succumbed to head injuries. The government rushed in with band-aid measures like promising a thorough investigation, ₹10 lakh in compensation for the family, and support for his sister's fees. Investigation showed that the gate, installed four years ago, had heavily rusted. The tragedy raises a few questions: why are gates to parks and playgrounds closed during the day and why are periodic infrastructure checks not undertaken? The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike has suspended the engineers in charge of the playground, a committee of engineers has been constituted to investigate negligence in work, and a report is expected in a week. Yet, not much systemic change can be expected if we are to go by earlier tragedies.

This was not a first for Bengaluru. Citizens, especially children, have become victims of faulty infrastructure like low-hanging power cables, shaky walls, falling rods and open drains. Vikram, a 7-year-old, was crushed under a stone bird bath in Lalbagh in 2016; 17-year-old Sanjana was buried alive when a college wall collapsed in Hebbal in 2010. Years have passed, but no one has been held responsible for these tragedies. Munirathna, the contractor responsible for building the wall that killed Sanjana, is now an MLA. The Lokayukta report held the contractor and officers responsible, but no action was taken.

It's deplorable that once such incidents fade from public memory, no action is taken against the corrupt officials, contractors and politicians involved. The malaise of 'percentage commission' is the bane of public projects—the 'cuts' that line pockets leave meagre funds for quality work. Last year, contractors exposed the '40 percent commission' culture of the previous BJP government, though it is well-known that corruption is part of every dispensation. How will the government provide a safe civic environment for its citizens, especially in places frequented by children? If the Niranjans and Sanjanas are to get justice and such accidents are to be prevented, we need a strong citizen-friendly legal system that encourages affected citizens to sue the civic authorities and not wait for the government to act.

### QUICK TAKE

#### CONSERVATIVE AND LIBERAL BRAINS

AS social scientists keep scratching their heads about what pushes people to the political right or left, biologists have teased out a relevant insight. Researchers the Netherlands and Greece, who examined MRI scans from nearly 1,000 people who had answered questionnaires on their political leanings, say it is reflected in the size of the amygdala, a part of the brain linked to threat perception, with conservatives showing slightly larger dimensions. It broadly agreed with a 2011 study that, interestingly, actor Colin Firth had commissioned in the UK. Sociobiology is a fascinating frontier of human understanding, but scientists warn against misconceptions and stereotypes while drawing conclusions from such findings.

THE recent extension of the Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme to include coverage for the elderly marks a significant step in India's efforts to address the needs of its ageing population. However, we must view this as just the beginning of a larger conversation about achieving the 'silver dividend'—the potential opportunities and challenges associated with an ageing society. As India's demographic profile shifts, the policies and frameworks must evolve to ensure the elderly are not only cared for but also empowered to contribute to society. If we plan well, we can convert a potential disaster into a significant opportunity.

India's population is set to age rapidly in the coming decades, with the proportion of those over 60 expected to double by 2050, according to the UN Population Fund. This is not unique to India. Many countries in the west and Asia, like Japan, are facing the implications of a rapidly ageing population. The silver dividend refers to the potential economic and social benefits of an ageing society, particularly if elderly individuals can remain active and engaged in economic, social and familial roles.

It is important to realise that reaping the silver dividend requires a robust policy framework that extends beyond healthcare. Over 40 percent of the elderly in India are in the poorest wealth quintile. Such levels of poverty are likely to affect their quality of life. As people live longer, their healthcare needs become more complex. The need for comprehensive geriatric care, including specialised treatments for chronic diseases, mental health support and facilities for palliative care is likely to grow. India currently faces a shortage of trained professionals across the health system—a gap that needs to be addressed urgently.

The Centre first came out with a National Policy for Older Persons in 1999. One of its main components is to promote family-based care. The policy also seeks to engage voluntary organisations in complementing family care and extending support to vulnerable elderly individuals. However, its implementation, particularly in rural regions, has been limited if not missing, underscoring the need for broader initiatives to meet the diverse physical, psychological and social needs of elderly people, especially from marginalised communities.

In addition to expanding healthcare services, improving the accessibility and quality of existing infrastructure is critical. Many elderly people, especially in rural areas, struggle to access healthcare due to poor transportation and inadequate facilities. Enhancing the reach of services such as

Our ageing population is a resource and a responsibility. Apart from strengthening elders' care infrastructure, we must innovate to engage them economically and socially

## PREPARING TO REAP INDIA'S SILVER DIVIDEND

POONAM MUTTREJA



Executive Director, Population Foundation of India



SOURAV ROY

telemedicine, mobile clinics and community health programmes will be key. It is also important to adopt a holistic approach that includes social security, economic engagement, and support for family structures.

Economic insecurity remains one of the most pressing concerns. The lack of appropriate pension schemes and adequate savings forces many to rely on their families, which may not always be viable. Approximately 90 percent of workers are in the informal sector, which offers no social protection for older persons. Policymakers should consider expanding pension schemes, especially for those in the unorganised sector, to provide a steady retirement income.

Creating age-friendly cities is essential to ensuring the elderly can live independent and dignified lives. Urban planning must

include accessible public spaces, pedestrian-friendly roads and public transportation systems that cater to the needs of older adults. Housing policies that support the development of senior-friendly communities and public buildings equipped with ramps, elevators and seating areas are vital.

One way to harness the silver dividend is to enable the elderly to remain economically active. Policies that promote flexible work arrangements, part-time jobs and community-based work can provide avenues for older adults to contribute their skills and experience. This not only supplements their income but also fosters a sense of purpose and community involvement.

In India, family members, particularly women, often bear the primary responsibility of caring for the elderly, impeding their

## A NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH MIDDLE EARTH

AS many as 28 nations bordering the Mediterranean Sea were recently represented in a new partnership between India and the region. Businesses from both sides explored potential cooperation in defence production, maritime and manufacturing, among others.

Ancient synergies have marked the traditional relationship between India and countries on the Mediterranean rim. The Mediterranean is a historically significant region that has facilitated land and maritime trade between the East and West for millenniums. A diverse region spread across the three continents of Europe, Asia and Africa, the 28 countries stand at different levels of economic development.

Together, they comprise a critical group facilitating approximately 25 percent of global maritime trade. The sea economies have a collective GDP of approximately \$10.5 trillion. India's total trade with the region was about \$76.2 billion in 2023-24 across three major sub-regions of Mediterranean Europe, West Asia and North Africa.

Similarly, India has also played a crucial role in facilitating global trade with its central location in the Indo-Pacific. As India becomes a \$5 trillion economy in the coming years and a leading global growth engine, it seeks to build new relationships in the world. It is in this context that India emerges as a crucial partner and friend of the Mediterranean nations. A continuation of India and the Mediterranean's historic bilateral trade ties would be a fruitful partnership for both regions. This is set to emerge as a multidimensional cooperation agenda, embracing various sectors.

To begin with, one key initiative to facilitate the partnership is the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC). Announced during the 2023 G20 Summit held in New Delhi, IMEC is envisaged as a dedicated trade corridor linking India and the Mediterranean economies through a combination of land and sea routes. Converging technology and sustainability-led practices, it promises to significantly improve the connectivity and commerce between India and the Mediterranean, and will increase prosperity in both regions.

The IMEC is expected to build multimodal transport infrastructure, including ports and railways, to enhance trade. Alongside, the region would also create industrial infrastructure to attract global value chains. Such proposed construction activity will benefit businesses of both sides.



CHANDRAJIT BANERJEE

Director General, Confederation of Indian Industry

Second, as two economic regions with significant presence in maritime trade, the blue economy emerges as a vital cooperation sector between India and the Mediterranean nations. The strategic location of Indian and Mediterranean ports makes them key facilitators of global commerce. Joint development of maritime infrastructure along the coasts of both the Mediterranean Sea and Indian Ocean could deepen ties, cultivate value chains for manufac-



ALEXANDRIA PORT AUTHORITY

Mediterranean ports like Alexandria have facilitated trade between the East and West for millenniums. The 28 countries on the Mediterranean rim account for a quarter of global maritime trade today. India's synergies with the region include infrastructure, energy and tech

tured goods and improve the efficiency of the IMEC. The two sides can also work together in shipping and ship construction. Fisheries, marine biology and research, and sustainability of coastal regions are other areas where the two can collaborate.

Third, as digitalisation and industry 4.0 technologies emerge as key components of global information, partnerships between Indian and Mediterranean countries can be envisaged. India and the Mediterranean could jointly cooperate on introducing and developing a payment interface like UPI, leveraging the strength of the India stack for sectors such as e-commerce and fintech.

Similarly, India and the Mediterranean could collaborate on an integrated digital corridor and increase undersea telecom-

munications connectivity.

Fourth, India and the Mediterranean nations must converge collaborations on energy security and sustainable energy. Under the National Green Hydrogen Mission and Production Linked Incentive Scheme on High Efficiency Solar PV Modules, India and the Mediterranean can work together on manufacturing and introducing clean energy into their energy mixes.

Fifth, with geopolitical instability as a global challenge to commerce, multilateral industrial defence partnerships could be catalysed. India and the Mediterranean should pursue joint manufacturing and tech transfer agreements under the Make in India initiative to diversify industrial defence supply chains and improve security.

Sixth, Mediterranean companies have significant opportunities to invest in India and use it as a manufacturing hub for not only the Indian market but also markets in the Indo-Pacific region, and, potentially, the world. Similarly, Indian companies can form joint ventures with Mediterranean businesses to integrate themselves into supply chains and access their markets.

Seventh, both regions enjoy immense potential for tourism linkages. Their historical connection can attract tourists in both directions. Along with this, tourist infrastructure, skill development, and cruise tourism can be areas of engagement.

Eighth, with India and the Mediterranean having significant urban populations, urban infrastructure and circular economy practices emerge as a mutual need to meet sustainability goals and combat climate change. Programmes such as India's Smart Cities mission offer significant opportunities for Indian and Mediterranean businesses to invest and develop technologies to promote sustainable urban development.

India and the Mediterranean are two regions that historically exchanged technology, currency and culture and, within the recent geopolitical shifts, the revitalisation and renewal of this relationship can offer a significant platform for stability and greater prosperity of the world.

(Views are personal) (cb@cii.in)

### MAILBAG

WRITE TO: letters@newindianexpress.com

#### Old-age homes

Ref: *More for elder care beyond health cover* (Sep 25). Beyond healthcare, elders need support, men more than women. Women can get the support of her children in the evening of their life. Less said about the agony of a widower at the hands of daughters-in-law, the better. The government should open old-age homes in all the districts to help the aged.

NR Ramachandran, Chennai

#### Taxing pensioners

The editorial has rightly spoken of emulating innovations from the Netherlands and Japan. Geriatric care includes both medical and non-medical care. For India to have more for elder care beyond health cover, a step in the right direction would be to take pensioners out of the direct income tax basket.

Katragadda Sarveswara Rao, Bhubaneswar

#### Election costs

Ref: *The difficult questions one election plan raises* (Sep 25). 'One nation, one election' has raised questions on the disbalancing federal structure of the nation. The 2024 polls cost nearly ₹1.34 lakh crore. Universal adult franchise is the spirit of democracy, but citing taxpayer's money, the government may devise mechanisms of cost-reduction, beginning with minimising re-polls due to fallacies.

Aparna Vats, Bengaluru

#### Diverting attention

There are more questions not answered by the Rammath Kovind-led Committee, the Election Commission, or the government, which is possibly aware of the impossibility of the proposal. It is, after all, an effort to keep the nation diverted from burning issues like Manipur, J&K and food inflation.

A G Rajmohan, Anantapur

#### Logistical hurdles

Implementing "One Nation, One Election" in India is a complex challenge due to the country's vast population and logistical hurdles. Elections involve significant state resources, especially in areas affected by naxalism and regions like Jammu & Kashmir, Chhattisgarh, and West Bengal. Ensuring security and managing distorted logistics at polling stations will be critical for success.

Kajal Kanhau, Cuttack

#### Ukraine peace

Ref: *Modi meets Zelenskyy in New York, offers India's support for peace bid* (Sep 25). The successive meeting between PM Narendra Modi and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy during a tumultuous time is commendable. This reflects India's willingness to put an end to the prolonged war.

M Rishidev, Dindigul







Israel hits 280 more Hezbollah targets, preps for grounds ops

At least 50 killed in latest attacks on Lebanon; Biden warns that an all-out war is possible

TEL AVIV

ISRAELI army chief Lt. Gen. Herzi Halevi said Wednesday that the military is preparing for a possible ground operation in Lebanon as Hezbollah hurled dozens of projectiles into Israel, including a missile aimed at Tel Aviv that was the militant group's deepest strike yet.

Addressing troops on the northern border, Gen. Halevi said the latest Israeli airstrikes were designed to "prepare the ground for your possible entry and to continue degrading Hezbollah." In an apparent reference to the missile aimed at Tel Aviv, he said: "Today, Hezbollah expanded its range of fire, and later today, they will receive a very strong response. Prepare yourselves."

To achieve the goal of returning the displaced citizens of northern Israel to their homes, "we are preparing the process of a maneuver," he said.

Besides, the Israeli military activated reserve troops in response to rising tensions with the Hezbollah.

US President Joe Biden warned on Wednesday of the possibility of an "all-out war".

"An all-out war is possible," he told ABC. "What I think is, also, the opportunity is still in play to have a settlement that could fundamentally change the whole region."

Israel said Wednesday its air force had struck some 280 Hezbollah targets across Lebanon by early afternoon, including launchers used to fire rockets on the northern Israeli cities of Safed and Nahariya.

Israeli military officials said they intercepted Hezbollah's surface-to-surface missile, which marked a further escalation after Israeli strikes on Lebanon killed hundreds of people.



Smoke rises from Israeli airstrikes in the southern village of Kfar Rouman, seen from Marjayoun, south Lebanon on Wednesday | AP



An Israeli firefighters plane uses a fire retardant to extinguish a fire after a rocket fired from Lebanon hit an open area near the city of Safed, northern Israel, on Wednesday | AP



jured. That raised the death toll from the past three days to 615.

Hezbollah said it fired a Qader 1 ballistic missile targeting the headquarters of Israel's Mossad intelligence agency. The Israeli military said it was the first time a projectile fired from Lebanon had reached central Israel.

The UN said some 90,000 people had been displaced in Lebanon this week, as Israel pounded Hezbollah targets across the country and the Lebanese group strikes back.

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Israel's killing of top Hezbollah commanders couldn't bring the Iran-backed Lebanese militant group to its knees.

"Some of the effective and valuable forces of Hezbollah were martyred, which undoubtedly caused damage to Hezbollah, but this was not the sort of damage that could bring the group to its knees," he said in meeting with military personnel and veterans of the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war.

New France minister to tighten immigration law

PARIS

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

A source close to the case identified the alleged attacker as a 22-year-old man of Moroccan nationality. Prosecutors have said the suspect had been previously convicted of rape and had been the subject of an order to leave France.

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

"This is an abominable crime," said Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau.

Retailleau, who on Monday took over from his predecessor Gerald Darmanin, vowed to boost law and order, tighten immigration legislation and make it easier to deport foreigners convicted of crimes.

"It is up to us, as public leaders, to refuse to accept the inevitable and to develop our legal arsenal, to protect the French," he added.

"If we have to change the rules, let's change them."

On Saturday, the body of a student was discovered in the Bois de Boulogne park in western Paris, not far from the Universite Paris-Dauphine she attended. A Moroccan national was arrested on Tuesday in the Swiss canton of Geneva and was identified as a suspect in a murder committed in Paris, a spokeswoman for the Swiss justice ministry said.

CHINA TESTS NEW MISSILE THAT CAN REACH U.S. CITIES

BEIJING

CHINA on Wednesday successfully test-fired an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) that could hit the US cities, in a rare publicised launch to display its strategic deterrence capability.

The launch tested weaponry performance and military training effectiveness and achieved desired goals, the Chinese Defence Ministry said in a statement. China had notified relevant nations about the test in advance, according to the PLA Rocket Force.

This is the first time in decades that China has made its flight test of an intercontinental ballistic missile public in an apparent show of strategic deterrence, China Daily reported.

According to the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post, the new missile could reach the US mainland, though the Defence Ministry has not specified its range.

As per the information published previously by the Chinese military, the PLA Rocket Force now has multiple types of ballistic missiles with intercontinental ranges, including the DF-31-AG, DF-5B and DF-41.

Also, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy has the JL-2 submarine-launched intercontinental ballistic missile, according to the China Daily report.

The missile, launched into the Pacific Ocean, fell into expected sea areas, the defence ministry statement said, adding that "this test launch is a routine arrangement in our annual training plan".

"It is in line with international law and practice and is not directed against any country or target," the statement said, without specifying the range of the missile. China's ICBM test comes as missile activities have been ratcheting up in the Asia-Pacific region.



Iran House blocks Sunni vice president appointment

TEHRAN

THE Iranian parliament on Wednesday blocked the appointment of a politician from the Sunni minority as vice president, media reported.

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

But on Wednesday lawmakers voted against his resignation from parliament to take up the vice president post, the official IRNA news agency said.

"Parliament members voted 107 in favour, 129 against, and five abstentions out of the 247 representatives present," it added. Following the vote, parliament member Mehrdad Lahouti said the vote was meant to keep Hosseinzadeh in the legislature due to his "capabilities and experience".

"The MPs believe his presence in parliament would be more effective and useful," said Lahouti in remarks quoted by parliament news agency ICANA. He said the decision to bar Hosseinzadeh from resigning was "completely unrelated" to his being a Sunni.

Sunni Muslims account for around 10% of Iran's population, where the vast majority are Shiites and that branch of Islam is the official state religion. They have very rarely held key positions of power since the Islamic revolution in 1979. Iran has numerous vice presidents, who are tasked with leading organisations related to presidential affairs in the country.

A 44-year-old reformist, Hosseinzadeh has spoken out publicly on several occasions in defence of the rights of Iran's Sunnis.

Flooding leads to culling of 125 crocodiles

THAILAND

A crocodile farm culled 125 of the reptiles because of fears they could escape during ongoing floods and endanger human lives, the owner said on Wednesday.

Days of heavy rain in the northern province of Lamphun damaged the enclosures at Natthapak Khumkad's farm, raising the risk that his herd of 10-foot Siamese crocodiles could escape and roam the countryside preying on villagers and livestock. "The rain was eroding the farm walls, so we sadly had to kill all 125 crocodiles," he said.

"We've had them for 17 years," Natthapak said he and his workers electrocuted the animals.

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SRUSHTI KULKARNI

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Pearl Diving



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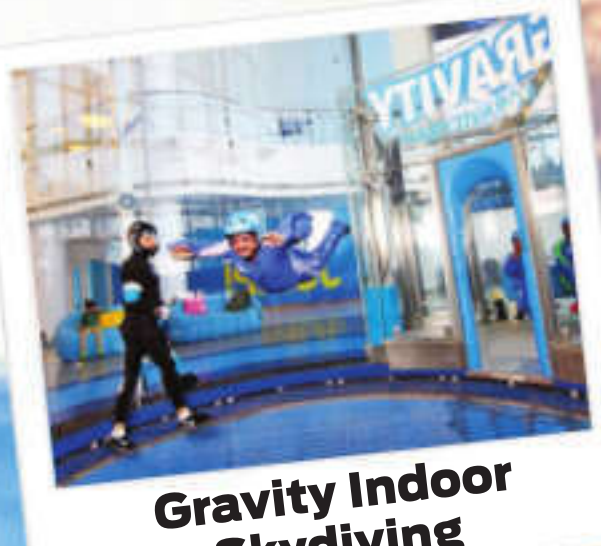
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Dubai to soon boast the world's first Museum of Candy

SRUSHTI KULKARNI

DUBAI, renowned for its luxurious attractions and welcoming new landmarks every now and then, is set to welcome a delightful addition to its vibrant entertainment scene — the world's first-ever Museum of Candy.

Following the buzz around the Museum of Ice Cream in Singapore, Dubai's latest family-friendly attraction offers a sweet journey through over 15 uniquely themed rooms, each dedicated to a different type of confectionery.

Visitors can look forward to an array of Instagrammable highlights, including a cotton candy bath, a gummy bear pool and an 'ice cream thrill and chill' room.

A standout feature of the Museum of Candy will be its café, offering an array of unique treats such as candy milkshakes and ice creams, alongside a tempting selection of sweets to enjoy on the spot or take home.

The museum is poised to open its doors in the coming weeks, although an official launch date has yet to be confirmed.

For those looking to make the most of their visit, the museum offers several ticket options. A General Admission ticket provides access to the vibrant world of sweets, while the VIP ticket includes priority entry, private assistance, exclusive gifts and a luxury candy experience like no other.

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